

# An Urban Oasis: Rock Creek Park's History and Management

Joan M. Zenzen, PhD

October 2020



Cover photo: *Aerial view of Rock Creek Park*  
*NPS PHOTO, 2006*

## Executive Summary

### Scope and Objective

This administrative history documents the establishment and management of Rock Creek Park (1860s–2015) and places the park’s history within the larger contexts of park management, public use, and natural and cultural resource preservation inside and outside the National Park System. This history builds upon the 1985 administrative history written by National Park Service (NPS) Bureau Historian Barry Mackintosh. Rock Creek Park encompasses Reservation 339 (Rock Creek Park proper) and a total of ninety-nine administrative units under Rock Creek Park management.<sup>1</sup>

This administrative history will serve present and future park managers (and NPS employees in other parks and regional offices, along with the general public) by describing the reasoning behind certain decisions and policies and explaining their significance. This information will guide park managers about the history of park issues, how they have been addressed, and how they have changed over time. This history will be comprehensive and thorough but not exhaustive. The report does not describe every event in the park’s history but focuses upon those key resources and issues that have shaped park management.

### Major Findings

Three major themes have informed the management of Rock Creek Park over time: the urban setting, the relationship with the District of Columbia, and the long stretch of different historical time periods. The major findings of this report fit within these three themes:

- The urban environmental damage affecting the metropolitan Washington area has likewise taken a toll on Rock Creek Park’s natural and cultural resources, requiring park managers to work with District and other federal agencies. Some examples of significant environmental factors include water quality (stormwater management and sewer leakages and overflows); invasive, non-native vegetation; and overpopulation of white-tailed deer.
- The Civil War history of Washington, DC, has shaped planning for transportation (roads, bicycles, walking, and hiking), recreational outlets (parks and trails), and commemorative events (ceremonies at forts and Battleground National Cemetery). Rock Creek Park managers have had to balance the park’s preservation and interpretive role with the need for open space and recreational outlets in urban neighborhoods.
- Rock Creek Park’s history has intersected with the racial and economic demographics of the District. Access to Reservation 339 has differed between the western (predominantly white and economically advantaged) and eastern (predominantly populated by people of color of lower economic means) sides.

---

<sup>1</sup> Reservation numbers refer to the land units that compose a park or section of one. A US Reservation is a parcel of land that was either purchased or acquired by the federal government through processes such as condemnation or gifting, after the city was originally founded. The vast majority of US Reservations are administered by the National Park Service. Reservation 339 refers to Rock Creek Park proper. Some park areas encompass multiple reservation numbers, due to different timetables for land acquisition. For example, Archbold Parkway, Fort Circle Park, and even Tenley Circle each embody more than one reservation number. See National Capital Region, Land Resources Program Center, Reservation List, 2011, NPS.

Some Rock Creek Park administrative units, such as Meridian Hill Park and Fort Reno, historically resulted from pushing out African American residents.

- Interpretation has responded to the changing educational requirements of area school-aged children. Students, their teachers, and their parents have sought outdoor activities that have ranged from identification of species (1950s and 1960s) to understanding ecological systems (1970s and 1980s) to documenting changes over time (1990s to the present). Interpreters have had to adapt programming to curriculum and state standards, which have shifted with educational priorities.
- Friends groups have provided essential support to Rock Creek Park's administrative units, but they have become siloed with different emphases. Whereas other national park units typically have one friends group that park managers collaborate with, Rock Creek Park has several. These groups separately focus on trails (Potomac Appalachian Trail Club), Peirce Mill, Meridian Hill Park, and Dumbarton Oaks Park, as some examples. Rock Creek Conservancy, which grew out of FORCE (Friends of Rock Creek's Environment), has broadened its focus from Rock Creek Park proper to include the park's other units. Rock Creek Park managers must juggle the requests of each friends group while keeping the overall park mission in mind.
- Rock Creek Park managers have constantly felt the push and pull of the park's neighbors and the District government. Ballfields and playgrounds exist in Reservation 339 and at the Civil War Defenses of Washington sites. A Tennis Center with an annual international tournament has forced park managers to address neighbor complaints while moderating the potential for resource damage and maintaining this structure. Carter Barron Amphitheater and other locales have given the park the opportunity to offer cultural entertainment. Commuters from the surrounding suburbs have demanded that Beach Drive and Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway remain open to automobiles, even as bicyclists have advocated for their closing. These transportation routes shaped discussion about two cell phone towers that ultimately stand in the park despite park staff members' opposition. Congressional and other political forces have oftentimes directly influenced where limited funds have been spent.
- Rock Creek Park's ninety-nine administrative units do not logically fit together into a comprehensive entity, complicating management and branding. Its units encompass prehistory (archeological sites documenting Native American quarrying and temporary campsites); colonial times and the Revolutionary War (Old Stone House); the Industrial Revolution (Peirce Mill); the Civil War (Civil War Defenses of Washington and Battleground National Cemetery); twentieth-century landscape architecture (Dumbarton Oaks Park, Montrose Park, and Meridian Hill Park); and civil rights, free speech, and the history of protest (Meridian Hill). Natural resources issues permeate Reservation 339 and the cultural landscapes located throughout northwest Washington, where Rock Creek Park's administrative units largely lie.

### **Next Steps**

The National Park Service's guide to administrative histories expects these reports to inform future actions taken by park managers. By providing context for key issues that park managers have previously addressed, subsequent managers can make educated decisions. These managers can also build upon the collaborative relationships established by their predecessors, using the provided background information. This Rock Creek Park administrative history meets this need.

## Contents

List of Illustrations.....	<i>v</i>
Acknowledgments.....	<i>vii</i>
Preface.....	<i>ix</i>
Abbreviations and Acronyms .....	<i>x</i>
Introduction.....	1
Part 1: Urban Planning.....	5
Chapter 1. Initial Park Planning Ideas in DC.....	7
Parks: A Brief History .....	8
Rock Creek Park: Early Planning .....	10
Fort Drive.....	14
Conclusion .....	19
Chapter 2. Transportation and Access .....	21
Commuter route .....	21
Glover-Archbold Park.....	23
General Management Plan.....	25
Access .....	27
Klinge Road .....	29
Conclusion .....	31
Chapter 3. Environment and Pollution.....	33
Water Quality.....	33
District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority .....	37
FORCE and RCC.....	39
Air Quality .....	42
Scientific Study.....	42
Conclusion .....	43
Chapter 4. Crime.....	45
Meridian Hill Park .....	45
Chandra Levy.....	50
Other Crimes in Rock Creek Park .....	51
Conclusion .....	52
Chapter 5. The Park within the City and Nation.....	53
Politics and Planning.....	54
Walter Pierce Park and Its cemeteries .....	55
Cell Phone Towers.....	57
Conclusion .....	60
Part 2: Park Resource Challenges .....	61
Chapter 6. Natural Resources Challenges.....	63
Inventory of Natural Resources .....	63
Deer Management.....	66
Non-native Invasive Plants and Herbicides .....	71
Fish Barriers.....	74
Resource Monitoring .....	76
Conclusion .....	77

Chapter 7. Cultural Resources Challenges.....	79
Civil War Defenses of Washington .....	80
Peirce Mill.....	87
Peirce Barn.....	97
Klinge Mansion.....	99
Old Stone House .....	101
Dumbarton Oaks Park.....	108
Archeological Sites .....	121
National Register .....	123
Conclusion .....	124
Part 3: Recreation.....	125
Chapter 8. Active Recreation.....	127
Tennis.....	128
Trail Rehabilitation .....	134
Recent Trail Work.....	139
Rock Creek Golf Course .....	140
More Places to Play .....	143
Water Recreation and Boathouses .....	144
Conclusion .....	147
Chapter 9. Other Kinds of Recreation.....	149
Meridian Hill Park .....	149
Montrose Park.....	164
Glover-Archbold Park.....	169
CWDW and Small Parks .....	171
Conclusion .....	173
Part 4: Education and Interpretation .....	175
Chapter 10. Interpretation at Historical and Cultural Sites.....	177
Old Stone House .....	179
Civil War Defenses of Washington .....	185
Peirce Mill.....	193
Other Locations.....	196
Conclusion .....	198
Chapter 11. Nature Interpretation .....	199
Interpretive Challenges .....	199
Rock Creek Park Nature Center.....	202
Planetarium .....	211
Multiple Audiences.....	213
Bridging the Watershed .....	214
Conclusion .....	219
Chapter 12. Entertainment .....	221
Carter Barron Amphitheater .....	221
Other Entertainment Venues.....	226
Conclusion .....	227
Part 5: Community.....	229
Chapter 13. Boundary Encroachments .....	231
Boundaries .....	231

Boundary Case Study.....	234
Conclusion .....	233
Chapter 14. Social Uses .....	235
Social Trails .....	235
Dogs .....	237
Conclusion .....	238
Chapter 15. Community Outreach .....	239
Green Outreach .....	240
Different Emphases.....	242
Rock Creek Park Superintendents and Outreach .....	246
Conclusion .....	249
Chapter 16. Memorialization and Commemoration .....	251
A Brief History of US Commemoration.....	251
Battleground National Cemetery .....	252
Fort Stevens .....	254
Sesquicentennial Observances .....	256
Statues and Memorials.....	257
Monumental Management Challenges .....	262
Memorials for the Future .....	266
Conclusion .....	267
Chapter 17. First Amendment Rights .....	269
Protests.....	270
Rock Creek Park Protest Sites .....	272
Conclusion .....	273
Part 6: Other Administrative Histories .....	273
Chapter 18. Battleground National Cemetery Administrative History.....	275
Battle of Fort Stevens.....	275
Battleground National Cemetery Established.....	276
Cemetery Features .....	278
Ceremonies .....	286
National Park Service Administration .....	288
Conclusion .....	292
Chapter 19. Georgetown Waterfront Park Administrative History .....	295
Beginnings .....	295
Washington Harbour.....	297
Initial Design Plans.....	300
Redesign.....	302
Obstacles.....	309
Openings .....	311
Boathouses .....	312
Conclusion .....	315
Conclusion .....	317
Research Recommendations.....	319

Appendices

A. A Timeline of Major Events at Rock Creek Park .....	321
B. Pertinent Legislation .....	323
C. Superintendent Timeline.....	329
D. Rock Creek Park Memorials and Statues .....	330
E. Oral History Interviews .....	331
F. Maps.....	332
Bibliography .....	335
Index .....	339

## Illustrations

Aerial view of Rock Creek Park, 2006 .....	cover
Figure 1. Boulder Bridge in Rock Creek Park, 2011 .....	6
Figure 2. Historic Olmsted Map of Rock Creek Park, 1918.....	12
Figure 3. Fort Drive Preliminary Drawing, 1927 .....	15
Figure 4. Armillary Sphere, 1966 .....	47
Figure 5. Joan of Arc Statue without Sword, n.d.....	48
Figure 6. Rock Creek Fish Ladder, 2007 .....	62
Figure 7. Civilian Conservation Corpsmen Reconstruct Fort Stevens, circa 1938 .....	82
Figure 8. Reconstructed Fort Stevens, 1967 .....	83
Figure 9. Reconstructed Fort Stevens Landscape, 1967 .....	84
Figure 10. Peirce Mill, 1935 .....	90
Figure 11. Ted Hazen at Peirce Mill, n.d.....	93
Figure 12. Peirce Barn as the Art Barn, 1971 .....	98
Figure 13. Restoration of the Old Stone House, 1955 .....	103
Figure 14. The Restored Old Stone House, 1982 .....	105
Figure 15. The Old Stone House Opening, 1960.....	106
Figure 16. The Old Stone House and Living History Interpreters, 1966.....	107
Figure 17. Dumbarton Oaks Park, 1963 .....	111
Figure 18. Dumbarton Oaks Park Stream and Bridge, 1963 .....	112
Figure 19. Rock Creek Golf Course, 1960 .....	126
Figure 20. Rock Creek Indoor Tennis Stadium, 2018 .....	131
Figure 21. Rock Creek Park Horse Center, 2010.....	137
Figure 22. Ropewalk at Montrose Park, 2003 .....	144
Figure 23. Meridian Hill Park's Aggregate Concrete, 1936.....	151
Figure 24. Meridian Hill Park Fountain, 1933.....	153
Figure 25. Dante Statue, n.d.....	155
Figure 26. A Starlight Concert at Meridian Hill Park, 1941.....	157
Figure 27. Playing Croquet at Meridian Hill Park, 1933.....	158
Figure 28. Montrose Park, 1944 .....	166
Figure 29. Park Ranger with Junior Naturalist Group, 1959 .....	176
Figure 30. Rae Koch at the Old Stone House, 1967 .....	181
Figure 31. Abraham Lincoln Reenactor at Fort Stevens, 1964.....	191
Figure 32. Park Ranger Shows a Snake at the Klinge Mansion Nature Center, 1959.....	203
Figure 33. Students inside the Klinge Mansion Nature Center, n.d. (circa 1959).....	204
Figure 34. Multiple Tables inside the Klinge Mansion Nature Center, n.d. (circa 1959) .....	205
Figure 35. Outside the Rock Creek Park Nature Center, 1961 .....	206
Figure 36. Inside the Rock Creek Park Nature Center, 1961.....	207
Figure 37. Caretaker's Cottage That Became Rock Creek Park Nature Center, n.d. ....	209
Figure 38. Planetarium, n.d.....	212
Figure 39. Carter Barron Amphitheater, 1991 .....	222
Figure 40. Park Cleanup by FORCE, 1976.....	230
Figure 41. Battleground National Cemetery, 2011 .....	253
Figure 42. Fort Stevens Monument, 2017. ....	255
Figure 43. James Buchanan Memorial, n.d.....	259

Figure 44. Joan of Arc Statue with Sword, 1936.....	260
Figure 45. Robert Emmet Statue, n.d.....	263
Figure 46. Kahlil Gibran Memorial, 2018 .....	265
Figure 47. Battleground National Cemetery Entrance, 1936.....	274
Figure 48. Marble Headstones at Battleground National Cemetery, 1936.....	280
Figure 49. Monument to the 122nd New York Volunteers, 1936 .....	281
Figure 50. Monument to the 25th New York Volunteer Cavalry, 2018 .....	282
Figure 51. Rostrum at Battleground National Cemetery, 1936 .....	284
Figure 52. “Bivouac of the Dead” Cast-Iron Tablet, 1936 .....	285
Figure 53. Battleground National Cemetery Lodge, 2011.....	289
Figure 54. Aerial View of Georgetown Waterfront Park, 2008 .....	294
Figure 55. Granite Interpretive Panels at Georgetown Waterfront Park, 2018 .....	306
Figure 56. The Fountain at Georgetown Waterfront Park, 2017 .....	307
Figure 57. The Labyrinth at Georgetown Waterfront Park, 2017.....	307
Figure 58. River Steps at Georgetown Waterfront Park, 2011 .....	308
Figure 59. Map of Areas Administered by Rock Creek Park .....	332
Figure 60. Civil War Defenses of Washington.....	333

## Acknowledgments

When I took my two young children to Rock Creek Park at the start of the twenty-first century, I marveled at how such a large wooded area filled with great rocks to climb on and water to stomp in could exist within our nation's capital. We gravitated toward the Nature Center's live animal display and planetarium. Once my kids got older, my husband and I took advantage of the hiking trails, where all four of us could gain scenic vantage points and work our muscles. These trails may not be in the mountains of Colorado or California, but they were close to home and thus accessible. When given the opportunity to research and write this update of Barry Mackintosh's 1985 administrative history, I enthusiastically said yes. Following in Barry's footsteps is intimidating; he was a mentor when I started my career in National Park Service (NPS) history. It is my hope that I have written a useful and worthy addition to the Rock Creek Park history library.

Many people helped me in my work on this history. At Rock Creek Park, Cultural Resources Program Manager Josh Torres was my key park contact. He tracked down documents, reports, photos, and maps, and pointed me to the right people if I had any questions. He provided me with contact information for the oral history interviews contained herein. He shared his knowledge on specific cultural resource issues. Midway through this project, he left the park to become the Regional Archeologist, and I missed not having his comments on subsequent drafts of this history. Nick Bartolomeo, Chief of Resources, gave me a parkwide tour and lots of background information to sort through. He also provided in-depth comments on the drafts. Former superintendent Tara Morrison and current superintendent Julia Washburn welcomed me and ensured that I had open access. Supervisory Theater Specialist Rita Gunther was my go-to for Carter Barron Amphitheater information; Civil War Defenses of Washington Program Manager Kym Elder helped me with the Civil War sites. Education Specialist Maggie Zadorozny gave me an on-the-spot appreciation for interpretation and made sure I had access to the interpretation files and reports. Tonukkah Baldrige scheduled my appointments with the superintendents and left me to review the administrative files. Newly appointed Rock Creek Park Cultural Resources Program Manager Brad Krueger provided helpful comments on the second draft. I thank everyone at the park for their hospitality and keen interest in ensuring my success with this project.

Other NPS affiliates also guided me to resources, shared their knowledge, or gave useful comments on drafts. National Capital Region Chief Historian Dean Herrin served as my main regional office contact. He responded quickly to my email questions and gave crucial comments on drafts. Former National Capital Area Monuments and Memorials Program Manager Glenn DeMarr in the National Capital Regional History Office was a key source for my understanding of the park's monuments. National Park Service Bureau Historian John Sprinkle Jr. opened the Washington Office history files and kept me chuckling over whatever little stories he would share. Staff Historian Lu Ann Jones furnished me with Georgia Ellard's previous oral history and searched for others. Cultural Resource Specialist Patti Kuhn Babin arranged for my access to the National Capital Region files held in the Washington Federal Records Center in Suitland, Maryland. Department of the Interior Head of Reference Services Jennifer Klang conducted research on the First Amendment legal cases described herein. Records/Library Manager Alvin Sellmer in the Denver Service Center Technical Information Center proved that he could find any technical report I could imagine existed. I have worked with him on other National Park Service histories, and he is a gem.

I spent a lot of productive time at the Museum Resource Center in Landover, Maryland, and I thank all of the staff for making that experience a great one. Archive Technician Tazwell Franklin scanned in a timely fashion the documents I flagged. Former Director Bob Sonderman supplied me with useful context about Walter Pierce Cemetery. I previously worked with current director Laura Anderson, and it was a joy to see her again and get a peek at some of the treasures in the Museum Resource Center.

This project is under the National Park Service–Organization of American Historians (OAH) Cooperative Agreement. I have been a beneficiary of this agreement in the past, and I thank former Chief Historian Dwight Pitcaithley for having the foresight to initiate such a partnership. It has built my career as an independent public historian and put National Park Service history on the map for accessible scholarly reporting. For this Rock Creek Park project, I want to acknowledge the succession of OAH Directors of Public History Programs. Aidan Smith, with whom I worked in the past, started me out on Rock Creek Park, but passed away suddenly and left a hole that only he could fill. Susan Ferentinos served as interim director; she had been Aidan’s predecessor, and I loved working with her again. Paul Zwireki, with Public History Associate Derek Duquette, has readily taken up the reins and provided me with lots of support and guidance.

Finally, I want to thank some key individuals. The narrators I interviewed readily shared their stories and made Rock Creek Park come alive. I could not have written this history without their insights. Barry Mackintosh stepped out of retirement and answered my questions with patience and deep knowledge. It is a joy to be in communication with him again. Heather Huyck served in many capacities when she worked for the National Park Service, and I have interviewed her previously. For Rock Creek Park, she gave me her always perceptive take on its different management units. Melanie Choukas-Bradley took me on a personalized nature tour of Rock Creek Park that helped me appreciate even more this staggering gift to the American people. Susan Dulany joined me on a day-long hike that went from Glover Archbold Park to Dumbarton Oaks Park and down to Georgetown Waterfront Park, giving me valuable on-the-ground knowledge. Carolyn Weinstein shared her enthusiasm for my research while we hiked Rock Creek Park. Indigo Weinstein did an editorial review. Stuart Weinstein brilliantly produced this manuscript. Aaron Weinstein gave me a needed reprieve by taking me into the park.

I dedicate this book to my fellow hikers in Rock Creek Park and in life, Stuart, Indy, and Aaron.

## Preface

This administrative history benefited from primary source research completed at Archives II of the National Archives and in National Park Service (NPS) archives and offices. Records dating from before 1990 (and especially from the 1960s and 1970s) often contained written correspondence that aided understanding of the administrative decisions made on various topics. These correspondence files are found in the Archives II records and sometimes in the Rock Creek Park records at the Museum Resource Center and in attic boxes at the park.

The adoption of email correspondence and digital technology for storing information has led to a conspicuous drop in the amount of saved correspondence. This drop led the historians at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park (NMP), as an example, to have an end date for that park's administrative history of 2001. They recognized that the park did not have the rich documentary collection for the most recent part of the park's history. Individual staff members had not saved (or printed) their emails, with the result that the park had digital copies of reports but not the associated correspondence.

The situation at Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania NMP is not isolated. The convenience of writing and deleting emails has made them easy to lose. The National Park Service has also changed its email servers over the years, most recently in February 2020 from Google to Microsoft. These changes have exacerbated records retention. Anecdotal information has suggested that emails have been automatically erased if kept past a certain number of days. Emails may have also been lost during the server changes. Unless individuals took an active interest in printing their email correspondence and saving it in a long-term way, the chances that a historian would uncover them would be small.

Oral history interviews, of which the author completed twenty-seven for this project, are an essential resource for compensating for this loss of email correspondence. The author interviewed current and former Rock Creek Park employees and National Capital Area-Region 1 and NPS Washington managers.<sup>1</sup> These recorded interviews have filled in crucial gaps in the documentary record and directed the author to other sources. Interviews with non-NPS informants, such as with members of friends groups, have added balance to these discussions. The author asked narrators for any additional records they might have, and some people did provide copies. These materials varied from news articles to reports and some limited correspondence.

Secondary sources, especially newspaper articles, have helped establish a chronology for events and give an idea of local reaction to events at Rock Creek Park. The *Washington Post* is the newspaper of record for the District, though specialty papers for Georgetown and Northwest Washington have also proven helpful. Unfortunately, the author, who is not affiliated with a university or a government agency, does not have ready access to the *Post's* electronic archives.

---

<sup>1</sup> The National Capital Region name changed to National Capital Area—Region 1 as a result of a reorganization of the NPS regional management structure.

## Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
AFF	Alice Ferguson Foundation
ANC	Advisory Neighborhood Committee
ARRA	American Recovery and Reinvestment Act
AV	Audiovisual
B&O	Baltimore & Ohio
BID	Business Improvement District
BIG	Beach Improvement Group
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BTW	Bridging the Watershed
C&O	Chesapeake & Ohio
CBA	Carter Barron Amphitheatre
CCC	Civilian Conservation Corps
CLR	Cultural Landscape Report
CORE	Congress of Racial Equality
CRM	Cultural Resource Management
CSO	Combined Sewer Overflows
CSX	Chessie
CUE	Center for Urban Ecology
CWDW	Civil War Defenses of Washington
DAWN	DC Anti-War Network
DC	District of Columbia
DDOT	District Department of Transportation
DOPC	Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EO	Executive Order
EPMT	Exotic Plant Management Team
FOMH	Friends of Meridian Hill Inc.
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
FOPM	Friends of Peirce Mill
FORCE	Friends of Rock Creek's Environment
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent
GAR	Grand Army of the Republic
GIS	Geographical Information System
GMP	General Management Plan
GSI	Government Services Inc.
GWP	Georgetown Waterfront Park
HABS	Historic American Building Survey
HFC	Harpers Ferry Center
HOV	High-Occupancy Vehicle
HRS	Historic Resources Study
I&M	Inventory & Monitoring
IP	Interpretive Prospectus

LRIP	Long Range Interpretive Plan
MEHI	Meridian Hill Park
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
NCA	National Capital Astronomers Association
NCP	National Capital Parks
NCPC	National Capital Planning Commission
NCPPC	National Capital Park and Planning Commission
NCR	National Capital Region
NCRN	National Capital Region Network
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHL	National Historic Landmark
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NM	National Monument
NMBZ	Nonmotorized Boathouse Zone
NPCA	National Parks Conservation Association
NPS	National Park Service
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NSO	National Symphony Orchestra
OPBPP	Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks
ORRRC	Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission
OSH	Old Stone House
PATC	Potomac Appalachian Trail Club
RCC	Rock Creek Conservancy
RCP	Rock Creek Park
RCPP	Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway
RG	Record Group
ROCR	Rock Creek Park
SCA	Student Conservation Association
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
SOLVE	Sustaining Our Lands with Volunteer Energy
SUP	Stand-Up Paddleboarding
TIC	Technical Information Center
US	United States
USDA	US Department of Agriculture
WABA	Washington Area Bicyclist Association
WMATA	Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
WPA	Works Progress Administration
WRT	Wallace Roberts & Todd
WTF	Wireless Telecommunication Facility
YCC	Youth Conservation Corps

## Introduction

When you step across Boundary Bridge in the District of Columbia's northern section of Rock Creek Park, you will find yourself immersed in the sounds and sights of a natural environment characteristic of the mid-Atlantic states.<sup>1</sup> You will recognize as you hike down Valley Trail that the park encompasses Rock Creek itself and its immediate surroundings. The park sometimes stretches horizontally up to a mile. But at its southernmost boundary, where the creek empties into the Potomac River near Theodore Roosevelt Island, the park is barely 1,000 feet across. In total, Rock Creek Park proper contains 1,754 acres, a thousand acres more than New York City's Central Park. But like Central Park, Rock Creek Park is an urban park where visitors will largely hear the rush of cars and trucks on parkways within the park or on city streets just outside the boundaries. Rock Creek Park offers city dwellers a refuge nonetheless, a place to reconnect with nature away from the hustle, bustle, and political power of the nation's capital.

President Benjamin Harrison signed the park's enabling legislation on September 27, 1890. That same day, he signed the legislation establishing Sequoia National Park, and a few days later, he established Yosemite National Park (which in 1864 had become a California state park) and General Grant National Park (eventually renamed Kings Canyon). Yellowstone, established in 1872, was the only previous national park, thus emphasizing the significance of Rock Creek Park, which from the start came under federal control due to its location in Washington, DC.<sup>2</sup> The legislation for Rock Creek Park and Sequoia National Park borrowed from the Yellowstone Act, "dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasure ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people." Rock Creek Park's legislation added more preservation language, calling for regulations to "provide for the preservation from injury or spoliation of all timber, animals, or curiosities within said park, and their retention in their natural condition, as nearly as possible."<sup>3</sup> This reference to Yellowstone's legislation indicates how Rock Creek's stunning natural scenery had a role in making the area a park. Park supporters, notably Charles Glover, who was then a partner in the Riggs and Company banking firm, also saw the park as an antidote to the challenges of urban life. Managers of Rock Creek Park would administer the park to meet both goals.<sup>4</sup>

Rock Creek Park's administration changed over time. First, the park came under military control, with the establishment of a commission consisting of chief engineers of the US Army, the engineer commissioner of the District of Columbia, and three presidential appointees. The commission had the task of identifying land for acquisition, surveying it, establishing valuations of the properties, and overseeing acquisition. Once this effort concluded in 1894, park management went to the Board of Control, another entity under military rule with the added representation of the District of Columbia. In 1918, Congress transferred Rock Creek Park

---

<sup>1</sup> This administrative history addresses Rock Creek Park within Washington, DC. Rock Creek Regional Park extends into Maryland and is administered by the Maryland National Capital Parks and Planning Commission.

<sup>2</sup> Barry Mackintosh, *Rock Creek Park: An Administrative History* (1985), chapter 1, section 3, <https://www.nps.gov/rocr/learn/historyculture/adhi.htm>, accessed March 22, 2017. Mackintosh's history serves as an important resource for the park until the mid-1980s. This update of Mackintosh's history builds upon the prior one but does not duplicate it. The author encourages readers to consult Mackintosh's history as a resource for the earlier period.

<sup>3</sup> Rock Creek Park (ROCR) Authorization, 51st Congress, 1st Sess. (1890).

<sup>4</sup> William Bushong and Piera M. Weiss, "Rock Creek Park: Emerald of the Capital City," *Washington History* 2 (Fall/Winter 1990/1991): 18, 20.

management to the US Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, which supervised the District park system. The military continued to have an important presence, with the Army Chief of Engineers in charge of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. In 1925, Congress abolished this office and established the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital. The Army Chief of Engineers had primary responsibility for this new office. In 1926, Maj. Ulysses S. Grant, grandson of the Civil War general and eighteenth president, was appointed to this position and remained in it nearly until the 1933 transfer of Rock Creek Park to the National Park Service.<sup>5</sup>

The National Park Service (NPS) has managed Rock Creek Park since 1933. However, the park did not initially have its own management team. Rock Creek Park was folded into the National Capital Parks, an NPS administrative branch meant to oversee the Washington, DC, acquisitions and to represent the parks collectively. National Capital Parks (NCP) became National Capital Region (NCR) from 1962 to 1969 and from 1976 to 2019, then becoming National Capital Area—Region 1. Rock Creek Park existed as a sub-unit under National Capital Parks/Region and did not have its own staff. Maintenance staff and others had details at the park, and sometimes the maintenance supervisor was known as the park's superintendent. In 1965, the National Capital Region was subdivided into three administrative units, and Rock Creek Park fell under National Capital Parks—North. In 1972, the three units were reduced to two, and Rock Creek Park fell under National Capital Parks—West.<sup>6</sup>

In 1975, NPS designated the park as a separate unit of the national park system, but it did not have administrative autonomy. When National Capital Parks—West was abolished in 1975, Rock Creek Park went to a division, led by James Redmond, within the National Capital Parks headquarters. In October 1976, Rock Creek Park took over administrative authority for Pinehurst Parkway, Soapstone Valley Park, Melvin C. Hazen Park, Klinge Valley Parkway, Normanstone Parkway, Dumbarton Oaks Park, Montrose Park, Beach Parkway, and Blair Portal—tributary and other bordering reservations that George Washington Memorial Parkway and National Capital Parks—East had recently managed. Eventually, Rock Creek Park would have ninety-nine units under its administrative control. One of these units was, of course, the park along Rock Creek itself. The others ranged in size from pocket parks to Civil War Defenses of Washington (CWDW) forts, from monuments in traffic circles to a national cemetery. In recognition of its enlarged boundaries, in 1977 Rock Creek Park attained independent status, and Redmond became its first full-time superintendent.<sup>7</sup>

Rock Creek Park, from the perspective of National Park Service administration, identifies both the natural area along Rock Creek and the ninety-nine total units under management control of the superintendent. Each of the units has a numerical designation, and Rock Creek Park, the preserved area along the creek, is called Reservation 339. Referring to Reservation 339 is one way to distinguish between the park and the administrative area. This administrative history examines the establishment and management of the ninety-nine units, with emphasis upon those areas which have had issues of relevance to current and future managers. Two separate administrative histories, of Battleground National Cemetery and Georgetown Waterfront Park, close out this study.

---

<sup>5</sup> Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 2, sections 1–2.

<sup>6</sup> Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 4, section 1. Robinson & Associates Inc., *National Park Service National Capital Region Administrative History, 1952-2005* (2008), 20.

<sup>7</sup> Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 4, section 1. NCR Admin History, 21.

Some central themes shape this administrative history. Rock Creek Park, both the singular park and its other administrative units, sits in an increasingly urban setting, and this setting has shaped management choices. Chapter 2 will discuss the early 2000s development of a General Management Plan (GMP) for Rock Creek Park (Reservation 339) and Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway (RCPP). This plan highlighted the continuing tension between recreation and transportation. Beach Drive extends from the park's northern boundary to south of the National Zoological Park, where the road intersects with Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway. Beach Drive and the Parkway have become major commuter routes. Road closures on weekends and holidays have served bicyclists (and other non-motorized travelers). Some bicyclists wanted to extend such closures or make other changes to increase safety. Some drivers wanted as much automobile access to the park's roadways as possible. The resulting General Management Plan decisions sought to balance these stances.<sup>8</sup>

Deer have multiplied in the past thirty years, a topic in Chapter 6. Prior to the early 1980s, park staff thought seeing a deer within Reservation 339 demanded entry in a special notebook recording infrequent animal sightings. Plentiful food from people's gardens and the park's vegetation, combined with a lack of natural predators, have allowed an explosion of white-tailed deer. By the 2000s, park naturalists could measure the damage, as seen by the clearing out of understory native plants. Forest health and diversity were being significantly damaged, and forest regeneration was at risk. After a long and methodical process, including public input, the NPS implemented its sharpshooting management decision.<sup>9</sup>

Urban life has shaped other administrative units under Rock Creek Park's management. Meridian Hill Park sits northeast of Dupont Circle on 16th Street. Its management since its 1936 opening reflects the varied urban challenges of the twentieth century. Meridian Hill Park, about 12 acres, recalls Italian villas of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This formal park, discussed in Chapter 9, with statuary and designed plantings, contains a lower park with water cascades and a reflecting pool. The upper park has a broad terrace overlooking the lower park and an open mall with flanking wooded areas. The Buchanan Memorial, in honor of President James Buchanan, sits in the lower park. The argument had been made that having this memorial to Buchanan meant that the park could not be renamed Malcolm X Park, as suggested in the late 1960s. Recent research has determined that there is no specific law prohibiting the renaming of a site due to the presence of a presidential memorial. Based on this information, Meridian Hill Park could be renamed, should Congress pass the appropriate legislation. In the 1960s, Meridian Hill Park entertained visitors with summer concerts and impressive lighting displays of the water features. NPS has experienced management challenges related to the maintenance of the park over the years. Social changes have also engulfed the park. Nearby rioting in 1968 followed the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Crime and drug use took hold of the park. Vandals damaged park features and sprayed graffiti. Meridian Hill Park became a place to avoid from the 1970s to 1990s. The National Park Service has used sporadic funding to repair and enliven the park, and since the 1990s, the Friends of Meridian Hill has been an active partner.<sup>10</sup>

Another theme for this history looks at the multifaceted relationship between Rock Creek Park and the District of Columbia. The National Park Service and DC government largely have a mutually beneficial relationship. Some topics, though, have been thorny over the years. Washington, DC's population, along with that of the surrounding jurisdictions, have relied upon,

---

<sup>8</sup> ROCR, Final General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), 2005.

<sup>9</sup> ROCR, Final White-Tailed Deer Management Plan and EIS, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> ROCR, Meridian Hill Park, Cultural Landscape Report (CLR), vol. 1, 2001.

for example, Reservation 339, the open areas of the Civil War Defenses of Washington, Meridian Hill Park, and the new Georgetown Waterfront Park for recreation. Reservation 339 alone contains a golf course, tennis stadium, horse center, planetarium, hiking trails, and Carter Barron Amphitheater. Sometimes, however, park neighbors and the DC government have clashing expectations of the National Park Service regarding recreation areas, as discussed in Chapter 5. Transportation through Reservation 339 has required coordination with the DC government for roadwork and closings, discussed in Chapter 2. The city and the National Park Service have exercised regular communication about stormwater management and the overflow of sewers into Rock Creek and other waterways, as discussed in Chapter 3. Chapters 11 and 12 recognize the ways in which Rock Creek Park serves DC schoolchildren, including trips to the Nature Center and Peirce Mill. Rock Creek Park and DC are also linked in the handling of crime, as discussed in Chapter 4. The most well-known case involved the well-publicized murder of Chandra Levy. District neighbors have helped the park over time, as discussed in Chapters 14 and 16, participating in friends groups or working to clean up parts of parks. Some people, however, have increasingly left their dogs unleashed while walking in the park and created social trails, trails off the trail system, as described in Chapter 15.

Finally, Rock Creek Park encompasses an impressive stretch of history. Two thousand years ago, Native Americans quarried stone from beds of ancient river cobbles exposed along some of the bluffs along Rock Creek.<sup>11</sup> The 1765 Old Stone House in Georgetown, under Rock Creek Park's administration, is the oldest structure on its original foundation in Washington, DC. Several mills used Rock Creek in the nineteenth century, but Peirce Mill was the most successful water-powered grist mill of these. Peirce Mill ran commercially from the 1820s until 1897, seven years after the establishment of Rock Creek Park. The Civil War Defenses of Washington surrounded Washington, DC, as protection during the 1861–65 war. About half of the remaining Civil War Defenses of Washington are under Rock Creek Park's management, including Fort Stevens, where President Abraham Lincoln was almost hit by Confederate fire. Rock Creek Park also administers Battleground National Cemetery, where forty soldiers are interred. Twentieth-century history within Rock Creek Park includes significant architectural designs, innovative recreational spaces, and brushes with famous and prominent figures.

These themes of urban setting, relationship with the District of Columbia, and diversity of historical time periods signal the complexity of the management of Rock Creek Park's ninety-nine administrative units.

---

<sup>11</sup> The Louis Berger Group Inc., *“Bold, Rocky, and Picturesque”: Archeological Identification and Evaluation Study of Rock Creek Park*, vol. 1, 2008.

**PART 1**  
**Urban Planning**



*Figure 1. Boulder Bridge in Rock Creek Park  
NPS PHOTO, 2011*

## CHAPTER 1 Initial Park Planning Ideas in DC

In 1866, Maj. Nathaniel Michler of the Army Corps of Engineers had the job of surveying the land in the Washington, DC, area for a potential park and site for a presidential mansion. The US Senate had inquired about moving the president's house away from the polluted waters of the Potomac and into a larger area. Michler reported the following year that the mansion should be in a secluded area but the park should be accessible to all. He presented a litany of reasons why such a park should be created. Parks provided a respite from the noise and movement of the city. They offered space for recreational pursuit. They inspired an appreciation for artistic and cultural forms. Parks connected people to nature. Michler remarked that parks had "the free air of Heaven"—meaning, in twenty-first-century language, that they offered clean air by lessening air pollution via trees soaking up fumes. They flattened the playing field for different social classes to interact. Parks encouraged healthy exercise. Michler cited the valley of Rock Creek as the location in DC that best met the requirements he listed. Sen. G. Gratz Brown (MO), who tried to shepherd the park's establishment through legislation, gave an additional reason for creating the park in Washington: it could be a place of relief for elected officials and government workers. Brown described the wear and tear of life in DC and how Rock Creek Park could provide a valuable antidote. Another twenty-three years passed before Congress agreed on a bill, but Michler and Brown both had the prescience to see Rock Creek Park as a natural and cultural wayside in an urban landscape for human health and well-being.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter examines the idea of parks historically, both in general and specifically within Washington, DC. In the District, the McMillan Commission laid the groundwork for an overall plan for parks and designed landscapes. Rock Creek Park, thanks in part to the contributions of landscape architect and city planner Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., fit easily within this vision. Another park idea, which would have connected the Civil War Defenses of Washington in a transportation and recreation unit, failed to fully materialize due to lack of funding, other political priorities, and changing transportation demands. Looking at initial planning for Rock Creek Park and Fort Drive helps us understand how planners envisioned the District of Columbia during a crucial stage in its development. This knowledge helps contextualize Rock Creek Park's progression, which included half of the Civil War Defenses of Washington within its management authority. Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. was a continuing presence during this planning period.

This chapter lays a foundation for understanding early planning for Rock Creek Park, describing the many management units and people who shaped the park's early history. The chapter chronologically ends at about 1968, with the end of the Fort Drive concept. Subsequent chapters consider planning from topical perspectives, such as transportation, environment, or historical preservation. These chapters also indicate the range of voices, organizationally and otherwise, that shape the park. The District of Columbia, the National Capital Planning Commission, and federal agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency have all played a role in determining Rock Creek Park's management. This multi-organizational approach is a necessary characteristic of urban planning.

---

<sup>1</sup> Maj. Nathaniel Michler, as quoted by Barry Mackintosh in *Rock Creek Park (ROCR): An Administrative History* (NPS, 1985), chapter 1, sections 1 and 2. William Bushong and Piera M. Weiss, "Rock Creek Park: Emerald of the Capital City," *Washington History* 2 (Fall/Winter 1990/1991): 15.

## **Parks: A Brief History**

A brief review of park history gives context to how parks have transformed over time and how Rock Creek Park fits within this larger story. Rock Creek Park is not alone in being an urban park meant to provide refuge and recreation to city dwellers. The idea of parks, however, stretches back to medieval times, when nobility (but not their servants) hunted in fenced areas. By the eighteenth century, English landowners had started hiring landscape gardeners (such as Lancelot “Capability” Brown) to carve out scenes representing idyllic facets of natural beauty. Such scenes might include a grotto, pastoral meadow, or hillside with artistically placed clumps of trees. Landscape gardeners intended each scene to evoke a prescribed emotional response, defined by the pastoral, picturesque, and sublime. These human-designed, emotionally charged landscapes would inform how white settlers and explorers reacted to natural settings, such as in Yosemite and the Grand Canyon, in the nineteenth-century United States. Back in Europe, parks slowly became public. British royals opened London’s Hyde Park to the public, with regulations, in the seventeenth century. By the early nineteenth century, Germans had transformed former fortifications into public gardens.

Across time, people have used open land—call these informal or vernacular parks—for sports, rest, and social interaction. In colonial New England, a town common had the utilitarian function of providing grazing land for cattle. The common became the place for public assemblies or militia drills, with the term “park” eventually applied. Some urban US cemeteries, such as Mount Auburn in Cambridge, Massachusetts, served in the mid-nineteenth century as social gathering places for picnics and other happenings. Their manicured grounds and statuary recalled the English romantic style. Rock Creek Park, with its picnic areas for social gatherings, represents an extension of these vernacular parks.<sup>2</sup>

National parks in the United States have expanded the scope and meaning of the term *park*. The first parks in the national park system protected natural or archeological areas, from Yellowstone to Mesa Verde. Slowly, other units entered the system. Rock Creek Park may not have “national” in its title, but it has always been under federal regulation and thus fits within the larger national park history. In 1933, American battlefield parks, previously under the US Army’s jurisdiction, came to the National Park Service (NPS), which Congress had established in 1916. Other historical sites appeared in the first half of the twentieth century, such as the birthplaces of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.

In the second half of the twentieth century, new park categories, such as National Recreation Areas (NRA), appeared. NPS Director George Hartzog led this effort to multiply the reach and scope of national parks. He also supported creating national park units in urban areas, thereby enlarging the constituency for the agency, responding to the priorities of Congress and the president, and meeting the identified needs of city dwellers. Rock Creek Park, though already a park under federal control, fit easily within this urban agenda. Golden Gate NRA (in the San Francisco Bay area), as an example, has offered a catalog of activities for nearby urbanites, from running and biking to walking and sightseeing.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 3–5. John Brinkerhoff Jackson, *Discovering Vernacular Landscapes* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984). John F. Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), chapter 5.

<sup>3</sup> A timeline for park history can be found at [https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/mackintosh1/sts3.htm](https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/mackintosh1/sts3.htm), accessed May 16, 2017. George B. Hartzog Jr., *Battling for the National Parks* (Mt. Kisco, NY: Moyer Bell, 1988).

Recognition of the diversity of the American population and experiences has slowly made its way into the national park system. National park sites in the South during segregation often had separate picnic areas or bathrooms. The Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park's visitor center forced African Americans to use a restroom in the garages. Rock Creek Park also had segregated picnic areas. Shenandoah National Park developed the Lewis Mountain location as a segregated camping area. By the end of the twentieth century, national park units took the opposite approach and began protecting and celebrating civil rights struggles and advancements in American life, with such sites established as Women's Rights National Historical Park, Manzanar National Historic Site, *Brown v. Board of Education* National Historic Site, Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site, and Stonewall National Monument.<sup>4</sup>

The National Park Service, as part of its Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) responsibilities during the New Deal of the 1930s, developed park facilities both in state and national parks. Conrad Wirth, who would later become NPS Director, led the agency's effort. CCC labor cleared parkland; built facilities (typically in the rustic architectural style of the period); laid out roads; brought in electrical, water, and sewer systems; and then opened the land to the public. This was not make-work. Studies by a rising class of medical professionals and social workers in the early twentieth century emphasized the physical and mental health benefits of outdoor recreation. Rock Creek Park benefited from CCC labor by completing some much-needed road and bridge work, in addition to restoring part of Fort Stevens.<sup>5</sup>

Central Park in New York City, another nineteenth-century park in a big city like Rock Creek Park in Washington, has embodied changing ideas about the term "park." Central Park is perhaps the most well-known urban park and often serves as a point of comparison to Rock Creek Park. The New York state legislature established Central Park in 1853. In 1858, Frederick Law Olmsted (father of Olmsted Jr.) and Calvert Vaux won the competition to design the park. Their Greensward Plan, which evoked a different sensibility from Rock Creek Park, combined formal and naturalistic features with architectural details for bridges and the like. A significant aspect of the plan used transverse roads to direct vehicular traffic out of the park and leave paths open for people to walk or take their carriages, for the most part unimpeded.

Central Park went through changes that Rock Creek Park largely avoided. For example, Olmsted and Vaux catered to the richest 5 percent of New York City's residents when laying out Central Park's network of carriage roads. But popular interest in sports, especially baseball in the 1850s and 1860s, led to some limited accommodation. By the turn of the twentieth century, Central Park shook off its initial elitism and sported a mass-consumption pleasure-ground aura. The park offered a popular zoo, children's rides, and restaurants. In the 1930s, the park added twenty-two playgrounds. By the 1970s, however, Central Park had deteriorated, and crime had increased. A broke city turned to private sources such as Donald Trump to manage the ice-skating rink and the zoological society to manage the Central Park Zoo. The Central Park Conservancy emerged in 1980 to raise funds, rehabilitate the area, and set the park on track for the future. As of 2017, the Conservancy had raised \$875 million for the restoration, programming, and management of the park, and was responsible for 75 percent of the park's

---

<sup>4</sup> Joan M. Zenzen, *At the Crossroads of Preservation and Development: A History of Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park* (Washington, DC: NPS, 2011). Reed Engle, "Segregation and Desegregation in Shenandoah National Park" (January 2006), <https://www.nps.gov/articles/segregation-and-desegregation-at-shenandoah.htm>, accessed October 29, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Conrad L. Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980). The US Forest Service also managed CCC camps.

annual operating budget of \$67 million. Rock Creek Park also has had its own set of Friends groups to help with programming and fundraising, but private entities have not managed its resources.<sup>6</sup>

This brief recounting of parks, especially urban ones, indicates that Rock Creek Park is not alone in trying to meet wide-ranging needs and changing tastes. Rock Creek Park may not be entirely unusual with its tennis stadium, horse center, planetarium, amphitheater, and golf course, in addition to ballfields, tennis courts, and trails for hiking, biking, and horseback riding. In his earlier history of the park, Barry Mackintosh noted that one of the first public developments in the park was an overnight summer camp, started in 1904, with three dozen tents set up to accommodate white underprivileged children and their mothers. This Camp Good Will served 150 mothers and their children for two-week periods and had buildings for dining, entertainment, administration, and bathing, plus a pool and ballfields. This early use of Rock Creek Park served an important urban function that went beyond a singular focus on nature. Baby Hospital Camp soon joined Camp Good Will, catering to poor infants. Camp Good Will became a day camp in 1933 and soon thereafter was moved to Prince William Park in Virginia.<sup>7</sup>

### **Rock Creek Park: Early Planning**

Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. had a long-lasting role in the early conception of Rock Creek Park. Olmsted Jr. worked on both the 1902 McMillan Plan and the 1918 plan for Rock Creek Park. His father was Frederick Law Olmsted, who (as previously noted) had collaborated with Calvert Vaux to design Central Park. Olmsted Sr. and Vaux likely inspired and influenced Maj. Nathaniel Michler's efforts to establish Rock Creek Park. Michler referred to the senior Olmsted's work in Central Park as the most important work of its kind. Michler's language in describing his vision for Rock Creek Park included many ideas similar to what Olmsted did in Central Park: formal versus naturalistic scenic areas, separate circulation systems, active recreation areas, and areas eliciting the pastoral, beautiful, and picturesque categories of romantic landscapes. Olmsted Jr. took his father's and Michler's conceptions and applied them to early twentieth-century realities, considering such inventions as streetcars.<sup>8</sup>

The McMillan Plan, which promoted the City Beautiful approach, laid out a vision for the physical development of Washington, DC. Its influence is visible today. Sen. James McMillan (R-MI), who chaired the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia, named to the commission four nationally known experts: architect Daniel Burnham as chair, architect Charles McKim, sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens, and landscape architect Olmsted Jr. The 1902 plan addressed two topics, updating Pierre L'Enfant's original design for the monumental core of the city and establishing a regional park system. Olmsted Jr. largely wrote the latter section.<sup>9</sup>

In the McMillan Plan, Olmsted Jr. identified Rock Creek Park as the principal park for the city, with its development requiring careful study due to its perplexing character.<sup>10</sup> The

---

<sup>6</sup> Rosenzweig and Blackmar, *The Park and the People*, 213, 218, 247–49, 374, 451, 510–13. Central Park Conservancy, "Park History," <http://www.centralparknyc.org/visit/park-history.html>, accessed May 17, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapters 2 and 3.

<sup>8</sup> Bushong and Weiss, "Rock Creek Park," 13–15.

<sup>9</sup> Bushong and Weiss, "Rock Creek Park," 22–23. Thomas S. Hines, "The Imperial Mall: The City Beautiful Movement and the Washington Plan of 1901–1902," in *The Mall in Washington, 1791-1991*, ed. Richard Longstreth (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1991), 85–87.

<sup>10</sup> Charles Moore, ed., "The Improvement of the Park System of the District of Columbia," 57th Cong., 1st sess., Sen. Rpt 166, (1902), 89 (hereafter McMillan Plan). The report states that the park's development is "a matter of great perplexity."

Board of Control of Rock Creek Park, with representatives from the Army Chief of Engineers and District of Columbia commissioners, had authority over the park once land acquisition was complete. This agency built the park's first roads and bridle paths, among other amenities. But concentrated planning did not begin until Olmsted Jr.'s analysis for the McMillan Plan, followed by the 1918 Rock Creek Park plan.<sup>11</sup> Olmsted Jr. argued, first and foremost, for landscape architects to develop a systematic plan to fully realize the vision for the park that had prompted the original purchase of its lands. He noted that the newly completed Beach Drive was skillfully laid out and brought many people into the park to enjoy the scenery. But in several locations, he pointed at where the road had harmed the scenery, and he warned that the road would soon be overcrowded, prompting the call for its widening. He cautioned against proceeding with such action without careful consideration of the effects on the scenery. Other considerations also prompted his attention. He wrote that the part of the creek south of the zoological park and to its mouth into the Potomac River was "unsightly to the verge of ugliness," and that the government needed to make decisions about whether to cover the creek at that location or build a parkway through the valley. Bridge and culvert construction forced the question of whether the creek should be covered and how to treat the space in either case. The development of Potomac and Rock Creek Parks, the creation of a park along the Anacostia River, and the growing use of the Old Soldiers' Home grounds for park purposes meant, according to the McMillan Plan, that the government needed to determine how best to connect the parks to create a single park system with diversified attractions.<sup>12</sup>

The McMillan Plan set the stage for the Olmsted brothers, Frederick Law Jr. and John C., to submit their concept for the park in 1918. The underlying theme in their report emphasized the park's value to the public. They stated from the start that "the real justification for this large park is unquestionably found in the recreative value of its natural qualities."<sup>13</sup> They emphasized that no matter how beautiful the scenery or how high its potential value, that value remained only potential except if the park was enjoyed "by large and ever larger numbers of people, poor and rich alike."<sup>14</sup>

They delineated the park into six fundamental divisions for landscape and administrative purposes, with a mind toward identifying the general policies for development and maintenance. Here again, the Olmsted brothers noted that the federal government needed to appreciate the need for a "far more intensive use of the Park, and for more ready accessibility."<sup>15</sup> Public use remained a key factor in their planning recommendations for the park. For instance, in Division A, Valley Section, which they called the topographical and psychological backbone of the park, they envisioned picnic groves by the creek, wading pools, and other attractions, "for the water is a great drawing card for the public." But such uses should be incidental or of the moment, they cautioned. Swimming holes, as a contrary example, would require bathroom and dressing areas, plus screens from roadways, all of which would injure the valley's beauty.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 2.

<sup>12</sup> McMillan Plan, 10–11, 88. Quote on p. 10.

<sup>13</sup> Olmsted Brothers, Rock Creek Park Report (hereafter Olmsted Brothers, 1918 Report), 1918, 1. Available at <https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/2194955>, accessed May 25, 2017.

<sup>14</sup> Olmsted Brothers, 1918 Report, 1–2.

<sup>15</sup> Olmsted Brothers, 1918 Report, 10.

<sup>16</sup> Olmsted Brothers, 1918 Report, 11–12.

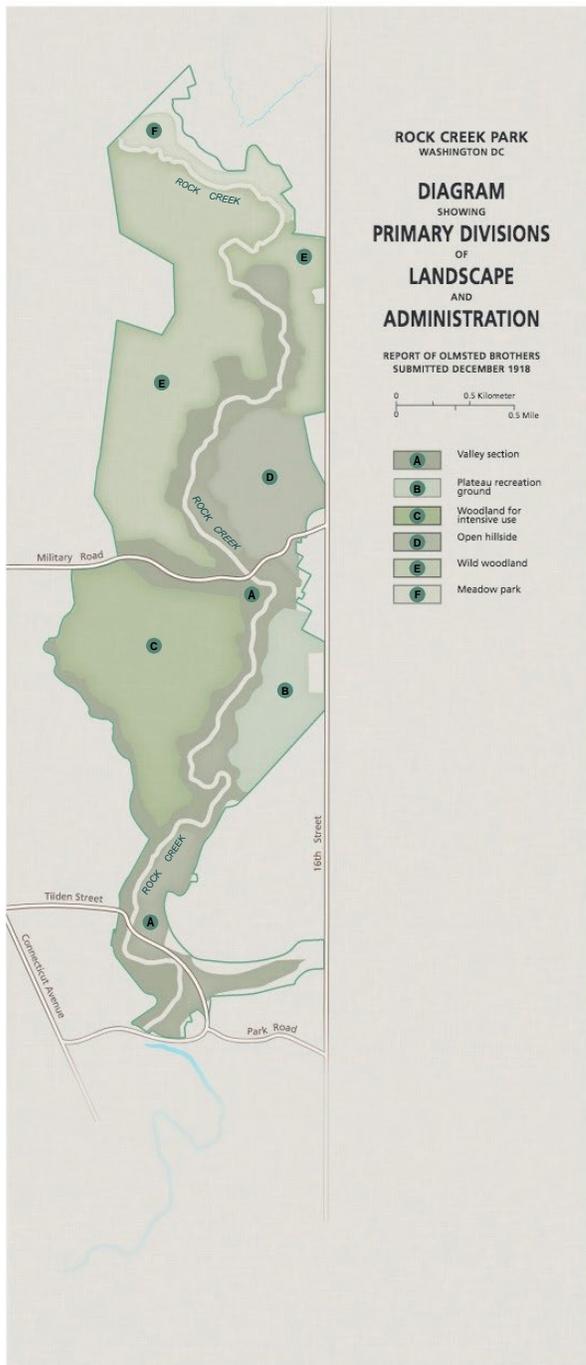


Figure 2. Historic Olmsted Map of Rock Creek Park  
NPS PHOTO, 1918

The 1918 report further connected people and the varied beauty of Rock Creek Park, always pushing for more use. In describing Division B, Plateau Recreation Ground, the Olmsted brothers observed that its location encouraged easy access from adjacent residential areas and by car from other parts of the District. Its topography made the area conducive for more or less “intensive recreation,” which they listed as different ball games and concerts. This area has since fulfilled the Olmsted brothers’ vision, with the construction of tennis courts and a tennis stadium, Carter Barron Amphitheater, and several ballfields.<sup>17</sup> When writing of Division C, Woodland for Intensive Use (the area where the Nature Center stands), the brothers remarked that this section had value to pedestrians wanting to enjoy the woods without having to expend as much effort as in the valley region’s abrupt inclines and drops. They recommended little development of trails or bridle paths and instead encouraged free and intensive use. They also stated that the area would become “ideally accessible” once a car line (streetcar line) was completed.<sup>18</sup> For Division D, Open Hillside Section (where the public golf course now stands), the brothers declared that for the section’s distinctive recreational value and accessibility, “a free use by all classes of patrons whether riding, driving or walking should be encouraged,” so long as not marring the grassy slopes.<sup>19</sup>

Division E, Wilder Woodland (surrounding the northern reaches of the valley area), offered an important counterpoint for Frederick Law Jr. and John C. This area was less accessible from transportation lines, and its rugged woods did not encourage intensive use. They decided to embrace these circumstances and make the “wild, natural character of its forests” the key factor for developing this area (or not). Trails, bridle paths, and picnic areas would be sufficient. But, they explained, “it is not our thought to discourage the enjoyment” of this or any other part of the park by the general public. They argued instead that some little regulation of the “elements of wildness,” which added to the beauty of the park, “would insure ultimately a far higher degree of service to the public—the owners of the Park.”<sup>20</sup>

Finally, the brothers described Division F, Meadow Park, the park’s far northern section. They defined this irregular stretch of meadowland as self-contained with woods surrounding it. They warned that park commissioners should guard this land against “inharmonious encroachments upon the simplicity, breadth, and restfulness inherent in its very character.” But they also stated that any use of the meadow should be welcomed that did not disturb the “simple broad stretch of greensward.”<sup>21</sup>

These six divisions made sense from the point of view of the park’s topography. But the Olmsted brothers also connected that topography to the public, demonstrating how specific uses would fit certain park areas. Ballfields would go where the landscape would encourage such use, and trails would cross those areas of variability. As landscape architects, they sought to protect the Rock Creek scenery, and their report describes how workers should prune some areas, clear out other areas, and generally maintain the landscape to the level they imagined in their plan. They also strongly discouraged the use of Division D, Open Hillside Section, for an arboretum, which had been started there. Their ideas were the next step in thinking about Rock Creek Park in relationship to Washington, DC, proper.

---

<sup>17</sup> Olmsted Brothers, 1918 Report, 12.

<sup>18</sup> Olmsted Brothers, 1918 Report, 13.

<sup>19</sup> Olmsted Brothers, 1918 Report, 15.

<sup>20</sup> Olmsted Brothers, 1918 Report, 15–16. Quote on p. 16.

<sup>21</sup> Olmsted Brothers, 1918 Report, 17.

## **Fort Drive**

Olmsted Jr. further influenced District of Columbia planning, especially related to Rock Creek Park, by contributing to planning on Fort Drive. Over a seventy-year period, a mix of national and local planners investigated the idea of connecting the Civil War Defenses of Washington into a cohesive transportation route. They called this roadway Fort Drive, and they pictured it as a parkway with scenic views of the surrounding landscape. They drew upon the example of the Bronx River Parkway (1911–25), which was the first modern motor parkway. The Bronx River Parkway used bridges to avoid intersecting roads and prohibited unimpeded access from adjoining properties. Parklands lined (and protected) both sides of the parkway. Designers emphasized its leisurely recreational purpose by slowing down speeds, barring commercial vehicles, and providing adjacent recreational facilities. In the 1920s and 1930s, Long Island State Park Commission Chair Robert Moses oversaw the construction of more parkways, though the later ones emphasized swift flow rather than leisurely activity. The CCC assisted states in building parkways in Milwaukee and Cleveland. CCC workers also helped build Mount Vernon Memorial Highway (connecting Washington, DC, and George Washington's home) and Colonial Parkway (tying Williamsburg, Jamestown, and Yorktown together). Parkway designers used roadway design and landscaping to advance the National Park Service goal of building an experience, not just a road. Plans for Fort Drive incorporated this approach.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Anne Mitchell Whisnant, *Super-scenic Motorway: A Blue Ridge Parkway History* (Charlotte: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 16, 40–42. Civil War Defenses of Washington/Fort Circle Park, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (hereafter CWDW NRHP 2015), May 15, 2015, section 8, pp. 113–14.

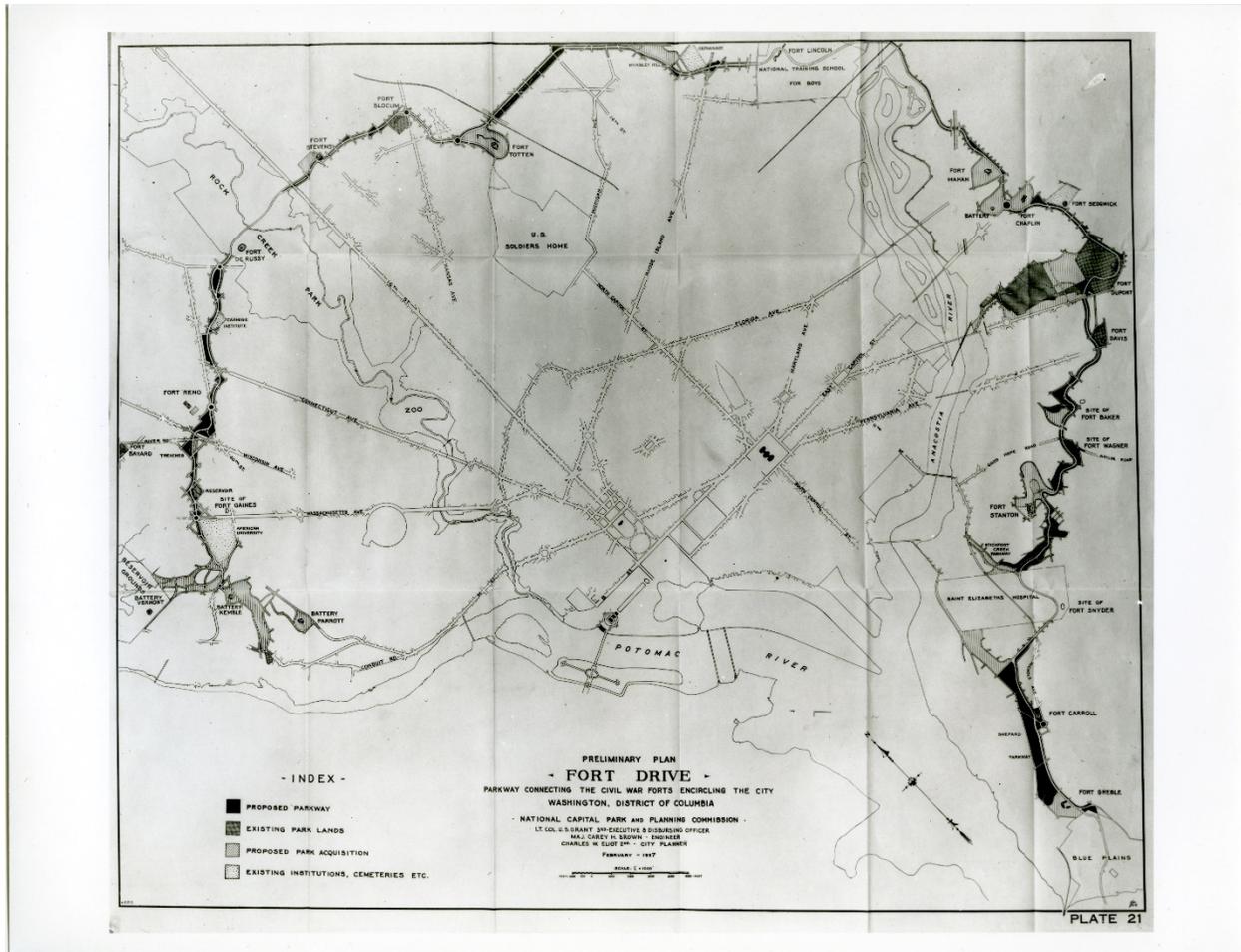


Figure 3. Fort Drive Preliminary Drawing  
NPS PHOTO, 1927

Fort Drive originates from the Civil War Defenses of Washington period. President Abraham Lincoln's administration had ordered the construction of a linked system of forts and batteries to protect Washington, DC, from possible Confederate raids or invasion. Up until that time, Washington had few, if any, defensive locations within its borders. Virginia, which had voted for secession, threatened the city in part due to Virginia's command of high ground on Arlington Heights and in Alexandria, perfect for firing cannons down upon the city. Brevet Maj. Gen. John G. Barnard designed the Washington fortifications and oversaw their construction. Barnard largely did the job well. Historians Benjamin Franklin Cooling III and Walter H. Owen II wrote in their 2010 assessment of these defenses that Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee, for one, opted on two occasions not to challenge their strength. On the third occasion, Lee sent Lt. Gen. Jubal Early to attack. The system worked as intended and kept Early at bay. This attack had directly threatened Lincoln, who had stood at Fort Stevens in the line of fire.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> CEHP Inc., "A Historic Resources Study (HRS): The Civil War Defenses of Washington" (hereafter HRS: CWDW), part 2, 1998, p. 9. Benjamin Franklin Cooling III and Walter H. Owen II, *Mr. Lincoln's Forts: A Guide to the Civil War Defenses of Washington* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 4, 23. CEHP Inc., HRS: CWDW, part 1 (n.d. [c. 1998]), chapters 2 and 7. Benjamin Franklin Cooling III, *The Day Lincoln Was Almost Shot: The Fort Stevens Story* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2013).

With the end of the Civil War, the US Army slowly decommissioned its fortifications. In 1865, these numbered 68 enclosed forts and batteries with emplacements for 1,120 guns, 905 of which (including 98 mortars) were still mounted. Another 93 batteries accommodated field guns. There were 3 blockhouses and 20 miles of trenches connecting the defensive works. In combination, Washington, DC, had 23 miles of defenses that stretched from the Potomac River and Chesapeake & Ohio (C&O) Canal up to the city's northern corner, down southeastward across the Anacostia River to the city's eastern corner, and finally south to the bluff overlooking the Potomac River.<sup>24</sup>

The geographical placement of the forts and their historical associations led planners to advocate for a Fort Drive. In 1893, Congress gave DC city commissioners the authority to develop a street system to address haphazard development from new housing. During the ensuing five-year debate over a street system, the commissioners suggested a fort-to-fort drive connecting surviving fortifications. City Engineer Commissioner William Powell reported in 1896 that the recommended highway would be five miles long and would run between Anacostia Park and Fort Stevens. In 1898, a city highway map included a road called the Fort Drive, though subsequent updates failed to include this drive. The 1902 McMillan Plan commented upon the beautiful views the military positions commanded and that a northern park circuit, in a widened roadway, would be of great interest. Land acquisition of five forts and connecting acreage would, according to the McMillan Commission, provide for small parks in what was then the outlier sections of the District.<sup>25</sup>

By the 1920s, interest in a Fort Drive had expanded. The Commissioners of the District of Columbia worked for five years until they won passage in 1925 of a bill to make recommendations for a continuous twenty-three-mile roadway between the Civil War Defenses. Separately, in 1919, the Washington Board of Trade of the District of Columbia adopted a resolution calling for Congress to acquire tracts of land for parks and recreation and for Fort Drive. The newly formed Washington Committee of 100 on the federal city completed a study in 1924 that recommended the establishment of Fort Boulevard. The Committee of 100 also influenced legislation, passed in 1925, that called for the comprehensive development of a park and playground system for the District. This act created the National Capital Parks Commission (NCPC), which made the Fort Drive proposal a priority, obtaining congressional funding that same year for its first land acquisition for the project. In 1926, Congress strengthened NCPC's authority, renaming it the National Capital Park and Planning Commission (NCPPC).<sup>26</sup>

The National Capital Park and Planning Commission took responsibility for moving the Fort Drive proposal forward. One of the key decisions involved whether the drive should use surface streets or be a dedicated parkway. The latter idea would incur greater expenses, as the DC population had increased 70 percent between 1901 and 1925 and assessed land values had gone up 240 percent. The larger population meant that the District had more new roads and the city could link these roads, although perhaps not fully in a parkway tradition. The National

---

<sup>24</sup> Fred W. Tuemmler and Associates, Fort Park System (1965), 2, Box 22, File CWDW–Fort Circle Parks–Cultural Resources–Preservation, Treatment, and Maintenance–Fort Parks System Master Plan 1965, Museum Resource Center (MRCE). All MRCE files are from the ROCR Collection. Fort Circle Parks, Interpretive Prospectus, 1971, 5, Box 23, File CWDW–Fort Circle Parks–History–General–Interpretation–Interpretive Prospectus, February 1971, MRCE.

<sup>25</sup> TC Jeffers, The Fort Drive, February 7, 1947, 1, document as reproduced in appendix EEE, in CEHP Inc., HRS: CWDW, part 2, appendices, 1998. CEHP Inc., HRS: CWDW, part II, 1998, 15. McMillan Plan, 111. CWDW NRHP 2015, section 8, p. 108.

<sup>26</sup> CWDW NRHP 2015, section 8, pp. 116–17. CEHP Inc., HRS: CWDW, part II (1998), 2–4.

Capital Park and Planning Commission hired landscape architect Charles Eliot II as its in-house city planner, with his first assignment being to study these two options and make his recommendation. Eliot II was the nephew of Charles Eliot, the famed landscape architect who planned the Boston Metropolitan Park System. Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. served as one of the ex officio members of the planning commission, and he likely helped shape Eliot II's report about Fort Drive. Olmsted Jr.'s presence created a full arc between the McMillan Commission, the 1918 Rock Creek Park plan, and the planning commission's Fort Drive plan. Eliot II's 1927 report presented the results of his studies, with a clear preference made for a dedicated parkway. He argued for a continuous green strip that would contribute to the District's park system, not just a roadway. The National Capital Park and Planning Commission deliberated and decided in favor of the dedicated parkway option.<sup>27</sup>

Washington never saw a fully completed Fort Drive. The federal government acquired the land, thanks in large part to the Capper-Cramton Act of 1930.<sup>28</sup> This act provided \$16 million for land acquisition in the District for parkland acquisition and another \$13.5 million in adjoining areas of Maryland and Virginia, with the intent of creating a regional system of parks and parkways. But the federal government's purchase of this land collided with the changing reality of DC's population and transportation needs. In 1908, less than a decade after the McMillan Plan's publication, the first Model Ts started coming off the production line at Henry Ford's manufacturing plant in Detroit. Washingtonians adopted motorized travel as quickly as the rest of the country, and between 1920 and 1930, car ownership quadrupled in the District. Resultant traffic jams and lack of parking in an increasingly urbanized setting forced the National Capital Park and Planning Commission to design more and wider roads, as well as slice out areas for parking. This ever-increasing network of surface roads necessarily complicated the commission's ability to dedicate space for its long-desired Fort Drive parkway.<sup>29</sup>

The National Park Service joined the Fort Drive discussion in 1933. Pres. Franklin D. Roosevelt signed an executive order giving management authority of federally owned parkland in the District to the agency, including the fort parks and rights-of-way for Fort Drive. The National Park Service oversaw the Civilian Conservation Corps across the nation, and the CCC in Washington, DC, built a segment of Fort Drive in the city's southeast quadrant. The Works Progress Administration added another short segment near Fort Reno.<sup>30</sup>

Between the 1940s and 1960s, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission attempted to keep alive some semblance of Fort Drive. This effort, however, largely emphasized accommodating more cars than designing a leisurely drive. A 1940 approved plan presented Fort Drive as a limited-access, four-lane divided parkway for passenger vehicles. It would serve as an outskirt bypass to help relieve downtown traffic. This 1940 version of Fort Drive used bridges and tunnels to remove street-level intersections, creating an unbroken parkway that did reflect the initial vision for Fort Drive. But it came with an estimated \$12–15 million price tag. The planning commission presented its comprehensive plan for the District in 1950, and Fort Drive remained. However, this time the commission identified Fort Drive as a traffic distributor, not a pleasure parkway. A 1959 transportation plan, co-sponsored by the planning commission and the

---

<sup>27</sup> CWDW NRHP 2015, section 8, pp. 117–20. Tuemmler and Associates, Fort Park System, 3.

<sup>28</sup> "Other Sources of Land: Acquisition Following Street Closures by the District of Columbia, Transfer from Other Governmental Agencies, and Donations," NPS, Fort Circle Parks Final Management Plan, 2004, 7–8.

<sup>29</sup> CWDW NRHP 2015, section 8, pp. 122–23, 128–29. McMillan Plan, 111–12.

<sup>30</sup> CWDW NRHP 2015, section 8, p. 125. The CCC did other important work at the forts, as discussed in other chapters.

National Capital Regional (NCR) Planning Council, noted that some of the rights-of-way taken for Fort Drive could be used for an intermediate loop of a freeway or parkway to relieve projected traffic. A revised 1960 highway study recommended using part of Fort Drive (between Galloway and Gallatin Streets) for a portion of the Interstate-95 alignment. A 1962 review task force reported to the National Capital Park and Planning Commission in a generally hopeful tone that the original park-type road envisioned for Fort Drive was not valid in its entirety, but some sections required further study for creating a partial parkway.<sup>31</sup>

Opposition to Fort Drive rose, driven largely by the changing urban demographics and corresponding needs of the DC region. The DC Budget Officer and DC Assessor in 1947 wrote that the pleasure boulevard idea “made no sense today” and encouraged the National Capital Park and Planning Commission to release the much-needed land for such uses as schools, recreation parks, and some roads, as outlined in the District’s transportation plan.<sup>32</sup> That same year, John Russell Young, President of the DC Board of Commissioners, noted in his letter to the Fine Arts Commission the “revolutionary change” in the size and distribution of population in the area. Five hundred thousand people had permanently moved into the area, and huge housing developments in the surrounding suburbs had forced new traffic patterns. Recent studies had indicated a \$35 million price tag for Fort Drive, which would take up limited funds and, in Young’s mind, would be more useful to address other pressing transportation needs.<sup>33</sup>

The National Park Service slowly shifted away from supporting Fort Drive. In 1944, the National Park Service and the District of Columbia signed a memorandum of agreement to build two sections of Fort Drive, from MacArthur Boulevard NW to Nebraska Avenue NW and from Military Road NW to a point east of 14th Street NW. When construction estimates came in at \$32–37 million, though, the District withdrew its funding commitment. These Fort Drive sections would use up all of DC’s transportation money for major highway improvements for the next twelve years. In 1962, the National Park Service indicated to the DC Department of Highways that changing economic and social factors made Fort Drive “impossible and unjustifiable” to support as originally conceived.<sup>34</sup>

The idea of Fort Drive died soon afterward. The National Capital Park and Planning Commission, in cooperation with the National Park Service, contracted with Fred W. Tuemmler and Associates to study and report on the evolution of the Fort Drive concept and present policy proposals and recommendations for consideration. Tuemmler and Associates proposed a basic re-imagining of Fort Drive into a Fort Park System, with recreation and history contributing to neighborhood vitality. In 1968, the National Park Service adopted the spirit of this proposal in its Fort Circle Parks Master Plan. This plan envisioned constructing a continuous pedestrian- and bicycle-way, offering visitors active and passive recreation outlets, along with interpretations of the area’s historical and natural features.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> CWDW NRHP 2015, section 8, pp. 129–30, 133. CEHP Inc., HRS: CWDW, part II (1998), 6. Tuemmler and Associates, Fort Park System, 3–7.

<sup>32</sup> CEHP Inc., HRS: CWDW, part II, appendices, 1998, appendix WW.

<sup>33</sup> CEHP Inc., HRS: CWDW, part II, appendices, appendix ZZ.

<sup>34</sup> NPS, as quoted by Tuemmler and Associates, Fort Park System, 7.

<sup>35</sup> Tuemmler and Associates, Fort Park System, v. NPS, Fort Circle Parks Master Plan, 1968, 1, Box 22, File CWDW–Fort Circle Parks–Cultural Resources, Prevention, Treatment, and Maintenance, Fort Circle Parks Master Plan 1968, MRCE.

## Conclusion

Urban planning shaped conceptions about Rock Creek Park. Advocates for the park used Central Park as an important model, which had a mix of natural and recreational spaces for all ages. A 1918 plan for Rock Creek Park, written by brothers Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and John C. Olmsted, emphasized how the space could best serve urban dwellers. The 1918 plan identified park areas and gauged their potential use in part by how easily people could get to those places. Olmsted Jr. also contributed to the 1902 McMillan Plan, which cautioned even at this early date that Rock Creek Park could become overwhelmed by visitors using the newly constructed Beach Drive. The McMillan Commission thus encouraged planners to complete a landscape appraisal of the park, which the 1918 plan did.

The McMillan Commission, Commissioners of the District of Columbia, the Washington Committee of 100, and the National Capital Park and Planning Commission had proposed for Fort Drive what could have been a remarkable mix of history, recreation, and transportation. But Congress may have thought otherwise for several reasons. First, urban planners would have wanted to take steps to enhance the capital city's monumental core, but the Civil War Defenses of Washington sat well beyond this area. The forts also sat in predominantly African American and economically disadvantaged communities, and some members of Congress may have put a low priority on completing improvements in those areas. Finally, Congress was in the process of considering many other Civil War sites for preservation, and the Civil War Defenses of Washington likely did not rank as highly as such battlefields as Fredericksburg, Salem Church, Chancellorsville, Wilderness, and Spotsylvania Courthouse (all of which became a single national military park in 1927). The Civil War Defenses of Washington, located where residents did not have a vote, did not have a constituency to push for preservation in the same way a state or town did. However, Congress did go on to fund the construction of other transportation routes within Rock Creek Park, most notably Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway, authorized in 1913 and completed in 1936.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> CWDW NRHP 2015, section 8, p. 114.



## CHAPTER 2 Transportation and Access

In many ways, Rock Creek Park hampers regional transportation. Washington, DC's radial network of major roads, laid out in Pierre L'Enfant's plan, and connector streets run up against the massive green space that Congress set aside for Rock Creek Park in 1890. Few roads cross through the park. Alaska Avenue stops dead at the park's eastern boundary along 16th Street. Nebraska Avenue does the same on the west side. Military Road and Porter Street (which becomes Klinge Road) are the only major roads to cut entirely through Rock Creek Park. Smaller streets, like Wise Road, Sherrill Drive, Bingham Drive, Joyce Road, and Morrow Drive, extend into the park but do not fully cross it.

The year 1966 marked a significant change in park transportation with respect to the region. The federal government completed the construction of the National Zoological Park tunnel, thus seamlessly connecting Beach Drive to Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway. This change transformed Beach Drive from its originally envisioned role as a park roadway for leisurely drives into a major commuter route. People in the booming Maryland suburbs could get to their downtown jobs and back home with fewer intersections to stop and wait at. The park's geographical effect upon the District's road system made it that much more attractive for commuters. The National Park Service has since contended with managing the traffic while also ensuring the protection of the natural and historical resources under its care.

Rock Creek Park's transportation role in the District has also contributed to a larger discussion about access from the perspectives of environmental, economic, and social/racial justice. The District has historically been divided from a racial and economic perspective along the north-south route that Rock Creek Park traverses. West of the park has traditionally been wealthier and whiter. Poorer people of color have largely lived east of the park. The fact that Rock Creek Park hampers east-west transportation means that the park has also hampered the mixing of these populations. It happens that west-side residents also have greater access to the park's interior than east-side ones. Physical geography in some ways explains this divide, since Rock Creek Park's eastern side is steep in many areas, making roads and trails difficult to locate. Rock Creek Park managers thus face peculiar access challenges that extend beyond park roads.

This chapter examines the various transportation issues related to Rock Creek Park Reservation 339 and some of its administrative units. Commuters using Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway or Beach Drive through the park have consistently challenged any proposed restrictions, such as closing sections for pedestrian and bicycle usage. Park superintendents have also ensured that these commuter routes were aesthetically pleasing, in a nod to the congressional officials and staff who traveled these roadways and doled out funding. Access to Rock Creek Park from its eastern and western sides played a crucial role in the debate over closing Klinge Road, an important access road for people living on the east side of the park.

### **Commuter Route**

Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway (RCPP), authorized in 1913 and completed in 1936, stretches from Beach Drive, just south of the National Zoo, to the National Mall, just north of the Lincoln Memorial. Together, the Parkway and Beach Drive create a conduit for traffic to travel from the Maryland state line down into the heart of Washington, DC, bypassing some of the city's busiest intersections. Planners had different intentions for these two roads. Beach Drive followed along the valley floor of Rock Creek, with scenic viewing as a main goal. Construction

involved some impairment of the natural setting, but Beach Drive took a sinuous, leisurely course, mimicking the creek.<sup>1</sup>

Congress intended for Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway to serve two major functions: to act as a speedy but pleasant transportation route and to prevent the pollution and obstruction of Rock Creek. By the late 1880s, the lower part of Rock Creek, south of the National Zoological Park, had become an ugly dumping ground and sewage passageway. Congress funded studies to determine next steps, with one popular idea being to tunnel this section of Rock Creek, fill in the valley, and produce new valuable land for development. Georgetown businesses promoted this alternative. City Beautiful advocates, which included the Washington Board of Trade, argued for restoring the lower valley through extensive regrading and constructing a landscaped parkway to link Rock Creek Park and West Potomac Park. Studies came back pointing to the high costs for covering the valley. These reports also noted that sewage treatment efforts planned to divert waste away from Rock Creek and that flooding could increase if Congress had the creek covered. The 1902 McMillan report recommended the open-valley alternative for its “economy, convenience, and beauty.” Engineers in 1908 instead advocated for a parkway along the creek, citing the expense and technical difficulties of the closed-valley proposal. Congress finally agreed to the plan in 1913. Soon after its 1936 completion, District planners cemented the parkway’s commuter status by alternating traffic one-way south for the morning rush hour and one-way north for the evening rush.<sup>2</sup>

The National Zoo sat at the critical connection point of Beach Drive and Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway. Rock Creek makes a large hairpin turn at the zoo, and the road link at one time followed this sharp curve and crossed two fords, which closed during high water. The resulting traffic backups prompted calls for building a tunnel to close the S-curve. The Smithsonian Institution, which managed the zoo; the National Capital Park and Planning Commission; and the National Park Service all opposed the tunnel proposal in the pre-World War II period. But by 1954, the National Park Service and the retitled National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) began advocating for road improvements. The Smithsonian finally agreed in 1960, and the zoo tunnel opened in 1966.<sup>3</sup>

Beach Drive and Rock Creek Park and Potomac Parkway together became a major commuter route with the construction of the zoo tunnel. Initial planning for the tunnel had included projects to relieve traffic congestion, but these were never completed. As a result, by 1971, rush-hour traffic between these two roads had more than tripled. The National Park Service had expected some increase since the route removed road closings from flooding and provided relatively good access to downtown with few signal light delays. The situation, however, demanded a consideration of extending the alternating one-way road pattern on Beach Drive as already instituted on the parkway.<sup>4</sup> But no matter the improvements the National Park Service made, the numbers of commuters kept increasing and damaging the park experience in

---

<sup>1</sup> Barry Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 2, “Road and Trail Construction”; chapter 3, “Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway”; chapter 4, “The Park and the Automobile.”

<sup>2</sup> Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 3, “Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway (RCPP)”; chapter 4, “Park and the Automobile.” RCPP, Historic American Building Survey (HABS) No. DC-697 (1991–1992), 49, 53 (quote), 59, 61, 67, 101, 111–14.

<sup>3</sup> Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 4, “Park and the Automobile.”

<sup>4</sup> Memorandum, Chief, Office of Environmental Planning and Design, Chief, Office of Environmental Planning & Design Eastern Service Center John Bright to General Superintendent, National Capital Parks, January 20, 1971, 1, Box 65, File Parkways and Trails-Zoo Tunnel Correspondence 1960-1975, MRCE. All MRCE files are from the ROCR Collection. ROCR and RCPP, GMP, and EIS, 2005, vol. 1, 9.

the park proper, known as Reservation 339. By 1976, Park managers had to admit that the zoo tunnel was an inappropriate development due to its direct encouragement of commuting through the park. That year's Rock Creek Park Statement for Management described the "great surges of commuter traffic" during morning and evening hours, "creating visible, audible and safety intrusions on the true visitor's park experience."<sup>5</sup>

Most of these commuters came from the Maryland suburbs, which exploded in the post-World War II period. Montgomery County went from 84,000 residents in 1940 to 523,000 in 1970. Prince George's County posted even larger gains, from 89,000 in 1940 to 661,000 in 1970. These jurisdictions exerted increasing pressure to transport their residents as effectively as possible to their downtown jobs. Maryland thus pushed as early as 1938 for building a multi-lane highway next to and through parts of Rock Creek Park. World War II stalled this proposal, but by 1952, the idea gained momentum as a link to the proposed US 240, now known as Interstate-270. Construction of the Capital Beltway, Interstate-495, joined the mix, and despite National Park Service objections, a portion of I-495 in Maryland went through the Maryland portion of Rock Creek Park. Rock Creek Park's adamant supporters and nearby residents vigorously opposed the highway proposal. A key distinguishing feature of this opposition was that white and black residents from either side of Rock Creek Park joined in a concerted effort to fight the highway plans. People, regardless of race, united while promoting their own interests, saving their homes. Construction of the Metrorail rapid transit system, which started in the late 1960s, sealed the highway proposal's defeat and halted further attempts to build an arterial roadway through the District's part of Rock Creek Park.<sup>6</sup>

### **Glover-Archbold Park**

Proposed highway construction in the post-World War II period also threatened the length of Glover-Archbold Park. This 222-acre park extended for 2.5 miles from just south of Tenley Circle to the Potomac River in Georgetown along Foundry Branch. Two major donors, Charles Carroll Glover and Anne Archbold, provided the bulk of the land for park establishment, stipulating that the park become part of the District's park system. The Archbold donation included a hundred-foot right-of-way for a highway following the path of the Foundry Branch Valley, as part of the 1893 Permanent System of Highways Act. The thoroughfare was named Arizona Avenue. In 1932, District Commissioners signaled their intent to transfer the right-of-way to the National Park Service, but they never completed this action.<sup>7</sup>

Highway construction characterized one aspect of District planning in the post-World War II era. The District in 1948 began discussions of building Arizona Avenue using the hundred-foot right-of-way. This highway would have connected to the proposed Three Sisters Bridge, which would have spanned the Potomac River over three large rocks, known as the "three sisters." In 1956, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission released a report by urban planner Harland Bartholomew that laid out a proposed overall highway plan for the

---

<sup>5</sup> ROCR, Statement for Management, 1976, 8, Box 72, File General-History-Administration-Management Plan 1976, MRCE. See also Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 4, "Park and the Automobile."

<sup>6</sup> US Census Bureau, Census, 1900 to 2009, as presented by DC Planning Department, <https://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/publication/attachments/Washington%2520Metropolitan%2520Statistical%2520Area%2520Population%25201900%2520to%25202009.pdf>, accessed September 5, 2018. Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 4, "Park and the Automobile." RCPP, Historic American Building Survey (HABS) No. DC-697, 128, 130, 133. Bob Levey and Jane Freundel Levey, "End of the Roads," *Washington Post Magazine* (November 26, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> Glover-Archbold National Register Nomination Form, 2006, section 8, p. 31.

District. This plan envisioned three concentric roadways at one-half mile, four miles, and ten miles from the White House. Bartholomew also recommended the construction of an eight-lane Three Sisters Bridge that would carry traffic from I-66 to Canal Road.<sup>8</sup>

The following year, District planners proposed extending the truck route of Route 240 from Maryland down the length of Glover-Archbold Park. Cloverleaf entrances would have sat at Massachusetts and New Mexico Avenues and Whitehaven Parkway. In 1959, the District's highway department presented preliminary drawings to the Commission of Fine Arts for Three Sisters Bridge. The commission gave conceptual approval, with the caution of preserving the beauty of Key Bridge and the Potomac Gorge.<sup>9</sup>

At this point, citizens joined together to fight the proposals for Three Sisters Bridge and the Glover-Archbold highway. In 1960, Archbold, Glover Jr., the District Audubon Society, and the Committee of 100 on the Federal City filed a suit against the District to stop the plan. In 1961, Archbold and Glover filed an injunction against the District Commissioners, arguing that the highway and bridge violated the terms of their donations that formed Glover-Archbold Park. Residents of Foxhall Village and other District residents joined the fight. They submitted a thousand-signature petition to Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall opposing the highway development. Udall and NPS Director Conrad Wirth lobbied against the highway. Senate Majority Leader Michael Mansfield (D-MT), who lived next to the park, introduced a bill to transfer the right-of-way to the National Park Service. This bill failed.<sup>10</sup>

Many people supported the highway plan. They saw the development as necessary for the economic stability of the city, to bring people from the expanding suburbs into the city to work and shop. The Washington Board of Trade, American Automobile Association, *Washington Post*, and *Evening Star* voiced their support. Mansfield's bill failed, largely due to the objections of Rep. Joel Broyhill (R-VA), who favored the Three Sisters Bridge as an important commuter route for his constituents. In 1967, the Commission of Fine Arts, after working with the DC Department of Highways on the design, approved the Three Sisters Bridge.<sup>11</sup>

An increasingly acrimonious debate over the bridge ensued. Protesters gathered at expected construction sites for the bridge and filed multiple lawsuits. Rep. William Natcher (D-KY), who sought extensive public works projects in his home state, supported highway plans in the District to gain legislative backing for his projects. As chair of the Subcommittee on Appropriations for the District of Columbia, he held up Metro funding for six years. Neighboring jurisdictions began lobbying heavily for Metro funding. Natcher eventually lost support from his colleagues, who were influenced by President Richard Nixon's appeals and a court decision. Nixon favored Metro funding to alleviate traffic congestion in the District and save millions of dollars of lost planning funds if the subway was never built. The District in 1974 voted to shelve any highway plans, and Congress did not oppose this decision. In 1975, the State of Virginia determined that I-66 construction did not depend upon the Three Sisters Bridge, effectively ending any lingering support. The US Department of Transportation in 1977 formally allowed the District to drop the Three Sisters Bridge from its transportation master plan. In the midst of this debate, in 1969, the District ceded the hundred-foot-wide, three-mile-long right-of-way to

---

<sup>8</sup> Glover-Archbold National Register Form, section 8, pp. 31–32.

<sup>9</sup> Glover-Archbold National Register Form, section 8, p. 32.

<sup>10</sup> Glover-Archbold National Register Form, section 8, p. 32. NPS Report on S. 2436, attached to Memorandum, NPS Director Conrad Wirth to Members of the National Capital Planning Commission, December 1, 1961, Box 60, File Glover Park–History–General–Correspondence–Children's Playground 1961, MRCE.

<sup>11</sup> Glover-Archbold National Register Form, section 8, pp. 32–33.

the National Park Service. Glover-Archbold Park could no longer become the location of a highway.<sup>12</sup>

### **General Management Plan**

Park superintendents William Shields (1991–97) and later Adrienne Coleman (1997–2010), with Rock Creek Park staff, the National Park Service Denver Service Center, National Capital Regional Office, US Park Police, and consultants, began to develop Rock Creek Park’s first-in-its-history comprehensive planning document in 1996. This General Management Plan (GMP) studied both Rock Creek Park and Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway and examined three major issues: traffic management, levels of service for interpretation and education, and appropriate locations for administrative and operations functions. A delay from November 1998 to early 2001, due to a congressionally mandated reorganization and downsizing of the National Park Service, pushed back a final decision on the General Management Plan to 2005.<sup>13</sup>

Proposals during the GMP planning process to change transportation in Rock Creek Park prompted the most attention from the public and government officials. The National Park Service considered closing Beach Drive to all automobile traffic and making bicyclists the primary user or ending weekend automobile closures and thus severely restricting bicycle usage. Other alternatives moderated these two extremes. The park held public meetings at each step of the planning process. The public responded most to the June 1997 open house meetings; as many as 800 people attended, and the public submitted about 1,000 comments. The other public meetings attracted smaller numbers of people. The July 1996 hearing attracted about 100 attendees, and about 300 people attended the third set of meetings in May 2003. The park received more than 3,000 comments in 2003. The District City Council and the Montgomery County Council each submitted resolutions in 2001 and 2003 emphasizing the importance of Beach Drive and the parkway to the effective flow of traffic in the region.<sup>14</sup>

The National Park Service strove to make preservation of the natural and historic park resources a primary goal. National Capital Region Chief of Planning Tammy Stidham recalled that they were trying to convey to the public that while Beach Drive had turned into a commuter route, that really wasn’t its purpose. She said that “it was actually better if we didn’t allow that thru-traffic.”<sup>15</sup> Most of the early public comments supported this idea, as the National Park Service reported in the second GMP newsletter. These initial comments stated that commuter traffic was a safety hazard and interfered with the enjoyment of the park’s natural areas. Most people, according to the GMP newsletter, believed that the agency should extend the weekend closures of Beach Drive to weekdays. One person wrote that “the greatest threat to the park’s future is a continuation of the current policy that allows fast-moving traffic to dominate the usage of the park.”<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> “Unbuilt Three Sisters Bridge across the Potomac,” Ghosts of DC Blog, <https://ghostsofcdc.org/2015/04/13/never-built-three-sisters-bridge-across-potomac/>, accessed February 5, 2021. Department of the Interior News Release, “Unused Right-of-Way in Glover-Archbold Park Is Ceded to National Park Service,” March 11, 1969, Box 60, File Glover Park–History–General–General Info 1961, MRCE. Glover-Archbold National Register Form, Section 8, p. 33. Levey and Levey, “End of the Roads.”

<sup>13</sup> ROCR and RCPP, GMP, vol. 1, 10, 293–97. ROCR, GMP/EIS Newsletter, No. 1 (June 1996), Denver Service Center, Technical Information Center (TIC). ROCR and RCPP Final GMP and EIS Record of Decision (ROD) (2007), 12–13, TIC.

<sup>14</sup> ROCR and RCPP, GMP/EIS ROD, 2007, 5, 11–13.

<sup>15</sup> Tammy Stidham, transcript of oral history interview with the author, August 4, 2017, 4, ROCR Archives.

<sup>16</sup> ROCR GMP/EIS Newsletter 2 (January 1997), 3, GMP EIS 1997 newsletter, TIC.

Bicyclists especially promoted closing sections or all of Beach Drive during weekdays, either entirely or during non-rush hour periods. The Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA), with more than 7,000 members, advocated for closing Beach Drive. Unsafe circumstances contributed to this perspective. Some people characterized existing bike trails as dangerous and far below national standards. One person wrote that many sections, especially south of Peirce Mill, were narrow, potholed, broken by tree roots, and covered in mud. Bicyclists switched to Beach Drive as an alternative. But, as other people wrote, some sections of Beach Drive are narrow and curvy, also with poor pavement conditions. Cyclists could not stay close to the edge, and cars could not easily pass them, making for hazardous conditions. Road rage sometimes resulted, as one bicyclist, for example, reported being the target of thrown bottles and screams from irate drivers.<sup>17</sup>

Rock Creek Park planners developed different alternatives that addressed these concerns. One option focused upon recreation, turning Beach Drive into a High-Occupancy Vehicle for two people (HOV-2) route during rush hour to control air quality and reduce traffic and safety problems. The paved recreation trail along Beach Drive would be widened and realigned as necessary to accommodate multiple users and increase public safety. Another alternative would emphasize scenic driving, closing or restricting access to Beach Drive in some sections, and having HOV-2 usage in others. A third possibility would turn Rock Creek Park into an urban wilderness by closing Beach Drive and letting developed areas, such as the golf course, go back to trees and natural growth.<sup>18</sup>

The park faced heavy resistance to any consideration of eliminating or restricting automobile traffic through the park. The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board in 1997, as an example, expressed reservations about how traffic management changes in Rock Creek Park and along Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway would affect traffic distribution in the District and area jurisdictions. The National Park Service received the most comments regarding transportation from people wanting to keep Beach Drive open to automobiles, though many supported the weekend closures. They saw Beach Drive as an important contributor to the quality of urban life. Comments also reflected concerns that changes in traffic patterns in the park would have a negative impact on local roads.<sup>19</sup>

National Park Service planners refined existing alternatives. In 2003, the agency offered to close three sections of Beach Drive to cars except during rush hour. Superintendent Coleman stated that about two-thirds of commenters supported such closings. However, she noted, “it had no political support.” Maryland local governments, park neighbors, and DC’s US Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton challenged this alternative, and the National Park Service revised the plan further, taking away two of those road closures. The one road closure would have provided a safe route for bicyclists where no bike trail existed while moving cars to a parallel road (Ross Drive) without affecting neighborhoods. Sustained opposition to any weekday closings led the National Park Service to drop any weekday closings in the preferred alternative.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> ROCR and RCPP, GMP/EIS, vol. 2, 100, 103, 105, C-102, TIC.

<sup>18</sup> ROCR GMP/EIS Newsletter 3, June 1997, TIC.

<sup>19</sup> NCR Transportation Planning Board, Newsletter, vol. 6, issue 3 (October 1997), 2; NCR Transportation Planning Board, Minutes, September 17, 1997, 9; ROCR GMP/EIS, Newsletter, n.d. (1998), 5, all in unprocessed, ROCR Archives.

<sup>20</sup> Coleman quoted by Monte Reel, “A Clash of Visions over Rock Creek Park,” *Washington Post* (June 24, 2004). See also Eric Gilliland, Letter to the Editor, *Washington Post* (December 8, 2005). ROCR and RCPP GMP/EIS, ROD, 3.

The Final General Management Plan featured ways to enhance visitor transportation experience and safety. The National Park Service would implement traffic-calming and speed-enforcement measures to reduce speeds and volumes. The park hoped to use traffic calming to encourage some drivers to switch to Ross Drive. The plan called for the park to place more traffic signs and speed tables (traffic-calming devices similar to speed bumps but flat-topped) on Beach Drive in the gorge area. The Final General Management Plan would have NPS improve the intersection of Beach Drive and Rock Creek Park and Potomac Parkway near Connecticut Avenue. The agency would repair and upgrade trails, including those for bicycles. The agency hoped that the combination of these efforts would address many of the transportation challenges while also accommodating demands for continued use of Rock Creek Park as a traffic conduit.<sup>21</sup>

Since the signing of the “Record of Decision” in 2007, the park has implemented a number of recommendations featured in the GMP. For example, Peirce Mill underwent a major rehabilitation between 2011 and 2012 to ensure the long-term preservation of the historic structure. In 2018, the park completed a Development Concept Plan for the Nature Center Complex, which proposes, among many things, moving the administrative offices out of the Peirce-Klinge Mansion into a new facility at the Maintenance Yard. Beach Drive received three speed tables in 2019, as part of a large-scale roadway rehabilitation project, to help calm traffic speeds in the southern end of the park. Finally, funding has been requested for a study to relocate the US Park Police from the historic Lodge House into more suitable quarters.

As the GMP enters its twilight years, there are still facets of the plan that require attention. Speed tables and other traffic calming measures are needed along Beach Drive north of Broad Branch Road. There is still public advocacy for closing Beach Drive permanently or at least during the week, but park management has remained committed to keeping it open to vehicular traffic. Additionally, while the park has added a multi-use trail along Blagden Road NW—and is preparing to add one along Piney Branch Parkway in 2021 and 2022, as well as a short segment along Rock Creek just south of Broad Branch Road—the park has yet to add the full 1.7 miles of trail to the existing trail system. However, there has been much work with formalizing certain social trails and concerted effort to maintain the existing historic trails. Finally, in 2014, the park completed a Foundation Document, which provides an overview of the park, its history and significance, and lists its fundamental resources and values. It also identifies key issues and associated planning needs, such as increasing visitation and recreation demands, which directly builds on the GMP and serves as an additional resource for park leadership when making management decisions.<sup>22</sup>

## Access

Access has long been a concern for park planners. In their 1918 Rock Creek Park report, the Olmsted brothers made adequate public transportation (in their time, streetcar lines) a fundamental consideration for developing Rock Creek Park to its full public potential. They argued that both rich and poor people should have access. The brothers noted that placement of thoroughfares, which would cross through the park and connect Rock Creek Park’s east and west sides, should intrude the least amount on the natural landscape. But, they wrote, such thoroughfares should also ensure the maximum amount of streetcar service to and into the park. They specifically looked at maps of existing and proposed streetcar lines when recommending

---

<sup>21</sup> ROCR and RCPP GMP/EIS, ROD, 3, 5–6, 8–9. ROCR and RCPP, Final GMP/EIS, 2005, vol. 1, 9, 70.

<sup>22</sup> NPS comments on the second draft of admin history, September 16, 2020, ROCR Archives.

thoroughfare crossings and road placements, making clear their intention to have the park open to all.<sup>23</sup>

Ellen Jones, Executive Director of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association, referred to the 1918 Olmsted report in her 2003 comments on the proposed General Management Plan. Many people had raised concerns about how motorized traffic might affect adjacent communities if Beach Drive was closed to commuter traffic. Jones pointed out, however, that little attention went to non-motorized visitor access for neighborhoods with relatively low levels of automobile ownership. About 50 percent of the households in densely populated Adams Morgan and Mount Pleasant, located directly east of the park, did not have access to a car, according to the 2000 Census, Jones wrote. She argued for making provisions for non-motorized access to Rock Creek Park Monday through Friday if Rock Creek Park remained a commuter park. Jones noted that the 1918 Olmsted report had documented the need for access for persons without automobiles and that “need remains unmet today.”<sup>24</sup>

Other people also raised concerns about access for residents living east of the park. Steve Coleman, Executive Director of Washington Parks & People, shared Jones’s alarm. He wrote in his comments on the General Management Plan that “the lack of sufficient safe, welcoming, and maintained non-motorized access” at key sites along the east side of the park was a “major environmental injustice.” He argued that such a situation “severely undermine[d]” the park’s value to tens of thousands of people living in the District’s most diverse neighborhoods.<sup>25</sup> Brian Caine, representing residents of the 1400 block of Taylor Avenue, at the easternmost tip of Rock Creek Park at Piney Branch Parkway, advocated for no change in National Park Service management of Beach Drive. He considered the desire to close this road during the week as “elitist and divisive,” keeping people from fully enjoying and making use of the park during weekdays. He characterized his neighborhood as “what the term ‘east of the park’ often implies,” with no trendy boutiques or tourist landmarks. He closed by saying that “personal safety and security [are] a constant concern.” The residents viewed their proximity to Rock Creek Park as their community’s “most positive signature feature.”<sup>26</sup>

Julia Washburn, current Rock Creek Park superintendent, agreed that inequities existed for people living east of the park. Rock Creek Park was an unofficial dividing line, with white people largely living west of the park and more diverse people of color living east. Income levels historically followed the same distribution, with the west side having wealthier residents than the east side. The west side had more access points, both for motorized and non-motorized transportation, than the east side. Washburn looked at this situation and said that “it’s still a social justice, racial justice, environmental justice issue.” She saw that historically there were people who continued to feel unwelcome. “That comes from segregation,” she said.<sup>27</sup>

Washburn wanted to address this basic inequity and increase overall access to and through Rock Creek Park. She thought the National Park Service could provide better trail access. Many areas of the park’s east side are very steep, and locating moderate slopes for pedestrian and bicycle access without adverse effects on the park’s natural and cultural resources has been a continual problem. Washburn thought that the park could also use the golf course, located on the eastern side of the park, to improve access. Carter Barron Amphitheater, closed

---

<sup>23</sup> Olmsted Brothers, Rock Creek Park Report (1918), 2, 15, 42–43.

<sup>24</sup> Ellen Jones, quoted in ROCR and RCPP, GMP/EIS, vol. 2, C-104.

<sup>25</sup> Steve Coleman, quoted in ROCR and RCPP, GMP/EIS, vol. 2, C-104.

<sup>26</sup> Brian Caine, as quoted in ROCR and RCPP, GMP/EIS, vol. 2, C-97.

<sup>27</sup> Julia Washburn, transcript of oral history interview with the author, July 10, 2017, 7, ROCR Archives.

for structural repairs, had been a historically important entertainment venue for black artists and audiences, and Washburn wanted to open the amphitheater again.<sup>28</sup>

National Capital Region Planning Chief Tammy Stidham saw the District's Bike Share program as another way to address inequities in access. She recognized that a person who took a bus to get to the Nature Center would get off at a bus stop on Military Road. That person then had a hard time going the remainder of the way to the Nature Center. The National Park Service imagined that riding a bike would make the experience faster and more pleasant than walking, and so it negotiated with the District to place Bike Share stations at the bus stop and the Nature Center.

Stidham stated that the idea took two years to come to fruition. During that time, she worked extensively with the park's Concessions Management Specialist, who oversaw existing bike rental operations in the park, to reach an agreement that Bike Share was a transportation program and fundamentally different from recreational rentals offered by the park. Once these differences were understood by the management specialist, Stidham said she worked with District officials to plan for Bike Share stations in and around the park.<sup>29</sup>

Rock Creek Park access has implications that reach beyond transportation. Many people viewed motorized use of Beach Drive as a means to an end, for commuting back and forth to District jobs. Some residents and others objected to closing Beach Drive during weekday rush hour because they feared motorists would inundate their neighborhoods. Many people wanted to emphasize the park's natural features by removing the traffic and encouraging bicycling and walking/hiking. Park officials and others saw access as an indicator of racial and social injustices. They wanted to address these injustices by increasing access, especially to the east side of the park.

### **Klinge Road**

One of the most contentious transportation battles involving Rock Creek Park focused on a section of Klinge Road NW, a roadway owned and maintained by the District of Columbia that ran between Porter Street NW and Cortland Place NW. For three decades, the National Park Service advocated for replacing this stretch of roadway, which bordered sections of parkland and provided access into Rock Creek Park from areas west of the National Zoo, with a recreational trail. Stormwater entering into the steep Klinge Creek valley had continually damaged the roadbed, headwalls, supporting walls, and stormwater management system for this 0.7 mile stretch of Klinge Road. By 1991, the District of Columbia could no longer maintain the roadway in a safe condition and closed it to traffic that year.<sup>30</sup>

In 1993, the National Park Service granted the District a permit for work on parklands associated with rehabilitating Klinge Road. This permit was based on 1991 plans for reconstructing the road to assist emergency services operations. During on-site consultations with District officials, the National Park Service determined that the District transportation department and its partner the Federal Highway Administration instead viewed the project as akin to building a new road. The National Park Service argued this position was substantially

---

<sup>28</sup> Washburn, transcript of interview, 9. ROCR and RCPP, GMP/EIS, vol. 2, 158.

<sup>29</sup> Stidham, transcript of interview, 11. NPS, Comments on January 2020 draft of admin history, 7, ROCR Archives.

<sup>30</sup> District Department of Transportation, Progress Report: The Klinge Road Project, 2000, 1, Klinge Road 2000s HQ supt files, ROCR. Bill Yeaman, transcript of oral history interview with the author, January 13, 2017, 36, ROCR Archives. US Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration and District of Columbia Department of Transportation, Klinge Road, Washington, DC Draft EIS, 2005, ES-1, Box 55, Bridges-Vehicular-Klinge Road-Cultural Resources-Prevention, Treatment, and Maintenance-Draft EIS Vol. I-March 2005, MRCE.

different from the 1991 plans used to grant the permit. The road construction, the National Park Service determined, would have severe impacts on trees, the stream bed, and drainage. Further study supported this viewpoint. In 1999, the District transportation department hired The Louis Berger Group Inc. to evaluate the environmental and socioeconomic characteristics of the project and help identify several alternatives for proceeding. No-build alternatives looked at having a green space without a trail or having a bike/hike trail. The build option included rebuilding the original road, having the original road with bike and pedestrian access, or having a one-lane road with bike and pedestrian access.<sup>31</sup>

The Louis Berger report concluded that reopening Klinge Road under any of the proposed build alternatives would result in only minor improvements in traffic operations because the road size could not accommodate the demand. In recognition of the deteriorated stormwater system and the degraded soils and vegetation along the stream, the National Park Service notified the District that it would not permit the use of parkland for road or stormwater purposes.<sup>32</sup>

The District government evaluated these alternatives and collected public comments. These comments indicated that Klinge Road represented more than a transportation route to residents. Many people living on the east side of the park advocated for rebuilding the seven-tenths of a mile road, seeing it as a valuable access point for crossing Rock Creek Park and for relieving traffic congestion. Many residents who lived on the park's west side, however, preferred to keep the roadway closed and turned into a trail. Some residents at a 2003 District Council meeting "injected race and social class into their arguments," according to one newspaper account. Some east-side residents argued that wealthier residents in west-side Woodley Park wanted the road closed "to keep out less affluent residents from eastern neighborhoods such as Mount Pleasant." The City Council voted to repair the road following this debate.<sup>33</sup>

Further debate ensued. In 2005, the District transportation department presented its Draft Environmental Impact Statement with five alternatives. The preferred alternative involved building a two-lane road, as Klinge Road had been.<sup>34</sup> The Draft EIS eliminated from further consideration two non-road options and two stormwater management options, due to a lack of technical feasibility and the inability to meet the project's purpose and need.<sup>35</sup>

Then, in 2008, the fate of Klinge Road changed again. DC Councilmember Mary Cheh (Ward 3) spearheaded a successful effort to overturn the DC Council's 2003 ruling to reopen the road. Cheh argued that the 2008 vote represented a commitment to the environment and to the democratic process, recognizing that viewpoints had changed since 2003. The District released the Klinge Valley Trail Final Environmental Assessment in 2011. Gale Black, a leader of the

---

<sup>31</sup> DDOT, Klinge Road Draft EIS, 1–3. NPS, comments on January 2020 draft of admin history, 7–8.

<sup>32</sup> NCR Regional Director Terry Carlstrom to Coalition to Repair and Reopen Klinge Road Laurie Collins, January 21, 2003, 1–2; Acting NCR Regional Director to Administrator, Design, Engineering, and Construction Administration, District of Columbia Gary Burch, November 30, 1994, 1; Adrienne Coleman to District Department of Public Works Administrator Kenneth Laden, August 13, 2001, Klinge Road 2000s Headquarters Superintendent Files, ROCR.

<sup>33</sup> Quote from David Nakamura and Arthur Santana, "Klinge Road Should Reopen, DC Council Decides," *Washington Post* (May 7, 2003). See also The Louis Berger Group Inc., "Klinge Road: Feasibility Study (2001)," <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55aeb9a8e4b051d73ba8cb1c/t/55c173ade4b0afb1f3f20c92/1438741421846/Klinge+Road+Feasibility+Study.pdf>, accessed September 10, 2018. Elizabeth Wiener, "Mayor Submits Bill to Close Klinge Road," *Washington Post* (January 1, 2003).

<sup>34</sup> Jonathan Abel, "DC Weighs Options for Opening Klinge Road," *Washington Post* (July 22, 2005).

<sup>35</sup> DDOT, Klinge Road Draft EIS, 2005, ES-2.

road campaign, served as the lead plaintiff in a 2011 lawsuit to seek the reopening of Klingle Road. The lawsuit was dismissed in 2012. The District completed the final design work in 2014, and trail construction began in the summer of 2015.<sup>36</sup>

The project involved more than building a trail. The District transportation department worked to keep water onsite through a variety of stormwater management techniques. Crews removed Klingle Road remnants and repaired and realigned utility lines. Then workers built bioretention ponds and bioswales, meant to slow water down, parallel to the seven-tenths-long trail, composed of porous asphalt. Workers restored Klingle Creek by fixing its eroded banks with new retention walls and realigning its channel. They cut three-step pools into the stream to mitigate the flow of water downhill.<sup>37</sup>

Upon the 2017 opening of Klingle Valley Trail, concerns about equitable access remained. Gale Black argued that while the pro-road people saw value in preserving green space, they did not want that green space at the cost of losing access. She wanted access to the oasis for all. “Not everybody can bike it or hike it,” Black said. “Preserve it for all of us, not some of us.” She continued to believe that the trail benefited the wealthier residents living west of the park more than the less well-off east-side residents.<sup>38</sup> Laurie Collins, who had also helped lead the pro-road residents, recalled that, in her mind, a small number of affluent residents on Woodley Road had wanted the road closed, and they pulled in environmental groups and special-interest groups to support their efforts. Collins says this effort turned political, bypassing the democratic process. *Washington Post* columnist Mary McGrory, who lived above the closed road, wrote in 1995 about such high-powered people who wanted to keep the road closed.<sup>39</sup> Stephen Whatley, also a pro-road resident, saw the split between drivers and walkers/bikers as generational, made even more so as more families with young children chose to live in the District.<sup>40</sup> Gale Black returned to the issue of equality, saying that “the other part of me knows this is a real injustice, and until it is corrected, it will continue as an injustice.”<sup>41</sup> Klingle Valley Trail, however, represents a concerted effort to foster non-automobile traffic, an idea important for encouraging recreation.

## Conclusion

Rock Creek Park’s urban location has meant that all park managers have had to adjust to and accommodate pressures from District residents, suburbanites, and national security officials. Rock Creek Park’s Beach Drive remains a major commuter route, while post–World War II proposals for a highway down Glover Archbold Park were thwarted due to vigorous public protests. Bicyclists won important improvements to trails. A short segment of Klingle Road, on

---

<sup>36</sup> Clarence Williams, “Both Sides Sound Off on Road Opening,” *Washington Post* (May 9, 2008). US Department of Transportation and DDOT, Final Environmental Assessment for Klingle Valley Trail, Washington, DC (December 2010). Martin Austermuhle, “Trails and Tribulations: Why It Took 27 Years to Build the Klingle Valley Hiker-Biker Trail in Rock Creek Park,” WAMU, June 23, 2017. Bryan Rodda, “The New Klingle Valley Trail Connects Woodley Park and Mount Pleasant,” Greater Greater Washington, <https://gwwash.org/view/63868/the-new-klingle-valley-trail-connects-woodley-park-and-mount-pleasant>, accessed September 10, 2018. Mary Hui, “The 26-Year Fight over Klingle Road Is the Story of a Changed and Changing DC,” *Washington Post* (July 1, 2017). Klingle Valley Trail Project website, <http://www.kinglevalleytrail.com/project-background/>, accessed September 10, 2018.

<sup>37</sup> Austermuhle, “Trails and Tribulations”; Rodda, “The New Klingle Valley Trail.”

<sup>38</sup> Black, as quoted by Hui, “The 26-Year Fight over Klingle Road.”

<sup>39</sup> Austermuhle, “Trails and Tribulations.”

<sup>40</sup> Hui, “The 26-Year Fight over Klingle Road.”

<sup>41</sup> Black, as quoted by Austermuhle, “Trails and Tribulations.”

the other hand, highlighted tensions about access into Rock Creek Park, and its closing represented a major defeat for some. The history of Rock Creek Park highlights the numerous challenges park managers faced in balancing access while protecting park resources and values. Addressing such challenges has at times exacerbated social, cultural, and economic tensions in the surrounding areas.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Environment and Pollution**

Rock Creek Park's Resource Management Division has worked for decades to address water quality issues. Inadequate stormwater management, urban pollution, and sewer leaks have degraded water quality in all the streams that flow through park land. Severe storms, which have increased in frequency over time due to climate change, have overwhelmed streams and washed away embankments, exposing sewer lines. Resource Management Specialist Bill Yeaman, who has worked on water issues in Rock Creek Park since 1985, noted that stormwater has been a problem since he started at the park in 1972 in the Interpretive Division. He explained in 2017 that the park and the District must slow down the creek water or lessen its impact to reduce erosion and other negative effects. Yeaman was frustrated because, as he said, Rock Creek is "the heart of it. It's the soul of the park."<sup>1</sup>

This chapter looks at environmental resources, particularly water and air. Water is a prime attraction for park visitors, and managing that water to maintain the park's natural features is daunting in the face of the park's increasingly urban setting. Stormwater management has been an especially challenging issue over time. Antiquated sewer systems and runoff during heavy storms have left Rock Creek and its associated tributaries compromised. The District has pursued new sewer tunnels and green infrastructure to combat stormwater failures. The park has fostered relationships with friends groups, Friends of Rock Creek's Environment (FORCE) and the subsequent Rock Creek Conservancy (RCC), to clean up the watershed and educate people about its health.

The park has also worked with local governments on air quality issues. Within the greater metropolitan region, vehicle emissions create the greatest amount of air pollution. Given that Beach Drive within Rock Creek Park is a major commuter route, the National Park Service has a role in combating air pollution. The greater DC area has successfully seen its overall air quality improve over the years. In 1988, the area met carbon monoxide standards, with the numbers continuing to fall long-term. Ground-level ozone, however, remains a constant concern. The DC area has consistently not met ground-level ozone standards. When the US Environmental Protection Agency implemented more stringent standards for ground-level ozone in 2003, the area again failed to attain the standards.<sup>2</sup> This chapter considers how Rock Creek Park staff have worked with the District government and friends groups to improve the area's environment in terms of the water and air.

### **Water Quality**

Many of the National Park Service's challenges in managing Rock Creek Park come from its namesake's course. Rock Creek flows south about thirty-three miles from its headwaters near Laytonsville, Maryland, through Washington, DC, to its confluence with the Potomac River in Georgetown. According to the 2005 General Management Plan, roughly a half-million people reside within its seventy-seven-square mile watershed. Seventy percent of the watershed was developed, causing flash floods, streambed scouring and silting in different park areas, bank

---

<sup>1</sup> Bill Yeaman, transcript of interview with the author, January 13, 2017, 21, ROCR Archives.

<sup>2</sup> ROCR, GMP/EIS, 2005, 132. District Department of the Environment, District of Columbia's Ambient Air Quality Trends Report, 2014, Executive Summary, [https://doee.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ddoe/service\\_content/attachments/AQ%20TRENDS%20Report%20for%20DDOEwebsite\\_finalDraft\\_2014Oct29.pdf](https://doee.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ddoe/service_content/attachments/AQ%20TRENDS%20Report%20for%20DDOEwebsite_finalDraft_2014Oct29.pdf), accessed December 5, 2019.

erosion, organic and chemical pollution, and accumulation of litter and other solid waste. Topography has long made Rock Creek susceptible to flooding, but stormwater drains from roadways and other developed areas have increased this problem. Two major tributaries in Washington, DC, feed into Rock Creek: Broad Branch and Piney Branch. Sixteen smaller tributaries feed into Rock Creek, primarily from the west. Numerous minor tributaries and many groundwater springs also drain into Rock Creek.<sup>3</sup>

Rock Creek's water quality problem historically originated with sanitary sewers and outfalls. Outfalls are where stormwater or combined sewers discharge into the creek or its tributaries. Many municipal storm sewers capture polluted water from roadways and parking lots. These sewers merge in the Rock Creek valley and discharge their sullied water into the creek. Rock Creek, as a low point in the city's geography and thus a natural place for pipelines working via gravity, contains numerous sanitary sewer lines that run under nearby roads and the creek channel. Flooding and then erosion have removed the protective soil around the pipes, making them vulnerable. Severe flooding has exposed pipes. Numerous sewer line leaks have dumped raw sewage into the creek and its tributaries. High concentrations of fecal coliform bacteria, along with probable nitrogen and phosphorous, enter the park's waterways.<sup>4</sup>

One historic and distinctive District approach for water management used combined sanitary and stormwater lines, especially in the southeastern portion of the park. Under normal circumstances, these combined lines went to the Blue Plains Wastewater Treatment Plant. When rainfall surpasses 0.3 inches per hour, however, these sewers exceed capacity and discharge directly into Piney Branch and Rock Creek. As of 2005, Rock Creek had twenty-nine combined sanitary/stormwater overflow outfalls (CSOs), averaging forty-nine million gallons of combined stormwater and sewage flowing into the creek annually.<sup>5</sup>

The District and the state of Maryland have both tried historically to address Rock Creek's water quality. The increasingly urban and suburban setting of Rock Creek endangered its waters and helped determine early management steps. In his 1985 administrative history of the park, Barry Mackintosh noted that early-twentieth-century planners knew that the integrity of Rock Creek (and the Anacostia River and Potomac River) in the District of Columbia relied upon the acquisition of lands in Maryland to protect the headwaters and creek. Such control would protect the flow of the water, keep pollution from upstream sources at bay, preserve forests and scenery of the District, and provide for the development of parks, parkways, and playgrounds in the District. Congress established the National Capital Park Commission (later called the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, NCPPC, and later the National Capital Planning Commission, NCPC) in 1924 specifically to meet these needs. The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) worked in cooperation with the National Capital Park and Planning Commission to make detailed plans for the Rock Creek and Anacostia River protective extensions into Maryland's Montgomery and Prince George's

---

<sup>3</sup> NPS, ROCR, and RCPP Final GMP/EIS, 2005, 134. Melanie Choukas-Bradley, transcript of interview with the author, April 10, 2017, 1, ROCR Archives.

<sup>4</sup> NPS, ROCR GMP/EIS, 2005, 135. ROCR, Resources Management Plan, 1983, Section ROCR-N17-Combined Sanitary-Storm Sewers, Box 72, File General-History-Administration-Management Plans 1983, Museum Resource Center (MRCE). All MRCE files are from the ROCR Collection. Steve Saari, transcript of interview with the author, May 5, 2017, 17, ROCR Archives. Yeaman, transcript of interview, 6-7. DSC Northeast Team, ROCR Adjacent Land Use Study, 1985, 10, Adjacent Land Use Study 1985, ROCR Archives.

<sup>5</sup> NPS, ROCR GMP/EIS, 2005, 135.

counties. Congress helped pay the costs for land acquisition through the 1930 Capper-Cramton Act.<sup>6</sup>

Congress placed a restriction on the disbursement of funds. The two planning commissions needed to reach a satisfactory agreement, as defined by Congress, about sewage disposal and stormwater flow with the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, the bi-county sewer and water authority. National Capital Planning Commission landscape architect Conrad Wirth (who would later serve as National Park Service Director) worked with the Maryland Commission to meet this requirement.<sup>7</sup>

By the 1930s, creek pollution largely came from government sources. Walter Reed Army Hospital used the creek for sewage disposal. The National Bureau of Standards dumped quantities of chemicals into a tributary of the creek. The National Zoo disposed of animal waste into the creek. By the mid-1960s, the federal government continued to use Rock Creek as a disposal site, prompting the Interior Department to call for self-examination to make sure federal agencies could not be accused of not setting a good example. Rock Creek Park itself was an offender, with waste from the Rock Creek Stables running into the creek. The NPS National Capital Region found the funds to remedy the problem. An Executive Order made the federal government accountable for eliminating all sources of pollution from their institutions.<sup>8</sup>

Despite these efforts, Rock Creek's water quality suffered. A 1954 US Forest Service report described Rock Creek in the District as smelly, mud-laden, filled with debris, and hardly representative of the creek originally preserved in Rock Creek Park.<sup>9</sup> Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall called the creek "this wounded, suffering Rock Creek environment."<sup>10</sup> The Rock Creek Park 1980 Natural Resources Management Plan stated that at times Rock Creek turned chocolate-colored due to the number of suspended solids.<sup>11</sup>

A 1967 Interior Department report, called *The Creek and the City: Urban Pressures on a Natural Stream, Rock Creek Park and Metropolitan Washington*, chronicled the destruction of the creek but also offered some hopeful signs. Erosion from swollen water bared tree roots and even caused the toppling of some. Impervious surfaces from increasing numbers of roofs, sidewalks, and roads caused more frequent and larger flooding. The continued presence of organic waste and bacteria meant that the creek was unsafe for wading, let alone for drinking.

---

<sup>6</sup> Barry Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, section "Other Additions," chapter 3, "Parkway and Other Additions." The federal government promised \$1.5 million and gave an additional \$3 million in an interest-free loan. The Maryland portion of the extended Rock Creek Park went 22 miles upstream and included 4,193 acres. Rock Creek Park in the District encompassed 1,754 acres.

<sup>7</sup> Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, section "Other Additions," chapter 3, "Parkway and Other Additions"; chapter 4, "The Urban Challenge."

<sup>8</sup> Kenneth Holum to Lawson B. Knott Jr., February 10, 1967, File Parks and Sites, Office of the Secretary, NPS, ROCR Part 2, Box 215, RG 48, Archives II, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Memorandum, Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks to Assistant Secretary for Water Pollution Control, October 12, 1967, 1, File Parks and Sites, Office of the Secretary, NPS, ROCR Part 2, Box 215, RG 48, Archives II, NARA.

<sup>9</sup> US Department of the Interior, *The Creek and the City: Urban Pressures on a Natural Stream, Rock Creek Park and Metropolitan Washington* (1967), 34.

<sup>10</sup> Stewart L. Udall to Ruth E. Blackburn, September 21, 1967, 1, File Parks and Sites, Office of the Secretary, NPS, ROCR Part 2, Box 215, RG 48, Archives II, NARA.

<sup>11</sup> ROCR, Natural Resources Management Plan, 1980, 24, DSC, TIC.

People used the creek as a convenient dumping ground for such items as refrigerators, stoves, toys, and even tires, hubcaps, and whole junked cars.<sup>12</sup>

Rock Creek saw some promising changes in the early 1960s. Montgomery County built two dams, which created Lakes Needwood and Frank. These bodies of water collected silt and helped control water flow. Montgomery County also implemented new sediment and grading requirements for new developments. The District of Columbia repaired some of its sewers and increased street cleaning. Street cleaners reduced the amount of pollutants carried by stormwater, thus protecting water quality.<sup>13</sup> Interior Secretary Udall pushed this effort along by naming the Rock Creek effort a “crash program” in making the creek “the finest possible example of urban stream renewal.”<sup>14</sup>

Subsequent attention went to the District’s combined sanitary sewers and stormwater pipelines. In the 1960s, the District initiated a program to separate the two lines. However, by 1980 the District ended the study after determining the “unfeasibility” of separation, as reported without explanation in the Rock Creek Park 1980 Natural Resources Management Plan. A 1979 report known as the Rock Creek Watershed Conservation Study, on the other hand, spearheaded improvements to the creek and its tributaries. According to the 2005 Final General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement: Rock Creek Park and Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway, actions identified post-1979 continued to bring about improvements. These included park staff monitoring sewers and facilitating their repair. The District was given assistance in tracing illegal discharges. Sanitary/storm sewer outlets were identified for retrofitting. Dry-weather outfall surveys have also led to cleaning out blocked lines.<sup>15</sup>

In 1985, Rock Creek Park identified the hiring of a part-time permanent Water Resources Specialist as the “most significant event in 1985 affecting water resources.” Bill Yeaman, who had previously worked in the park’s Interpretive Division, brought his knowledge of conservation and resource development to the Resource Management Division. His work initially focused on going out into the field and surveying DC’s 31 combined sewer-overflow structures, 60 sanitary sewer-line crossings of streams, and 375 outfall structures on park land. He located problems with sanitary sewer lines and helped agencies determine the underlying causes. He also assisted these agencies with identifying and implementing solutions, such as the installation of rip rap over and around sewer lines. He also completed a related task each year, checking stormwater outfalls for polluted discharges and notifying authorities of problems.<sup>16</sup>

Examples of breaks and other leaks into park waters and lands over the years indicate the range of pollution and its sources. In February 1987, park personnel identified soil and water contamination from about seven hundred gallons of heating oil near Picnic Grove 1 inside

---

<sup>12</sup> Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 4, “The Urban Challenge.” US Department of the Interior, *The Creek and the City: Urban Pressures on a Natural Stream, Rock Creek Park and Metropolitan Washington* (1967), 7, 9, 17, 20–21, 43–44.

<sup>13</sup> Udall to Blackburn, September 21, 1967, 2.

<sup>14</sup> Memorandum Assistant Secretary, Water and Power Development Kenneth Holum to Assistant Secretary, Fish and Wildlife and Parks, July 12, 1966, 1, NARA, Archives II, File Parks and Sites, Office of the Secretary, NPS, ROCR Part 1, Box 215, RG 48.

<sup>15</sup> ROCR, Natural Resources Management Plan, 1980, 26. NPS, ROCR GMP/EIS, 2005, 140.

<sup>16</sup> Yeaman, transcript of interview, 6–9. Quote p. 6. ROCR, 1980 Natural Resources Management Plan, 33. The park used contractors to complete some of the survey work that Yeaman then took on. For example, in 1984 the firm O’Brien and Gere completed two parkwide surveys of outfalls and dry-weather flows. See ROCR, Annual Report, 1984, 18, File Rock Creek Park, Box 45, Entry P17, RG 79, Archives II, NARA. ROCR, Annual Report, 1988, 1, Unprocessed Administrative Files, ROCR Archives. ROCR, Resources Management Plan, 1996, Project Number ROCR-N-003.002.

Reservation 339. The leak was traced to an underground tank from the Embassy of Czechoslovakia near Tilden Street, NW. Yeaman coordinated responses from the Environmental Protection Agency, the NPS National Capital Region, NCR's Center for Urban Ecology, the District government, and two contractors employed by the embassy. The park tried removing the oil from the picnic area via pumping and a scavenger system without success. A clay containment barrier forced gradual decomposition of the oil in the soil. Another heating oil spill in 1997 at the University of the District of Columbia, Van Ness Campus, poured into a storm sewer and then discharged into Soapstone Valley Park. Personnel placed absorbent booms and pads in the stream, but the discharge amounted to several thousand gallons of oil, producing significant environmental damage.<sup>17</sup>

Some leaks have come from incorrect sewer line connections, such as chronic discharges that occurred in 1985 in Klinge Creek. Yeaman and DC Sewer Services personnel traced chronic pollution to a restaurant on Connecticut Avenue, which had improper connections between sewage and stormwater pipes. In 1995, Yeaman identified Woodrow Wilson High School as a source of wastewater and filter backwash from its swimming pool. Yeaman saw the same gray water flushed into Soapstone Creek. The gray water left behind diatomaceous earth. Yeaman, working with a field crew from DC Water, followed deposits of the diatomaceous earth through the storm sewer lines until the line ended at the high school. School officials quickly hired contractors to remedy the illegal connection.<sup>18</sup>

The park has worked cooperatively with the city's water utility, now in 2021 the independent agency DC Water, formally known as the District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority. One effort has focused on installing cured-in-place liners inside aged sanitary sewer lines throughout the park to stop or prevent leakage of sanitary sewage into Rock Creek and its tributaries. In 1987, the DC government relined 800 feet of sewer line in pipes located just north of Fort DeRussy. In 1988, the District installed 1,200 feet of Insituform under Bingham Drive. The District in 1989 used the substance to line the interiors of portions of the sanitary sewers in Pinehurst Parkway, Portal Parkway, and across Beach Parkway at Redbud Lane. Another step has involved constructing a new storm sewer. In 2005 Rock Creek Park personnel worked closely with the District's Transportation Department to install a new stormwater management system under the length of Sherrill Drive in the park. The former storm sewer had discharged into a tributary of Rock Creek. The new system dispersed storm flow to non-erosive levels before discharge.<sup>19</sup>

### **District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority**

The District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority (DC Water) signed a consent decree in 2005 with the District government, the Department of Justice, and the US Environmental Protection Agency to address its combined sewer overflows (CSO). The District's combined sewer overflows discharged into the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers and Rock Creek during heavy rains. The Long Term Control Plan (named the Clean Rivers Project in 2010), which in 2005 was estimated to total \$2.4 billion for the twenty-year project, identified the construction of

---

<sup>17</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 1987, 7, File Rock Creek Park, Box 45, Entry P17, RG 79, Archives II, NARA. ROCR, Annual Report, 1997, 15, Unprocessed Administrative Files, ROCR Archives.

<sup>18</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 1985, 33–34. ROCR, Annual Report, 1989, 1. Yeaman, transcript of interview, 10.

<sup>19</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 1988, 1, File Rock Creek Park, Box 45, Entry P17, RG 79, Archives II, NARA. ROCR, Annual Report, 1988, 1. ROCR, Annual Report, 1989, n.p., Box 70, File ROCR–General–Administration–Annual Reports 1989, MRCE. ROCR, Annual Report, 2005, TIC.

large tunnels and the implementation of green infrastructure for handling combined sewer overflows. The tunnels would act as storage facilities for high water levels and then time-release the stored water to the Blue Plains Wastewater Treatment Plant. DC Water initially planned to control combined sewer overflows mostly with the large tunnels and then with some green infrastructure. In January 2016, DC Water submitted an amendment to the 2005 consent decree, proposing to remove the planned tunnel at Rock Creek. DC Water also requested shortening the Potomac River tunnel from 9,100 to 4,500 feet. Instead, DC Water expected to use green infrastructure to meet the combined sewer overflow demands where no tunnels would be built. Another review in 2020, however, has led DC Water to determine that green infrastructure alone cannot accomplish the stormwater and sewage reductions. Therefore, it appears, as of early 2021, that DC Water will be constructing stormwater and sewer management capture structures under Piney Branch Parkway by 2030.<sup>20</sup>

Green infrastructure has included many different forms. The underlying premise is that by slowing down (or removing) water, the runoff will not overload a sewer system, thus removing the situation causing combined sewer overflows. Stormwater runoff might be managed using rain gardens, which collect water runoff, using plants to remove pollutants and allowing stormwater to soak slowly into the ground. Installing pervious paving stones allows for rainwater absorption into the ground. Green roofs transform rooftops into water absorbers. Encouraging homeowners to install rain barrels also helps make roofs seem pervious by collecting rainwater for later use. Rock Creek Park has participated in green infrastructure initiatives—using rain barrels at the Nature Center, for instance. DC Water hosted a special Green Infrastructure Summit in 2014 to encourage more ideas to implement. The agency committed to installing enough green infrastructure in the Rock Creek’s Piney Branch sewershed to absorb 1.2 inches of rain falling on 365 acres of impervious land that currently did not absorb stormwater. By 2017, DC Water had completed several preliminary green infrastructure demonstration projects. The agency plans to accomplish an additional 44 acres by June 2019.<sup>21</sup>

DC Water requested these changes for several reasons. First, the agency could begin making substantial improvements to the system much sooner than in the previous plan because it did not have to depend upon building the tunnel. Green infrastructure improvements could start immediately. Second, the revised plan would significantly cut expected expenses, substituting \$237 million for tunnel construction with a \$90 million green infrastructure plan. Third, an additional economic benefit came from the goal that 51 percent of new jobs created by the green infrastructure project be filled by DC residents. The District and DC Water joined into an agreement to make such job creation a reality through training and certification opportunities. Fourth, DC Water recognized that the financial, engineering, and environmental commitments

---

<sup>20</sup> DC Water and Sewer Authority, Biannual Report Combined Sewer Overflow Control Activities, April 2016, 1, 4, [https://www.dewater.com/sites/default/files/documents/CSO\\_apr\\_2016.pdf](https://www.dewater.com/sites/default/files/documents/CSO_apr_2016.pdf), accessed October 21, 2017. Comments from Nick Bartolomeo, Public Presentation Script, January 11, 2021, ROCR Archives.

<sup>21</sup> DC Water and Sewer Authority, Biannual Report Combined Sewer Overflow Control Activities, April 2010, 2, 4, [https://www.dewater.com/sites/default/files/documents/spring2010\\_cso\\_web.pdf](https://www.dewater.com/sites/default/files/documents/spring2010_cso_web.pdf), accessed October 21, 2017. US EPA website, “DC Utilizes Green Infrastructure to Manage Stormwater,” <https://www.epa.gov/arc-x/dc-utilizes-green-infrastructure-manage-stormwater>, accessed October 21, 2017. Peter Kenyon, “DC Water Scales Back CSO Tunnel Plans,” *TunnelTalk*, January 29, 2014, <https://www.tunneltalk.com/Washington-DC-28Jan2014-DC-Water-to-scale-back-Clean-Rivers-Project-Phase-2-storage-tunnels.php>, accessed October 21, 2017. Yeaman, transcript of interview, 20. DC Water and Sewer Authority, Long Term Control Plan Modification for Green Infrastructure, 2015, <https://www.dewater.com/sites/default/files/green-infrastructure-ltcp-modificaitons.pdf>, accessed December 5, 2019.

under the original agreement were unlikely to yield the results it needed, given the uncertainties of current and future extreme weather events. Green infrastructure, in tandem with the large storage tunnels for the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers, offered such flexibility.<sup>22</sup>

### **FORCE and RCC**

The Friends of Rock Creek's Environment (FORCE) served as one of the park's first volunteer organizations. From as early as 1976, this group has assisted with park operations and provided needed staff assistance. By 1979, FORCE boasted an array of year-round programming and cleanup activities. Monthly meetings saw speakers from US government agencies or educational institutions share information about the park's plants and animals. Members went on field trips to area sites and enjoyed the planetarium show at the park.<sup>23</sup>

Superintendent Jim Redmond (1975–83) made natural resource protection a key element of his park management effort. According to National Capital Regional Director Robert Stanton, Redmond especially focused on the park's water quality. He knew that the park had little control over the water as it flowed south from Maryland or over the District's streets into Rock Creek. He could use whatever help he could get, and thus he fostered the park's relationship with FORCE. In 1982, for example, FORCE volunteers placed water control bars in strategic places to divert water runoff and protect creek banks from erosion. Other work included removing invasive plants and helping with animal surveys. These volunteers participated in letter-writing campaigns to advocate for the park's well-being. Georgia Ellard (1983–88), who succeeded Redmond as superintendent, emphasized FORCE's importance in advocating for the park, advising neighbors and others about park programming, and volunteering in trail maintenance.<sup>24</sup>

FORCE members became integral organizers of and contributors to the annual Rock Creek Park Day, held each September in celebration of the park's establishment on September 27, 1890. Redmond worked with these volunteers in 1976 on programming, which varied from hiking to creating your own décor with found trash to photography.<sup>25</sup> In subsequent years, FORCE spent its August meetings preparing for the event and provided as many as one hundred volunteers to assist with the festivities. One year, the park had more than thirty embassies display and sell art, food, and crafts unique to their countries. They also performed music. Pony rides and face painting entertained families. Environmental and recreational organizations set up booths and provided information on such topics as jogging, camping, and animal care. By 1983, the event had more than fifty embassies and forty recreational and environmental exhibits for as many as twenty-five thousand attendees.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Kenyon, "DC Water Scales Back CSO Tunnel Plans." US EPA website, "DC Utilizes Green Infrastructure to Manage Stormwater."

<sup>23</sup> ROCR, Statement for Management, 1976, 11, 1976 Statement for Management, ROCR. ROCR, Annual Report, 1979, 28–30, Annual Report 1979, Box 71, File Administration–Annual Reports 1979, MRCE. ROCR, Annual Report, 1980, 54–55, Box 71, File Administration–Annual Reports 1980, MRCE.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Stanton, transcript of oral history interview with the author, July 25, 2017, 14, ROCR Archives. Yeaman, transcript of interview, 34. ROCR, Natural Resource Management Plan, 1980, 2, Natural Resources Management Plan 1980, TIC. Reader Exchange, *Washington Post* (April 17, 1982), as reproduced in ROCR, Annual Report, 1982, B-2, Box 71, File Administration–Annual Reports 1982, MRCE. ROCR, Annual Report, 1984, 23, 1984 annual report, ROCR. Georgia Ellard, email to the author, June 6, 2017, ROCR Archives.

<sup>25</sup> Memorandum, Park Manager, Division of Rock Creek James Redmond to Director, National Capital Parks, August 23, 1976, 4, File General–History–Events–ROCR Day Weekend 9/24-26/1977, Box 72, ROCR Collection, MRCE.

<sup>26</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 1979, 28. ROCR, Annual Report, 1980, 54. ROCR, Annual Report, 1983, 34, Box 71, File Administration–Annual Reports 1983, MRCE. NPS, News Release, Rock Creek Park to Celebrate its 92nd Birthday

FORCE was no longer mentioned in park annual reports by 1987, but a reincarnated Friends of Rock Creek's Environment gained new life in 2003. Steve Saari initiated this effort. While working as Watershed Manager for the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin, he contacted Rock Creek Park Education Specialist Maggie Zadorozny. As Zadorozny remembered, he asked her why Rock Creek Park didn't have a friends group like so many other national park sites. He learned about FORCE and decided to resurrect it, according to Zadorozny. She encouraged him to work with the Alice Ferguson Foundation and its annual Potomac River cleanup as a starting point. He applied for a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to start a watershed that would look at the entire Rock Creek watershed—including both the two-thirds located in Maryland and the remaining third in the District. Saari saw the need to build citizen involvement in restoring the watershed and to coordinate work among jurisdictions. He won the grant, and FORCE returned.<sup>27</sup>

Saari worked with the National Park Service and other organizations as he put the grant proposal together. He modeled the coordination that he envisioned for the actual work proposed for the grant. He talked with the District of Columbia Environmental Health Administration, which later merged with several other entities to form the District Department of Energy and Environment. He also talked to Montgomery County and state environmental planning departments, finding all of them receptive. Saari remembered that Bill Yeaman at Rock Creek Park had early involvement in FORCE, but eventually Superintendent Adrienne Coleman had a visible presence. Yeaman recalled that Coleman resurrected FORCE and expressed support for its work.<sup>28</sup>

FORCE members immediately worked on projects to help Rock Creek along its entire thirty-three-mile course. Volunteers participated in regular trash pickups. They made storm drain markings to follow where trash went. The organization did stream walks and invited experts, such as naturalist and author Melanie Choukas-Bradley, to take people along the creek and talk about the natural setting and how pollution affected it. Members trained with the Audubon Naturalist Society to monitor Rock Creek for aquatic insects and check the water's health.<sup>29</sup>

FORCE matured in 2007 when it hired its first part-time temporary staff person, Beth Mullin. She would go on to become Executive Director. When Mullin had first learned of FORCE, she had volunteered to adopt a tributary. She chose Pinehurst Tributary, which was close to her home. She gathered together her neighbors to create a mini-organization, which they called the PT Cruisers, to take care of the waterway. Mullin tried to organize an event each month to address the health of the tributary. In 2007, FORCE won a grant from the District Department of Energy and Environment to start RiverSmart Homes. This pilot project selected a home in each of the District's eight wards, plus one public site (in Georgetown), landscaped with

---

Anniversary, September 25, 1982, reproduced in ROCR, Annual Report, 1982, B-30–B-31. ROCR, Annual Report, 1983, 35, Box 71, File Administration-Annual Reports 1983, MRCE.

<sup>27</sup> Rock Creek Conservancy website, <https://www.rockcreekconservancy.org/who-we-are/about-us>, accessed September 12, 2018. Saari, transcript of interview, 1–2. Beth Mullin, transcript of oral history interview with the author, August 3, 2017, 4, ROCR Archives. Maggie Zadorozny, transcript of oral history interview with the author, January 13, 2017, 50, ROCR Archives. Rock Creek Current newsletter (Fall 2006), 1, FORCE and Weekend Section 2006, 1998, ROCR. Saari and the 2006 newsletter use the 2003 start year for FORCE, while the RCC website refers to 2005 as the FORCE start year. The ROCR 2005 Annual Report gives a 2005 date. ROCR, Annual Report, 2005, 1, 2005, 2008, annual reports, ROCR.

<sup>28</sup> Saari, transcript of interview, 2–3. Yeaman, transcript of interview, 34.

<sup>29</sup> Saari, transcript of interview, 5. Rock Creek Current newsletter (Fall 2006), 3.

rain barrels, pervious pavements, and rain gardens to demonstrate the value of capturing stormwater to keep streams clean of pollution. This grant allowed FORCE to hire Mullin.<sup>30</sup>

Mullin amplified FORCE's impact. She won a grant to hire a temporary part-time person to coordinate a massive trash pickup, with the goal of having fifty events (or trash pickup areas) in one day to cover the entire Rock Creek watershed. Mullin knew that she needed a way to tap into large numbers of volunteers to succeed. She and the part-time staffer found volunteers to lead stream teams, similar to what she had created with the PT Cruisers. These people would then recruit friends and neighbors. Mullin developed a database to keep track of people when they volunteered and what they did so that she might find ways to engage them in future work. She recognized that some people might start out with picking up trash but then want to move on to removing invasives or marking storm drains. The database allowed her to identify leaders and then match them to volunteers and organizations wanting to help. She promoted the work through Facebook and Twitter. FORCE went from a few hundred volunteers to thousands thanks to Mullin's contributions.<sup>31</sup>

The National Park Service supported these activities. Rock Creek Park staff members offered their perspectives on what projects they valued, coordinating with FORCE on site selections and other decisions. Maintenance staff helped with the trash cleanups by picking up the collected garbage. FORCE had its interagency meetings in Rock Creek Park facilities. According to Saari, FORCE wanted "to make [NPS staff members'] lives easier."<sup>32</sup> Mullin recalled that she worked with the park's volunteer coordinator to schedule events and enlist volunteers. According to Mullin, the events were meant to get people into the park and learn about environmental issues and how people's actions in their own yards affect the environment.<sup>33</sup>

In 2011, FORCE became the Rock Creek Conservancy (RCC). This new name signaled an expanded vision for the organization. Mullin and the FORCE Board recognized that FORCE did not have the capability to grow into the size of organization that could have the impact they wanted. Through a deliberative process, they decided to link the organization to Rock Creek Park in name and vision. Rock Creek Conservancy resulted, with a dual mission to protect the larger Rock Creek watershed (thus retaining the work that FORCE had done) and to revitalize Rock Creek Park for people to treasure and enjoy (the expanded vision the FORCE Board sought). This latter part of the mission has meant that Rock Creek Conservancy has looked at the visitor experience and park facilities, for all of Rock Creek Park's ninety-nine management units, and worked to enhance them. Rock Creek Conservancy has reached out to other park friends groups, such as Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy, and offered to help, advertising their events or coordinating activities.<sup>34</sup>

Rock Creek Conservancy has met its vision for expanding its capability to help. The organization won a million-dollar grant in 2015. Part of this money has gone toward supporting a Youth Conservation Corps program in the park for two summers. Other funds have aided the park in developing signage and waysides to direct people around what many see as a confusing

---

<sup>30</sup> Friends of Rock Creek's Environment, "Annual Report, 2008,"

[http://www.rockcreekconservancy.org/images/stories/2008\\_Annual\\_Report.pdf](http://www.rockcreekconservancy.org/images/stories/2008_Annual_Report.pdf), accessed September 13, 2018.

Mullin, transcript of interview, 4–5, 7–10. ROCR, Annual Report, 2008, 2, 2005, 2008 annual reports, ROCR. Rock Creek Current newsletter (Fall 2006), 1.

<sup>31</sup> Mullin, transcript of interview, 7–10.

<sup>32</sup> Saari, transcript of interview, 4.

<sup>33</sup> Mullin, transcript of interview, 12.

<sup>34</sup> Mullin, transcript of interview, 12–17. RCC, Strategic Plan, 2013–2015, ROCR Archives.

trail system. The park hopes to make all signs consistent in appearance to help visitors recognize they are in a national park unit.<sup>35</sup>

### **Air Quality**

The District of Columbia's Department of Energy and Environment (and its predecessor departments) has held primary responsibility for measuring ambient air quality throughout the District, including Rock Creek Park and other areas administered by the park. The District maintains and operates a twenty-four-hour system for checking air pollutant concentration, conducting studies, collecting air samples, and reporting to the US Environmental Protection Agency. Vehicle emissions have been the largest contributor to air pollutants in the District. The National Ambient Air Quality Standards, established with the 1970 Clean Air Act, have set standards for the concentration of contaminants to protect public health and prevent the degradation of the environment. As of the 2005 Rock Creek Park General Management Plan, the Washington metropolitan region met five of the six National Ambient Air Quality Standards. The region did not meet the standard for ground-level ozone and continued to miss the ground-level ozone standard as of 2014.<sup>36</sup>

In December 1996, the National Park Service measured carbon monoxide levels for a brief period inside the park and along Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway. This thirteen-day monitoring study found that the park did not have any "valley" effects that would concentrate pollutants. The limited study also found that park measurements aligned with those taken by the District, confirming their applicability to the park.<sup>37</sup>

Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway and Beach Drive accommodate rush-hour traffic and thus contribute to the region's overall air quality levels. A continuing source of discussion has been whether to encourage or discourage such usage. The park's 1980 Resources Management Plan recognized that excessive traffic volumes and speed contributed to air pollution, roadkill, vegetation damage, noise, aesthetic degradation, and safety hazards, especially in prime natural zones and some principal visitor use areas. The park has responded to public comments over the years by converting all lanes of the parkway to one-way for taking traffic into the District each morning and taking traffic out of the District each evening. The park has also experimented with closing sections of Beach Drive to allow people on bikes and various foot traffic to take over the road.<sup>38</sup>

### **Scientific Study**

The National Park Service has not historically had a dedicated science program. NPS Historian Richard West Sellars documented the emphasis upon tourism to the detriment of scientific study from the agency's establishment in 1916 through the early 1990s. In 1963, the exterior scientific community delivered both Leopold and National Academy of Sciences reports urging the National Park Service to inventory and monitor park wildlife and park areas, managing them in as close to a natural state as possible. The National Park Service, as recounted

---

<sup>35</sup> Tara Morrison, transcript of oral history interview with the author, October 28, 2016, 22, ROCR Archives.

<sup>36</sup> ROCR, GMP/EIS, 2005, 132. District Department of the Environment, District's Ambient Air Quality Trends Report, 2014, Executive Summary. The five standards ROCR met are for fine particulate matter, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, and lead.

<sup>37</sup> ROCR, GMP/EIS, 133–34.

<sup>38</sup> ROCR, Resources Management Plan, 1980, section ROCR-N27, TIC.

by Sellars, vacillated on such a call, sometimes declaring such intention in its planning documents but often side-stepping the actual work.<sup>39</sup>

Rock Creek Park's scientific research demonstrated the park's interest in research endeavors, but funding limited the efforts. The 1980 Rock Creek Park Natural Resource Management Report sought information through research or other means to better understand the forests and other natural areas and develop management strategies that perpetuated park resources. By 1983, the park could tout that it had a Watershed Conservation Study that documented flooding, pollution, erosion, and ecological problems in Rock Creek's main artery. The park hired contractors to study hydrology, focusing upon springs and threats to groundwater resources. Vegetation and soil studies also had some preliminary work.<sup>40</sup>

By 1996, the park delineated its difficulties in maintaining a science program. The park stated in that year's resources management plan that a total of 4.7 work years was devoted to natural resources management within the park's 101 FTE (full-time equivalent) ceiling.<sup>41</sup> But it needed considerably more funding and/or staff to meet its research needs. That little bit of staff time did accomplish some work with vegetation, boundary, and water resources, but much remained untouched. Staff also patrolled and inspected trails and natural areas to address threats. Park staff worked with volunteers, law enforcement, and members of the park's maintenance and interpretive divisions to extend this monitoring. The National Capital Region's Center for Urban Ecology also proved invaluable to Rock Creek Park, but the center's transfer to the National Biological Survey meant the loss of crucial support. The threats to Rock Creek Park, including invasive non-native species, an overabundance of deer, water pollution, and boundary encroachments, presented a daunting list of resources to study and mitigate.<sup>42</sup>

The existing constrained situation meant that current staff worked on identifying and mitigating existing problems. In its 1996 Resources Management Plan, the park acknowledged that "limited funds and staff time" were available for a full-fledged resource management program, such as inventory, monitoring, research, restoration, and Geographical Information System (GIS) activities.<sup>43</sup> This situation improved by 2005 when the park issued research permits for counting the number of fox and newly observed coyote. The park contributed to a region-wide breeding bird atlas and a nationwide monarch butterfly monitoring effort. A continuing partnership with the US Geological Survey inventoried and monitored the park's reptile and amphibian populations. Park staff monitored the Eastern box turtle and contributed to region-wide inventorying and monitoring of grasses and other plants, in addition to water quality monitoring.<sup>44</sup>

Research on the number, distribution, and changing status of the park's wildlife and vegetation fed into an analysis of the effects of water and air pollution. Without baseline data, though, the park lacked the evidence it might need to advocate for greater protections and

---

<sup>39</sup> Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 268–80.

<sup>40</sup> ROCR, Natural Resources Management Plan, 1980, 1, TIC. ROCR, Resources Management Plan, 1983, ROCR-N33, MRCE.

<sup>41</sup> Full-time equivalent (FTE) refers to the number of hours worked by one employee on a full-time basis. This concept is used to convert the hours worked by several part-time workers into the hours worked by full-time workers.

<sup>42</sup> ROCR, Resources Management Plan, 1996, Section III, Overview of Current Program and Needs, TIC.

<sup>43</sup> ROCR, Resources Management Plan, 1996, Section III, Overview of Current Program and Needs.

<sup>44</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 2005, 3, ROCR, Unprocessed Administrative Files.

regulation. In addition, the park needed to know how changes in pollution amounts might impair the animals and plants within park boundaries.

### **Conclusion**

Rock Creek's thirty-three-mile-long passage to the Potomac River traverses increasingly suburbanized Maryland and enters the District of Columbia. Tributaries feed into the creek, and at each junction, potential pollutants have an entryway. Pounding storms and impervious surfaces wash stormwater directly into the creek without the opportunity to soak into the land or get collected into rain barrels, bioretention ponds, or rain gardens. Overwhelmed sewers have dumped human waste into Rock Creek at an all-too-frequent rate. Commuter traffic along Beach Drive and Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway negatively impacts the area's air quality and leaves behind salt and oil, which can also leak into the creek. These realities, driven in part by climate change, have made partnerships with local governments and friends groups essential for the National Park Service to meet its obligations for welcoming visitors to the natural and historical resources of Rock Creek Park. The lack of a fully funded scientific program has meant that Rock Creek Park staff has not gathered crucial baseline data to assess possible changes over time or inform actions in response to climate change.

## CHAPTER 4 Crime

Rock Creek Park, in Reservation 339, is a safe place to hike, picnic, play, and explore natural and historical resources. Former Deputy Superintendent Cindy Cox pointed out that compared to the surrounding neighborhoods, Reservation 339 had considerably less crime. The National Park Service tried to emphasize this point when Bell Atlantic requested cell phone towers in the park. Park staff wanted to reassure people of Reservation 339's safety and thus discount the perceived need for cell towers, which intruded into the natural landscape. However, many people supported the towers due to safety concerns. They wanted to ensure that their cellular devices could receive and transmit information in case of an emergency. These concerns helped decide in favor of the towers.<sup>1</sup>

Lieutenant Allan Griffith, former Commander of the US Park Police's District 3 (Rock Creek Station) substation, echoed Cox's assessment. In a 2017 interview, he called the park "very safe." But he also cautioned about the park at night. Reservation 339 had no lights. The park had many secluded areas. US Park Police had finite resources and could not patrol the entire park. This situation left a perfect setting for criminals. Griffith thus qualified his appraisal, urging people to consider the reality of the situation, saying, "What is a park after dark?"<sup>2</sup>

Rock Creek Park, located not just in an urban environment but also in Washington, DC, with its hyper-security demands as the national capital, has had related park crime and park law enforcement issues. This chapter looks at some key crime stories related to Rock Creek Park. Meridian Hill Park has seen significant crime, whether through vandalism of its sculptures or widespread drug trafficking, especially marijuana. Rapes and other violent acts occurred in or near the park, leaving the National Park Service to impose a curfew. The 1990 establishment of the Friends of Meridian Hill helped turn the situation around. Reservation 339 attracted national notoriety in 2001 with the murder of Chandra Levy while she was running through the park.

### Meridian Hill Park

Meridian Hill Park has experienced varying kinds of crime throughout its history. Vandalism dated to before the park's official opening in 1936. Vandals damaged parts of the Armillary Sphere, prompting its removal in the early 1970s for repair and cleaning. The green granite base remains; the sphere's entablature and cherub (not the sphere itself) are stored at the NPS National Capital Region's Museum Resource Center in Landover, Maryland. Joan of Arc's sword has attracted repeated thefts. Serenity has a broken nose. Some vandals have put make-up on her. The Diplomacy statue within the Buchanan Memorial has lost its nose and has badly damaged feet.<sup>3</sup> Meridian Hill's statues have had sections coated with spray paint over the years. For example, in 1993 the *Washington Post* reported that the National Park Service had recently removed decade-old graffiti, left from the park's drug-dealing days.<sup>4</sup> In 1989, one or more

---

<sup>1</sup> Cindy Cox, transcript of oral history interview with the author, February 2, 2017, 16, ROCR Archives.

<sup>2</sup> Allan Griffith, transcript of oral history interview with the author, March 6, 2017, 13, ROCR Archives.

<sup>3</sup> Architrave, P.C. Architects of Washington, DC, Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, vol. 1 (2001), 133, 141, 149, 310–11, appendix 4. Rose Cartagena, "People Have Been Stealing the Sword from This Joan of Arc Statue for Over 80 Years," *Washingtonian*, November 30, 2016. Simone Monteleone, transcript of oral history interview with the author, December 22, 2016, 13, ROCR Archives.

<sup>4</sup> Hank Stuever, "The Woods, Dark and Deep; Rock Creek Park Entices with Its Leafy Green Embrace. But Sometimes beneath the Trees, All Is Shadow," *Washington Post*, May 24, 2002.

graffiti vandals used the Joan of Arc statue, plus park walls and balustrades, as a canvas for repeatedly writing the word “Uhuru,” Swahili for “freedom.”<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Linda Wheeler, “Wrested from the Jaws of Crime: Historic Park’s Transformation Is the Work of Good Neighbors,” *Washington Post*, August 5, 1993. Michael Willrich, “The Autobiography of Malcolm X Park,” *Washington City Paper*, November 24–30, 1989.



*Figure 4. Armillary Sphere*  
NPS PHOTO, 1966



Figure 5. Joan of Arc Statue without Sword  
NPS PHOTO, N.D.

On April 4, 1968, Protests in Washington after the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. produced a downward economic spiral for the area near Meridian Hill Park, contributing to increased crime in and near the park. Many people who protested reacted not just to King's death but also to decades of discrimination in housing, employment, shopping, and food service. Many African Americans living in the adjoining neighborhoods shattered windows, looted, and set buildings on fire with Molotov cocktails. The protesting lasted days and claimed the lives of ten people (mostly from being trapped inside burning buildings), with more than seven thousand people arrested.<sup>6</sup> Newly appointed District mayor Walter Washington refused to order police to shoot protesters, a decision that likely saved thousands of lives. The protests left three major commercial areas within the District devastated, and stores such as Woolworth and Sears moved from the area. Thousands of African American Washingtonians had worked in those stores, and the neighborhoods lost their shopping outlets. Many people who could moved out to the suburbs, and people were generally afraid to come into the neighborhoods. The neighborhoods were filled with boarded-up buildings and drug addicts on street corners.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> LaBarbara Bowman and Kenneth Bredemeier, "The Riots: Fifteen Years Later," *Washington Post*, April 4, 1983. Denise Kersten Wills, "'People Were Out of Control': Remembering the 1968 Riots," *Washingtonian*, April 1, 2008, states that twelve were killed.

<sup>7</sup> Bowman and Bredemeier, "The Riots." Wills, "'People Were Out of Control.'" Willrich, "Autobiography of Malcolm X Park." Dana Lanier Schaffer, "The 1968 Washington Riots in History and Memory," *Washington*

Due to its close proximity to such devastation and poverty, Meridian Hill Park saw crime rise and fall from the 1960s through the 1990s. In 1967, Meridian Hill Park was named the second most dangerous park in terms of reported crime in the District. The Summer in the Parks Program, started in 1968, provided a counterbalance to help keep youth occupied in positive activities. Thousands of people took advantage of the associated summer concerts and other events. But by 1975, the NPS reported that drugs, assaults, and other crimes had increased. In the early 1980s, rising crime numbers prompted NPS to close the park from 9:00 p.m. until dawn. An increased police presence led to more arrests.<sup>8</sup> One officer characterized the park as a “supermarket for drugs and dealing.” Five police officers were assaulted in the park in 1981. Violent crimes, such as robberies and homicides, joined the drug trade. An armed robbery with handguns occurred in November 1982. As one police officer described the situation, “This is a sad park, a very sad park.”<sup>9</sup>

The late 1980s and early 1990s did not see a change in crime levels. Meridian Hill Park became a booming marijuana marketplace. African American, African, and Caribbean dealers dominated the upper garden, while Hispanics took over the lower garden. Crack cocaine dealers went elsewhere to sell their goods. Crack had become an epidemic in the District and many other parts of the United States, but police officers insisted that Meridian Hill Park did not have the drug. There were incidents of rape in the park, and several bodies were found in the area (from homicides that occurred elsewhere). A boy named Ricky Magnus fell victim to a daytime drive-by shooting, and he died in the park on January 15, 1990. Some drug buyers were assaulted and robbed during drug deals gone awry. Gay men were known to use the park for sex. One officer found around seventeen men in the bathroom one evening before the National Park Service began to lock the bathrooms at night. The National Park Service demolished the restrooms by 1993.<sup>10</sup>

Local citizens joined together, led by neighbor Steve Coleman, to begin a crime patrol. The Magnus killing prompted this action, with neighbors deciding to walk the park and say hello to each person they met. They wanted to act pro-community, with no weapons. The Friends of Meridian Hill (FOMH), formed later in 1990, evolved from the January 1990 crime patrol effort. Friends of Meridian Hill joined into a formal partnership with the National Park Service in November 1990 to develop programs; assist with interpretation, maintenance, and preservation; and raise funds for the park. In April 1990, about one hundred Friends of Meridian Hill

---

*History* 15 (Fall/Winter 2003/2004): 5–9. J. Samuel Walker, *Most of 14th Street Is Gone: The Washington, DC, Riots of 1968* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

<sup>8</sup> Memorandum, Ira Hutchison, Superintendent National Capital Parks-East, to Director, National Capital Parks, May 9, 1975, 1, File MEHI-General History-Historical Documentation 1804-2/1999, Box 4, Museum Resource Center (MRCE). All MRCE files are from the ROCR Collection. Memorandum, Acting Chief, US Park Police to Regional Director, National Capital Region, November 12, 1982, 1, File Supt’s File 1981–1984, Box 83, MRCE. Russel Wright, Summer in the Parks—1968, Trends, April 1969, 4, Summer in parks 1968 article, DSC, TIC.

<sup>9</sup> Quotes in Linda Wheeler, “The Dark Side of a Park,” *Washington Post*, August 30, 1981. See also Memorandum, Chief, Branch of Construction, National Capital Team, DSC to Director, National Capital Region, November 2, 1982, 1, File Supt’s File 1981–1984, Box 83, MRCE.

<sup>10</sup> Willrich, “Autobiography of Malcolm X Park.” Lt. Henry Berberich, Commander Rock Creek Station to Stephen Coleman, December 12, 1991, TIC. Wheeler, “The Dark Side of a Park.” Steve Coleman, transcript of oral history interview with the author, April 24, 2017, 1–2, ROCR Archives. Meridian Hill Park, Cultural Landscape Report (CLR), 2001, 18.

volunteers participated in one of the earliest activities of the friends group, coordinating a major effort to clean up the grounds, plant flowers, and mulch.<sup>11</sup>

Friends of Meridian Hill helped turn Meridian Hill Park around and received important recognition. President Clinton chose Meridian Hill Park for his annual Earth Day address on April 21, 1994. He brought with him Vice President Al Gore and many members of his cabinet. National Capital Regional Director Robert Stanton, who had worked with Friends of Meridian Hill and Rock Creek Park to support the transformative work, officially represented the agency at the event. President Clinton noted that among Friends of Meridian Hill's and the Park Police's accomplishments was a 90 percent reduction in crime.<sup>12</sup>

### **Chandra Levy**

Likely the most sensationalized crime in Rock Creek Park's history occurred on May 1, 2001, when Chandra Levy disappeared. Twenty-four-year-old Levy worked as an intern for the Federal Bureau of Prisons. The case gained national attention when police released information that Levy may have had an affair with Rep. Gary Condit (D-CA), a married man who was thirty years her elder. Condit, a friend of her family's, represented Levy's hometown of Modesto. Police later cleared Condit as a suspect. While searching for turtles, a man and his dog stumbled upon Levy's skeletal remains in 2002 in Rock Creek Park, where she frequently went running, on a steep wooded hill near Broad Branch Road.<sup>13</sup>

The case remained unsolved until 2009, when charges were filed against Ingmar Guandique, an illegal immigrant from El Salvador. Guandique pleaded guilty and was already serving time in prison for two 2002 assaults with the intent to rob other women in Rock Creek Park. In 2010, a jury found Guandique guilty for the murder of Levy and sentenced him to sixty years in prison. Prosecutors relied upon Guandique's cellmate Armando Morales, who said that Guandique had admitted to her murder. A judge later overturned the case after Morales's testimony was called into question. Prosecutors intended to retry the case but dropped it due to continued questions about the key witness. Prosecutors did not have forensic evidence or eyewitnesses to link Guandique to Levy's murder. In July 2015, a judge dismissed the case, at the request of prosecutors.<sup>14</sup>

On March 3, 2017, an immigration judge issued a final order of removal. The US Immigration and Customs Enforcement detained Guandique in a detention center in Virginia until sending him to San Salvador on May 8, 2017. The agency turned him over to proper law enforcement authorities in his home country. ICE released the statement that Guandique was a documented member of the international MS-13 gang and had committed violent crimes in the United States since his illegal entry many years ago. The US government has not charged anyone else for Levy's death.

---

<sup>11</sup> Memorandum of Understanding between NPS and FOMH, November 9, 1990; Superintendent Rolland Swain to Elizabeth Gardeal, May 9, 1990; Steve Coleman to Superintendent William Shields, January 22, 1992, 1, all in File Friends of Meridian Hill Inc. 1989–1992, Box 81, MRCE. Coleman, transcript of interview, 2–7.

<sup>12</sup> Meridian Hill Park CLR, 149. Malcom Peabody to Robert Stanton, July 21, 1994, The NPS-Friends of Meridian Hill Partnership, File MEHI–General–Park Assocns: FOMH-General Communications 1982–1996, Box 5, MRCE. Press Release, The White House, Remarks by the President at Earth Day Celebration, April 21, 1994, 2, File MEHI–History–Events: President Clinton visit–4/24/1994, Box 4, MRCE. See Chapter 9 for more on FOMH.

<sup>13</sup> Maria Sacchetti and Keith L. Alexander, "Man Once Charged in Slaying of Chandra Levy Is Deported," *Washington Post*, May 8, 2017. John Bacon, "Deportation Closes Another Chapter in Sensation Chandra Levy Mystery," *USA Today*, May 9, 2017. Stuever, "The Woods."

<sup>14</sup> Sacchetti and Alexander, "Man Once Charged." Bacon, "Deportation Closes."

Levy's disappearance and the subsequent trial garnered national attention, feeding the perception of heightened crime in Rock Creek Park. In 2016, ABC News called Levy's case "one of the nation's most intriguing cold cases." Stories on the evolving status of the case appeared in the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *LA Times*, *The Atlantic*, *Slate*, *The Guardian*, the *Wichita (Kansas) Eagle*, *Christian Science Monitor*, and *People* magazine. In addition to ABC News, NBC News, CBS News, CNN, WTOP (in Washington, DC) radio, and NPR reported on the case.<sup>15</sup>

### **Other Crimes in Rock Creek Park**

Reservation 339 has seen other crimes less sensationalized than the Levy case but still noteworthy. Assaults, rapes, robberies, indecent exposures, and murders other than Levy's have happened within park boundaries. US Park Police Officer Lt. Joseph Cox, stationed at Rock Creek Park in 2002, indicated the presence of a continuing threat. He offered safety advice for one *Washington Post* article, indicating that people were at risk inside the park. He cautioned that people should be careful when listening to headphones because many attacks happen from behind. He also recommended that women runners look people in the eye if they are standing on the trail, in that way projecting strength and making identification easier.<sup>16</sup>

Bicyclists have also been the victims of crimes. People have waited for lone cyclists (male or female), used a stick to trip the bike, and then stolen the bike once the cyclist was on the ground. The attackers might also assault the cyclist. In one case, an attacker used an ice pick. The attacks often occur during prime visitor use time, such as in April 1997 when the park logged five attacks on Saturdays and Sundays in the mid to late afternoon.<sup>17</sup>

Rock Creek Park rangers have found evidence of animal sacrifices over the years. A US Supreme Court ruling in 1993 found animal sacrifice to be a religious sacrament protected under the First Amendment. Animal sacrifices are thus legal, but they must be done during daylight hours in the park, as the park officially closes at night. Rangers and park visitors have found altars with colored candles, coins, fruit, flowers, and feathers. They have found animal remains, such as goats and chickens, and animal sacrifice implements. Visitors have heard drumming. Park rangers assign the animal sacrifices, altars, and drumming to Afro-Caribbean followers of the Santería religion. Santería followers believe in one god and use animal sacrifice as a way to communicate with this god, known as Olorun.<sup>18</sup>

Graffiti has covered parts of Rock Creek Park's administrative units, beyond the examples provided herein for Meridian Hill Park. The stream culverts under Broad Branch Road at Beach Drive NW have decades worth of graffiti. Dumbarton Oaks Park has had occasional graffiti. The 2000 Cultural Landscape Report described spray paint on some stones and pipe protrusions near the front entrance.<sup>19</sup>

Fort Bunker Hill Park, located in the Brookland neighborhood, experienced a rash of illegal activity in the mid-1990s. Neighbors reported prostitution and sporadic shooting sprees. Residents saw cars parked late at night for sex acts and condoms strewn on the ground. One

---

<sup>15</sup> Jack Cloherty and Emily Shapiro, "How the Chandra Levy Murder Has Become One of the Nation's Most Intriguing Cold Cases," ABC News, July 29, 2016. Stuever, "The Woods." List of publications and media based upon a Google search, February 4, 2018.

<sup>16</sup> Halle Shilling, "Fight, and Live to Run Another Day," *Washington Post*, April 15, 2002.

<sup>17</sup> Henley F. Gabeau, Opinion, "Phones in the Park: Pluses and Perils," *Washington Post*, March 15, 1998. "Park Police Warn Cyclists of Series of Assaults in Rock Creek Park," *Washington Post*, April 30, 1997.

<sup>18</sup> Julie Wakefield, "Silence of the Goats," *Washington City Paper*, September 26, 1997.

<sup>19</sup> Dumbarton Oaks Park, Cultural Landscape Report, 2000, 225.

fourteen-year-old boy found a handful of used bullets. The park also became a dumping ground for cement blocks and other items. Neighbors asked for barricades, signs warning of park hours (closure at dark), and intensive patrols. They also asked for cleanups of the overgrowth of underbrush and thorough trash pickups to remove condoms and broken glass. Superintendent William Shields tried to respond to these requests, but he pointed to limited funding for improvements and maintenance. Neighbors worked to establish a friends group to assist the National Park Service. Fort Totten Park, as another example related to the Civil War Defenses of Washington, saw a spike in violent muggings in 2012, prompting Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton to meet with residents to address the problem.<sup>20</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Many factors shape crime in Rock Creek Park. An important contributor is the presence of crime in surrounding neighborhoods. Prime circumstances, such as unmaintained spaces or secluded areas, make a park unit attractive for illegal activity. Effective patrolling decreases crime, but the US Park Police has many responsibilities and a finite budget. Park units face a vicious cycle, with visitation pushing out crime but crime instilling fear in visitors who thus shy away from entering the park. Sufficient funding for maintenance, interpretive activities, and patrolling would go a long way toward curbing crime. A dedicated friends group, like the one associated with Meridian Hill Park, also has the potential to make a positive difference.

---

<sup>20</sup> Superintendent William Shields to Councilmember Harry Thomas Sr., November 19, 1993; Harry Thomas Sr. to William Shields, November 10, 1993; Ann Gilbride to William Shields, November 3, 1993; William Shields to Carole Baker, August 12, 1994; Carole Baker to John Parsons, July 21, 1994, all in File CWDW–Ft Bunker Hill–General–Park Assns 1985–1993, Box 27, MRCE. Press Release, Eleanor Holmes Norton webpage, “Crime Spree to Bring Norton to Fort Totten Park,” October 4, 2012, <https://norton.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/crime-spree-to-bring-norton-to-fort-totten-park>, accessed February 6, 2018.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **The Park within the City and Nation**

Rock Creek Park's superintendents have had to juggle the park's mission with the realities of living not only in an urban area but the nation's capital. Sometimes, the park (and other NPS sites within the region) has attracted heightened attention from the US Congress and the president that may not have been the case if located further from the national capital. The Park Service has also had to collaborate with other federal agencies to meet safety and political exigencies unique to the capital region. Manassas National Battlefield Park in northern Virginia, for example, had a constant stream of controversies related to suburban development that prompted unusual congressional inquiry and action. As another example, the federal government carved a Presidential Retreat, later called Camp David, out of Catoctin Mountain Park in Maryland. Catoctin Mountain Park superintendents have had to coordinate with the military presence and at times assert their authority over the national park site for visitor safety and protection. The National Park Service has also accommodated nationally significant social justice actions and politically inspired events on the National Mall, in addition to serving visitors and recreational users.<sup>1</sup>

Security measures undertaken to address potential terrorist attacks represent a more recent involvement between the National Park Service and other federal agencies. Terrorist attacks resulting in the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrow Federal Building in Oklahoma City and bombings in 1998 of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania led to closing Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House and the design of a pedestrian mall with multiple security enhancements. After the September 11, 2001, attacks, the National Capital Region placed barriers around key memorials, including the Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial, and Jefferson Memorial, and making design changes to keep vehicles away. The National Capital Regional Office has significantly bolstered US Park Police presence at key sites.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter looks at how politics and national imperatives have played out in Rock Creek Park and how other federal agencies have collaborated with Rock Creek Park's administrative units. One superintendent found that funding decisions depended on how well Reservation 339 looked to congressional members and their staff as they commuted through the park. The Rock Creek Park Tennis Center was built and maintained, according to many people, due to political pressure. Separately, the National Park Service and the District confronted politically sensitive issues with their soil erosion mitigation work at the Walter Pierce Community Park in Adams Morgan. The uncovering of human remains from two nineteenth-century cemeteries, one Quaker and a much larger African American one, required both agencies to cooperate with residents and descendants in caring for these gravesites. Finally, the chapter examines the politically charged controversy over building cellphone towers in Reservation 339, which went against staff recommendations but had strong political support.

---

<sup>1</sup> Robinson & Associates, National Park Service National Capital Region Administrative History, 1952–2005 (hereafter NCR Admin History) (2008), 144, 148, 154, 156, DSC, TIC.

<sup>2</sup> NCR Admin History, 154, 156.

## Politics and Planning

Political forces have shaped Rock Creek Park from its beginnings. When the US Congress debated the legislation for establishing the park, some congressional representatives balked at spending federal tax dollars for a park they saw as benefiting speculators and local interests. Rep. Lewis E. Payson (R-IL) stated in 1888 that “the primary result [of the bill was] . . . to largely enhance the value of the speculative holdings of the owners of real estate thereabout.”<sup>3</sup> This reluctance to support the park led Congress to include a provision for the District of Columbia to reimburse the US Treasury for half the expenses of surveying and acquiring lands and then for maintenance and improvement of the park. The enabling legislation also required assessments of nearby property owners if they directly benefited from the location and improvement of the park.<sup>4</sup>

Rock Creek Park superintendents have recognized that political interests hold sway in the park’s workings. Superintendent Georgia Ellard noted that well-connected and wealthy artists made up the Art Barn Association that rented space in Peirce Mill Barn. They controlled what exhibits went up when and hired their own director. Ellard said later that “you had to be very careful in those associations.” The benefit, though, came from the introductions Ellard had to people in the embassies. Plus, the Art Barn Association held an annual Day in the Park that “was unbelievable,” she recalled. “It was just an excellent opportunity to engage with people” whom one would not otherwise have known.<sup>5</sup>

Superintendent Rolland Swain knew that how much money his park received was directly tied to how well it looked from the perspective of its commuter route. He stated that “the politics are [that] the Rock Creek Parkway better look good” because so many members of Congress and their staff took the parkway back and forth to the Capital each day.<sup>6</sup> According to Swain, National Capital Regional Director Robert Stanton insisted that Rock Creek Park spend thousands of dollars each year to plant daffodil bulbs, even though the park suffered from budget cuts. “It needs to look the way it has,” Swain stated, because “that’s a reality of working in the District.” In fact, how well the parkway looked also influenced congressional appropriation decisions in general. Swain emphasized that how the parkway looked had implications for the National Park Service “that were bigger than Rock Creek or bigger than the National Capital Region.”<sup>7</sup>

Swain argued that these economic decisions had a negative effect on how the park maintained other areas. He pointed at the Northeast Region of the District where Rock Creek Park had authority over Fort Totten, one of the Civil War Defenses of Washington. Residents in this area, who were predominantly African American, perceived “that the ignoring of the needs was because it was racial.” But Swain insisted, “That wasn’t it.” Stanton, an African American, required Swain to put money into the parkway, and the limited park budget could not meet expectations elsewhere.<sup>8</sup>

Other examples abound of politics and park planning for Rock Creek Park units. Concessions Specialist Steve LeBel called the construction of the tennis stadium and the annual tournament “a very political event” due to the tennis foundation hosting a national tournament

---

<sup>3</sup> Lewis, as quoted in Barry Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 1, “Renewal of Interest” section.

<sup>4</sup> Rock Creek Park (ROCR) Enabling Legislation (1890), Sec. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Georgia Ellard, transcript of oral history interview with Lu Ann Jones, January 16, 2015, 36, NCR Archives.

<sup>6</sup> Rolland Swain, transcript of oral history interview with the author, August 22, 2014, 42, ROCR Archives.

<sup>7</sup> Swain, transcript of interview, 4, 42.

<sup>8</sup> Swain, transcript of interview, 41.

and the neighborhood opposed to the traffic and parking problems. He also recounted the situation at Thompson Boat Center, in which at least one local university tried to take over management. “We’ve always prevailed,” according to LeBel, but there is “constant political pressure” to turn it over to the institutional rowers to operate. LeBel also mentioned that Rock Creek Park proper, Reservation 339, had its own pressures. “You’ve got rich folks on one side,” LeBel stated, “and not so many wealthy folks on the other side of the park.” He indicated that the park was “in the middle of a lot of very valuable property” and that there was “tremendous political pressure from the District” from the wealthy landowners.<sup>9</sup>

Steve Saari, who helped reinvigorate Friends of Rock Creek’s Environment (FORCE), called Rock Creek Park “a poor park,” caught between the NPS mission and the political whims of the city. He noted that “this city is just full of lawyers,” and residents have connections with senators or others to try to have “the Park Service do something that isn’t a part of their mission.” He immediately thought of the Tennis Center and remarked that he was certain Rock Creek Park managers “would be very happy to not have that there.”<sup>10</sup>

Park managers have sought positive ways to address these political realities. One key component has been developing relationships with District elected officials. Over the years, park superintendents have routinely met with the Advisory Neighborhood Commissions having jurisdiction where Rock Creek Park has park units. These interactions have allowed the National Park Service to address neighborhood concerns and advocate for park issues.<sup>11</sup> District of Columbia Delegate to the House of Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton and the National Park Service have worked together collegially over the years. Norton stated that “I’ve had an excellent relationship with them. We’re always on them to get things done.” But she recognized that the National Park Service was “one of the best examples of an underfunded agency” with business all over the United States. She understood “the pressures they’re under.” She has paid close attention to the neighborhood parks, which often are owned by the federal government.<sup>12</sup>

Norton has also worked with the National Park Service to address requests from her constituents, including Rock Creek Park friends groups. Rock Creek Conservancy asked Norton to support legislation to rename Rock Creek Park as Rock Creek National Park, to emphasize the fact that the National Park Service owned and managed this park. The Alliance to Preserve the Civil War Defenses of Washington also asked Norton to submit legislation to make the Civil War Defenses of Washington their own national park unit. In each case, Norton worked with the friends group and the National Park Service.<sup>13</sup>

### **Walter Pierce Park and Its Cemeteries**

District of Columbia politics and concerns have also played a role in Rock Creek Park planning and administration. The National Park Service has historically owned most parklands in the District, requiring the federal and local governments to coordinate their park planning. This situation raised two questions in the late 1960s and early 1970s. First, should the nation’s taxpayers pay for local recreation in the District? Second, with Home Rule coming for the

---

<sup>9</sup> Steve Lebel, transcript of oral history interview with the author, August 18, 2017, 5, 16, 22, ROCR Archives.

<sup>10</sup> Steve Saari, transcript of oral history interview with the author, May 5, 2018, 21–22, ROCR Archives.

<sup>11</sup> Georgia Ellard, transcript of oral history interview with the author, May 8, 2017, 5, ROCR Archives. Julia Washburn, transcript of oral history interview with the author, July 10, 2017, 40, ROCR Archives.

<sup>12</sup> Eleanor Holmes Norton, transcript of oral history interview with the author, September 8, 2017, 2, 5, ROCR Archives. Quotes on p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Norton, transcript of interview, 5–7. Loretta Neumann, transcript of oral history interview with the author, September 5, 2017, 21–22, ROCR Archives.

District (achieved in 1973), shouldn't the District have control over its own recreational facilities? In response to these issues, the National Park Service has slowly transferred ownership or jurisdiction of some lands to the District. In 1968, the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) prepared a study to begin addressing these questions. The National Park Service had built and maintained recreation centers, for example, in the post–World War II period and had assigned their management to the District's Department of Recreation. In 1971, the NPS National Capital Region implemented the National Capital Planning Commission plan and transferred more than 350 municipal park units (totaling about 750 acres), consisting mostly of recreation areas, picnic areas, and traffic islands, to the District. This transfer reduced the number of park areas that the National Capital Region administers by nearly half. However, the National Park Service still has jurisdiction over 74 percent of parklands in the District.<sup>14</sup>

Rock Creek Park has also been involved in politically sensitive situations. In 2005, city and federal officials announced plans to conduct soil erosion mitigation work at Walter Pierce Community Park in Adams Morgan. The park encompassed two former nineteenth-century cemeteries, one a small Quaker burial ground (established in 1807), and the other a much larger African American cemetery (founded in 1870) called Mount Pleasant Plains Cemetery and started by the Colored Union Benevolent Association. Both cemeteries closed in 1890 due to development pressures. The District owns and administers most of Walter Piece Park. NPS has authority over a small piece of developed land on the west side, with a sidewalk, lights, and some benches, and the hillside to the west with some burials. The Smithsonian also owns part of the park. The District's mitigation work would involve heavy earth-moving machinery, and residents, some of whom were descendants of people buried in the cemeteries, protested. NPS slope mitigation work did not involve any heavy machinery but rather handwork. Human bones had begun washing out of hills due to erosion, and many people believed the National Park Service responded slowly to the situation. These protesters convinced Mark Mack, a biological anthropologist at Howard University and laboratory director at African Burial Ground National Monument in lower Manhattan, to lead an investigation of the site. In 2006, the District agreed to halt its work until Mack and his fellow researchers completed their study.<sup>15</sup>

The archeological investigation did not deliberately disturb the graves or remove human remains. Volunteers removed some human remains after the archeological investigations began.<sup>16</sup> Mack led a pedestrian survey, which involved site investigation and documentation of the ground to check for exposed remains and artifacts. Researchers also used non-invasive ground-penetrating radar to look at subsurface features. Investigators conducted historical research to learn who was buried in the two cemeteries. They identified more than 8,400 burials in the two cemeteries and less than 300 disinterments, according to District records.<sup>17</sup>

During this research, the National Park Service released a 2009 draft Environmental Assessment in preparation for a soil erosion mitigation project on the West Slope of Walter Pierce Park. During the pedestrian survey, investigators found exposed human skeletal remains from at least four individuals, a wood coffin, and cemetery-related hardware. In 2010, the

---

<sup>14</sup> CWDW NRHP Nomination Form (2015), Section 8, 134. NCR Admin History, 22, Appendix A, p. 17; Appendix E, p. 29. District of Columbia Parks and Recreation, Master Plan (2014), 17.

<sup>15</sup> Mark Mack and Mary Belcher, *The Archaeological Investigation of Walter C. Pierce Community Park and Vicinity, 2005–2012* (2013), 1. Personal conversation, Josh Torres with the author, July 10, 2017. Personal communication, Bob Soderman with the author, March 10, 2016.

<sup>16</sup> The human remains are housed in the W. Montague Cobb Biological Anthropology Laboratory at Howard University.

<sup>17</sup> Mack and Belcher, *Walter Pierce Archaeological Investigation*, 5–6.

National Park Service began the mitigation work. Observers claimed that they saw NPS contractors engage in activities they characterized as disrespectful to those buried in the cemetery, including roughly placing boulders in the gullies that were being stabilized. Residents protested this turn of events. Mary Belcher, a concerned neighbor, professional artist, and community historian, documented the disturbances. Rock Creek Park Cultural Resources Manager Simone Monteleone clarified that National Park Service contractors did not dig and respectfully covered any remains they found. The protests continued, and the National Park Service temporarily halted the work. The park ultimately allowed the Walter Pierce Park Archaeology Team to monitor the mitigation project.<sup>18</sup>

Mack's archeological investigation ended in 2012 with a series of recommendations, some of which applied to the National Park Service. The investigators called for all graves to be left and protected with minimal disturbance. Future park construction by the District was to be minimized, with heavy trucks and other vehicles banned from driving across the lands. Land crews, including city and federal workers, were to obtain training in recognizing and handling human remains and artifacts. Investigators wanted a permanent place of remembrance and for the site to be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. They also wanted the District to pass legislation and establish policies to identify and protect other African American burial grounds. Recent projects include finalizing a cemetery management plan in 2020 and working to complete the National Register of Historic Places nomination form for the site.<sup>19</sup>

### **Cell Phone Towers**

The increased reliance on cell phones, driven by technological improvements, has made the placement of cell phone towers a politically charged issue. President Bill Clinton signed into law the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which was enacted to promote competition and reduce regulations to stimulate the adoption of new technologies. Clinton had submitted a preceding August 10, 1995, memorandum directing federal agencies to develop necessary procedures for facilitating access to federal properties for locating wireless telecommunication facilities (WTF). The Act makes federal property, including national parkland, available for the placement of wireless telecommunication facilities by duly authorized providers, absent conflicts with an agency's mission, an agency's current or planned use of the property, or access to that property. NPS Director's Order 53 on Special Park Uses and its accompanying Reference Manual 53 delineate the procedures for implementing the 1996 act.<sup>20</sup>

Rock Creek Park was one of the first national park sites to have cell phone towers. On April 15, 1998, Bell Atlantic Mobile Inc. (now Verizon) submitted separate applications for right-of-way permits for two wireless telecommunication facilities in Rock Creek Park. In 1999, the National Park Service, National Capital Region, completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) to assess the potential effects of these proposed facilities on Rock Creek Park's resources.

---

<sup>18</sup> The National Park Service has owned this land since 1929, as part of Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway. See Mack and Belcher, *Walter Pierce Archaeological Investigation*, 2, 64, 113, 136. Michael Price, "Graves beneath the Park in Adams Morgan," *Washington Post* (May 16, 2013).

<sup>19</sup> Mack and Belcher, *Walter Pierce Archaeological Investigation*, 139–40. The NPS has no plans for redeveloping or doing any construction on the portion of land the agency manages that is connected to the park and the cemetery. Changes may be made pending the completion of, and adoption of, any recommendations in the cemetery management plan, which was still in draft form as of 2020. Walter Pierce Park is not on the National Register as of 2020. NPS Comments to second draft of Admin History, September 16, 2020, ROCR Archives.

<sup>20</sup> ROCR, *Wireless Telecommunication Plan and Environmental Assessment (WTP and EA 2008)*, 2008, 7. NPS Director's Order 53 was released in 1997 and revised in 2000 and 2004. See PEER, *Telecom Act and Parks*.

The National Park Service determined that the wireless telecommunication facilities would not have a significant impact on the human environment and thus released a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), dated March 2, 1999, and a revised one on April 7, 1999. Bell Atlantic Mobile constructed the two wireless telecommunication facilities, each consisting of a monopole with antennae and supporting infrastructure—one at the Maintenance Yard (130-foot tall) and the other at the Tennis Center (100-foot tall). These two monopoles went operational in March 2000.<sup>21</sup>

The process of approving Rock Creek Park's two cell phone towers held special significance. John Parsons, Associate Regional Director for Land, Resources, and Planning in the National Capital Region, recalled that the National Park Service was under great pressure to review and approve the Bell Atlantic Mobile application. If not done within thirty to forty-five days, Parsons stated, "there was going to be national legislation for the Park Service." Federal agencies had previously expressed reluctance to approve initial phone company requests for cell phone towers, and the 1996 Telecommunications Act served to facilitate the process. The Act ensured that federal agencies did not automatically oppose cell towers on their land. However, National Park Service managers still did not warm up to the idea of cell towers, and Parsons stated that if the National Park Service "got out of step with the rest of the federal agencies," then he knew Congress would pass specific legislation giving the agency "less discretion." According to Parsons, NPS Deputy Director Denis Galvin believed that if the Rock Creek Park cell towers did not get done, then "the whole park system nationally would be suffering." Parsons admitted that "the park staff will never forgive me" because the region took the review process over and completed the task as quickly as possible.<sup>22</sup>

Congress had another reason to pay attention to the cell tower applications in Rock Creek Park. Members of Congress and their staff often drove through Rock Creek Park, and they wanted coverage. Parsons argued that "all decisions are local," meaning that the immediate needs of these legislators would take precedence.<sup>23</sup>

Bell Atlantic Mobile and others consistently argued that the park needed the cell towers to ensure adequate communication within Rock Creek Park for safety reasons. The park's hilly geography and deep terrain meant that large "dead zones" existed where the company could not ensure coverage. The White House, US Park Police, and Congress all urged the National Park Service to approve and renew these towers in the name of safety. Park Police needed the towers for law enforcement and emergency communications purposes. Vice presidential motorcades traveled through the park two or three times a week on average according to a 2003 letter.<sup>24</sup>

The Audubon Naturalist Society of the Central Atlantic States and private individuals filed a lawsuit in 2000. They argued that the National Park Service had completed a legally insufficient Environmental Assessment, which then led the National Park Service to erroneously

---

<sup>21</sup> ROCR, WTP and EA 2008, 12. ROCR, Telecommunications Facilities Environmental Assessment, 2003, iii.

<sup>22</sup> John Parsons, transcript of oral history interview with Judith H. Robinson, Tim Kerr, and Gary Scott, October 18, 2006, 78, Appendix E of NCR Admin History.

<sup>23</sup> Parsons, transcript of 2006 interview, 78.

<sup>24</sup> Rep. W. J. Billy Tauzin to Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton, February 13, 2003, ROCR Archives. Quote on p. 1. See also Darryl Fears, "Protesters Oppose Park Towers Despite Early Construction," *Washington Post* (January 23, 2000). Chief, White House Communications Agency Frank Mathis Jr. to ROCR Superintendent Adrienne Coleman, January 14, 2003, ROCR Archives and Counsel for Verizon Wireless (successor to Bell Atlantic Mobile) R. Timothy McCrum to Assistant Attorney General, Environmental and Natural Resources Division, Department of Justice Thomas L. Sansonetti and Department of the Interior Solicitor William G. Meyers III, February 14, 2003, both in ROCR Archives. Cox, transcript of interview, 14.

issue the FONSI (“Finding of No Significant Impact”) and allow construction of the towers. Rock Creek Park Resource Management Specialist Ken Ferebee later stated that the initial Environmental Assessment that the regional office wrote “was just a piece of junk.” He characterized it as “a ramrod effect.” He saw the Environmental Assessment as something just to get done because “we have to.” This description fits with what Parsons had explained, with the National Capital Region’s effort to avoid legislation by rushing through the Rock Creek Park review.<sup>25</sup>

On July 2, 2002, the US District Court for the District of Columbia found in favor of the plaintiffs and ordered the National Park Service to submit a new Environmental Assessment. The court ruled that the initial Environmental Assessment was insufficient in its analysis of the impact of the towers on migratory birds. The Maintenance Yard cell tower is in an important nocturnal migratory bird flyway. The National Park Service released a new Environmental Assessment and signed a revised FONSI on June 16, 2003. The 2003 Environmental Assessment allowed the two monopoles to remain but required the National Park Service to develop a plan for evaluating future wireless telecommunication facilities’ permit applications and monitoring the impacts of the towers on migratory birds. In October 2005, the National Park Service renewed the right-of-way permits for the two towers. During this renewal review process, the National Capital Planning Commission stated that it would not approve any further renewals until the National Park Service had a plan for future wireless telecommunication facilities sited in Rock Creek Park. The National Park Service submitted this plan in 2008.<sup>26</sup>

The cell towers elicited negative reactions. Rock Creek Park’s staff largely opposed the towers. Rock Creek Park Deputy Superintendent Cindy Cox stated that “the majority of the staff really didn’t want it because they thought it would mar the visual quality of the park.”<sup>27</sup> Resource Management Specialist Bill Yeaman later stated that Superintendent Adrienne Coleman and Cox “both strongly opposed it. Despite getting pressure from regional people to support it.” Yeaman described Coleman’s reaction to the towers as being “so discouraged and so despondent.” Yeaman recalled that she said, “I failed. We got this darn tower.”<sup>28</sup>

Many members of the public also opposed the towers. According to Rock Creek Park Deputy Superintendent Cindy Cox, “people were really, really, really, really, really against it.”<sup>29</sup> One public hearing during the initial review process demonstrated this antagonism. National Capital Region Chief of Planning Tammy Stidham said that the meeting “was very, very contentious.” Many worried that migratory birds would inadvertently hit the cell towers and die. One woman especially expressed this fear when she dropped a bag of dead birds on a table in front of the National Park Service presenters at a public hearing. This show of resistance particularly impressed Stidham. She later said that this act was the woman’s way of expressing her what would happen if the cell tower was put in the Maintenance Yard.<sup>30</sup>

Rock Creek Park staff and some others raised other concerns. People wondered if cell towers placed outside park boundaries would address the coverage needs. Other factors included

---

<sup>25</sup> Ken Ferebee, transcript of oral history interview with the author, January 5, 2017, 25, ROCR Archives.

<sup>26</sup> ROCR, WTP and EA 2008, 12-13. ROCR, 2003 EA, 5-6. Cox, transcript of interview, 15. Stephanie D. Dickey and J. Edward Gates, Annual Report, The Effect of Cell Towers on Birds and Bats at Rock Creek Park, Washington, DC, 2007, 8.

<sup>27</sup> Cox, transcript of interview, 17. Bill Yeaman also referred to the staff worrying about the visual intrusion of the towers. See Bill Yeaman, transcript of oral history interview with the author, January 13, 2017, 25, ROCR Archives.

<sup>28</sup> Yeaman, transcript of interview, 25, 35.

<sup>29</sup> Cox, transcript of interview, 16.

<sup>30</sup> Tammy Stidham, transcript of oral history interview with the author, August 4, 2017, 7-8, ROCR Archives.

air quality and noise from construction and maintenance of wireless telecommunications facilities. Construction and maintenance operations could also impair flora and fauna habitat and negatively impact historic and cultural resources. A frequent complaint centered around the visual intrusion of the towers. The Maintenance Yard tower could interrupt sightlines to Fort DeRussy and between Fort DeRussy and Forts Stevens and Reno. Visitor and staff safety could be affected by radiofrequency emissions from the facilities. The 2003 Environmental Assessment did not find sufficient reason for any of these concerns to warrant removal of or changes to the wireless telecommunications facilities.<sup>31</sup>

Rock Creek Park addressed the 2002 court order and contracted with the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, Appalachian Laboratory, to conduct a three-year migratory bird and bat survey. The initial results indicated that the towers did not pose a significant threat to migratory birds or bats. According to the report, the few mortalities found could be attributed to causes other than the towers, with the exception of one case.<sup>32</sup> Stidham noted that the park did not experience the bird mortality they had expected. “But who knew at that point?” she said. “Cell towers were fairly new.”<sup>33</sup>

The two cell towers and support facilities remain in Rock Creek Park. The review processes for the acceptance and renewal of the right-of-way permits demonstrate that political forces played an important role, usurping the park’s resistance. Many members of the public opposed the towers based on concerns that have since been proven unwarranted with respect to birds being threatened by the cell towers. But the towers remain a significant visual intrusion.

## **Conclusion**

Rock Creek Park’s managers have stewarded the park’s resources through the realities of federal and District government influences. Sometimes congressional or city forces have had the happy result of introducing superintendents to people who were otherwise off limits, such as Superintendent Georgia Ellard found with Art Barn associates. Other times, these intrusions have put park managers at odds with these higher levels of power, threatening the park’s resources. The case of the Tennis Center and cell phone towers in Reservation 339 represent such obtrusive developments. Rock Creek Park’s staff also had to find ways to work with District residents and descendants of people buried in historic cemeteries encompassed by the Walter Pierce Community Park. Political and cultural considerations have shaped National Park Service actions within Rock Creek Park and other National Capital Park units.

---

<sup>31</sup> ROCR, 2003 EA, 9–11.

<sup>32</sup> Dickey and Gates, Annual Report, The Effect of Cell Towers, 2007, 8. Stephanie D. Dickey and J. Edward Gates, Annual Report, The Effect of Cell Towers on Birds and Bats at Rock Creek Park, Washington, DC, 2008, 7.

<sup>33</sup> Stidham, transcript of interview, 8.

**PART 2**  
**Park Resource Challenges**



*Figure 6. Rock Creek Fish Ladder*  
*NPS PHOTO, 2007*

## CHAPTER 6 Natural Resources Challenges

Natural resources are the bedrock of what makes Rock Creek Park. Its 1890 designation as a national park unit resulted from the recognition that its valley, forest, and picturesque water features appealed to humans as a respite from the demands of an increasingly urbanized society. The enabling legislation called for Rock Creek Park to serve as a “public park or pleasure ground” with roadways, foot trails, and bridle paths. This legislation also called for park managers to preserve the plants, animals, and “curiosities” within the park in their “natural condition,” or as close to that condition as possible.<sup>1</sup>

Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and his brother stated in their 1918 report that the “real justification” of Rock Creek Park was in the “recreative value of natural qualities.” The park’s public value came from its “wild and natural beauty.”<sup>2</sup> At the same time, the Olmsted brothers urged that the park be open to increasingly more people who might benefit from walking, driving, and riding through its varying scenery. They pointed out the need for better transportation to bring people, rich and poor, to the park. Their words reflect the dual mandate for Rock Creek Park and other national park sites, to preserve the natural beauty while also making useful that beauty for public enjoyment.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter looks at key natural resource challenges in Rock Creek Park. Many of these projects serve as an excellent example for seeing science applied to management decisions. Park staff underwent a multi-year evaluation of the damage deer were inflicting on park resources, leading to a deer management program. This chapter also looks at evaluations of Rock Creek and how barriers from Peirce Mill and other features hindered the migration and spawning of certain fish and eels. Fish ladder construction at these barriers has returned natural reproduction to Rock Creek. Non-native invasive plants and animals, another topic in this chapter, have required intensive study and action by park staff and volunteers.

Urban runoff has been a continuing challenge to the natural resources of Rock Creek Park. Impervious surfaces, such as roads and buildings, have forced rainfall into stormwater sewers or to rush downward via gravity into Rock Creek and its tributaries. Sometimes the stormwater sewers overflow during significant rainstorms. This water surge negatively affects Rock Creek Park by eroding streambanks and pumping oils, salts, and other contaminants into the water and ground. Each of the topics discussed in this chapter can add urban runoff as a factor. For a more complete explanation of stormwater and its effects on the park, see Chapter 3.

### Inventory of Natural Resources

National Park staff within the National Capital Region and Rock Creek Park have conducted scientific research and identified and monitored key species to maintain these natural features. This work has taken different forms over the years. In 1938, Donald McHenry developed a quarter-mile-loop nature trail east of Beach Drive and north of the Bingham Road intersection that identified two hundred plants and other natural features. From then and into World War II, McHenry and his naturalist staff, which included W. Drew Chick Jr., led bird-

---

<sup>1</sup> Rock Creek Park Enabling Legislation, September 27, 1890, Sec. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Olmsted Brothers, Rock Creek Park, 1918, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Olmsted Brothers, Rock Creek Park, 1–2. See also the enabling legislation for Yellowstone National Park, March 1, 1872.

watching walks and nature hikes. They worked with volunteers from the District's Audubon Society. Chick Jr. later became chief naturalist of National Capital Parks and instituted the first Rock Creek Park Day, on May 15, 1955, to focus attention, in part, on the protection of the Rock Creek watershed.<sup>4</sup>

The early 1960s brought a sea of change for expectations about the National Park Service's natural resources management, putting science at the forefront. The 1962 National Park Service report, *Wildlife Management in the National Parks*, known as the Stagner Report for lead writer and park naturalist Howard R. Stagner, called for policies to preserve animal populations in their natural wild states. In a 1963 report, the National Academy of Sciences recommended that the National Park Service (NPS) establish an independent research unit within the agency to complete comprehensive natural resource studies by qualified scientists. Finally, also in 1963, the *Report of the Advisory Board on Wildlife Management in the National Parks*, named the Leopold Report after advisory board chairman and scientist A. Starker Leopold, argued for the National Park Service to maintain or recreate biotic associations in parks that are in the condition of when the first Europeans visited the United States.<sup>5</sup>

In response to these reports, in 1964 National Park Service Director George Hartzog appointed National Science Foundation biologist George Sprugle Jr. as the first chief scientist in agency history. He made science a priority for the agency, at least for a short time. By 1969, however, Hartzog de-emphasized science by removing the Office of Natural Science Studies from his direct supervision and burying it under a cluster of eight divisions overseen by a single associate director. In 1971, Hartzog moved staff scientists to regional offices, naming them regional chief scientists reporting to the regional directors. Biologists in the parks reported to regional directors or park superintendents, not the chief scientist in Washington as previously. This scenario left park scientists without an organizational home and made them dependent upon the parks and regions for funding and authority.<sup>6</sup>

Other factors slowed the advance of science in the National Park Service. Between 1961 and 1972, Congress and the Executive Branch added 87 new park units and 3.7 million acres of land to the national park system. More parks came in the 1970s, including 12 national monuments in Alaska under President Jimmy Carter. A 1978 omnibus bill added another 12 parks, expanded more than 20 others, and raised spending ceilings on 36 more, which could be used to acquire additional land. This massive increase in real estate for the National Park Service to manage meant that science—and any other discrete agency division—came under increasing competition for funds.<sup>7</sup>

The fact that science failed to have a strong organizational foothold within the strongly bureaucratic agency meant that its research and management efforts suffered. Within Rock Creek Park, this situation manifested in the fact that dedicated scientific studies did not begin until 1979. This setback was not unusual. Not until 1978 did a work session at the annual superintendents' conference note the need for strengthening natural resources programs in the parks. The next year, the National Parks and Conservation Association (NPCA) completed an adjacent lands survey that pointed out that external threats, such as pollution and increased

---

<sup>4</sup> Barry Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter "Under the National Park Service," section "Interpretation, Recreation, and Entertainment." Robinson & Associates, National Park Service National Capital Region: Administrative History 1952–2005, 87.

<sup>5</sup> Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 114–17. Robinson & Associates, NCR Admin History, 84.

<sup>6</sup> Sellars, *Preserving Nature*, 220, 227–29.

<sup>7</sup> NPS, *The National Parks: Shaping the System* (NPS, 2005), 80–84, 100–101.

development, were treating parks as “isolated islands,” which rendered the traditional preservation efforts practiced by park staff meaningless. Under congressional pressure, the National Park Service completed its own survey of park conditions and released *State of the Parks—1980: A Report to Congress*. *State of the Parks* agreed with the 1979 NPCA report on external threats and added data on problems within parks, such as visitor use.<sup>8</sup>

In 1979, Rock Creek Park staff initiated regular field monitoring of streams, trails, and boundaries. The park also made an intentional effort to work closely with DC government offices to check the impact on park land of sewers, facilities, and construction sites under District purview. Extensive planting in the park was meant to retard erosion and stabilize streambanks, replace dead plants and those damaged from storms, and fulfill landscape plans. In 1985, the park reported its sixth year of conducting a small mammal survey. That same year, the park sent two calls to area universities for proposals for research projects. The park expected qualified graduate students to perform the work. One project focused on herbariums and the other invasive species. Between 1986 and 1994, the park saw a survey of vascular flora completed and reported by Peggy Fleming and Raclare Kanal. They found 656 species, with 418 indigenous and 238 introduced. These combined efforts set the stage for intensive inventory and monitoring work by the 2000s, building an information base for park planning and action.<sup>9</sup>

Rock Creek Park protects a distinctive and diverse range of species, a potential source of surprise to the casual visitor or weekday commuter. Federally listed species in Rock Creek Park include the northern long-eared bat and the Hays spring amphipod. The latter exists in freshwater springs located in certain areas of the park, plus next door at the National Zoo. Its existence depends upon the reduction of threats from the pollution of the waters sustaining this fragile species. The 1980 and 1983 Resources Management Plans noted that staff were instructed to avoid disclosing spring locations to prevent accidental or intentional contamination. The 2005 General Management Plan (GMP) listed twenty-eight rare plant species in Rock Creek Park. These included American chestnut, shingle oak, overcup oak, and Kentucky coffee tree. Rare flowering plants included the orange coneflower, cornel-leaved aster, two-flowered melic, yellow passionflower, and Carolina leaf flower. Arlington County, Virginia, and the State of Maryland identified additional animal and plant species for state listing. Overall, as of 2019, Rock Creek Park is home to 700-plus species of flowering plants (500 native plants and 200 non-native invasive plants) and 9 species of coniferous trees.<sup>10</sup>

National Park Service natural resources inventories as of 2019 identified about 260 animal species in Rock Creek Park, excluding insects and other invertebrates. About 30 species of mammals call Rock Creek Park their home. Some species have attracted public attention over the years, including coyote, raccoon, gray fox, red fox, opossum, beaver, gray squirrel, eastern chipmunk, and white-tailed deer. Park staff and members of such birding organizations as the

---

<sup>8</sup> Sellars, *Preserving Nature*, 262–63.

<sup>9</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 1979, 12, 14, File Admin–Annual Report 1979, Box 69, Museum Resource Center. All MRCE files are in the ROCR Collection. ROCR, Annual Report 1981, 26, File Admin–Annual Report 1981, Box 69, MRCE. ROCR, Annual Report, 1985, 35–36, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR. Peggy Fleming and Raclare Kanal, “Annotated Checklist of Vascular Plants of Rock Creek Park, National Park Service, Washington, DC,” *Castanea* 60 (December 1995): 283–316.

<sup>10</sup> ROCR, Resources Management Plan, 1983, N19-1, File General–History–Admin–Management Plans–1983, Box 72, MRCE. ROCR, Resources Management Plan, 1980, 21, Denver Service Center, Technical Information Center. ROCR, GMP/EIS, 2005, 144–46; Appendix E. Explore Natural Communities website, <https://www.explorenaturalcommunities.org/parks-places/rock-creek-park/natural-history/native-plants>, accessed December 11, 2019.

Audubon Naturalist Society have documented about 180 species of breeding or migratory birds. Most are seasonal visitors. The Audubon Naturalist Society and the American Bird Conservancy in 2004 named Rock Creek Park as an Important Birding Area due to its exceptional diversity of bird species. Rock Creek Park has a 65-acre breeding bird census area, used since 1948 to count bird species. Typically, these birds nest in the breeding bird census area. Overall results from the breeding bird census have documented a serious decline in neotropical migrants, such as the red-eyed vireo, ovenbird, wood thrush, and other migrants that breed in the park.<sup>11</sup>

Documented declines are found with reptiles and amphibians. In the early to mid-twentieth century, reptiles numbered 24 species and amphibians numbered 17 species. By 2005, reptile numbers had decreased to 11 species and amphibians to 9 species. The park's amphibian numbers echoed those found world-wide. Among the amphibians lost to Rock Creek Park are the gray treefrog and chorus frog.<sup>12</sup>

About 35 species of fish call Rock Creek home. Resident native species include white suckers, yellow bullhead catfish, pumpkinseed, American eel, and many minnow species, such as blacknose dace, cutlips minnow, bluntnose minnow, and common shiner. Some anadromous species, such as the alewife and blueback herring, migrate from the Atlantic Ocean to Rock Creek in the spring to spawn. Resident-introduced species include carp, bluegill, and largemouth bass. In 2007, the park built a fish ladder at Peirce Mill dam to allow unobstructed access to historic spawning waters all the way to Rockville, Maryland. The American eel takes a reverse route, living in Rock Creek until it swims to the North Atlantic Ocean to spawn. Unfortunately, urban pollution and stormwater runoff adversely affect fish numbers and diversity in the park.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, Rock Creek Park has non-native wildlife. Some examples, among many others, include free-roaming domestic cats that prey on small mammals and birds, starlings that compete with some birds for nesting sites, and the gypsy moth, which in abundant years threatened the defoliation of forest trees.<sup>14</sup>

## **Deer Management**

Ken Ferebee remembers that in 1991 when he started as a Resource Management Specialist at Rock Creek Park, he would drive the park roads and not be able to see through the woods. He would just see green. "There was a lot more vegetation," he recalled. White-tailed deer were not consuming large quantities of understory, shrub, and emerging vegetation. The park kept observation cards of any unusual or rare animal sightings, and deer sightings prompted filling out such cards. For the decade of the 1960s, the park filled out observation cards for four deer in total. Slowly, park staff registered more deer, with nineteen in the 1970s and the first recorded sighting of deer in Glover-Archbold Park in 1984. During 1987–89, the park counted thirty-nine deer. By the early 1990s, people saw so many deer that the park decided to stop completing the observation cards. "It wasn't a big deal anymore [to see a deer]," Ferebee noted.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> ROCR, GMP/EIS, 146–47. Explore Natural Communities website, <https://www.explorenaturalcommunities.org/parks-places/rock-creek-park/natural-history/native-animals>, accessed December 11, 2019.

<sup>12</sup> ROCR, GMP/EIS, 147–48.

<sup>13</sup> ROCR, GMP/EIS, 147–48.

<sup>14</sup> ROCR, GMP/EIS, 148–49.

<sup>15</sup> Ken Ferebee, transcript of oral history interview with the author, January 5, 2017, 2–4, ROCR Archives. Quotes on pp. 2, 4. See also Rock Creek Park, Final White-Tailed Deer Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (NPS, 2011), ii. The 1983 Rock Creek Park Resources Management Plan says nothing about white-tailed deer.

Rock Creek Park has used various counting methods to survey deer numbers. Staff recorded the first roadkill in 1989 and have continued this count for subsequent road deaths. They keep information about the sex, age, and presence or absence of parasites. They have also started tracking road death location in a Geographic Information System layer. From 1996 to 2017, the park has conducted spotlight surveys, done at the same time each year over a four-night period and along the same twenty-two-mile route covering much of Reservation 339. The numbers of deer recorded are based upon visual sighting and eye shine. When possible, surveyors record sex and age determinations. Spotlight surveys only provide population trends, as they are not based on any specific scientific protocols. But, when graphed, these numbers demonstrate the extent of increase, from around 60 deer in 1996 to more than 250 deer in 2009. Distance sampling is another annual counting method in Rock Creek Park. Staff learned the technique and began applying it in 2000 over the course of three to four consecutive nights. Distance sampling accurately estimates animal population density. Between 1997 and 1999, the park used another counting method, known as “forward-looking infrared surveys,” which used a helicopter for nighttime surveys. The National Park Service discontinued using this method due to the unacceptable error rate.<sup>16</sup>

No matter the counting approach, the numbers demonstrated that Rock Creek Park’s deer population had skyrocketed. The park was not alone. Historically, white-tailed deer may have numbered between 23 and 34 million in the pre-European contact period. By 1790, Europeans had significantly reduced the deer population. These numbers remained low until after 1900. Then, the extirpation of predators and the growth of food and habitat sources meant a steady increase in population. White-tailed deer thrive in habitats created by suburban development, whose roads and housing units increase edge habitat by fragmenting farms and forests. Deer flourish along these edges, finding plentiful food sources, suitable shelter space, no predators, and virtually no hunting. By the late 1990s, deer density in some areas of the East Coast reached beyond 100 deer per square mile. Protected areas like Rock Creek Park have fostered deer population growth.<sup>17</sup>

National park managers at Rock Creek Park studied the deer population situation by looking at possible changes in vegetation, either in terms of variety of species or the sheer amount of plant growth. Wildlife biologists from the NPS Center for Urban Ecology in 1991 established thirty permanent vegetation monitoring plots located randomly in Reservation 339. These plots were unfenced and measured every four years. The biologists gathered base data on diversity, abundance, and size of vegetation, plus any signs of browsing. Between 1991 and 2007, biologists found that all tree seedling counts generally declined and that counts for all height classes were near zero. In 2000, biologists established paired plots (one plot fenced, the other unfenced, adjacent to each other with similar vegetation) in Reservation 339 and Glover-Archbold Park. These plots showed that plant cover for non-native, native, herbaceous, and woody plants existed two to three times less in the unfenced plots as the paired fence plots. The studies indicated that these results came from deer browsing.<sup>18</sup> National Capital Regional

---

Raccoons were the wildlife eliciting park resource attention. See Rock Creek Park, Resource Management Plan, 1983, N9-4.

<sup>16</sup> ROCR, Final White-Tailed Deer Management Plan/EIS, 14–16.

<sup>17</sup> ROCR, Final White-Tailed Deer Management Plan/EIS, 13–14. William F. Porter, *White-Tailed Deer in Eastern Ecosystems: Implications for Management and Research in National Parks* (NPS/NRSUNY/NRR-91/05, 1991), vii, 1–2.

<sup>18</sup> Rock Creek Park, Resources Management Plan, 1996, Section ROCR-N-002.002, ROCR Archives. ROCR, Final White-Tailed Deer Management Plan/EIS, 17–18.

Director Joseph Lawler encapsulated the situation, saying that “the park is being overrun by deer,” creating a challenging situation for the park superintendent and staff.<sup>19</sup>

Other jurisdictions noticed the increased numbers of deer and subsequent effects. Montgomery County, Maryland, just north of the District line, responded to resident complaints beginning in 1992 by establishing a task force and then a working group to assess deer overabundance and solutions. The county published in 1995 a comprehensive management plan for white-tailed deer, with the understanding that deer-human conflicts varied throughout the county. The plan gave attention to public safety, economics, and the protection of natural areas. In 1996, the county implemented a managed deer removal operation in the agricultural history farm park in the northern part of the county, an area which had required immediate attention. The county completed other managed deer removal operations in other areas of the county, and the program was expanded since its implementation.<sup>20</sup>

Other national park sites aside from Rock Creek Park have also struggled with increased deer numbers. At Gettysburg National Military Park (Pennsylvania), biologists started collecting data in 1987. Information showed that vegetation browsing posed a serious threat to forest regeneration and crop growth, both part of the historical scene. Gettysburg began sharpshooting in 1995, taking 503 deer, and by 2009, the park achieved its deer density goal of 25 deer per square mile. At Valley Forge National Historical Park (Pennsylvania), deer monitoring began in 1983. Deer density studies showed that numbers grew from 31 to 35 deer per square mile to 241 deer per square mile by 2009. The park worked with the US Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (USDA Wildlife Services), to implement in 2011 a lethal removal program. At Catoctin Mountain Park (Maryland), park staff in the 1990s studied forest regeneration, finding it nearly absent through the park. During this same time period, staff placed deer exclosures to show forest regeneration potential. Catoctin Mountain Park personnel conducted surveys to determine deer density, with results ranging from 125 deer per square mile to 185 deer per square mile. The park conducted deer herd checks in 1988 and 2002, with the 1988 one finding that the park could not maintain the nutritional demands of the increasing number of deer. The 2002 survey indicated that the herd suffered from parasitism and abnormal nutritional syndrome. The Catoctin Mountain Park deer exhibited poorer health than nearby herds in Antietam National Battlefield Park (Maryland) and Monocacy National Battlefield Park (Maryland). The Catoctin Mountain Park staff worked with the USDA Wildlife Services to undertake a managed deer removal operation, beginning in 2010.<sup>21</sup>

Rock Creek Park initiated the development of a white-tailed deer management plan / Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in 2005 with its internal scoping process. The park collaborated with staff from the National Capital Region Center for Urban Ecology, the Washington Service Office Environmental Quality Division, the District of Columbia Fisheries and Wildlife Division, and the Montgomery County Park and Planning Commission. This process included identifying management alternatives and mitigation measures. The park also identified members of a Science Team, which met five times over a five-month period to review and supplement data. In September 2006, the park published its Notice of Intent in the Federal

---

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Lawler, as quoted in Robinson & Associates Inc., NPS National Capital Region Administrative History: 1952–2005, June 2008, appendix E, transcript of oral history interview with Joseph Lawler, November 3, 2006, 12.

<sup>20</sup> ROCR, Final White-Tailed Deer Management Plan/EIS, 18–19.

<sup>21</sup> ROCR, Final White-Tailed Deer Management Plan/EIS, 21–23. Catoctin Mountain Park, White-Tailed Deer Management Plan: Environmental Impact Statement (NPS, 2008), 15–17. Porter, White-Tailed Deer, 26. Gettysburg National Military Park and Eisenhower National Historic Site, Final Environmental Impact Statement: White-Tailed Deer Management Plan (NPS, 1995), 9–14.

Register to mark the beginning of public scoping. In November 2006, the park hosted two public meetings in the Rock Creek Nature Center. The park released a draft plan/EIS in July 2009, with a public comment period held until November 2009. The park held another public meeting in September 2009 at the Rock Creek Park Nature Center.<sup>22</sup>

Rock Creek Park and other parks and jurisdictions have evaluated different management approaches to controlling deer populations. These alternatives fall into three broad categories: lethal control, reproductive control, and barrier control. Lethal control includes sharpshooting to immediately reduce the size of a deer herd or capture and euthanasia to remove animals not appropriately taken for safety or security reasons. Lethal control also encompasses managed public culling. Reproductive control involves darting the does with an infertility drug to last a certain number of years. Barrier control includes fencing key areas. It also involves capturing and removing deer to another location and using repellants to make vegetation less palatable.<sup>23</sup>

Public comments collected at Rock Creek Park and other park units indicated a preference for non-lethal management of deer populations. The combined Antietam National Battlefield / Monocacy National Battlefield / Manassas National Battlefield Park plan/EIS cites 17 percent of total comments opposing lethal management, another 15 percent supporting non-lethal management with reproductive control and fencing, and 14 percent supporting non-lethal management. Thirteen percent favored lethal management of deer numbers. For Catoctin Mountain Park's deer plan/EIS, many commenters raised concerns about the implementation of lethal management. Some people wanted the National Park Service to consider public hunting. A small number favored non-lethal management, which included reproductive control, fencing, and the use of repellants.<sup>24</sup>

Public comments at Rock Creek Park display a strong negative reaction to lethal management of deer populations. Almost 17 percent of commenters, totaling 428 comments, supported Alternative B non-lethal actions. Nearly 19 percent, or 480 people, opposed lethal reduction versus 1.3 percent or 33 people supporting lethal reduction. Alternative D, which was the preferred action and included lethal management and reproductive control, had 359 people (14 percent) opposed and 122 people (4.8 percent) supporting.<sup>25</sup> Comments at public meetings also indicate a preference for non-lethal management. One person questioned whether deer were a problem at the park. In her opinion, they were wonderful to see. She wanted the National Park Service to focus on other problems, such as littering and speeding. Another person recognized that deer were a problem, as they ate in her yard regularly, but she advocated for non-lethal means, especially contraceptives. A person called upon the National Park Service's moral authority to use reproductive control. Another person favored fencing, to allow the plants to grow until they no longer would attract deer browsing.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> ROCR, Final White-Tailed Deer Management Plan/EIS, 271–73. ROCR, Annual Report, 2005, 1, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR.

<sup>23</sup> Fire Island National Seashore: Final White-Tailed Deer Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (NPS, 2015), chapter 2. Catoctin Mountain Park, White-Tailed Deer Management Plan: Environmental Impact Statement (NPS, 2008), chapter 2. Antietam National Battlefield, Monocacy National Battlefield, and Manassas National Battlefield Park, Final White-Tailed Deer Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (NPS, 2014), chapter 2. ROCR, Final White-Tailed Deer Management Plan/EIS, chapter 2.

<sup>24</sup> Antietam National Battlefield et al., Final Deer Plan/EIS, 320–21. Catoctin Mountain Park, Deer Plan/EIS, 293, 385.

<sup>25</sup> ROCR, Final White-Tailed Deer Management Plan/EIS, 329–33.

<sup>26</sup> ROCR, NPS Public Meeting Deer Public Policy, November 1, 2006, 30–32, 36–44, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR.

Resource Management Specialist Ken Ferebee explained why the park needed to act as quickly as possible to stop any further damage. Some people wanted the park to leave the deer alone. The organization In Defense of Animals, based in California, stated that the park had never had to kill animals before and asked, “Why start?” This organization and five other plaintiffs unsuccessfully sued the park using this argument. Ferebee responded that the deer were drastically changing the park. The National Park Service had a responsibility to maintain the park. Otherwise, the vegetation would change. Certain animals that depended on the low shrubs and understory would leave. Deer sat at the top of the food chain and controlled the vegetation. Ferebee stated that humans had artificially created the park and its environment, and people needed to go back and maintain that environment.<sup>27</sup>

Bill Yeaman, Resource Management Specialist, agreed with Ferebee on the need for action to stop further destruction of the park’s resources from deer. Yeaman pointed out that the park has a legislative mandate to protect all trees in the park and to perpetuate a healthy and diverse ecosystem. Overpopulation of deer would eventually prevent forest regeneration. The delicate food chain would be disrupted. Loss of wildflowers meant the loss of insects feeding on them. Migratory birds would lose their food source in insects, such as caterpillars. The whole forest infrastructure would be compromised.<sup>28</sup>

The National Park Service’s National Capital Region has written resource briefs to explain the impact of high deer numbers on park environments, further supporting action to reduce herd size. Deer inhibit forest regeneration of preferred species, such as oak and hickory. Deer browsing of shrubs has meant the loss of habitat for nesting birds. Deer reduce the number of seeds and nuts by impacting the plants that produce them, leading to reduced populations of small mammals. They have reduced crop yields and damaged nurseries and orchards, though this has not happened in Rock Creek Park. Deer can carry a high number of ticks, which can carry the bacteria that causes Lyme disease. Over-browsing has meant altered nutrient levels in soil, sometimes permanently.<sup>29</sup>

Rock Creek Park adopted Alternative D, lethal and non-lethal actions, to address deer management. The park worked with the USDA Wildlife Services to design the methodology for lethal reduction. Rock Creek Park staff stand at road barricades and trailheads to ensure that people do not enter the park. Deer management operations occur in the dark when the park is closed, and there should be no visitation. The USDA Wildlife Services personnel did the sharpshooting, being well-trained from carrying out similar operations in other areas for years. Between March 2013, when the culling began, and January 2017, the park had 13 shooting rounds with no safety issues. The park removed 234 deer, or about 7,300 pounds of meat, which it donated to DC Central Kitchen, which prepares the venison and distributes it to homeless shelters and churches, wherever the food is needed. The park’s estimated deer population density was 77 per square mile when the culling started. As of January 2017, that number went down to 19 deer per square mile. The park had calculated that between 15 and 20 deer per square mile would create the conditions for successful regeneration of vegetation. The park is monitoring the vegetation management plots for evidence of forest regeneration and will base future deer management actions on the plot data.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Ferebee, transcript of interview, 12. Porter, White-Tailed Deer, 26.

<sup>28</sup> Bill Yeaman, transcript of oral history interview with the author, January 13, 2017, 23, ROCR Archives.

<sup>29</sup> National Capital Region Network, White-Tailed Deer Resource Brief, February 13, 2009.

<sup>30</sup> Ferebee, transcript of interview, 8–15. Deer Management Frequently Asked Questions, <https://www.nps.gov/rocr/learn/management/deer-management-frequently-asked-questions.htm>, accessed October

Rock Creek Park is not alone in having to address deer over-browsing. National Park Service units, after similar review of deer management, have also employed lethal control as the preferred alternative. Valley Forge National Historical Park (Pennsylvania) used culling deer in response to severe over-browsing that left only old trees and invasive plants deer did not eat. Valley Forge National Historical Park brought their deer per square mile down from 240 to 50, as of fall 2014. Fire Island National Seashore (New York) recommended using lethal means for immediately reducing the deer population. If sufficient progress had been made on reproductive control, the park would use this method to maintain the reduced herd size. Deer that approached humans in the Fire Island community would be captured and euthanized to reduce the likelihood of other deer learning this behavior. The park would use fencing to protect certain park areas. Lethal management of deer at Catoclin Mountain Park between 2010 and 2016 removed 1,200 deer, with annual maintenance to keep the population in check. At this park, culling deer has led to the return of wild turkeys and even bears. In addition, analyses showed that seedlings rose from about 630 per hectare in 2006–9 to more than 5,000 per hectare in 2011–14. Antietam / Monocacy / Manassas NBP's plan/EIS also favored sharpshooting, with reproductive control to maintain deer herd size. Culls at these three battlefield parks began in winter 2017.<sup>31</sup>

Rock Creek Park and the other National Park Service units discussed above continue to monitor vegetation resurgence and other related signs to determine the success of deer management by lethal methods. In Defense of Animals and a small number of DC residents near Rock Creek Park have used the Freedom of Information Act to request data on the park's deer management program.<sup>32</sup>

### **Non-native Invasive Plants and Herbicides**

Non-native invasive plants (or invasives) are those that have been introduced into an environment in which they did not evolve and thus have no natural enemies to limit their reproduction and spread. Next to habitat loss, invasives have become the most powerful threat to the nation's biodiversity and natural resources. Many pathways exist for the entry and establishment of plant invasives in Rock Creek Park. Improperly maintained, highly designed neighboring front and back yards can allow non-native invasive plants to slowly encroach into the park. Seeds can be brought down the gradient by Rock Creek and any of the several streams that run through the park. Once they find a suitable habitat, invasives can quickly take over an

---

30, 2018. According to ROCR Chief Ranger Nick Bartolomeo: "During the first year of culling, park managers received death threats from animal rights activists after concerted information campaigns against deer management at ROCR by these groups. The threats came in phone messages, emails and written communication. It's a tribute to the superintendent and staff that they did their jobs and protected park resources in the face of such threats as, 'We know where you live' and 'I hope USDA shoots you'" (NPS comments on the second draft of ROCR Admin History, July 6, 2020, ROCR Archives).

<sup>31</sup> Heidi Ridgley, "What Happens When a National Park Has Too Many Deer?," *National Parks* (Fall 2014), 50–52. Fire Island National Seashore, Final White-Tailed Deer Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (NPS, 2015), ix. Catoclin Mountain Park Plan/EIS, vii. Frank Smith, transcript of oral history interview with the author, September 10, 2015, 19, Catoclin Mountain Park Archives. JP Schmitt and M. Nortrup, National Capital Region Network, Forest Regeneration 2014 Resource Brief, 2014. Associated Press, "Feds Plan to Shoot Deer at 2 Maryland Civil War Battlefields to Curb Forest Damage," Fox News US (October 5, 2016). Antietam/Monocacy/Manassas NBP Plan/EIS, iii. Associated Press, "Antietam Battlefield Wrapping Up Deer-Culling Program," *US News and World Reports* (March 4, 2017).

<sup>32</sup> Ferebee, transcript of interview, 13, 15.

area by smothering natives. Deer and other animals often avoid invasives, giving the non-native plants an extra boost in terms of survival.<sup>33</sup>

The National Park Service historically has addressed non-native invasive plants (and animals), though with varying levels of attention. In 1933, the agency published its “Fauna of the National Parks of the United States: A Preliminary Survey of Faunal Relations in National Parks” (known as Fauna No. 1). This document, by primary author George Melendez Wright, was the agency’s first comprehensive statement of natural resource management policies, arguing for perpetuating natural conditions and restoring park fauna to as “pristine” a state as possible. One action the report recommended was the removal of non-native invasive species. The Leopold Report called out the removal of invasive plants and animals as important for returning parks to their ecological conditions. The 1980 State of the Parks report also identified encroachment of non-native invasive species as damaging to parks. National Park Service Management Policies in 2001 and 2006 ordered the removal of invasives unless they met an identified park purpose.<sup>34</sup>

Rock Creek Park implemented several different actions to remove non-native invasive plants. One key step used scientific controls to determine the best approach for each species. The 1982 Rock Creek Park annual report described the first year of this effort, which used mechanical/manual controls, fire, and chemicals on kudzu, English ivy, and wisteria in an extensive series of experiments. Vegetation Management Specialist Peggy Fleming from Rock Creek Park and Dr. L. Kay Thomas of the region’s Ecological Services Lab (precursor to the region’s Center for Urban Ecology) led the effort. The park used temporary help to conduct the fieldwork. In 1983, the park set two prescribed fires, believed to be the first use of prescribed fires in the region, to determine its potential for controlling kudzu.<sup>35</sup>

Results of the control experiments demonstrated that species responded best to different removal methods. Park personnel could only eradicate kudzu by using tap root removal. Control could come from cutting, grubbing, flame-wilting, prescribed burning, grazing, and spraying with Round-Up, kernite, ammate, and sodium chloride. Poor results came from injections, plant hormones, *Cercospora*, and Locust Leaf Minor beetles. English ivy, with its shallow roots and lack of storage roots, could be controlled with cutting, raking, hand pulling, flame wilting, and spraying with Round-Up. Plant hormones and sodium chloride did not show promise, and

---

<sup>33</sup> Randy G. Westbrooks, *Invasive Plants, Changing the Landscape of America: Fact Book* (Washington, DC: Federal Interagency Committee for the Management of Noxious and Exotic Weeds, 1998), 3. Executive Order 13112 Invasive Species (February 3, 1999). US Department of the Interior, Statement for the Record before the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation’s oversight hearing on “Invasive Species Management on Federal Lands,” May 16, 2013, [https://www.doi.gov/ocl/hearings/113/invasivespeciesmanagement\\_051613](https://www.doi.gov/ocl/hearings/113/invasivespeciesmanagement_051613), accessed October 7, 2017. Resources Management Plan for Rock Creek Park, 1983, ROCR-N5-Exotic Plant Control. Richard R. Anderson and Dennis McFadden, The Vegetative Community Structure of the Glover Archbold, Battery Kemble, and Additional Reservations of Rock Creek Park, 1978, no page numbering, File General 1974–1997, Box 24, MRCE. ROCR, Statement for Management, 1985, 9, File Old Stone House-Subject Files-Management, Box 54, MRCE.

<sup>34</sup> Sellars, *Preserving Nature*, 97–98, 214–15, 233–34, 258, 263. Terri Hogan, Invasive Plant Management in the National Park Service, n.d., [http://cal-ipc.org/symposia/archive/pdf/2016/1\\_Hogan.pdf](http://cal-ipc.org/symposia/archive/pdf/2016/1_Hogan.pdf), accessed October 7, 2017.

<sup>35</sup> The park used a limited control approach in 1980 and 1981. See ROCR, Annual Report, 1980, 34, File Admin–Annual Reports 1980, Box 71, MRCE, and ROCR, Annual Report, 1981, 27, File Admin–Annual Report 1981, Box 71, MRCE. 1983 Resources Management Plan for Rock Creek Park, ROCR–N5–Exotic Plant Control. ROCR, Annual Report, 1982, 24, File Admin–Annual Report 1982, Box 71, MRCE. ROCR, Annual Report, 1983, 55, File Admin–Annual Report 1983, Box 71, MRCE. ROCR, Statement for Management, 1985, 27–28. ROCR, Resources Management Plan, 1983, N5-1–N5-2.

mulching and winter herbicide treatments required further evaluation. Thomas continued to aid the park in its treatment of invasives. In 1987, he developed a control program, placing Krenite crystal on the root stem of kudzu in the park's thirty-five colonies of kudzu. The following year, the park recorded that kudzu had declined but also cautioned that repeated treatments and monitoring were needed to ensure eradication.<sup>36</sup>

Despite this research, the park reported in its 1996 Resources Management Plan that effective methods for invasives removal remained elusive. The Center for Urban Ecology had ongoing research on kudzu, English ivy, and wisteria, and the park implemented the results reported on kudzu. However, Rock Creek Park had forty-one species of invasives considered aggressive, which displaced or killed native plants and eliminated habitats that supported the native plants. Re-treatment was imperative to keep the invasives from re-growing or invading.<sup>37</sup>

Research between 1996 and 1999 gave hope in largely removing certain non-native invasive plants. This effort, also using control plots, focused on using herbicides, testing methods, and types. Researchers identified for spraying 125 acres in 1996, 192 acres in 1997, and 351 acres in 1998. In 1996, the park had 610 acres infested with non-native plants, with about 175 acres heavily infested. Initial treatment targeted the heavily infested areas. Instead of focusing on Asiatic bittersweet as originally planned, the park treated all identified non-native species. Investigators reported in 2000 that effective treatments were found for 11 of 13 invasive species tested. They measured the non-native infestations dropping by more than 80 percent overall. The study found more than a 90 percent reduction in Asiatic bittersweet and English ivy. The park needed to maintain these results by spraying, but personnel time was elusive. The park hired a seasonal technician, and maintenance staff agreed to treat picnic areas. Student interns and other volunteers might have also contributed to the needed help. The park's 2003 and 2005 annual reports described continued eradication efforts by regional exotic (invasives) plant management team (EPTM) members, partners, and volunteers. But the park also admitted that invasives removal was a "never-ending problem."<sup>38</sup>

Its extensive research into invasives control resulted in the park's sharing of information. The 1996 annual report stated that the park had become a "local clearinghouse" in assisting other parks with similar infestations. An Exotic Plants Workshop helped spread research results. Gardeners and professional groups requested that Rock Creek Park give talks.<sup>39</sup>

The park has continued to benefit from outside help with invasive plant management. As an example, the 1989 annual report highlighted the efforts of temporary employees (working 220 days on invasives), Youth Conservation Corps members (64 days), volunteers, and school groups. Scouts also proved helpful. A PhD candidate at George Washington University conducted a research program on the removal of Japanese knotweed. Fleming, over the course of a year, collected lesser celandine to define its life history. She cooperated with Ann Leslie from the Environmental Protection Agency to find control measures.<sup>40</sup> Up to 2019 and into the

---

<sup>36</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 1984, 24; ROCR, Annual Report, 1987, 5; ROCR, Annual Report, 1988, 5, all in File Rock Creek Park, Box 45, Entry P17, RG 79, Archives II, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

<sup>37</sup> ROCR, Resources Management Plan, 1996, ROCR-N-001.001.

<sup>38</sup> Quote, ROCR, Annual Report, 2005, 4. Susan Salmons, Rock Creek Park Invasive Non-native Plant Mitigation Program: Final Report, 2000, 6, 11–12, 18, 20, Nature Center Library, ROCR. ROCR, Annual Report, 2003, 2, DSC, TIC.

<sup>39</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 1997, no page numbering, TIC. Salmons, Rock Creek Park Invasive Non-native Plant Mitigation Program.

<sup>40</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 1989, 2, File Admin–Annual Reports 1989, Box 70, MRCE. ROCR, Annual Report, 1987, 1, File Rock Creek Park, Box 45, Entry P17, RG 79, Archives II, NARA. ROCR, Annual Report, 1983, 56.

foreseeable future, park managers have continued using the assistance of NCR-EPMT, contractors, partners, volunteers, and park staff to manage non-native invasive plant species. Park managers have followed guidelines presented on the 2016 Invasive Plant Management Plan and Environmental Assessment (NCR-IPMP) to select treatment locations and species.<sup>41</sup>

### **Fish Barriers**

Rock Creek hosts approximately thirty-five species of fish. At least two native species, the blueback herring and the alewife (collectively known as river herring), migrate from the Atlantic Ocean each spring up freshwater streams such as Rock Creek to spawn. A series of barriers, however, kept these migratory (anadromous) fish from reaching their historical spawning waters in Rock Creek above the Peirce Mill dam all the way to Rockville in Montgomery County, Maryland. American eels (catadromous) take a reverse route for spawning, traveling from Rock Creek to the Sargasso Sea. In either case, the barriers restricted natural life patterns.<sup>42</sup>

In 1980, the National Park Service identified its interest in removing migratory fish barriers at Peirce Mill dam and other locations along Rock Creek. The National Park Service wanted to ensure the safety of fishing in Rock Creek. The District did not have licensing requirements or catch limits until the 1990s. Most fishing on Rock Creek occurred south of Peirce Mill in waters that were often polluted, from combined sewer overflows and upstream pollutants. By removing barriers, the National Park Service would give the native fish more room for spawning. Plus, the fish would not concentrate in small areas and become easy targets for unregulated overfishing. The National Park Service could better sustain minimum populations for long-term survival.<sup>43</sup>

In 1989, the District of Columbia joined the Commonwealth of Virginia, the State of Maryland, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the Chesapeake Bay Commission, and the US government in committing long-term stable financial support and human resources to removing barriers to fish migration. Migratory fish were the most-prized and sought-after fish species by both commercial and sport fishers. But their numbers dwindled significantly. In 1920, American shad and river herring were the number-one and number-two finfish of value in commercial fishing in the Chesapeake Bay. The American shad commercial catch totaled 17 million pounds at a price of more than \$6 million (1989 dollars). The 1985 shad harvest from the Bay had a dockside value of \$170,000. Removing fish barriers at four hydroelectric plants would have brought between \$42 million and \$185 million annually. Restoring river herring to freshwater systems, as another example, would result in strengthened ecosystems. River herring enhanced resident fish populations, in part by their juvenile herring serving as food for bass and other resident fish.<sup>44</sup>

---

ROCR, Annual Report, 1982, 24. ROCR, Annual Report, 1980, 34, File Rock Creek Park, Box 45, Entry P17, RG 79, Archives II, NARA. ROCR, Natural Resources Management Plan, 1980, 20. ROCR, Resources Management Plan, 1983, N5-2.

<sup>41</sup> NPS, comments on first draft manuscript, August 28, 2019, 15, ROCR.

<sup>42</sup> ROCR, GMP/EIS, 2005, 148.

<sup>43</sup> ROCR, Natural Resources Management Plan, 1980, 29–31. ROCR, Natural Resources Management Plan, 1983, N13-4. ROCR, Resources Management Plan, 1996, ROCR-N-002.005.

<sup>44</sup> Chesapeake Executive Council, Strategy for Removing Impediments to Migratory Fishes in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed: Chesapeake Bay Program, Agreement Commitment Report, 1988, unpaginated section, ROCR Unprocessed Records, Headquarters. Dynamac Corporation and International Science and Technology, Rock Creek Fisheries Study: Final Report, 1993, 123, Nature Center Library, ROCR.

Many physical barriers to migratory fish are a common occurrence on rivers and streams that drain into the Chesapeake Bay. In the District, the Rock Creek system contained the key fish obstacles. Ten blockages existed in Rock Creek. Concrete weirs (small dams) and fords, sewer lines (active and inactive), and Peirce Mill dam hindered migratory fish passage. The total number of blockages included two barriers downstream of the National Zoological Park. Funding from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources in 1991 enabled these two fords to be removed.<sup>45</sup>

The \$2.4 million Wilson Bridge fish bypass mitigation project provided the lion's share of the funding. This construction project built a new span over the Potomac River approximately seven miles downstream from Rock Creek's mouth. The fish bypass project was part of the larger wetlands mitigation phase. Funding started in fiscal year 2004. Potomac Crossing Consultants, a consortium of companies formed to lead environmental projects related to the Woodrow Wilson bridge effort, worked with officials from the National Park Service, Federal Highway Administration, DC Department of Parks and Recreation, Federal Highway Administration, Maryland State Highway Administration, Virginia Department of Transportation, and Compass Environmental (the contractors for the fish passage project). Potomac River Consultants used different techniques to mitigate the fish barriers. In the case of abandoned sanitary sewer lines, the engineers removed the lines and restored the landscape. For active sewer lines, the engineers created a carefully planned series of step pools below each active sanitary sewer to allow water to pool and rise until the water covered the sewer line. They used rocks to recreate rapids and mimic natural conditions so that fish would perceive it as the rest of the environment. For a historic ford, the engineers broke up the concrete and built a new ford at the same location that was lower in the middle to provide fish passage for migratory species during periods of low stream flow.<sup>46</sup>

Peirce Mill dam proved the most impressive and daunting engineering feat for removing fish barriers. The historic dam, built in 1904, was a contributing structure in the National Register-listed Rock Creek Park Historic District. The National Park Service worked with its cooperators and determined that a fish ladder (specifically a type known as a Denil fishway) would serve the needed purpose. Potomac River Consultants recommended form-lined concrete to simulate rocks as the underlying structure. Rock Creek Park, upon examination of this material, determined that the materials failed to meet visual quality criteria and thus did not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes. The Federal Highway Administration responded by recommending the construction of a concrete core faced

---

<sup>45</sup> Chesapeake Executive Council, Strategy for Removing Impediments, 6. ROCR, GMP/EIS, 22, 50. Resources Management Plan, 1996, ROCR-N-002.005. ROCR, Annual Report, 1995, unpaginated, File General-History-Admin-Personnel-Structure and Functions 1987-97, Box 72, MRCE. ROCR, Annual Report, 1992, 3, TIC. The nine fish barrier passages are as follows: USGS Weir; Metro Dam; Ford 1; Ford 2; Peirce Mill dam; inactive sewer line near Boulder Bridge; active sewer line at Picnic Grove 4; Milkhouse Ford; and sewer line crossings at Milkhouse Ford, Sherrill Drive, and Picnic Grove 10, Dynamac Corporation, ROCR Fisheries Study, 135-36.

<sup>46</sup> ROCR, GMP/EIS, 49, 196. ROCR, Annual Report, 2003, unpaginated, TIC. This source states that the Woodrow Wilson mitigation project removed the eight barriers to fish migration in Rock Creek. This number does not jive with the fact that two barriers had been removed in 1995 using Maryland Department of Natural Resources funding. Any insight on the correct number? David Fahrethold, "Rock Creek Fish Head Home Again: With Obstacles Removed, Herring Return to Spawning Area," *Washington Post*, March 31, 2007. Nia-Malika Henderson, "Engineering a Clear Path for Spawning," *Washington Post*, November 10, 2005. Other interested parties included American Rivers, Audubon Naturalist Society, DC Historic Preservation Office, and the Potomac Conservancy. Other waterways in Maryland also benefited from the Wilson Bridge fish barrier mitigation project: Sligo Creek, Northwest Branch, Paint Branch, and a host of creeks. Yeaman, transcript of interview, 15.

with natural stone veneer for the fishway and a dry-stack stone retaining wall with soil nails behind the wall to support the slope, including Beach Drive, behind the wall. The National Park Service and the DC State Historic Preservation Officer agreed to these changes.<sup>47</sup>

The Peirce Mill dam fish ladder opened for the spring 2007 migration. Water Resources Specialist Bill Yeaman watched as some of the first fish, six silver-sided alewives, took the fish ladder up Rock Creek. As he said later, "I'll never forget the time I stood there" when they opened the fish ladder, watching the first fish come through. "I just never had a feeling like that," he said. "I was so enthralled and just mesmerized, and it just actually happened."<sup>48</sup>

The fish ladder has about twenty baffles, each slightly above the last with a V-notch so that fish can go up one baffle at a time. The fish can rest to the side of each baffle if needed. Water runs down the center and guides the fish up. The passageway is about four-feet wide and provides access for fish to travel around the eight-foot-high Peirce Mill dam. To imprint newly hatched fish to some of their historic spawning areas on Rock Creek, during the 1990s, DC fisheries biologists transported and released many hundreds of alewives from lower Rock Creek to the vicinity of Picnic Grove 10 to spawn. The hope was that the barriers on Rock Creek would eventually be removed and that the fish born in the vicinity of Picnic Grove 10 would return. The park closes the fish ladder after the fish migration is over and reopens it in early March in preparation for the start of fish migration.<sup>49</sup>

### **Resource Monitoring**

Rock Creek Park staff and its cooperators have protected natural resources through identification, monitoring, and research. Budget limitations have influenced the extent of this work over time. Rock Creek Park's Resources Management Plans are one source of tracing this protection work. The 1980 Resources Management Plan recorded the need for research of wildlife populations and significant species or habitats.<sup>50</sup> The 1983 Resources Management Plan also identified a need for measuring wildlife populations, stating that a "complete and professionally" prepared information base to guide Rock Creek Park management and planning was "lacking."<sup>51</sup> The 1996 Resources Management Plan, the most recent of such plans as of 2017, acknowledged that the park did not know basic park and biological information for its wildlife species. Without this information, park management, according to the 1996 plan, did not have the needed data to fully meet National Park Service policies and federal laws.<sup>52</sup>

In 1998, Congress mandated the National Park Service to create a Natural Resource Inventory & Monitoring (I&M) Program. This program's goal was to provide park managers with broad-based data about the park's natural resource systems to inform decision-making, interactions with cooperators, and communications. According to National Park Service historian Richard West Sellars, historically the agency had failed to embrace science in favor of scenery preservation, with the latter thus shaping management decisions. With the 1963 publication of the Leopold Report and the National Academy of Sciences report, a shift started to emerge. The

---

<sup>47</sup> ROCR, News Release, Partnership Project to Restore Fish Passage to Rock Creek Begins, December 22, 2003, 2, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR. Adrienne Coleman to John Gerner, Project Manager, Federal Highway Administration, August 15, 2002, 2; Gerner to Coleman, November 1, 2002; Gerner to Coleman, November 1, 2002, all in Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR.

<sup>48</sup> Yeaman, transcript of interview, 16.

<sup>49</sup> Yeaman, transcript of interview, 17.

<sup>50</sup> ROCR, Resources Management Plan, 1980, 7.

<sup>51</sup> ROCR, Resources Management Plan, 1983, N33-1.

<sup>52</sup> ROCR, Resources Management Plan, 1996, ROCR-N-002.001.

modern environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s further led to the use of scientific and ecological data for making natural resource decisions. The 1991 Vail Agenda, published for the National Park Service's seventy-fifth anniversary, gave an uneven report card to national park units, commending past performance (despite evidence to the contrary) and urging further scientific study.<sup>53</sup>

The National Park Service developed a framework to meet Congress's 1998 mandate. In 1999, the agency created 32 ecoregional networks for the 270-some national park units having significant natural resources. All Inventory & Monitoring units report on "vital signs" that indicate the overall health of a park. The goal of the Inventory & Monitoring program is manifold: inventory National Park Service natural resources; monitor park ecosystems to understand their dynamics; use Inventory & Monitoring as standard practice within the national park system; integrate Inventory & Monitoring into planning, managing, and decision-making; and share National Park Service information with outside natural resource organizations, creating partnerships in search of shared results. For Rock Creek Park, park staff have worked with the US Geological Survey, as an example, to inventory and monitor the reptile and amphibian populations.<sup>54</sup>

Rock Creek Park is part of the National Capital Region Network (NCRN). The National Capital Region Network monitors Rock Creek Park's natural resources. One of the largest efforts focuses upon forest vegetation. The National Capital Region Network checks nineteen plots spread throughout Rock Creek Park's forests, identifying and monitoring the trees, shrubs, vines, and herbs, and noting the evidence of deer browse, pests, and diseases. The National Capital Region Network staff monitors water quality on a quarterly basis at eleven sites on Rock Creek and its tributaries, as well as Battery Kemble Park's creek, which flows directly into the Potomac River. Measurements include pH, dissolved oxygen, water temperature, acid-neutralizing capacity, salinity/specific conductance, nitrate, and total phosphorus of the water. Stream width, depth, flow, and discharge are also logged. Between 2008 and 2013, National Capital Region Network also monitored macroinvertebrates, fish, and stream habitat. National Capital Region Network monitors amphibians several times a year, with egg mass counts followed by larval counts. Streamside salamanders are also monitored. Forest birds are checked twice each summer at fourteen forest sites.<sup>55</sup>

## Conclusion

Rock Creek Park managers have used science since the 1980s to make informed decisions about natural resources. Staff members inventory and monitor the status of the plant and animal life in Reservation 339 and other park units under Rock Creek Park authority. Deer management involved tracking the numbers of deer over time and assessing their impact upon park resources. This data informed the development of alternative management approaches and, with public input, the decision to use targeted reductions to protect Rock Creek Park's resources.

---

<sup>53</sup> West, *Preserving Nature*, 267–68, 276–79. NPS, Program Brief: Inventory and Monitoring, March 2015, 1, [https://science.nature.nps.gov/im/assets/docs/IM\\_Program\\_Brief.pdf](https://science.nature.nps.gov/im/assets/docs/IM_Program_Brief.pdf), accessed October 31, 2017.

<sup>54</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 2005, unpaginated. NPS, Program Brief: Inventory and Monitoring, March 2015, 1. NPS, Natural Resource Challenge web page, <https://www.nps.gov/nature/challenge.htm>, accessed November 1, 2017. S. G. Fancy, J. E. Gross, and S. L. Carter, "Monitoring the Condition of Natural Resources in US National Parks," *Environmental Monitoring and Assessment* (2009): 161–74, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/4577/b84754196c7d066f31eec3ba80a6348e27d8.pdf>, accessed November 1, 2017.

<sup>55</sup> Inventory & Monitoring at Rock Creek Park, NPS I & M web page, <https://science.nature.nps.gov/im/units/ncrn/parks/rocr.cfm>, accessed November 1, 2017.

Scientific analysis has also shaped how the park has addressed the rise of non-native invasive species. However, Budgetary limitations have influenced the extent of action for removing invasive species. The removal of fish barriers along Rock Creek points to a significant achievement in restoring fish species to their once-lost habitat. Each of these examples, among others, indicate how the National Park Service has adopted scientific research for making management decisions.

## CHAPTER 7 Cultural Resources Challenges

Simone Monteleone, Rock Creek Park's former Cultural Resources Program Manager, has long held that US Reservation 339 is a singular historic (cultural) landscape. But soon after taking her position, she discovered that that was not the viewpoint of several natural resource management staff. She learned, though, that good-natured banter with these staff members led to "very good philosophical discussions" on how natural resources and cultural resources are "more integrated than sometimes people assume that they are."<sup>1</sup>

What Monteleone found at Rock Creek Park has historically permeated the National Park Service (NPS). In 1987, while serving in the National Park Service Pacific West Regional Office, former National Park Service Associate Director for Cultural Resources Stephanie Toothman wrote that the National Park Service categorized national park units in informal groupings of natural, cultural, and recreation areas. Placement of an individual unit in one of these categories reflected how National Park Service managers perceived a park's "primary mandate and characteristics." Toothman argued that "failure to recognize the presence of cultural resources is one of the key obstacles" to effective cultural resource management (CRM) in natural areas.<sup>2</sup> Monteleone's experience in Rock Creek Park in the early 2000s suggests that cultural resource managers still had an uphill climb in advocating for the cultural resources in their parks.

The National Park Service has codified its practice of cultural resource management in NPS-28.<sup>3</sup> The most recent iteration of this policy document dates to 1998 and speaks to the agency's progression on cultural resources management. The National Park Service has identified five types of cultural resources: archeological resources, history, cultural landscapes, structures, museum objects, and ethnographic resources. The agency recognizes that such categorization helps organize cultural resources into manageable groups with common attributes. However, the agency also makes the important declaration that "categorization may obscure the interdisciplinary nature" of cultural resources. This latter point resonates at Rock Creek Park's Reservation 339, which contains such varied cultural resources as Native American campsites and quarry locations, nineteenth-century Peirce Mill and Klinge Mansion, and the remains of Civil War Defenses of Washington's Fort DeRussy. These cultural resources sit within Rock Creek Park and contribute to the overall cultural landscape. This cultural landscape, in turn, is composed of an array of natural resources, including vegetation, animals, and the creek and its tributaries. Such twentieth-century recreational resources as Carter Barron Amphitheater, the Rock Creek Tennis Center, ballfields, and picnic sites contribute to the overall visitor experience and make Rock Creek Park a dynamic and challenging resource to manage.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter focuses upon the park's cultural resources, briefly describing the resource itself and then delving into the National Park Service's acquisition and management of these resources. Many of these sites, such as Peirce Mill and Barn, Klinge Mansion, or the Old Stone House, are structures with some associated natural resources. The Civil War Defenses of

---

<sup>1</sup> Simone Monteleone, transcript of oral history interview with the author, December 22, 2016, 3, ROCR Archives.

<sup>2</sup> Stephanie S. Toothman, "Cultural Resource Management in Natural Areas in the National Park System," *The Public Historian* 9 (Spring 1987): 65–66.

<sup>3</sup> NPS-28, Cultural Resource Management Guideline, is the NPS Director's Order for stating the basic principles governing the management of cultural resources within the national park system.

<sup>4</sup> NPS, NPS-28: Cultural Resource Management Guide (Effective Date 1998), chapter 1, [https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/nps28/28chap1.htm](https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/nps28/28chap1.htm), accessed December 12, 2019.

Washington, on the other hand, are cultural resources that sit within natural resource settings. At one time, though, federal planners considered linking the Civil War Defenses of Washington into a Fort Circle Park to serve recreational needs. Some remnants of this idea remain today, making these Civil War Defenses of Washington a unique cultural, natural, and recreational resource. Dumbarton Oaks Park, another topic in this chapter, represents a significant cultural landscape. The chapter ends with an overview of Reservation 339's archeological sites and a discussion of the National Register of Historic Places sites in Rock Creek Park.

### **Civil War Defenses of Washington**

The federal government has preserved the Civil War Defenses of Washington (CWDW) to varying levels over time. In the 1890s, both Union and Confederate patriotic organizations began rallying for the preservation of the defenses. Betty Thomas, the free black woman who owned the land where Fort Stevens was built, joined Union efforts to preserve these sites. Much of their attention went to Fort Stevens, due to its important association with President Abraham Lincoln. Fort Stevens needed help. By 1911, the fort's ramparts, except a portion of the western one, had been leveled. A small street crossed where the parade ground had been, and modest frame houses sat in a row along this road. The 1930 Capper-Cramton Act and other funding actions brought many of these Civil War Defenses of Washington sites back under federal government control to build Fort Drive. The federal government ultimately did not build Fort Drive as envisioned, but this land acquisition effort saved a portion of many of the forts or the land where they had stood.<sup>5</sup>

Visitors can see Civil War Defenses of Washington earthworks that are under the management of Rock Creek Park. Fort DeRussy sits within Reservation 339, Rock Creek Park proper. A visitor can easily discern the fort's spatial organization and parts of the historic circulation pattern. Mature trees populate the site, serving as a form of protection. Fort Bunker Hill has partial remains of the fort, and the 2004 Fort Circle Parks Final Management Plan listed them in good condition. Fort Totten, also according to this 2004 report, had significant erosion of the original earthworks. This park site has open fields, some trees, and picnic tables. Some of Fort Slocum's rifle trenches remain, though they are overgrown. The park site has open fields with a mixed forest and a picnic pavilion.<sup>6</sup>

Rock Creek Park administers two Civil War Defenses of Washington batteries, and these are also in relatively good condition. Batteries are unenclosed earthworks with artillery emplacements, built in front of or between forts as an additional form of defense. About half of Battery Kemble, as listed in the 2015 Civil War Defenses of Washington National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Registration Form, still exists. The reopening of Chain Bridge Road following the Civil War resulted in the ruin of the northern flank section of the fort. The southern flank's parapet and deep ditch remain. Battery Kingsbury as of 2015 consists of a shallow mound and depression, the remains of the southeastern end of the battery.<sup>7</sup>

However, two Civil War Defenses of Washington sites now under Rock Creek Park management lost the battle prior to NPS administration. Most of Fort Reno was visible as late as 1892, but then the federal government graded the fort and battery for a water reservoir. In the

---

<sup>5</sup> CEHP Inc., A Historic Resources Study (HRS): The Civil War Defenses of Washington, part 2 (1998), 11, 13–14. CWDW, Long Range Interpretive Plan, 2014, 10.

<sup>6</sup> CWDW/Fort Circle Park, NRHP Registration Form (May 15, 2015), section 7, pp. 46–47. CEHP Inc., HRS: CWDW, Part 2, (1998), 14. NPS, Fort Circle Parks Final Management Plan (2004), appendix E.

<sup>7</sup> CWDW NRHP 2015, section 7, p. 24.

post–World War II period, the site has had concentrated development, including public schools, a defense communications center, and District of Columbia snow equipment and salt supplies. Fort Reno Park has ballfields, community gardens, and a reservoir. Fort Bayard has a playground and ballfield, with no remaining signs of the fort.<sup>8</sup>

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) between 1938 and 1941 reconstructed Fort Stevens as part of its important cultural resources management work on the Civil War Defenses of Washington during the New Deal. Robert McKean, National Capital Parks (NCP) landscape architect, oversaw this work. He conducted the necessary research, which included reviewing battle accounts, interviewing still-surviving war veterans of the battle, and checking historic photographs. War Department officials found the original drawings for the fort. McKean and his associates surveyed the remaining breastworks to make their drawings for the reconstruction. Civilian Conservation Corps workers began the excavation, uncovering uniform buttons, canteens, bullets, and pieces of shells. The National Park Service saved some of these artifacts for eventual display in a hoped-for museum. Workers also found a copper box under the Lincoln Monument, containing medals, newspapers, photographs, and other patriotic memorabilia. The Sixth Army Corps Association had placed the box in 1920 when it had erected the monument. The reconstruction project used \$25,000 (\$474,000 in 2017 dollars) for the Fort Stevens restoration, completed in 1938. The workers rebuilt the fort’s western parapet, substituting concrete (made to look like wood) for wooden revetments, embrasures, gun platforms, and a stockade gorge trace. They also constructed the western magazine and mounted several period artillery pieces. The concrete offered a longer lifespan and less maintenance than wood. The workers reseeded three acres of parkland and installed four hundred feet of gravel walks. Fort Stevens is the only restored Civil War Defenses of Washington fort.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> NPS, Fort Circle Parks Final Management Plan, appendix E.

<sup>9</sup> Bernard Kohn, “Restored Civil War Fort Is New Sightseeing Shrine,” *Sunday Star* (Washington, DC), July 4, 1937. Benjamin Franklin Cooling III and Walter H. Owen II, *Mr. Lincoln’s Forts: A Guide to the Civil War Defenses of Washington* (Lanham: MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 178. CEHP Inc., HRS: CWDW, part 2 (1998), 7. CWDW NRHP 2015, section 8, p. 128. NPS, Fort Circle Parks Master Plan, 1968, 76–79.



*Figure 7. Civilian Conservation Corpsmen Reconstruct Fort Stevens*  
NPS PHOTO, CIRCA 1938



*Figure 8. Reconstructed Fort Stevens*  
NPS PHOTO, 1967



*Figure 9. Reconstructed Fort Stevens Landscape*  
NPS PHOTO, 1967

The CCC completed improvements at other Civil War Defenses of Washington sites. For the defenses now under Rock Creek Park administration, the CCC cleaned up trash and cleared vegetation at Fort Bunker Hill and did a general cleanup at Fort Totten. Civilian Conservation Corps workers also built several trails and an amphitheater at Fort Bunker Hill. As of 2015, the stone stage is largely intact and the terraced seating remains visible.<sup>10</sup>

The National Park Service completed additional cultural resources work on Fort Stevens at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century. For the Civil War Centennial 1961–65, the National Park Service restored eroded sections of the parapet and magazine. The agency in 1989, in time for the 125th anniversary of the Battle of Fort Stevens, remounted the two 30-pounder cannons on two newly sand-cast aluminum 18-pounder gun carriages. In 2008, the National Park Service hired contractors to complete a significant rehabilitation of Fort Stevens. This involved repairing the concrete core and surface cracks of the gun emplacements and pickets. Sections of the concrete logs needed repair or replacement.

<sup>10</sup> CWDW NRHP 2015, section 7, p. 35.

Workers also restored the rostrum and flagpole. This effort prepared Fort Stevens for the Civil War Sesquicentennial events, held in July 2014 in commemoration of the battle.<sup>11</sup>

The federal government may have partially reconstructed Fort Stevens, but the other fort and battery sites remain hidden under vegetation and soil. This natural covering blankets and protects the ruins, a management strategy, but the vegetation also obscures the fort walls. Passersby often do not realize they might be walking on the Civil War Defenses themselves. Some active recreation has caused significant damage. For example, beginning in the 1970s, mountain bikers wore down the Fort Totten traces. Signage helps inform visitors of these remnants from the Civil War and encourages protection.<sup>12</sup>

A proposed addition that would surround the sides and back of Emory United Methodist Church, whose property borders Fort Stevens, proved a recent threat. The church sits on land where the original Fort Stevens stood, with the reconstructed parapets located on another section of the same Fort Stevens land. The existing church structure, though not original to the Civil War period, sits next to a fourteen-foot-high berm running along Georgia Avenue and Quackenbos Street frontages. This berm is a remnant of the Civil War Defenses of Washington. Emory Church applied for and received variance relief for height restrictions and Floor Area Ratio requirements, allowing it to build the five-story structure, with its back facing the historic fort. The massive addition, scheduled for completion in late 2018, will cut off the visual connection between the fort, the church, and the road along which Confederates advanced during the battle. Emory Church and its nonprofit partner The Community Builders designed the structure, named Beacon Center, to have ninety-nine units for affordable and homeless housing, office and commercial space, and recreation. Emory Church in the late 1960s had switched, as the neighborhood had, from being an all-white church to an all-black one. In the mid-2000s, Rev. Joseph W. Daniels Jr. began laying out his vision for the center.<sup>13</sup>

Opposition to the proposal came from different sources. The National Park Service advocated for a reduced height so as not to break the visual field. The agency also reminded the Board of Zoning Adjustment that the project was within the Rock Creek East Plan of the National Capital Area Comprehensive Plan, which required protection of significant historical resources of the area.<sup>14</sup> The newly formed Alliance to Preserve the Civil War Defenses of

---

<sup>11</sup> NPS, Rehabilitation of Fort Stevens Battleground and Interpretive Features, NPS PMIS No. 123340A, As Constructed Drawings, November 5, 2008. Rock Creek Park, Annual Report, 2008, unpaginated (p. 2), Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR. Rock Creek Park, Annual Report, 1988, 12, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR. CWDW NRHP 2015, section 8, p. 136.

<sup>12</sup> NPS American Battlefield Protection Program, 1995 Application, Fort Totten Park Community Partnership, 4, CWDW 1995 grant applic and 1974 Dev Concept Plan Ft Totten, File CWDW-Ft Totten-Cult Res PTM: General-1966-1997, Box 33, Museum Resource Center (MRCE). All MRCE files are from the ROCR Collection. Fry and Welch Associates, Fort Totten Park Design Concept Plan, 1974, 9, CWDW 1995 grant applic and 1974 Dev Concept Plan Ft Totten, MRCE.

<sup>13</sup> Adrienne Coleman to Board of Zoning Adjustment Chair Marc Loud, December 10, 2009, Emory Church file from Loretta Neumann, ROCR Archives. Martin Austermuhle, "The Battle for Fort Stevens: How Civil War Buffs and Church Fought over Housing," WAMU (October 12, 2016). Erik Alsgaard, "Emory's Beacon Illuminates Neighborhoods in DC," Baltimore-Washington Conference, The United Methodist Church News, <http://www.bwcumc.org/news-and-views/emorys-beacon-illuminates-neighborhoods-in-dc/>, accessed September 16, 2018.

<sup>14</sup> District of Columbia Comprehensive Plan, 2006, <https://planning.dc.gov/page/comprehensive-plan>, accessed September 28, 2020. This plan also indicated resident concerns about the growth of group homes and churches, with residents wanting a stronger decision-making role. See Rock Creek East, [https://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/publication/attachments/District%20Elements\\_Volume%20II\\_Chapter%2022\\_April%208%202011.pdf](https://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/publication/attachments/District%20Elements_Volume%20II_Chapter%2022_April%208%202011.pdf), p. 22.

Washington joined with the National Park Service in calling attention to the ways in which the proposed structure would block the viewshed for Fort Stevens visitors. The Civil War Preservation Trust added Fort Stevens to its list of eleven most endangered battlefields. *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd, who grew up near Fort Stevens, gave the issue national exposure.<sup>15</sup>

Emory Church obtained its needed approvals, but historic preservationists gained ground when the church applied to raze all but the façade of its worship building. The DC Preservation League, backed by the Alliance and other Civil War groups, applied for and won historic designation for the church building. This designation forced the church to redesign the project. The National Park Service proposed a land swap, to have Beacon Center built across the street on less historically significant National Park Service land. Church officials rejected this offer, citing the increased costs to entirely redesign the building.<sup>16</sup>

The parties came together through a mitigation plan for historic preservation, and officials broke ground for the center in October 2016. The mitigation plan included an archeological dig on the site for Civil War-era artifacts. Officials agreed to keep most of the church building intact, renovate the interior, and remove one of two levels of planned underground parking. Space inside the building has been designated for a Fort Stevens visitor center.<sup>17</sup> Loretta Neumann, a cofounder of the Alliance to Preserve the Civil War Defenses of Washington, called the outcome “very disappointing.” The Alliance had hoped that the church would build the center across the street, thereby removing any visual intrusion on the battlefield site. Neumann stated that “we don’t always win our battles, but we definitely were in there supporting the Park Service and fighting off the bad stuff.”<sup>18</sup>

Another development proposal ended more positively for the historic preservation of the Civil War Defenses of Washington. In 1999, developer Martin Poretzky purchased land from the Washington Hebrew Congregation. He proposed to build 26 townhouses on the one-acre lot, with the 1300 block of Missouri Avenue NW. Neighbors and preservationists protested. Neumann, speaking as a member of Historic Takoma and the DC Preservation League, pointed out that the project would add inappropriate density, and a historic road through parklands would have to be dug up to allow access to the building site. The owners of the next-door Lightfoot House, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, learned that the developer owned its driveway and front steps, threatening that property. Other opponents included the Military Road School Alumni Association (now Military Road School Preservation Trust), whose school sat adjacent to the proposed development.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Coleman to Loud, December 10, 2009. Austermuhle, “Battle for Fort Stevens.” Tersh Boasberg to Marc Loud, December 11, 2009, Emory Church file from Loretta Neumann, ROCR Archives.

<sup>16</sup> Austermuhle, “Battle for Fort Stevens.” Alliance to Preserve the Civil War Defenses of Washington President Loretta Neumann to DC Historic Preservation Office Director David Maloney, February 16, 2014, Emory Church file from Loretta Neumann, ROCR Archives.

<sup>17</sup> Austermuhle, “Battle for Fort Stevens.”

<sup>18</sup> Loretta Neumann, transcript of oral history interview with the author, September 5, 2017, 35, ROCR Archives.

<sup>19</sup> Carrie Donovan, “Park Purchase Ends Fight over Fort Stevens Project,” *Washington Post* (May 1, 2003). Military Road School started in a Fort Stevens army barracks in 1864, providing education for enslaved people who lived in the area and those who had escaped the South and headed into the District in search of freedom. In 1865, an annex to the school was built, with the school named for the road it was on. The school served only black children until desegregation after the *Brown v. Board of Education* US Supreme Court decision of 1954. The building, on the National Register of Historic Places, now houses the Latin American Montessori Bilingual Public Charter School. See Military Road School Preservation Trust, <http://www.mrspt.org/about/default.html>, accessed October 23, 2018.

Neumann, in concert with these partners, contacted the National Park Trust (NPT). Since the contested land sat next to national park land, maybe the National Park Trust could purchase the land and hold it. Once the National Park Service had the funds, it could then buy the acre from the National Park Trust and add the property to its collection of lands associated with the Civil War Defenses of Washington. Both the National Park Trust and the National Park Service agreed. In December 2001, the National Park Trust purchased the property and the developer's rights to buy it as well. The National Park Service completed its purchase of the land from the National Park Trust in April 2003. The Lightfoot House owners purchased the rights to the disputed land around their driveway. The land acquired by the National Park Service sits next to Military Road School, occupied since 2003 by the Latin American Montessori Bilingual Public Charter School.<sup>20</sup>

### **Peirce Mill**

In 1994, Isaac Peirce bought about 160 acres on Rock Creek, 3 miles north of Georgetown. This already-developed property had a wooden mill structure, a house, slave quarters, and an orchard of more than 750 fruit trees. He expanded operations around 1800 by building a sawmill, a springhouse, potato house, cow barn, carriage house, and distillery. He then built a miller's house and the stone mill that would carry his name. Peirce Mill has the date 1829 on its south gable, which is its accepted completion date. The building is made of blue granite in randomly coursed and sized stones. The walls sit on a solid granite foundation and are thirty inches thick in the basement, tapering to twenty-three inches on the third floor. The mill sits in a floodplain, with the basement only a few feet above Rock Creek's water level. In 1829, Peirce likely installed an undershot wheel, in which water flowed under the wheel just high enough to strike the paddles on the wheel and make it turn. He probably adopted the automated milling system invented by American Oliver Evans and explained in his book *The Young Mill-Wright & Miller's Guide* (1795). Peirce Mill had the necessary three stories to implement Evans's design, which integrated all steps in the milling process by using belts and gears driven by the water wheel turning a vertical shaft. An Evans mill increased productivity sevenfold and produced cleaner flour. The gear system transported the grain and flour, instead of humans doing the backbreaking work.<sup>21</sup>

Isaac Peirce's successors owned the mill until 1892 when Louis Peirce Shoemaker sold the land with the mill, Peirce Barn, and a springhouse to the federal government. The mill stayed in operation until 1897 when the turbine machinery failed. By this time, many people had started picnicking and relaxing along Rock Creek near the mill. People fished, painted, birdwatched, and generally enjoyed the pastoral landscape.<sup>22</sup>

Peirce Mill in the nineteenth century had lots of company. In total, eight flour mills stood along Rock Creek in Washington county, the rural part of the District. These "custom mills"

---

<sup>20</sup> Donovan, "Park Purchase Ends Fight," National Park Trust, <https://www.parktrust.org/park-preservation/completed-projects/#dc>, accessed October 23, 2018. Kym Elder, conversation with the author, August 30, 2016. The school uses this area for recreation space, without NPS approval. NPS has requested on several occasions that the school stop using the space, as it is damaging the field and killing several trees that NPS has planted.

<sup>21</sup> Steve Dryden, *Peirce Mill: Two Hundred Years in the Nation's Capital* (Washington, DC: Bergamot Books, 2009), 3, 6, 14–16, 18–19. Peirce Mill National Register for Historic Place Nomination Form, March 16, 2012, 6–7. Quinn Evans Architects, Basis-of-Design Report, Preserve Peirce Mill Structures and Restore Milling Machinery, Rock Creek Park, 2009, 16, DSC, TIC.

<sup>22</sup> Dryden, *Peirce Mill*, 54, 60. Peirce Mill CLR, 2009, 2.12.

served local area farmers, milling on demand and exacting a toll that the government regulated. Rock Creek also harbored bone and plaster mills, a woolen mill, sawmills, and lime kilns. In contrast, mills along the Potomac River and Chesapeake & Ohio Canal, with their stronger waterpower and greater transportation access, developed into large commercial operations. Peirce Mill sat at the end of rough wagon roads, making it even less accessible than mills on the Potomac and canal. The mill's owners practiced careful business practices to make the mill profitable, but Isaac Peirce and his successors did not run the mill. They leased the mill to millers who paid rent to live in the miller's house and shared profits with the owners. Enslaved people, owned by Isaac Peirce beginning in 1820, may have overseen the daily running of the mill. Peirce's successors also owned enslaved people and may have used them in mill operations.<sup>23</sup>

The Rock Creek Park Board of Control, which had administrative oversight over the mill, once acquired in 1892, emphasized visitor enjoyment instead of mill restoration. A series of individuals and groups between 1906 and 1934 ran a teahouse concession at the mill. During the first decades of the twentieth century, teahouses in the United States may have offered tea, but they primarily served small and simple meals for lunch. Three women operated the teahouse between 1909 and 1919. In 1920, an African American woman named Hattie Sewell took over the concession, and the Peirce and Shoemaker family members objected. Washington, DC, was a segregated city, and the newly created National Park Service followed the tradition of the geographic location of each park site. The federal government ended her contract after a year and had the Girl Scouts of America take over the teahouse. The Girl Scouts ran the teahouse from 1921 to 1926 and added a fireplace and pipeless furnace. They hosted riding parties and bridge parties, in addition to running the teahouse. Finally, between 1926 and 1934, the Welfare and Recreation Association, a charitable organization, ran the teahouse. The association made several changes to the interior of the building, including cutting in a staircase between the first floor and basement, building closets, constructing a stone chimney, and installing restrooms on the third floor.<sup>24</sup>

The mill's physical capability to grind wheat and corn had hit bottom. The Rock Creek Park Board of Control replaced the washed-out historic dam just upstream of the mill with a concrete dam faced with boulders. The dam produced a seven-foot waterfall, meant as a picturesque addition to the landscape, as opposed to a water source for the waterwheel. In 1914, the park's manager emphasized his opinion that the mill should serve an idyllic as opposed to functional purpose. Without approval from his superiors, he ordered his crews to fill in the millrace with dirt and stones from a nearby sewer-trenching project. In 1931, the Welfare and Recreation Association built a screened porch, removing any sign of the waterwheel and any capability of grinding wheat and corn. Exterior timbers in the mill had already rotted and the stone-lined raceway required excavation, further indicating that the Board of Control had left Peirce Mill inoperable.<sup>25</sup>

The advent of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal program renewed interest in Peirce Mill as a historic structure. President Franklin D. Roosevelt had signed two executive orders in 1933 giving the National Park Service, established in 1916, authority over historic sites and battlefields, plus federally administered parks in Washington, DC. National Park Service Director Horace Albright had an affinity for history, and he wanted historic sites to expand the

---

<sup>23</sup> Dryden, *Peirce Mill*, 15–16, 33, 41, 44. Peirce Mill National Register, 18–22. Peirce Mill CLR, 2.4. Charles H. McCormick, Milling in Rock Creek Park: General Background (National Park Service, 1967), 12–13, 32.

<sup>24</sup> Peirce Mill National Register, 24–26. Peirce Mill CLR, 2.15–2.16, 2.19. Dryden, *Peirce Mill*, 62–65.

<sup>25</sup> Peirce Mill CLR, 2.16. Dryden, *Peirce Mill*, 60–62.

agency's reach beyond the primarily western natural national parks. He also saw strategic benefit from adding to the agency's portfolio of parks east of the Mississippi to cement political, social, and economic support from the more populous East Coast. In 1934, the National Park Service recommended to Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes the restoration of Peirce Mill and Klinge mansion (originally named Linnaean Hill house). Ickes embraced the idea, saying in November of that year that parks should help people get back to a simpler lifestyle, as opposed to the excesses of the Roaring Twenties. Ickes also had the funds and access to labor, both through New Deal programs.<sup>26</sup>

The National Park Service undertook the historic restoration of Peirce Mill. The newly established Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) completed its survey of the building and collection of documentation. Architect Thomas Waterman oversaw the restoration. Waterman had helped design the Wren Building and other historic structures in Colonial Williamsburg. By 1934, he was completing several architectural projects in the mid-Atlantic states. He had trained under William Sumner Appleton, founder of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, and had worked for Henry Francis du Pont in his efforts to transform his mansion into a museum. Appleton had instilled in Waterman an appreciation for the stages of a building's life and to make the least changes when restoring a structure. Waterman's approach toward Peirce Mill embodied this philosophy. He restored building elements to the early nineteenth century. He attempted, according to the Peirce Mill National Register nomination form, to reconstruct the milling machinery to the nineteenth century. He directed work to repoint the stonework, switch cement windowsills with stone, and replace the roof with one using hand-split cedar shingles. He found nineteenth-century hardware for the doors and a circa 1820 stove for the miller's office.<sup>27</sup>

The Fitz Water Wheel Company of Hanover, Pennsylvania, took the job of fabricating the milling machinery. Owner John S. Fitz, the third generation in his family to run the company, had his staff sweep the region for parts to use in the repair and construction of the needed mill parts. These parts, though damaged, were authentic and represented the compact English and the early Oliver Evans milling systems. Peirce Mill still had its wooden elevators, mechanisms that cleaned the grain and sifted the flour, and the big millstones. The mill also had its wooden frame that supported the milling machinery. Once the National Park Service removed the screened porch and cleared out the debris where the waterwheel had been, Fitz designed a breast wheel, which was powered by the weight of water in the buckets and by the force of water striking the buckets. Fitz determined that this type of wheel was probably used before the installation of the turbine, late in the life of Peirce Mill. The mill could not use the more efficient overshot wheel, where water runs over the wheel to produce energy, due to Rock Creek's relatively low flow level. Waterman tried to change the dam to a crib style that would be more historically accurate, but funding restricted him to only raise the level of the existing dam.<sup>28</sup>

Peirce Mill opened to the public in January 1937. More than 2,400 people attended, watching the park's miller Robert Little grind the first grain in the mill since 1897. Government employees gave away more than 1,000 pounds of flour milled by Little that day. The National

---

<sup>26</sup> Dryden, *Peirce Mill*, 68–69.

<sup>27</sup> Fay Campbell Kaynor, "Thomas Tileston Waterman: Student of American Colonial Architecture," *Winterthur Portfolio* 20 (Summer/Autumn, 1985), 105–6, 116, 121, 130–32. Dryden, *Peirce Mill*, 70–71. Peirce Mill, National Register, 28.

<sup>28</sup> Dryden, *Peirce Mill*, 71–73. PMIS 77569, Preserve Peirce Mill Structure and Restore Milling Machinery, November 5, 2003, 2, File PEMI-General-Park Assns-FOPM: Pilot Project 2001–2004 (1 of 2), Box 15, MRCE.

Park Service subsequently set up a small sales area at the mill where people could buy one- or five-pound bags of flour. Secretary Ickes had a bag of cornmeal and a bag of buckwheat delivered to his home each day from 1936 to 1943, according to a 1970 news article. Government cafeterias in the Washington area also purchased the flour. In that first year, the mill sold more than 3,000 pounds of cornmeal and 700 pounds of flour. To avoid accusations of underselling competitors, the mill charged a higher price than could be found in stores.<sup>29</sup>



Figure 10. Peirce Mill  
NPS PHOTO. 1935

Problems soon surfaced with the mill. The raised boulder dam inundated water into the low ground adjacent to the mill, depositing silt and harming vegetation. Lack of funds to build a new dam meant that the park may have lowered the dam by removing some rocks. A bigger issue revolved around operations. The miller operated the mill during cold months only due to a lack of refrigeration to keep the flour. Shutting down the waterwheel, however, led to drying of the wood, then warping and cracking. This cycle of intermittent running of the mill led to its shutdown in 1958.<sup>30</sup>

In 1967, National Park Service architect Blaine E. Cliver studied how to resume operations at Peirce Mill. He recommended using an overshot wheel, which he felt was historically accurate. Rock Creek was not high enough to run the wheel alone, and so the park added plumbing to use municipal water in addition to creek water. The park filled in the millrace, which left visitors not fully appreciating how water-powered mills operated. These changes did

<sup>29</sup> Anne Hebard, "Old Pierce Mill to Grind Again," *Washington Post*, May 15, 1970. Dryden, 73–76. Barry Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 4, section "Peirce Mill and the Art Barn."

<sup>30</sup> Dryden, *Peirce Mill*, 78–79. Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 4, "Peirce Mill and Art Barn."

not meet historical standards but did result in Peirce Mill running again by July 1970. The mill used husked corn from Oxon Hill Farm, a National Park Service site in Maryland.<sup>31</sup>

The mill attracted a huge audience in the 1970s. One day in January 1973, about 500 people visited, seeing a government secretary in handmade gingham handing out corn fritters cooked on the mill stove. In total, more than half a million people stopped at Peirce Mill in the 1970s. The mill experience fed into many people's inclination for the back-to-the-earth, newfound environmental awareness of the decade. In 1970 alone, such events as the enactment of the National Environmental Policy Act, the premier of Earth Day, and the beginning of the *Mother Earth News* monthly publication all spoke to the uneasiness of many Americans about the future of the land. Huge technological achievements foreshadowed essential changes in all aspects of life, with the launching of Skylab (1973), the founding of Microsoft (1975) and Apple (1976), the selling of the first personal computer (1977), Atari's release of its first home video game (1977), and the most serious nuclear power plant accident in US history occurring at Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania (1979). The Middle East Oil crisis (1973), the Watergate scandal and resignation of President Richard Nixon (1974), and the Iran Hostage crisis (1979) all had the potential to unsettle some Americans, leaving them looking for reminders of a simpler and less contentious time.<sup>32</sup>

During the 1970s, the National Park Service added midspan shoring at each floor level, attic to basement. The shoring used six-by-six-inch nominal beams and posts. Later architectural review called this shoring "severely undersized" for the spans, with signs of significant deflection and shear failure. Significant local overstresses in the floor framing resulted from varied vertical alignments from one floor to the next.<sup>33</sup>

In 1984, the National Park Service hired Theodore Roosevelt "Ted" Hazen Jr. to serve as the miller for Peirce Mill. Hazen's training encompassed working at mills in Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and South Carolina, learning about wind and water milling, plus electric-powered systems. Hazen had a long appreciation for milling; his grandfather had served as a millwright, and his father had worked on the water mechanics of mill dams. Ted Hazen brought milling expertise and historical appreciation to his love of milling, creating a powerful combination that engaged visitors. He started his time at Peirce Mill by restoring most of the Oliver Evans automated system. He found, though, that the water system, which still used city water, barely turned the wheel enough to run the equipment. He had to run the mill in stages to avoid jamming. But Hazen still produced product, and he emphasized its sale to the public. After his annual public health inspection of the mill in 1991, a National Park Service health consultant recommended that the park stamp "For demonstration purposes only" on its bags of flour, to address any potential liability issues. The park had been selling the flour in bags as souvenirs, implicitly not meant for consumption.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Blaine E. Cliver, Historic Structures Report, part 1 (Portion) on Pierce Mill Water-Wheel, Rock Creek Park (1967), 6–8, TIC. Hebal, "Old Pierce Mill to Grind Again." Dryden, *Peirce Mill*, 82–85. Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 4, section "Peirce Mill and Art Barn." Peirce Mill National Register, 29–30. Peirce Mill CLR, 2.34.

<sup>32</sup> Gilder-Lehrman Institute of American History, <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/1945-present/seventies>. The People History, <http://www.thepeoplehistory.com/1970s.html>. Welcome to the '70s, <http://www.welcometothe70s.com/70sculture.html#fads>, all accessed July 27, 2017. Peirce Mill Nat Reg, 30. Dryden, *Peirce Mill*, 84.

<sup>33</sup> Quinn Evans Architects, Basis-of-Design Report, 2009, 21.

<sup>34</sup> Dryden, *Peirce Mill*, 86–90. Peirce Mill National Reg, 30–31. Steve Strach to Marie Spencer, March 15, 1992, File PEMI–Cult Res–PTM: Sanitation 8/1981–10/1998, Box 10, MRCE.



*Figure 11. Ted Hazen at Peirce Mill*  
NPS PHOTO, N.D.

One day in April 1993, Hazen and volunteer mill helper Richard Abbott heard a loud rumbling noise. Abbott ran outside to turn the valve that shut off the water supply. The mill's machinery halted. Examination showed that the wheel shaft had rotted. Frequent flooding had left the posts in the basement and the main beam above them with dry rot. The floorboards, windows, and machinery parts all displayed the signs of deterioration and dilapidation. Other aspects of the scene required consideration, too. The dam just upstream from the mill blocked the annual passage of spawning herring and other fish. Park naturalists and environmentalists explored the idea of restoring the park's ecology, potentially having an impact upon Peirce Mill's operation.<sup>35</sup>

Richard Abbott had an unstifled interest in Peirce Mill. He was a chemical engineer in the food processing industry. When in the Netherlands, he had marveled at the windmills and how they ground corn. His technical background made him eager to learn more, and he applied this interest to volunteering at Peirce Mill under miller Ted Hazen in the days before the mill stopped working. One Friends of Peirce Mill member called Abbott "really the force" who was "willing to butt heads and be a thorn" to "push it." Getting the mill running again "was really so much of his achievement."<sup>36</sup>

He waited patiently for the National Park Service to allot the funds to rebuild Peirce Mill. However, the National Park Service had a tight budget, and within the National Capital Region, other funding requests were of a higher priority than the mill. Three and a half years after the mill stopped, Abbott read a Close to Home opinion piece by Mary Hanson in the *Washington Post*. Hanson wrote about how Peirce Mill was an "engineering marvel" but people could not see it work anymore. She wondered if the National Park Service might establish a nonprofit organization to raise the necessary funds for restoration. Her musings caught the attention of Abbott, who replied to Hanson in his own opinion piece, inviting people to call his phone number and leave a message if they were interested in the cause. Thirty-five people called and more than sixty people formed the initial membership of the Friends of Peirce Mill (FOPM). Twenty-six stayed with the group throughout the full span of the period until the running of the mill once again in 2011. One of these members, Sheila Ploger, kept track of the membership ranks and worked on the *Milling About* newsletter, an important communication vehicle for keeping the organization cohesive. More volunteers have since helped with fundraising, mill mechanics, educational programming, and guiding visitors through the mill.<sup>37</sup>

Adlumia "Lummy" Hagner kickstarted the fundraising. She drew upon her high-level contacts within the Washington, DC, social register and philanthropic community. She had formerly served as head of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association. Grantors she brought in included Marjorie Merriweather Post Foundation, Chevy Chase Bank, Pepco, Helen Clay Frick Foundation, Helen Parker Willard Foundation, Dahlgren & Close Attorneys, and Kiplinger Foundation.<sup>38</sup>

Julia Washburn, who served for three years as chief of interpretation and resources management at Rock Creek Park (and as park superintendent as of 2019), facilitated two

---

<sup>35</sup> Dryden, *Peirce Mill*, 90–92. Richard D. Abbott, Friends of Peirce Mill (FOPM): A Brief History, 3, ROCR Archives. Richard Abbott, transcript of oral history interview with the author, April 12, 2017, 2, ROCR Archives.

<sup>36</sup> Steve Dryden, transcript of oral history interview with the author, December 21, 2016, 11, ROCR Archives.

<sup>37</sup> Mary Hanson, "Getting Back into the Old Grind," *Washington Post*, September 1, 1996. Richard Abbott, "A Mill That No Longer Turns," *Washington Post*, September 29, 1996. Abbott, FOPM History, 3. Abbott, transcript of interview, 3.

<sup>38</sup> Abbott, FOPM History, 3–5, 11. Abbott, transcript of interview, 3.

important grants. One came from the James Bell Ford Foundation (General Mills). Julia's father Abbott Washburn, a former General Mills executive, was instrumental in obtaining the grant for Peirce Mill. His family had owned Washburn Mills, which became part of General Mills. Julia also helped Friends of Peirce Mill obtain a grant from the Georgia-Pacific Foundation, which had a Partnership for Parks program under what was then called the National Parks and Conservation Association.<sup>39</sup>

Another person who contributed to both fundraising and education was Steve Dryden. Dryden had worked as a foreign correspondent until he switched careers so that he could work with his hands. He had a predilection for history, having written a history of the US Trade Office Representative. He loved water and old stone buildings, making him a prime candidate to work on the mill's restoration. Dryden took a leadership role in the organization and eventually worked on educational exhibits and teacher contacts. He also wrote a history of Peirce Mill, tracing the families who had owned it. This book served as a publicity piece for fundraising.<sup>40</sup>

The mill restoration hit some snags, beyond the expected funding issues. From the perspective of Abbott and the Friends of Peirce Mill, the National Park Service had not fully defined what reporting the park needed before restoration work could begin. At first, the Friends of Peirce Mill thought that it needed to complete a Condition Assessment and Code Analysis Evaluation. The National Park Service instead determined that the project needed a full Historic Structures Report, along with an interior structural analysis. The agency determined that the mill building itself needed evaluation to ensure that the building's interior could safely support the restored milling machinery. The Friends of Peirce Mill hired Quinn Evans Architects to complete the broadened report and Robert Silman Associates (structural engineers) to do the structural analysis. Well-regarded miller and restoration expert Derek Ogden assessed the mill's current state. He had previously surveyed the mill in 1977. He described the problems of the late 1990s, especially the mill's historically inaccurate waterwheel, and estimated that it would cost the National Park Service \$400,000 or more to make the repairs. His evaluation informed the effort. The Friends of Peirce Mill began hiring professionals in 2001 to slowly repair the mill.<sup>41</sup>

Steve Ortado of Historic Structures Inc. refurbished the main beam, original to the mill, and supporting posts, requiring removal and later replacement of the floorboards on the main level. He used epoxy and a stainless-steel rod to address rotten sections of the main beam, from water and insect damage. The mill's rotting and structural weaknesses have largely resulted from longtime water damage due to its location in a floodplain. Ortado repaired and replaced selected floor joists. Most of this work, which ensured the mill's safety and structural integrity, was completed in 2004. Ortado, a member of Friends of Peirce Mill, donated his professional services.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> Abbott, FOPM History, 5, 11. Abbott, transcript of interview, 3. FOPM News Update, March 1998, File PEMI-General-Park Assns-FOPM: Newsletters and Flyers 1997-1998, Box 15, MRCE.

<sup>40</sup> Abbott, transcript of interview, 1. Dryden, transcript of interview, 2-3, 12, 14-15.

<sup>41</sup> Abbott, FOPM History, 6-7. Abbott, transcript of interview, 5-6. Friends of Peirce Mill website, <http://www.friendsofpeircemill.org/restoring-the-mill/>, accessed August 5, 2017. FOPM News Update, November 1997, File PEMI-General-Park Assns-FOPM: Newsletters and Flyers 1997-1998, Box 15, MRCE. Email, Steve Ortado to Richard Abbott, November 15, 2003, File PEMI-General-Park Assns-FOPM: Pilot Project 2001-2004 (1 of 2), Box 15, MRCE. Email, Cindy Cox to Richard Abbott, November 5, 2003, PEMI-General-Park Assns-FOPM: Pilot Project 2001-2004 (1 of 2), Box 15, MRCE. Adrienne Coleman to Richard Abbott, August 7, 1997, 1, File PEMI-General-Park Assns-FOPM: Bylaws and Organizational Papers 1995-97, Box 15, MRCE.

<sup>42</sup> Abbott, FOPM History, 9-10, 13. Friends of Peirce Mill website, <http://www.friendsofpeircemill.org/restoring-the-mill/>, accessed August 5, 2017. Robert Silman Associates, Peirce Mill Historic Structure Report, Pilot Project Final Report, March 2005, 1-4, File PEMI-Cult Res-PTM: Pilot Project 2001-2006, Box 8, MRCE. Linda

John O'Rourke and Gus Kiorpes (O&K) simultaneously worked as the historic preservation specialists on the George Washington Grist Mill at Mount Vernon and on Peirce Mill. At the latter, beginning in 2004, they removed the damaged, unusable machinery and repaired the hurst frame, an internal frame that supported the gears and millstones. They installed bearing blocks for the main shaft, then oversaw in July 2008 the setting of the twenty-foot-long white oak main shaft. The wood came from large old oak trees felled on the National Institutes of Health campus in preparation for a building project. The mill's main shaft transferred power from the waterwheel outside to the machinery inside the mill. Later, they attached a new pit gear, the primary drive shaft, which would drive the auxiliary gears from the main shaft. The pit gear engaged a spur wheel (built in 2009) attached to the new vertical shaft, which in turn ran two pairs of millstones and the machinery on the upper floors. Separately, the pit gear ran another set of millstones by a countershaft and cog wheel.<sup>43</sup>

In 2010, Rock Creek Park won a total of \$5 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds, of which \$2.1 went to the Peirce Mill project.<sup>44</sup> The park had completed a Cultural Landscape Report (2009) and Environmental Assessment (2010) in preparation for this next round of restoration work. This combination of reporting made the Peirce Mill project "shovel-ready" and thus eligible for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds. National Park Service Regional Director Peggy O'Dell had strongly advocated for the funds for Peirce Mill. The Friends of Peirce Mill had raised an additional \$1 million in donations and grants throughout this period. These infusions of critical funding allowed the park and the Friends of Peirce Mill to complete the restoration. Quinn Evans Architects undertook design work, the National Park Service Denver Service Center provided planning and supervision services, and TMG Construction Corporation completed the construction work under contract supervision by Alpha Corporation.<sup>45</sup>

Beginning in July 2011, workers built the headrace. The National Park Service did not want creek water to run the mill, due to concerns about trash entering the system and for environmental reasons. Instead, the mill operates on a closed recirculating system of city water. A stone enclosure partially follows the path of the mill's original headrace and contains the water pumping system. The waterwheel uses the city water to turn and generate power, and thus the mill machinery still runs on waterpower as originally built.<sup>46</sup>

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funded more work. The contractor further strengthened the mill building, laid a bus parking area for offloading schoolchildren, provided for bicyclists and handicapped persons, and upgraded electrical and mechanical systems. The project included a significant re-landscaping of the area around the mill and the adjacent Peirce

---

Wheeler, "Private Group Pitches in for Peirce Mill," *Washington Post*, November 20, 1998. Quinn Evans Architects, Basis-of-Design Report, 2009, 16, TIC.

<sup>43</sup> Abbott, FOPM History, 7, 13, 17. Friends of Peirce Mill news update, March 1998; May 1998, File PEMI-General-Park Assns-FOPM: Newsletters and Flyers 1997-1998, Box 15, MRCE. The wood from the NIH trees also served to repair some supporting beams inside the mill.

<sup>44</sup> The balance of funds went to a retaining wall for Meridian Mill Park and to rehabilitation of the superintendent's lodge at Battlefield Cemetery. Abbott, FOPM History, 20.

<sup>45</sup> Quinn Evans Architects, Rock Creek Park, Peirce Mill Complex Cultural Landscape Report, 2009, TIC. Rock Creek Park, Preserve Historic Peirce Mill: Environmental Assessment/Assessment of Effect (ROCR 77569), 2010, TIC. NPS, Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), Preserve Historic Peirce Mill, 2010, TIC. Abbott, FOPM History, 21. FOPM website, <http://www.friendsofpeircemill.org/restoring-the-mill/>, accessed August 5, 2017.

<sup>46</sup> Abbott, FOPM History, 21. FOPM website, <http://www.friendsofpeircemill.org/restoring-the-mill/>, accessed August 5, 2017.

Barn, especially removing the slope between the two that had unintentionally fed water into the mill around the foundations and rotted the floor joists.<sup>47</sup>

Once the waterwheel was installed and other restoration work completed, the mill was ready to once again grind grain. On October 15, 2011, the Friends of Peirce Mill and the National Park Service held a celebratory ceremony and welcomed visitors to Peirce Mill, which milled grain for the first time in eighteen years. Abbott called the day “extremely satisfying,” which gave him “the most wonderful feeling.” Dryden, who had written the history of the mill, commented that “for a local boy like myself, [seeing the mill run again] certainly is much more meaningful.”<sup>48</sup> Rock Creek Park’s then Chief of Interpretation and Resources Management Julia Washburn commented that Abbott “pretty much single-handedly” started the Friends of Peirce Mill and got the mill fixed. Washburn noted that National Park Service put the effort “over the line,” but the mill “wouldn’t have been ready for our money if it hadn’t been for Richard” and the other Friends of Peirce Mill volunteers.<sup>49</sup>

More work remains. Beginning in 2012, the Friends of Peirce Mill planted apple and pear trees to recreate the Peirce Plantation orchard, located on the hillside west of the mill. On the hillside behind the orchard, the Friends of Peirce Mill has led the effort to remove non-native invasives and plant oaks, maples, pines, and other native species. In 2016, the Friends of Peirce Mill restored the barrel hoist, a mechanical system run by the waterwheel that transports barrels and bags of flour between floors, used during the mill’s commercial operation.<sup>50</sup>

## Peirce Barn

A carriage house, known as Peirce Barn, sits a few hundred yards away from Peirce Mill. Isaac Peirce built the barn before completing the mill. Peirce Barn is a two-story stone building with irregularly laid stone like Peirce Mill. The Barn’s south façade, which contains both the pedestrian entrance and vehicle entrance, has board cladding. Around 1920, the federal government built a one-story comfort station adjacent to the barn, which has been moved twice around the building. The federal government has completed restoration work on Peirce Barn over the years. During the New Deal restoration of Peirce Mill, workers rehabilitated Peirce Barn and the nearby springhouse. They repointed the stonework and altered the interior of both for use as offices and residences. The exterior space linked by the mill, barn, and springhouse became an area for living history interpretation of nineteenth-century milling.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> Abbott, FOPM History, 21. FOPM website, <http://www.friendsofpeircemill.org/restoring-the-mill/>, accessed August 5, 2017.

<sup>48</sup> FOPM website, <http://www.friendsofpeircemill.org/restoring-the-mill/>, accessed August 5, 2017. Abbott, transcript of interview, 12. Dryden, transcript of interview, 12.

<sup>49</sup> Julia Washburn, transcript of interview with the author, July 10, 2017, 21, ROCR Archives. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act required that projects be “shovel ready” to obtain funding.

<sup>50</sup> FOPM website, <http://www.friendsofpeircemill.org/restoring-the-mill/>, accessed August 5, 2017.

<sup>51</sup> Peirce Mill CLR, 2.4–2.5, 2.36, 3.18–3.19, 4.1, 4.26.



Figure 12. Peirce Barn as the Art Barn  
NPS PHOTO, 1971

In 1971, just as a rehabilitated Peirce Mill opened, Peirce Barn reinvented itself as the Art Barn. For this new use, NPS added new structural supports and a shake roof. NPS and the Associates of Artists Equity of Washington joined in a cooperative project that dovetailed with the National Capital Parks' "Parks for All Seasons" program. Local artists did not have a permanent place to display their work without charge. The Art Barn continued the NPS goal of the parks-are-for-people concept to serve the community with meaningful and innovative ideas. The exhibits coordinated with classes and special events.<sup>52</sup>

Superintendent Georgia Ellard, who served from 1983 to 1988, remembered the Art Barn Association, as the artists group came to be called. In 1984, Congress authorized the Secretary of the Interior to negotiate a five-year agreement with the Art Barn Association. Ellard recalled how the artists would have activities that drew visitors not just to the art gallery but also to the park. The Art Barn Association also took on Rock Creek Park Day, the annual celebration of the

---

<sup>52</sup> Peirce Mill CLR, 4.7. Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 4, section "Peirce Mill and the Art Barn." NPS News Release, May 4, 1971, scan from Harpers Ferry Center collection, ROCR Archives. Art Barn flyer, no date, scan from Harpers Ferry Center collection, ROCR Archives.

park's founding each fall. The artists would help put together a Saturday–Sunday program that Ellard described as a “very exciting time for the park and also for Washington, D.C.” Ellard noted that Rock Creek Park Day grew because of the Art Barn Association and other friends of the park.<sup>53</sup>

The Art Barn Association, later known in 1992 as Rock Creek Gallery, continued to use Peirce Barn until 2000. The association had encountered financial difficulties in the 1990s, leading to fewer exhibitions and offerings until its demise.<sup>54</sup>

Beginning in 2007, NPS has made improvements to Peirce Barn and its landscape. The agency rehabilitated the barn in 2007. NPS substantially changed the landscape around the barn during Peirce Mill rehabilitation to reflect site conditions more accurately during the historic period when the mill was in operation. In 2020, NPS designed new fire suppression and security systems for the barn. Additionally, NPS is building a new comfort station/restroom facility behind the barn, replacing one that used to stand there. The barn houses interpretative and educational displays on milling in Rock Creek. NPS completed a Historic Structures Report (HSR) in 2013 for both the Peirce Barn and Peirce Springhouse.<sup>55</sup>

### **Klinge Mansion**

In 1823, Isaac Peirce gave his son Joshua eighty-two acres along Rock Creek. Joshua, then in his twenties, already had an affinity for horticulture. He named the property Linnaean Hill, after Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus, the creator of taxonomy. This same year, Joshua released his first catalog of fruit and ornamental trees, flowers, and greenhouse plants for sale. That same year, he also built his home on a hill just south of Peirce Mill and Barn. He combined the architectural styles of Georgian and Pennsylvania German folk. He used the same blue-gray stone covering the mill and barn, quarried at nearby Broad Branch. The mansion had ten rooms across its three floors, with an addition built twenty years later. Twin buildings in the back were joined into a massive retaining wall and greenhouse. The greenhouse sat in ruins by 1907, and the National Park Service removed the retaining wall in 1935, with the stone used in refurbishing the mansion. A wood and stone barn sits to the east of the mansion. Joshua landscaped his property with carefully placed trees and shrubs and an elaborate system of roads and paths, following in the tradition of American landscape architect Andrew Jackson Downing. Joshua owned between six and thirteen enslaved people, and at least one of them worked in his horticultural business, as indicated when he set a \$50 reward for one escapee, whom he described as having experience in cultivating exotic plants.<sup>56</sup>

The home on Linnaean Hill passed from Joshua Peirce to his wife's nephew Joshua Peirce Klinge upon Joshua Peirce's death in 1869. Klinge remained the mansion's owner until the early 1890s when the federal government acquired the property as part of Rock Creek Park. Since the time of federal government acquisition, Klinge mansion has not served as an interpretive location for Rock Creek Park. Instead, the mansion functioned as a residence for

---

<sup>53</sup> Georgia Ellard, transcript of oral history interview with the author, May 8, 2017, 4–5, ROCR Archives. Quote from p. 5.

<sup>54</sup> ROCR, GMP/EIS, 2010, v. Art Barn Collection Description, Historical Society of Washington, DC, 1–2, ROCR Archives.

<sup>55</sup> NPS comments, ROCR Admin History, September 16, 2020, ROCR Archives. Peirce Barn and Peirce Springhouse, Historic Structures Report, 2013, 1.2.2–1.2.3.

<sup>56</sup> Dryden, *Peirce Mill*, 26, 30, 33–34. Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 4, The Pierce-Klinge House and the Nature Center. National Register for Historic Places Nomination Form, Rock Creek Park Historic District, 1991, section 7, pp. 6, 9.

government employees. When the National Park Service gained authority over Rock Creek Park in 1933, the agency had the house renovated for continued residential use. Public Works Administration workers completed this task, including uncovering in the basement an enormous six-foot-by-four-foot fireplace with an adjacent beehive oven.<sup>57</sup>

Beginning in 1952, the National Park Service used the building in new ways. Park Police officers used it for a year as office space. In 1956, the agency converted the mansion into the first Rock Creek Park Nature Center. In 1959, the Nature Center moved to its current location, and the following year the Junior League of Washington took residency. The Junior League moved in 1972 to new quarters in Georgetown. For the next decade, Klinge Mansion served as home to the Green Scene (part of the Summer in the Parks program), other science and natural resources programs, and a variety of administrative uses. During the 1970s, the National Park Service completed major rehabilitation work to the mansion; the agency leased the upper floors for office space, and Park Police kept a substation in the basement. In 1982, the American Institute for Conservation signed a five-year cooperative agreement to use the space as its headquarters.<sup>58</sup>

Klinge mansion displayed severe deterioration problems by the time the American Institute for Conservation vacated. Superintendent Rolland Swain wrote that a combination of problems threatened the building's structural integrity. These included a leaking roof, water seepage through holes in the stone walls, corrosion of the heating system, rot and insect-infested floor joists, and broken windows and doors. Swain pointed at deferred maintenance as the main culprit. National Park Service Director William Penn Mott Jr. reinforced the severity of the situation when he visited the site and urged the park to treat the deterioration.<sup>59</sup>

Swain made the case that fixing the mansion's deterioration would also help the park in addressing its office space requirements. In 1975, the Rock Creek Park headquarters staff moved from their offices on Beach Drive to the maintenance yard. Park Police then moved their substation from trailers near Carter Barron Amphitheater to the Beach Drive facility. This move gave the police a better-suited substation but gave up secure storage. The maintenance yard building, however, had to accommodate more people in its already snug quarters. In 1981, the Palisades maintenance operation moved to the main maintenance yard, further increasing the number of people at the main maintenance yard but decreasing the space for park maintenance operations. Swain argued for rehabilitating Klinge mansion for use by park headquarters staff. The National Park Service adopted this approach, with the building's work completed in three phases between fiscal years 1989 and 1991. Park administration moved into the mansion in June 1993.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 4, The Pierce-Klinge House and the Nature Center. NPS, Rehabilitation of Klinge Mansion, Rock Creek Park, Klinge Mansion, volume 2, FY 1990, History section, TIC.

<sup>58</sup> Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 4, The Pierce-Klinge House and the Nature Center. NPS, Design Drawings and Specifications for "Rehabilitation of Klinge Mansion," Rock Creek Park, Klinge Mansion, Washington, DC, FY 1991, Vol. 1 Design Work, Approved Task Directive Revised January 1991, Summary, TIC; Memorandum, Randall Copeland to Superintendent ROCR, January 28, 1991, TIC. NPS, Rehabilitation of Klinge Mansion, Rock Creek Park, Klinge Mansion, Volume 2, FY 1990, History Section, TIC.

<sup>59</sup> Mott was trying to find a location where interns/employees might stay when visiting Washington, DC, for business. Bill Mott to Jack Fish, July 17, 1987; Memorandum, Rolland Swain to Deputy Regional Director, National Capital Region, March 9, 1990, 1; Memorandum, Rolland Swain to Regional Director, National Capital Region, October 18, 1988, 1, all in DSC, TIC.

<sup>60</sup> Memorandum, Rolland Swain to Deputy Regional Director, National Capital Region, March 9, 1990; Memorandum, Rolland Swain to Regional Director, National Capital Region, October 18, 1988, both in TIC. ROCR Annual Report, 1992, TIC.

NPS made improvements to Klinge Mansion between 2009 and 2018. The agency replaced the HVAC system in 2018 to address condensation, mold, and ventilation issues in the building. NPS completed a structural assessment (i.e., joist sampling) in 2015 to determine the structural integrity of critical components of the first, second, and third floors; house skeleton; and any supporting structures, including the back porch. Circa 2009, NPS has also rehabilitated the two-story, cast-iron veranda and two balconies on the back of the building.<sup>61</sup>

Klinge Mansion has remained the park headquarters. This arrangement has proven disadvantageous. The existing buildings are not large enough to accommodate the needs of a centralized administrative office. Substantial alterations to the historic structure would be needed to meet those needs and comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The current arrangement also keeps the building from being interpreted as a historic resource for visitors. Klinge Mansion suffers from preservation challenges and deferred maintenance.<sup>62</sup>

### **Old Stone House**

On March 26, 1953, the National Park Service acquired the Old Stone House in Georgetown following condemnation proceedings. The former owners, Capital Enterprises, had threatened to raze the structure to put in a parking lot. Citizen organizations in Georgetown had protested this proposed action beginning in 1941 and took their concerns to Congress, requesting legislation to save the two-and-a-half-story stone building dating from 1764 to 1767. With bipartisan support, Congress passed a bill on September 25, 1950, calling for the acquisition and then restoration of the home for use as a museum. Upon acquisition, the National Park Service identified a land survey error, in which a part of the building sat on a narrow strip of land to the west of the Old Stone House. In 1956, the federal government obtained the deed for this narrow strip of land, which had also been owned by Capital Enterprises.<sup>63</sup>

Georgetown citizen organizations advocated for the preservation of the Old Stone House. These groups included Historic Georgetown Inc. They issued stock to nearly one hundred members, with the money used to partially renovate three buildings that had sections dating to the pre-Revolutionary War period. These buildings sat on the same block as the Old Stone House. Historic Georgetown Inc. and other Georgetown organizations hoped to use the Old Stone House as an example to encourage businesses to retain the colonial charm of the area instead of moving their businesses into new construction. They wanted to turn M Street, where the Old Stone House sits, into a major commercial strip.<sup>64</sup> With the National Park Service

---

<sup>61</sup> NPS comments, ROCR Admin History, September 16, 2020.

<sup>62</sup> ROCR GMP/EIS, 2010, 81–82.

<sup>63</sup> Dorothea Andrews, “Georgetown Envisions M Street ‘Williamsburg,’” *Washington Post* (April 2, 1950). Assistant Secretary for the Interior to Mr. Frederick J. Lawton, September 21, 1950; Memorandum, Ronald F. Lee to Superintendent, National Capital Parks, November 15, 1941; US Department of the Interior Solicitor Mastin G. White to US Attorney General, February 25, 1952, all in File OLST–Subject Files–Correspondence 1940–1956 (cont’d), Box 53, MRCE. Mr. D. Otis Beasley to Rep. Walter Rogers, April 24, 1956, 3, File OLST–Subject Files–Correspondence 1940–1956, Box 53, MRCE. Public Law 81-836, An Act to provide for the acquisition and preservation of the Old Stone House, September 25, 1950. Memorandum, Superintendent, National Capital Parks to Director, October 12, 1953, 1, File OLST–History–General–Primary Documents–General 1781–1954, Box 49, MRCE.

<sup>64</sup> Edward Burling Jr. to Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay, October 25, 1955, 1, File OLST–Subject Files–Correspondence 1940–1956 (cont’d), Box 53, MRCE. Other DC organizations supporting acquisition of the Old Stone House were Georgetown Citizens Association, Georgetown Progressive Citizen Association, Georgetown University, and Columbia Historical Society, plus the Daughters of the American Revolution, Colonial Dames of America, American Institute of Architects, and the Sons of the American Revolution. Eva R. Hinton and Birnie

restoring the Old Stone House, some people in Georgetown hoped that this “opening wedge” would lead to a campaign that produced a Georgetown business district that “out-Williamsburg[ed] Williamsburg.”<sup>65</sup>

The National Park Service did not have immediate funding for fully restoring the Old Stone House, and these same Georgetown organizations applied pressure.<sup>66</sup> The Progressive Citizens Association of Georgetown in October 1955 sent resolutions to the National Park Service calling for action. This association pointed at Parkway Motors, which leased the property from the federal government for a second-hand car lot. The company had a large sign hanging from the side of the Old Stone House and used the backyard, then covered with asphalt, as the lot. This lessee had been on site since before the National Park Service acquisition of the property. Responding to inquiries from many Georgetown individuals, National Park Service Director Conrad Wirth indicated his concern about this tenancy on the property and the delays to repair the building.<sup>67</sup>

National Capital Parks (NCP) obtained fiscal year 1957 funding for restoration of the house and grounds. National Park Service maintenance workers, led by National Capital Parks Chief Architect William Haussmann (who had also worked on Carter Barron Amphitheater), completed the extensive work. The building needed structural stabilization and replacement of defective materials, but as a testament to its level of architectural integrity, the overall look of the building did not change. However, there were some serious issues to address. Perhaps most disconcerting was the loading capacity of the floors. When Haussmann first evaluated the building during the 1953 acquisition, he found that the main floor could support ordinary loads only through temporary shoring in the basement. The second floor could not safely support any loads.<sup>68</sup>

---

West, Statement to the Appropriations Committee, March 8, 1956, File OLST–Subject Files–Correspondence 1940–1956 (cont’d), Box 53, MRCE.

<sup>65</sup> Andrews, “Georgetown Envisions M Street ‘Williamsburg.’”

<sup>66</sup> NPS did obtain a small amount (\$7,000) for completing external work, sandblasting off the lime coatings and repointing the stone, thereby weatherproofing the building and stabilizing the walls. See Memorandum, William Haussmann to Harding, Jett, and Roberts, November 30, 1956, 1, File OLST–Cult Res–PTM: General Preservation and Reconstruction 1956–1995, Box 45, MRCE. Memorandum, Superintendent, National Capital Parks (NCP), Edward J. Kelly to Director, NPS, December 30, 1955, 3, File OLST–Subject Files–Correspondence 1940–1956 (cont’d), Box 53, MRCE.

<sup>67</sup> Progressive Citizens Association of Georgetown, Resolution, October 3, 1955; Associate Superintendent Harry Thompson to Mrs. Frank Allen West, June 10, 1955; Memorandum, Conrad Wirth to Superintendent National Capital Parks, November 19, 1954, all in File OLST–Subject Files–Correspondence 1940–1956 (cont’d), Box 53, MRCE.

<sup>68</sup> Memorandum, Acting Superintendent Harry Thompson to Chief, Division of Design and Construction, NPS, October 17, 1956, and attached Preliminary Report: Restoration of The Old Stone House, by William M. Haussmann, Section I, OLST 1950s restore MRCE, File OLST–Subject Files–Correspondence 1940–1956, Box 53, MRCE. Photo, Parking sign on Old Stone House, *The Sunday Star* (July 12, 1959). Memorandum, William Haussmann to Chief, Landscape Architectural Branch, National Capital Parks, et al., March 1, 1957, 1, File OLST–Subject Files–Correspondence 1957–1958, Box 53, MRCE. NPS NCP Press Release, December 21, 1959, 1, File OLST–Cult Res–Curatorial–Furnishings Plans–Correspondence 1959–1982, Box 44, MRCE. Memorandum, Superintendent, National Capital Parks to Director, NPS, October 12, 1953, 2, File OLST–History–General–Primary Documents–General 1781–1954, Box 49, MRCE.

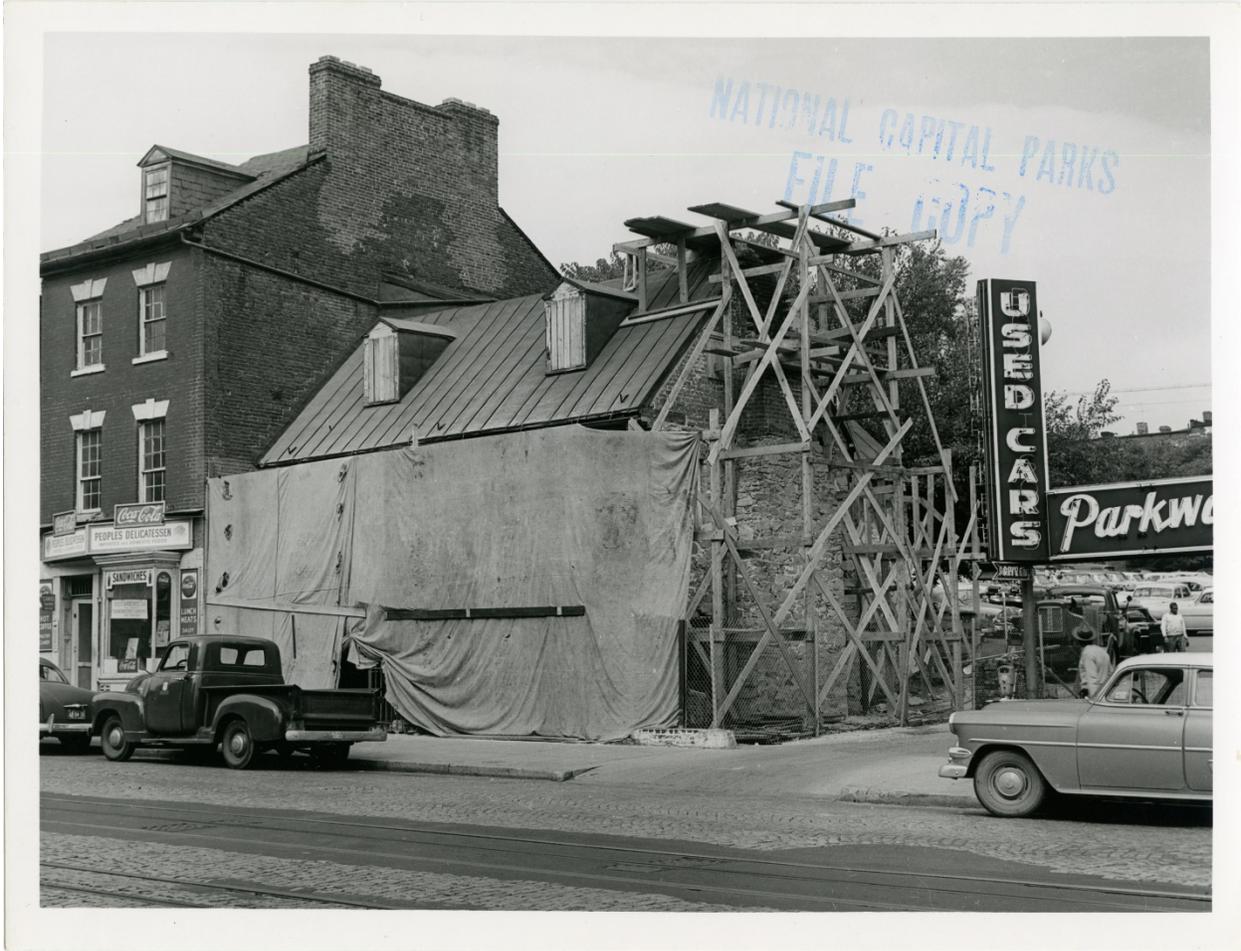


Figure 13. Restoration of the Old Stone House  
NPS PHOTO, 1955

Haussmann conducted his architectural restoration work on the Old Stone House using accepted historic preservation standards with the intent of turning the space into a museum. The National Park Service had been pursuing having an outside organization rent the building and using it as office space in addition to having a museum. These talks ultimately fell through, and NPS National Capital Parks took over the site. However, Haussmann expressed his concerns about anyone using the building for office work, and in doing so, he revealed what work he supervised at the Old Stone House. In the front wing, the floor had sagged 2 inches in the center. Half of the inadequate joists had been deeply cut out in the center of the span, and some were cracked through. The National Park Service bolted new two-by-six-inch fir joists to them. The agency could then keep the original floor members, but as Haussmann noted, the strengthened floor still did not have the capacity for fifty-pound loads, as required in offices according to the building code. Haussmann thought the loading in the rear wing had some greater capacity, but not by much. The stairs from the main floor to the basement had many “winders” that Haussmann kept for historic preservation purposes but were unsafe for office purposes. He also indicated that the electrical system would be minimal, with hidden switches and localized lighting, in keeping with the museum setting. He noted that the National Park Service had

considered electric heating for the building due to its lower cost to install, but it would cost more to run if using the space as a full-time office instead of a museum.<sup>69</sup>

Haussmann worked with National Capital Parks Historian Cornelius Heine and Smithsonian Archeologist G. Hubert Smith. Heine conducted intensive primary source research to answer four questions peppering the Old Stone House. Was this building George Washington's Headquarters? (No.) Was this building Pierre L'Enfant's Headquarters? (No.) Was this building Suter's Tavern? (No.) What was the actual use of the house? (A residence and business.) Heine also wrote about the architectural style of the building. He referred to Thomas T. Waterman and his 1934 assessment of the Old Stone House. Waterman, who had also worked on Peirce Mill during the 1930s, declared the Old Stone House as Pennsylvanian in style, having a T-shaped plan with a wing (later added) in the rear. In 1957, Smith completed an archeological investigation of the interior of the main residence.<sup>70</sup>

The Old Stone House opened to the public on January 24, 1960. NPS Director Conrad Wirth inserted a five-inch iron key into the door lock and welcomed more than three hundred visitors that day. People could tour four of the eight rooms in the home. Women from Georgetown dressed in colonial wear and joined National Park Service employees in interacting with guests and stoking a fire in the dining room fireplace. Furnishings came via loan or gift from individuals and the Smithsonian, including a blanket chest, tavern table, two corner cupboards, and a pewter basin. The *Evening Star* emphasized that the house had little to distinguish itself from other historic properties. The building was "just about unique among eighteenth century Washington area buildings" by the so-far-as-known fact that George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, or the Marquis de Lafayette had not slept or "wassailed" there.<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> William Haussmann to Associate Superintendent, March 18, 1957, File OLST-Subject Files-Correspondence 1957-1958, Box 53, MRCE. Memorandum, Superintendent NCP Harry Thompson to Director, NPS, October 20, 1958, File OLST-Subject Files-Correspondence 1957-1958, Box 53, MRCE.

<sup>70</sup> Cornelius W. Heine, Preliminary Report, attached to William Haussmann, Preliminary Report, Restoration of The Old Stone House, October 1956, 1-2, 9-10, File OLST-Subject Files-Correspondence 1940-1956, Box 53, MRCE. Acting Superintendent NCP Harry Thompson to Director, NPS, November 14, 1956, File OLST-Subject Files-Correspondence 1940-1956, Box 53, MRCE. Christie Rinehart, "Restoration of Old Stone House Provides Mystery for Park Officials" (n.d.), File OLST-General: Articles 1940-1970, Box 51, MRCE. C. Fisher, proposal for Restoring the Grounds of the Old Stone House, January 4, 1973, 2, File OLST-Cult Res-Landscape: Proposal for Restoring Grounds 1973, Box 45, MRCE.

<sup>71</sup> John W. Stepp, "Georgetown's Old Stone House Opens to the Public; 300 Turn Up," *Evening Star* (January 25, 1960).



*Figure 14. The Restored Old Stone House*  
NPS PHOTO, 1982



*Figure 15. The Old Stone House 1960 Opening*  
NPS PHOTO, 1960



Figure 16. *The Old Stone House and Living History Interpreters*  
NPS PHOTO, 1966

National Capital Parks planners for the house opening did have some concerns. The continued public relations pressure to open the house meant that restoration proceeded before interpretive plans had matured, as the National Park Service preferred. Plus, the planners gave approval to the furnishing plans with certain caveats, namely the need for additional research on occupants and the building. National Capital Parks interpreters wanted the period for presentation to date to the colonial period, as noted in the stated purpose for acquisition, but current research could only place the house furnishings to 1800–1808. Circulation through the building, driven by structural concerns, also prompted alarm. Visitors would have to go up and down the same winding staircase due to the structural weakness of the south wing. The National Capital Parks Chief Interpreter recommended using the front outdoor staircase for entering the building at the main level and then using the small winding staircase for exiting. This proposal held less appeal in poor weather.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Memorandum, Superintendent, NCP Harry Thompson to Director, NPS, September 3, 1959; Memorandum, Chief, Division of Interpretation to Superintendent, NCP, November 23, 1959, 1–2, and attached Agnes Downey, *The Old Stone House Furnishing Plan*, July 1959, all in *Old Stone House Historic Furnishing Plan*, 1959, TIC.

The National Park Service completed maintenance and repairs to the Old Stone House over the years. In 1976, Haussmann oversaw roof replacement during the initial restoration effort, and the agency replaced the roof again. In the 1974 annual report, Site Supervisor Rae Koch wrote about the “terrible shape” of the building due in part to the deterioration of the roof. Koch also wrote in that annual report about the faulty operation of the furnace and air conditioner. The furnace left some rooms overly hot and others overly cold. In 1987, the park refurbished the Old Stone House, though the annual report does not give specifics. The National Park Service contracted to have the building exterior repainted, including the removal and disposal of lead-based paint.<sup>73</sup>

The National Park Service removed the parking lot in the rear of the building and planted a well-enjoyed garden, which had its first full year of blooming in summer 1958. Over the years, site supervisor Rae Koch designed an eighteenth-century perennial colonial garden for the space, and National Park Service gardener George Hunsaker made these plans a reality. The Georgetown lunchtime crowd spent nice days eating in the garden. Many couples, recognizing the beauty of the plantings, got permission to hold their nuptials in the garden.<sup>74</sup>

In 2018, NPS completed another rehabilitation of the Old Stone House and its grounds. According to Cultural Resources Program Manager Brad Krueger, NPS coordinated its work with the DC Historic Preservation Office and the Old Georgetown Board / Commission of Fine Arts. NPS reconstructed approximately 150 square feet of the stone foundation and walls, selectively repairing plaster inside the house. The park painted and repointed the interior and exterior and rehabilitated all nineteen windows. NPS replaced and rehabilitated exterior shutters and doors. Heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning (HVAC); plumbing; and electrical systems were upgraded or replaced. NPS installed a new water-based fire protection system. Finally, the park replaced in-kind the wooden picket fence and gate.

Following the 2018 rehabilitation, the Old Stone House has now reopened to the public. However, as of 2020, the museum collection and exhibit pieces have not yet returned. Before this can happen, a review of the occupancy limits needs to be completed and related structural issues addressed to ensure the safety of visitors and staff. A geotechnical investigation (i.e., soil borings) was completed circa 2012 to assess the structural integrity of the site after there was suspected movement of the building.<sup>75</sup>

### **Dumbarton Oaks Park**

In November 1940, Robert Woods and Mildred Bliss deeded twenty-seven acres of land, which they named Dumbarton Oaks Park, consisting of the informal, naturalistic garden area of their Georgetown property, to the National Park Service. They required that Dumbarton Oaks Park be a public park for pedestrians only, with no streets or roadways crossing the park. Into the 1920s, the National Capital Park Commission had explored extending some District streets through Dumbarton Oaks Park or using land in the park to complete Whitehaven Parkway. These ideas went off the table. Also, in 1940, the Blisses gave their home Dumbarton Oaks, with its library and collections of Byzantine and Pre-Columbian art, along with its attached formal upper

---

<sup>73</sup> Quote in Old Stone House Annual Report, 1975, 15. See also George Washington Memorial Parkway Annual Report, 1976, 24, both in File OLST–Reports–Annual Reports 1970–1979 (1 of 2), Box 52, MRCE. Rock Creek Park Annual Report, 1987, 10, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR. Rock Creek Park Annual Report, 1995, 4, TIC.

<sup>74</sup> Old Stone House Annual Report, 1977, 2, File OLST–Reports–Annual Reports 1970–1979 (2 of 2), Box 52, MRCE. “New Garden, Old House,” photo newsclipping in File OLST–General: Articles 1940–1970, Box 51, MRCE.

<sup>75</sup> NPS comments, ROCR Admin History, September 16, 2020.

gardens, to Harvard University. The Blisses requested in their deed that Harvard establish a research institute for study in the humanities and fine arts, with special emphasis on the collections they had already established. The Blisses gave Harvard an endowment to support the research institute, and Mildred left the bulk of her remaining estate to Harvard upon her death. The Blisses did not leave an endowment to the National Park Service for caretaking of the naturalistic park, driven at least in part by the concern that the federal government would reduce maintenance funds for the park by the amount available through the endowment.<sup>76</sup>

In 1921, the Blisses hired Beatrix Farrand to design both the gardens and grounds around their home and the connected informal naturalistic area. Farrand, who called Reef Point (her family estate in Bar Harbor) her home for nearly seventy-five years, cofounded the American Society of Landscape Architects in 1899. (She was yet not 30 years old at the time.) She had trained under Charles Sprague Sargent, the first director of the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University. She then traveled abroad to Italy and Britain to study gardens. From her family's grounds in Maine, she likely gained an appreciation for ecological restraints on plant life and translated this understanding into her work at Dumbarton Oaks Park, where she designed the landscape based upon the lay of the existing landscape. She achieved international fame for the many private and public spaces she designed. Her work at Dumbarton Oaks was her most famous.<sup>77</sup>

Farrand worked with the Blisses, particularly Mildred, for almost thirty years in designing and maintaining the Dumbarton Oaks grounds. Robert Woods served in the Foreign Service, and thus they primarily lived abroad until his 1933 retirement. For Dumbarton Oaks, their primary home in the United States, they wanted the illusion of country life within the city. Mildred asked Farrand to design and plant for spring and autumn and to have evergreens for the winter months, these being the months she and Robert would likely be in residence. One hallmark of this request, and a way to connect plantings in the formal and informal landscape, was Forsythia Dell. Farrand tightly planted forsythia bushes, which swept between the formal gardens and the naturalistic park.<sup>78</sup>

Farrand designed the naturalistic park in part to meet the Bliss's need for a country setting in an urban environment. She incorporated the existing meadows and farm track that harkened back to the farming of this property. She added eighteen dams to the stream, an unnamed tributary of Rock Creek, creating rustic waterfalls and pools of water of varied sizes. Each pool echoed the shape of the kalmia leaf and served as a mirror to the larger plantings of azaleas and iris. She used small groupings of plants to give a romantic touch to the natural setting. With stone benches placed nearby, she created rooms for contemplation and connection with nature.<sup>79</sup> She wanted the entire area to have a "certain eighteenth century quality of the

---

<sup>76</sup> Maureen De Lay Joseph, Kay Fanning, and Mark Davison, Cultural Landscape Report: Dumbarton Oaks Park, Rock Creek Park, Part I (August 2000), 37–39, 49. Deed No. 39041, November 30, 1940, ROCR Archives. Dumbarton Oaks website, <https://www.doaks.org/about/history>, accessed August 25, 2017. Beatrix Farrand, "Dumbarton Oaks: An Historical Setting for the Making of History," *Landscape Architecture* (n.d.): 131, File DUOA-General-Articles 1941–1998, Box 42, MRCE. Bill Welsh, "Restoration of Dumbarton Oaks Park Gains Momentum," *Land* (October 1998): 4.

<sup>77</sup> William W. Patterson, "Beatrix Farrand, 1872–1959: An Appreciation of a Great Landscape Gardener," *Landscape Architecture Quarterly* (Summer 1959): 216–17. Dumbarton Oaks CLR, 19. Historic American Building Survey (HABS) Dumbarton Oaks Park, HABS-DC-571, 5–6, TIC.

<sup>78</sup> Dumbarton Oaks CLR, 20–21, 25. Adrian Higgins, "Dumbarton Oaks," *Washington Post* (September 16, 1993).

<sup>79</sup> Dumbarton Oaks CLR, 31, 34, 48. Mildred B. Bliss, "An Attempted Evocation of a Personality," *Landscape Architecture Quarterly* (Summer 1959): 222–23. HABS-DC-571, 29. Beatrix Farrand to Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss, June 24–25, 1922, in HABS-DC-571, 40.

naturalistic,” as she explained to Harry Thompson, NPS National Capital Parks Superintendent and trained landscape architect.<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup> Beatrix Farrand to Harry Thompson, March 22, 1943, 2, in HABS-DC-571, 50.



*Figure 17. Dumbarton Oaks Park  
NPS PHOTO, 1963*



*Figure 18. Dumbarton Oaks Park Stream and Bridge*  
NPS PHOTO, 1963

Farrand and the Blissés gave suggestions to the National Park Service after the transfer of the land to the federal government. Some of these interactions addressed the changed use of the park from private to public. Farrand and Mildred Bliss, for example, strongly recommended that the agency widen the streamside path and lay out a trail on the brow of Clifton Hill, in both cases to handle increased usage of the grounds. The Blissés and Farrand also urged the agency to establish an Advisory Committee for the future upkeep of the grounds. The resulting committee only lasted a brief time, not having much authority.<sup>81</sup>

Farrand consulted with the National Park Service, recommending types of plants and where to place them. She wrote in a March 1943 letter to the agency about her underlying design approach for the park. She had not recorded her layout or plantings schemes when she had designed the park, so this letter serves as an important source. She wrote that the planting along the stream “was planned to be rather small in scale and entirely simple in all its arrangements.” She thus cautioned against masses of large plant material. She noted that bulbs should be planted in drifts, not clumps or beds. In writing about how she had designed the naturalistic park, though, Farrand acknowledged National Park Service budget constraints. She wrote, for example, that

---

<sup>81</sup> Dumbarton Oaks CLR, 41–48.

the bulbs would likely need only a few replacements over time, and she recommended one type that could fill in easily.<sup>82</sup>

National Park Service caretaking of Dumbarton Oaks Park began earnestly but quickly ran up against budget constraints. Congressional appropriations reduced the overall maintenance funding for National Capital Parks, which administered Dumbarton Oaks Park. NCP Planning Division Chief Donald Kline wrote to Farrand in May 1942 that it would be “exceedingly difficult” for the region to “adequately maintain the area,” given these circumstances.<sup>83</sup> But National Capital Parks did manage to get a crew out in 1942 in anticipation of a visit from the Blissés. Harry Thompson, who replaced Kline as chief of the planning division, noted to Farrand that the park looked “spic and span” as a result.<sup>84</sup>

The issue of stormwater also plagued the park. The small stream flowing through the park served as a natural conduit for water and debris running off nearby impervious surfaces. The Blissés had had early conversations with the District of Columbia’s Engineering Department before vacating their home, and the District continued its review of the situation.<sup>85</sup> But before the department installed a storm sewer, Thompson had to write to Farrand about the “unholy mess” wreaked upon the stream and its eighteen scenic dams.<sup>86</sup> But Farrand already had seen such damage; she wrote in July 1942 of the “regrettable and deplorable” mess from the “mud invasion” of the previous season.<sup>87</sup> That mud came from loose dirt piles on the site of the Naval Observatory that swept down streets and into the Dumbarton Oaks Park stream. Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes wrote to the Secretary of the Navy to demand action, though he admitted that his department had no power in the situation and relied upon the Navy to take preventive steps. The Navy Secretary responded within ten days with the agency’s approach to solving the problem. Continued stormwater incursions from the Naval Observatory and environs would plague the park as late as 1998.<sup>88</sup>

The Blissés deeded their property a year before US entry into World War II. National and world climate had a negative impact upon National Park Service funding and staffing, and Dumbarton Oaks Park experienced such restrictions. Wartime demands prioritized spending for troops and armaments. After the war, the National Park Service saw visitation soar but congressional appropriations flatten. Not until NPS Director Conrad Wirth spearheaded Mission 66, a ten-year park development program that ended in 1966 at the fiftieth anniversary of the agency, did funds flow. Those funds went to expanding road systems in such parks as Yosemite and to building new lodging units in Yellowstone and Everglades, for example. More money went to upgrading the interpretation at parks by constructing visitor centers, a new building form that combined visitor comfort (including restrooms), display of artifacts (which parks had

---

<sup>82</sup> Farrand to Thompson, March 29, 1943, as reproduced in Appendix D, Dumbarton Oaks Park CLR, 287–88.

<sup>83</sup> Chief, Planning Division Donald L. Kline to Beatrix Farrand, May 21, 1942, Unprocessed Files, Headquarters Superintendent Files, ROCR.

<sup>84</sup> Harry Thompson to Beatrix Farrand, November 11, 1942, Unprocessed Files, Headquarters Superintendent Files, ROCR.

<sup>85</sup> Superintendent Irving C. Root to Farrand, September 9, 1942, 1, Unprocessed Files, Headquarters Superintendent Files, ROCR.

<sup>86</sup> Thompson to Farrand, November 11, 1942, Unprocessed Files, Headquarters Superintendent Files, ROCR.

<sup>87</sup> Farrand to Irving C. Root, July 8, 1942, Unprocessed Files, Headquarters Superintendent Files, ROCR.

<sup>88</sup> Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes to Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, June 13, 1942; and Knox to Ickes, June 22, 1942, both in Unprocessed Files, Headquarters Superintendent Files, ROCR. ROCR Superintendent Adrienne Coleman to Commander US Naval Observatory Captain D. M. Larsen, May 29, 1998, Unprocessed Files, Headquarters Administrative Files, ROCR.

previously done in their museums), and visitor contact (where visitors could ask questions and get basic park information).<sup>89</sup>

Rock Creek Park got its Nature Center as a Mission 66 project. But Dumbarton Oaks Park did not see a significant increase in its care under Mission 66. Overworked maintenance staff managed to keep the park close to the level of care as during the Bliss ownership, but they could not stem the damage from stormwater. In 1958, John Thacher, director of Dumbarton Oaks, asked to see National Park Service personnel to discuss the poor condition of the park. Thompson and Thacher agreed on certain actions, including removing dead trees, trimming back the forsythia, and clearing the stream bed. But the park's overall quality remained threatened. In summer 1967, a National Park Service naturalist reported regularly about the park's status, with pollution and stream degradation being the most severe issues.<sup>90</sup>

Dumbarton Oaks Park declined further. In 1972, National Capital Parks assigned George Washington Memorial Parkway administration of Dumbarton Oaks. Until about that same time, one gardener had had full-time responsibility for the park, with additional help available from staff assigned to Montrose Park or the general maintenance crew. The gardener could largely keep up with the basic maintenance issues. When that gardener retired, though, he was not replaced, and the park declined dramatically. In 1976, Dumbarton Oaks Park went back to Rock Creek Park administration, which in August 1977 was named a distinct organizational unit with a superintendent, James Redmond.<sup>91</sup>

After 1976, Rock Creek Park managed Dumbarton Oaks Park differently from the previous time. The park's maintenance staff did not have the institutional history of its former gardener. In the 1970s, the National Park Service increasingly adopted ecological perspectives in its interpretive activities and management.<sup>92</sup> This emphasis translated into Dumbarton Oaks Park deteriorating, as stated by the 1989 Historic American Buildings Survey report, due to "misguided resource management as a 'natural' area."<sup>93</sup>

The National Park Service had lost sight of Dumbarton Oaks Park as a designed landscape. Julia Washburn encountered this situation when she served as Rock Creek Park's Chief of Interpretation and Resources Management between 1996 and 1999. Washburn found that the Natural Resources Chief at the time, Bob Ford, "was sort of raised under the era when we let nature takes its course," believing that "the forest will take care of itself." Lack of funds did not necessarily determine this management approach, according to Washburn. The publication of the Leopold Report in 1964 encouraged National Park Service managers to focus on natural systems, with its call for the agency to stop feeding the bears, for example, and to use scientific evidence to care for the parks. However, this approach threatened national parks' designed landscapes, not just because plants would overgrow or die with age. More importantly,

---

<sup>89</sup> Janet A. McDonnell, "World War II: Defending Park Values and Resources," *The Public Historian* 29 (Fall 2007): 15–33. Sarah Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers: The History of a Building Type* (NPS, 2000), Introduction, [https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/allaback/vc0.htm](https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/allaback/vc0.htm), accessed August 29, 2017. Ethan Carr, *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007).

<sup>90</sup> Dumbarton Oaks Park CLR, 53, 55.

<sup>91</sup> Dumbarton Oaks Park CLR, 55. Memorandum, Landscape Architect, Design Services Darwina Neal to Superintendent Rock Creek Park, July 15, 1983, 3, File DUOA–Cult Res PTM: General treatment Projects 1977–1995, Box 39, MRCE.

<sup>92</sup> Barry Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service: A Historical Perspective* (NPS, 1986), chapter 4, [https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/mackintosh2/directions\\_environmental.htm](https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/mackintosh2/directions_environmental.htm), accessed September 12, 2017. Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 246–61.

<sup>93</sup> HABS-DC-571, 15.

invasive species could tenaciously take hold from lack of National Park Service intervention. Over the last twenty years, the agency has adopted active management in natural areas. But from the 1970s to the turn of the twenty-first century, Rock Creek Park opted to remain hands-off.<sup>94</sup>

Rock Creek Park assessed the status of Dumbarton Oaks Park in 1983. National Capital Region landscape architect Darwina Neal reported on the alarming state of the park. She used photographs from the Dumbarton Oaks collection to assess the change. She wrote in her report that “the resemblance between those photographs and the park were difficult to find” during her April and May visits. Erosion was a major issue. Silt behind the 18 dams had nearly filled the streambed so that in heavy rain, water washed over the dams and eroded the sides of the dams, threatened their stability, and washed out roots of nearby trees. The large pool in the stream had all but disappeared, and the stream banks of the dam which formed the pool had severely eroded. Erosion and invasive plant growth had “obliterated” sections of paths. Neal noted that one path used by pedestrians and maintenance crews had shrunken by half, going from ten to twelve feet to a four- to six-foot eroded path.<sup>95</sup> A 1983 Rock Creek Park Resource Management Plan reiterated what Neal reported, stating that water from large areas of nearby Wisconsin Avenue overflowed into the Dumbarton Oaks Park stream, creating problems with severe erosion, debris, and pollution.<sup>96</sup>

Structures did not fare better. All wooden bridges across the stream had washed out. All wooden mill structures and the arbor had rotted through and caved in. Trees, flowering trees, and shrubs originally included in the Farrand design were dead and gone or so overgrown with invasive vines and volunteer trees that they were barely identifiable. Volunteer trees, covered by invasive vines, tightly populated what had once been meadows and would require bulldozing to remove. People had stopped visiting the park due to its degraded appearance and safety concerns. Vagrants had taken over some thickly grown areas.<sup>97</sup>

Neal made recommendations. She noted first that Rock Creek Park’s maintenance personnel, under chief David Powers, had begun clearing grass areas to allow mowing. Some volunteers, in partnership with the park’s Resource Management division, had also started invasive vine removal. Neal cautioned, however, that without a concentrated effort to get the park into shape and regular maintenance, Dumbarton Oaks Park “will soon be beyond hope and help without massive infusions of labor and funding.”<sup>98</sup>

Neal recommended further action. She argued that such emergency work would not return the park to its historic condition. For that, Rock Creek Park needed a Historic Landscape Restoration Plan and funding to implement the plan. If Rock Creek Park could not obtain sufficient National Park Service funds, Neal suggested securing community support and funding from various Georgetown citizen associations and commercial businesses, such as Safeway, which had built a grocery store on adjacent property. National landscape and conservation organizations might also contribute donations. Neal closed by reminding Rock Creek Park that

---

<sup>94</sup> Washburn, transcript of interview, 31–34. Quotes on pp. 31–32. See also William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness; or Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, edited by William Cronon (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), 69–90, for a discussion of how environmental thinking has shifted its view of wilderness as void of human influence to a place that has had repeated long-standing human intervention. Thus no place is truly wilderness, and nonintervention is an inadequate human construct.

<sup>95</sup> Neal to Superintendent Rock Creek Park, July 15, 1983, 2.

<sup>96</sup> ROCR, Resources Management Plan for Rock Creek Park, 1983, C6–1, ROCR Nature Center Library.

<sup>97</sup> Neal to Superintendent Rock Creek Park, July 15, 1983, 2–3.

<sup>98</sup> Neal to Superintendent, Rock Creek Park, July 15, 1983, 3–5. Quote on p. 4.

Dumbarton Oaks gardens were nationally and internationally known, designed by a noted landscape architect, and that Dumbarton Oaks Park had the same pedigree. Superintendent Redmond approved pursuing funding for a landscape plan and developing community support.<sup>99</sup>

Community support started in 1992 when Georgetown residents and others formed the Friends of Montrose and Dumbarton Oaks Parks. They worked with the National Park Service to try to restore both parks. For Dumbarton Oaks Park, the Friends Group first started the hands-on work of removing invasive vines and weed trees. They then began raising money, using a Challenge Cost-Share grant with the National Park Service to fund the Dumbarton Oaks Park Landscape Preservation Maintenance Plan. The Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation partnered with the National Park Service and the Friends Group to complete this plan in 1997. The Friends Group again cost-shared with the agency to implement three specific projects identified in the maintenance plan. The Garden Conservancy, established in 1989 to save and share American gardens, aided the cost-share mechanism and gave professional guidance. In 1995, the Friends Group and the National Park Service formalized their relationship by signing a cooperative agreement, delineating their responsibilities.<sup>100</sup>

The continuing issue of stormwater runoff and siltation threatened the headway the Friends Group and the National Park Service had accomplished. In the 1920s, when the Blisses first hired Beatrix Farrand to design their grounds, meadows and woods had surrounded the property, acting as a sponge for rainfall. A 1996 hydrological report indicated the amount of change from 1920. The report stated that 78 percent of the watershed feeding into the Dumbarton Oaks Park stream was impervious, so that most of the precipitation from a storm would quickly run off into the stream. Piping of stormwater runoff through a sewer system and then eventually to the stream increased the amount of runoff and reduced the amount of time the water would take to reach the stream.<sup>101</sup> The stream, as described by Friends Group member William Cochran in a report to the organization, “became a major drainage swale for storm water.”<sup>102</sup> Water levels rose above the existing height of the designed dams and eroded their outlines. The banks of the stream channel also eroded. The historic dams collected sediment and impeded the carrying capacity of the stream. Water backed up behind the dams caused severe erosion. The stream channel began meandering, seeking a channel of less resistance for water to travel. Removal of the historic dams, according to the hydrological report, would allow the stream channel to handle

---

<sup>99</sup> Neal to Superintendent, Rock Creek Park, July 15, 1983, 3–5. ROCR, Resources Management Plan, 1983, C6-1–C6-2.

<sup>100</sup> Dumbarton Oaks Park CLR, 58, 61. Friends of Montrose and Dumbarton Oaks Parks, 1997 Progress Report, File MONT–General–Park Assns: Friends of Montrose Park–Bylaws and Organization, Box 36, MRCE. Bill Welsh, “Restoration of Dumbarton Oaks Park Gains Momentum,” *Land* (October 1998): 4–5. Adrian Higgins, “Dumbarton Oaks,” *Washington Post* (September 16, 1993). Superintendent Adrienne Coleman to Director Nora Mitchell, April 7, 1997, 2, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR. “Dumbarton Oaks Park: Reuniting a Farrand Design,” *The Newsletter of the Garden Conservancy*, Fall 1995, 7, File DUOA–General–Articles 1941–1998, Box 42, MRCE. Agreement between Rock Creek Park and Friends of Montrose and Dumbarton Oaks Park, February 1, 1995, File DUOA–General–Park Assns–Friends of DumOaks–Administration and Membership Documentation 1993–1999, Box 42, MRCE.

<sup>101</sup> Memorandum, National Capital Area (NCA) Hydrologist, Stewardship and Partnerships to Superintendent Rock Creek Park, February 14, 1996, 1–3, File DUOA–Cult Res–PTM: Restoration Project 1996, Box 40, MRCE. HABS-DC-571, 15.

<sup>102</sup> William Cochran to Bill Shields, December 22, 1994, attached report to Friends Group, 1, File DUOA–General–Park Assns: Friends of DUOA–General Correspondence and Meeting Minutes 1994–1998, Box 42, MRCE.

more stormwater, but the stream banks would likely still suffer from erosion and the stream from channel scouring.<sup>103</sup>

The Friends of Montrose and Dumbarton Oaks Parks contributed funds for the preparation of a stormwater management plan. By 2000, though, this organization had disbanded. Lou Slade, who would join the next friends group, Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy, stated that there had been earlier attempts to restore Dumbarton Oaks Park that “had failed.”<sup>104</sup> The demise of the friends group did not mean that all efforts stopped. Volunteers continued working in the park. Dumbarton Oaks Park was initially added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1967, with this nomination updated with extensive documentation in 2004, and the National Park Service conducted a Historic American Landscape Survey in 2008. But the park continued to deteriorate. The Cultural Landscape Foundation named Dumbarton Oaks Park to its 2006 list of the nineteen most endangered historic landscapes.<sup>105</sup> Cindy Cox, deputy superintendent of Rock Creek Park at the time, acknowledged that Rock Creek Park staff had initiated stabilization steps but had not undertaken any huge actions. Cox remarked, “It’s such a beautiful place, and all of us cringe to not have it in perfect condition.”<sup>106</sup>

Rock Creek Park’s landscape architect Mike McMahon agreed with Cox and Washburn on the state of Dumbarton Oaks Park. He said that, over time, Dumbarton Oaks Park had less and less funding earmarked for it. The park became quite “overgrown” with invasive, non-native plants. In the late 1990s, when McMahon went to the park, he felt like throwing his hands up. He emphasized that there was very little that Rock Creek Park managers could do at the time to return Dumbarton Oaks Park to where it needed to be. “It really required a huge, huge effort,” McMahon said, because it “was just so overgrown, you couldn’t work your way through it.” The National Park Service needed a partner.<sup>107</sup>

Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy (DOPC) incorporated in late 2010 to early 2011. Rebecca Trafton, a garden designer and documentary filmmaker, and Jane MacLeish, a landscape architect, cofounded the organization. They gave the organization in April 2011 a “splashy start,” according to longtime Board member Lou Slade, with a large public meeting, held at the park until heavy rains forced them to the National Cathedral.<sup>108</sup> Trafton asserted the dire situation facing the park. She told the meeting attendees that Dumbarton Oaks is one of the “greatest gardens in America” and that Dumbarton Oaks Park was “an inextricable piece of the whole.” She cautioned that “it is perilously close to losing its design and ecological integrity,” but she believed that they were “right at the point we can bring it back to life.”<sup>109</sup>

Some well-known people participated in the Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy inaugural event. Edward O. Wilson, Harvard professor *emeritus* and father of the study of ants

---

<sup>103</sup> Memorandum, NCA Hydrologist, Stewardship and Partnerships to Superintendent ROCR, February 14, 1996, 1–3. HABS-DC-571, 15.

<sup>104</sup> Lou Slade, transcript of interview with Lindsey Milstein and Lou Slade, May 5, 2017, 2, ROCR Archives. See also James O’Day, “Dancing into the Future: Dumbarton Oaks Park,” Library of American Landscape History (2012), <http://lalh.org/dancing-into-the-future-dumbarton-oaks-park-2012/>, accessed September 15, 2017.

<sup>105</sup> O’Day, “Dancing into the Future.”

<sup>106</sup> Cox, as quoted in “Invasive Vines have a Chokehold on a DC Park,” *Washington Post* (November 8, 2007).

<sup>107</sup> Mike McMahon, transcript of oral history interview, December 13, 2016, 6–7, ROCR Archives.

<sup>108</sup> Lou Slade, transcript of interview with Milstein and Slade, 2. Trafton and MacLeish timed the public meeting to be on the exact day Dumbarton Oaks Park first opened to the public 70 years earlier. “Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy Formed,” *Georgetown Dish* (April 5, 2011), <http://www.thegeorgetowndish.com/thelatest/dumbarton-oaks-park-conservancy-formed>, accessed September 16, 2017.

<sup>109</sup> Trafton, as quoted in Adrian Higgins, “Clearing a Path to DC Park’s Recovery,” *Washington Post* (April 14, 2011).

and other animal societies, spoke to the more than one hundred park supporters. He recalled his own childhood exploring Rock Creek Park, which was connected to Dumbarton Oaks Park through an unnamed tributary of Rock Creek. At age ten, using a net to capture insects, he told the audience that he was “born as a naturalist in Rock Creek Park.” He came back to support restoration efforts at Dumbarton Oaks Park as a kind of payback. Garden historian and writer Elizabeth Barlow Rogers joined Wilson that April afternoon. In 1980, Rogers spearheaded the effort to resuscitate New York City’s Central Park by establishing the Central Park Conservancy. She had a personal connection to Georgetown, having taken her young daughter for walks through Dumbarton Oaks Park. Having Wilson and Rogers attend the Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy kick-off meeting brought always necessary visibility.<sup>110</sup>

The Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy sought productive relationships with the National Park Service and the park’s neighbors. The conservancy invited the thirteen park abutters, which included foreign embassies, schools, and private landowners, to an October 2011 public forum on conservation of the park. Rock Creek Park Chief Ranger Nick Bartolomeo said at the time that Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy was “instrumental in reaching out to park neighbors.” Community relations, Bartolomeo (and many others) believed, held “the key to a successful and sustainable rehabilitation of Dumbarton Oaks Park.”<sup>111</sup>

Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy used social media to further its goals. Lindsey Milstein and Ann Aldrich trained the Board on using Twitter. The organization put up a Facebook page. They then used this social media to garner votes in the 2013 Partners in Preservation competition, sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and American Express. DOPC won \$50,000 for being one of the top thirteen historic places in Washington, DC, Maryland, and Virginia.<sup>112</sup> Milstein, who later chaired the DOPC Board, remarked that she and Aldrich “got on like our little hamster wheels, and we just ran ran ran ran.” Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy raised another \$50,000 from the nearby community.

With this money in hand, Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy initiated what it called the Signature Project. The organization chose a two-acre area, called the Beech Grove, near the entrance to the park where a historical stand of beech trees stood. Farrand had incorporated the trees into her design. The location served to demonstrate to park visitors and people in the community what could be done to bring the park back.<sup>113</sup> Former Rock Creek Park Cultural Resource Program Manager Simone Monteleone supported having Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy work on smaller projects at a time. Monteleone stated that working with discrete projects meant that the National Park Service could better position itself for Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy fundraising. A “broad brush” restoration approach would leave the National Park Service without the capability to maintain the full twenty-seven acres of Dumbarton Park at once.<sup>114</sup> Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy looked to the Signature Project as a vehicle for “rivet[ing] attention” and drawing news media, helping publicize the larger effort.<sup>115</sup> Lindsey Milstein, President of the Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy Board, referred to the Signature Project as a learning lab, to see what plants Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy planted there

---

<sup>110</sup> Edward O. Wilson quoted in Adrian Higgins, “Clearing a Path.”

<sup>111</sup> O’Day, “Dancing into the Future.”

<sup>112</sup> “2013 Partners in Preservation: Washington, DC,” National Trust for Historic Places, May 13, 2013, <https://savingplaces.org/stories/partners-in-preservation-dc#.Wb2fbdFrXGM>, accessed September 16, 2017.

<sup>113</sup> Milstein and Slade transcript, 9–10.

<sup>114</sup> Monteleone, transcript of interview, 9.

<sup>115</sup> Slade, Milstein and Slade transcript of interview, 9.

would stick and how well they complemented Farrand's vision. The Conservancy also tested low-cost, low-tech solutions to address problems from stormwater.<sup>116</sup>

Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy volunteers found the two-acre plot a mess. As Slade recalled, "the scale of the invasive problem is hard to grasp" looking back from 2018 and seeing the beautiful woodland. But volunteers removed seventy invasive trees, including Norway maples and ailanthus, and they planted another hundred or so replacement trees.<sup>117</sup> Vines hung from the beech trees, choking them and threatening to kill them if not removed. Volunteers removed invasive ground covers, set in place jute anti-erosion matting, and planted native ferns and other woodland vegetation. Georgetown Garden Club members planted two thousand bluebells in this area alone. More volunteers set in place coconut-fiber logs on steep slopes in Bridge Hollow to control erosion as new plantings took root. In the fall, volunteers spread the seeds of four native grasses onto the slopes to stabilize them.<sup>118</sup> Milstein and others had collected the seeds in the park. She noted that "the beauty of this to me is that we gleaned this seed ourselves" from the park.<sup>119</sup> The Conservancy had the Old Stone Pump House re-pointed.<sup>120</sup>

Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy also tackled the meadows in Dumbarton Oaks Park. The organization brought in Larry Weaner, a Philadelphia-based meadows expert, who helped Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy with the five Farrand-designed meadows. Milstein observed that Weaner's approach was sympathetic to that of Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy and the National Park Service. Milstein stated that Weaner looked to the land "to tell us what it wants to do." Milstein also recalled how Charles Sprague Sargent had trained Beatrix Farrand, to "let the land lead."<sup>121</sup> Weaner designed a seed mix of grasses to replace the invasive vines of bittersweet, wisteria, and honeysuckle that volunteers had painstakingly ripped out. Fifty people over two Saturdays had also hand-pulled the mass of Japanese stiltgrass. Former Rock Creek Park Cultural Resource Program Manager Simone Monteleone noted that Farrand was "very particular" about the seed mix and types of plants growing in the meadows. The meadows were not just open areas that naturally evolved.<sup>122</sup> Weaner tried to duplicate that design. He then shared his knowledge with a lecture he gave at the Rock Creek Park Nature Center.<sup>123</sup>

Both McMahon and Monteleone emphasized that any restoration work needed to recognize Farrand's vision. But they also acknowledged that Farrand had expressed some flexibility when she had worked with the National Park Service after the Blisses first donated the park. McMahon, for instance, stated that Farrand didn't hold tight to exact plants. Instead, she had a vision of "this magical forest-type landscape." She was most interested in the right color and texture to fit her design, according to McMahon. If a certain plant did not grow well in a location, she would make a substitution, always keeping in mind her larger vision.<sup>124</sup>

---

<sup>116</sup> Milstein, Milstein and Slade transcript or interview, 9–11. Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy (DOPC) website, The Signature Project, <https://dopark.org/restoration/the-signature-project/>, accessed September 19, 2017.

<sup>117</sup> Slade, Milstein and Slade transcript of interview, 8. Adrian Higgins, "The Slow Rebirth of Dumbarton Oaks," *Washington Post* (December 17, 2014).

<sup>118</sup> Milstein and Slade transcript of interview, 9. Higgins, "The Slow Rebirth of Dumbarton Oaks."

<sup>119</sup> Milstein, as quoted in Adrian Higgins, "Inch by Inch, Taking Back Dumbarton Oaks Park," *Washington Post* (December 18, 2014).

<sup>120</sup> "Breathing New Life into Dumbarton Oaks Park," The Cultural Landscape website, October 15, 2015, <https://tclf.org/landslides/breathing-new-life-dumbarton-oaks-park>, accessed September 19, 2017. DOPC website, The Signature Project, <https://dopark.org/restoration/the-signature-project/>.

<sup>121</sup> Milstein, Milstein and Slade transcript of interview, 23.

<sup>122</sup> Monteleone, transcript of interview, 10.

<sup>123</sup> Slade, Milstein and Slade transcript of interview, 22–24. Higgins, "The Slow Rebirth of Dumbarton Oaks."

<sup>124</sup> Mike McMahon, transcript of oral history interview with the author, December 13, 2016, 7, ROCR Archives.

Monteleone explained that Farrand sometimes used plants that today are considered non-native invasives, what Monteleone called “naughty plantings.” The National Park Service could possibly swap out those invasives for native plants that were of a similar palette but were sustainable. Farrand, however, had a bamboo grove in the park, and nothing native could replace bamboo. The National Park Service, with the park’s volunteers, has had the responsibility to keep this plant contained. Formal guidelines inform the thought process for choosing substitute plantings. Two factors further determine how the National Park Service and its partners can restore the cultural landscape. Dumbarton Oaks Park was initially listed in May 1967 to the National Register of Historic Places. This nomination included little documentation, and the National Park Service provided additional documentation for the nomination in March 2004. The National Register listing plays a role in determining the restoration of the park. Following the procedures of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) also figures in shaping the restoration effort.<sup>125</sup>

Stormwater management has remained the key obstacle to fulfilling plans for a complete restoration of Dumbarton Oaks Park. A storm would typically bring the water up over the stream bank and spread twenty feet wide, going four to six feet deep. Milstein explained that “to solve the stormwater problem is to reach our finite goal” of restoring the park and moving into maintenance. Solving stormwater would mean that, according to Milstein, Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy could work on “the really delicate inner stream valley” and do the necessary restoration work. Until then, the Conservancy acted as if “the park’s a bowl, a teacup,” and Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy is “working down in kind of a spiral,” according to Milstein.<sup>126</sup>

Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy chose Beech Grove for the Signature Project in part because those historic trees were at risk from stormwater. The dam at this location was failing, and the water pouring over the dam severely eroded the stream bank and threatened the beech trees. Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy worked with the National Park Service and the Army Corps of Engineers to find a temporary mechanism to halt the water until the National Park Service and outside entities, such as the District, could fashion a permanent solution. The temporary remedy involved building a gabion, which uses large stones encased in a large wire basket to slow down water and keep down the amount of erosion. Gabions are one of the oldest tools used for stormwater management, and their utilitarian design does not disguise their blunt looks. Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy, however, is choosing to draw attention to this incongruent part of the park to educate visitors about stormwater and the management challenges.<sup>127</sup>

The National Park Service and Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy are searching for a long-term solution to stormwater. The stormwater sewer system in Dumbarton Oaks Park and vicinity remains essentially unchanged from the original 1909 storm sewer placed in what later became the park. Subsequent lateral connections feed into that storm sewer. A series of manhole covers run through the stream valley, disclosing the sewer’s presence. Other storm sewer outfalls, as described in the 2000 Dumbarton Oaks Park Cultural Landscape Report, are the US Naval Observatory, the Page Building at Wisconsin Avenue and Whitehaven Street NW, the

---

<sup>125</sup> Monteleone, transcript of interview, 11. Dumbarton Oaks National Register of Historic Places listing, March 2004, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/AssetDetail?assetID=e707f3b4-7fe6-45f2-9a32-659a73a261e2>, accessed September 22, 2017.

<sup>126</sup> Milstein, Milstein and Slade transcript of interview, 33.

<sup>127</sup> Milstein and Slade transcript of interview, 30, 34–36.

Safeway grocery store on Wisconsin Avenue and south of the Page Building, the Guy Mason Recreation Center adjacent to the Naval Observatory, and Dumbarton Oaks Gardens. Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy and Rock Creek Park recently won a six-figure Centennial Challenge grant for stormwater management. In 2018, Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy had the task of raising half the total amount, and the National Park Service would provide the other half.<sup>128</sup>

### Archeological Sites

Rock Creek Park contains significant archeological resources, some investigated beginning in the late nineteenth century. Most famously, William Henry Holmes, with the Bureau of American Ethnology, studied the quartzite and soapstone quarries within the Rock Creek valley of Piney Branch between 1890 and 1894. He argued that the rough, oval preforms or cobbles left in the quarries represented the castoffs of indigenous people fashioning hand axes. Earlier American archeologists had interpreted the cobbles as dating to a much earlier time. Holmes's interpretation has proved the one most accepted by the scholarly community.<sup>129</sup>

Rock Creek Park saw only intermittent archeological explorations, undertaken as unpredictable funding sources and volunteers were available. The park laid out the state of archeology in its 1981 cultural resources management plan. This 1981 plan identified that some archeological finds had been recently uncovered, such as a building foundation, two bridges, and a significant prehistoric boulder quarry. Boulder Bridge and Ross Drive Bridge, where some excavation work had taken place, had recently been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Official studies completed in advance of construction work unveiled prehistoric remains in Potomac Palisades. Unfortunately, some unofficial archeological work had also occurred. Some visitors had attempted unauthorized digging that uncovered more prehistoric evidence in Glover-Archbold Park. When combined, this collection of findings fed into a larger understanding of the park's past. The 1981 plan noted, however, that this haphazard approach failed to provide the park or larger community of scholars a comprehensive survey and evaluation of the resulting data.<sup>130</sup>

Volunteer help came in the early 1980s. The New York University Archeological Field School spent the summer of 1981 at the Blagden Mill Site at Picnic Grove #3 and the Piney Branch Quarry. They found a "wealth of artifacts" and field records. The *Washington Post*, Channel 7 television, and WMAL Radio interviewed the supervisors, students, and Youth Conservation Corps assistants. The National Capital Region helped make the program possible.<sup>131</sup> When the students returned in 1983, they focused on the Blagden Mill site.<sup>132</sup>

Some limited archeological surveys proceeded. Three surveys in 1983 and 1985 involved Fort Totten, readying for Metro construction. In 1981, A. M. Fehr completed a reconnaissance of the proposed crosstown-watermain tunnel at the Foundry Branch work site. P.Y. In 1985,

---

<sup>128</sup> Dumbarton Oaks Park CLR, 56–57. Tara Morrison, transcript of interview with the author, October 28, 2016, 22–23, ROCR Archives.

<sup>129</sup> The Louis Berger Group Inc., "Bold, Rocky, and Picturesque": Archeological Identification and Evaluation Study of Rock Creek Park, vol. 1 (2008), 3–4. Carol A. Ebright, "Quartzite Petrography and Its Implications for Prehistoric Use and Archeological Analysis," *Archeology of Eastern North America* 15 (Fall 1987): 36, 40. Kevin Fernlund, *William Henry Holmes and the Rediscovery of the American West* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2000). William Bushong and Piera M. Weiss, "Rock Creek Park: Emerald of the Capital City," *Washington History* 2 (Fall/Winter 1990/1991): 6.

<sup>130</sup> ROCR, Cultural Resource Management Plan, 1981, C-11-1–C-11-3.

<sup>131</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 1981, 14–15, File Admin–Annual Reports 1981, Box 71, MRCE. Quote on p. 15.

<sup>132</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 1983, 49, File Admin–Annual Reports 1983, Box 71, MRCE.

Inashima investigated thirty-one erosion control and bank stabilization sites along Rock Creek and its tributaries. Archeological surveys were completed in 1987 in anticipation of the construction of the Kahlil Gibran Memorial. A 1995 survey of archeological programs throughout the National Capital Area (now National Capital Region) indicated that no further archeological work had been done at Rock Creek Park.<sup>133</sup>

The Louis Berger Group completed between 2003 and 2007 a four-year archeological survey of Rock Creek Park, including units beyond Reservation 339.<sup>134</sup> Rock Creek Park Cultural Resources Program Manager Perry Wheelock initiated the archeological study, working with National Capital Region (NCR) Chief Archeologist Stephen Potter.<sup>135</sup> The Louis Berger Group identified seventy-seven archeological sites, all with site assessments. Their report covered the sweep of prehistory and history contained within the park's boundaries. They found evidence of colonial tenant farms, which did not have wells—presumably inhabitants collected water from the creek. The Louis Berger Group found a dumpsite for Fort DeRussy, revealing hundreds of nails, pieces of bottle glass and ironstone dishes, and military relics, such as buttons and a bayonet scabbard tip. In their investigations around Fort Stevens, the archeologists identified a likely location of Confederate pickets. The archeologists also confirmed historic reports of significant heavy fighting, as evidenced by the number of fired and dropped shells. In the post-Civil War era, the Louis Berger Group found some homesites, including one that belonged to an African American woman named Sarah Whitby. Documents showed that she rented the house beginning in 1895. Archeologists located the site of the house, where the cellar produced more than 500 artifacts. A plethora of buttons suggested that Whitby worked as a laundress and had at least one wealthy client.<sup>136</sup>

The Louis Berger Group identified a “spectacular find,” located near Whitehurst Freeway and Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway, as the most important prehistoric Indian discovery in the District of Columbia. This site, identified during an archeological investigation led by Dennis Knepper and reported in 2006, was a burial plot for the bone fragments of a thirty- to forty-year-old woman who had been cremated. Items buried with the woman's remains included a carved comb, two stone pendants, a carved sandstone phallus, a knife, shark teeth, and woven textiles. Most of these artifacts closely resembled artifacts found in graves in central New York. Combined with items found at another site in Delaware, archeologists and historians might have the evidence they needed to date the entry of Algonquian Indians traveling south from the Great Lakes Region to the Chesapeake region. Radiocarbon dating put the woman's burial at AD 640 to 790. Algonquian presence in the area might thus lay between AD 600 to 700.<sup>137</sup>

Two important prehistoric sites, wherein a large number of artifacts were found, sat in the floodplain of a small stream once known as Maddox Branch. The Louis Berger Group called these rare surviving sites of the sort that early archeologists like Holmes had seen. Prehistoric humans used these sites for four thousand years, from 2500 BCE to 1500 CE. These two sites probably sat on an important travel route, and American Indians likely stayed there for extended periods, perhaps for the growing and harvesting seasons. Evidence showed a complete

---

<sup>133</sup> Barbara J. Little, National Capital Area Archeological Overview and Survey Plan (NPS, 1995), 253–55.

<sup>134</sup> Annual Reports do not provide information about archeological work between the early 1980s and early 2000s. The General Management Plan refers to four published studies, dated at 1985, 1995, and 1997.

<sup>135</sup> Monteleone, transcript of interview, 28.

<sup>136</sup> Louis Berger Group, “Bold, Picturesque, and Rocky,” I, 31–33, 57, 63–64, 77. ROCR, Annual Report, 2008, 4, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR.

<sup>137</sup> Louis Berger Group, “Bold, Picturesque, and Rocky,” 7–8. Quote on p. 7.

progression of tool production over time, with American Indians in one period (400 BCE to 1000 CE) using rhyolite and chert, both of which likely came from the west.<sup>138</sup>

The National Park Service largely protects its collection of archeological sites by restricting the sharing of their locations. The Louis Berger Group report, volume 1, is largely silent about most of the sites that were found. A second volume presumably goes into detail about all seventy-seven sites, but the National Park Service restricts access to only those who have a need to know. This approach has been adopted over time by many agencies.<sup>139</sup>

The United States first formalized its commitment to the preservation of archeological resources in the Antiquities Act of 1906. This act set the precedent of a broad public interest in archeology on public lands and the support for the care and preservation of archeological sites, collections, and related information. Education also plays a role in the Antiquities Act, with federal agencies tasked to offer public interpretation of collections.

The National Park Service has also preserved archeological sites by limiting the extent of excavation, thereby keeping artifacts undisturbed. Archeologists also replace soil removed for investigation, again to keep remaining artifacts intact.

### **National Register**

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 established the National Register of Historic Places. Properties listed in the National Register meet certain criteria of historical or archeological value worthy of preservation. Rock Creek Park has twenty entities listed in the National Register. These listings include historic buildings, such as Conduit Road Schoolhouse, Peirce-Klinge Mansion, Peirce Mill, Peirce Springhouse and Barn, and the Old Stone House. Sites associated with travel include the Boulder Bridge and Ross Drive Bridge and Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway Historic District. Memorials listed in the National Register are the Francis Asbury Memorial, Cardinal James Gibbons, Guglielmo Marconi Memorial, and Francis Griffith Newlands Memorial Fountain. Meridian Hill Park, Glover-Archbold Park, Dumbarton Oaks Park, and Montrose Park are listed. The Godey Lime Kilns have a separate designation in the National Register, as does an archeological site at Potomac Palisades.<sup>140</sup>

Rock Creek Park itself is listed as the Rock Creek Park Historic District. This designation, dating from 1991, encompassed the boundaries of Reservation 339. The nomination did not include other urban parks that are part of Rock Creek Park administratively but are not contiguous to Reservation 339. The National Park Service also did not include other contiguous areas, like Melvin Hazen Park or Pinehurst Parkway, because they had been added relatively recently to Rock Creek Park and did not share legal and historical associations. Rock Creek Park contracted with EHT Tracerics to write an amendment to the original National Register form. In January 2014, the contractor delivered to the National Park Service its amended form. As of September 2017, the National Park Service had not yet submitted the amended listing for inclusion in the National Register.<sup>141</sup>

The amended National Register listing adds Klinge Valley Parkway, Soapstone Valley, Beach Parkway, North Portal, and Pinehurst Parkway. The amended listing also recommends adding Woodley Park, Melvin C. Hazen Park, and a park on the north side of the National Zoo.

---

<sup>138</sup> Louis Berger Group, "Bold, Picturesque, and Rocky," 8–12. The report does not specify an area of the west where the rhyolite or chert may have originated.

<sup>139</sup> Conversation with Joshua Torres, Rock Creek Park Cultural Resource Program Manager.

<sup>140</sup> <https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/SearchResults/>, accessed September 21, 2017.

<sup>141</sup> ROCR, Rock Creek Park Historic District NRHP Amendment, January 2014, section 9, pp. 73–74.

The amended nomination expands the period for historic significance to 1972, to include Mission 66 and Parkscape USA. The amendment adds Criterion D Archeology as significant to Rock Creek Park's history, and it expands significance for the themes of community planning and development, conservation, landscape architecture, architecture, and entertainment/recreation. The revised listing emphasizes that Rock Creek Park is a historic cultural landscape, developed as such to preserve the landscape for public use. As of September 2017, the National Park Service had not submitted the amended listing to the original National Register form.<sup>142</sup>

### **Conclusion**

This review of cultural resources and related management decisions reveals the variety of time periods represented in Rock Creek Park and the multiple challenges National Park Service staff have addressed over time to preserve and protect cultural resources sites. Cultural resources within Reservation 339, such as Native American archeological sites, Peirce Mill, Peirce Barn, and Klingle Mansion, sit within the larger cultural landscape framed by native and non-native invasive plants and animals. Other sites under Rock Creek Park's administration include the Old Stone House and the Civil War Defenses of Washington (with Fort DeRussy within Reservation 339). Dumbarton Oaks Park represents a designed cultural landscape, using vegetation and water to create a setting for exploration and contemplation. Individuals and groups, in partnership with National Park Service staff, have alternately advocated for these sites and made important contributions to their long-term preservation.

---

<sup>142</sup> ROCR, Rock Creek Park Historic District NRHP Amendment, January 2014, sections 1–6, pp. 4–5; section 8, pp. 34–35.



### **PART 3**

### **Recreation**



*Figure 19. Rock Creek Golf Course*  
NPS PHOTO, 1960

## CHAPTER 8

### Active Recreation

Rock Creek Park, both in Reservation 339 and in separate parks administered under Rock Creek Park, is a multi-use park with a variety of active recreational outlets. Visitors can serve tennis balls, drive golf balls, ride bikes, hike trails, go horseback riding, play ball, have picnics, run around playgrounds, tend gardens, or go boating.

This variety helps meet the recreational needs of the District. National Park Service (NPS) parks make up 74 percent of the parks and open space for the District. National park units thus form an integral part of the District's open space requirements. These parks originated in two important planning documents. Both the L'Enfant Plan and McMillan Plan incorporated parks and open space as key elements. Charles Pierre L'Enfant's 1791 plan, revised and completed by Andrew Ellicott, used the example of Paris and other places to enhance his scheme with natural areas for monuments and memorials, but also for neighborhood green spots. L'Enfant used the low-lying land and rivers as a natural boundary from the formal areas and as an endpoint for the broad avenues distinctive to his plan. The McMillan Commission, which included a young Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., reviewed L'Enfant's plan with the goal of addressing the urban growth in the District. The McMillan Plan, approved in 1910, resurrected L'Enfant's plan and recommended a linked system of parks and open spaces. The McMillan Plan also envisioned a Fort Circle parkway that would link the Civil War Defenses of Washington via green corridors.<sup>1</sup>

The federal government, before National Park Service authorization, provided the first public recreational space within the District with the 1890 establishment of Rock Creek Park. Horseback riders used the park from the start. In 1916, the federal government built tennis courts, playing fields, and picnic grounds, and in 1923, it opened a public nine-hole golf course within Rock Creek Park. The District's Playground Department and Board of Education started providing community-oriented recreation in 1911.<sup>2</sup>

The Capper-Cramton Act of 1930 made a significant impact on recreation in the District, calling for the federal government to acquire lands within the District suitable for the development of parks, parkways, and playgrounds. National Park Service National Capital Parks used this federal land from 1933 to 1942 to build and maintain fields and other open space areas for thirty major sports. National Capital Parks organized band and symphony concerts, celebrations, and other events in these parks. In 1949, the National Park Service and the District signed a Memorandum of Agreement to delineate their roles regarding the use of lands, maintenance, and transfer of funds. With the establishment of Home Rule in 1974, most recreational properties under title of the District and some still titled to the federal government but with administrative jurisdiction of the District came under the DC Department of Parks and

---

<sup>1</sup> District of Columbia Department of Parks and Recreation and District of Columbia Office of Planning, District of Columbia Parks and Recreation Master Plan, 2014, 17. National Capital Planning Commission, Government of the District of Columbia, and National Park Service, Capital Space: A Park System for the Nation's Capital: Ideas to Achieve the Full Potential of Washington's Parks and Open Space, 2010, 9–10, 20.

<sup>2</sup> Capital Space, 62–63.

Recreation. The National Park Service retained overall management of the designated national parks, but the District had permitting responsibility for some fields.<sup>3</sup>

Racial segregation shaped this history of both federally and city-owned parks. As a southern city, the District government kept its recreational resources segregated until after the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court ruling. However, the National Park Service, as a federal agency, had been managed under a non-segregated, non-discriminatory basis since the early 1930s. In practice, white and black residents largely used separate facilities. Swimming pools offer a stark example. The National Park Service oversaw six large outdoor pools, open to all races. Whites used two of the pools and blacks used the other four, decided by custom and not regulation or law. Complicating this situation, the District offered free segregated swim lessons and open swims at the federal pools during morning hours. Then a federal contractor operated the pools, open to anyone, and charged fees. When black teens challenged this status quo in 1949 by going to the “white” Anacostia pool owned by the National Park Service, violence ensued. The lifeguards refused to work, effectively closing the pool. Attempts to reopen failed, and the Secretary of the Interior closed the pool until the following summer.<sup>4</sup>

During the Jim Crow era, the District sought greater control over recreational resources owned by the National Park Service, but its adamantly enforced racial segregation policies kept the National Park Service from agreeing. Taking over playgrounds, ballfields, golf courses, tennis courts, and bike concessions meant that the District could offer more activities. However, the city’s racial perceptions remained. For example, the District agreed to operate large federal parks under a nondiscrimination policy, but the city’s Recreation Board believed that the size and diversity of offerings at these sites likely deterred interracial encounters. Tennis, in the Board’s mind, was a game where the races might play together, but they did not touch. Golf, on the other hand, seemed to segregationists an intimate sport where golfers might spend hours together on a course. The National Park Service and the Recreation Board fought over the federally owned golf courses in part because the National Park Service recognized this incompatible perception.<sup>5</sup>

This chapter looks at types of recreation offered in Rock Creek Park and other areas administered by Rock Creek Park. These modes include tennis; hiking, biking, and horse trails; golf; and water recreation. Chapter 9 looks at Meridian Hill Park, Montrose Park, Glover-Archbold Park, and small parks to explore their histories and recreational opportunities, defined broadly.

## Tennis

Tennis as a topic of consideration for Reservation 339 in Rock Creek Park dates to the early 1900s. The 1918 report on Rock Creek Park by the Olmsted Brothers calls the park’s plateau region “admirably adapted for more or less intensive recreation,” including tennis. Some tennis courts, playing fields, and picnic spots were built in 1916. They sat adjacent to the Brightwood Reservoir, built in 1899 and removed in 1937 once the District determined it did not need its water. Removal of the reservoir opened the way, thanks to the cleared land, for more

---

<sup>3</sup> Capital Space, 62–63. Capper-Cramton Act of 1930, 46 Stat. 482, section 4.

<sup>4</sup> Martha H. Verbrugge and Drew Yingling, “The Politics of Play: The Struggle over Racial Segregation and Public Recreation in Washington, DC, 1945–1959,” *Washington History*, 27 (Fall 2015): 57–59, 67.

<sup>5</sup> Verbrugge and Yingling, “Politics of Play,” 65–66.

recreational areas. Works Progress Administration employees installed sixteen new tennis courts, along with baseball, football, and soccer fields.<sup>6</sup>

Tennis grew in popularity at Rock Creek Park. The park offered three areas for tennis: one at Peirce Mill, one at Montrose Park, and the other near Carter Barron Amphitheater. In 1955, the Washington Area Tennis Patrons Foundation (WATPF), called the Washington Tennis Foundation (WTF) in the 1990s and now known as the Washington Tennis & Education Foundation (WTEF), began to organize and operate tennis programs at the Carter Barron Amphitheater location for children without regard to their financial means. In 1989, for example, the organization reached more than seven thousand children. The foundation further shifted its focus, adding education as a component. The foundation worked with at-risk youth, using tennis and education to help address social problems. By 1998, the foundation had established a Center for Excellence to train thirty high school student athletes in writing, public speaking, and computer literacy. The foundation sought to maximize the students' success in college admissions and scholarships.<sup>7</sup>

International-class tennis player Donald Dell and John Harris, a boyhood friend, approached the Washington Area Tennis Patrons Foundation in 1969 with the idea of hosting a professional men's tennis tournament. Dell, a Potomac, Maryland, native, wanted to raise the visibility of tennis in the District, and he recognized the charity was an established and well-connected group that could help grow the tournament. The foundation saw the tournament as a fundraiser for its work with youth. Dell and the foundation convinced the National Park Service to let them construct 2,500 bleacher seats around one of the Carter Barron courts, and the tournament began. Washington Star International Tennis Championships (later Sovran Tennis Classic and then NationsBank) sponsored the first tournaments. Two years later, the National Park Service allowed the group to build a one-story structure to house a shop and restrooms with showers, plus add seating.<sup>8</sup>

The foundation pursued an indoor stadium beginning in 1982. The foundation recognized that the outdated clay courts and brutal DC summers discouraged top American players from choosing this tournament. The larger number of sites and sponsors for pro-tennis also meant that tennis sanctioning authorities had more demands in selecting locations for tournaments. The foundation needed to improve or lose its major funding source for its work with youth.<sup>9</sup>

The National Park Service disagreed. The agency determined through a market study that such an indoor stadium had insufficient demand. The foundation argued in 1984 that the outdoor courts required modification to meet standards for professional play. In 1986, the foundation asked again for an indoor stadium, providing architectural plans which had 7,500 seats indoor,

---

<sup>6</sup> David Swerdloff, "Brightwood Reservoir: The Story of Carter Barron and the Tennis Stadium," June 6, 2017, Crestwood Citizens Association webpage, <https://www.crestwood-dc.org/page-18104/4883773>, accessed February 13, 2018. "350 Jobs Added to City's Share of WPA Boost," *Washington Post*, December 28, 1937. William Bushong and Piera M. Weiss, "Rock Creek Park: Emerald of the Capital City," *Washington History*, 2 (Fall/Winter 1990/1991): 28. Barry Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, External Pressures and Unnatural Presences section.

<sup>7</sup> Steve LeBel, transcript of oral history interview with the author, August 18, 2017, 3, ROCR Archives. "That Tennis Center: Courting the Kids," *Washington Post*, September 3, 1989. Andrew Curry, "Parlaying Tennis into Education," *Washington Post*, April 16, 1998. ROCR, Tennis Stadium Final Environmental Impact Statement, 1995, 11, Denver Service Center (DSC) Technical Information Center (TIC).

<sup>8</sup> Roger M. Williams, "On the Line," *Washingtonian Magazine* (July 1992), 37–38. Rock Creek Park, Annual Report, 1987, 14–15, File Rock Creek Park, Box 45, Entry P17, RG 79, Archives II, NARA.

<sup>9</sup> Williams, "On the Line," 37–38.

1,400 seats for three exterior courts, corporate suites, a dining facility, a health and fitness club, and office space.<sup>10</sup>

The National Park Service addressed its administrative obligations by overseeing reviews of the indoor stadium proposal. Several concerns surfaced. These included long-term exclusive use of public parkland, substantial expenditures for maintenance and operations, and adverse community reaction. Other concerns related to traffic impacts due to limited onsite parking, violation of residential zoning regulations, and a lack of public input in planning. Public review encouraged finding an alternative site and, if not possible, approval by the Advisory Neighborhood Commission, National Capital Planning Commission, and Commission of Fine Arts.<sup>11</sup>

Georgia Ellard, who served as superintendent 1983–88, remembered that the Washington Area Tennis Patrons Foundation had a powerful group of people with ties to Capitol Hill. Ellard met many times with these people and saw how they persuaded Congress to include money in Rock Creek Park's budget to support construction of the stadium. The foundation wanted to keep the professional tennis tournament in the District.<sup>12</sup>

On December 8, 1987, the National Park Service and the foundation entered into a 25-year agreement to allow for the stadium construction. The stadium, oval shaped with a hole in the middle, would have indoor facilities, including offices, a retail shop, locker rooms, and suites surrounding the outdoor tennis court and 7,500 seats. The stadium promoted the foundation's goals of offering tennis throughout the area and sponsoring programs for children, teens, seniors, the disabled, and others in the Washington, DC, area. The foundation had expanded its goals to broaden its target audience for its charitable programs. Reviewing commissions approved the stadium proposal with conditions. Washington Area Tennis Patrons Foundation raised money through several sources. William H. G. FitzGerald spearheaded the fundraising by making a \$1 million donation. For this gift, the foundation put his name on the Tennis Center complex. Family and friends of the late William R. Morris also made substantial gifts. (Morris's name graces the indoor stadium.) Other individual donors also helped, and the foundation took out a \$6.5 million loan to help cover the \$17 million construction project.<sup>13</sup>

The stadium, unfinished though still far enough along for use, hosted its first tournament in 1988. Different companies have sponsored the tournaments, lending their names to the event. These companies are Sovereign Bank, Legg Mason, and Citibank.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> ROCR, Draft EIS: Tennis Stadium, 1992, 11–12, TIC. NPS, Concessions Market Study Indoor Tennis Facility, 1983, 15, Tennis 1983 concessions study, TIC. ROCR, Annual Report, 1987, 14.

<sup>11</sup> ROCR, Draft Environmental Impact Statement: Tennis Stadium, 1992, 12. Greenhorne & O'Mara Inc., ROCR DC Tennis Center Traffic and Parking Analysis, 1987, 56–60, TIC.

<sup>12</sup> Ellard served as Assistant Superintendent from 1981 to 1983. Georgia Ellard, transcript of oral history interview with the author, May 8, 2017, 7–8, ROCR Archives.

<sup>13</sup> "That Tennis Center." Williams, "On the Line," 37–38. ROCR, Draft Environmental Impact Statement: Tennis Stadium, 1992, 13. ROCR, Annual Report, 1988, 4, File Rock Creek Park, Box 45, Entry P17, RG 79, Archives II, NARA.

<sup>14</sup> LeBel, transcript of interview, 14. Will Fairfax, "Tournament History," <http://www.citiopentennis.com/en/about/tournament-history>, accessed March 5, 2018.



Figure 20. Rock Creek Indoor Tennis Stadium  
NPS PHOTO, 2018

Ellard noted what Rock Creek Park lost with the new stadium. The stadium's footprint meant that Rock Creek Park lost one of its largest picnic areas. This had been the place where, for example, the District held its annual senior citizen picnic. Some soccer fields and rugby fields were lost. Ellard called the stadium an intrusion on the landscape. She also noted how neighbors were quite upset by the stadium, with parking being a key concern. She did not see much value in the stadium for the park.<sup>15</sup>

The National Park Service immediately began examining the impact of the 7,500-seat tennis stadium, resulting in an Environmental Impact Statement. In 1988, NPS Director William Penn Mott Jr. conducted onsite visits to several national park units in the National Capital Region, including Rock Creek Park's tennis stadium. Mott asked about the parking situation, wondering if the foundation would increase events at the stadium to make it self-supporting. Such a scenario, Mott conjectured, would mean problems for the neighborhoods and thus force enlarging the parking capacity. By 1991, other groups submitted proposals for using the stadium for sporting events (other than tennis) and special activities. These queries indicated additional potential conflicts for using the stadium and surrounding neighborhoods. In response, the National Park Service began developing an Environmental Impact Statement. Backup studies informed development of the Environmental Impact Statement. One study looked at a full year of tennis stadium use (1991), with special emphasis upon research on parking and traffic circulation. A 1993 study examined air quality, noise, traffic circulation, and parking.<sup>16</sup>

Events during this time period indicated the extent of issues the National Park Service needed to address. Rolland Swain, who served as superintendent from 1988 to 1991, remembered how one year the foundation's contractor had parked cars in the rain on Rock Creek Park's ballfields. The ballfields had been a traditional parking area during tournaments, and the contractor had placed a deposit with the National Park Service to cover any costs for rehabilitating the fields. The National Park Service had to sod the severely damaged field. The contractor objected, but Swain remembered that using sod would return the fields more quickly than planting grass and would meet strong demands from regular ball players. Steve LeBel, who came to Rock Creek Park soon after this parking debacle as Concessions Specialist, recalled that the National Park Service had to take the fields out of use for an extended period. He worked with the concessioner during his time at the park to train its workers. LeBel stated that he considered it one of his "personal accomplishments" to educate and train tournament operators to minimize damage.<sup>17</sup>

Another controversy also during Swain's superintendency involved sponsorship of the tournament by Virginia Slims. In 1991, a national anti-smoking group challenged the National Park Service on its agreement. Swain argued that legally Virginia Slims could be associated with the tournament, so long as the company did not promote a brand of cigarettes or distribute cigarettes. The anti-smoking group effectively made its case, resulting in a legal settlement with

---

<sup>15</sup> Ellard, transcript of interview, 8.

<sup>16</sup> NPS Director William Penn Mott Jr. to National Capital Parks Regional Director Bob Stanton, November 16, 1988, 2, Unprocessed Superintendent Files, ROCR Archives. Robert Peccia & Associates, Rock Creek Park Tennis Center: Parking and Traffic Circulation Needs Analysis for 1991 Tennis Events, 1991, 4, TIC. Robert Peccia & Associates, Rock Creek Park Tennis Stadium EIS Technical Memorandum, Air Quality, Noise, Traffic Circulation and Parking, 1993, TIC.

<sup>17</sup> Quote in LeBel, transcript of interview, 8. See also Rolland Swain, transcript of oral history interview with the author, August 22, 2017, 9–10, ROCR Archives.

the National Park Service that banned tobacco company sponsorship. Some park neighbors supported the anti-smoking group's efforts, saying that such sponsorship was particularly inappropriate in the District, where cancer rates were high. District Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton had also pushed for the cancellation of the Virginia Slims sponsorship.<sup>18</sup>

The National Park Service finalized the Environmental Impact Statement in 1995 and recommended Alternative 2 with two modifications. Alternative 2 allowed for one professional tennis tournament per year at the Tennis Center. The professional tournament would be operated in accordance with the Interim Operating Plan between the National Park Service and the Washington Tennis Foundation. Alternative 2 also continued amateur and league tennis, along with public court use and instruction. The first modification stated that the National Park Service would retain management authority to consider a second large-scale tennis event on a case-by-case basis only if such an event generated a significant amount of funding in advance for tennis programs for youth, seniors, and special populations. The second modification stated that the National Park Service would retain management authority in allowing parking on the grass recreational field south of Morrow Drive under certain conditions and if recreational opportunities could continue. Other proposed alternatives had the tennis stadium used for amateur and league activities only; two professional events each year as in the existing situation; and for other events, such as boxing, circuses, concerts, ice skating shows, and basketball and volleyball tournaments. The final proposed alternative had relocation of professional tournaments to another place within the region.<sup>19</sup>

As indicated by the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), the National Park Service has been stuck in the middle, between the foundation and the neighborhood. National Park Service Concessions Specialist LeBel used the term "jostled." He said that everyone, the foundation, neighborhood, and the National Park Service, wanted to "get along very well," but there were significant issues. A vocal and long-lasting opposition group within the neighborhood argued that the stadium and tournament did not fit with the National Park Service's stated mission to preserve and protect the park for future generations. They also referred to impacts, such as parking, noise, and environmental concerns. Parking on city streets elicited considerable outcry by neighbors since tournament goers took local parking spaces from residents. The National Park Service worked closely with the District's parking enforcement department to institute a system that strictly enforced parking restrictions put into place specifically for the tournament.<sup>20</sup>

Despite these efforts, District Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton has continued to advocate for the residents living near the tennis stadium. She commented that there is a "huge tennis tournament" in the middle of a "lovely" residential community, and every year, she had to work with the residents on how to accommodate the tournament. She argued that Congress had pushed the tennis stadium onto the neighborhood. "A process was not done," she said, "so we are always working."<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Molly Sinclair, "Anti-Smokers Protest Tennis Sponsorship," *Washington Post*, January 18, 1991. Christine Spolar, "Park Service Bans Tobacco Sponsors: Last Tennis Tourney for Virginia Slims," *Washington Post*, August 16, 1991.

<sup>19</sup> ROCR, Final EIS, 1995, iv–v. Tennis Stadium, Draft EIS, 1992, 12. Comment, first draft of ROCR Admin History, August 28, 2019, ROCR Archives.

<sup>20</sup> LeBel, transcript of interview, 4–7. Quotes on p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> Eleanor Holmes Norton, transcript of oral history interview with the author, September 8, 2017, 10–11, ROCR Archives.

For the National Park Service, the stadium has presented administrative challenges over the years. Once built, the foundation turned the building over to the agency. The National Park Service has responsibility to maintain the building, except during the tournament. This situation has meant a significant outlay for the agency over the years. The building, over time, did not adhere to accessibility requirements, which the National Park Service required in 2004–5. The National Park Service also struggled with the foundation’s decision to put William H. G. FitzGerald’s name on the stadium. The National Park Service cannot name the parts of a park—Congress has that responsibility. The agency instead called the building the Rock Creek Tennis Center. With time, the foundation and the tournament operator also informally adopted that name.<sup>22</sup>

The National Park Service collaborates with two entities for the tournaments. The foundation owns the tournament itself and contracts with a tournament operator to put on the event. ProServ, started by former professional tennis player Donald Dell, was the original tournament operator. Eventually, ProServ was sold several times, and Legardere, a large French company, won the contract. Legardere remained the tournament operator until 2018. The tournament operator runs the tournament for the holder of the tournament rights, WTEF. NPS has a concessioner who handles food service in all areas of the park, which until the end of fiscal year 2020 was Guest Services Inc. (GSI). GSI also handles operations of the courts surrounding the stadium.<sup>23</sup>

Rock Creek Park’s commitment to tennis has resulted in a complicated scenario. Park managers work to ensure access to tennis courts. Tennis courts date back to the early 1900s, indicating the extent of this commitment. The National Park Service has sought having diverse users of the tennis courts. The Washington Tennis Foundation made at-risk youth in disadvantaged neighborhoods a long-standing focus of its efforts. The foundation made tennis a central (but not the only) aspect of its program. The tournament became one important source for raising sufficient funds to support this work, especially as the foundation expanded the numbers of youth in its program. But the professional tournament, the only one in a national park, has presented challenges. The National Park Service has worked with the neighborhood to address parking and traffic congestion. The building has also meant an added expense for the agency. Most recently, the agency negotiated a new contract with the foundation. The National Park Service now treats the tournament as an event requiring an annual permit. Changing agency perspectives on agreements has meant that the National Park Service scrapped the multiple-year contract with the foundation to a shorter one that resembled more of a business agreement. Superintendent Tara Morrison in the 2010s spent many years working with the foundation to execute an agreement that both parties could accept.<sup>24</sup>

## Trail Rehabilitation

---

<sup>22</sup> LeBel, transcript of interview, 9, 13. GWWO Inc./Architects, Rehabilitate William H. G. Fitzgerald Tennis Center: Condition Assessment, 2004, 1–4, TIC. ROCR, Annual Report, 2005, 2, 2005, 2008 annual reports, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR. NPS Director James M. Ridenour to Rep. Bruce F. Vento, June 25, 1992, File ROCR Tennis Stadium, Glenn DeMarr Files, National Capital Region (NCR) Office.

<sup>23</sup> LeBel, transcript of interview, 9. Tara Morrison, transcript of oral history interview with the author, 9, ROCR Archives.

<sup>24</sup> Morrison, transcript of interview, 7–8.

Pedestrian and bridle trails in Rock Creek Park were developed and maintained in spurts. The federal government and partner organizations often built a trail while also closing another one. Funding, staffing availability, and natural resource considerations have determined the number and condition of trails. Social trails, which are informal trails created haphazardly by park users, have complicated NPS and its partners' trail management. But there was also a lack of trail-system planning, as there was no overall vision for the system. Residents living near the park tried to rally interest in building more access inside the park. Federal programs, such as the 1930s New Deal work projects or the 1950s Mission 66 national park improvement effort, gained momentum and largely shaped the current trail system. The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) has devoted decades of volunteer time to maintaining the park's foot trails.

Four years after the establishment of Rock Creek Park, the Rock Creek Park Commission turned over park administration to the Board of Control of Rock Creek Park. This board was composed of three District of Columbia Commissioners and the US Army Chief of Engineers. The engineers first focused on road improvements and constructing Beach Drive and Ridge Road. By the early 1900s, engineers had also succeeded in improving horse and carriage trails, but the development of foot trails lagged. In 190, one area resident complained in the *Washington Post* that foot trails were not connected, poorly maintained, and sometimes blocked by fallen trees, forcing pedestrians onto the busy roads. The Board of Control led a rejuvenated effort to improve the trails so that by January 1907 work had been completed on a footpath from Klinge Road to Peirce Mill and the paving of the bottom of Milkhouse Ford. Attention then shifted to ensuring access through publicized entrances.<sup>25</sup>

The popularity of the foot trails rose in response to trail work and the expansion of streetcar service, allowing for ease of access for more people. The Wanderlusts walking club was formed in 1907, with an interest in birding, rock collecting, and botany. The club held its first organized walk in the park's upper Rock Creek Valley in 1914, attracting an enormous crowd of 920 people. The Wanderlusts started night hikes, with at least 300 people following the park's foremen. In the 1920s, the Wanderlusts was replaced by other short-lived walking clubs until the 1927 establishment of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club. In 1977, the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club formalized its relationship with Rock Creek Park to improve and maintain its foot trails. Another group known as the Wanderbirds formed in 1934, sponsored by the *Washington Post*. Both the Wanderbirds and Potomac Appalachian Trail Club remain active in 2021.<sup>26</sup>

Bridle trails existed before the park's establishment. The Washington Riding Academy, located at the eastern edge of the P Street Bridge and thus near Rock Creek Park, opened in 1888. In 1915 and 1916, a bridle path west of Rock Creek and between Boulder Bridge and Military Road was extended 6,500 feet north of Military Road. A footbridge crossing Piney Branch eased navigation across this stream. Some bridle trails were widened eight feet to allow two people riding abreast.<sup>27</sup>

The need for intentional planning caused the Board of Control and the Chief of Engineers to solicit an assessment from the military in 1917. The resulting report emphasized the haphazard locations of bridle and foot trails, their excessive number that duplicated each other, and their scarring of hillsides. The 1918 Olmsted Brothers report further encouraged planners to place

---

<sup>25</sup> Deana R. Poss and Frances McMillen, *Cultural Landscape Report: The Historic Trails of Rock Creek Park* (Washington, DC: NPS, 2013), 37, 40, 44, 46–47.

<sup>26</sup> Poss and McMillen, ROCR Trails CLR, 52–54.

<sup>27</sup> Poss and McMillen, ROCR Trails CLR, 54–56.

trails so that they did not damage the landscape. The report called for trails to direct people away from sensitive areas to protect them. The Olmsted report suggested that trails encourage people to go out into the park, but the trails also need to harmonize with the landscape. They should facilitate the visitors' mental and physical well-being with easy access and effort. Subsequently, Rock Creek Park's administration under the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks (OPBPP) of the National Capital led to some enactment of the proposals by previous planners. OPBPP closed many trails, especially bridle trails, likely to simplify the trail system by removing parallel trails and those not connecting with other trails. Three footbridges were built across Rock Creek, and new foot trails opened near Sherrill Drive.<sup>28</sup>

Significant advancements in trail development and maintenance followed. The 1930s work by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and Public Works Administration brought about new footbridges. Men from the Civil Works Administration conducted a basic topographical survey of the park to inform plans for roads and trails. The survey commented upon the poor condition of trails and the need for more walking trails. Public Works Administration workers completed a foot and bridle underpass under the Peirce Mill Bridge. The park's naturalist developed in 1936 a Nature Trail for guided nature walks, popular with stay-at-home women and school groups. For bridle trails, the Washington Bridle Trails Association, formed in 1940, partnered with the National Park Service to encourage horseback riding and maintain Rock Creek Park trails. In the 1950s, including during the national park improvement program called Mission 66, the park closed several bridle trails and created two north-south bridle trails. The White Horse Trail was located on the park's west side and the Black Horse Trail on the east side. These trails were nine feet across. Three new foot trails opened on the park's east side.<sup>29</sup>

The environmental movement and the nation's recreation emphasis harkened to a revived effort to plan and improve trails in Rock Creek Park. In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson delivered an address to Congress on conservation and restoration of beauty. Part of his vision included a call for Congress to establish a national system of trails, building upon the thousands of miles of trails in national forests and parks. Congress and President Johnson approved the National Trails System Act in 1968. For Rock Creek Park, this new attention to trails meant funding for adding and reconstructing foot, bridle, and bicycle trails. In 1969, the National Capital Region made Rock Creek Park the first to have multi-use paved trails in the region. This initial multi-use trail looped in the park's northern section.<sup>30</sup>

Rock Creek Park also linked to many regional and national trails, such as the American Discovery Trail. This trail dated to the 1990s and extends from Delaware to California. It uses the bike trail south of Peirce Mill and connects to the C&O Canal. In 2006, the park also became part of the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail. Visitors travel the trail on canoes, with stopping points around the bay and its tributaries. The trail enters Rock Creek Park at the mouth of Rock Creek, where it meets the Potomac River.<sup>31</sup>

Bridle trails have historically dominated Rock Creek Park's trail system. Rock Creek Park managers designed bridle paths to accommodate horseback riding for horses from both inside and outside the park. In 1958, the National Park Service built a horse stable, called Rock Creek Stables, near the Nature Center south of Military Road. The L-shaped concrete-block building accommodated forty horses when built, with an accompanying lobby, tack room, office

---

<sup>28</sup> Poss and McMillen, *ROCR Trails CLR*, 58, 61–62, 71.

<sup>29</sup> Poss and McMillen, *ROCR Trails CLR*, 76–80, 85, 87.

<sup>30</sup> Poss and McMillen, *ROCR Trails CLR*, 91–93.

<sup>31</sup> Poss, *Historical Trails of ROCR*, 97.

space, storage area, and restrooms. The Horse Center had a training ring added in 1972. A nearby Equitation Field had been onsite since 1945.<sup>32</sup>



Figure 21. Rock Creek Park Horse Center  
NPS PHOTO, 2010

A 1985 study of horse trails indicated the need for more attention to these paths. The consultant listed several “fatal flaws” in the horse trail system, pointing out steep grades. The park’s trails had as much as 20–27 percent grades, while the customary national standard recommends 8–10 percent for both horse and foot trails. Such grading caused long-term resource problems and high annual maintenance requirements. The extreme grading forced the need for water bars, drains, and crib structures to protect soil and reduce the chances of erosion. But these structures also reduced the horseback riding experience. Ultimately, the park needed to decide on relocating or reconstructing trails. Maintenance personnel were responsible for maintaining horse trails, and the 1985 study argued that the successful rehabilitation or relocation of the trails would mean “greatly reduced” costs and impacts on maintenance efforts.<sup>33</sup>

The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club has become a key partner with the National Park Service in managing the foot trails. Club members began working in Rock Creek Park in cooperation with park managers. This all-volunteer force recognized that the park’s early- to

<sup>32</sup> Poss, Historical Trails of ROCR, 166–67. Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, “Equestrian Use” section. ROCR Historic District National Register Form, 2014, Section 7, pp. 11–12.

<sup>33</sup> Robert Proudman, Report on the Horse Trails in Rock Creek Park, 1985, II, pp. 3–5, Unprocessed Administrative Files, ROCR. Quote on II, p. 5.

mid-1970s staff shortages had left hiking trails in disrepair and essentially impassable. The first year, in 1977, the Club and another park volunteer group called FORCE (Friends of Rock Creek Environment) successfully completed a trail rehabilitation on a two-mile section of trail. The Club went on in subsequent years to prune, regrade, clear fallen trees, and install water bars. Club members closed badly eroded sections and constructed alternative routes. Superintendent James Redmond described the partnership in 1979 as “very healthy and productive,” and Redmond did “not know what we would do without them!”<sup>34</sup>

According to Rock Creek Park Natural Resource Management Specialist Ken Ferebee, the Club has been instrumental in maintaining the foot trails. The organization’s volunteers blazed the trails and installed signs they donated. They put together a trail map. As of 2015, Club members continued to maintain the foot rails monthly. Ferebee echoed Redmond, saying that the park did not have the capability to keep up the trails without such dedicated volunteers.<sup>35</sup>

Some of the foot trails that the Club built and maintained attracted both horseback riders and bicyclists. In 1984, the Club wrote Rock Creek Park Superintendent Georgia Ellard about the US Park Police taking their horses on the foot trails for routine training and patrol. The Club described resulting severe resource damage and threatened to stop its trail work if the National Park Service did not talk to the Park Police. Ellard responded within a month, having come to an agreement with the Park Police to stop using the foot trails for horses. The Club later turned to the Park Police in 1991 to obtain help in enforcing a policy of no bikes on the foot trails. Bicyclists, as commuters, used the foot trails as shortcuts between city streets. The Club felt that this was unsafe for hikers, who might run into bikers around a blind corner. Bicycles also caused trail degradation and erosion. The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club asked the Park Police to enforce regulations prohibiting the use of bikes on trails.<sup>36</sup>

Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA), founded in 1972, has advocated for more and better-designed trails in Rock Creek Park. Its members pushed unsuccessfully to have Beach Drive permanently closed to cars, but it did win Saturday closures, in addition to the already instituted Sunday ones. Rock Creek Park’s General Management, finalized in 2002, continued these vehicle restrictions. The Washington Area Bicyclist Association worked with the park and local governments to establish the Civil War Defenses of Washington Trail. This trail had long been a vision to connect the forts and batteries that circled Washington during the Civil War. In 1969, the National Park Service decided to turn the proposed Fort Drive into the Fort Circle Parks Hiking and Biking Trail. This trail would connect the Civil War Defenses of Washington and provide a recreational outlet for the District’s urbanized population. In 1971, the Secretary of the Interior dedicated two completed sections of this trail, the Fort DeRussy and Fort Dupont sections of a larger Fort Circle Parks National Recreation Trail. This National Recreation Trail designation emphasized how a set of historical sites, and sites in an urban setting, could still obtain recognition for their active recreation use. Separately, in response to

---

<sup>34</sup> Quote in Memorandum, Redmond to Director, Appalachian Trail Project, November 27, 1979. See also “PATC to Assist NPS in Rock Creek Park,” PATC Newsletter (January 1977), File Parkways & Trails–Trails–Potomac Appalachian Trail Club–Correspondence and Activity 1976–1996, Box 67, ROCR Records, MRCE.

<sup>35</sup> Ken Ferebee, transcript of oral history interview with the author, January 5, 2017, 18–19, 32, ROCR Archives. Poss, Historical Trails of ROCR, 94–95. ROCR, Annual Report, 1980, 34–35, File Rock Creek Park, Box 45, Entry P17, RG 79, Archives II, NARA.

<sup>36</sup> Jim Douglas to Georgia Ellard, June 26, 1984; Georgia Ellard to Jim Douglas, July 17, 1984; Memorandum, Jim Douglas to Phil Barringer and Marie Grenan, August 22, 1984, all in File Parkways & Trails–Trails–Potomac Appalachian Trail Club–Correspondence and Activity 1976–1996, Box 67, ROCR Records, MRCE.

increasing bicyclist use of Rock Creek Park, in the late 1970s the park paved some bridle and foot trails.<sup>37</sup>

### **Recent Trail Work**

Since 1985, park staff, PATC, SCA, and other volunteers have completed substantial improvements to Rock Creek Park's trail system. Much of this work has involved moving trails away from the creek due to flooding or to improve safety. For example, in 1992 PATC volunteers rerouted the western end of the Whitehaven Trail to move it uphill out of a drainage. In 2005, PATC rerouted the lower Theodore Roosevelt Trail uphill away from creek, and in 2010, PATC rerouted the Valley Trail near Boulder Bridge to move it away from creek. For the National Park Service Centennial in 2016, SCA replaced the bridge across Foundry Branch in upper Glover-Archbold Park and replaced the bridge across Portal Branch in Reservation 433. In 2018–2019, SCA completed two other projects. These student volunteers rehabilitated and improved the social trail along the creek between West Beach Drive and Boundary to formalize the trail, now named Creekside Trail. That same year, they installed stone cribbing on the Valley Trail between the Park Police substation and Boulder Bridge to improve the trail tread.<sup>38</sup>

According to Natural Resource Management Specialist Ken Ferebee, three projects stand out as especially noteworthy. The first is the creation of the Boundary Trail. This involved building a new trail and providing new access to the park. Park neighbors living in the area adjacent to the park along Grubb Road in Maryland and Primrose Street in DC requested an access point to the interior of the park and the existing trail system. The trail was designed to fit the landscape and hopefully reduce future maintenance issues, instead of just improving an existing trail that was not designed properly. PATC completed this project in 1995.<sup>39</sup>

The second noteworthy project was the construction of the bridge over Foundry Branch to carry the Wesley Heights Trail. This new bridge replaced the existing crossing which involved walking across a sanitary sewer. The bridge was challenging to build because of its length (approximately forty feet). It was engineered and built by two SCA crews in 2016, with funding from a DC Department of Transportation grant.<sup>40</sup>

The third project was the 2019 replacement of the elevated boardwalk in Melvin Hazen Park. Ferebee called this replacement project one of the most significant ones completed by PATC. Park staff had built the boardwalk in 2001. However, periodic flooding made the trail impassable, requiring elevation of the bridge two feet. Continuing flooding during the project period complicated the work by keeping crews from working regularly, making the project last several months to finish. Park staff and PATC volunteers did all the building.<sup>41</sup>

These many projects indicate the extent of trail maintenance Rock Creek Park managers have had to address and how crucial volunteer groups are. Several factors may influence the need for these projects. Wear and tear from usage, and the possibility that some trails have had

---

<sup>37</sup> Poss and McMillen, ROCR Trails CLR, 91–94, 96. DSC, Paved Recreation Trails of the National Capital Region: Recommendations for Improvements and Coordination to Form a Metropolitan Multi-Use Trail System, 1990, 10–11, File Paved Recreation Trails Improvements 1990, Box 66, MRCE. Memorandum, Acting Chief, Division of Special Planning Studies to Director, May 6, 1971, 1, File CWDW–FOCI–History–General: General Background 1924–1984, Box 23, ROCR Records, MRCE.

<sup>38</sup> Ken Ferebee, email to the author, July 16, 2020, ROCR Archives.

<sup>39</sup> Ferebee, email to the author, July 16, 2020.

<sup>40</sup> Ferebee, email to the author, July 16, 2020.

<sup>41</sup> Ferebee, email to the author, July 16, 2020.

increased usage over time, has required attention. Climate change, causing sea-level rise and extreme weather events, may have led to more rainstorms and more severe rainstorms with concomitant flooding. New developments upstream of Rock Creek Park may have changed water patterns and levels, leading to downstream adverse effects. This combination of factors emphasizes the continued demands for trail maintenance and NPS's reliance on volunteers.

### **Rock Creek Golf Course**

In the twentieth century, the federal government established seven golf courses and three miniature golf courses within the District on federal lands. Three of these courses exist into the twenty-first century—East Potomac Park Golf Course, Rock Creek Golf Course, and Langston Golf Course—all under National Park Service authority. The federal government opened Langston Golf Course in 1939 to replace an earlier African American course at the Lincoln Memorial that had deteriorated. The East Potomac and Rock Creek golf courses were segregated for whites only until official action in 1941 by Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes. The Rock Creek Golf Course, at about 100 acres, is smaller than the other two, with East Potomac Park Golf Course encompassing about 220 acres and Langston Golf Course about 145 acres. Langston Golf Course is located along the Anacostia River in Anacostia Park. East Potomac Park Golf Course sits along the Potomac River and Washington Channel on a peninsula.<sup>42</sup>

Commissioners of the District of Columbia set in motion the first attempt at introducing golf to the city in 1904. They identified Rock Creek Park, and specifically the park area south of Brightwood Reservoir, for an eighteen-hole course. The reservoir sat inside the park's boundaries, and some of the already-cleared land for the reservoir, along with some natural hazards, seemed appropriate for a golf course. In 1906, District Engineer John Biddle walked the proposed area with Findlay Douglas, a Scottish immigrant and the 1898 winner of the US Amateur title, and they agreed on the layout for an eighteen-hole course. By September 1907, the first nine holes required only some grading, clearing, and planting. In 1908, the commissioners reported that construction had been completed, with good grass growth started, but the course remained closed due to a lack of funds to keep the grass cut. The second nine holes were never started, and the course never fully opened.<sup>43</sup>

In 1908, some members of Congress did not support funding golf courses at public expense. This attitude quickly changed between 1910 and 1937, considered the golden age of golf architecture in the United States. The number of courses across the United States grew exponentially from 742 in 1918 to 5,691 in 1930. Golf course design pivoted from primitive geometrics to ones informed by the best Scottish and English courses. Construction advancements, such as using steam shovels in the 1920s and bulldozers in the 1930s, and such improvements as better drainage and tree removal, all contributed to the growth in numbers of courses. Suburbanization fostered the rise in country clubs for middle- and upper-class whites, but small- and medium-sized metropolitan areas also embraced golf and provided public courses. Golfing enthusiasts pointed to the sport's health benefits as a recreational outlet.<sup>44</sup>

The District saw its first public golf course open in 1920 in East Potomac Park, with nine holes on a reversible course. Efforts for this course started soon after the initial Rock Creek

---

<sup>42</sup> Patricia Kuhn Babin, *Links to the Past: A Historic Resource Study of National Park Service Golf Courses in the District of Columbia* (Washington, DC: NPS, 2017), 1–3.

<sup>43</sup> Babin, *Links to the Past*, 22–26.

<sup>44</sup> Babin, *Links to the Past*, 26–27.

course died, succeeding in part because of a multi-tiered base of support. Presidents William Howard Taft and Woodrow Wilson were both avid golfers and made pitches for a public course. The Washington Board of Trade, one of the most powerful organizations in the District and the key force behind the establishment of Rock Creek Park, also put its weight behind a golf course and worked with the Washington Chamber of Commerce and athletic organizations to see a public golf course built in the District. By 1914, plans for East Potomac Park included an eighteen-hole golf course, and that same year, the federal government opened a three-hole practice course in West Potomac Park. This trial course was quickly packed with government workers, and this experience helped convince people to support the full-sized course. Within a year of opening, East Potomac Park Golf Course was also packed with players, prompting the *Washington Post* to call for a second course, located in Rock Creek Park.<sup>45</sup>

Rock Creek Golf Course sits on land further north from the unfinished course of 1908. The completed course had initially been home to Camp Good Will and an arboretum run by the US Forest Service. Camp Good Will, begun in 1904 by a local charity, was a summer camp for underprivileged white children and their mothers. For the arboretum, the Forest Service had planted about two thousand trees north, south, and east of Camp Good Will between 1911 and 1920.<sup>46</sup> In their 1918 report on Rock Creek Park, the Olmsted brothers singled out the arboretum as incompatible with the park, pointing instead to the open land with rolling hills as having a recreational value different from other parts of the park. The Olmsted brothers noted that this had been old farmland with a sense of “freedom, breadth and outlook found nowhere else in the Park.”<sup>47</sup> This character drew planners to this site for the golf course. President Woodrow Wilson, who had advocated for East Potomac Park Golf Course, had not initially supported a golf course in Rock Creek Park, believing it would mar the park’s natural beauty. Officer in Charge of the Office of Public Grounds and Buildings Lt. Col. Clarence O. Sherrill, however, responded that the part of the proposed area had already been cleared of trees and lacked natural beauty due to overgrowth (which the Olmsted report had noted). Plus, a golf course would not mar the park’s appearance as much as constantly used picnic areas did, Sherrill argued. Wilson seemed satisfied, and planning commenced.<sup>48</sup>

William S. Flynn, part of the Philadelphia School of Golf Architecture, designed Rock Creek Golf Course. By the time of his untimely death at age fifty-four in 1945, he had designed more than thirty-five courses and redesigned or expanded thirty more. His work at Rock Creek Park exemplified his style. He valued the park’s natural topography to provide alleys for fairways and present challenges for play. He designed greens with interplays of continuous slopes and tied the greens in with the surroundings to make it difficult to discern slopes. Flynn was sparing in his use of sand traps at Rock Creek, in comparison to flat East Potomac Park, in part because he took advantage of the natural topography. Flynn also used trees to separate holes and create angles of play. He kept swathes of trees instead of razing a site, though the Rock Creek course did require clearing thirty acres of woodland.<sup>49</sup>

Rock Creek Golf Course opened in May 1923, and almost nine thousand people used the nine-hole course in little over a month, indicative of its popularity. In July 1924, Lt. Col. Sherrill invited Flynn back to design another nine holes. The new full course, played as two nines,

---

<sup>45</sup> Babin, *Links to the Past*, 28–31, 43.

<sup>46</sup> Barry Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, under “Military Rule.”

<sup>47</sup> Olmsted Brothers, Rock Creek Park Report, 1918, 14–15. Quote on p. 14.

<sup>48</sup> Babin, *Links to the Past*, 253–54.

<sup>49</sup> Babin, *Links to the Past*, 189, 191–96, 255.

opened in 1926. Flynn made radical changes to the existing holes, sometimes abandoning greens and constructing new ones. He had to blast rock and remove stones to widen fairways, a problem made evident from the initial design. Even more golfers packed the course. In 1923, 47,000 people played at Rock Creek Park; in 1927, that number jumped to 94,000.<sup>50</sup>

Rock Creek Golf Course opened under concessioner Severine G. Leoffler, who oversaw some changes to the course over the years. Leoffler rebuilt some of the greens following golfer complaints about their “concrete-like consistency,” as reported in a *Washington Evening Star* November 1939 article. In 1942, Leoffler rerouted several holes on the back nine to improve congestion, resulting in long walks between holes. The most significant change came between 1946 and 1958 when the District widened Military Road to a four-lane parkway, eating up part of the southern stretch of the golf course. Pennsylvania golf course architect William F. Gordon designed the changes, which required removing original Holes 3,4, and 5, building three new holes, and redesigning several other holes.<sup>51</sup>

Leoffler, who now had his sons Sergine Jr. and Layne in the business, made few improvements in the 1960s and 1970s, though by the mid-1970s, both golfers and the federal government complained about potholes on the fairways, weeds on the fairways and greens, and an overall sense of neglect. In 1975, Leoffler severely changed the scenic back nine, prompting some golfers to complain about how the once-challenging course had become just another pitch-and-putt place to play. Following recommendations in 1977–78 by golf course architects Leon and Charles Howard of Austin, Texas, Leoffler constructed three new greens for holes 14, 15, and 16, but Leoffler did not incorporate any further recommended changes, which had included a new irrigation system and storage reservoir for the back nine and addressed problems with the front nine. Leoffler sought to end its Rock Creek Golf Course contract in 1981, following six straight years of losses, and Golf Course Specialists Inc. won the contract in 1982. Golf Course Specialists Inc. made improvements, some immediately. The company restored the back nine, cleared out brush, and constructed a new maintenance building in 1984.<sup>52</sup>

When Rock Creek Golf Course readied for opening in 1923, Congress had not appropriated money for a clubhouse. Instead, a farmhouse from Camp Good Will was put into service. This farmhouse had dated originally to the 1700s and had been burned, reconstructed, and modified many times already. Leoffler improved the two-story wood-frame building to house a lounge, lockers, showers, and a café. In 1933 and 1937, fires damaged the clubhouse, and the National Park Service unsuccessfully pursued constructing a new clubhouse in 1937.<sup>53</sup>

In the mid-1950s, National Capital Parks of the National Park Service recommended a new clubhouse under the parks improvement Mission 66 program. One hallmark of the program was its adoption of modern architectural design. The Rock Creek Golf Course clubhouse, opened in 1964, reflected this modern sensibility. John Hans Graham & Associates, in consultation with the National Capitol Office of Design and Construction, designed the new two-story structure to fit into a hillside. Its large windows looking onto the course sat inside a cantilevered roofline with an adjacent deck. The new clubhouse had a lounge, kitchen, and pro shop on the upper level and men’s and women’s facilities on the lower level. Some longtime users of the original clubhouse expressed dislike for the new one, missing the café that was replaced by vending

---

<sup>50</sup> Babin, *Links to the Past*, 259–61.

<sup>51</sup> Babin, *Links to the Past*, 262–64.

<sup>52</sup> Babin, *Links to the Past*, 268–72.

<sup>53</sup> Rock Creek Park Historic District National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 2014, Section 8, p. 55. Babin, *Links to the Past*, 258–59.

machines and considering the overall building as too small. The farmhouse clubhouse was demolished in 1965.<sup>54</sup>

By the early 2000s, the conditions at Rock Creek Golf Course had deteriorated. The front nine's grass has turned sunburnt each summer from lack of an irrigation system, and the back-nine's fairways have increasingly narrowed from encroaching trees. Weeds have continued to plague fairways and greens. US House Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton submitted legislation in 2014 to turn one of the federal government's three golf courses in the District into a championship-level course through a public-private partnership. District Delegate Holmes believed that such a course, with commensurate fees, would help pay for the other two National Park Service golf courses in the District. She thought East Potomac Park Golf Course was the best fit for such a venture, and thus Langston and Rock Creek golf courses could benefit financially. The legislation did not go anywhere, but such a proposed step recognizes the need for some economic infusion to keep the three courses going. Rock Creek Golf Course in 2016 had the most challenging course but also the fewest players, at 15,723 rounds of golf that year.<sup>55</sup>

The Rock Creek Park Historic District, established in 1991, includes Rock Creek Golf Course. The National Register listing recognized that despite the tees, greens, and traps being moved and rebuilt over the years, the fairways as of 1991 had remained essentially unchanged, especially on the back nine's tight hilly section. The front nine also retained its open rolling landscape. The Mission 66 clubhouse and three shelters built in 1960 were all contributing structures to the historic district.<sup>56</sup>

## More Places to Play

Reservation 339, Rock Creek Park proper, contains eight picnic areas that require reservations between May and October and 21, available on a first-come, first-served basis. They are scattered throughout this park unit, proceeding north from Peirce Mill to south of Riley Spring Bridge. They are a historically popular recreation area in the park.<sup>57</sup>

Rock Creek Park visitors use other park units, in addition to Reservation 339, for recreational activities. People can follow hiking trails in Glover-Archbold Park, Battery Kemble, Palisades Park, Whitehaven Park, Soapstone Valley Park, Melvin C. Hazen Park, Dumbarton Oaks Park, and along the former Klinge Road. In Montrose Park, visitors take advantage of two separate sets of tennis courts, a baseball field, and a children's playground. Picnicking, dog walking, walking, and hiking round out active and passive recreational activities at the park. The Ropewalk, a historic feature of the estate marking where rope was manufactured from 1804 to 1814, provides an entrance to the park at R Street NW. It is a paved ten-foot-wide path with a five-foot central section and ends at the playground.<sup>58</sup>

---

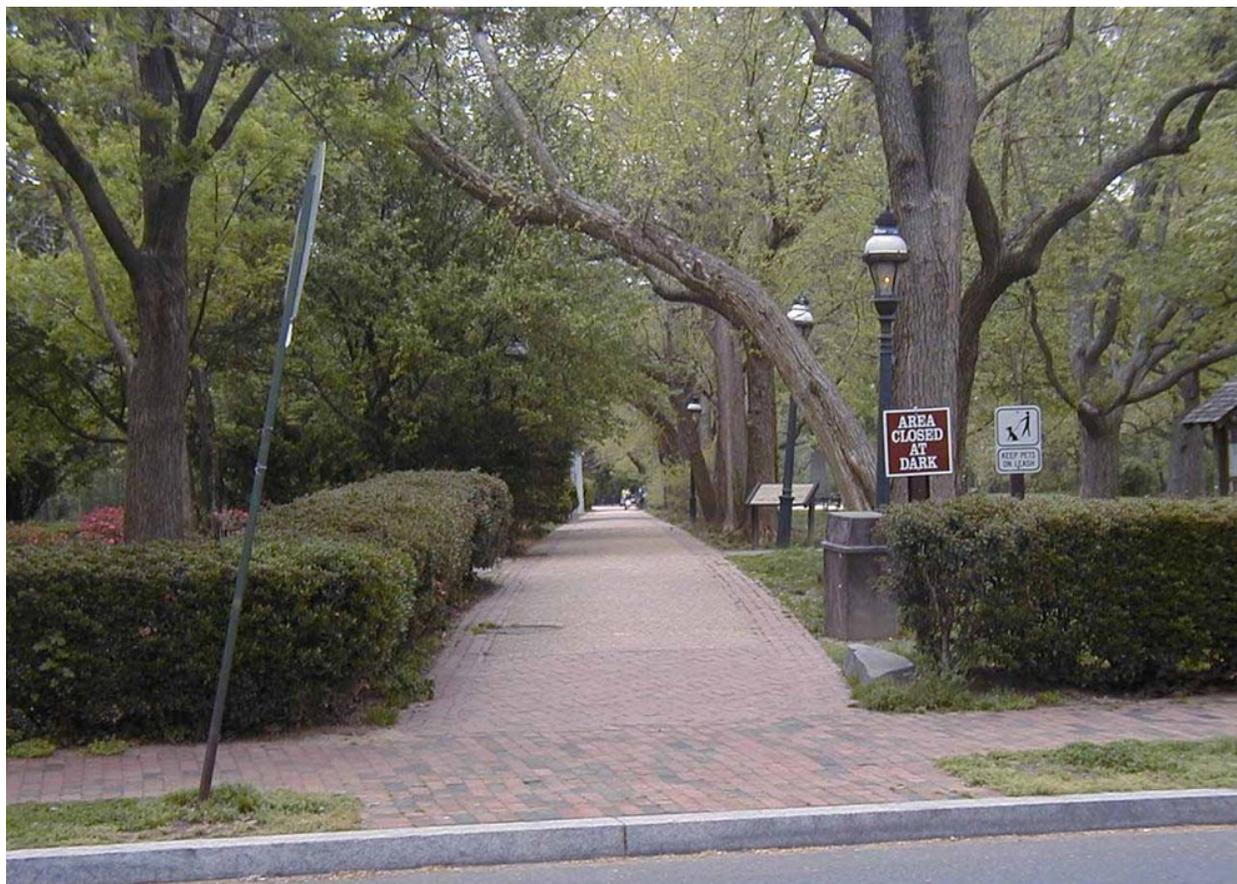
<sup>54</sup> ROCR Historic District Register Form, 2014, Section 8, pp. 55–56. Babin, *Links to the Past*, 266–68.

<sup>55</sup> Mike DeBonis, "An Upscale Future Pondered for DC's Proletarian Public Golf Courses," *Washington Post*, May 20, 2014.

<sup>56</sup> Rock Creek Park Historic District National Register of Historic Places Register Form, 1991, Section 7, pp. 25–26. ROCR Historic District Register Form, 2014, Section 7, pp. 13–14.

<sup>57</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 1984, 47; ROCR, Annual Report, 1987, 4; ROCR, Annual Report, 1988, 4, all in File Rock Creek Park, Box 45, Entry P17, RG 79, Archives II, NARA.

<sup>58</sup> Architrave PC, Architects, Montrose Park Cultural Landscape Report, 2004, vii, 78, 81, 84.



*Figure 22. Ropewalk at Montrose Park  
NPS PHOTO, 2003*

The Civil War Defenses of Washington park sites serve as important recreation sites. For those under Rock Creek Park jurisdiction, these recreational outlets offer both passive and active outlets. Picnic tables sit in Battery Kemble, Fort Bunker Hill, Fort Totten, and Fort Slocum. There are community gardens at Fort Totten and Fort Reno. Fort Reno has multiple ballfields and recreation fields, while Fort Bayard has a playground and ballfield. The National Park Service acknowledged in its 2004 Civil War Defenses of Washington management plan that it will have a “high tolerance for noise and activity” around the ballfields and picnic areas. The Civil War Defenses of Washington, except for Fort Stevens, did not see direct battle action. Fort Stevens does not have any recreational facilities, and its landscape is maintained for quiet reflection to honor the 1864 battle. Many of the other Civil War Defenses of Washington sites, however, have evolved to serve as recreation sites.<sup>59</sup>

## **Water Recreation and Boathouses**

---

<sup>59</sup> Civil War Defenses of Washington Management Plan, 2004, 18, 27, 63–64. Quote on p. 18. Beyond Fort Stevens, there are many other sites that preserve cultural resources (earthworks) and are not used for recreation, including Fort Totten, Fort DeRussy, Battery Kemble (the earthworks area), Fort Slocum, and others.

Water recreation has been a major source of outdoor leisure in the United States. The 1962 Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC) named water as a “prime factor” in outdoor activity. In the early 1960s, 44 percent of the population preferred water-based recreation over any others. Water also made land recreation, such as camping, hiking, or picnicking, more attractive, according to the ORRRC study.<sup>60</sup>

The ORRRC study reported two significant factors that had the potential to reduce the public’s enjoyment of the water. First, the report noted that private land adjacent to shorelines restricted access to publicly available water resources. Zoning or road building would help address this need for access. Planners needed to take care in designing roads to complement, not detract from, the natural setting.<sup>61</sup>

Second, the suitability of the water for recreation purposes influenced how much people could play in the water. The report stated that governments at all levels needed to institute pollution controls to make water safe for people to use. The ORRRC report came out before the passage of the 1970 National Environmental Policy Act and the 1972 Clean Water Act, when waterways throughout the country were suffering. For example, industries circulated river water through their systems as a coolant, then dumped this overheated water back into the rivers. The resulting higher water temperatures threatened fish and other aquatic life.<sup>62</sup>

The Potomac River has had many stressors. Urbanization, with paved roads, storm sewers, and densely packed buildings, meant that untreated stormwater, chemicals, and trash flowed into the river. The District did not start removing raw sewage until 1938; before that, this waste went directly into the river. Not until 1959 did the District treat secondary solids suspended in this waste stream. In 1957, the US Public Health Service declared the Potomac River unsafe for swimming. Other parts of the watershed in the 1950s were deemed unsafe for recreation and fishing. The ORRRC report, as an example of the seriousness of the pollution situation, described how the Potomac River, during many times in the summer of 1961, registered a bacterial count 250 times greater than what the US Public Health Service deemed safe for swimming. In 1971, the District made swimming in the river illegal.<sup>63</sup>

Pollution controls and stormwater management have slowly improved the Potomac River’s water quality. Maryland allows swimming, but the District continues to ban it. Governments caution against playing in the river after storms since increased stormwater flows magnify the amount of pollution dumped into the Potomac. But there has been improvement. In 2017, the Potomac Conservancy reported that bald eagles and other waterfowl had started returning in significant numbers. American shad, white perch, and striped bass recorded booming populations. The Potomac Conservancy pointed at reduced runoff from agricultural lands and better water treatment as factors in improving water quality. If these successes

---

<sup>60</sup> Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, Report to the President and the Congress (Washington, DC, 1962), 87, 173. Quote on p. 173.

<sup>61</sup> ORRRC Report, 87, 174–75, 178–79.

<sup>62</sup> ORRRC Report, 87, 176–77.

<sup>63</sup> Robinson & Associates Inc., NPS National Capital Region Administrative History, 1952–2005 (2008), 92.

ORRRC Report, 176. Swimming hazards have included strong currents and glass and other foreign substances on the river floor, in addition to pollution. David A. Fahrenthold and Ashlee Clark, “On the Potomac, Swimming in Risk,” *Washington Post* (July 14, 2007). More about water pollution in Rock Creek Park can be found in Chapter 3.

continued and government funding did not dry up, the group predicted that people could safely swim in the Potomac in another ten years.<sup>64</sup>

Rock Creek Park has responsibility for two boathouses, Thompson Boat Center and Key Bridge Boathouse. The National Park Service built Thompson Boat Center under Mission 66. The boat center is named after Harry Thompson, the National Park Service superintendent who pushed for its construction and died a few months after its completion.<sup>65</sup>

Key Bridge Boathouse had started as Jack's Boathouse. John W. "Jack" Baxter, formerly a DC police officer, opened Jack's Boathouse in 1945 with six rowboats. Jack's became a venerable DC institution, with generations of Washingtonians taking its boats out onto the Potomac. After Jack died in 1999, his son Frank took over. Frank partnered with Paul Simkin and Anna Popoff in operating the business, and Simkin assumed responsibility following Frank's death in 2009.<sup>66</sup>

In December 2012, the National Park Service served Simkin with an eviction letter, following the determination that Simkin did not have a valid lease with the agency. Simkin had been operating off a monthly lease that originated in 1982, and the lease did not have Simkin's name on it. The National Park Service wanted to regularize the boathouse operation and bring it in line with other businesses within the national park system.<sup>67</sup> National Capital Region Chief of Planning Tammy Stidham recalled that NPS Director Jon Jarvis had visited Jack's Boathouse and called the place "the wild, wild West." Stidham remembered that Jarvis felt there was "no order," "no leadership," and "no ownership."<sup>68</sup> In January 2013, the agency released a request for interested bidders for a concession contract for the boathouse. Simkin declined to bid on the new concession contract. Simkin filed suit, arguing that the District retained ownership of the land where his boathouse stood and that his lease should be with the District government. The judge disagreed. The District had turned the waterfront over to the federal government in 1987, and thus Jack's boathouse operated under a federal lease.<sup>69</sup>

The National Park Service awarded the concession contract to B&G Outdoor Recreation, based in Boston. The Service renamed Jack's Boathouse as the Key Bridge Boathouse. When the B&G Outdoor Recreation contract expired in 2015, the National Park Service bundled the contracts for Thompson Boat Center, Key Bridge Boathouse, and Fletcher's Boathouse (another National Park Service Boathouse but not under Rock Creek Park management) under a single concession contract. Guest Services Inc. bid on and won this contract in 2016. Guest Services, originally named Government Services Inc. (GSI), had a relationship with the federal government that extended back to 1927. Guest Services ran snack bars and cafeterias in dozens

---

<sup>64</sup> Steve Hendrix, "A Swim in the Potomac? The River's Remarkable Recovery Makes that a Possibility, Report Says," *Washington Post* (March 27, 2017). See also NCR Admin History, 93–94.

<sup>65</sup> Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, section "The Mouth of the Creek." Further information about Thompson Boat Center can be found in Chapter 19.

<sup>66</sup> Lebel, transcript of interview, 17. Kathleen Rellihan, "Rocking the Boathouse: There's a New Crew Handling Rentals and Classes near the Key Bridge in Georgetown," *Washington Post* (July 30, 2013).

<sup>67</sup> Benjamin R. Freed, "Jack's Boathouse Is Now Gone. It's Now Key Bridge Boathouse," DCist (April 11, 2013), [http://dcist.com/2013/04/jacks\\_boathouse\\_is\\_gone\\_its\\_now\\_key.php](http://dcist.com/2013/04/jacks_boathouse_is_gone_its_now_key.php), accessed September 22, 2018.

<sup>68</sup> Tammy Stidham, transcript of oral history interview with the author, August 4, 2017, 16, ROCR Archives.

<sup>69</sup> Benjamin R. Freed, "Jack's Boathouse Is Now Gone. It's Now Key Bridge Boathouse," DCist (April 11, 2013), [http://dcist.com/2013/04/jacks\\_boathouse\\_is\\_gone\\_its\\_now\\_key.php](http://dcist.com/2013/04/jacks_boathouse_is_gone_its_now_key.php), accessed September 22, 2018. Aaron Wiener, "You Don't Know Jack's," *Washington City Paper* (January 30, 2013). Allison Klein, "Park Service Says Jack's Boathouse Lease Is Outdated and Owner Is Not on It," *Washington Post* (December 27, 2012).

of government buildings. In 1951, the National Park Service contracted with Guest Services to run a range of concessions, including boating facilities, snack bars, tennis courts, and swimming pools. Guest Services had also run Carter Barron Amphitheater and Peirce Mill.<sup>70</sup>

Water recreational offerings on the Potomac have varied over the years. Canoeing, kayaking, and rowing have long attracted recreationists. A more recent offering has been standup paddleboarding (SUP). Standup paddleboarding originated with surfing but has diversified only in the past decade. Visitors to Thompson and Key Bridge boathouses can rent a paddleboard for traveling on the Potomac. There are also yoga and fitness classes performed on paddleboards. Guest Services has offered tours of the District's monuments via paddleboards and kayaks. The Rock Creek Park Long-Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP) has recommended having concession-led boat tours as part of the park's overall educational programming.<sup>71</sup>

Students at many area high schools and colleges have participated in sculling through Thompson Boat Center. Thompson Boat Center is the only public Boathouse in the area and provides the only access point to the Potomac for sculling. The National Park Service has experienced persistent demand from the schools, according to Rock Creek Park concessions manager Steve LeBel, to take Thompson Boat Center out of the concessions business and have the schools operate it. The situation is difficult because this boat center is swamped with users storing their boats there and has no room to grow. It continues to serve the schools and visitors.<sup>72</sup>

For more than fifty years, canoeists and kayakers have floated down Rock Creek through Rock Creek Park. Such transport is possible in the immediate hours after a thundershower or one to three days after extended rainfall. Otherwise, the creek is too shallow. Until 1986, the park required a float permit, but superintendents have since lifted this restriction. The National Park Service identified canoeing and kayaking as permissible activities for all alternatives considered during the general management planning conducted under superintendents Bill Shields and Adrienne Coleman.<sup>73</sup>

## Conclusion

As a matter of necessity, the federal government's lands have served in varying capacities as active recreational outlets for the District. Congressional oversight of the District, partially lifted with establishment of Home Rule, has meant that public lands are largely controlled by the federal government. In recognition of this situation, since 1933, when the National Park Service obtained authority over most federal parklands in the District, NPS has partnered with the District to make recreation a key component of national park management. But some challenges have developed, especially with tennis and the tennis stadium. The stadium has helped the Washington Tennis Foundation finance its work with at-risk youth. But many neighbors have complained, some vociferously, about the negative impact of parking and traffic. The stadium has also taken away recreational space and requires coordination with Carter Barron

---

<sup>70</sup> LeBel, transcript of interview, 18. NCR Admin History, 51. Martin Weil, "New Programs, New Management Plan for DC Public Boathouses on Potomac," *Washington Post* (February 20, 2016).

<sup>71</sup> Boating in DC website, <https://boatingindc.com/>, accessed September 22, 2018. ROCR, Long Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP) (NPS, 2010), 43.

<sup>72</sup> LeBel, transcript of interview, 16. Ann Satterthwaite, transcript of oral history interview with the author, July 21, 2017, 11, ROCR Archives.

<sup>73</sup> ROCR, General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (GMP/EIS), vol. 1, 36–37.

Amphitheater because the two share a parking lot. Rock Creek Golf Course was once a popular place, with more than 90,000 rounds of golf played there in its first year. That number has dropped to 15,000, and financial constraints have threatened this recreational resource. Trails for hikers, bikers, and horseback riders crisscross Rock Creek Park, providing a variety of landscapes and skill levels to meet recreational needs. Water is an important recreation resource in the District's, due to its proximity to the Potomac River. Sitting within a large and complex urban environment, Rock Creek Park's ninety-nine units offer many opportunities to engage with natural, historical, and cultural resources, while also providing a range of recreational prospects.

## CHAPTER 9 Other Kinds of Recreation

The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines *recreation* as a way of enjoying yourself when not working. The previous chapter considered recreation involving active motion, such as tennis and golf. This chapter considers many different forms of recreation as practiced over time in specific parks under Rock Creek Park management. Visitors can view statues and listen to concerts at Meridian Hill Park. In the 1930s, people also played croquet and into the twenty-first century, runners routinely passed through the park. Over the years, Montrose Park has served as an important playground space for Georgetown families. Glover-Archbold Park has a longitudinal hiking trail and a community garden. Small parks, especially those associated with the Civil War Defenses of Washington, have offered a range of pursuits, from contemplative to active. In each of these cases, the National Park Service (NPS) has worked with District residents and elected officials to bring recreational outlets to the city.<sup>1</sup>

### Meridian Hill Park

Meridian Hill Park, an Italian Renaissance–inspired landscape design, sits on twelve acres, one and a half miles directly north of the White House, with distant views of the city.<sup>2</sup> This is a grand park meant to engage visitors with water features and designed spaces. In the past, recreation in the park included croquet and children’s play, but from its beginnings to the present, the park has taken a more encompassing view of recreation. Visitors use their senses and their bodies to enjoy and recreate in the designed landscape. They see the formal gardens and statues, they touch the rough aggregated concrete railings and walls, they hear the fountains splash, and they smell the flowers blooming in the warmer months.

Meridian Hill Park has faced challenges in maintaining this landscape design and thus maintaining its full recreational potential. Its varied features have required constant infusions of money and expertise, which the cash-strapped National Park Service has often found difficult to devote to the park. Deferred maintenance, which contributed to increased crime impinging on the park, meant that Meridian Hill Park lost its attraction as a recreational resource. Visitors worried about their safety. A previous chapter described crime in the park, and this chapter returns to this topic but with an eye toward how crime prevention brought the park back to its recreational roots.

In 1994, the park was designated as a National Historic Landmark (NHL) for its formal designed historic landscape, one of fewer than twenty formal designed landscapes with National Historic Landmark status. The park has a strong longitudinal axis, reinforced by a cascading water feature, and a cross axis that divides the park into an elevated upper park with an open mall, flanking woods, and terrace overlooking the lower park with a fountain, symmetrical stairways, and a reflecting pool. The name of the park comes from an early-1800s proposal to establish an official meridian or longitudinal base point through the center of the White House, marked in 1816, where the park now stands. The park is unofficially known as Malcolm X Park,

---

<sup>1</sup> *Recreation*, defined by *Cambridge Dictionary*, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/recreation>, accessed January 13, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Views to the south are now blocked by two apartment buildings. Architrave, P.C. Architects, Meridian Hill Park, Cultural Landscape Report, vol. 1 (National Park Service [NPS], 2001), 171.

as dubbed by academic, writer, and political activist Angela Davis at the one-year anniversary of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s death.<sup>3</sup>

The 1901 report of the McMillan Commission, charged by Congress to make recommendations for the development of Washington, DC, placed a park above Florida Avenue and straddling 16th Street. Meridian Hill Park would realize the eastern portion of this proposed park. Henderson Castle, the large brownstone home of retired Sen. John Henderson and his wife Mary Foote Henderson, dominated the western portion of the park advised by the McMillan Commission. Mary Henderson proved an effective force for realizing her vision of turning the Meridian Hill neighborhood into the gateway to the Nation's Capital and having a park contribute to this goal. She bought parcels of land, had elaborate residences built, and sold them as embassies to control development in the area. She advocated for relocating the White House to Meridian Hill and having the Lincoln Memorial built there. She had temporary success campaigning to rename 16th Street as the Avenue of the Presidents, but the name converted back when the Commission of Fine Arts rejected her idea of having busts of all the presidents and vice presidents line the street. Henderson then put her energy behind Meridian Hill Park, lobbying Congress for funds at critical times throughout the construction process until her death in 1931.<sup>4</sup>

The NHL nomination singles out the advanced construction technology, along with the park's design, as distinguishing Meridian Hill Park as a nationally significant historic resource. Use of exposed aggregate concrete, developed by Washington craftsman John J. Earley and his studio, for virtually all the structural elements demonstrated the skill and knowledge of landscape designer George Burnap and his successor Horace Peaslee in adapting sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italian design to early twentieth-century sensibilities and technological advancements. The cast-in-place concrete was treated to expose the aggregates composing the mixture. The result referenced the colors and textures of mosaics and tiles made by Renaissance masons. The forms—balustrades, urns, benches, niches, and others—echoed those in past Roman villas but reinterpreted them in twentieth-century building materials.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Meridian Hill Park (MEHI), Cultural Landscape Report (CLR), vol. 1 (NPS, 2001), ix, 3, 141. "Learn More about Meridian Hill/Malcolm X Park," *Washington Post*, March 9, 2018. NPS, Meridian Hill Park, <https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/wash/dc48.htm>, accessed July 15, 2018. Meridian Hill Park, National Historic Landmark (NHL) Nomination, 1993, 5.

<sup>4</sup> MEHI, CLR, vol. 1, 32–34, A 2-5–2-6. Meridian Hill Park, Historic American Building Survey (HABS), HABS-DC-532, 10-13.

<sup>5</sup> MEHI, NHL, 1993, 6, 10–11. MEHI, HABS, 46–48.



*Figure 23. Meridian Hill Park's Aggregate Concrete  
NPS PHOTO, 1936*

Meridian Hill Park emerged between 1910, when Congress legislated the establishment of the park, and 1936, when the park officially opened. The federal government completed land acquisition in 1912, purchasing properties from Henderson and other owners. Park development pushed out a sizable African American community that had flourished in the Meridian Hill area following the Civil War, when the Union Army had an encampment there. Between late 1912 and early 1913, the US Chief of Engineers had the land cleared. One well-known building sat in the way of construction. The California State Association moved to Rock Creek Park the Joaquin Miller cabin, built and once lived in by Miller, a writer, lawyer and judge, journalist, and world traveler known for his poetry about the Sierra Nevada.<sup>6</sup>

George Burnap, a landscape architect for the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, created the initial design for the park. With concurrence from the Commission of Fine Arts,

---

<sup>6</sup> MEHI, CLR, 2001, vol. 1, 7–10, 25, 32. District of Columbia Government, Office of Planning, Ward 1 Heritage Guide, <https://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/publication/attachments/Ward%201%20Heritage%20Guide%20Final.pdf>, 17, accessed November 25, 2019. I also did a peer review through OAH of Meridian Hill Park: A Special History Study, draft 2, 32, discusses the African American community living in what would become Meridian Hill Park.

Burnap envisioned a park meant as a congregation point for vast numbers of visitors, as opposed to a neighborhood recreational park. In 1914, Burnap, Horace Peaslee, and other landscape designers in the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds toured gardens in Italy and other European countries to aid design plans. Construction began in 1915 with the lower retaining wall along 16th Street. Burnap resigned in 1917 as head of the project to return to private practice, and Peaslee became the lead landscape architect for the next 18 years.<sup>7</sup> Peaslee's 1917 revision of the park plan simplified the upper park but otherwise largely retained Burnap's design.<sup>8</sup>

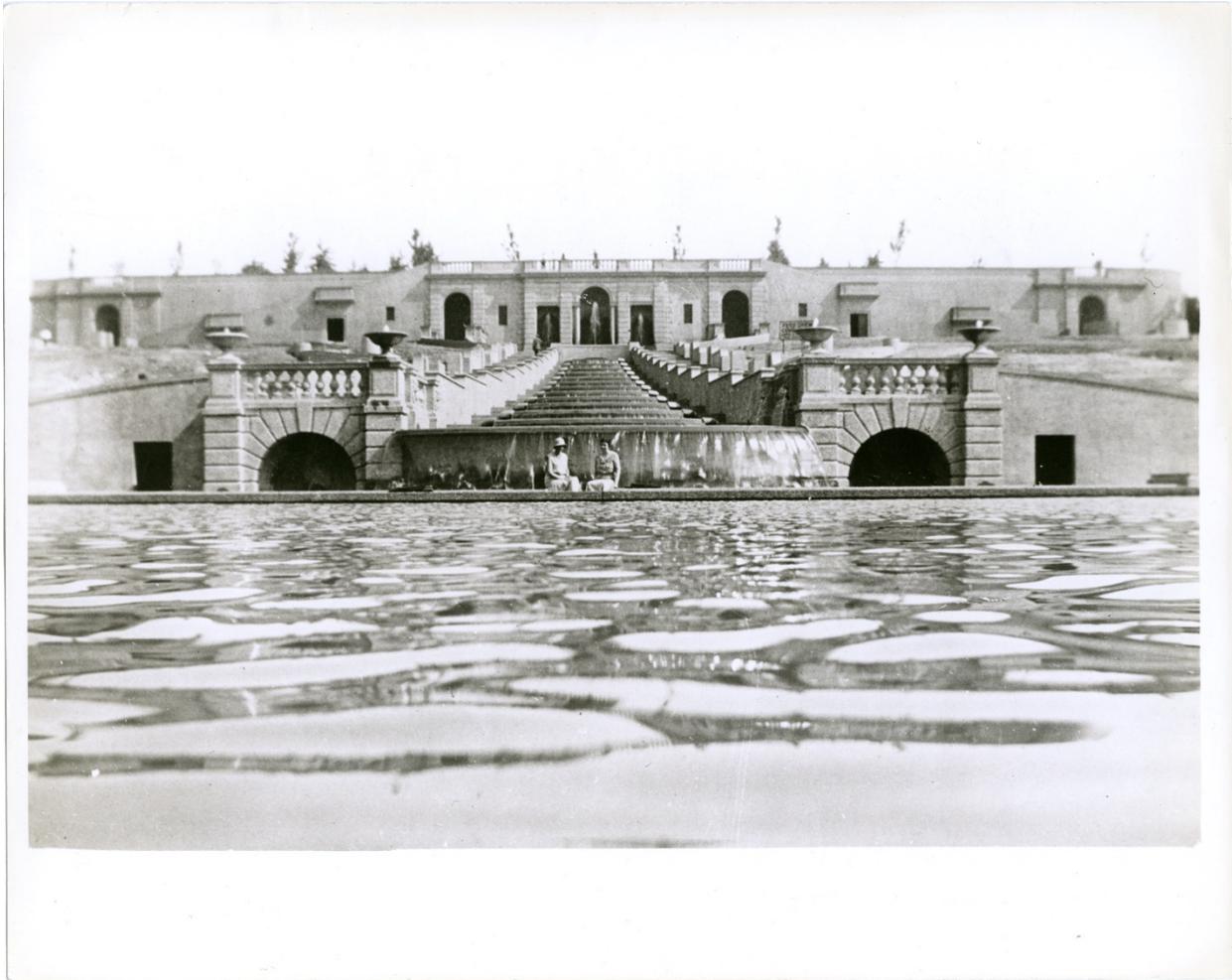
Ferruccio Vitale of the New York City firm of Vitale, Brinckerhoff, and Geiffert began in 1919 as the chief designer of the planting plan for the project. His planting plan softened the architectural spaces while also reinforcing the overall spatial organization. In 1920, the Commission of Fine Arts gave final approval to the park plan. The upper park officially opened in 1923, though work continued on the great terrace for another decade. The National Park Service took over management of the park in 1933 but received no appropriations until 1936 to complete the park and oversee its official opening.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Horace Peaslee listed his titles as follows: Landscape Architectural Designer (1915), Landscape Architect, Architect of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, and later Architect or Consulting Architect in independent practice. See MEHI, CLR, 2001, vol. 1, A2-7.

<sup>8</sup> MEHI, CLR, 2001, vol. 1, 37, 40, 43, 45, 51, 81.

<sup>9</sup> MEHI, CLR, vol. 1, 123, 126, A2-9.



*Figure 24. Meridian Hill Park Fountain*  
NPS PHOTO, 1933

Five sculptures have graced the grounds of Meridian Hill Park—all of which were gifts and none specifically commissioned by the park’s planners. Two are original pieces, the President James Buchanan Memorial and the Armillary Sphere (memorializing Edith Noyes). Joan of Arc, Dante, and Serenity (memorializing Navy Lieutenant Henry Scheutze) are copies or replicas of original works located elsewhere. The Daughters of the American Revolution also placed a plaque at the 16th Street entrance to mark the proposed placement of a meridian stone for the Western Hemisphere. At the request of the Commission of Fine Arts in 1913, Burnap incorporated a Buchanan statue in the park design, making this memorial an integrated part of the park from early on. The other pieces came to the park due to congressional approval for placement on government grounds, not necessarily Meridian Hill Park, but due to various circumstances, they each ended up in the park.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> MEHI, CLR, vol. 1, 41, 79–81, 84, 106–7, 309. MEHI, HABS, 32–34.



*Figure 25. Dante Statue*  
NPS PHOTO, N.D.

Both Burnap and Peaslee opposed using the park as a repository for sculpture. They wanted sculpture designed for places and purposes already within the park. The placement of Joan of Arc brought extended discussion. She stands on the great terrace, but some people, including Peaslee, argued to move this statue, first to the northern end of the park and later to the lower terrace facing the 16th Street entrance. The National Park Service removed the Armillary Sphere between 1977 and 1985 (the exact date is unknown) for repairs after vandalism, but its location is currently unknown, according to Rock Creek Park Cultural Resources Program Manager Simone Monteleone in 2013. The park's sculptures have all been vandalized.<sup>11</sup>

The Commission of Fine Arts, Burnap, Peaslee, and an assortment of other park planners envisioned Meridian Hill Park as a gathering place for passive recreation and shared enjoyment of the arts, particularly music. Between 1941 and 1944, the park hosted Starlight outdoors concerts featuring such groups as the Salzedo Harp Ensemble, the American Society of Ancient Instruments, and the von Trapp Family Singers. In the summer of 1963, the National Park Service revived the Starlight concert series. Pearl Bailey opened the Summer in the Parks concert series in 1968 with 20,000 people in attendance. This concert series was meant to provide community activities in many parks following destructive riots after the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Passive uses in Meridian Hill Park have changed over the years, from croquet to drum circles, for example, but sitting, walking, talking, reading, picnicking, and informal play have been mainstays in the park. Since the 1980s, jogging and running have been more active and popular activities.<sup>12</sup> C. Marshall Finnan, Superintendent of National Capital Parks, reiterated these benefits in 1934 when he wrote that the park served the “double purpose of both beautifying the community and helping to serve its recreational requirements.”<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> MEHI, HABS, 32–34. MEHI, CLR, vol. 1, 309–11. John Kelly, “Where, Oh Where, Is Meridian Hill Park’s Armillary Sphere?,” *Washington Post*, June 14, 2013. The 1981 ROCR Resources Management Plan alternatively notes that the Armillary Sphere was stolen in 1962, removed from its base with a hacksaw. See ROCR, Resources Management Plan, 1981, III-1, File ROCR Cultural Resources–Curatorial–Mgmt Plans–Cultural Resource Mgmt Plan 11/1981, Box 67, MRCE. All MRCE materials come from the ROCR Collection. According to Monteleone, NPS has an aluminum mockup of the Armillary Sphere in a storage facility, created from design drawings after the loss of the original.

<sup>12</sup> MEHI, CLR, vol. 1, 40–41, 136, 138, 141, 156. Meridian Hill Park, n.d., from the Archives of the National Park Service, c. 1936, File MEHI–General-Press Releases and Publications–1962–1980s, Box 5, MRCE.

<sup>13</sup> NCR Superintendent C. Marshall Finnan to Theodore Pimper, May 29, 1934, 2, File MEHI–General History–Historical Documentation 1804–2/1999, Box 4, MRCE.



*Figure 26. A Starlight Concert at Meridian Hill Park  
NPS Photo, 1941*



Figure 27. *Playing Croquet at Meridian Hill Park*  
NPS PHOTO, 1933

Inadequate maintenance has negatively affected safe enjoyment of the park.<sup>14</sup> Despite the World War II-era Starlight concerts, which suggest flush funding, the National Park Service operated throughout the 1940s and early 1950s with an increasingly tight budget. Meridian Hill Park suffered as a result. Peaslee had tried early and often to direct attention to maintaining this more-than-million-dollar investment (in 1936 dollars), stating that if the park had been a building as opposed to a garden, the funds would have been allocated. But, by 1954, he instead saw his recommendations, whether for the replacement of dead plant material or the repair of spalling and settling of concrete structures, languish.<sup>15</sup> David Finley, Chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts in 1954, urged NPS Director Conrad Wirth to “take personal interest” because the park needed “constant and carefully planned maintenance and protection.”<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Vandalism, drug trafficking, and violence, as described in Chapter 4, have also negatively affected the park.

<sup>15</sup> Janet A. McDonnell, “World War II: Defending Park Values and Resources,” *The Public Historian* 29 (Fall 2007): 18–19. Bernard DeVoto, “Let’s Close the National Parks,” *Harper’s Magazine* (October 1953): 49–52. MEHI, CLR, vol. 1, Exhibit H (1939 Memorandum of Agreements). MEHI, HABS, 51–52. Memorandum, Horace Peaslee to NPS Director Conrad Wirth through the Commission of Fine Arts, April 9, 1954, and Memorandum, Commission of Fine Arts Chairman David Finley to Wirth, May 12, 1954, both in File MEHI–Cult Res–PTM: Misc Projects 12/1939–6/1999, Box 2, MRCE.

<sup>16</sup> Finley to Wirth, May 12, 1954, 2.

The National Park Service has tried to play catch-up. A 1966 report on the park's electrical and plumbing systems detailed their serious disrepair. But the report also warned how deliberate human actions had damaged, for example, the lighting fixtures on walkways or fouled the watercourses. Nature had taken its toll on the park, but vandalism had hastened the process, according to the report. The 1966 report outlined \$3 million worth of recommended repairs; the park's 2001 cultural landscape report states that many of these steps "appear[ed] to have been implemented," but the 2001 report authors could not say when they were done.<sup>17</sup>

More definitive action came in the 1970s, with enthusiasm for the nation's bicentennial driving some of the repair work. The park was listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 1974, and this designation brought attention that led to some repair work of walkways and restrooms, plus re-sodding of the upper mall. In 1975, National Capital Parks East Superintendent Ira Hutchison submitted a status report that laid out the park's dire situation, caused by overuse and insufficient funds to complete anything but ad hoc groundskeeping. Hutchison, who had only recently been put in charge of Meridian Hill Park, reported that numerous residents had called his office requesting action on the park to repair its features, make the park safe, and hold bicentennial events at the park. Hutchison got some of the needed funds, and in May 1976, the National Park Service held a special "reopening ceremony" to mark the changes. The agency had spent more than \$60,000 installing lighting, maintaining operation of the cascades and fountain features, initiating regular patrols by Park Police, and establishing a full-time grounds maintenance crew. Community groups and volunteers participated in this process.<sup>18</sup>

By the time Rock Creek Park assumed administrative control of Meridian Hill Park in October 1980, the on again-off again maintenance funding predicament had exacerbated the crime situation and left Superintendent James Redmond with few options. The park's value as a passive recreational resource was compromised both by deteriorating resources and by the rising crime situation. Crime statistics showed that the drug problem had escalated. Responding to resident concerns, US Park Police closed the park during nighttime hours, starting in January 1982.<sup>19</sup>

Problems persisted. Rock Creek Park had contracted for repair of the exposed aggregate walls and walks. The backlogged maintenance, such as replacing broken lighting or clearing vegetation, had left the park vulnerable to crime and vandalism. But once the park started repairs, unlawful encounters hampered this work.<sup>20</sup>

Meridian Hill Park's fate changed on January 15, 1990 (a school holiday for Martin Luther King Jr. Day) with the drive-by shooting of seventeen-year-old Ricky Magnus just outside the park's walls. Steve Coleman lived in the house in front of where Ricky fell.

---

<sup>17</sup> MEHI, CLR, vol. 1, 138–40. Quote on p. 140.

<sup>18</sup> MEHI, CLR, vol. 1, 141–43. Memorandum, National Capital Parks (NCP) East Superintendent Ira Hutchison to Director, National Capital Parks, May 9, 1975, and attached Meridian Hill Park status report, File MEHI-General History-Historical Documentation 1804-2/1999, Box 4, MRCE. The HABS report states that "park restoration became a personal commitment for Mr. Hutchison." See MEHI, HABS, 29.

<sup>19</sup> Redmond to Clark, September 25, 1981. David Clarke to Redmond, October 23, 1981; Memorandum, Acting Commander, West District Marvin Ellison to District Three Personnel, January 6, 1982, both in File Supt's File 1981-1984, Box 83, MRCE.

<sup>20</sup> Memorandum, Project Supervisor, Branch of Construction Raymond Orndorff to Assistant Manager, National Capital Team, Denver Service Center (DSC), October 15, 1982; Memorandum, Acting Chief US Park Police Larry Finks to Regional Director, NCR, November 12, 1982, both in File Supt's File 1981-1984, Box 83, MRCE. ROCR, Annual Report, 1982, 35, File Admin-Annual Reports 1982, Box 71, MRCE.

Coleman's housemate, an emergency room physician, ran out to try to save the boy, and Ricky died in her arms. Coleman, who was the head of his neighborhood association, called a meeting the very next day.<sup>21</sup>

This action initiated a turnaround for the park, with concerned residents working with NPS to eradicate crime and return Meridian Hill Park to its recreational roots. These residents adopted a multicultural, and what would later be called anti-racist, approach. Their success, and the many challenges along the way, is instructive and thus merits some extended discussion.

The neighborhood association decided to institute a crime patrol, using a different approach. Each patrol group had to be multi-racial. No one carried a weapon or anything that looked even slightly like a weapon. If patrol members encountered someone on their patrol, they said, "Hello." Coleman later said that the patrol would be "no weapons, not a vigilante approach, but one that was pro-community."<sup>22</sup>

Steve Coleman lived his life as an organizer and activist, and he used those skills to help his community. Coleman's natural predilection was to build alliances and find solutions through open communication and respect for people, what would later be tools for anti-racism. He put these skills into practice at Meridian Hill Park. Nine days after Ricky's death, Coleman went out with the first patrol. His group did not find any drug dealers or muggers, but they did meet two "shadowy figures" who extended their hands in friendship. Rev. Morris Samuel, an ordained Baptist minister, had visited the park every fair-weather day for thirty-six years and was considered the park's "mayor." Howard Coleman, no relation to Steve, had been an addict, a drug dealer, homeless, and locked up. But when he talked about Meridian Hill Park, according to Steve Coleman, tears came to his eyes, saying that "this used to be the most beautiful place in the world."<sup>23</sup>

The Friends of Meridian Hill Inc. (FOMH), co-founded by Steve Coleman, set its sights on making the park once again a beautiful and welcoming place for everyone, safe for recreation and enjoyment. For Earth Day 1990, the group attracted 100 volunteers in the rain to clean up the park (filling 250 bags of trash), lay mulch, and plant dogwoods and flowers. The National Park Service and Friends of Meridian Hill signed a memorandum of understanding in November of that year, formalizing their mutual commitment to preserving, repairing, maintaining, and interpreting the park.<sup>24</sup> Rolland Swain, superintendent of Rock Creek Park at the time, later remembered, "I enjoyed working with him [Steve Coleman], and I was really impressed with what he was doing." According to Swain, Coleman "was contacting the various apartments and basically kind of setting up associations of folks to kind of reoccupy the park."<sup>25</sup> Coleman recalled that Swain worked very closely with the Friends. "He was a very humble, down to earth, accessible guy," Coleman recalled, "who really wanted to encourage us."<sup>26</sup>

Swain needed someone like Coleman to jumpstart action on the park. He stated in a *Washington Post* article that he had never heard from neighbors about problems at Meridian Hill Park, unlike with Glover-Archbold, Fort Reno, or other parks under his jurisdiction. People

---

<sup>21</sup> Steve Coleman, transcript of oral history interview with the author, April 24, 2017, 1–3, ROCR Archives.

<sup>22</sup> Coleman, transcript of interview, 1–3. Quote on p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> Coleman, transcript of interview, 1, 4–5. Quotes on pp. 4, 5.

<sup>24</sup> Rolland Swain to Elizabeth Gardeal, May 9, 1990, 1, File Friends of Meridian Hill Inc. 1989–1992, Box 81, MRCE. Linda Wheeler, "Friends Help Meridian Hill Park," *Washington Post*, June 4, 1990. Memorandum of Understanding between NPS and Friends of Meridian Hill (FOMH), November 9, 1990, File Friends of Meridian Hill Inc. 1989–1992, Box 81, MRCE.

<sup>25</sup> Rolland Swain, transcript of oral history interview with the author, August 22, 2017, 6–7, ROCR Archives.

<sup>26</sup> Coleman, transcript of interview, 15.

didn't seem invested. Swain tried to get additional funding for addressing the antiquated plumbing of the water features, but he was turned down each time. His staffing at the park went from a supervisor and two workers to just one employee completing basic maintenance, not correcting problems. With the increased visibility from Friends of Meridian Hill, Swain could do more.<sup>27</sup> He "re-jiggered" his staffing and assigned more maintenance people to the park. He also arranged more rangers to conduct interpretive programs during the summer. US Park Police heightened their presence by assigning two officers per day to the park. Swain wasn't sure how long he could "keep this up, but we will do our best to create a clean environment."<sup>28</sup>

The National Capital Regional (NCR) Office, and especially NCR Regional Director Bob Stanton, supported Rock Creek Park's and Friends of Meridian Hill's partnership. In 1993, Stanton stated that the Friends changed the perception that the neighborhood did not care about the park, indicating that the "park is a priority now" for the National Park Service. Stanton attended the concerts and other events held at the park.<sup>29</sup> He had high praise for the Friends of Meridian Hill, writing in one memorandum to Rock Creek Park Superintendent Bill Shields (who replaced Swain in 1992) that "I think we would all agree" that Friends of Meridian Hill under the leadership of Steve Coleman is "exemplary" and demonstrates what can be accomplished between the community, DC government, and the National Park Service.<sup>30</sup>

Coleman recognized how the Friends could help both the park and the surrounding community. He stated later that the National Park Service had "shuffled [Meridian Hill Park] around administratively" until Rock Creek Park finally had management of it. According to Coleman, With each shuffling, "it seemed to lose" funding, connection, and priority, even though the park had once put on amazing concerts with illuminated cascading water features. It was Carter Barron or Wolf Trap before either of these concert venues existed, he argued.<sup>31</sup>

Friends of Meridian Hill brought music back to the park, raising the park's visibility, connecting the park to the neighborhood again, and reinstating a fundamental recreational pursuit. Bo Diddley's nephew Ricky Jolivet, who used the stage name Bo Diddley Jr., performed the afternoon of the first park cleanup. He went on to perform a July 4th concert that same year. Coleman later said: "We weren't just cleaning up the park. We weren't just addressing what was bad. We were beginning to bring back what was good. And there was a power in that. There was a magic in that."<sup>32</sup> By the end of 1995, Friends of Meridian Hill, in partnership with the National Park Service, had presented more than 150 free performances in the park. Many of these shows reached out to children, with youth musicians in the DC (District of Columbia) Youth Orchestra, the Levine School of Music, or the World Music Youth ensemble. Friends of Meridian Hill also brought in African American reenactors from the 54th Massachusetts Regiment, featured in the

---

<sup>27</sup> Linda Wheeler, "Washington's Jewel of a Park Losing its Luster to Vandalism," *Washington Post*, February 24, 1990. Swain to Gardeal, May 9, 1990.

<sup>28</sup> Partial article in Unprocessed Superintendent's Files, with no title, author, or date.

<sup>29</sup> Stanton, quoted by Linda Wheeler, "Meridian Hill Wrestled Away from DC Drug Dealers," *Washington Post*, March 15, 1993.

<sup>30</sup> Memorandum, Regional Director, National Capital Region Bob Stanton to Superintendent, ROCR Bill Shields, August 9, 1993, File Correspondence 1991-1996, Box 79, MRCE. See also Robert Stanton, transcript of oral history interview with the author, July 25, 2017, 10, ROCR Archives.

<sup>31</sup> Coleman, transcript of interview, 11.

<sup>32</sup> Coleman, transcript of interview, 14.

movie *Glory*, to promote a positive image of African Americans fighting for freedom with the blessing of the Union. At the Dante statue, Friends even offered poetry in motion.<sup>33</sup>

Friends of Meridian Hill, with National Park Service support, succeeded on many fronts to bring Meridian Hill Park back to some of its past glory. Hundreds of people have come out and donated thousands of hours to beautify the park, whether planting more than a hundred trees and keeping them watered, removing graffiti, tackling non-native invasive plants, or regularly picking up trash and cleaning up waste. The Friends also raised money to further the park's restoration. Rock Creek Park Landscape Architect Mike McMahon started working with volunteers to prune shrubs and remove dead trees and plants. Spaces that had once harbored illegal activity opened, making them less attractive for nefarious deeds. The new vegetation, always added with an eye toward the original landscape plan, enhanced the tree canopy and invited neighbors and other visitors to reclaim the park.<sup>34</sup>

A combination of activities—including community policing, increased US Park Police presence, clearing out trash and dead plants, and concerts and other programs—turned Meridian Hill Park around in four short years, from one of the most dangerous parks in the District to one of the safest. Crime went down a remarkable 90 percent. US Park Police officer Lt. Henry Berberich helped make this reduction possible. Berberich gave up promotions to stay at the patrol level at the park. He helped solve the last murder in the park, a 1992 hate crime against a gay man. President Bill Clinton singled out Berberich, Coleman, and others when he presented his Earth Day remarks at Meridian Hill Park on April 21, 1994. Clinton recognized not only the many positive changes at the park but also its recent designation as a National Historic Landmark.<sup>35</sup>

Early in its efforts to reclaim the park as a safe community space, Friends of Meridian Hill had declared its interest in adopting Horace Peaslee's 1939 recommendations for further designing the park.<sup>36</sup> The Commission of Fine Arts had approved some of these recommendations at the time, and the Friends believed that they represented the complete park plan.<sup>37</sup> In 1994, the Committee of 100 on the Federal City expressed its support for the Friends' request.<sup>38</sup> Friends of Meridian Hill argued that completion of the 1939 recommendations would make the park "more safe, attractive, and inviting of positive uses" for recreation. The park

---

<sup>33</sup> Coleman, transcript of interview, 20–22. The Friends of Meridian Hill Partnership: 1990–1995, Meridian Hill probs 1999, Unprocessed Administrative Files, ROCR.

<sup>34</sup> Stephen Coleman to ROCR Superintendent William Shields, January 22, 1992, 1, File Friends of Meridian Hill Inc. 1989–1992, Box 81, MRCE. Coleman, transcript of interview, 18. The Friends of Meridian Hill Partnership: 1990–1995. Rita Gunther, transcript of oral history interview with the author, December 13, 2016, 24, ROCR Archives. Mike McMahon, transcript of oral history interview with the author, December 13, 2016, 3–5, ROCR Archives. MEHI, Annual Report, 1995, 2, File GENERAL–History–Admin–Personnel–Structure and Functions 1987–97, Box 72, MRCE.

<sup>35</sup> ROCR, Briefing Statement—Meridian Hill Park, January 18, 2000, 2, Unprocessed Superintendent's Files, ROCR. White House Press Release, Remarks by President Bill Clinton at Earth Day Celebration, Meridian Hill Park, April 21, 1994, 2, File MEHI–History–Events: President Clinton visit–4/24/1994, Box 4, MRCE. Coleman, transcript of interview, 16–17.

<sup>36</sup> Horace Peaslee's recommendations are included in Appendix 4 of MEHI, CLR. His recommendations examined the placement and treatment of sculpture, plantings, and maintenance issues.

<sup>37</sup> MEHI, CLR, 133.

<sup>38</sup> Committee of 100 Chairman Dorn McGrath, Jr. to Robert Stanton, June 20, 1994, File MEHI–Cult Res–PTM: Misc Projects 12/1939–6/1999, Box 2, MRCE.

would “remain a living model” of urban park renewal and rehabilitation for future generations.<sup>39</sup>

The National Park Service decided against adopting the 1939 recommendations. Federal Standards and Guidelines stated that the historic character of a property should be retained and preserved, without replacement of intact or repairable historic materials or spaces. NPS Director’s Order 28, Cultural Resource Management, stated that designs never executed historically should not be constructed. The park’s 1994 National Historic Landmark designation identified 1910–36 as the period of significance. These three documents established that Peaslee’s recommendations for changes to the completed park should not be adopted.<sup>40</sup> Stanton wrote in 1994 that he supported the collaborative effort among the National Park Service, Friends of Meridian Hill, administration and congressional leadership, and the Committee of 100 in realizing “the spirit” of the 1939 Horace Peaslee plan. However, Stanton stated that his first priority was the preservation and rehabilitation of the historic as-built components of the park. He prioritized a line-item construction fund request for the rehabilitation of failing park infrastructure.<sup>41</sup>

The National Park Service has spent millions of dollars since the 1990s to restore Meridian Hill Park and return its recreational opportunities. Some funding also came from a DC Fee Initiative fund in 2000–2001. Park rehabilitation has proceeded in five phases. Phase 1, started in 2003 and costing \$2.5 million, focused upon the repair of the aggregate concrete in the walls, walks, decorative architectural elements, and curbs. Phase 2, costing \$2.7 million, continued the concrete repairs, installation of storm drains, and sodding and rehabilitating the landscape at the upper mall. Phase 3 involved more landscape work, more concrete repairs, improvements to irrigation, installation of two accessible drinking fountains, replacement of lighting, and installation of waysides and directional signage. This part of Phase 3 cost \$3.5 million. An additional aspect of Phase 3 included restoration of the 16th Street wall with removal of the Linden tree allée, and installation of steel rods, drainage piers, vertical capacity piers, and lateral capacity helical piers. This part of Phase 3 cost \$1.2 million. As of 2014, the park had deferred Phase 4 and scheduled Phase 5 for construction in fiscal year 2016. Phase 5 focused on life safety repairs and accessibility.<sup>42</sup>

Rock Creek Park also oversaw the restoration of some of the park’s statues. Rock Creek Park Cultural Resources Manager Simone Monteleone noted that by the 1980s, with crime and vandalism so high in Meridian Hill Park, the National Park Service had decided to stop replacing Joan of Arc’s sword. This statue, in Monteleone’s estimation, was in “horrible condition.” She was missing her sword, some of her spurs, and parts of the horse’s bridle. With Joan of Arc’s prominent location at the top of the water feature, her poor condition lessened the impact of the other park improvements. Monteleone stated that “the park was looking really good,” but the Joan of Arc statue was “just not looking good.” Rock Creek Park gave her a good cleaning and waxing, replicated her missing parts, and ensured that she sat squarely on her pedestal.

---

<sup>39</sup> Finishing Meridian Hill Park: The Historic NPS Plan, attached to FOMH Co-Chair and Treasurer Malcolm Peabody to NCR Regional Director Robert Stanton, July 21, 1994, File MEHI–General–Park Assocns: FOMH–General Communications 1982–1996, Box 5, MRCE.

<sup>40</sup> MEHI, CLR, 148. MEHI, NHL, Statement of Significance.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Stanton to Committee of 100 Chairman Dorn McGrath, August 4, 1994, 1, File MEHI–Cult Res–PTM: Misc Projects 12/1939–6/1999, Box 2, MRCE.

<sup>42</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 2003, 3, DSC Technical Information Center (TIC). Mills + Schnoering Architects, Preservation of Meridian Hill Park Phase V Pre-design Narrative, 2014, 1–3, TIC. NPS, Briefing Statement—MEHI, January 18, 2000, 1, Unprocessed Superintendent’s Files, ROCR.

Monteleone recalled that the press gave favorable reviews at the unveiling of the refurbished statue, and the neighbors were excited to have the statue back.<sup>43</sup>

Some of the park repairs have accommodated active recreational pursuits. Sodding the upper mall has supported impromptu soccer games. Phase 3 restoration work included replacement of brick pavement at the play area and installation of new chess tables. The 1936 park plan had had multiple small sand play areas, though by the turn of the twenty-first century, all but one of these had disappeared.<sup>44</sup>

Meridian Hill Park's grand design features may not seem like recreational resources. The fountain, statues, and carefully laid out formal gardens and open spaces may seem too reserved and stiff for recreation. From its beginnings, though, the park has made recreation a centerpiece, to engage visitors with their senses and provide a respite. When crime encroached this space, exacerbated by continued deferred maintenance, that recreational value was threatened. Friends of Meridian Hill, using a multicultural and anti-racist approach, joined with NPS to return the park to its former glory and thus make recreation a safe and attractive pursuit again.

### **Montrose Park**

Between 1904 and 1911, Sarah Louisa Rittenhouse advocated for the federal purchase of the Montrose estate in Georgetown, to turn it into a public park. Rittenhouse had grown up and spent much of her adulthood living near the estate. She recognized that its grove of trees and well-kept lawn offered valuable open space for Georgetown's then thirty-thousand inhabitants who did not have any parks. Congress passed the necessary legislation and purchased the sixteen acres, formally establishing Montrose Park in 1911. The park is bounded by R Street NW to the south, Dumbarton Oaks to the west, Oak Hill Cemetery to the east, and Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway to the north.<sup>45</sup>

Montrose Park encompasses land once owned by Richard Parrott, a major industrialist in Georgetown in the early nineteenth century. Parrott built a Ropewalk on the property for the manufacture of rope. The Ropewalk today measures about five hundred feet (it may have extended longer in the historical period) and served for combing hemp and spinning it into yarn, then twisting several strands of yarn to form rope. Rope makers walked backward to spin the rope. Rope from Parrott's Ropewalk supplied the frigate *President*, and the boat was used to survey the Potomac River. The British burned the Ropewalk in 1814 during the War of 1812, and Parrott did not rebuild it.<sup>46</sup>

Parrott introduced other improvements on his property. He built a federal-style mansion, along with a Summerhouse and stable/carriage house. People called the northern section of his land, along with an adjacent area that later became Oak Hill Cemetery, Parrott's Grove or Parrott's Woods. Visitors used this wooded area for picnicking, political rallies, and fairgrounds, establishing a public use early in its history.<sup>47</sup>

The estate changed hands twice before federal purchase. Parrott died in 1822, and Clement Smith bought the property. Smith sold the estate to Mrs. Mary McEwen Boyce in 1837,

---

<sup>43</sup> Simone Monteleone, transcript of oral history interview, December 22, 2016, 13–15, ROCR Archives. Quotes on p. 14.

<sup>44</sup> Mill + Schnoering Architects, Preservation of MEHI, 2. Email, Sara Morello to NPS Director, January 12, 2000, Unprocessed Superintendent's Files, ROCR. MEHI, CLR, vol. 1, 272–74.

<sup>45</sup> Architrave P.C., Architects; Rhodeside & Harwell, Inc.; and Robinson & Associates, Inc. Montrose Park Cultural Landscape Report, (2004), 1–2, 27–28.

<sup>46</sup> Montrose Park CLR, 12–13.

<sup>47</sup> Montrose Park CLR, 14–17.

and her husband William Boyce became the owner ten years later. William Boyce was Chief of the US Coast and Geodetic Survey. He named the estate Montrose, in recognition of his relation to the Scottish earls of Montrose. Mrs. Boyce planted rose gardens along R Street and opened them to her neighbors, another indicator of how this land had had a public component. The Boyces used the former Ropewalk as the drive into the estate. Following the deaths of Mary and William Boyce, their heirs rented the property, and by the mid- to late 1890s, the house had fallen into disrepair. The threat of redevelopment of the property prompted Rittenhouse to pursue federal ownership.<sup>48</sup>

George Burnap and Howard Peaslee, who also designed Meridian Hill Park, planned Montrose Park. They worked for the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds under the US Army Corps of Engineers. In 1914, Burnap completed a plan, which remains the most influential one today. He used the theme of a country estate for designing the park, re-introducing rose gardens, repairing a boxwood hedge, and planting Osage orange plants. Referring to late-nineteenth-century photos of court games on the Central Lawn, Burnap added croquet and tennis courts. In consultation with the newly established Commission of Fine Arts, the federal government demolished the mansion and most of the outbuildings. The Summerhouse remained. Burnap kept the Ropewalk, turning it into a concrete walkway and edged by an Osage orange hedge. He introduced a Perennial Garden and added to the tree canopy with evergreens and dogwoods. Peaslee designed the entrance to the park, with a fountain and paths to the new Lodge, which housed restrooms and service functions. He also recommended moving the Summerhouse to the tennis court.<sup>49</sup>

During the 1920s and 1930s, the park served many different recreational functions. It hosted large events, such as folk festivals, pageants, and dancing. The Office of Public Buildings and Grounds (renamed the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks in 1925) expanded the single tennis court into two. The agency also added a children's playground, sandbox, volleyball court, and backstop for a baseball diamond. There was a fieldhouse to house recreational activities.<sup>50</sup>

The National Park Service took over management of Montrose Park under a 1933 reorganization of the federal government under President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The agency wanted to shift the park's emphasis from active to passive recreation. National Capital Parks Superintendent C. Marshall Finnan argued that Montrose Park's rough terrain made it largely unsuitable for active recreation. Montrose Park had a northern forested area that then sloped down to a plateau where the lawn extended. Finnan agreed that Montrose Park could serve the neighborhood as a needed open space, but he also thought that other spaces, such as schoolyards, were better suited for housing tennis courts and playgrounds. Erosion and soil compacting at Montrose Park from the playground further informed his planning approach. Finnan's approach to Montrose Park was not unique; National Park Service representatives since the early twentieth century had tried to direct children's play facilities away from national park units to other public spaces.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> Montrose Park CLR, 17–20, 26.

<sup>49</sup> Montrose Park CLR, 28–29, 31–32, 36, 45–46, 49–50.

<sup>50</sup> Montrose Park CLR, 54–55.

<sup>51</sup> Montrose Park, CLR, 58, 62, 64. Newsclippings, "Montrose Park Plans Reviewed" (1935), and "Montrose Park Future Debated" (1936), File MONT-General-Articles 1904–1997, Box 38, MRCE. National Capital Parks Superintendent Marshall Finnan to Chairman, Conservation Committee, Georgetown Garden Club, Frances A. Sortwell, February 17, 1934, File MONT-General-Supt's Files 1984–1986 (2 of 2), Box 38, MRCE. Malcolm Kirkpatrick, from the NPS Branch of Planning and Design, reiterated Finnan's approach to Montrose Park in his

Montrose Park continued to serve the active recreational needs of Georgetown, despite the National Park Service's vision for the space. Public opinion, as expressed in the mid-1930s by the Georgetown Citizens' Association and many Georgetown residents, favored the play equipment and courts. In recognition of this attitude, in the mid-1940s, the National Park Service doubled the size of the basketball court. These courts remained until the late 1980s. The agency installed new playground equipment in the early 1960s. In 1979, the agency replaced the clay tennis courts with hard surfaces and enlarged the backcourts.<sup>52</sup>



Figure 28. Montrose Park  
NPS PHOTO, 1944

Some improvements referred to the park's historical associations. The Georgetown Garden Club, under the authority of an Act of Congress, donated an armillary sphere and limestone pedestal in memory of Sarah Louisa ("Loulie") Rittenhouse. By 1944, the National

---

1936 planning document. See Memorandum, Malcolm Kirkpatrick to Finnan, January 14, 1936, and attached Considerations Governing the Development of a Plan for Montrose Park, 6, File MONT-General-Supt's Files 1984-1986 (2 of 2), Box 38, MRCE.

<sup>52</sup> Montrose Park CLR, 63, 66, 70. Memorandum, Regional Director, National Capital Region Terry Carlstrom to Director, Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance, January 16, 2002, and attached Nomination Form, 2002 White House Closing the Circle Awards for Montrose Park Playground, File Montrose Park, Admin Files, ROCR.

Park Service had replaced the park's entrance fountain (designed by Peaslee) with a rose garden, and the armillary sphere, dedicated in 1956, sits within this garden. Montrose Park also had some of the only remaining gas lights in the District. In 1912, the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds had installed seventeen Newport, Rhode Island-style gas lights in the park. The city removed all gas lights in 1939, but Montrose Park retained its lights. The park's gas lights fell into disrepair by the 1970s. Funding from the Cafritz Foundation in 1992 allowed the National Park Service to restore the gas lights and relocate five of them. The agency relocated several gas lights to the Ropewalk and restored them.<sup>53</sup>

By the early 1980s, the Georgetown Citizen Association had contacted Rock Creek Park Superintendent James Redmond about Montrose Park's poor condition. In 1981, the association complained about large trucks driving on the lawn and walks, causing damage, and the lack of maintenance. Trees needed pruning, the soft tennis court was out of use, and the restrooms needed regular attention.<sup>54</sup> National Capital Region Landscape Architect Darwina Neal reviewed the park's status in 1983 and made several recommendations. She wrote that the National Park Service had not done work on Montrose Park for a long time so that its structures and features "have seriously deteriorated" and required large infusions of money to rehabilitate.<sup>55</sup> Complaints continued, noting the decline of this, "one of the jewels of the neighborhood," into "one of the most neglected areas in town" by 1984.<sup>56</sup> *The Georgetown* newspaper printed an opinion piece about the National Park Service's "haphazard" maintenance and the general "state of disrepair" of Montrose Park. The paper said that Montrose Park was just a collection of "broken paths, broken watermains, broken lights, deeply rutted lawns, trees damaged by trucks and incompetent pruning." In response, some citizens held a special meeting in April 1984 to "bring back Montrose!"<sup>57</sup>

Georgia Ellard had assumed the superintendency following Redmond's death, and she requested funds from the National Capital Region to address these deficiencies. Neal had singled out the poor state of the Ropewalk, which required full replacement, and Ellard put that item at the top of her request.<sup>58</sup> National Capital Region provided the necessary funds, and a year later, Georgetown resident Mrs. M. de Montaudouin praised Ellard for "listen[ing] with great patience to our complaints" and making "great strides" in the park's rehabilitation. De Montaudouin declared that Ellard's name had become "so well-known" and "synonymous to first-rate park management, with all it entails in expertise and wise selection of labor force."<sup>59</sup> *The Georgetown* newspaper reiterated these sentiments, publishing in summer 1985 that Ellard had

---

<sup>53</sup> Montrose Park CLR, 29, 66-67.

<sup>54</sup> Memorandum, ROCR Superintendent James Redmond to Chief of Maintenance, ROCR, April 16, 1981, 1, File MONT-Cult Res-PTM: General-Complaints and Compliments 1981-1996, Box 37, MRCE.

<sup>55</sup> Memorandum, Landscape Architect, Design Services Darwina Neal to Acting Superintendent Rock Creek Park, April 29, 1983, File MONT-Cult Res-PTM: Rope Walk Repair 1982-1986, Box 37, MRCE.

<sup>56</sup> Mrs. M. de Montaudouin to NCR Regional Director Manus Fish, April 4, 1984, 1, File MONT-Cult Res-PTM: General-Complaints and Compliments 1981-1996, Box 37, MRCE.

<sup>57</sup> Opinion: Montrose Park in State of Disarray, *The Georgetown*, March 30-April 12, 1984, File MONT-General-Supt's Files 1984-1986 (2 of 2), Box 38, MRCE.

<sup>58</sup> Memorandum, ROCR Superintendent Georgia Ellard to Regional Director, National Capital Region, April 9, 1984, File MONT-General-Supt's Files 1984-1986 (2 of 2), Box 38, MRCE. Neal to Acting Superintendent ROCR, April 29, 1983.

<sup>59</sup> Mrs. M. de Montaudouin to Georgia Ellard, July 12, 1985, File MONT-Cult Res-PTM: General-Complaints and Compliments 1981-1996, Box 37, MRCE.

taken a “personal interest” in the park and deserved “high praise” for her efforts.<sup>60</sup> In 1986, the National Park Service dedicated the restored Ropewalk, and in 1987, the agency installed a wayside.<sup>61</sup>

Montrose Park still needed attention, and in 1992 a group of residents formed the Friends of Montrose and Dumbarton Oaks Parks. This organization, which signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the National Park Service in 1994, set its sights on improving the safety and aesthetics of both parks. An early project involved restoring the rose garden around the armillary sphere. Other early work involved cleaning out the boxwood hedge, removing overgrowth from paths, and installing new benches.<sup>62</sup>

The Friends devoted much of its attention to replacing the playground equipment at Montrose Park. Demographics in Georgetown changed in the 1990s, with more young families moving into the neighborhood. These families wanted safe nearby playgrounds. The Montrose Park playground equipment dated to the early 1960s and was covered in lead paint. In 1995, the National Park Service alerted the Friends of the intended removal of the play equipment due to safety concerns. The Friends established a Playground Committee, which worked with the agency on a design for the new playground. Many factors shaped the conversation about playground design, including preserving the historical integrity of Montrose Park, protecting old trees, reducing archeological intrusions, and limiting access to the playground to keep children in and dogs out.<sup>63</sup>

Superintendent Bill Shields unsuccessfully led the initial effort to replace the playground equipment. His staff members Chief of Maintenance Cindy Cox and Landscape Architect Mike McMahan joined Landscape Architect Darwina Neal from the regional office to design the playground. They consulted with the Friends. Landscape Architect Brian Stephenson of Stephenson & Good stepped in pro bono when McMahan was called upon for a White House project. The Friends playground committee agreed with the National Park Service on a design and started fundraising. The agency had promised \$100,000 in site preparation, installation, and maintenance. The Friends would have to raise money for the equipment. Some members of the Friends Board of Directors questioned the location and size of the proposed playground and sought outside support to oppose the design. Many people also accused the National Park Service of catering to private daycares and the elementary school in the area. A nearby condominium association objected to the design, arguing that it would negatively affect the view and character of the park. Shields decided to hold public meetings to address concerns. He also

---

<sup>60</sup> “Up at Montrose Park,” *The Georgetown*, June 21–July 4, 1985, File MONT–General–Articles 1904–1997, Box 38, MRCE.

<sup>61</sup> Montrose Park CLR, 70.

<sup>62</sup> Montrose Park CLR, 70–71. The Friends group first focused on Montrose Park, but within a year, the organization had started including Dumbarton Oaks Park in its activities. See Friends of Montrose Park Secretary Jonathan Wall to Friend of Montrose Park, April 26, 1993, File MONT–General–Park Assns: Friends of Montrose Park: General Info and Correspondence, Box 38, MRCE.

<sup>63</sup> The Friends of Montrose and Dumbarton Oaks Parks, Newsletter, Fall 1996, 1; Friends of Montrose and Dumbarton Oaks Parks Progress Report, 1997, Playground Replacement; Friends of Montrose and Dumbarton Oaks Parks, Montrose Playground Renovation Fact Sheet, n.d., all in File MONT–General–Park Assns: Friends of Montrose Park: General Info and Correspondence, Box 38, Collection, MRCE. Friends of Montrose and Dumbarton Oaks Parks, Summary of Formal Comments at the NPS Meeting, September 11, 1996, File MONT–Cult Res–PTM: Playground 1996–1997, Box 37, MRCE.

met with the Advisory Neighborhood Committee (ANC). The National Park Service collected comments during an extended comment period.<sup>64</sup>

The National Park Service installed Montrose Park playground in 2002, under Superintendent Adrienne Coleman. Coleman emphasized that she did not want the playground to “compromise the natural beauty or cultural significance” of the place. She wanted a design that “lays lightly on the land and becomes a part of the park vocabulary” while also “creating a true sense of place,” allowing children to “play safely with great imagination.”<sup>65</sup> Cox and McMahon developed a design, with the Montrose Park Playground Committee, that used recycled and sustainable materials to enhance and preserve the park’s character. Park benches used recycled engine blocks to cast the arms and certified plantation grown and harvested purple heart wood for the wooden members. All six pieces of play equipment used recycled metal. The surrounding wrought-iron fence was fabricated from 100 percent domestic recycled material. Paint on the fence was a low-solvent-by-volume environmentally friendly paint. Thirty-one thousand pounds of used truck tires provided the resilient rubber safety surface. The design met the approval of the Old Georgetown Board, Advisory Neighborhood Council, and Commission of Fine Arts. The Commission of Fine Arts made the Montrose Park playground design the standard for all new District playgrounds. With this accomplishment, the Friends of Montrose and Dumbarton Oaks Parks dissolved. In 2010, under new circumstances, the Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy started.<sup>66</sup>

### **Glover-Archbold Park**

The bulk of Glover-Archbold Park resulted from two land donations, from Charles Carroll Glover in 1924 and Anne Archbold in 1925. Glover, born in North Carolina but living in the District since age nine, had roamed the Rock Creek Valley while growing up in the District. His attachment to this setting led him to join the effort to establish Rock Creek Park in 1890. He personally worked with Sen. John Sherman (R-OH) to draft the proposed legislation and then visited dozens of congressional offices to promote the bill. Glover was a wealthy banker and had worked his way up the ranks of Riggs Bank and Company, becoming the first president of Riggs National Bank in 1896. His many philanthropic efforts in the District included fostering the establishment of Washington National Cathedral, donating land on the Anacostia Hills to the federal government, donating land for the Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway, and lobbying for Potomac Park. In December 1923, he donated 77.5 acres of land to the federal government for park and playground purposes. In June 1924, Congress passed a bill that authorized the Commissioners of the District of Columbia to accept the land donation and call the lands the Glover Parkway and Children’s Parkway.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> Memorandum, ROCR Superintendent William Shields to Field Director, National Capital Area, September 19, 1996, 1–2, File MONT–Cult Res–PTM: Playground 1996–1997, Box 37, MRCE. Shields to President, Montrose Walk Condominium Association Harry Holmgren, February 6, 1997, File Montrose Park, Admin Files, ROCR.

<sup>65</sup> ROCR Superintendent Adrienne Coleman to Friends of Montrose and Dumbarton Oaks Parks Helen Runnels Dubois, December 4, 1998, 1, File Montrose Park, Admin Files, ROCR.

<sup>66</sup> Nomination Form, 2002 White House Closing the Circle Awards, Montrose Park Playground, Narrative, 1, File Montrose Park, Admin Files, ROCR. In 2020, NPS rehabilitated the tennis courts and returned the back court to its historic configuration. NPS Comments to ROCR Second Draft, July 6, 2020, ROCR Archives.

<sup>67</sup> Barry Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 1, “Renewal of Interest and Success.” Scott Einberger, *A History of Rock Creek Park: Wilderness and Washington, DC* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2014), 74–76. Robinson & Associates, National Park Service National Capital Region Administrative History 1952–2005 (2008), 43. Index of Data Relating to Glover-Archbold Parkway, n.d., ROCR. William Bushong and Piera M. Weiss, “Rock

Anne Archbold gave twenty-seven acres, in two parcels, to supplement the nearly eighty acres from Charles Glover for incorporation into the park system of the District. Archbold was the daughter of John Dustin Archbold, who had served as John D. Rockefeller's right-hand man and, following the court-ordered breakup of Standard Oil Company, the president of Standard Oil of New Jersey. Anne, a philanthropist with an interest in science, parks, and conservation, built a seventy-eight-acre estate near Georgetown and named it Hillandale. She donated the two parcels, comprising part of her estate, in November 1924, placing a conditional dedication on one of those parcels. Congress accepted Archbold's donations in February 1925. In 1933, Archbold released the conditional dedication on the one parcel.<sup>68</sup>

Glover-Archbold Park extends for 2.5 miles along Foundry Branch from just south of Tenley Circle to the Potomac River in Georgetown. In addition to the original donation from Charles Carroll Glover, between 1931 and 1943, his family either sold or donated smaller parcels for the park, totaling about twenty-eight acres. The park also grew from transfers of rights-of-way for 38th, 39th, 42nd, and 44th Streets NW. The park totals 222 acres.<sup>69</sup>

The park is largely forested and surrounded by urban development, mostly residential. Such major streets as Massachusetts Avenue, Reservoir Road, and New Mexico Avenue cross the park. Sewer lines sit along the park. A longitudinal hiking trail follows along Foundry Branch, which sits in a valley. This earthen trail follows a large stormwater line that runs from just north of Massachusetts Avenue NW to the Potomac River. A deciduous forest largely contains tulip poplar, oak, and sycamore. The park sits on the flight path of warblers, thrushes, and other birds. Resident birds include owls, woodpeckers, and wrens.<sup>70</sup>

The hiking trails offer the predominant form of recreation in Glover-Archbold Park. The District government had once operated a summer day camp south of Reservoir Road, though the camp used minimal and temporary facilities. A former picnic site with two tables and a fireplace once stood south of New Mexico Avenue. District residents tend plots in a community garden, dating to the World War II Victory Garden days, at 42nd Street and New Mexico Avenue NW. In 1929, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission had hired Conrad Wirth, a trained landscape architect and future NPS Director, to design a plan for Glover-Archbold Park. Wirth envisioned a playground, amphitheater, picnic grove, and foot and bridle trails for the park, but lack of funding kept the National Capital Park and Planning Commission from adopting any of Wirth's recommendations, except for completing some trail work. A 1947 park plan proposed active recreation areas for tennis, volleyball, croquet, basketball, football, and soccer, plus a playground. None of these elements were adopted. These 1929 and 1947 plans indicate interest in having Glover-Archbold Park serve the active recreational needs of residents. Anne Archbold emphasized the quiet retreat the park offered to the District's urban population when opposing a proposed highway project that would have run down the length of the park.<sup>71</sup>

---

Creek Park: Emerald of the Capital City," *Washington History* 2 (Fall/Winter 1990/1991): 18–20. Glover-Archbold Park National Register Nomination Form, 2006, section 7, p. 2; section 8, p. 16.

<sup>68</sup> Index of Data Relating to Glover-Archbold Parkway. Information about the transportation challenges associated with Glover-Archbold Park can be found in Chapter 2.

<sup>69</sup> A Master Plan for Glover-Archbold Park, 1967, 2–3, TIC. Glover-Archbold Park, National Register Form, section 8, pp. 9–10.

<sup>70</sup> Master Plan for Glover-Archbold Park, 4–6, 13. Glover-Archbold National Register form, section 7, pp. 2–3.

<sup>71</sup> Master Plan Glover-Archbold Park, 9, 19. Glover-Archbold Park National Register form, section 7, pp. 3–4; section 8, pp. 11–12. Anne Archbold, Glover Park History, <https://gloverparkhistory.com/estates-and-farms/hillandale/anne-archbold/>, accessed August 3, 2018.

NPS continues to foster recreation in Glover-Archbold Park. For example, the agency has maintained a trail network throughout the park. Local hiking and birding groups include the park in its recommendations. However, in 2019, downed branches and trees caused the emergency closing of one section of the trail, from Foxhall Road to south of P Street NW. This section remains closed in 2020.<sup>72</sup>

### **CWDW and Small Parks**

Small parks, those encompassing 0.045 to about 7 acres, offer another potential recreational resource. These “parklets,” as they are sometimes called, might be traffic circles or small wooded areas. They might contain nationally significant historical resources, like the Civil War Defenses of Washington (CWDW), or commemorative memorials with statues or plaques. Small parks, in aggregate, contribute to the open sense of the District’s overall landscape, supplying “breathing spaces.” Neighbors to parklets often adopt these areas by keeping them maintained as a point of pride. With the District’s population increases, pressure has intensified to use parklets for recreation. A National Park Service 2017 study of small parks identified thirty-nine locations that had the potential to have playground equipment.<sup>73</sup>

The District’s urban space and the federal government’s ownership of most open land has meant that some unlikely places, like Civil War battlefield sites, have become areas for active recreation. Civil War battlefield parks in other places in the United States largely maintain a level of decorum and separateness from everyday life. But the topic of recreation, what kind and how much, has prompted debate. Manassas National Battlefield Park, in northern Virginia and only thirty-three miles from Fort Stevens, had allowed Frisbee throwing, softball games, and even fox hunts in the 1960s, but superintendents since the 1970s have carefully excluded such diversions.<sup>74</sup>

The District over time, with National Park Service concurrence, has incorporated the Civil War Defenses of Washington into its recreational planning. Active recreational offerings have appeared at Rock Creek Park—managed sites with invisible or negligibly visible earthworks. Battery Kemble has become a favorite area for dog owners to walk their dogs. Many people keep their dogs unleashed, despite city and federal laws prohibiting such action. Fort Bayard has a playground and ballfield. Fort Reno offers multiple-use ballfields and recreation fields. Fort Totten, Fort Slocum, Fort Bunker Hill, and Battery Kemble offer picnic tables. Residents can tend community gardens at Fort Totten, Fort Reno, and in the Fort Circle Park corridor between Fort Stevens and Fort DeRussy.<sup>75</sup>

Some Rock Creek Park—managed Civil War Defenses of Washington sites do not offer recreational outlets. The Civilian Conservation Corps partially reconstructed Fort Stevens in the 1930s, and this reconstruction continues to serve as the focal point for visitors. Friends of Fort Stevens have partnered with the National Park Service to present special events, such as Fort Stevens Day, with living history, music, speakers, and children’s activities. Fort DeRussy within

---

<sup>72</sup> ROCR website, <https://www.nps.gov/rocr/planyourvisit/hiking.htm>, accessed October 1, 2020.

<sup>73</sup> Quote in Elizabeth Barthold, “The Predicament of the ‘Parklets’: Understanding Washington’s Smaller Parks,” *Washington History*, 5 (Spring/Summer 1993): 35. See also NPS National Capital Region, *Small Parks Management Strategies*, 2017, 2, 4, 16, 23. Tammy Stidham, transcript of oral history interview with the author, August 4, 2017, 18, ROCR Archives.

<sup>74</sup> Joan M. Zenzen, *Battling for Manassas: The Fifty-Year Preservation Struggle at Manassas National Battlefield Park* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 82–84

<sup>75</sup> This list of CWDW sites is for those under ROCR management. Ballfields at other CWDW sites are found at Fort Davis, Fort Dupont, and Fort Mahan. NPS, *Fort Circle Parks Final Management Plan* (2004), 63–64.

Rock Creek Park Reservation 339 has its remaining earthworks as the sole draw for visitors. Interpretive rangers periodically take visitors from the Rock Creek Park Nature Center on a short hike to see this site.<sup>76</sup>

Residents and the District government have sought more recreational opportunities at some popular Civil War Defenses of Washington sites. Fort Reno, located in Tenleytown near Woodrow Wilson High School and Alice Deal Middle School, has attracted considerable attention because of its size and suitability for ballfields. In 1977, residents formed the Fort Reno Tennis Committee to advocate for the return of tennis courts at the park. The Army Corps of Engineers had removed the courts in 1946. The Tennis Committee exercised steady advocacy, overcoming nearby homeowners' concerns about the proposed location of the courts and the requirement for an archeological survey, which delayed the project by several years. Three tennis courts now grace the park's grounds.<sup>77</sup>

Ward 3, where Fort Reno is located, lacked enough ballfields to meet demand by the early 1990s. In response to inquiries from Eleanor Holmes Norton, the District's Delegate to Congress, Superintendent William Shields, in 1991 had his staff survey potential locations within Rock Creek Park jurisdiction for an additional field. Fort Reno promised the best location. The National Park Service did not build this field, due in part to the expectation that a general management plan for the Fort Circle Parks would inform any proposed construction. In 1995, Capital City Little League presented to the agency a plan for a ninety-foot baseball field, a sixty-foot baseball field, and a soccer field. Many organizations with a stake in Fort Reno's ballfields communicated their concerns about being excluded from the plan's development. Other little leagues wanted assurances they would have time to use the fields. Wilson High School authorities reminded the National Park Service that the school did not have a baseball field, and Fort Reno was its single resource. Stoddert Soccer League, which already used Fort Reno one weekday per week and on Saturdays, worried about its potential elimination.<sup>78</sup>

The construction of Metro's Green Line at the Fort Totten station in the 1980s sparked neighbors and nearby schools to push for improvements of Fort Totten Park. Residents and nearby schools had previously used Fort Totten Park's open fields for ball playing. In the 1970s, a playground had sat adjacent to an elementary school, and the District had offered a summer day camp, with crafts, nature education programs, outdoor cooking, and outdoor games. The National Park Service and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) had agreed for WMATA to use Fort Totten Park as an access point for digging the Green Line

---

<sup>76</sup> NPS, Fort Circle Parks Final Management Plan, 63–64.

<sup>77</sup> Fort Reno Tennis Committee Chair Thomas Winston to DC Department of Recreation Director William Rumsey, September 5, 1981, File CWDW–Ft Reno–Cult Res–PTM: Tennis courts project–General–1977–1988, Box 27, MRCE. Fort Reno Tennis Committee, Minutes, January 23, 1984; Fort Reno Tennis Committee Chair Thomas Winston to DC Department of Recreation, Division of Planning and Development Arthur Fawcett, June 27, 1984; Fort Reno Tennis Committee Secretary Barbara Luchs, Notes on Meeting at Fort Reno Park, June 18, 1984, all in File CWDW–Ft Reno–Cult Res–PTM–Tennis Courts Project, Box 27, MRCE.

<sup>78</sup> Superintendent ROCR William Shields to Associate Regional Director, Operations, NCR, December 20, 1991, File CWDW–Ft Reno–Cult Res–PTM: Ballfields–General 1991–1999, Box 27, MRCE. Brendan Kirby, "Fort Reno May House New Fields," *The Northwest Current*, December 6–19, 1995, File CWDW–Ft Reno General–Articles 1957–1998, Box 29, MRCE. PTA Co-Presidents Cathy Reilly and Lou Steadwell, Wilson SHS Assistant Principal George Arlotto, and Wilson SHS Athletic Director Eddie Saah to Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks George Frampton, October 13, 1995; Stoddert Soccer Chairman William Willis to George Frampton, October 13, 1995; President Northwest Washington Little League Sara McIntosh to NPS Director Roger Kennedy, October 17, 1995; William Shields to Sara McIntosh, November 3, 1995; NCR Field Director Robert Stanton to William Willis, December 8, 1995, all in File CWDW–Ft Reno–Cult Res–PTM: Ballfields–General 1991–1999, Box 27, MRCE.

subway tunnel. Once construction finished in the late 1980s, WMATA filled in the access hole and completed limited landscaping. In the early 1990s, the National Park Service resurrected the idea, from a 1968 Fort Circle Parks plan, of having a bicycle and walking path along the twenty-three-mile Fort Circle Parks corridor. Fort Totten residents strongly objected, stating that the limited WMATA funds should be used to restore a softball diamond and two tennis courts. In the 2004 NPS Fort Circle Parks Final Management Plan, the agency dropped the bicycle trail. Fort Totten Park currently has open playing fields.<sup>79</sup>

The 2004 Fort Circle Parks management plan recognizes that the local cityscape has incorporated these Civil War sites, turning them into integral community parks. National Park Service planners decided that Civil War Defenses of Washington management would focus upon recreation and cultural resources, but with protection always primary. The 2004 plan stated that recreational management would be compatible with the protection of significant cultural and natural resources in these parks. Visitors would gain an appreciation of the story of the Civil War Defenses through interpretive signage and educational programs. Fort Stevens would be a key site for this effort. Concurrently, park managers at all CWDW sites are tasked with protecting earthworks and other historic remains while also allowing for recreation that does not threaten these historic features.<sup>80</sup>

## Conclusion

Rock Creek Park managers have recognized the vital and varied role of recreation. They have also had to work with community members to find ways to incorporate Rock Creek Park–managed parks into the everyday fabric of life in the District, including accommodating recreational needs. But recreation encompasses many different activities. The formal gardens and fountain of Meridian Hill Park offer experiences to engage visitors’ senses in recreating and relaxing in its spaces. Glover-Archbold Park has hiking but also a community garden. Montrose Park was established as an essential recreational outlet for Georgetown, and when the National Park Service debated turning it into a passive recreation park, the community loudly protested and won. The Civil War Defenses of Washington offer multiple uses. For reconstructed Fort Stevens, contemplation and education are primary. At Fort Totten and other Civil War Defenses of Washington sites without highly visible historic remains or reconstructions, active recreational uses meet pressing demands by District residents.

---

<sup>79</sup> Regional Director, NCR to WMATA, February 3, 1989; Memorandum, ROCR Chief of Resources Bob Ford to ROCR Superintendent Rolland Swain, February 15, 1989; DC Public School Safety Manager Dominic Angino to Rolland Swain, January 16, 1991; Memorandum, Bob Ford to Rolland Swain, March 21, 1991, all in File CWDW–Ft Totten–Cult Res PTM: Metro Station project 1975–1986, Box 33, MRCE. Shaun Sutner, “In Ft. Totten, the Battle Is Over Fate of a Park,” *Washington Post*, February 27, 1992. NPS, Fort Circle Parks Master Plan, 1968, 7, File CWDW–FOCI–Cult Res–PTM: Fort Circle Parks Master Plan 1968, Box 22, MRCE. Fry and Welch Associates, Design Concept Plan Fort Totten Park: Description of Environmental Assessment, 1974, 12–13, File CWDW–Ft Totten–Cult Res PTM: General–1966–1997, Box 33, MRCE. NPS, Fort Circle Parks Final Management Plan, 2004, iv, 7–8, 18, 27–28, 39, 41–42, 64.

<sup>80</sup> NPS, Fort Circle Parks Management Plan, 2004, 27.





**PART 4**  
**Education and Interpretation**



*Figure 29. Park Ranger with a Junior Naturalist Group*  
NPS PHOTO, 1959

## CHAPTER 10 Interpretation at Historical and Cultural Sites

The National Park Service (NPS) adopted a distinctive style of visitor interaction in the mid-twentieth century. Freeman Tilden's 1957 classic *Interpreting Our Heritage* (released in successive editions, most recently in 2008) dominated the approach of many National Park Service interpreters. Tilden wrote of six principles for interpretation, with its key aim being "provocation," not instruction. He urged that interpretation be "revelation based upon information," and he cautioned that interpretation should connect whatever was under display or discussion to the visitor. Tilden remarked that interpretation is an art, which combined many art forms, even if the subjects addressed are historical, scientific, or archeological. He wrote that interpretation should present a whole story and that it should address the whole visitor. Finally, he believed that interpreters should follow a fundamentally different approach for addressing children under age twelve and not dilute adult programs.<sup>1</sup> Tilden's words informed interpretation guidelines into the 2000s.<sup>2</sup>

Rock Creek Park over time incorporated Tilden's interpretive methods for its historical and cultural sites, with the goal of drawing visitors into the place. The Old Stone House, Peirce Mill, and Fort Stevens have showcased their historic settings with living history. Interpreters at these sites have guided visitors into understanding how a water-powered mill grinds corn or how a colonial house was kept. Living history interpreters have explained the Civil War in the District. Park interpreters have had a keen interest in making the historic and cultural sites relatable. One objective for the Old Stone House in 1968 was to "make the house seem more alive, real, and functional to the visitor."<sup>3</sup> Rock Creek Park's 1985 Interpretive Prospectus captures the Tilden approach in its objectives. According to the 1985 Interpretive Prospectus, interpreters should provide opportunities for visitors to learn about park resources and thus influence visitor behavior to reduce adverse effects. In other words, in 1985 Rock Creek Park interpreters were encouraged to provoke visitors to act in defense of park resources.<sup>4</sup>

Moving into the twenty-first century, the National Park Service re-examined its interpretation program. In 1995, the agency began establishing standards to professionalize its interpreters and their work through the Interpretive Development Program. This program provided certification and training through classroom instruction, satellite presentations, videos, and academic partnerships. In 2006, the National Park Service assessed its strengths in interpretation and education and developed an Action Plan in preparation for the 2016 National Park Service Centennial. The Action Plan laid out five areas of focus: engage people to make connections to America's national parks, use new technologies, work with partners, develop and implement professional standards, and create a culture of evaluation.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1977), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Timothy Glines and David Grabitske, "Telling the Story: Better Interpretation at Small Historical Organizations," *History News* 58 (Spring 2003): 4-5.

<sup>3</sup> Memorandum, Superintendent National Capital Parks North J.A. Martinek to Director, Informational and Interpretive Services Annual Narrative Report for 1968, February 11, 1969, 15, File OLST-Reports-Annual Reports 1960-1969, Box 52, MRCE. All files from MRCE are from the ROCR Collection.

<sup>4</sup> ROCR, Interpretive Prospectus, 1985, 11, DSC, TIC.

<sup>5</sup> Cynthia Kryston, The Interpretive Journey, in David L. Larsen, ed., *Meaningful Interpretation: How to Connect Hearts and Minds to Places, Objects, and Other Resources* (Eastern National, 2003), [https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/eastern/meaningful\\_interpretation/mi6b1.htm](https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/eastern/meaningful_interpretation/mi6b1.htm), accessed January 15,

During the same time period that the National Park Service was examining its interpretive program, the agency was also exploring civic engagement as a possible interpretive tool. Civic engagement, according to the NPS Director's Order #75A (2003, 2007), is a "continuous, dynamic conversation" between the agency and the public to reinforce the public commitment to natural and cultural resource protection. Applied to interpretation, civic engagement invites national park sites to know their audiences and tailor the interpretation to these audiences. These audience members may then gain a personal understanding of the resource and develop an individual or collective motivation to care for the resource. Through this action, the parks and the people build relationships in the form of civic engagement.<sup>6</sup>

Rock Creek Park's Long-Range Interpretive Plan (2010) incorporated the changes in National Park Service thinking about interpretation. First, the planning team encompassed staff from the park, the National Capital Region, Harpers Ferry Center, the Washington Office, and various partners. Representatives from Friends of Peirce Mill, FORCE, two educators, and two people from cooperating association Eastern National served on the planning team. Second, the planning process involved workshops to identify interpretive themes and a confirmation workshop, which involved participation from park and regional staff, partners, concessioners, local community groups, and Eastern National. These interactions helped the planners identify next steps for the park's interpretive program so that visitors had opportunities to increase their understanding and appreciation for the park and its resources. This work also built a foundation for civic engagement. Third, the 2010 interpretive plan called for park staff to continually evaluate programming and assess partnerships to ensure that park and partner needs were being addressed. Fourth, the 2010 plan highlighted the need for national interpretive development training, meeting certification standards in the field, and evaluating these services. These latter two steps ensured that Rock Creek Park's interpretive planning met existing and future National Park Service standards.<sup>7</sup>

The Rock Creek Park interpretive planners identified the lack of National Park Service identity as a primary concern for implementing the plan. With ninety-nine administrative units, planners could not easily define, and thus interpret, the park for its varied users. Twelve million of those users were commuters who passed through to and from work. Weekend users saw the park as a place for picnics and active recreation. There was no obvious connection between such popular sites as Peirce Mill, the Old Stone House, Meridian Hill Park, the Civil War Defenses of Washington, or other sites under Rock Creek Park's management. The Long-Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP) thus sets out interpretive plans for these major locations while also laying out some overall approaches. Partnerships and collaborations with new potential audiences, such as immigrants and young adults, were some recommendations. The use of social media and new technologies also played a role in the 2010 interpretive plan.<sup>8</sup>

---

2020. About the Interpretive Development Program, in Larsen, *Meaningful Interpretation*, [https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/eastern/meaningful\\_interpretation/mi6m.htm](https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/eastern/meaningful_interpretation/mi6m.htm), accessed January 15, 2020. NPS Interpretive Development Program, About Interpretation, <http://idp.eppley.org/about-interpretation>, accessed January 15, 2020. Julia Washburn, transcript of interview with the author, July 10, 2017, 46, ROCR Archives.

<sup>6</sup> NPS Conservation Study Institute, *Stronger Together: A Manual on the Principles and Practices of Civic Engagement* (2009), 9–10, [https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1412/upload/stronger\\_together\\_web-508.pdf#%5B%7B%22num%22%3A43%2C%22gen%22%3A0%7D%2C%7B%22name%22%3A%22Fit%22%7D%5D](https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1412/upload/stronger_together_web-508.pdf#%5B%7B%22num%22%3A43%2C%22gen%22%3A0%7D%2C%7B%22name%22%3A%22Fit%22%7D%5D), accessed January 16, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> ROCR, Long Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP), 2010, Planning Process, Plan Highlights, 42, 44, 52.

<sup>8</sup> ROCR, LRIP, 11, 23, 34.

This chapter describes the major interpretive programs and accomplishments implemented at key Rock Creek Park historical and cultural sites. Some themes are evident. Changes in funding led to the expansion and then contraction of interpretation at the Old Stone House and Peirce Mill. Volunteer involvement, which included extensive fundraising, helped revitalize Peirce Mill in the twenty-first century. Some of the Civil War Defenses of Washington sites have served District residents as recreational space for ball fields and playgrounds. Fort Stevens, partially reconstructed in the 1930s, remains a historical site with associated interpretation. Dumbarton Oaks Park had its interpretation focus upon nature themes as opposed to how landscape architect Beatrix Farrand designed the space. Other park sites, including Montrose Park, Meridian Hill Park, and Georgetown Waterfront Park, have had varying levels of interpretation over time.

### **The Old Stone House**

The Old Stone House came under Rock Creek Park administration in 1980 when National Capital Parks—East transferred thirty-two units.<sup>9</sup> The Old Stone House already had a vibrant interpretive program, using costumed interpretation and special programming. Many people who were attracted to the site's age and stories volunteered and thus extended the National Park Service's ability to offer personal interactions with visitors.

The Old Stone House program took shape in the late 1950s. In 1959, NPS Historian Agnes Downing Mullins prepared for the 1960 site opening. She reviewed records and followed up with contacts from people who offered leads on possible eighteenth-century furnishings for the house. She felt strongly that tour guides should not “treat the past and the people who lived in it as if it were another planet.”<sup>10</sup> This approach prevailed for the January 1960 opening. Along with National Park Service staff, some enthusiastic women in Georgetown, who dressed in eighteenth-century period clothing, welcomed visitors. The dining room fireplace blazed with cedar logs. Many people gave the house historic furnishings, including a blanket chest, tavern table, bird roaster, two corner cupboards, and a pewter basin. The Smithsonian also loaned some period pieces.<sup>11</sup>

National Park Service staff at the Old Stone House nurtured a vibrant living history program. Mullins began this emphasis, overseeing demonstrations for schoolchildren and the public. She earned special recognition for her work in 1962 by the Progressive Citizens Association of Georgetown. The National Park Service signaled its continued commitment to living history in 1966 when the superintendent of National Capital Parks—North entered into a cooperative agreement with the Hospitality Committee for the Old Stone House. Members of the committee agreed to make their own period costumes to wear when volunteering at the site.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Old Stone House had been under the specific administration of George Washington Memorial Parkway and then in 1977 Chesapeake & Ohio (C&O) Canal National Historical Park. C&O Canal National Historical Park (NHP), Annual Report, 1977, 24, File OLST–Reports–Annual Reports 1970–1979 (2 of 2), Box 52, MRCE.

<sup>10</sup> Quote by Ruth Dean, “Miss Agnes Downey Works in the Past,” *Sunday Star* (November 8, 1959). See also “Stone House Groomed for Opening,” *Sunday Star* (July 12, 1959).

<sup>11</sup> John W. Stepp, “Georgetown’s Old Stone House Opens to the Public; 300 Turn Up,” *Evening Star* (January 25, 1960). Jerry O’Leary Jr., “The Changing Scene,” *Sunday Star* (October 21, 1961).

<sup>12</sup> Progressive Citizens Association of Georgetown, Resolution, June 26, 1962, File OLST–Subject Files–Correspondence 1959–1979, Box 54, MRCE. Superintendent Joe Brown to Alicia Heiden, April 25, 1966, and attached cooperative agreement, March 23, 1966, File OLST–Subject Files–Hospitality Committee 1965–1966, Box 54, MRCE.

Living history helped the National Park Service address two interpretive concerns at the site. First, the Old Stone House stood on a busy Georgetown street, with modern-day living a constant intrusion. Second, the house was small, with limited floor space for accommodating groups. National Park Service interpreters believed that living history would beckon visitors back into the eighteenth century. The agency also saw living history as fostering small-group interactions and immersing visitors into the historical time period through crafts and demonstrations. Even for standard house tours, the Old Stone House staff and volunteers tried to present demonstrations such as candle-dipping, inviting visitors to participate.<sup>13</sup>

In 1970, the Old Stone House staff initiated what became a well-regarded multi-year program called A Day in the Life of an Eighteenth-Century Child. The Day in the Life program had different girls, ages seven to ten years old, dress in period wear each Saturday and Sunday afternoon. The Old Stone House staff supervised three girls at a time in two-hour periods. The girls learned various eighteenth-century home crafts, such as making candles, pomander balls, quilt pieces, and Virginia wafer cookies.<sup>14</sup> The 1973 Old Stone House annual report stated that the program was a “great crowd pleaser” and a valuable history lesson for the Old Stone House volunteers.<sup>15</sup> The following year, the annual report noted that it was “difficult to judge sometimes whether the girls or the visitors have the most fun in the girls’ experience of going colonial.”<sup>16</sup> The Day in the Life program lasted eighteen years.<sup>17</sup>

Lorraine (“Rae”) Koch worked at the Old Stone House for twenty years, first as Housekeeper for two days a week in 1968 and later as site supervisor around the same time A Day in the Life started.<sup>18</sup> She saw her position as “playing house”—like she was in her own house all day long. Koch wanted to project this feeling to visitors, with demonstrations down on the first level in the kitchen. The upper levels conveyed the sense that the inhabitants had just left for a minute. A National Park Service spokesman stated at Koch’s retirement in 1989 that Koch knew the history of the house and its inhabitants “better than anyone alive.” She made that historical knowledge come alive, making the house a “homey re-creation of life in early Georgetown.” She punctuated this approach, as reported, with her warm smile and friendly

---

<sup>13</sup> National Capital Region, Handbook for Park Guides, c. 1962, no pp. numbers (Old Stone House Interpretive Manual, Special Interpretive Programs section), File OLST–History–Interp: Mgmt–Handbook for Park Guides c. 1960s, Box 50, MRCE. George Berndt, Old Stone House, Interpretive Prospectus, January 9, 1971, 3, MRCE. Memorandum, Superintendent National Capital Parks—North J. A. Martinek to General Superintendent National Capital Parks, November 23, 1979, File OLST–History–Interp: Proposals–General 1971–1994, Box 51, MRCE. NCR, Handbook for Park Guides, Interpretive Manual for Old Stone House, c. 1962, no pp. numbering (Exhibit–Kitchen section). NPS Press Release, Old Stone House in Georgetown, September 24, 1962, File OLST–General–Press Releases 1962–1990, Box 52, MRCE.

<sup>14</sup> Memorandum, Martinek to General Superintendent National Capital Parks, November 23, 1979. Berndt, Old Stone House, Interpretive Prospectus, January 9, 1971, 3. “Little Pioneers at Stone House,” *Evening Star*, November 12, 1970. Old Stone House, Annual Report, 1973, 4; Old Stone House, Annual Report, 1974, 4, both in File OLST–Reports–Annual Reports 1970–1979 (1 of 2), Box 52, MRCE. Superintendent Joseph Antosca to Cecilia V. V. Wood, November 5, 1971, File PEMI–History–Interp–Programs: “A Day in the Life of a Miller” 1971, Box 13, MRCE.

<sup>15</sup> Old Stone House, Annual Report, 1973, 4. Old Stone House reports considered the Day in the Life girls as volunteers “of a sort.” See George Washington Memorial Parkway, Annual Report, 1975, 24, File OLST–History–Interp: Mgmt–General Info 1975–1997, Box 50, MRCE.

<sup>16</sup> Old Stone House, Annual Report, 1974, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Lori Miller, “Old Stone House Loses Its Most Valued Tenant,” *Washington Post*, March 30, 1989.

<sup>18</sup> Memorandum, Superintendent, North National Capital Parks to Director, January 30, 1968, 14, File OLST–Reports–Annual Reports 1960–1969, Box 52, MRCE.

manner. She often burst into laughter while sharing stories.<sup>19</sup> She had a “fascinating” storytelling approach, making people feel a sense of the Old Stone House’s time and place.<sup>20</sup> The Old Stone House staff made the house a place of “solitude” or “calmness,” and some lunchtime visitors saw the garden as a “respite.”<sup>21</sup>



Figure 30. Rae Koch at the Old Stone House  
NPS PHOTO, 1967

Many volunteers saw her as their colonial mother. She expected them to come to work, and she encouraged them to think of it as coming home. In 1989, Koch commented that she was known as “Mother Koch” to some of the girls who participated in A Day in the Life. When the same girls brought their own children, Koch became “Granny Koch,” an indication of how well she had turned the living-history program into an inviting experience for volunteers and visitors alike.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Miller, “Old Stone House Loses Its Most Valued Tenant.”

<sup>20</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 1981, 49, File Admin-Annual Reports 1981, Box 71, MRCE.

<sup>21</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 1983, 35, File Admin-Annual Reports 1983, Box 71, MRCE.

<sup>22</sup> Miller, “Old Stone House Loses Its Most Valued Tenant.”

The Georgetown community's free newspaper called Koch an ambassador. She was a "caretaker of tradition and heritage, an ambassador to visitors to Georgetown, a citizen who lived in and gave to the world around her." The newspaper went further, saying that the Old Stone House under Koch's guidance "became more [than a historical landmark]: it is a place to see and commune with Georgetown and the nation's Colonial past, a place to find comfort in the beauty of its gardens, a place to be welcome."<sup>23</sup> Koch participated in community planning for Georgetown's first parade in more than one hundred years. She then rode in the 1975 parade with District Mayor Walter Washington, indicating how valuable many considered her contributions to the community.<sup>24</sup>

Koch introduced other interpretive experiences at the Old Stone House beyond living history. Tours developed over the course of her tenure. The Old Stone House 1971 Interpretive Prospectus called tours "the best interpretive medium" for visitors to "receive the clearest and best understanding of the value and significance" of the house.<sup>25</sup> School groups and scout troops constituted the largest influx of people taking specialized tours. In 1973, to better connect visitors to the larger history of Georgetown, the Old Stone House staff offered summertime Georgetown walking tours of the waterfront.<sup>26</sup> The 1975 Old Stone House Annual Report emphasized the approach of incorporating Georgetown history into that of the Old Stone House. The annual report stated that the staff "believe[d] that in order to interpret the story of the Old Stone House then we must also tell the story of the old community of which it is a part, past and present." The Old Stone House tour guides stopped at such Georgetown locations as the National Firefighting Museum, Yes Health Food Store, and Grace Church, the latter founded in the 1850s as a mission for Georgetown harbor sailors and Chesapeake & Ohio Canal boatmen.<sup>27</sup>

Special programming engaged more visitors and continued beyond Koch's retirement, including candlelit tours, concerts, Christmas decorations reminiscent of the eighteenth century, and even walks along the C&O Canal. The latter addressed demand for outdoors experiences and likely met National Park Service expectations for an environmental focus in parks, which started soon after the first Earth Day in 1970. Spinning, weaving, crocheting, and period culinary work kept visitors engaged within the house. Local school groups, bus groups, and individuals from the immediate area composed the largest audience. Media outlets, reaching beyond local newspapers and television to *Readers Digest*, publicized these varied offerings.<sup>28</sup>

House staff tried to address the needs of special communities and international visitors. Catherine Ingram joined Koch as an interpreter, also in period clothing. Ingram was deaf and

---

<sup>23</sup> "Georgetown's Ambassador: Rae Koch Retires from Old Stone House," *The Georgetownian*, March 24–April 6, 1989.

<sup>24</sup> George Washington Memorial Parkway, Annual Report, 1975, 24.

<sup>25</sup> Old Stone House, Interpretive Prospectus, 1971, 8, File OLST–History–Interp: Proposals–General 1971–1994, Box 51, MRCE.

<sup>26</sup> Old Stone House, Annual Report, 1973, 2, 4. Old Stone House, Annual Report, 1974, 7.

<sup>27</sup> Old Stone House, Annual Report, 1975, 9–10. Quote on p. 9. Grace Protestant Episcopal Church National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 1971, section 8.

<sup>28</sup> Old Stone House, Annual Report, 1975, 3. Old Stone House, Annual Report, 1974, 5–6, MRCE. Old Stone House, Annual Report, 1973, 2–4, MRCE. George Washington Memorial Parkway, Annual Report, 1975, 23. ROCR, Annual Statement for Interpretation, 1983, 9, TIC. ROCR, Annual Report, 1985, 13, TIC. Old Stone House, Activities from June to September 1988, n.p., File OLST–History–Interp: Mgmt–General Info 1975–1997, Box 50, MRCE. C&O Canal NHP, Annual Report, 1978, 24, File OLST–Reports–Annual Reports 1970–1979 (2 of 2), Box 52, MRCE. ROCR, Annual Report, 1987, 10, File ROCR, Box 45, Entry P17, Record Group (RG) 79, Archives II, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). ROCR, Annual Report, 1989, Interpretation section, Unprocessed Files, ROCR.

completed her assignments without assistance, as noted in the Rock Creek Park 1981 annual report. Her presence meant that the Old Stone House could offer programming for hearing-impaired visitors. Ingram led walks and taught sign language classes. The house developed an audio-visual cassette program for the deaf. Many parts of the Old Stone House had structural barriers to visitors with physical handicaps. Staff tried to assist as much as possible and recommended having a photo exhibit of areas inaccessible to such visitors. The Old Stone House attracted an international audience, and the staff posted brochures in German, French, Spanish, and Japanese. One volunteer in 1988 conducted two tours in Spanish, and that year's annual report noted the need for bilingual ability.<sup>29</sup>

The Old Stone House's garden evolved into a popular community space. Parkway Motor Company had leased the backyard as a secondhand car lot. Once the National Park Service replaced the asphalt with soil, the garden opened in 1958. In 1973, the garden included pink and white begonias, pansies, and chrysanthemums. By 1983, Koch and Ingram had designed and site maintenance employee George Hunsaker had installed a historically accurate eighteenth-century perennial colonial garden. Koch reported in 1983 that the garden attracted crowds on warm spring days. Weekday workers took their lunches there. Mothers brought their small children to play in the garden. Some people sunbathed in the area, she wrote, and artists used the space for painting or photographing.<sup>30</sup>

The Old Stone House staff offered an array of interpretive opportunities associated with the garden. Garden concerts over the years brought colonial-period music and modern pieces, such as jazz, to lunchtime and evening visitors. The addition of an herb garden and vegetable garden in the early 1970s gave staff the opportunity to grow and harvest plants for indoor use. In 1973, the Old Stone House staff collected black walnuts from the yard, describing how colonists used them.<sup>31</sup>

A continuing issue for the Old Stone House interpreters involved deciding for which period the National Park Service should furnish and interpret the house. When the Old Stone House opened in early 1960, the furnishings reflected the period when Cassandra Chew's daughter Barbara lived there (circa 1808) with her husband John Suter Jr. and her family. Her husband had a watchmaker and cabinetmaker's shop in the house, and likely the family lived there, too. The Old Stone House's interpretive theme later caused concern. The National Capital Region Chief of Interpretation wrote the National Capital Region Superintendent in November 1959 to acknowledge that public relations pressures had prompted the National Park Service to restore the Old Stone House before interpretive plans had matured. The furnishing plan was

---

<sup>29</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 1981, 49–50. ROCR, Annual Report, 1987, 10. Old Stone House, Annual Report, 1980, File OLST–Reports–Annual Reports 1980–1989 (1 of 2), Box 53, MRCE. Old Stone House, Annual Report, 1975, 3. Old Stone House, Interpretive Guidelines, 1979, 3, File OLST–History–Interp Mgmt–Guidelines–1983–1991, Box 50, MRCE. Old Stone House, Annual Report, 1988, 5, MRCE. Old Stone House, Annual Report, 1980, 1. Rock Creek Park, Statement for Interpretation, 1983, 9, TIC.

<sup>30</sup> Resolution, Progressive Citizens' Association of Georgetown, October 3, 1955, File OLST–Subject Files–Correspondence 1940–1956 (cont'd), Box 53, MRCE. “New Garden, Old House,” news photo, May 29, 1959, File OLST–General: Articles 1940–1970, Box 51, MRCE. Old Stone House Annual Report, 1983, 13. Old Stone House, Annual Report, 1973, 9. Old Stone House Annual Report, 1983, 2–3, 10, 13, File OLST–Reports–Annual Reports 1980–1989 (2 of 2), Box 53, MRCE.

<sup>31</sup> Old Stone House Annual Report, 1983, 4. Old Stone House, Annual Report, 1973, 10. George Berndt, Interpretive Prospectus for Old Stone House, 1971, 13.

completed in the opinion of the person who wrote the plan, without sufficient time to complete research on the occupants and furnishings.<sup>32</sup>

Then, a 1986 Historic Furnishing Plan used Christopher Layman's inventory upon his death to determine the Old Stone House's interpretation. Harpers Ferry Center, having no other documentation, furnished the house as Layman's woodworking shop and home. The Historic Furnishing Plan argued that the National Park Service could firmly place Layman as an owner/occupant of the Old Stone House and that he lived there in the pre-Revolutionary period, an important period for this site's interpretation. Layman, however, died after owning the Old Stone House for only a year.<sup>33</sup>

National Capital Regional Historian Gary Scott pushed for a different approach. Scott expressed concern in 1986 about the Historic Furnishing Plan's recommendation to use the Layman occupancy as the basis for outfitting and interpreting the Old Stone House. Scott referred to the enabling legislation that directed the National Park Service to establish a museum pertaining to the early history of Georgetown and Washington, DC. He argued that using only Layman's time because of the available inventory (which subsequent residents did not leave behind) slighted this mandate. The National Park Service denied its broader legislative mandate, Scott argued. He recommended instead that only one or two rooms be devoted to Layman, and the others talk more broadly about Georgetown and Washington, DC, history. He noted that such an approach would complement the District's expected celebrations of Pierre L'Enfant and the founding of the city of Washington.<sup>34</sup>

Scott, joined by Rock Creek Park Cultural Resource Specialist Steve Strach, advocated further for such a change. Scott noted that providing visitors with an orientation to historic Georgetown would be a great service to people who initially only came to the area to eat and drink.<sup>35</sup> Strach expressed his enthusiasm for this idea, writing to Julia Washburn, Chief Ranger at Rock Creek Park and later Superintendent, that Rock Creek Park had an "opportunity to do something great at the site in terms of education/partnerships etc."<sup>36</sup> In 2010, the Old Stone House had furnishings on all three floors to represent middle- to upper-class inhabitants from the mid- to late eighteenth century. This approach represented a departure from a strict interpretation of the Layman period. Most of the furnishings came from Arlington House under permanent loan. The dining area displayed period kitchenware reflective of that uncovered from onsite archeological excavations. The shop area functioned as a sales outlet for cooperating association Eastern National, which in 2008 had more than \$73,000 in sales.<sup>37</sup>

The National Park Service decided early on not to interpret the Old Stone House as a headquarters and office for George Washington and L'Enfant during the founding of the city. NPS Historian Cornelius Heine could find no paper trail for such an assertion. Scott had historian

---

<sup>32</sup> Cassandra Chew purchased Old Stone House after Layman died. Email, Gary Scott, May 12, 1998; Memorandum, Regional Historian Gary Scott to Superintendent Rock Creek Park, March 27, 1987, both in File OLST-History-Interp Programs-Education-General 1957-1998, Box 50, MRCE. Memorandum, Chief, Division of Interpretation to Superintendent, National Capital Parks, November 23, 1959, 1, TIC. Agnes Downing, Old Stone House Furnishings Plan, 1959, 17-19, 23, 25, TIC.

<sup>33</sup> John P. Brucksch, Historic Furnishings Report: Old Stone House, Rock Creek Park, TIC. Email, Gary Scott, May 12, 1998.

<sup>34</sup> Regional Historian NCR Gary Scott to Chief, Historic Resources Division, National Capital Region (NCR), April 30, 1986, File OLST-History-Interp Programs-Education-General 1957-1998, Box 50, MRCE.

<sup>35</sup> Email, Scott, May 12, 1998.

<sup>36</sup> Email, Scott, May 12, 1998.

<sup>37</sup> ROCR, LRIP, 2010, 16-17, 27, 31.

Pamela Scott pursue further research into the founding of the city and the Old Stone House. She also could not locate any documentation to support Washington and L'Enfant using the Old Stone House. Thus the agency has not used what it considers a myth to interpret the Old Stone House.<sup>38</sup>

### **Civil War Defenses of Washington**

The National Park Service has based its interpretive programming at the Civil War Defenses of Washington (CWDW) sites on three major areas: history, recreation, and environmental education. This approach reflects the administrative challenges the agency has faced. Well before National Park Service management of these sites, most of the forts, batteries, and other structures from the Civil War had been paved over or left unprotected. The federal government began purchasing CWDW-related lands for the proposed Fort Drive largely between the 1930s and 1950s. However, this same time period saw a rapid increase in population in Washington, DC. Residents needed areas for play and recreation, and the Civil War Defenses of Washington lands offered such space. The sites had natural settings that could translate into educational spaces for learning about flora and fauna, another desire of the District's urban population.

The history theme, which has been a constant throughout National Park Service management of these sites, tells the story of the defenses within the context of the Civil War and Jubal Early's 1864 attack. Substantial fighting at Fort Stevens and nearby defenses left many Union and Confederate troops dead, with forty-one Union soldiers buried at Battleground National Cemetery. President Abraham Lincoln was at Fort Stevens during some of the fighting and was shot at, underscoring the historical importance of the ring of defenses. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1938 restored the western section of Fort Stevens, making it the only restored Civil War Defenses of Washington.

National Capital Parks—North historian Anthony Lucero argued in 1968 that the National Park Service should buy the rest of the land where Fort Stevens had stood and fully reconstruct the fort. He noted that interpreters could explain the Civil War and the Confederate attack on Washington through Fort Stevens. Lucero stated that many historical figures made contact at Fort Stevens, making for several stories of interest. He also connected Fort Stevens to other defenses, Forts DeRussy and Slocum, since they both experienced fighting in the 1864 battle. Lucero envisioned an entire interpretive program at Fort Stevens, with museum exhibits in the Blockhouse Information Center, an audiovisual program, an electric map, a self-guided tour, and a tower to view the terrain and extent of the battlefield.<sup>39</sup>

The National Park Service approved in 1969 a different approach from Lucero's for its management of the Fort Circle Parks, the name the agency adopted during this time for the Civil War Defenses of Washington. The Fort Circle Parks Master Plan (dated in 1968 but approved in 1969) did agree that if the National Park Service obtained the land where Fort Stevens had stood, reconstruction would be practicable. Until that time, the master plan recommended having staffed tours and self-guided tours at the site. The blockhouse could serve as a wayside information

---

<sup>38</sup> Email, Gary Scott to Julia Washburn, and others, May 12, 1998, File OLST–History–Interp Programs–Education–General 1957–1998, Box 50, MRCE.

<sup>39</sup> Anthony Lucero to Superintendent North National Capital Parks, February 29, 1968, attached to NPS, Fort Circle Parks Master Plan, 1968, File CWDW–FOCI–Cult Res–PTM: Fort Circle Parks Master Plan 1968, Box 22, MRCE. Anthony Lucero, Interpretive Prospectus for Fort Stevens, n.d. (1968)], 3–4, 10–17, with attached Memorandum, Fred Binnewies to NPS Director, May 26, 1968 and Anthony Lucero, Outline of the Interpretive Prospectus for Fort Stevens, 3, TIC.

center. Visitors could also see equipment demonstrations and displays of military artifacts during events at the fort.

The Fort Circle Parks 1968 master plan recommended that the National Park Service study building a major visitor facility at Fort Totten. This facility would offer a wide variety of nature programs, in addition to interpretation related to the historical events of the Fort Circle Parks. Lucero argued against such a suggestion, believing that Fort Stevens had a strong connection to the Civil War events, thanks to the partial reconstruction, and was also the place of major fighting during the 1864 battle. The 1968 Fort Circle Parks master plan also left some question as to whether the proposed visitor facility would house historical interpretation, as it stated that space constraints might force such interpretation to another site. The proposed visitor facility would have meeting spaces and workrooms, an auditorium, and interpretive areas so that National Park Service staff could lead environmental education with school groups and conservation groups. Fort Totten had the advantage of being a large park with a suitable physical environment and convenient access to the community. Fort Stevens conversely lacked such space.<sup>40</sup>

In 1971, the National Park Service released its Interpretive Prospectus for the Fort Circle Parks. This plan dropped Fort Totten as the primary visitor facility for the Fort Circle Parks and instead recommended it for Fort Dupont. The Fort Dupont interpretive facility would serve residents east of the Anacostia River in the same way the Rock Creek Park Nature Center did west of the river. The Fort Dupont facility would tell historical, natural, and environmental stories while also encouraging community involvement, with spaces for community meetings and local art exhibits, or instance. For Fort Stevens, the 1971 Interpretive Prospectus stated that if the National Park Service obtained land, the agency might pursue reconstructing Fort Stevens. But, without that additional land, Fort Stevens still had lots of interpretive possibilities. The 1971 Interpretive Prospectus recommended waysides and reconstruction of the workhouse and magazine. The plan recommended that the agency develop a self-guided tour.<sup>41</sup>

The National Park Service offered varied interpretive programs at Fort Stevens in the 1980s. From 1982 through 1984, Rock Creek Park authorized a living history encampment at Fort Stevens by members of the Fifth US Calvary. Rock Creek Park Nature Center offered an art exhibit on the Civil War in 1982, including an original painting showing President Abraham Lincoln on the Fort Steven parapet. In 1983, the Nature Center presented a slide program on the Fort Stevens siege and a discussion of soldier uniforms. In 1989, for the 125th anniversary of the Battle of Fort Stevens, Rock Creek Park held a sixty-minute commemorative ceremony. The park added new waysides and two sand-cast aluminum eighteen-pounder gun carriages for remounting the Fort Stevens thirty-pounder gun tubes. The commemoration at Fort Stevens eventually was called Fort Stevens Day.<sup>42</sup>

Other Civil War Defenses of Washington sites under Rock Creek Park jurisdiction had limited interpretation. As of the 2010 Long-Range Interpretive Plan, these forts and other Civil War military defenses lacked staffed buildings. They had few restroom facilities or directional

---

<sup>40</sup> NPS, Fort Circle Parks Master Plan, 1968, 38–41.

<sup>41</sup> NPS, Fort Circle Parks Interpretive Prospectus, 1971, 11–14, File CWDW–FOCI–History–General–Interp prospectus 2/1971, Box 23, MRCE.

<sup>42</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 1982, 37, File Admin–Annual Reports 1982, Box 71, MRCE. ROCR, Annual Report, 1983, 19, 32, File Admin–Annual Reports 1983, Box 71, MRCE. ROCR, Annual Report, 1984, 51, File ROCR, Box 45, Entry P17, RG 79, Archives II, NARA. ROCR, Annual Report, 1988, 12, Unprocessed Files, ROCR. ROCR, Annual Report, 1989, Interpretation Section, File ROCR–General–History–Admin–Annual Reports 1989, Box 70, MRCE.

signs, and Rock Creek Park offered few interpretive or educational programs. Waysides provided minimal interpretation, providing historical background on the individual forts.<sup>43</sup>

The National Park Service has made recreation another emphasis for interpretation at the Fort Circle Parks. Back in 1937, when reconstructing Fort Stevens, a local newspaper wrote that “the restoration area is destined to become famous for its recreational as well as its historical appeal.” Large shade trees, shrubs, an expansive grass area, and benches “will offer a pleasant retreat from jammed thoroughfares of the bustling city.”<sup>44</sup> This passive recreation would serve some people, while active recreation outlets at other fort sites would attract other people. In the post–World War II period, the National Park Service built several neighborhood recreation centers near many Civil War Defenses of Washington sites to meet booming demand. The District of Columbia Department of Recreation managed these centers, but the National Park Service retained ownership and oversight. In anticipation of the District winning home rule, the National Park Service transferred ownership and oversight of the centers to the District as early as 1968.<sup>45</sup>

Many Civil War Defenses of Washington sites themselves evolved into neighborhood parks. The remains (whether above- or belowground) of Fort Bayard, Fort Bunker Hill, Fort Reno, Fort Slocum, and Fort Totten are all in parks open for recreation of various sorts. Fort DeRussy and Battery Kingsbury are located within Rock Creek Park proper, Reservation 339, and thus are part of its recreational opportunities. Battery Kemble has trails used by joggers, walkers, and sledders in the winter.

The recreation emphasis came in large part during the time when the National Park Service and the National Capital Park and Planning Commission (NCPPC, which in 1952 became the National Capital Planning Commission, NCPC) struggled with the Fort Drive concept. The federal government had purchased land that formed a twenty-three-mile greenbelt around the inner periphery of Washington, DC. The National Capital Planning Commission, with the support of the National Park Service, asked Fred Tuemmler and Associates to recommend how to move forward with Fort Drive, and the resulting report proposed that the automobile-centric Fort Drive turn into a hiker-biker trail. The National Park Service accepted this recommendation.<sup>46</sup>

The Fort Circle Trail, as planned by the National Park Service in 1969, would connect the defenses with as many as seventy parklets. It would serve as a trunk trail for a comprehensive system of hiking, nature, and access trails. Recreation and the Civil War Defenses of Washington would thus interconnect.<sup>47</sup>

The National Park Service saw interpretation and recreation as interwoven when planning the Fort Circle Parks. Interpretation, according to the 1971 Fort Circle Parks Interpretive Prospectus, would tell the story of “man, past and present, and his environment.” But the 1971 plan cautioned that this story could only be told if “the recreational needs of the park user are

---

<sup>43</sup> ROCR, LRIP, 18.

<sup>44</sup> Bernard Kohn, “Restored Civil War Fort in New Sight-Seeing Shrine,” *Sunday Star* (Washington, DC), July 4, 1937.

<sup>45</sup> CWDW National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 2015, section 8, p. 134.

<sup>46</sup> Fred Tuemmler and Associates, Fort Park System, 1965, iv–v, File CWDW–FOCI–Cult Res–PTM: Fort Parks System Master Plan 1965, Box 22, MRCE. NPS, Fort Circle Parks Master Plan, 1968, 1. National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC), Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Parks, Open Space, and Natural Features, 1983, 5, File CWDW–General–Resources: National Capital Planning Commission “Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital”–1983, Box 21, MRCE.

<sup>47</sup> NPS, Fort Circle Parks Master Plan, 1968, 7–8.

recognized and met.”<sup>48</sup> The 1971 Interpretive Prospectus admitted that “it is somewhat unorthodox” to talk about recreation and interpretation, but “Fort Circle Parks is an unorthodox area” in an urban society with specific needs the National Park Service was dedicated to meet.<sup>49</sup> People would bike or walk the trail. They might engage in camping, including some overnight camping for groups. People might picnic. They might engage in active recreation in the parks, such as throwing a ball or playing on play structures. The 1968 Fort Circle Master Plan recommended that interpretation be considered broadly, not limited to what might be in the parks but expanded into outdoor education and recreation, conservation, beautification, and the relationship of humans to the natural world.<sup>50</sup>

The National Park Service expected to work in cooperation with the District government to develop programming, much of it recreational. As one example, during World War II, the District had begun to offer summer day camps for children aged seven to fourteen years. These camps had continued, with many held at Fort Circle Parks, and offered outdoor recreation, such as archery, volleyball, and softball, in addition to such traditional camp activities such as crafts, singing, and campfire programs. The National Park Service had seasonal naturalists visit the camps as part of nature education. The agency provided basic management, maintenance, and protection services to support the day camps. The 1968 Fort Circle Parks Master Plan wanted to take the relationship further by recommending a cooperative agreement.<sup>51</sup>

Subsequent interpretive planning continued to see recreation as a facet of interpreting the Fort Circle Parks. The emphasis changed slightly, though. The 1985 Rock Creek Park Interpretive Prospectus stated the obvious—that recreational use was “substantial” since most Civil War sites sat near densely populated regions in the District. People picnicked, played ball, used playground equipment, walked trails, and generally interacted with the natural environment. Civil War enthusiasts also visited. The 1985 plan put types of visitors together with the desire to offer them varied programming in history, recreation, and nature education.<sup>52</sup>

Change came with the 2004 Fort Circle Management Plan and the 2010 Rock Creek Park Long-Range Interpretive Plan. The 2004 plan stated that the National Park Service would support recreation as “small nodes of intense activity in portions of the Fort Circle Parks,” away from any earthworks or known historical or archeological sites.<sup>53</sup> The Civil War Defenses of Washington and their natural areas had become part of the local cityscape. The National Park Service would maintain this recreational outlet, but the 2004 plan wanted to contain it and make sure that visitors understood the historical associations to build knowledge and commitment to preservation of the resources. The agency may have proposed this approach due to actual damage to earthworks. In 1995, a National Park Service partnership application noted that improper recreational use by mountain bikers had threatened the Fort Totten grounds. The 2010 Rock Creek Park Long-Range Interpretive Plan noted that most visitors at Fort Circle Parks did not know they were in a Civil War site nor at a National Park Service park. The 2010 Rock

---

<sup>48</sup> NPS, Fort Circle Parks Interpretive Prospectus, 1971, 5.

<sup>49</sup> NPS, Fort Circle Parks Interpretive Prospectus, 1971, 19–20.

<sup>50</sup> NPS, Fort Circle Parks Master Plan, 1968, 7–8, 33–34.

<sup>51</sup> NPS, Fort Circle Parks Master Plan, 1968, 2, 54–56. The District had a day camp at Fort Totten, at the sites under Rock Creek Park administration. See p. 17.

<sup>52</sup> Rock Creek Park, Interpretive Prospectus, 1985, 5.

<sup>53</sup> Fort Circle Parks Final Management Plan, 2004, 18, TIC.

Creek Park Long-Range Interpretive Plan considered new signage and more interpretive programs an important goal.<sup>54</sup>

In 2010, the National Park Service's Connect Trails to Parks program and the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail provided important funding for self-guided hiking and biking trails. The National Park Service collaborated with the City of Alexandria, northern Virginia counties of Arlington and Fairfax, and the Washington Area Bicyclist Association to identify and mark routes connecting the forts, which also stood in these Virginia locales. The April 2012 Capital Space Plan highlighted this fort recreational route.<sup>55</sup>

The National Park Service made nature education a third emphasis for Fort Circle Parks interpretation. This focus is tied to the socioeconomic changes of the mid-twentieth century. The 1971 Civil War Defenses of Washington Interpretive Prospectus was written only a few years after the Washington, DC, riots of April 1968, in response to the assassination of the civil rights leader Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The plan used some dismissive and racist language related to the "ghetto child" and his "tragically practical and provincial world," who needs to learn how to control and improve his world, not just study and observe it.<sup>56</sup> The plan also stated that a major interpretive objective was to help the park user realize "how fortunate" he is in having such a park so close. Wise use of the park "will enrich his environment—despoliation of the park will impoverish him."<sup>57</sup> The 1971 Interpretive Prospectus recommended gardening for children to forge an attachment to the parks. The National Park Service recommended working with local schools to encourage students to plant seeds, garden, and harvest.<sup>58</sup>

Other interpretive planning documents for the Fort Circle Parks emphasize the natural setting of the defenses. The 1968 Civil War Defenses of Washington Master Plan encouraged interpreters to use the wide variety of natural elements in the parks for their programming. Trees, birds, small animals, and stream valleys all offered subjects for exploration with visitors. The 1985 Rock Creek Park Interpretive Prospectus stated simply that nature and conservation education would join historical interpretation and recreation as part of a varied program for visitors.<sup>59</sup> The 2004 Civil War Defenses of Washington Management Plan noted that the parks contained "significant natural corridors" where people could learn about the flora and fauna as found in an urban area.<sup>60</sup> In 1997, Rock Creek Park staff developed a relationship with three elementary schools located near Fort Bunker Hill Park. Following a teacher training program, teachers took their students into the park year-round for local history and environmental field studies. Faculty, students, and park neighbors also volunteered to groom trails and protect fort remains.<sup>61</sup>

The multiple demands and expectations placed upon the Fort Circle Parks have meant that planning for these Civil War defenses has differed from other Civil War sites in the country.

---

<sup>54</sup> Fort Circle Parks Final Management Plan, 2004, 18, 24. Fort Totten Park Community Partnership Application, January 13, 1995, 4, File CWDW-Ft Totten-Cult Res PTM: General-1966-1997, Box 33, MRCE. ROCR, LRIP, 2010, 18, 36.

<sup>55</sup> CWDW, LRIP, 2012, 11, TIC.

<sup>56</sup> NPS, CWDW Interpretive Prospectus, 1971, 2.

<sup>57</sup> NPS, CWDW Interpretive Prospectus, 1971, 4.

<sup>58</sup> NPS, CWDW Interpretive Prospectus, 1971, 1-2, 17.

<sup>59</sup> NPS, Fort Circle Parks Master Plan, 1968, 35. ROCR Interpretive Prospectus, 1985, 5, TIC.

<sup>60</sup> NPS, CWDW Management Plan, 2004, 11.

<sup>61</sup> Rock Creek Park Annual Report, 1998, 4, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR. Scope of Work, Fort Bunker Hill Outdoor Classroom Project, no date; and Email, Julia Washburn to Regina Moriarty, Cindy Cox, Steve Strach, and Maggie Zadorozny, January 3, 1997, both in File CWDW-Fort Bunker Hill-History-Interp: Outdoor Classroom Project 1997, Box 27, MRCE.

National Park Service superintendents at Civil War battlefield parks have largely rejected active recreation at their sites. Manassas National Battlefield Park in the 1960s had allowed for softball games and Frisbee throwing on some of the most historic areas. Local hunt groups had permission to chase foxes throughout the park. But by the end of that decade, the newly arrived superintendent put up gates to block access for such recreation and moved the horse trails to less sensitive locales. Changing ideas about the Civil War battlefield sites and their care emerged slowly, punctuated by the Civil War Centennial in the mid-1960s; Shelby Foote's three-volume narrative of the Civil War, released between 1958 and 1974; and then the 1990 airing of Ken Burns's *The Civil War*, which had Foote as a memorable commentator. The 1988 attempt to build a shopping mall adjacent to Manassas National Battlefield Park catapulted historic preservation of Civil War sites to the top of funding wish lists. The shopping mall threat reminded people of the solemn and sacred associations of these lands where blood had been spilled. Many park supporters decried having these battlefields host active recreation.<sup>62</sup>

The Civil War Defenses of Washington host active recreation, but some decorum remains, especially at Fort Stevens. The federal government, in cooperation with military and historical associations, has routinely held ceremonies at Fort Stevens and at Battleground National Cemetery, located a half mile away. Events have included the laying of wreaths, speeches, music, and the firing of guns. Fort Stevens Day in mid-July commemorates the battle and has often included some reenactors, sometimes in a re-creation of a Civil War era-type camp. As the park's budget has allowed, ranger interpreters have given monthly talks at Fort Stevens from spring to fall. During special years, such as the 100th (1964), 125th (1989), and 150th (2014) anniversaries of the Battle of Fort Stevens, the park has worked with partners, most recently the Alliance to Preserve the Civil War Defenses of Washington, to produce related programming. A reenactor portraying Abraham Lincoln in 1964, for example, mounted a parapet, only to be pulled down in a re-creation of the Fort Stevens battle. Lincoln-Thomas Day, initiated by the National Federation of Colored Women's Clubs of America on September 22, 1924, honored President Abraham Lincoln and Elizabeth (Betty) Thomas. Thomas was a free black woman who until her death in 1917 owned the land where the US government built Fort Stevens. Lincoln-Thomas Day was celebrated in many cities across the United States and thus indicates the impact of this battle well beyond the District. Rock Creek Park continues to join with the Alliance, the Military Road School Preservation Trust, and other groups to have annual Lincoln-Thomas Days in September.<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> Joan M. Zenzen, *Battling for Manassas: The 50-Year Preservation Struggle at Manassas National Battlefield Park* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1998), chapters 6, 10.

<sup>63</sup> George Eagle, "Lincoln in Stove Pipe Visits Front in Fort Stevens Battle Ceremony," *Washington Post*, July 12, 1964. Kym Elder, conversation with the author, August 30, 2016.



Figure 31. Abraham Lincoln Reenactor at Fort Stevens  
NPS PHOTO, 1964

The Alliance to Preserve the Civil War Defenses of Washington has contributed to these interpretive programs while also raising the visibility of these sites in the name of preservation. The idea for the Alliance came from comments submitted by the Committee of 100 on the Federal City on the draft Civil War Defenses of Washington management plan. Loretta Neumann worked with attorney Tersh Boasberg and others to submit a substantial set of suggestions and concerns. These comments urged the National Park Service to submit legislation for making the Civil War Defenses of Washington a separate national park unit. Neumann and others also called for the management plan to consider historic preservation, public safety, a Fort Circle Parks Trail for education and recreation, improved public access, visitor services, land acquisition, natural resource needs, and conducting additional studies. Finally, the comments recommended that the National Park Service build a diverse set of partnerships among government, private organizations, and other entities to aid in making the plan a reality.<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> Committee of 100 on the Federal City, Parks and Environment Subcommittee Chair Loretta Neumann to National Capital Regional Director Terry Carlstrom, August 15, 2003, and attached Call to Action on the Fort Circle Parks Draft Management Plan, Committee of 100 file from Loretta Neumann, ROCR Archives.

The process of compiling this report, which included extensive site visits and other research, led Boasberg to suggest the creation of the Alliance. The group was formed in 2008. It initially set two major goals. First, the Alliance wanted to assist the National Park Service in preparing for the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Fort Stevens. Second, the Alliance wanted to spearhead the effort to submit legislation for congressional action to establish the Civil War Defenses of Washington National Historical Park. The Alliance achieved this latter goal when DC Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton (with co-sponsors Rep. Frank Wolf [R-VA], Rep. James Moran [D-VA], and Rep. Donna Edwards [D-MD]) introduced a bill in 2014, 2016, and again in 2018.<sup>65</sup>

The Alliance succeeded in making the 150th anniversary a notable, well-attended event. Neumann recalled that beginning in 2012, the Alliance set up a table at Fort Stevens on the anniversary weekend. Then in 2013, more people came, in part due to dedicated publicity. Neumann contacted local newspapers and had articles published advertising the event. The National Park Service and the Alliance in 2013 held a series of meetings to build relationships with interested individuals and organizations in preparation for 2014. A planning workshop attracted participation from the Washington Area Bicyclist Association, Sierra Club, DC Preservation League, Washington Revels, National Parks Conservation Association, President Lincoln's Cottage, and DC Commission of the Arts and Humanities.<sup>66</sup>

By the anniversary in 2014, the Alliance, led by Neumann, and the National Park Service, led by CWDW Program Manager Kym Elder, had planned several days of commemoration. The National Capital Planning Commission and the National Archives sponsored a talk on Washington's Civil War Forts and Parks. Benjamin Franklin Cooling, the authority on the history of the Civil War Defenses of Washington and the Battle of Stevens, and Neumann spoke with Elder. That evening, Cooling talked about the battle itself and the City of Takoma Park sponsored a presentation with period music, a video, and a reception on the Battle of Fort Stevens and Montgomery County, Maryland. Friday night had a Civil War Historians Round Table with NPS Chief Historian Robert Sutton and the African American Civil War Memorial Executive Director Frank Smith. On Saturday, the American Hiking Society sponsored a seven-mile hike from Battery Kemble to Fort Stevens, stopping at several forts along the way. The commemorative program had former NPS Chief Historian Ed Bearss, among others, speak. Bearss is an acclaimed authority on Civil War history. This event included the firing of a cannon, the first such firing in 150 years. A military encampment, historic walks and talks, children's activities, and period music filled out the day. On Sunday, the commemorative activities continued with living history and walks. The National Park Service closed the weekend with a memorial program at Battleground National Cemetery.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> Loretta Neumann, transcript of oral history interview with the author, September 5, 2017, 8–18, 31–32, ROCR Archives. HR 4003 (2013–2014), HR 4915 (2015–2016), and HR 5023 (2017–2018). Eleanor Holmes Norton, transcript of interview with the author, September 8, 2017, 7–8, ROCR Archives. Draft Alliance for the Preservation of the CWDW Mission Statement, September 17, 2007, Alliance file from Loretta Neumann, ROCR Archives. Susan Claffey and Loretta Neumann, "The Alliance to Preserve CWDW," *The NPS Sentinel* magazine (150th Anniversary 1864/2014), 36. Kate Lucero, "On Eve of Battle's 150th Anniversary, Group Aims to Preserve Civil War Forts," *The Current* (September 11, 2013).

<sup>66</sup> Loretta Neumann, transcript of oral history interview with the author, September 5, 2017, 32–34, ROCR Archives. Lucero, "On Eve of Battle."

<sup>67</sup> Programs to Commemorate 150th Anniversary of Battle of Fort Stevens, Fort Stevens File from Loretta Neumann, ROCR Archives. "Civil War at the City Line," Weekend section of *Washington Post* (July 11, 2014).

The agency expressed satisfaction with the results. Elder exclaimed in the end that “I was almost in tears at one point, that this has all come to fruition.”<sup>68</sup> She remarked that the response from the local community was “phenomenal,” and she was “thrilled” that so many neighbors shared the park’s mutual interest in the area’s history. Rock Creek Park planned to use the event as a training opportunity.<sup>69</sup>

The Alliance also found much to celebrate. The National Park Service hired Elder, Neumann argued, thanks in part to the Alliance’s push. “We’ve gotten the National Park Service to focus on the Defenses more than they ever have in the past,” she said.<sup>70</sup>

Civil War Defenses of Washington Program Manager Kym Elder has overseen many improvements. Elder works administratively through Rock Creek Park and coordinates with senior management and site administrators at Rock Creek Park, George Washington Memorial Parkway, and National Capital Parks—East. She also works with supervisory rangers, park guides, and park rangers from all three units. She has supervised trail repairs and the publication of a hiking guide. Fort Dupont has annual concert series. On National Trails Day, the first Saturday in June, Civil War Defenses of Washington sites have had workshops and work projects. Civil War Defenses of Washington has a dedicated website, distinctive signage at fort sites, and non-personal interpretive media, such as waysides, brochures, and even podcasts for Fort Stevens and Battleground National Cemetery. These are all examples of the value of having a dedicated National Park Service person for the Civil War Defenses of Washington.<sup>71</sup>

The National Park Service completed in 2012 a Long-Range Interpretive Plan for the sites to guide future programming. A key recommendation stated that the Civil War Defenses of Washington should be interpreted as a single unit which would thus raise awareness of and appreciation for the sites. The CWDW Long-Range Interpretive Plan referred to the need for branding to aid in this endeavor. Visitors would also learn about the impact the Civil War Defenses of Washington had on the urban development of the District. This story would include a discussion of African American experiences related to the sites, including Fort Stevens. The CWDW Long-Range Interpretive Plan also recommended new visitor contact approaches, with one being a mobile unit interpretation.<sup>72</sup>

## **Peirce Mill**

Peirce Mill was always been a popular place for interpretation. After its restoration under a Public Works Administration project in 1937, the mill sold flour and cornmeal to visitors and the federal government. Robert Little served as the miller, providing limited information about the mill. The National Park Service did not enhance this interpretation, but the agency did offer activities outside the mill, focusing on nature themes. A National Park Service ranger, for example, led campfire programs in June 1936.<sup>73</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> Kym Elder as quoted by Sarah Kaplan, “Event Honors Key Civil War Battle in DC,” *Washington Post* (July 13, 2014).

<sup>69</sup> Kathryn Kirby, “Battle of Fort Stevens Sesquicentennial Held,” *Inside NPS* (July 15, 2014).

<sup>70</sup> Neumann, quoted in “Profiles in Preservation,” *Hallowed Ground* (Summer 2014), 34.

<sup>71</sup> CWDW, LRIP, 2012, 30, 32–33.

<sup>72</sup> CWDW, LRIP, 2012, 14, 17, 38, 46–48.

<sup>73</sup> Further information on the mill’s operation can be found in Chapter 7. Peirce Mill National Register of Historic Places Register Form, 29. Steve Dryden, *Peirce Mill: Two Hundred Years in the Nation’s Capital* (Washington, DC: Bergamot Books, 2009), 74–75, 77–78. Peirce Mill Cultural Landscape Report (CLR), 2009, 2.34, TIC. Memorandum, Park Ranger Richard Steacy to Supervisor Julia Washburn, January 3, 1997, 3, PEMI–General–Park

The National Park Service offered limited visitor contact during a mill closure in 1958, in which Peirce Mill served as a museum and interpretive center. John Wolf served as the mill's first full-time park ranger, arriving in the late 1950s from his post at the Lincoln Memorial. Wolf worked with miller Raymond Watt, who was not required to dress in period wear or train as an interpreter. Wolf wore his ranger uniform and completed historical research before developing site-specific interpretive programs. He attracted more than 15,000 visitors in 1966, as an example, despite the mill still being closed. A diorama of Peirce Mill and the activation of a set of buhrstones with an electric motor in the basement brought additional interest in 1968. The mill reopened that same year, using municipal water to fuel the mill, in a cost-saving effort, as opposed to creek water.<sup>74</sup>

The 1970s and 1980s proved an exceptionally high visitation period at Peirce Mill, even with the mill closed occasionally due to mechanical failures. The park developed a program similar to what the Old Stone House offered young girls. At Peirce Mill, young boys (or girls) dressed in overalls and suspenders, work shirts, and broad-brimmed black hats. Under adult supervision, they operated the mill's wooden machinery and regulated water levels to grind corn. The National Park Service found both the Old Stone House and Peirce Mill living-history programs exceptionally popular.<sup>75</sup> But mill machinery did break on occasion during this period. The gudgeon wheel (axle) broke in 1981, stopping all milling demonstrations. The agency found more problems in 1982 and kept the mill closed into 1983 but continued to have a park ranger onsite to provide walks and talks and to hand out brochures. More than 500,000 people visited, perhaps driven by the popular desire for simplicity. The agency offered living history demonstrations, in which volunteers dressed in period clothing and demonstrated old-time activities. The 1970s back-to-the-land movement drew young adults and their families to communes or their own acreage to scrape together a living that relied upon growing their own goods and jettisoning twentieth-century luxuries. A historic mill churning out its own flour and cornmeal attracted those who craved the old while staying put in their modern lifestyles.<sup>76</sup>

The National Park Service hired Ted Hazen in 1984, a decision that led to the resurgence of the mill in operation and interpretation. Peirce Mill had stopped turning in 1981, and the agency did not have the estimated \$82,000 (\$242,000 in 2020 dollars) for the needed repairs. The National Park Service still kept the mill open. Hazen came to the job with extensive milling experience in his home state of Pennsylvania, plus additional training in Tennessee and South Carolina. He had milling and waterworks in his blood from his grandfather, who had built a mill near the family home, and his father, a plumber who had worked on mill dams. Hazen set out first to restore the Oliver Evans automated system that moved the grain through the three floors

---

Assns–FOPM: Newsletters and Flyers 1997–1998, Box 15, MRCE. Steacy stated that millers performed milling functions and maintenance of the site. Interpretation and education were secondary responsibilities.

<sup>74</sup> Dryden, *Peirce Mill*, 79–81. Memorandum, Superintendent North National Capital Parks to Division of Interpretation and Visitor Services, Assistant Director (Operations), January 24, 1967, 4; and Memorandum, Superintendent National Capital Parks—North to Director, February 11, 1969, 6, both in File OLST–Reports–Annual Reports 1960–1969, Box 52, MRCE.

<sup>75</sup> Antosca to Wood, November 5, 1971.

<sup>76</sup> Peirce Mill National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Nomination form, 2012, 30. Eleanor Agnew, *Back from the Land: How Young Americans Went to Nature in the 1970s, and Why They Came Back* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2004). ROCR, Statement for Management, 1976, 3, ROCR Nature Center Files. ROCR, Annual Report, 1979, 25, File Admin–Annual Reports 1979, Box 71, MRCE. ROCR, Annual Report, 1980, 50. ROCR, Annual Report, 1981, 47. ROCR, Annual Report, 1982, 41. ROCR, Annual Report, 1983, 45.

of Peirce Mill. Hazen addressed the poor water supply situation by operating the mill in a segmented fashion. He got the mill running again in 1985 and sold the milled flour.<sup>77</sup>

Hazen departed from previous millers by adopting historical interpretation. He dressed as an early-nineteenth-century Pennsylvania laborer, based upon his research. He shared stories about the Peirces and the history of milling. He initiated a Spring Festival in 1987, with stone carving, spinning, rail splitting, and other period activities. Late summer 1987 brought opportunities for visitors to learn how to make paper and lace and play dulcimers. Hazen developed interpretive opportunities that spanned the seasons. In winter, these programs included information about sawmills, the American milling industry, and hand spinning. Spring programs explored indigenous people's lives along Rock Creek and included demonstrations on wheat weaving and basket making. Hazen also offered Children's Day activities, flour grinding, and guided tours. The popularity of these programs attracted more than thirty thousand visitors in 1988. In 1989, Hazen informed visitors about the other mills that had once sat along Rock Creek, making comparisons to Peirce Mill.<sup>78</sup>

The mill broke down again in 1993, this time seemingly for good. The National Park Service did not have the funds to make the necessary repairs, which were extensive and involved basic safety. The waterwheel shaft had broken from decay. In addition, frequent flooding of Rock Creek had rotted basement posts and the main beam above them. Floorboards, windows, and machinery had deteriorated. The agency offered Hazen a new job driving trash trucks. Hazen declined and left.<sup>79</sup>

Richard Abbott had worked as a volunteer under Hazen and spearheaded the effort to start the Friends of Peirce Mill (FOPM). This friends group raised the crucial funds to finance the needed repairs that restarted the mill. The group also worked cooperatively with the National Park Service to offer a wide array of interpretive programming. Open House Days spotlighted the mill and efforts to demonstrate that restoration work was proceeding. Friends of Peirce Mill volunteers obtained training to serve as interpreters.<sup>80</sup>

The National Park Service, with Friends of Peirce Mill, wrote and published a curriculum for visiting schoolchildren. This curriculum had a hands-on approach and focused on such topics as waterpower and gravity. The mill remained closed due to safety concerns. With much of the interior torn up for repairs, Friends of Peirce Mill and the agency held interpretive programs for schoolchildren and others outside the building. When the time came closer for the mill's reopening in 2010–11, Friends of Peirce Mill reached out to teachers to entice them into visiting. Schools have visited every fall and spring since 2011, totaling about several thousand students. Most of these students come from DC schools. Friends of Peirce Mill created five portable interpretive panels that told stories about slavery, the Peirces, and the restoration process. Friends

---

<sup>77</sup> Dryden, *Peirce Mill*, 85–87. Peirce Mill, NRHP, 30. Peirce Mill Reopening, June 1985, File PEMI–History–Events: Reopening of the Mill 1985, Box 11, MRCE. ROCR, Statement for Interpretation, 1983, 7, TIC. ROCR, Statement for Interpretation, 1987, 10, TIC. ROCR, Interpretive Prospectus, 1985, 4, TIC.

<sup>78</sup> Dryden, *Peirce Mill*, 86–91. Peirce Mill, NRHP, 31. Peirce Mill Winter 1989 Programs, Spring 1989 Programs, File PEMI–History–Events; General–History–Events General 1986–1989, Box 11, MRCE. ROCR, Annual Report, 1988, 10. Peirce Mill, NRHP, 31. ROCR, Annual Report, 1989, Interpretation section.

<sup>79</sup> Dryden, *Peirce Mill*, 86–91. Peirce Mill, NRHP, 31. Peirce Mill Winter 1989 Programs, Spring 1989 Programs. ROCR, Annual Report, 1988, 10.

<sup>80</sup> Dryden, *Peirce Mill*, 92. Richard Abbott, transcript of oral history interview with the author, April 12, 2017, 11, ROCR Archives. Agreement between ROCR and Friends of Peirce Mill (FOPM), 2001, 1, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR. Abbott to Bruce Babbitt, June 20, 1997, 2, File PEMI–General–Park Assns: FOPM: Correspondence 1996–1999, Box 15, MRCE.

of Peirce Mill sent these panels to schools and libraries, and they then went into the mill once it reopened. Steve Dryden, who headed Friends of Peirce Mill's education and interpretation effort, also did important research and published a book about the history of Peirce Mill, titled *Peirce Mill: Two Hundred Years in the Nation's Capital*. Friends of Peirce Mill used the book as a fundraiser.<sup>81</sup>

The National Park Service found Friends of Peirce Mill essential to its interpretive efforts at Peirce Mill. Assistant Superintendent Cindy Cox reported in 2002 that three park interpreters had transferred, and the park did not have the remaining staff to conduct interpretive programs. Cox asked Dryden if there were ten Friends of Peirce Mill volunteers who might undergo training and commit to four hours per week. The agency would conduct the training and provide uniforms. Otherwise, the park could only open the mill by appointment. The National Park Service installed a milling history exhibit in Peirce Barn in 2003 and waysides in the Peirce Mill complex in 2013. Friends of Peirce Mill also assisted the agency by paying for school buses, simplifying the contracting process. Sometimes, though, the National Park Service had to rein in Friends of Peirce Mill's enthusiastic plans, reminding the volunteers that the agency had to follow rules and regulations, contracting procedures, and review and monitoring efforts. By 2010, the agency had the Peirce Mill wagon barn, next door to the mill, open five days a week, staffed with a park interpreter. Services included stationed interpretation of historic structures, guided walks and talks, education programs, and informal interpretation. An Eastern National sales outlet provided books and other sources of information about the mill and park.<sup>82</sup>

### Other Locations

Park management offered an array of interpretive programs at Meridian Hill Park in the 1980s. A park ranger gave a forty-five-minute guided tour, covering the history of the park and an overview of the park's architecture and statuary, on the first Saturday of each month. A ranger also provided informal interpretation on Wednesdays and Saturdays in the afternoon. The park reached out to nearby residents of the Roosevelt Hotel for Senior Citizens and gave special programs, including watching films, and a tour. Rock Creek Park interpretive staff developed a slide program and tape narrative for offsite interpretation and to foster further interest in the preservation and protection of Meridian Hill Park.<sup>83</sup>

By the 2000s, Meridian Hill Park had a new interpretation. A cell phone tour stopped at each of the sculptures. However, access to the phone number was limited to the park's website or finding a paper poster in two park locations. A seasonal interpreter roved the park once a month and gave informal interpretation.<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup> NPS kept the mill open to visitors despite its inoperative status. ROCR, Annual Report, 1995, 3, TIC. See also, Friends of Peirce Mill, Newsletter, *Milling About*, "Open House Days at the Mill," Spring/Summer 2009, 2, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR. Dryden, transcript of interview, 13–15. FOPM Minutes, Annual Meeting, November 6, 1999, 2, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR. Maggie Zadorozny, transcript of oral history interview with the author, January 13, 2017, 13, ROCR Files. Steve Dryden, transcript of oral history interview with the author, December 21, 2016, 14–15, ROCR Archives.

<sup>82</sup> Assistant Superintendent Cindy Cox to Steve Dryden, February 6, 2002, 2, File PEMI–Cult Res–PTM: Pilot Project 2001–2006, Box, 8, MRCE. ROCR, Annual Report, 2003, 1, TIC. Zadorozny, transcript of interview, 57, 59. ROCR, LRIP, 2010, 15, 28, 31.

<sup>83</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 1982, 37. ROCR, Annual Report, 1983, 32. ROCR, Annual Report, 1984, 49. ROCR, Annual Report, 1985, 16. ROCR, Annual Report, 1988, 11. ROCR, Annual Report, 1989, Interpretation Section.

<sup>84</sup> ROCR, LRIP, 20.

National Park Service interpretation of Dumbarton Oaks Park has largely focused upon nature, despite its importance as the designed landscape of noted landscape architect Beatrix Farrand. Guided nature walks began in 1941. In May 1962, the park hosted a ceremony remembering the death of Henry David Thoreau. One hundred people attended, including poets Robert Frost and Louis Untermeyer, Chief Justice Earl Warren, Justice William O. Douglas, and Interior Secretary Stewart Udall. Untermeyer remarked at one point that Thoreau would have been “staggered” by the beauty of the park. The Secretary of the Wilderness Society, Howard Zahniser, called Dumbarton Oaks Park a primitive forest area, suggesting that the ceremony highlighted the natural qualities of the park, in opposition to its historic designed landscape. The National Park Service consistently fed this perception by failing to mention the historic designed landscape in press releases and park literature. The lack of proper maintenance over the course of decades meant that this landscape deteriorated and was subsumed by weeds and other unchecked vegetation. By the 2000s, an occasional ranger-guided tour and a cell phone stop on a larger tour gave some interpretation. In 2016, the Interpretation Division obtained a small Every Kid in a Park grant to transport fourth-grade students from three schools to Dumbarton Oaks Park. The students learned about the park’s natural and cultural history and collaborated with their peers to design a three-dimensional landscape. The initial program was successful enough to obtain another grant to support four schools participating the following year.<sup>85</sup>

Visitors to Montrose Park had the opportunity for natural and historical interpretation. The National Park Service installed a wayside in 1985 to explain the history of the area and the park’s establishment. Visitors could also take guided spring wildflower walks and enjoy seasonal natural history programs. In 1988, visitors had the opportunity on Saturdays during warm-weather months to take a guided walk. The Ranger discussed the history of the Ropewalk and subsequent highlights of the history of Montrose Park. The agency placed a wayside at Montrose Park to describe nineteenth-century rope manufacturing using machinery like that in the Richard Parrott Ropewalk.<sup>86</sup>

Georgetown Waterfront Park and Francis Scott Key Park have had limited historical interpretive opportunities. For Georgetown Waterfront Park, granite panels picture the waterfront’s history as an active port. Waysides accompany these panels to describe the history. Francis Scott Key’s house once stood at the approach to Key Bridge and adjacent to Georgetown Waterfront Park, but the federal government allowed for its dismantling during bridge construction. The pieces of the house were pilfered over time, resulting in the loss of the house. Occasional roving interpreters visit both sites.<sup>87</sup>

Some historic sites have little to no interpretation. The Joaquin Miller cabin had been moved from Meridian Hill in 1912 to its present location in Reservation 339. Miller had been an eccentric poet known for his writings on the Sierra Nevada, among other topics. He traveled extensively, providing further inspiration for his work. In Rock Creek Park, his cabin has lacked interpretive signage. Conduit Road School House on MacArthur Boulevard NW is the last remaining one-room schoolhouse in the District. Discovery Creek Children’s Museum of Washington Inc. was a long-time renter until 2009–10. This organization offered early childhood environmental education programs and summer camps. As of 2021, the National Park Service has not installed an interpretive panel explaining the history of the building. Klinge Mansion has

---

<sup>85</sup> Dumbarton Oaks Park, Cultural Landscape Report, 53–55, 100–101, TIC. ROCR, LRIP, 21. Zadorozny, transcript of interview, 8–9.

<sup>86</sup> ROCR, Interpretive Prospectus, 1985, 6. ROCR, Annual Report, 1988, 12.

<sup>87</sup> ROCR, LRIP, 17–18.

served as a residence, staff housing, nonprofit headquarters, Rock Creek Park nature center, and currently park headquarters. There is a wayside explaining the history and lineage of the Peirce-Klingles. The Civilian Conservation Corps built the Lodge House, located on Beach Drive near Military Road, in the 1930s. The building has provided space for an array of administrative uses, with its current use as a US Park Police substation. Park Police give visitors basic information and orientation services.<sup>88</sup>

Rock Creek Park has offered some interpretation of its archeological sites. In 2008, the National Park Service approved Louis Berger's archeological identification and evaluation study for the park. The National Park Service Archeology in the Parks website summarizes this study on its webpage. In 2010, the Rock Creek Park Nature Center featured an exhibit of artifacts recovered from a quarry that was once behind the nature center. In 2021, the Nature Center displayed replica prehistoric stone tools showing the different stages of tool manufacture. Additionally, since 2010, the National Capital Region's Regional Archeology Program has offered a multi-webpage exploration of findings from an archeological dig of the Whitehurst Freeway Corridor, conducted in 1996–97 for the DC Department of Public Works and under a National Park Service permit.<sup>89</sup>

## Conclusion

Interpretation at Rock Creek Park's historical and cultural sites has fit within the changes in National Park Service interpretive efforts. Interpreters have sought to connect visitors to an array of resources and develop a commitment to their conservation. Twenty-first-century interpretation has greater professionalization, with certification, training, and evaluation. Rock Creek Park's diverse sites have required park rangers to gain expertise in different time periods and settings. Funding limitations and visitor turnout have shaped interpretive programs. Some historical and cultural sites have seen nature interpretation take precedence at times. Friends groups have proven critical for maintaining public contact and disseminating information.<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>88</sup> ROCR, LRIP, 17, 21–22.

<sup>89</sup> ROCR, LRIP, 27. NPS Archeology Program, <https://www.nps.gov/archeology/sites/npsites/rockCreek.htm>, accessed March 16, 2018. Prehistoric Landscapes of the Nation's Capital, [https://www.nps.gov/rap/archeology/ROCR\\_phl.htm](https://www.nps.gov/rap/archeology/ROCR_phl.htm), accessed March 16, 2018.

<sup>90</sup> Zadorozny, transcript of interview, 12–13.

## CHAPTER 11 Nature Interpretation

Rock Creek Park Education Specialist Maggie Zadorozny described in 2017 one recent group of visitors to the Rock Creek Park Nature Center, saying, “It was great to see a family yesterday with young children.” She described how each family member had hiking poles and a day pack, even the smallest of the children. She went on to say, “They were all just kind of pumping up themselves up the hill, coming to the Nature Center.” She waited a moment and concluded, “You can’t start them too young.”<sup>1</sup>

The Rock Creek Park Nature Center and Planetarium is command central for nature interpretation for Rock Creek Park. Here, visitors learn about the different communities of animals and plants that make the park their home. Children have had the chance to watch a beehive in action or meet injured or recovering animals that live at the Nature Center. Visitors can learn about the solar system. People can apply their newfound knowledge as they exit the Nature Center and explore one of the nearby hiking trails, maybe with hiking poles in hand and day packs on their backs.

Nature interpretation within Rock Creek Park, with its ninety-nine administrative units, shares the wonders of natural resources found within its urban setting with a diverse audience. Visitors learn about the natural world and the special natural communities that comprise Rock Creek Park’s administrative units. Park staff members develop interpretive programming to nurture the mental, physical, and spiritual well-being of visitors. Park interpretation informs visitors with the hope that they will become ambassadors for and stewards of Rock Creek Park.

However, the multitude of natural features in non-contiguous locations makes interpretation difficult. Limited park staff must conduct wide-ranging research to create educational programming and other interpretive tools. Partnerships with schools, nonprofit organizations, and friends groups have made a difference in extending the reach of park interpretation.

This chapter looks at the different ways Rock Creek Park has done nature interpretation and some of the challenges Rock Creek Park staff have faced in communicating to visitors. Rock Creek Park’s first nature center was at Klinge Mansion and was moved to its current location in 1960. Both nature centers have had exhibits, live animals, and nearby hiking trails. A key drawing card of the current nature center is the planetarium, which local star watchers from the National Capital Astronomers Association had advocated for. Over time, Nature Center staff have worked with volunteers to reach out to different audiences, including non-English speakers, special needs individuals, and other groups. The chapter ends with a description of the Bridging the Watershed program, an educational outreach partnership between Rock Creek Park and the Alice Ferguson Foundation. Bridging the Watershed gives high school students the opportunity to do science and collect data at national park sites in the Washington metropolitan area. Students learn about the local Potomac ecology while completing scientific studies related to their school curricula.

### Interpretive Challenges

Interpretation in Rock Creek Park proper (Reservation 339) faces many challenges. Multiple access points to the park’s natural areas and recreational venues means that visitors may enter without full recognition that they are inside a national park unit. Many people do not stop at

---

<sup>1</sup> Maggie Zadorozny, transcript of oral history interview with the author, January 13, 2017, 6–7, ROCR Archives.

the Rock Creek Park Nature Center and Planetarium. They may not see a wayside or ask questions of a park ranger or volunteer. They are users who might hike the Valley Trail along Rock Creek or play a pick-up soccer game on the ballfields off 16th Street NW. In scenarios like these, visitors do not have the opportunity to learn about the landscape and its resources. Nor do they benefit from this knowledge to reduce any actions that are potentially harmful to the natural setting. Over the years, park interpretive plans have made these two points important goals for interpretive planning. But many visitors do not have the benefit of this interpretation to reflect upon their experiences and act positively for resource protection.<sup>2</sup>

Decreases in interpretive staff, according to the Rock Creek Park Long-Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP), have “severely reduced” the potential for learning about the park.<sup>3</sup> Between 1979 and 2008, twelve interpretation and education staff decreased to five. Education Specialist Maggie Zadorozny, who started at Rock Creek Park in 1995, described the effects. Once seasonal visitors left at the end of summer, the park typically assigned one person to Peirce Mill, one person to Old Stone House, one to the Nature Center, and herself to run the educational programming with the schools. A supervisory park ranger worked out of the headquarters building and thus did not provide public programs. Staff could not sustain this situation, if only from a safety perspective, and thus the Nature Center, Peirce Mill, and Old Stone House went to five-day-a-week operations. Interpretation at the Nature Center has focused upon school groups Wednesdays through Fridays and public programming on Saturdays and Sundays. This shortened schedule has meant fewer chances for public interaction. Nature Center visitation went down, from 49,000 people in 1979 to 32,000 in 2008. Staff also did not have the flexibility to conduct roving interpretation. The latter would have presented an effective way to reach out to those visitors who needed education about the park they did not know they had entered.<sup>4</sup>

Most visitors (more than 95 percent) do not go to the park’s three primary visitor contact sites—the Nature Center, Old Stone House, and Peirce Mill. Park visitation, according to the 2010 Long-Range Interpretive Plan, has nearly doubled from 1979 (1,150,000) to 2008 (2,076,466). These two measurements indicate that Rock Creek Park must find ways to educate people about the park’s national significance. Twelve million commuters, for example, see the park as scenery, while weekend picnickers view the park as a recreational asset.<sup>5</sup>

Visitor composition and usage patterns reinforce these interpretive challenges. A 1999 visitor study by the University of Idaho captured a picture of who came to the park. Eighty-nine percent came from the DC-Maryland-Virginia area, and 75 percent were making a repeat visit. They came predominantly to exercise (61 percent), escape from the city (47 percent), spend time with family and friends (37 percent), and find solitude (30 percent). People largely spent one to two hours in the park. They arrived by car if visiting interpretive centers, concessions, or picnic areas. Trail and Beach Drive users often arrived via foot, bicycle, or inline skates. Seventy-four percent identified as white and 24 percent as African American. Almost all identified as from the United States. People saw the park’s most important facilities as garbage/recycling, Carter Barron Amphitheater, and the trails—not any of the interpretive centers. They most frequently

---

<sup>2</sup> ROCR, Statement for Interpretation, 1983, 29, DSC, TIC. ROCR, Interpretive Prospectus, 1985, 11, TIC. ROCR, LRIP, 2010, 5, 9.

<sup>3</sup> ROCR, ROCR and Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway GMP and EIS, vol. 1 (2005), 162.

<sup>4</sup> ROCR, LRIP, 9–10. Zadorozny, transcript of interview, 13–14.

<sup>5</sup> ROCR, LRIP, 10–11.

used the trails, roads, restrooms, and parking. The features and qualities people rated highest were beauty, recreational opportunities, and clean air and water.<sup>6</sup>

Friends groups have stepped in to provide vital help and support. From as early as 1981, FORCE (Friends of Rock Creek's Environment) volunteers were instrumental in conducting interpretive walks while also completing such resource protection actions as removing exotic species and repairing trails. FORCE eventually became the Rock Creek Conservancy, another volunteer group, which has leveraged its on-the-ground cleanup work to educate the public about Rock Creek and the park. Friends of Peirce Mill successfully led the restoration effort that brought the mill back to life. During its fundraising and repair work, and into the present, this friends group has partnered with the National Park Service to offer educational programs for school groups and present public programs. Former Cultural Resources Program Manager Simone Monteleone noted that volunteers from this friends group shared their passion about the mill with students. Friends of Meridian Hill took an expansive view on interpretation, using music as one way to connect residents to the park and its history. Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy has sponsored an environmental education program to foster stewardship by interweaving play and information.<sup>7</sup>

Having volunteers lead aspects of park interpretation has its challenges. Park staff must ensure that interpretive goals are met and information is consistent with what the park presents. Such coordination with these groups necessarily takes already limited staff time, an immediate burden, even though the result is a plus for interpretation. A larger issue potentially looms. Friends groups might shape interpretation in ways different from the park. Some steps can minimize such a possibility. Cooperative agreements lay out the fundamental relationship and expectations. Regular meetings allow National Park Service staff and friends to share ideas and discuss issues. The fact that friends groups are often more nimble than agency staff, who have bureaucratic restrictions, has also offered avenues to try new approaches.<sup>8</sup>

The changing composition of populations living in adjacent areas is another interpretive challenge. Staff members recognize, as noted in the Long-Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP), that they need to find effective communication channels to educate these visitors about using and protecting park resources. The District's racial composition has fallen from 61 percent African American in 1970 to 44.5 percent African American in 2020. According to the LRIP, with many immigrants moving into nearby neighborhoods, park staff have had to find ways to overcome potential language barriers. Staff also have had to find ways to educate new park visitors about preserving park resources.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Margaret Littlejohn, Rock Creek Park Visitor Study, Report 112 Visitor Services Project (1999), Report Summary, TIC. ROCR, LRIP, 9.

<sup>7</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 1981, 14, File Admin—Annual Reports 1981, Box 71, Museum Resource Center (MRCE). All MRCE files are from the ROCR Collection. Rock Creek Conservancy, Clean Water. Healthy Parks: Strategic Plan, 2013–2015, 8–11. ROCR, LRIP, 30. Steve Dryden, transcript of oral history interview with the author, December 21, 2016, 13–15, ROCR Archives. Simone Monteleone, transcript of oral history interview with the author, December 22, 2016, 7, ROCR Archives. Lindsey Millstein and Lou Slade, transcript of oral history interview with the author, May 5, 2017, 45, ROCR Archives. Steve Coleman, transcript of oral history interview with the author, April 24, 2017, 20–21, 30, ROCR Archives.

<sup>8</sup> Hal K. Rothman explores these issues, within the context of Alcatraz, in his book *The New Urban Park: Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Civic Environmentalism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 160–64.

<sup>9</sup> DC Health Matters,

<https://www.dchealthmatters.org/index.php?module=demographicdata&controller=index&action=index>, accessed October 2, 2020. ROCR, LRIP, 11.

Park staff directed efforts to other special populations for the 1985 Interpretive Prospectus (IP). A significant concern was accommodating people with disabilities. Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act guaranteed certain rights to people with disabilities, and its codification in federal government regulations by the early 1980s meant that federal agencies made necessary and appropriate recommendations. The 1985 Rock Creek Park Interpretive Prospectus called for staff to evaluate labels for readability, develop recorded programs for trails and major interpretive sites, and create alternative interpretive experiences for inaccessible sites. The prospectus also identified citizen groups of different educational, social, civic, and religious emphases as important for outreach.<sup>10</sup>

### **Rock Creek Park Nature Center**

Rock Creek Park has had two nature centers. The first one, located at Klinge Mansion, operated from October 7, 1956, to December 31, 1959. The second and still operating one, the Rock Creek Park Nature Center and Planetarium, opened on June 4, 1960, where a former caretaker's residence had been located near the park's maintenance yard and horse center. The Klinge Mansion Nature Center used four rooms for exhibits and displays. National Capital Parks staff designed and constructed the exhibits, offering electronic quiz games to identify mammals, birds, and plants in Rock Creek Park. Children could touch rocks, feel snake skins, or see live animals and plants. The Nature Center had its own beehive for observation. Visitors could walk a self-guided nature trail and see outdoor exhibits in the immediate area.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> ROCR, Interpretive Prospectus, 1985, 11, 16.

<sup>11</sup> NCR Admin History, 96–97. Barry Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 4, section “The Pierce-Klinge House and the Nature Center.” Scott Einberger, *A History of Rock Creek Park: Wilderness and Washington, DC* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2014), 164–65. Nature Center Closes December 31, NPS Press Release, December 10, 1959, Nature Center Materials, ROCR.



Figure 32. Park Ranger Shows a Snake at the Klinge Mansion Nature Center  
NPS PHOTO, 1959



Figure 33. Students inside the Klinge Mansion Nature Center  
NPS PHOTO, N.D. (CIRCA 1959)



Figure 34. Multiple Tables inside the Klinge Mansion Nature Center  
NPS PHOTO, N.D. (CIRCA 1959)

The succeeding Rock Creek Park Nature Center opened in 1960 as part of the National Park Service's Mission 66 parks improvement effort. Mission 66 accommodated record numbers of visitors and instituted visitor centers to inform the public about national park units. The National Park Service opted not to use the term "visitor center" for the building in Rock Creek Park, perhaps because the new Nature Center replaced the one at Klinge Mansion. With its location tucked into the woods, the new Nature Center also did not have the typically visible location of other Mission 66 visitor centers. The Rock Creek Park Nature Center thus represented a departure from National Park Service Mission 66 planning, as noted by former Rock Creek Park Cultural Resource Program Manager Simone Monteleone, serving as a natural oasis in the middle of the city as opposed to a spotlight for activity and information. The main level of the building contains a lobby and exhibit hall, along with an auditorium and staff offices on the lower level. At its opening, the exhibit room had interactive displays like the ones found in Klinge Mansion. Children could raise flaps in one exhibit, showing a scene along Rock Creek, and learn about a variety of plants and animals. Electronic quizzes lit up when students made the proper correlation between a name and an illustration. "Feel it" and "Smell it" boxes had visitors identify a rock or aromatic plant, with the answer found by raising the lid. The new

Nature Center also had live animals, a beehive, and aquariums. Max the barred owl, unable to fly after a car collision, remained a visitor favorite from the mid-1970s until his death in 1991.<sup>12</sup>



Figure 35. Outside the Rock Creek Park Nature Center, with Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall in the Center  
NPS PHOTO, 1961

---

<sup>12</sup> NCR Admin History, 97. Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 4, section “The Pierce-Kingle House and the Nature Center.” Einberger, *Rock Creek Park*, 165–66. Monteleone, transcript of interview, 17. Cornelius Heine, Assistant Regional Director, Conservation, Interpretation, and Use to D. Robert Hakela, Visitor Information Specialist, US Department of Agriculture, January 10, 1964, File D3415 Nature Center ROCR 1/1/63 to 1/1/65, Box 27, Acc. 68A-3201, Washington Federal Records Center (WFRC). Jeff Hayward, Second Report from August Visitor Study, December 28, 1982, 6, TIC.



Figure 36. Inside the Rock Creek Park Nature Center  
NPS PHOTO, 1961

National Capital Parks naturalists had been experimenting since 1940 with ways to interpret Rock Creek Park for schoolchildren and adults. Limited availability meant that National Park Service staff often had to turn down requests from schools for conducted nature walks. In response, naturalists developed a Junior Nature Leaders course. Initially, fifth and sixth graders took the course, which had indoor sessions and field excursions. By 1945, interest had grown so that junior high and high school students also attended, and adults had their own training sessions. Five hundred people participated in 1945 alone. National Park Service naturalists hoped that the courses would heighten appreciation for park values, encourage more visitation, and reduce vandalism. By 1948, however, the National Park Service found that too few students from a single school completed the training program to justify establishing pupil-led nature trips. Even when enough students did have such training, schools often did not follow-through. In response, the agency streamlined the program with fewer indoor and outdoor sessions and directed the course, now called the Junior Naturalist Training Course, to individuals. School systems in the District, Maryland, and Virginia all supported the change. The training program continued as late as 1966 when Rock Creek Park naturalists changed the name to the Woodsmen's Club.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Donald Edward McHenry, "Junior Nature Leaders Today and Tomorrow," *Recreation* (June 1944): 123–25, 164. W. Drew Chick Jr., "Junior Naturalists," *The Science Counselor* (December 1952): 133–34. Memorandum,

Along with the training course, National Capital Parks (NCP) rangers experimented with elementary schools to encourage teachers to go on field excursions to nearby parks. National Capital Parks naturalists in 1950 initiated a pilot project with Jackson School in Georgetown. The naturalists and school educators reviewed the science curriculum and determined where natural resources at nearby Montrose Park could enrich student studies. On field trips to the park, adults encouraged schoolchildren to use their powers of observation to see how the park changed over the seasons. Students then wrote and spoke about their observations, made graphs and charts, and completed art projects. The sixth-grade class wrote and produced a radio program based upon their field excursions to Montrose Park, and the third- and fourth-graders wrote and presented a ballet in the park. The educators prepared a prospectus for distribution throughout the DC school system, and the Jackson School principal appeared at several conferences and training sessions to talk about the program. National Capital Parks naturalists completed additional limited studies with other schools using other city parks, providing applicable methods and techniques with minimal assistance. National Park Service naturalists followed up on this direct training with short articles for teachers, guiding them in taking students out to a nearby park and observing nature.<sup>14</sup>

National Capital Parks staff sought more ways to interpret Rock Creek Park (and the larger Washington, DC, environs) for children, opening the Nature Center in Klinge Mansion as a pilot project. Here, National Park Service staff could test different interpretive approaches.<sup>15</sup> Basic structural problems hindered the project, though. In 1963, Interior Secretary Stewart Udall wrote a letter about the Klinge Mansion nature center, responding to an inquiry about possibly using the mansion as a children's museum. Interior Secretary Udall wrote that NPS had found the rooms in the mansion small, the building could not be heated sufficiently, and mildew was a recurring problem in the basement. Udall also pointed out that the approach road to Klinge Mansion was narrow and steep, and there was insufficient parking. Neighbors on Williamsburg Lane, which led up to the mansion, had submitted "constant and increasing strong complaint[s]" about the intrusive automobile and school bus traffic, in addition to trespassing by students since there were no sidewalks.<sup>16</sup> Secondary sources suggest that the wealthy white neighbors on Williamsburg Lane opposed the presence of African American students visiting the Nature Center.<sup>17</sup>

The Rock Creek Park Nature Center sits away from residential areas and offers plenty of space for parking. But it also follows the approach used in siting Mission 66 visitor centers, placing the Rock Creek Park Nature Center along Glover Road near its intersection with heavily used Military Road. The Nature Center thus serves as an easily accessible orientation point and helps to concentrate day-use facilities, including Rock Creek Stables, at one location. National

---

Superintendent North National Capital Parks to Division of Interpretation and Visitor Services, Assistant Director (Operations), January 24, 1967, Information and Interpretive Services Annual Narrative Report, 1966, 11, File OLST-Reports-Annual Reports 1960-1969, Box 52, MRCE.

<sup>14</sup> H. Raymond Gregg, "Park Users—Junior Grade," *Parks and Recreation* (June 1950): 194–97. W. Drew Chick, Jr., "Autumn Adventures," *The Science Counselor* (March 1952): 27–28.

<sup>15</sup> NCR Admin History, 96. Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 4, section "The Pierce-Klinge House and the Nature Center."

<sup>16</sup> Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall to Lloyd Hinton, President, Children's Museum of Washington, March 22, 1963, 1, File Parks and Sites, Office of the Secretary, Rock Creek Park, Part 2, Box 334, Record Group (RG) 48, Central Classified Files, Archives II, NARA.

<sup>17</sup> Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 4, section "The Pierce-Klinge House and the Nature Center." Einberger, *Rock Creek Park*, 165.

Park Service architect William Haussmann designed the Nature Center around a former caretaker's residence. He incorporated the modernistic aesthetic typical of Mission 66 architecture, such as horizontal lines, shallow shed roofs, ribbon windows, and irregular-course stonework. He concealed the building's massing by taking advantage of the hillside. Inside, the Nature Center mimicked Mission 66 visitor center circulation layouts, with visitors entering the lobby and seeing first the information desk. Park staff could then direct visitors to the exhibit room, auditorium, planetarium, or outside trails. The exhibit room had large windows and a viewing deck, typical of Mission 66 visitor centers. The Rock Creek Park Nature Center also had administrative offices, making the building a multipurpose space—another feature of this era's architecture.<sup>18</sup>



*Figure 37. Caretaker's Cottage That Became Rock Creek Park Nature Center*  
NPS PHOTO, N.D.

Nature Center exhibits have changed over the years to meet new interpretive approaches and keep frequent visitors engaged with new material. A 1974 interpretive concept report for the Nature Center stated that many residents knew the exhibits by heart, as most dated to 1960, and scanned them only to check for new items or animals. New interpretive ideas, new concepts in exhibit design, and new materials and fabrication techniques made the existing Nature Center exhibits “obsolete,” according to the report. The 1960 exhibits emphasized identification and

---

<sup>18</sup> Haussmann was the chief architect of the restoration of Old Stone House and the design of Carter Barron Amphitheater and Thompson Boat Center. ROCR NRHP Nomination form, 2014, section 8, pp. 53–54.

taxonomy. The report recommended that the new exhibits instead “excite the visitor to the wonders of the natural world” and raise awareness about the “the great welter of detail” in the natural world.<sup>19</sup> The National Park Service closed the Nature Center between June 1980 and February 1981 to complete major renovations and install twenty-five new nature exhibits in the main exhibit hall. The rehabilitation project included updating the heating and cooling system, increasing energy efficiency, improving acoustics in assembly areas, and replacing flooring.<sup>20</sup>

The 1980 exhibits proved problematic despite their popularity. Visitors could press a button and make an animal appear in a diorama of a forest floor. Another exhibit allowed visitors to press a button and see a slide show of the natural succession of an open field to an old-growth forest. Visitors could stack blocks of different plants and animals to create a food-chain pyramid. These interactive opportunities frequently broke down. The park relied upon outside contractors to maintain and repair the exhibits, prompting a re-design. By 1987, the Nature Center had brand-new and less technology-dependent exhibits. These exhibits combined live and stuffed animals with models and elaborate color graphics to describe the biological habitats within Rock Creek Park. However, these new Rock Creek Park exhibits had their own flaws. According to the 2005 Rock Creek Park Long-Range Interpretive Plan, the 1987 exhibits were based upon those at Great Smoky Mountains National Park and thus did not provide specific information about Rock Creek Park.<sup>21</sup> Former Cultural Resources Specialist Monteleone recalled her embarrassment when taking her kids to see the visitor center at Great Smoky Mountains National Park and having her kids recognize how similar the exhibits were to those at the Rock Creek Park Nature Center. She later chuckled that the two exhibits were “literally” the same, except that the one in Great Smoky Mountains National Park had a bear and the Rock Creek Park one had an eagle. The exhibits also did not reflect Rock Creek Park’s interpretive themes or critical issues.<sup>22</sup>

Rock Creek Park made changes to other areas of the Nature Center over the years. In 1995, park staff incorporated a multimedia computer system to teach children about urban stream and forest ecology. Technological changes in computers from 1980 (when the Nature Center exhibits had caused so many repair issues) to the 1990s made such an addition to the interpretive program possible. In 1998, thanks to a National Park Foundation and Coca-Cola Corporation grant, the interpretive staff worked with Harpers Ferry Interpretive Design Center to create a Discovery Center in the Nature Center’s lower lobby. The Discovery Center engaged upper-elementary and middle-school aged students and their families. This interactive, bilingual exhibit incorporated multi-sensory discovery elements.<sup>23</sup>

The auditorium (also called the assembly room) has been the site of slide programs, films, demonstrations, and public talks over the years. Programming changed with the seasons, so that curious youngsters and adults might learn about snowflakes during the winter and spring peepers during the spring. Beginning with the Nature Center’s 1960 opening, auditorium programs involved tape recordings, slide shows, films, and automatic projection equipment. Naturalists might combine a demonstration on birdhouse building, for example, along with

---

<sup>19</sup> Interpretive Concept for Rock Creek Nature Center, August 1974, 3, 5, Rock Creek Nature Center materials, ROCR.

<sup>20</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 1980, 47, File Admin–Annual Reports 1980, Box 71, MRCE. ROCR, Annual Report, 1981, 43, File Admin–Annual Reports 1981, Box 71, MRCE.

<sup>21</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 1987, 13, TIC. NCR Admin History, 97–98. D. Geoffrey Hayward, Visitor Studies for Rock Creek Nature Center proposal, 1982, 1, TIC. ROCR, LRIP, 14.

<sup>22</sup> Monteleone, transcript of interview, 18.

<sup>23</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 1998, 4, TIC. ROCR, Annual Report, 1995, 3, File General–History–Admin–Personnel–Structure and Functions 1987–97, Box 72, MRCE. ROCR, LRIP, 14.

sharing recorded bird sounds and showing a Disney film on water birds. By 1969, visitors could watch a fifteen-minute slide show, called the *Rock Creek Park Story*, about Washington's natural areas through the seasons and the park's recreational activities. In late 1982, Rock Creek Park premiered a seventeen-minute film about the park, with emphasis upon what visitors might do. Activities highlighted included bicycling and horseback riding. Eventually, Rock Creek Park retired this film, being so dated in its coverage.<sup>24</sup>

By the 2010s, the National Park Service had outfitted the Nature Center with updated technology. Flat-screen TVs in the lobby, exhibit room, and outside the planetarium showed PowerPoint presentations about such topics as deer management or about what is happening in the heavens during the season. The auditorium around 2014 had all-new AV (audiovisual) equipment installed with a new in-ceiling LCD-projector, new computer, new sound system, and a new screen. Everything runs off an iPad, which sometimes encounters glitches in communicating with the equipment. But when the system runs, the presentation is great, according to Education Specialist Maggie Zadorozny.<sup>25</sup>

### **Planetarium**

Rock Creek Park has the only planetarium, which is connected to the park's Nature Center and opened in 1960, within the entire National Park Service. Bill Yeaman, a longtime park employee who had started at Rock Creek Park in 1972 in the interpretive division, noted that the National Capital Astronomers Association (NCA) had lobbied for the planetarium. Bob McCracken, who had served as NCA president, had been a driving force. National Capital Astronomer's mission sought to promote interest in, knowledge of, and education in astronomy and the related sciences. The organization established in 1959 an Education and Schools Advisory Committee to facilitate the teaching of astronomy in area schools and have National Capital Astronomers members serve as resources for teachers. McCracken was a founding member of the committee. The DC science supervisor particularly wanted to improve the District's science curriculum by including specialized topics such as astronomy. McCracken and another member taught an astronomy course to local science teachers. Members held star parties for teachers to encourage them to have such stargazing with their students. National Capital Astronomers had, for a long time, fostered young people's interest in astronomy with its Junior Division efforts. National Capital Astronomers had a relationship with the Recreation Program of the National Capital Parks, offering the Exploring the Sky program with their telescopes and cameras.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> ROCR, Nature Center schedule, Summer 1960; Spring 1961; Winter 1969–70, Nature Center programs, Nature Center materials, ROCR. ROCR, Annual Report, 1982, B-34, File Admin–Annual Reports, 1982, Box 71, MRCE. ROCR, Interpretive Prospectus, 1985, 3, TIC.

<sup>25</sup> Zadorozny, transcript of interview, 74–75, 78.

<sup>26</sup> Einberger, *Rock Creek Park*, 166. National Capital Astronomers Association, *Star Dust* newsletter, March 1959, 2; September 1959, 7, 12; August 1959, 1; July 1959, 3; February 1960, National Capital Astronomers website, [http://capitalastronomers.org/SD\\_year/](http://capitalastronomers.org/SD_year/), accessed June 11, 2018. Robert Henry McCracken, Obituary, American Astronomical Society, <https://aas.org/obituaries/robert-henry-mccracken-1921-1996>, accessed June 5, 2018.



*Figure 38. Planetarium*

*NPS PHOTO, N.D.*

The planetarium is a major draw for the Nature Center, driven in part by international events. The space race between the United States and the Soviet Union had started in October 1957 when the Soviets launched Sputnik, the first satellite in space. The US followed in January 1958 with its own satellite, Explorer 1. In 1961, Russian Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin (April) and Alan Shepard (May) became the first humans in space. That same year, President John F. Kennedy challenged the US space program to put a person on the moon by the end of the decade. The National Aeronautics and Space Agency accomplished this goal in July 1969 when Neil Armstrong and “Buzz” Aldrin took the first human steps on the moon’s surface. Planetarium programs incorporated information about space exploration. The fall 1961 planetarium program, *The Green Planet*, for example, included a talk about satellites placed in space by humans and the photos of the earth transmitted from them. The winter 1961–62 schedule took planetarium visitors on an imaginary rocket ship to view neighboring planets.<sup>27</sup>

Programming has relied upon a combination of the planetarium mechanical system and the skills and interests of interpreters over the years. The planetarium used first a mechanical A1 and then a mechanical A4 projector (installed in 1970) until 2009 when “Ms. Seymour,” a Spitz SciDome video projector, replaced the forty-year-old system. Ms. Seymour, as the park calls the new system, simulates the night sky, reproduces celestial phenomena, and shows movies and multimedia presentations. Ms. Seymour is mechanically easier to run than the previous system, but it does require interpreters to have more technological skill.<sup>28</sup> The new digital system prompted “rave reviews” from visitors.<sup>29</sup>

Across the board, interpreters have referred to two major themes in their planetarium programs. First, they have talked to audience members about light pollution in the city and how that decreases the visibility of stars. The Ms. Seymour system can easily switch between light pollution and a dark night sky to demonstrate the stark difference. Second, interpreters have reminded listeners that the Sun is the engine that runs Earth. The park has typically offered a planetarium program for children as young as four years old and then other programming for ages seven and above. Topics have included the planets, mythological stories related to constellations, and specifics about planet Earth and its movements.<sup>30</sup>

### **Multiple Audiences**

Rock Creek Park staff members have sought ways to interest different population groups in its Nature Center and planetarium programming. The Nature Center has largely attracted regional visitors, from both the city proper and the surrounding suburbs. Only a small percentage of visitors come from other parts of the country or foreign lands. School groups and organized groups, such as scout troops, account for half of the visitation, and families or individuals make up the rest. Overall, Rock Creek Park draws in a wide range of ethnic and economic groups from various parts of the region.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> National Archives Space Timeline, <https://www.archives.gov/research/alic/reference/space-timeline.html>, accessed June 11, 2018. Rock Creek Nature Center schedule, Fall 1961; Winter 1961–62, Nature Center Programs, Nature Center materials, ROCR.

<sup>28</sup> ROCR, LRIP, 14. ROCR, Nature Center schedule, Winter 1970–71, Nature Center programs, Nature Center materials, ROCR. Einberger, *Rock Creek Park*, 166–68.

<sup>29</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 2008, 3, Admin Files, ROCR.

<sup>30</sup> Zadorozny, transcript of interview, 46. The Nature Center has copies of previous Nature Center and planetarium calendars of activities, ROCR.

<sup>31</sup> ROCR, Statement for Interpretation, 1983, 17–18, 20, TIC. ROCR, Interpretive Prospectus, 1985, 3, TIC.

Over time, Rock Creek Park staff have developed programs to appeal to special groups. In 1983, one staff member completed a sign-language course, and the park intended to use this new skill set for natural and cultural resource interpretation. That same year, park staff repaired a sensory trail, located within walking distance to the Nature Center, for anticipated increased use. A DC Special Olympics summer camp program brought three hundred individuals with disabilities to Rock Creek Park to attend morning interpretive programs and afternoon therapeutic riding at the Rock Creek Park Horse Center. In the early 1980s, the park staff developed a program for preschoolers, called Tales for Tots. Previously, most activities had been geared for school-aged children. Tales for Tots consisted of three parts, beginning with a storybook reading to introduce a topic. Then, staff would show a ten-minute slide presentation, followed by a live animal experience to reinforce the topic. For Black History Month in 1981, staff offered two programs highlighting the contributions of African American scientists and engineers. A 2008 planetarium show titled “Night Sky to Freedom” told how enslaved people used the night sky as a compass to reach freedom.<sup>32</sup>

Park staff made outreach to the surrounding Spanish-speaking population a priority. In 1997, a bilingual interpreter provided ranger services and Spanish language programming in the Nature Center. In 2008, the park offered Spanish language trail tours and planetarium shows. The park launched its first Spanish language Junior Ranger program that year.<sup>33</sup>

As the park experienced greater funding restrictions, staff trained volunteers to supplement interpretive programming. Sometimes, volunteers helped with outreach to new audiences. In 1988, the park directed its programming to senior citizens in nursing homes, youth organizations, and daycare centers. Student interns and volunteers assisted available staff to reach this growing audience.<sup>34</sup>

### **Bridging the Watershed**

In 1998, the Alice Ferguson Foundation partnered with the National Park Service and area high schools to develop an educational outreach program called Bridging the Watershed. Bridging the Watershed focuses upon natural resource issues and public lands of the Potomac River basin and greater Chesapeake Bay watershed. High school students participate in different science modules and collect authentic data during field studies in national park sites in the Washington metropolitan area. Rock Creek Park fostered this region-wide educational program. Bridging the Watershed has demonstrated the essential value of partnerships to strengthen park preservation efforts.<sup>35</sup>

The program has three goals. First, it promotes understanding and stewardship of the local ecology by using national parks as learning laboratories for secondary school teachers and students. National parks also support local high-school math and science curricula. Second, Bridging the Watershed increases knowledge of the Potomac watershed and raises the visibility of national parks and their role in preserving natural and cultural resources. Third, the program

---

<sup>32</sup> ROCR, Statement for Interpretation, 1983, 42. ROCR, Statement for Interpretation, 1984, 31, TIC. ROCR, Annual Report, 2008, 3. ROCR, Statement for Interpretation, 1987, 32, TIC. ROCR, Annual Report, 1981, 45. ROCR, Annual Report, 1983, 31, File Admin—Annual Reports 1983, Box 71, MRCE.

<sup>33</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 1997, 3–4, TIC.

<sup>34</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 2003, 1, TIC. ROCR, Statement for Interpretation, 1988, 14, TIC. ROCR, Annual Report, 2005, 2. ROCR, Annual Report, 2008, 3.

<sup>35</sup> Peter S. O’Connell and Elizabeth F. Hoermann, National Parks and Education Partners: Six Case Studies (NPS, n.d. [circa 2003]), 109, 112.

establishes a model with the potential for replication among other national park sites and high schools.<sup>36</sup>

The Bridging the Watershed partnership with the Alice Ferguson Foundation began in 1996 when Rock Creek Park Education Specialist Maggie Zadorozny attended her first Potomac Watershed cleanup meeting at the Alice Ferguson Foundation facility at Hard Bargain Farm in Accokeek, Maryland. The Alice Ferguson Foundation had sponsored annual Potomac Watershed cleanups since 1988, galvanizing hundreds of volunteers from many organizations to pick up trash at sites along the entire watershed. Zadorozny, park rangers from other parks, and foundation education staff shared what they told their volunteers about the watershed as they removed trash. Zadorozny recognized that each site was communicating a similar message, and she wanted schoolchildren to receive that message in a systematic way. She wanted students to understand, for example, why people shouldn't throw litter in the street or why people need to be careful about herbicides and pesticides running down the street and into the storm drain, eventually leading to waterways and the Potomac River, a major source of drinking water.<sup>37</sup>

Julia Washburn, Rock Creek Park's Chief of Interpretation and Resources Management, pursued the initial funding. In 1997, Washburn approached Alice Ferguson Foundation Executive Director Kay Powell with the idea of Rock Creek Park and the foundation submitting a proposal for a three-year National Park Foundation grant, funded by Toyota USA Foundation. The grant criteria required programs aimed at secondary school students and teachers, with an emphasis upon fostering greater stewardship of national parks and their natural and cultural resources. Powell initially declined the partnership offer, citing several concerns. The foundation might be overwhelmed by a complicated partnership with a much larger organization. The foundation did not have a lot of experience with high school students; its primary audience was younger students. The foundation also would have to direct its limited staff away from other tasks, and the foundation might need to deal with constant shifting of personnel in the larger organization. Washburn, Zadorozny, and others sought other partners to address Powell's concerns. The Alice Ferguson Foundation joined the resulting group, and Powell suggested the name "Bridging the Watershed."<sup>38</sup>

The initial Bridging the Watershed proposal gathered interest and expertise from across the metropolitan area. Five national park sites joined Rock Creek Park: Chesapeake & Ohio (C&O) Canal National Historical Park, George Washington Memorial Park, National Capital Parks—Central, National Capital Parks—East, and President's Park. These parks valued reaching out to an underrepresented population in national parks: high school students. District of Columbia Public Schools and Prince George's County Public Schools agreed to participate. Hays B. Lantz Jr., Prince George's County Public Schools Science Supervisor, helped ensure that Bridging the Watershed teaching modules fit within national reform efforts for science education. Howard University's Professor of Entomology George Middendorf provided expertise in science and teaching strategies. The Student Conservation Association valued the connection of the program to fostering future national park stewards, and Flip Haygood, Vice President for the Mid-Atlantic SE Region National Urban & Diversity Program, enthusiastically joined the partnership. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation and US Fish and Wildlife Service wrote letters of

---

<sup>36</sup> O'Connell and Hoermann, *Six Case Studies*, 110–11.

<sup>37</sup> Zadorozny, transcript of interview, 17–18. O'Connell and Hoermann, *Six Case Studies*, 109–10.

<sup>38</sup> O'Connell and Hoermann, *Six Case Studies*, 110.

support. Gary Heath, Maryland State Department of Education Science Supervisor, sent a letter of endorsement.<sup>39</sup>

Bridging the Watershed won a three-year Toyota USA Foundation grant, totaling \$150,000, running from March 1998 to February 2001. Washburn and Bridging the Watershed partners secured supplemental funding. A National Park Service Parks as Classrooms grant (a total of \$40,000 for the first two years) supported teacher involvement and curriculum writing. A series of Challenge Cost Share grants (\$120,000 over the three-year grant period) allowed Bridging the Watershed to hire a project director to oversee and fulfill grant requirements. The US Department of Education provided a \$5,000 planning grant in 1998 for an interactive website. Rock Creek Park and the Alice Ferguson Foundation were the overall management partners for the grant, and a steering committee met quarterly to address current needs and issues.<sup>40</sup>

The Alice Ferguson Foundation has served as an ideal key partner. In 1922, Alice Ferguson, an accomplished artist trained at the Corcoran School of Art, and her husband Henry Gardiner Ferguson bought Hard Bargain Farm, a 330-acre property along the Potomac River across from Mount Vernon. Alice designed and built the farmhouse, managed the working farm, and self-trained as an archeologist to survey American Indian sites uncovered on the farm. In the 1960s, the lower part of the property was deeded to the National Park Service for incorporation into Piscataway Park, which preserves the watershed from Mount Vernon. Henry established the Alice Ferguson Foundation in 1954 in memory of his wife and in pursuit of their combined commitment of wanting people to understand the Potomac River and its importance for food, water, and recreation. The foundation has since provided hands-on outdoor environmental and agricultural education to underserved elementary school-aged children in the District of Columbia and the suburbs of Maryland and Virginia. The foundation also trains teachers in outdoor education and sponsors the Trash-Free Potomac Watershed Initiative, a community-wide movement aimed at reducing trash.<sup>41</sup>

Rock Creek Park and the Alice Ferguson Foundation signed a cooperative agreement, with the foundation providing in-kind support for an office at Hard Bargain Farm and in-kind support for program administration. The Alice Ferguson Foundation, as a nonprofit organization, had the flexibility to manage and secure funding for the project that the National Park Service, as a federal government agency, did not have. In May 1998, the foundation hired Nancy Smaroff, a curriculum writer and retired teacher, as the Bridging the Watershed project director. By that summer, Smaroff had invited teachers and park rangers to the first Summer Institute, with one week for field experiences and one week for curriculum writing. Smaroff revised and finalized the curricula (which ultimately took three years), training teachers and rangers in the content and pedagogy of the different units. Bridging the Watershed offered five initial science units. These looked at water quality by studying benthic macroinvertebrates and nine parameters of the Water Quality Index, alien plant invaders, effects of runoff and sediment, and the impact of trash on the

---

<sup>39</sup> O'Connell and Hoermann, *Six Case Studies*, 110–11.

<sup>40</sup> O'Connell and Hoermann, *Six Case Studies*, 112. Memorandum, ROCR Superintendent Adrienne Coleman to Superintendents at C&O Canal NHP, George Washington Memorial Parkway, National Capital Parks—Central, National Capital Parks—East, President's Park, July 24, 1998, Unprocessed Files, ROCR.

<sup>41</sup> Alice Ferguson Foundation, <http://fergusonfoundation.org/history/>, accessed May 31, 2018. John H. Sprinkle Jr., "Operation Overview and the Creation of Piscataway Park," *The Public Historian* 38 (November 2016): 79–100. O'Connell and Hoermann, *Six Case Studies*, 112. Zadorozny, transcript of interview, 18–20.

environment. Students can upload their authentic data onto an interactive database to compare data collected by other schools.<sup>42</sup>

Bridging the Watershed is entering its third decade. Washburn obtained a base funding increase of \$300,000, spread out among the six national parks in \$50,000 increments. This crucial and dedicated funding, effective as of fiscal year 2001, has sustained the program. Part of this funding stays within the National Park Service for administrative costs, and the rest goes to the Alice Ferguson Foundation, which continues to supply staffing, buses for transporting students and teachers, and administrative support. In spring 2000, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute invited the Rock Creek Nature Center and Planetarium to apply for a \$500,000 grant to expand Bridging the Watershed into other parks and schools. Howard Hughes Medical Institute was seeking to support informal science education and science centers. Bridging the Watershed won this grant and used the \$125,000 per year to hire part-time educators and conduct workshops. The Howard Hughes Medical Institute grant and others have helped Bridging the Watershed grow to ten national park units. The Alice Ferguson Foundation has been especially important in identifying and winning new grants, some of which support updated technology for the field experiences. The grants have also allowed parks to develop their own modules. Rock Creek Park has Herring Highway, which investigates the migratory herring that travel through the park each spring. In 2007, the National Park Service announced that the agency planned to expand Bridging the Watershed across the Potomac Watershed using the National Park Service Centennial Challenge, a funding mechanism that matched public money with private donations in anticipation of the 2016 National Park Service Centennial Celebration. Howard Hughes Medical Institute was one large donor.<sup>43</sup>

Bridging the Watershed has demonstrated its value to environmental education and park stewardship. Education Specialist Zadorozny describes the varying reactions of the high school students. Some have entered the park not wanting to be outdoors and have left with the same attitude. On the other hand, one student returned a comment card with smiley faces, saying “Best day of high school ever.” Some students remarked on how surprisingly lovely Rock Creek Park was and vowed to return. Tentative reactions by some students to putting on waders and going out in the creek changed to enjoyment at skimming rocks and even the surprise of catching what they thought was a snake but really was a baby eel. Zadorozny admitted, “It’s great when you see the turnaround” of these young people’s attitudes toward nature.<sup>44</sup>

Teachers have seen this spark in their students. One Advanced Placement Environmental Science teacher from Fairfax County, Virginia, recalled that “each and every one” of the students “was involved and working together.” The teacher continued, remarking, “It was such a wonderful thing” to see the students “doing science” and “enjoying science.”<sup>45</sup> Another teacher commented upon student interactions after the Talkin’ Trash module field study, saying that students acted more like a team after picking up trash. Their “cooperative attitude was an unexpected benefit from the activity.”<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> O’Connell and Hoermann, *Six Case Studies*, 112–14.

<sup>43</sup> O’Connell and Hoermann, *Six Case Studies*, 114–15, 117. Zadorozny, transcript of interview, 20–21, 55–56. Julia Washburn, transcript of oral history interview with the author, July 10, 2017, 12, ROCR Archives. “Spanning the Watershed,” *Washington Post* (September 11, 2007).

<sup>44</sup> Zadorozny, transcript of interview, 25–26, 33–34. Quote on p. 34.

<sup>45</sup> Unnamed teacher quoted in “Bridging the Watershed,” *Hard Bargain Newsletter*, December 2007, <http://fergusonfoundation.org/newsletters/>, accessed May 31, 2018.

<sup>46</sup> Unnamed teacher quoted by Jeanne Troy, “Bridging the Watershed,” *Hard Bargain Newsletter*, February 2009, <http://fergusonfoundation.org/newsletters/>, accessed May 31, 2018.

Washington metropolitan-area teachers and educators have incorporated Bridging the Watershed into the fabric of high-school science education. Each Bridging the Watershed module incorporates preparatory lessons done in the classroom or online before students visit the parks. The field studies then reinforce and apply this learning. Zadorozny noted that the students do the same water quality analyses, for example, that a professional would do in a lab, only on a smaller scale. Teachers must attend a teacher institute for training and obtain an introduction to the Bridging the Watershed philosophy and approach. As an indication of how the school systems have viewed Bridging the Watershed, in 2003 Prince George's County Public Schools integrated all five Bridging the Watershed modules into its curriculum. Teachers must use Bridging the Watershed, and as a result, students taking environmental studies in Prince George's County thus participate in at least one Bridging the Watershed unit.<sup>47</sup>

Bridging the Watershed has accumulated accolades. In 2010, the District of Columbia named the Alice Ferguson Foundation its Partner of the Year for the Mayor's Environmental Excellence Awards. This award recognized the foundation and the Bridging the Watershed program for giving students an "authentic experience" of going out into parks and making observations like a scientist would do.<sup>48</sup> That same year, the Department of the Interior recognized the Alice Ferguson Foundation with one of twenty-four Partners in Conservation Awards, celebrating its partnership with the National Park Service to conserve the nation's landscapes and waterways. In response to President Barack Obama's 2009 Executive Order 13508, Chesapeake Bay Protection and Restoration, federal agencies published a strategy for action. One small part of that strategy called for the National Park Service and the Alice Ferguson Foundation to expand Bridging the Watershed and grow citizen stewardship across age groups.<sup>49</sup>

Bridging the Watershed has had its share of concerns. Program leaders have had to develop effective communication. The \$300,000 base increase, which was meant solely for Bridging the Watershed, initially went to the six national park units (a decision made for political reasons), but some park managers wanted to use a portion of this funding for other pressing interpretation and education needs. Heated debates over funding allocations ensued during steering-committee meetings. Officials in the regional office responded by putting the funding into a single account dedicated to Bridging the Watershed and managed by Rock Creek Park. In addition, National Capital Region parks not affiliated with Bridging the Watershed believed that the Bridging the Watershed base increase meant that the region would not obtain other additional funding for education, thus negatively affecting these non-Bridging the Watershed parks. Bridging the Watershed managers have sought communication methods to address these issues.<sup>50</sup>

Concerns have also circulated around leadership. Two of the founding members of Bridging the Watershed, Rock Creek Chief Ranger Washburn and the Alice Ferguson Foundation Director, left their positions at about the same time. Washburn's replacement, Chief Ranger Laura Illige, faced the daunting task of addressing significant organizational and

---

<sup>47</sup> Zadorozny, transcript of interview, 22, 26–28. O'Connell and Hoermann, *Six Case Studies*, 120.

<sup>48</sup> Case Study—Alice Ferguson Foundation, Department of Energy & Environment, Washington, DC, <https://doe.dc.gov/service/case-study-alice-ferguson-foundation>, accessed May 31, 2018.

<sup>49</sup> Jeanne Troy, "Bridging the Watershed," *Hard Bargain Newsletter*, October 2010, <http://fergusonfoundation.org/newsletters/>, accessed May 31, 2018. Federal Leadership Committee for the Chesapeake Bay, Strategy for Protecting and Restoring the Chesapeake Bay Watershed (May 12, 2010), 90, <https://federalleadership.chesapeakebay.net/file.axd?file=2010%2F5%2FChesapeake+EO+Strategy%20.pdf>, accessed May 31, 2018.

<sup>50</sup> O'Connell and Hoermann, *Six Case Studies*, 114–15.

budgetary difficulties. Both the National Park Service and the Alice Ferguson Foundation realized how large and complex Bridging the Watershed is and have had to ascertain accurate staff numbers for coordinating with schools, teachers, bus companies, and parks, while also addressing other logistical, day-to-day issues. Staff turnover has complicated this scenario because National Park Service rangers trained in the Bridging the Watershed program often leave for other positions. Much debate resulted in ensuring that part of the Bridging the Watershed funding went to an education technician employed by Bridging the Watershed through Rock Creek Park. These leadership issues have reinforced the need to institutionalize the partnership in the parent organizations, moving beyond personalities to the structure or agreements themselves.<sup>51</sup>

Bridging the Watershed has continued as a partnership between NPS and the Alice Ferguson Foundation. During the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, the environmental program went virtual for the 2020–21 school year. The revised program offered both thirty-minute lessons and three-hour-block interactive learning activities. Virtual programs might include a virtual barnyard visit, finding macroinvertebrates in local rivers and lakes, or studying birds up close.<sup>52</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Many visitors stream into Rock Creek Park because it is an oasis within an increasingly urban area. They seek solitude, recreation, and connection with nature and with other people. Interpretation helps these visitors better appreciate their natural surroundings. With that appreciation, park interpreters hope that people become ambassadors for Rock Creek Park, extending the reach of good stewardship. Interpretive programming at Rock Creek Park Nature Center has used exhibits, live animal displays, and the planetarium to help people make connections to nature and build a sense of responsibility for the park's natural resources. Educational programming, such as with Bridging the Watershed, has an important dual function. Students learn about natural processes in out-of-the-classroom experiences. They can apply their class readings and homework to hands-on work in the field. They can then take these experiences home, hopefully to share with their parents and friends, thus building a network of stewards to preserve the park and other natural resources for future generations to come.

---

<sup>51</sup> O'Connell and Hoermann, *Six Case Studies*, 115–16, 148.

<sup>52</sup> Alice Ferguson Foundation, <https://fergusonfoundation.org/news/environmental-education-programs-go-virtual-for-2020-21-school-year/>, accessed October 2, 2020.



## CHAPTER 12 Entertainment

Two different performing arts experiences dramatize how Carter Barron Amphitheater has tried to meet and exceed audience expectations. In 1955, an Ice Capades production had a full ice rink covering the stage. Despite the August show date, the promoter also dumped twenty-five tons of snow so that people could go sledding free of charge. In a sign of changing cultural expectations and audiences, Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band appeared for three shows in 1975. One show had two torrential downpours, which delayed the music for nearly two hours. But the electrified audience took the poor weather in stride, cheering, yelling, and stomping their feet.<sup>1</sup>

Rock Creek Park administers numerous facilities that are dedicated to entertainment, such as Carter Barron Amphitheater, or that feature performances and organized sports, such as Meridian Hill Park and the Rock Creek Park Tennis Center. Offerings have varied, from nationally known performers to local bands. The National Park Service has arranged events itself or contracted with a firm to handle bookings. Audiences have sat in stadium seats, on folding chairs, or on blankets on the ground. They have seen opera or the Ice Capades, enjoyed classical music, clapped to jazz or blues or soul music, heard rock-and-roll bands, and immersed themselves in Broadway musicals and Shakespearean theater. The agency has had the responsibility of maintaining the stages (or performance spaces) and meeting public expectations to build attendance. Performances in Washington, DC, had the potential to reach many people living in the city and suburbs, plus tourists and elected officials from across the nation. What Rock Creek Park managed with its music and stage productions had the potential for bringing people together and building common ties. The National Park Service, for example, held community activities in parks like Meridian Hill after the 1968 riots in the District. This chapter examines how the National Park Service has offered entertainment to build connections and meet public needs.<sup>2</sup>

### Carter Barron Amphitheater

Carter Barron Amphitheater is a four-thousand-plus-seat outdoor venue for the performing arts. President Harry Truman named the facility for Carter T. Barron, who died of cancer just a few months after the amphitheater opened in August 1950. Barron had been Vice Chairman of the Sesquicentennial Commission, established to mark the founding of Washington, DC, as the nation's capital. Carter Barron Amphitheater was built to memorialize this important anniversary. The amphitheater opened with the performance of *Faith of Our Fathers*, a drama with music and dance about George Washington, written by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Paul Green. Barron had specifically sought an outdoor venue to avoid segregated seating, as practiced in the District. Outdoor seating did not require segregation. He wanted people of all races to enjoy the shows at the new amphitheater. Secretary of the Interior Oscar Chapman echoed this sentiment in 1949.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> "C Is for Carter Barron," Rock Creek Conservancy Blog, <http://www.rockcreekconservancy.org/get-involved/rock-creek-blog/367-c-is-for-carter-barron>, accessed March 15, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> NCR Admin History, 134–38. Meridian Hill Park CLR (2001), 141.

<sup>3</sup> Barry Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 4, section "Interpretation, Recreation, and Entertainment." Richard L. Coe, "The Dramatic History of Paul Green," *Washington Post*, July 26, 1987.



Figure 39. Carter Barron Amphitheater  
NPS PHOTO, 1991

Many patrons and critics gave Green's drama poor reviews, but numerous people applauded the physical setting. In 1943, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. identified the site for an outdoor amphitheater, with 1,500 seats and a stage that could show movies. The actual amphitheater took advantage of the natural bowl-like setting and had 4,200 seats. Some reviewers commented upon the excellent acoustics and sightlines, concluding that there was no bad seat in the house. Many considered the amphitheater as the best outdoor venue in the United States.<sup>4</sup>

Administrative difficulties ensued in trying to book entertainment at Carter Barron Amphitheater without financial losses. Green's drama, revised for the 1952 summer season, still prompted poor reviews and attendance. In 1952, the Sesquicentennial Commission transferred ownership of Carter Barron Amphitheater to the National Capital Parks (NCP) Regional Office when the commission disbanded. That summer, Irvin and Israel Feld, who owned Super Attractions Inc., obtained a contract and offered Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. Super Attractions could not fill the 1953 season, and the following year the National Park Service signed a contract with Washington Festival Inc. This company lost a significant amount of money in its solo year,

---

<sup>4</sup> Coe, "Paul Green." NPS, Carter Barron History, ROCR website, <https://www.nps.gov/rocr/planyourvisit/cbhistory.htm>, accessed February 22, 2018. Cornelius W. Heine, *A History of National Capital Parks*, 1953, chapter 3, section "Carter Barron Memorial Amphitheater." Carter Barron Amphitheater, draft history, n.d., no author, 4, citing T. Sutton Jett to Henry M. Jackson, January 15, 1965, Unprocessed Administrative Files, ROCR.

with shows such as *Annie Get Your Gun* and *Show Boat*. The National Park Service then went back to the Feld brothers.<sup>5</sup>

Super Attractions Inc., booked entertainment at Carter Barron Amphitheater between 1954 and 1974. This long-running management freed up National Park Service staff and ensured that Carter Barron Amphitheater offered programming that fit changing entertainment taste. At first, the Feld brothers lined up the National Symphony Orchestra, *The Mikado*, the New York City Ballet, the National Ballet of Canada, and several musicals. Some neighbors raised concerns in the early 1950s about traffic and noise from some Carter Barron Amphitheater events. Neighbors also argued against what they called commercial productions, stating that commercial producers were profiting at the expense of nearby property owners. In reaction, the Feld brothers in 1953 promised Carter Barron Amphitheater neighbors that they would offer only cultural programs, not “hillbilly or jazz band concerts,” to maintain the neighborhood tone. Such a statement may have reflected cultural, ethnic, racial, and class expectations for Carter Barron Amphitheater. However, Carter Barron himself, and Interior Secretary Oscar Chapman, had proclaimed their intent to have Carter Barron Amphitheater open to all races.<sup>6</sup>

The Feld brothers incorporated jazz concerts into their lineup beginning in 1963. This change reflected evolving musical tastes. They took ballet out and booked such acts as the Kingston Trio, Victor Borge, Nat King Cole, Benny Goodman, Ethel Merman, Henry Mancini, Andy Williams, Louis Armstrong, and Peter, Paul, and Mary. Superintendent Georgia Ellard remembered how people dressed up to see such performers as Harry Belafonte and Ella Fitzgerald. The Feld brothers responded to the shifting musical interests in the District, plus reactions to the 1968 riots in the District that left people afraid to go downtown. More modifications came in 1972 when Carter Barron Amphitheater hosted soul and rock 'n' roll acts like Stevie Wonder, Ray Charles, B. B. King, the O'Jays, Smokey Robinson, and the Four Tops.<sup>7</sup>

National Capital Regional (NCR) Director T. Sutton Jett wrote to Rep. Wayne Aspinell (D-CO) in 1965, describing the contract between the National Park Service and Super Attractions Inc. Jett wrote that his agency was “greatly pleased” with the Feld brothers’ operation of Carter Barron Amphitheater. They were “highly competent” in the field of entertainment and had “provided a variety of the finest professional entertainment available at a level of quality that could not be maintained by any type of public operation.” Jett believed that Carter Barron Amphitheater, as a result, was a “real asset to the cultural life of the Nation’s Capital.”<sup>8</sup> Rock Creek Park Supervisory Theater Specialist Rita Gunther echoed this characterization, commenting later that Carter Barron Amphitheater was “very much a part of the fabric of a lot of people’s lives in the District.”<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Coe, “Paul Green.” NPS, Carter Barron History, ROCR website. NCR admin history, 135. Carter Barron Amphitheater, draft history, 3. Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 4, section “Interpretation, Recreation, and Entertainment.”

<sup>6</sup> Quote in “Amphitheater Control by Recreation Board Proposed in Dispute,” *Washington Post*, March 11, 1953. NPS, Carter Barron History, ROCR website. Carter Barron draft history, 12–13.

<sup>7</sup> NPS, Carter Barron History, Rock Creek Park website. NPS, Carter Barron draft history, 12–13. Georgia Ellard, transcript of oral history interview with the author, May 8, 2017, 4–5, ROCR Archives. Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 4, section “Interpretation, Recreation, and Entertainment.”

<sup>8</sup> NCR Regional Director T. Sutton Jett to Rep. Wayne Aspinall, February 2, 1965, 2, File C3823 Carter Barron 1/1/63 to 1/1/66, Box 14, Acc. 68A-3201, WFRC.

<sup>9</sup> Rita Gunther, transcript of oral history interview with the author, December 13, 2016, 10, ROCR Archives.

Cellar Door-Dimensions took over Carter Barron Amphitheater management in 1976. Super Attractions Inc. had begun to incur heavy losses and requested removal from its contract. New performing arts locations, indoor and outdoor, had begun opening in the late 1960s and 1970s, places such as the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts (National Park Service management), Arena Stage, Merriweather Post Pavilion (in Columbia, MD), the reopening of Ford's Theater (National Park Service management), the Washington Theater Club, and Wolf Trap Farm Park for the Performing Arts. Cellar Door-Dimensions sought a diverse audience, influenced in part by the 1968 riots. African American teenagers became the largest group to patronize Carter Barron Amphitheater, resulting in part from white flight to the suburbs. The District and federal agencies sought ways to ease remaining tensions, using cultural activities as one vehicle. Cellar Door-Dimensions booked such groups as Kool and the Gang, Bruce Springsteen, the US Navy Band, the National Symphony Orchestra, the Shakespeare Festival, Richard Pryor, Chick Corea, and the DC Black Repertory Co.<sup>10</sup>

After 1976, the National Capital Parks Regional Office decided to manage Carter Barron Amphitheater (and Fort Dupont's amphitheater) on its own, more than likely because of contractors unable to make their effort profitable enough. Performances included Soviet Émigré Orchestra, National Ballet of Canada, Jose Feliciano, the Four Seasons, and B. B. King. Carter Barron Amphitheater showed the musical *1776* for the Bicentennial year. In 1996, National Capital Region Director Robert Stanton transferred full responsibility for the management and operation of Carter Barron Amphitheater to Rock Creek Park. Stanton took this course of action due to a National Park Service restructuring plan and a reorganization of the National Capital Region. He also cited the intention to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of Carter Barron Amphitheater management and coordination of events at the tennis stadium and recreational fields.<sup>11</sup>

Under National Capital Region and Rock Creek Park management, Carter Barron Amphitheater entertainment continued to evolve. Performances in the 1980s included jazz, rock, gospel, and religious services. In 1988, the park reported seventy-five thousand fans attending. In 1991, Rock Creek Park started a long-running partnership with the Shakespeare Theater. Shakespeare Theater began performing free productions of plays it had offered in its indoor theater during previous seasons. The outdoor program at Carter Barron Amphitheater was called Shakespeare Theater Free for All. Performances went for two full weeks at the beginning of Carter Barron Amphitheater's season. They attracted a large crowd, who tailgated before performances. Carter Barron Amphitheater also worked with the *Washington Post*, which arranged for three or four concerts, each containing two to three local bands. Genres included Latin, classic soul, or doo-wop. Further partnerships came with the National Symphony Orchestra and the DC Blues Society. By 2008, Rock Creek Park offered a Latin American Music

---

<sup>10</sup> NPS, Carter Barron History, ROCR website. NCR Admin History, 135. Gunther, transcript of interview, 16–17. Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 4, section "Interpretation, Recreation, and Entertainment." NPS, Rock Creek Park Historic District, National Register for Historic Places Continuation Sheet, 1991, section 8, p. 84.

<sup>11</sup> Gunther, transcript of interview, 17. Carter Barron draft history, 14. Memorandum, NCR Director Robert Stanton to ROCR Superintendent William Shields, April 10, 1996, 1, File Carter Barron–History–Legislation 1949–1996, Box 54, Museum Resource Center (MRCE). All MRCE files are from the ROCR Collection. Memorandum, NCR Regional Director Robert Stanton to Superintendent William Shields and Special Assistant to the Regional Office Snowden, May 16, 1995, 1, File Carter Barron–History–General–1977–1998, Box 54, MRCE. NCR Admin History, 135.

Night to promote its efforts to reach the Spanish-speaking community in the District. Carter Barron Amphitheater also had a diversity of local musicians open for national acts.<sup>12</sup>

The number of partners increased in the 2000s. Rock Creek Park reported in 2005 that the Dance Institute of Washington, the Washington Reflections Dance Co., Metro DC Dances, and the Blues Alley Youth Orchestra all performed under arrangements with Rock Creek Park. But some of these partners eventually left. Shakespeare Theatre ended its Free for All in 2008. Gunther explained that the theater found it hard to put on a play on as big a stage as Carter Barron Amphitheater. Plus, expenses became unwieldy, according to Gunther, even though the theater raised between \$600,00 and \$750,000 each year. The National Symphony Orchestra (NSO) also left in 2008. Gunther suggested that the stock market crash may have influenced both the Shakespeare Theatre's and NSO's decision. NSO also had union musicians and stagehands, an expensive responsibility. Both organizations had indoor facilities with the new Sydney Harman Hall and the Kennedy Center, respectively. The *Washington Post* left in 2016 due to a changed arrangement for applying newspaper profits, as Gunther stated.<sup>13</sup>

The National Park Service has had to address negative public reaction from some nearby neighbors. As early as 1952, some residents along 16th Street NW complained that the presentation of *Faith of Our Fathers* was a waste of money and an inconvenience to neighbors living near Carter Barron Amphitheater. Sources cited, without documentation, that organizers paid \$50 per day to use Carter Barron Amphitheater. A year later, some residents protested having commercial interests (such as Super Attractions Inc.), arguing that these vendors would profit at the expense of property owners. They stated that they did not object to productions purely aligned to civic purposes. Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay asked the chairman of the District's Recreation Board to arbitrate disputes if the commercial proposal went forward. The District's Recreation Superintendent Milo F. Christiansen offered that the Recreation Board process applicants wanting to use Carter Barron Amphitheater, with the District taking a percentage of the profits and the money going to citywide recreation programming. The National Park Service Regional Office instead maintained authority over Carter Barron Amphitheater management.<sup>14</sup>

Traffic, parking, and noise elicited the most complaints. These complaints resurfaced when the National Park Service entered into an agreement in 1987 with the Washington Area Tennis Patrons Foundation to build the tennis stadium. Some residents in 1953 pointed out that traffic was already heavy in the area and that nightly shows would only add to the frustration. Cars on the narrow side streets hampered flow, and people going to a show took parking spaces regularly used by residents. The National Park Service initially offered parking next to Carter Barron Amphitheater on the grass, but complaints about clouds of dust settling in the neighborhood led the agency to pave the parking lot in 1953. Some nearby neighbors objected to the noise, especially if shows ran late into the night. Big shows performed continuously caused some concern, with one neighbor at the time considering them a nuisance for noise and traffic. But other residents, when interviewed, saw no reason to complain. One

---

<sup>12</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 1988, 4, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR. ROCR reported that 28,000 visitors attended similar programs, Annual Report, 1988, Interpretation Section. Gunther, transcript of interview, 12. ROCR, Annual Report, 2008, 3, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR.

<sup>13</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 2005, 2, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR. Gunther, transcript of interview, 13–15.

<sup>14</sup> "Sesqui Show Opposed by Citizens Unit," *Washington Post*, February 14, 1952. "Amphitheater Control by Recreation Board Proposed in Dispute," *Washington Post*, March 11, 1953.

person said the noise problem might be solved by better amplification and restrained audiences, not vocalizing as loudly.<sup>15</sup>

Entertainment booking companies offered the National Park Service a key advantage. The agency did not have the cash flow to book national acts, which traditionally required a 50 percent payment upon signing, to cover such expenses as travel and rehearsal time. Federal government regulations instead required full payment upon completion of work, such as the show. By the late 2000s, however, Rock Creek Park did not have the funds to pay for a contractor. By the 2010s, the National Park Service also did not have the money to run a box office anymore. When Rock Creek Park did run the box office, the park floated same-year performance contracts using the entire park budget. But the park did not have that capability any longer, according to Gunther in 2016. But Carter Barron Amphitheater did have some outstanding seasons. The 2008 season was the best, with all seven paid shows selling out. The National Park Service sold 24,500 tickets and made around \$500,000. This money paid for staffing and supported the regular free shows also performed at the amphitheater. In the current fiscal environment, Gunther believes that a partnership model of some sort is needed to bring Carter Barron Amphitheater and its national shows back.<sup>16</sup>

### **Other Entertainment Venues**

The annual tennis tournament in Rock Creek Park has attracted top names in the sport. The initiators of the tournament, Donald Dell, a member of the United States Davis Cup team in 1968, and two of his friends Steve Potts and John Harris, recognized that Arthur Ashe was key to the tournament's initial success. Ashe had won the 1968 US Open, becoming the first African American man to win a Grand Slam. Dell knew that Ashe, who had suffered discrimination throughout his life and who wanted to desegregate tennis, would only play a tournament in the District in a naturally integrated area. The location of the tennis courts at 16th and Kennedy Streets, NW, fit that bill, and Ashe played at the inaugural tournament in 1969. Ashe lost that year to Brazilian Thomaz Koch, but he entered the tournament eleven times, winning in 1973. Willis Thomas had been Ashe's childhood doubles partner and later became vice president for programs for the Washington Tennis & Education Foundation, the nonprofit organization that owned the tournament and worked with at-risk children through tennis and educational endeavors. Thomas recalled that at the 1969 tournament, 30 percent or more of the faces in the crowd watching Ashe were African American, and almost everybody there was cheering for Ashe.<sup>17</sup>

Having big names play at the tennis tournament brought visibility and money. Well-known names also brought an entertainment factor. Jimmy Connors and Andre Agassi, as examples, won multiple times at the Rock Creek tennis tournament. Connors had the ability to draw in the audience by pumping his left fist and roaring in exuberance for hitting a great shot. He "was perhaps the most rebellious player to ever play," according to the International Tennis Hall of Fame. Agassi "brought flash and pizzazz to courts throughout the world," also according to the International Tennis Hall of Fame. Early on, he signed an endorsement contract with Nike,

---

<sup>15</sup> "Amphitheater Control by Recreation Board Proposed in Dispute," *Washington Post*.

<sup>16</sup> Gunther, transcript of interview, 17–19.

<sup>17</sup> Jacob Feldman, "Arthur Ashe Helped Establish Washington's Pro Tennis Tournament," *Washington Post*, August 1, 2015. Tournament History, Will Fairfax, CitiOpen Tennis website, <http://www.citiopentennis.com/en/about/tournament-history>, accessed March 5, 2018.

which led to Agassi sporting shoes and clothing that matched his “bold, aggressive, and confident” playing style. He set a new, modern tone for tennis.<sup>18</sup>

The National Park Service hosted concerts in various parks administered by Rock Creek Park. During World War II, Meridian Hill Park drew crowds for its Starlight outdoor concerts. These included astonishing lighting displays of the cascading waterfall. A harp ensemble, a string quartet, and the Von Trapp Family Singers performed, among others. The Starlight concerts returned on July 4, 1963, with the Watergate Symphony Band. Following the April 1968 riots after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the Summer in the Parks concert series began. Pearl Bailey performed before 20,000 people in Meridian Hill Park that summer. Friends of Meridian Hill, formed in 1990, organized a concert with the District’s own Bo Diddly Jr. for that July 4. Twelve hundred people attended, giving strength to the friends group’s effort. More concerts followed in subsequent years.<sup>19</sup>

Other parts of Rock Creek Park also offered entertainment. The Old Stone House presented concerts in its yard, with musical performances by the National Guard Band in 1975 and the US Army Band in 1977. By 1980, the Old Stone House had a full range of offerings. Candlelight concerts, evening concerts in the gardens, and lunch concerts showcased a wide variety of musicians. As part of the weekend-long commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Fort Stevens, the Jubilee Voices, an African American concert group associated with Washington Revels, sang spirituals as people placed a flag at each gravesite at Battleground National Cemetery. Fort Reno has held concerts for more than thirty years. Hometown band Fugazi performed regularly in the late 1980s and 1990s to devoted fans.<sup>20</sup>

Administratively, the National Park Service has used its staff resources to organize the entertainment in the Rock Creek Park units. Friends groups and other partners have contributed to this effort. The Fort Reno concerts relied upon funding from the District’s Neighborhood Planning Council’s summer youth programs until that funding dried up in the late 1990s. With the help of donations, the Northwest Youth Alliance then supported the concerts. The Friends of Meridian Hill, in cooperation with the National Park Service and the Capitol Police, arranged the concert series for that park. Over the years, staff at the Old Stone House have arranged for its concerts.<sup>21</sup>

## Conclusion

---

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.tennisfame.com/hall-of-famers/inductees/jimmy-connors/> and <https://www.tennisfame.com/hall-of-famers/inductees/andre-agassi/>, accessed March 5, 2018.

<sup>19</sup> Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report, Part 1, 9–10, 136, 138, 141. Steve Coleman, transcript of oral history interview with the author, April 24, 2017, 14, ROCR Archives. Steve Coleman to Superintendent William Shields, January 22, 1992, attached 1992 Park Event Calendar, File Friends of Meridian Hill Inc. 1989–1992, Box 81, MRCE.

<sup>20</sup> NCR Admin History, 153–54. Old Stone House, Annual Report, 1975, 3, File OLST–History–Interp: Mgmt–General Info 1975–1997, Box 50, MRCE. Old Stone House, Annual Report, 1977, 3, File OLST–Reports–Annual Reports 1970–1979 (2 of 2), Box 52, MRCE. Old Stone House, Annual Report, 1980, 2, File OLST–Reports–Annual Reports 1980–1989 (1 of 2), Box 53, MRCE. Loretta Neumann, transcript of oral history interview with the author, September 5, 2017, 39, ROCR Archives. Fritz Hahn, “When the Civil War Came to Washington: Reliving the Battle of Fort Stevens,” *Washington Post*, July 10, 2014. Erik Linden, “Successful Local Band Returns to Fort Reno as Sponsors Seek Funding,” *The Northwest Current*, August 5, 1998.

<sup>21</sup> Old Stone House, Annual Report, 1973, File OLST–Reports–Annual Reports 1970–1979 (1 of 2), Box 52, MRCE. Old Stone House, Annual Report, 1977, 3. Old Stone House, Annual Report, 1980, 2. Linden, “Successful Local Band Returns.” Coleman to Superintendent William Shields, January 22, 1992.

Over the years, Rock Creek Park has offered a wide range of entertainment. These offerings have relied upon partners and National Park Service staff. Sometimes these entertainment offerings have challenged Rock Creek Park staff due to budgetary and administrative constraints. These dual situations have hampered the booking of events at Carter Barron Amphitheater recently. Carter Barron Amphitheater closed in 2017 for safety reasons, with reconstruction work delayed. Historically, though, Rock Creek Park and its management units have displayed creativity and a commitment to enhancing the District's cultural life, across generations and socioeconomic or racial differences.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Rachel Sadon, "There Won't Be Shows at Carter Barron Amphitheater in 2017, and Probably for Years to Come," DCist, [http://dcist.com/2017/03/there\\_wont\\_be\\_shows\\_at\\_carter\\_barro.php](http://dcist.com/2017/03/there_wont_be_shows_at_carter_barro.php), accessed March 6, 2018.

**PART 5**  
**Community**



*Figure 40. Park Cleanup by FORCE  
NPS PHOTO, 1976*

## CHAPTER 13 Boundary Encroachments

Different factors have hampered the National Park Service's ability to check boundary encroachments in the ninety-nine administrative units under Rock Creek Park management. The lack of clearly demarcated boundaries has meant that homeowners and businesses do not know where their properties end and where the park begins. Limited staff time has meant that illegal encroachments have occurred without immediate repercussions. Lack of a public information program has kept residents and users uneducated about the harm of littering and encroachment. A clear enforcement policy would help guide Rock Creek Park staff in addressing the situation. This chapter examines the boundary encroachment issue to understand some significant challenges Rock Creek Park managers have faced over time and suggests how public engagement might help reduce the issue.

### Boundaries

Rock Creek Park's 99 administrative units encompass 82.5 miles of border, which park managers must monitor and defend against encroachments. Encroachments are unlawful misuse of parkland. They can cause significant harm to the health and biodiversity of the park's plant and animal species. They can also cause erosion and visually impair views of the park. National Park Service Ranger Charles Clusen emphasized this threat when writing about Glover-Archbold Park, stating in 1968 that park managers needed to "cure this disease." He went on, saying that continued avoidance of this situation would reduce Rock Creek Park's parklands "to private backyards and dumping grounds."<sup>1</sup>

Residences, whether single-family, townhouses, or apartment buildings, line much of the park's borders, whether along Glover-Archbold Park, Rock Creek Park, or any of the other park units currently under Rock Creek Park management. Some homeowners have extended their lawns and gardens past their property lines. They have built fences, patios, basketball courts, gardens, landscaped areas, walls, and stairs. These incursions have taken away parklands, effectively shrinking the size of the park. Non-native invasive plants have entered the parks from people's yards, threatening native species inside parklands. Some people have cleared and removed plants from inside park boundaries, sometimes wanting to tidy an area to their liking. Other people have used the park as a dumping ground for lawn waste or other trash.<sup>2</sup>

A continuing issue for park managers has been the lack of boundary markers. Clusen noted that in the northern section of Glover-Archbold Park, only one white boundary marker could be found and that the entire area was "a complete mess" from dumping and litter. A landfill operation had covered some of the markers.<sup>3</sup> Park managers could not report better boundary conditions in 1983. Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) teams had replaced rotting white markers in Reservation 339 and Glover-Archbold Park by 1980, but the park had not completed any boundary maintenance for the past fifteen years (essentially since Clusen's report). The

---

<sup>1</sup> Memorandum, Charles Clusen to Superintendent NCP-North, June 27, 1968, 1, File Glover Park-Cult Res PTM-General 1957-1996, Box 60, MRCE. All MRCE files are from the ROCR Collection.

<sup>2</sup> Rock Creek Conservancy, *Revitalizing Rock Creek Park: The Next 125 Years*, 2015, 4, 37. Bill Yeaman, transcript of oral history interview with the author, January 13, 2017, 22, ROCR Archives. Memorandum, Clusen to Superintendent NCP-N, June 27, 1968, 2-4.

<sup>3</sup> Memorandum, Clusen to Superintendent NCP-N, June 27, 1968, 2.

result had been that the park boundary, according to the 1983 Rock Creek Park Resources Management Plan, “is not readily observable” to staff, park police, visitors, or neighboring residents.”<sup>4</sup> A 1985 Adjacent Land Use Study echoed this finding, stating that in some areas, parkland was “indistinguishable” from adjacent privately owned woodlands.<sup>5</sup>

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) completed a series of surveys in the 1990s and early 2000s to define Rock Creek Park’s boundaries. The 1983 Rock Creek Park Resources Management Plan had noted that neither the park nor the region had the capability to conduct a comprehensive survey and that the park should contact BLM for its expertise. By 1993, BLM had completed several surveys, arranged through the National Capital Regional (NCR) office, and more work continued in 1994, 1995, 1997, 1998, and 2005. This work helped staff members document known property encroachments.<sup>6</sup>

With this survey information in hand, park staff members reached out to property owners with known encroachments. This task required sensitivity. In 1968, Ranger Clusen emphasized the need for good public relations by informing residents of park policy and regulations through personal contact with individuals and civic groups. Clusen noted that many people living next to Glover-Archbold Park had actively fought the highway proposal that would have gone down the length of this park. He believed that such interest and concern showed that the park could expect “much cooperation and assistance.” Clusen also recognized that the National Park Service had little recourse but to develop friendly relations with neighbors. Frequent park users, he wrote, “determine what kind of park it is to be and its condition.” He went on to state that much could be done with citizen support—and very little could be done without it. Plus, the agency faced the reality that it could not take legal action against all encroachments. Instead, Clusen urged the National Park Service to use good public relations to convince most people to cooperate.<sup>7</sup> The park’s 1995 annual report testified to using a “soft approach” as being most effective in removing encroachments, echoing Clusen’s earlier comments.<sup>8</sup>

### **Boundary Case Study**

One case from the mid-1990s provides an example of how the park addressed encroachments. In the summer of 1993, BLM surveyed the Rock Creek Golf Course section of Reservation 339. The park placed monuments and signs to mark the boundary. In early February 1994, the park sent letters to all District of Columbia councilmembers to explain the boundary program and how the park planned to correct encroachments. Two weeks later, the National Park Service sent a letter to [Text Removed to Protect Personally Identifiable Information (PII)] stating that their [Text Removed to Protect PII] intruded into Reservation 339. The National Park Service gave the [Text Removed to Protect PII] 60 days to cease this unlawful use of parkland. [Text Removed to Protect PII] responded that a previous owner had installed these items and waived responsibility. The agency verified that these items had existed before the [Text Removed to Protect PII] had moved in and agreed that the National Park Service would

<sup>4</sup> ROCR, Resources Management Plan (RMP), 1983, N28-1, File General-History-Admin-Mgmt Plans-1983, Box 72, MRCE.

<sup>5</sup> Northeast Team, DSC, Adjacent Land Use Study, 1985, 14, DSC, TIC.

<sup>6</sup> ROCR, RMP, 1983, N28-2-N28-3. ROCR, Annual Report, 1995, 3, File General-History-Admin-Personnel-Structure and Functions 1987-97, Box 72, MRCE. ROCR, Annual Report, 1997, 5, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR Archives. ROCR, Annual Report, 1998, 8, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR Archives. ROCR, Annual Report, 2005, 4, ROCR Admin Files. ROCR Superintendent William Shields to DSC-PS Roger Mercer, November 1, 1994, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR.

<sup>7</sup> Memorandum, Clusen to Superintendent NCP-N, June 27, 1968, 3-4.

<sup>8</sup> ROCR, Annual Report, 1995, 3.

remove them. Rock Creek Park Superintendent William Shields stayed in active contact with [Text Removed to Protect PII] while also keeping National Capital Region Director Manus “Jack” Fish informed. As the date for removals neared, [Text Removed to Protect PII] appealed to Regional Director Robert Stanton, who replaced Fish, and District of Columbia Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton. [Text Removed to Protect PII] argued that the National Park Service would not gain a great amount of land if he and other landowners removed these minimal encroachments and that the agency could financially benefit if landowners leased said land.<sup>9</sup> [Text Removed to Protect PII] did emphasize that Shields and Assistant Superintendent Brown “have been professional and courteous in all their dealings with me.”<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, the files do not reveal what the National Park Service did at the [Text Removed to Protect PII] property, but the exchange reveals some of the issues revolving around boundaries and how Rock Creek Park has tried to address them.

The park’s boundary situation has offered opportunities to engage people. The Rock Creek Conservancy (RCC) wrote in 2015 that the park had a wide range of institutional neighbors, such as schools, religious institutions, the National Zoo, and Hillwood Museum and Gardens, to reach out to. Park staff members could also reach out to adjacent embassies and ambassadors’ residences. These groups could foster connections between the park and other interested groups. Rock Creek Conservancy encouraged the National Park Service to develop a park neighbors program to “promote pride in the park and educate and empower park neighbors to serve as stewards.” Rock Creek Conservancy recommended that educational topics include native plant gardening and gardening for wildlife, lighting, and pet management.<sup>11</sup>

## Conclusion

The boundary encroachment issue brings back to focus the challenges the National Park Service has faced in protecting parkland in an urban setting. Many people want to live and work near these public lands, but unmarked boundaries have aggravated agency attempts to ensure proper use and preservation. Many people have acted more from ignorance than from deceit in extending their gardens or other yard treatments into parkland. The National Park Service has adopted a soft-handed approach to build connections and foster understanding in these instances and more.

---

<sup>9</sup> Chronology for Reservation 339, Adjacent Property Owned by [Text Removed to Protect PII]; Superintendent Shields to [Text Removed to Protect PII] February 17, 1994; Memorandum, Shields to Files, February 28, 1994; Shields to DC Councilmember Frank Smith Jr., February 1, 1994; Memorandum, Shields to Robert Stanton, December 1, 1994; [Text Removed to Protect PII] to Robert Stanton, November 23, 1994, all in Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR.

<sup>10</sup> [Text Removed to Protect PII] to Regional Director Robert Stanton, November 23, 1994, 3, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR. The files do not say if NPS completed the removals. Satellite photos in a 2020 search of the property, where [Text Removed to Protect PII] still lives, show dense trees in the backyard, bordering Rock Creek Golf Course. See [Link Removed to Protect PII], accessed January 18, 2020. See also [Link Removed to Protect PII], accessed January 18, 2020.

<sup>11</sup> RCC, Revitalizing Rock Creek Park, 38.



## CHAPTER 14 Social Uses

People using Rock Creek Park proper and the other management units under its administration largely obey park rules, making these open spaces safe and fun. One continuing issue, however, has been social uses, especially social trails. Social trails are informal, non-designated trails between two locations. Some visitors may cut across an open area instead of keeping to designated pathways. Such use may occur often enough that a new trail emerges. If park staff have not tried to stop such incursions, the social trail may become regularized and difficult to remove. The social trail may encourage erosion or the spread of non-native invasive plants, thus threatening parkland. This chapter examines social uses, from the perspective of social trails and dog walking, and how they challenge park managers in reducing their negative consequences.<sup>1</sup>

### Social Trails

Rock Creek Park Natural Resource Specialist Bill Yeaman called social trails an increasingly dramatic problem for the park. In the past ten to fifteen years, he said, the number of social trails had come to outnumber authorized trails. He characterized some people as starting their own trail, and if others follow, the trail originator then starts another personal trail. Soon, a network of unauthorized trails develops. Yeaman pointed out in 2017 that authorized trails alone represent a “compromise,” allowing people to enjoy the park and its features. But such trails also necessarily take away a bit of natural habitat. Social trails make the situation worse, with more invasion of the natural setting and cause more stress, according to Yeaman.<sup>2</sup>

Stephen Syphax, who grew up near Rock Creek Park and spent his career in natural resource management for National Capital Parks—East, noted the dramatic increase in the number of social trails. He identified the larger number of such trails north of Military Road in Reservation 339. Many of these trails also went north of Klinge Mansion. He stated that the social trails were larger and becoming more established with people taking shortcuts. He attributed such trails to people jogging. Some joggers may have sought quieter, less-traveled routes to avoid the increased numbers of other users.<sup>3</sup>

Many dog owners, another dominant park user, often develop social trails. Yeaman stated that many dog owners let their dogs go off-leash, which is against the District’s and National Park Service regulations. These owners make new trails for their dogs to run, according to Yeaman. When the agency tries to close a social trail, Yeaman described how these dog owners will often go around the brush the National Park Service laid on the original social trail or move the brush to use the original social trail. Yeaman concluded that “it’s a terrible problem” that is hard to get a handle on.<sup>4</sup>

Sometimes, the National Park Service addressed community concerns and made a social trail official. Many people started cutting through Fort Totten park to get to the metro station, and they established a social trail. The agency did not maintain the trail, and people started

---

<sup>1</sup> NPS, Yosemite National Park, Glossary of Terms, 2015, [https://definedterm.com/social\\_trails](https://definedterm.com/social_trails), accessed January 29, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Bill Yeaman, transcript of oral history interview with the author, January 13, 2017, 23–24, Rock Creek Park (ROCR) Archives. Quote on p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Syphax, transcript of oral history interview with the author, April 24, 2017, 18–19, ROCR Archives.

<sup>4</sup> Yeaman, transcript of interview, 23–24. Quote on p. 24.

getting mugged along the unlit path. Community members lobbied for a path with lighting, and initially the National Park Service resisted. Further conversations, however, led the agency to build a paved path with lighting. A similar scenario played out at the Rhode Island Avenue metro stop. Lieutenant Allan Griffith, Commander of US Park Police's District 3 (Rock Creek Park) substation, argued that the park had been left with having to put in the paved path because it had not stopped use of the social trail.<sup>5</sup>

At Peirce Mill, the National Park Service made a review of social trails a key component of its 2010 Environmental Assessment. The agency provided limited access to the mill's grounds, including some pedestrian paths not compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). This circulation system limited access to the site. As a result, some visitors developed social trails across the landscape. These unauthorized trails, however, had tripping hazards and led to people trampling the vegetation, causing soil exposure and erosion. The National Park Service-adopted alternative called for removing the existing circulation system and constructing paths meeting ADA compliance and logically connect the sites and the offsite parking. A large gathering area between the mill and the barn has provided starting points for tours and educational programs.<sup>6</sup>

Safety concerns color National Park Service responses to social trails. Rock Creek Park rangers may not know where a hiker is if he or she is on a social trail. Griffith described the scenario in which a person may fall from a twisted ankle. The person may call the park on his/her cell phone but cannot accurately describe his/her location. Griffith stated that "we're shooting in the dark," trying to find the person to provide medical assistance. Ultimately, Griffith acknowledged that people will continue to use the path of least resistance, and "some battles aren't worth fighting."<sup>7</sup>

Social trails threaten park resources. Such trails, for example, exacerbate slope erosion caused by stormwater runoff. In 2009, when the National Park Service assessed the possibility of stabilizing a slope within Reservation 360 (part of Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway), the agency considered social trails as a contributing negative factor. The slope was part of a former nineteenth-century Quaker and African American cemetery. The agency wanted to stop erosion from stormwater to keep the remaining graves intact. Social trails exacerbated the stabilization effort because off-trail excursions damaged the slope and had the potential to expose human remains.<sup>8</sup>

People using social trails trample vegetation, keeping nature from regenerating. Volunteers spent time in the late 1980s and early 1990s trying to restore a slope along the east side of Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway, stretching from P Street in the north to the culvert under the Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway south of Pennsylvania Avenue. Most of the area (which is Reservation 360) sits on a steep slope. The project's goal was to remove all foot trails except for one at the top of the hillside and return native vegetation. The volunteers did not use the term social trails, but they reported that they closed 204 trails, measuring almost 6,000 linear feet or about 1 mile, in 50 separate areas. So many foot trails suggest that many of these were

---

<sup>5</sup> Allan Griffith, transcript of oral history interview with the author, March 6, 2017, 34–35, ROCR Archives.

<sup>6</sup> NPS, Rock Creek Park: Preserve Historic Peirce Mill, Environmental Assessment/Assessment of Effect, January 2010, 9, 23–24, 59.

<sup>7</sup> Griffith, transcript of interview, 24.

<sup>8</sup> The Louis Berger Group Inc., Stabilization and Maintenance of Slope: Environmental Assessment/Assessment of Effect (October 2009), ES-1, 2.

unauthorized. The volunteers also had to keep a sharp eye to keep pedestrians from re-establishing some of these trails.<sup>9</sup>

Social trails alter cultural landscapes. The National Park Service and its partner Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy (DOPC) encountered this situation at Dumbarton Oaks Park when trying to re-establish Beatrix Farrand's design. Stormwater and erosion had washed out some sections of the original paths. People responded by establishing social trails, not following the original path alignment. Unregulated visitor use, along with water damage, improper maintenance, and neglect, also contributed to damaging or destroying the landscape's intended character. Social trails resulted from mountain bike riding to walking unleashed dogs, leading to negative consequences. One unauthorized access trail altered Farrand's original design for a circular walkway. Two social trails led to a temporary structure used by a homeless man. Streamside plantings suffered from social trails, flooding, erosion, and invasive plants, providing excellent ground for invasive plants and volunteer trees to establish and transform an open field to dense canopy. Such a scenario threatened the park's historical integrity, creating a uniform landscape without differentiation of spaces as Farrand had intended.<sup>10</sup>

The Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy approached social trails with a thoughtful process. The volunteers wanted to re-establish the five meadow "rooms" Farrand had envisioned. The conservancy members cleared out invasive plants so that the original daffodil plantings could establish themselves again. The daffodils edged the original path. With this information, conservancy members could place the path and mow it. The mowing forced park users to abandon the social trails.<sup>11</sup>

## Dogs

Former Rock Creek Park Superintendent Tara Morrison remembered walking out to her car one evening after work at Klinge Mansion. A large dog came bounding up to her and jumped up so that Morrison and the dog were face to face. The dog's owner, according to Morrison, remarked that her dog was "just friendly." Morrison knew otherwise with this dog and the other unleashed dogs roaming the park. She noted that the dogs had a potentially negative impact on the park, its natural resources, staff, and visitors. Morrison did not want to keep dogs out of the park, but she wanted them leashed, as required by law. She recognized that such a goal required communication with dog owners and National Park Service staff and the US Park Police. Success would take a lot of time.<sup>12</sup>

Rock Creek Conservancy (RCC), a Rock Creek Park friends organization, outlined some of the concerns about unleashed dogs in Rock Creek Park. Dogs on social trails could injure or intimidate birds and wildlife. They could run through sensitive habitats, such as vernal pools, and disturb reptiles and amphibians. They could also spread invasive plants. Social trails wind through fragile biological, historical, and geological park areas, and dogs exacerbate the negative effects of these unauthorized trails.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Gary Sikora and Peg Shaw, *Erosion Control and Revegetation Project at P Street Beach and the Black Forest* (1994), 1, 3–5.

<sup>10</sup> Maureen De Lay Joseph, Kay Fanning, and Mark Davison, *Cultural Landscape Report (CLR): Dumbarton Oaks Park, Rock Creek Park*, part I (Washington, DC: NPS, August 2000), 102, 109, 111, 162.

<sup>11</sup> Lindsey Milstein and Lou Slade, transcript of oral history interview with the author, May 5, 2017, 22, ROCR Archives.

<sup>12</sup> Tara Morrison, transcript of oral history interview with the author, October 28, 2016, 16–17, ROCR Archives. Quote on p. 17.

<sup>13</sup> Rock Creek Conservancy Green Paper, 27, 44.

Battery Kemble Park, one of the Civil War Defenses of Washington (CWDW), posed a tricky situation for Rock Creek Park managers. To some visitors, Battery Kemble Park is like a dog park, where—despite city and NPS regulations to the contrary—they let their pets off their leashes for play and exercise. Although the park has no established dog parks on the property that it administers, Battery Kemble has been named as one of the top ten dog parks in the District. The *Washington City Paper* counted as many as thirty to forty dogs unleashed on a 2001 weekend day, running through the park's fifty-seven acres of grassy hills and forested creek trails. To some, Battery Kemble Park has the appearance of a “dog park,” where owners have come to expect being able to unleash their dogs and let them run free, against District and Federal law.<sup>14</sup>

Reservation 339, especially along the creek, attracts dogs on a regular basis. They run in and out of the water on summer days. Melanie Choukas-Bradley, who visits the park almost daily, stated that she worried about having a dog, since she knew the pressure would be to let it off-leash, against the law and against her preference. People rarely had their dogs leashed.<sup>15</sup> But this freedom comes with a price for some dogs. Dogs sometimes experience negative effects from running through the creek. The creek's polluted waters can leave dogs sick if they take a drink.<sup>16</sup>

## Conclusion

Social trails and off-leash dogs represent some of the community challenges of having a popular urban park. Many visitors embrace the open green space and make it their own, not fully recognizing the harmful consequences. The park's limited funds keep it from conducting a needed full-fledged communication program. Volunteers, such as from Rock Creek Conservancy, can assist in closing social trails. The National Park Service can evaluate these trails to assess their value to the park's overall trail system, and some social trails may be made permanent. The agency's overall goal for assessing social trails and dogs is to enhance the visitor experience while protecting the park's resources.

---

<sup>14</sup> Melinda Wittstock, “Call of the Wild,” *Washington City Paper*, May 4, 2001. Malee Oot, “Ten Dog Parks in the DC Area That Get a Paw of Approval,” UpOut, February 18, 2016, <http://www.upout.com/blog/washington-dc/10-dog-parks-in-the-washington-dc-area-that-get-a-paw-of-approval>, accessed January 30, 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Melanie Choukas-Bradley, conversation with the author, April 10, 2017.

<sup>16</sup> Rock Creek Conservancy Green Paper, 21.

## CHAPTER 15 Community Outreach

The National Park Service articulated the need for community outreach, often called civic engagement, in its seventy-fifth-anniversary symposium, held in Vail, Colorado. The resulting *National Parks for the Twenty-First Century: The Vail Agenda* summarized the salient conclusions of the nearly seven hundred experts, half of whom worked outside the agency. The Vail Agenda had many important strategies for the protection and enjoyment of national parks, but one recommendation wove throughout the report: partnerships. Park managers could no longer take care of their resources with hardly a glance outside their parks. They had to step beyond park boundaries, the report urged, and dive into the larger community. Here, they could swap expertise, build relationships to aid park protection and interpretation, and work collaboratively toward common goals.<sup>1</sup>

Since 1991, the National Park Service has investigated best practices for civic engagement. The Conservation Study Institute, now called the Stewardship Institute and based at Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park (Vermont), has organized workshops and published findings since its 1998 founding. These works have fostered collaboration and commitment to develop new approaches for the caretaking of national parks. Its 2001 publication, *Collaboration and Conservation: Lessons Learned in Areas Managed through National Park Service Partnerships*, as an example, emphasized the vital role of partnerships for conserving the most precious national landscapes. More recently, *Stronger Together: A Manual on the Principles and Practices of Civic Engagement* (2009), provided a how-to on strengthening civic engagement. The Stewardship Institute has also offered Superintendents Leadership Roundtables, an intensive multi-year small-group format, to build field competencies.<sup>2</sup>

As the National Park Service neared its centennial in 2016, studies came out that assessed the previous century and looked forward to the next. These all highlighted outreach as an important tool for furthering the agency's mission. The National Park System Advisory Board submitted to the National Park Service Director in 2001 its *Rethinking the National Parks for the 21st Century*. This study urged the agency to collaborate with governments, scholars, educators, indigenous peoples, and others to be successful in the coming century. The National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) convened in 2008 an independent panel of private citizens with expertise in science, history, education, conservation, and business. This group met over the course of the year and submitted its National Parks Second Century Commission Report, *Advancing the National Park Idea* (2009). Civic engagement, collaboration, and pursuit of diversity were integral parts of the panel's vision for the national parks. The National Park Service Chief Historian, in another effort, invited the Organization of American Historians to assess history in the agency. The resulting study, *Imperiled Promise: The State of History in the National Park Service* (2011), called for collaboration and shared authority as a means to enhance historical study and interpretation.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> NPS, *The Vail Agenda: National Parks for the 21st Century* (NPS, 1992), 2, 24–28, 43.

<sup>2</sup> See the Stewardship Institute website for links to its publications and a description of its work: <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1412/index.htm>, accessed September 18, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> National Park System Advisory Board, *Rethinking the National Parks for the 21st Century* (2001), <https://www.nps.gov/policy/report.htm>. National Parks Second Century Commission Report, *Advancing the National Park Idea* (NPCA, 2009), [https://www.nps.gov/civic/resources/Commission\\_Report.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/civic/resources/Commission_Report.pdf). Anne Mitchell Whisnant, Marla R. Miller, Gary B. Nash, and David Thelen, *Imperiled Promise: The State of History in the*

Rock Creek Park has fostered friends groups and education as ways to reach out to the public. Some of these friends groups have focused on individual park areas, such as Peirce Mill or Georgetown Waterfront Park. One friends group, Rock Creek Conservancy, has developed into an organization that has looked out for the overall health and vitality of Rock Creek Park and its ninety-nine administrative units. Community outreach has also involved educational and interpretive work. Rock Creek Park rangers have developed relationships with teachers and schools to offer programming that fits within state curriculum guidelines. Park rangers have educated people about threats to the park and built active volunteer constituencies to address these challenges.

Community outreach is also required under the laws and regulations guiding the National Park Service. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA, 1970) and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA, 1966) include meaningful opportunities for public participation whenever the federal government embarks upon a major action. Typically for the National Park Service, these opportunities involve public meetings, submission of comments, and outreach to specific advocacy groups. Rock Creek Park superintendents have addressed National Environmental Policy Act requirements when preparing such important documents as its General Management Plan (GMP) for Rock Creek Park and Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway (RCP, 2005) and the Wireless Telecommunications Plan (2008). Community meetings for these and other planning efforts have sometimes been adversarial, such as when some people strongly opposing having cell towers in Reservation 339. These outreach and communication channels, however, allow for input and guide National Park Service planning. This chapter examines community outreach from the perspective of volunteer friends groups and Rock Creek Park staff. The chapter begins by looking at environmental outreach.

### **Green Outreach**

National Park Service community outreach has sometimes involved connecting people to the land and its greenery in a hands-on fashion. Rock Creek Park hosts nine community gardens, including at Glover-Archbold Park, Fort Reno, Fort Stevens, and Rock Creek Park proper. Community gardeners have advocated for this access, successfully stopping a proposed General Management Plan alternative to eliminate the gardens, horse center, and golf course and turn Reservation 339 into a nature preserve. Community gardeners wrote in their comments that gardeners look after a park if there is a community garden.<sup>4</sup>

The National Park Service sponsored another hands-on community outreach program focused on plant care called the Green Scene. The Green Scene started in 1972 as part of the Summer in the Parks, an urban initiative to encourage District children to explore and learn in the parks. NPS Director George Hartzog had seen some of the city's children playing in the street as opposed to the nearby and empty Lincoln Park. He worked with Rep. Julia Butler Hansen (D-WA) to secure funding in National Capital Region appropriations for children's parks programming. Hartzog first unveiled the Summer in the Parks idea in February 1968. The program gained urgency following the April 1968 Washington, DC, riots in response to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination. Summer in the Parks bused children to parks just outside the District, such as Greenbelt and Catoctin Mountain parks for camping. Children across the city also participated in arts and crafts, sporting events, musical performances, interpretive

---

*National Park Service* (OAH, 2011), <http://www.oah.org/programs/the-oah-national-park-service-collaboration/imperiled-promise-the-state-of-history-in-the-national-park-service/>, all accessed September 18, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> ROCR, LRIP, 2010, 23. ROCR and Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway, GMP/EIS, 2005, vol. 2, ROCR 3064, C-26.

programs, and other activities. National Park Service Rangers visited community centers, hospitals, and other locations to share environmental information and gardening advice.<sup>5</sup>

The Green Scene, housed in Klinge Mansion, encouraged gardening and the caretaking of plants inside homes and offices. A prime element of the program was youth gardens, with children planting, maintaining, and harvesting vegetable gardens. Green Scene staff members set up exhibits at local noontime concerts and educated people about plant care. Staff members used a special clear bubble machine, designed by a science consultant to the regional director, to assemble terrariums. They used these displays for their environmental outreach. Green Scene also visited hospitals and senior homes.<sup>6</sup> Steve Syphax, who worked with the Green Scene during its early years, recalled driving down District streets in a Summer in the Parks van, which sported a Happy Tree on the side to advertise the program. Syphax remembered that inevitably, kids would run up to the van and excitedly ask where the van was setting up for the day and what the Green Scene leaders would be doing. Syphax said that the kids “knew that meant music, all kinds of activities, arts and crafts.” He noted that it was “a real popular program at the time.”<sup>7</sup>

Another immensely popular program had been Weed Warriors. Non-native invasive plant species have inundated national parks and other natural areas across the country. Reduced budgets have prevented National Park Service staff from effectively removing these noxious plants. These invasives have crowded out native species, threatening the landscapes that the National Park Service has been tasked to preserve. Volunteers have stepped in to provide the manual labor that the agency no longer can afford. Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy (DOPC), for example, has recruited dedicated volunteers and seen parts of this park emerge from a mass of overgrown and invasive vegetation. Small corners of Rock Creek Park, once overwhelmed by aggressive lesser celandine, now have native wildflowers bloom again.<sup>8</sup>

Weed Warriors receive specialized training, and National Park Service staff oversee their activities. Some specially trained volunteers work independently and lead groups of volunteers. They only employ mechanical methods, like pulling or cutting to remove weeds. National Park Service staff will apply chemical sprays as required. People sign up in numbers large enough that sometimes the agency must turn them away for lack of space. Some park neighbors have embraced a range of service activities for the park, including Weed Warriors. Such participation speaks to the effectiveness of ranger outreach to this community, who sometimes encroach on park boundaries with their own gardens or other outdoor landscaping.<sup>9</sup>

Rock Creek Park has recently adopted an overarching outreach program called SOLVE (which stands for Sustaining Our Lands with Volunteer Energy). SOLVE was modeled after a program at Chesapeake & Ohio (C&O) Canal National Historical Park. Other groups have also used it, such as Washington Parks & People (which currently encompasses Friends of Meridian Hill, FOMH). The National Park Service launched SOLVE during its 125th Anniversary celebration in 2015. Volunteers might remove graffiti (which also requires training) or do trash

---

<sup>5</sup> NCR Admin History, 152–53.

<sup>6</sup> NCR, Admin History, 96–97. Stephen Syphax, transcript of oral history interview with the author, April 24, 2017, 5–6, ROCR Archives.

<sup>7</sup> Syphax, transcript of interview, 6–7.

<sup>8</sup> For more on exotic species, see Chapter 6. For more on Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservatory, see Chapter 11.

<sup>9</sup> The ROCR website has information about its Weed Warrior program and its popularity. See <https://www.nps.gov/rocr/getinvolved/weed-warriors.htm>, accessed September 17, 2018. Simone Monteleone, transcript of oral history interview with the author, December 22, 2016, 23, ROCR Archives. Ken Ferebee, transcript of oral history interview, January 5, 2017, 20, ROCR Archives. Rita Gunther, transcript of oral history interview, December 13, 2016, 24–25, ROCR Archives.

pickups. They also report to the park about downed tree limbs or even when a car drives through Chevy Chase Circle, for example.<sup>10</sup>

The park sees these SOLVE members as being as important as the friends groups. Rock Creek Park Partnerships Coordinator Rita Gunther stated that SOLVE members help the park significantly. Rock Creek Park, Gunther said, is a “grounds park. We have a lot of landscapes, a lot of circles, triangles, and squares.” She recalled former superintendent Tara Morrison saying that these people love the park to death and SOLVE helps channel that energy constructively.<sup>11</sup>

### **Different Emphases**

Some friends groups have expressed concerns over different emphases in achieving goals between themselves and the National Park Service. One of Steve Saari’s favorite memories of working with the National Park Service also highlighted some of the frustrations he found while volunteering with Friends of Rock Creek’s Environment (FORCE). Rock Creek Park had opened a fish ladder at Peirce Mill dam in late March 2007. This ladder allowed fish to travel back to their spawning grounds and lay eggs. The timing of the fish ladder’s opening was a little late for allowing shad to take the ladder up north. In response, FORCE members worked with the District’s Fish and Wildlife staff and the National Park Service to collect shad at the bottom of the dam and use a bucket brigade to carry the shad over the barrier. Saari remembered feeling good that he and others had helped perpetuate the species. The shad could now lay their eggs further north in Rock Creek. The offspring would imprint on that area and return in subsequent years. He stated later, “Yes, that was a really good, feel-good event” that many people participated in and learned from.<sup>12</sup>

Saari noted that in his mind, as a person interested primarily in the protection of the natural environment, National Park Service historic preservation requirements sometimes rejected what he thought could be preferred options. With Peirce Mill, for example, the most effective and least expensive measure would have been to remove the dam. If the dam needed to stay for historic reasons, then Saari preferred that the fish ladder be placed on the side closest to the mill, allowing for interpretive opportunities. Plus, placement on the mill side, according to Saari, would have been less expensive to build because there was no roadway there, there was more space to work, and it would have been easier to install the fish ladder thanks to the sloping of the hillside.<sup>13</sup>

Saari could point to other similar examples, such as an unused historic carriage road, Old Bingham Road. This road had become a conveyance for stormwater, causing problems downstream. The National Park Service went to FORCE members to ask for help in addressing the situation, and Saari remembered saying that the best option was the removal of the road. The National Park Service stated that the road was historic and could not be removed, and as Saari remembered, “at greater cost, we ended up doing a different project that was half as good as what we could have done.” Saari argued that the agency had in the past used the road as a dumping ground, reinforcing his belief that the road should go.<sup>14</sup>

These examples made Saari reflect on the different demands upon the National Park Service. He wished for “a little bit more compromise.” He worried that sometimes the agency

---

<sup>10</sup> Gunther, transcript of interview, 24–25.

<sup>11</sup> Gunther, transcript of interview, 25.

<sup>12</sup> Steve Saari, transcript of oral history interview with the author, May 5, 2017, 6, ROCR Archives.

<sup>13</sup> Saari, transcript of interview, 18–19.

<sup>14</sup> Saari, transcript of interview, 20.

was “not seeing the forest for the trees” and thinking about how a project might have a “greater, positive impact” for the whole park despite a “slight negative impact.” Saari stated that to a certain degree, he understood the decisions the agency made. But he also viewed others as “crazy things” that stumped him.<sup>15</sup>

Beth Mullin, who had once worked as a federal employee for the Environmental Protection Agency, saw National Park Service actions a little differently. She felt FORCE and the National Park Service had a very good relationship. She was “always really sympathetic” with what the National Park Service was “up against in terms of their own rules and requirements.” As a lawyer, she also was “respectful of everything that they needed to do.” Mullin did not remember clashing with the agency on anything and noted that “the people there were so good-hearted and loved the park” and they “focused on trying to do good stuff.” Mullin said that she and other partners wanted to help, too.<sup>16</sup>

Friends of Meridian Hill also ran into differences with the National Park Service. Friends of Meridian Hill consistently focused on building a connection between people and Meridian Hill Park. This emphasis sometimes conflicted with the National Park Service, which must act within a broad set of legal and policy requirements. Steve Coleman, cofounder of Friends of Meridian Hill, shared that this organization wanted “to support programming and interpretation and volunteer and advocacy for the park.” To accomplish this goal, he said that “what we really want is a lasting partnership” with the community “playing a pivotal role in managing the park.” The park was a hybrid, in Coleman’s estimation, between a national park with a presidential memorial (for James Buchanan) and a community park. He explained that Friends of Meridian Hill (which was part of the larger organization Washington Parks & People) and other park groups and agencies have “to serve concentric circles of community.” He argued that if the National Park Service and the friends groups were not serving the communities who used the parks, then “you’re not going to have a sustainable park.”<sup>17</sup>

A significant barrier to positive and productive relations between the National Park Service and Friends of Meridian Hill involved a National Park Service request for a financial audit, as required by the memorandum of understanding. Previous superintendents Rolland Swain and Bill Shields, plus initially Adrienne Coleman, according to Friends of Meridian Hill correspondence, had deemed unnecessary a full audit of the small organization. Instead, the friends group had submitted annual financial records, which, according to Friends of Meridian Hill, the National Park Service had reviewed and approved.<sup>18</sup> By 1998, Adrienne Coleman requested a full audit of the 1996, 1997, and 1998 records.<sup>19</sup> Friends of Meridian Hill argued that full audits would “unduly tax” the small organization, but it ultimately did submit them.<sup>20</sup> The financial audit was completed in November 1999.<sup>21</sup>

During this contentious period, Friends of Meridian Hill saw the toll on the park and its supporters. Steve Coleman wrote to Adrienne Coleman about “how much the Park is suffering” while waiting for a resolution of the audit situation. He described how community leaders and residents who had “worked so hard” were “upset by your continuing suspicions” of Friends of

---

<sup>15</sup> Saari, transcript of interview, 19–20.

<sup>16</sup> Beth Mullin, transcript of oral history interview with the author, August 3, 2017, 17–18, ROCR Archives.

<sup>17</sup> Steve Coleman, transcript of interview, 30–31.

<sup>18</sup> FOMH Chair Malcolm Peabody and FOMH President Stephen Coleman to NCR Regional Director Terry Carlstrom, May 15, 1998, 2, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR.

<sup>19</sup> Adrienne Coleman to Stephen Coleman, March 27, 1998, 1, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR.

<sup>20</sup> Peabody and Coleman to Carlstrom, May 15, 1998, 2.

<sup>21</sup> NPS, Briefing Statement-Meridian Hill Park, January 18, 2000, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR.

Meridian Hill operations.<sup>22</sup> Steve Coleman pointed out later that Friends of Meridian Hill had won the National Park Service's highest organizational honor and "was suddenly being treated like a criminal operation, and it was really heartbreaking."<sup>23</sup> The end result, something that Friends of Meridian Hill had sought from the beginning to combat and overcome, was a loss of public trust between the community and the National Park Service, in Steve Coleman's mind. Rebuilding that trust "is going to be especially difficult," Steve Coleman wrote to Adrienne Coleman, but "parks cannot make it without a deep and lasting bond with their publics." He sought "honest face-to-face dialogue and concrete on-the-ground collaboration" to move the work forward.<sup>24</sup>

Friends of Peirce Mill (FOPM) has had one continuing frustration with the National Park Service, though overall Friends of Peirce Mill volunteers have called their Rock Creek Park relationship close and productive. The issue is flour. Until the early 1990s, Peirce Mill sold the flour it milled to the public. Friends of Peirce Mill wants to continue this tradition. Richard Abbott, who initiated the formation of Friends of Peirce Mill, remembered bagging and selling Peirce Mill flour before the mill broke down.<sup>25</sup> Steve Dryden, a longtime member of Friends of Peirce Mill, believes this organization would have a good income source if it could sell the flour. The nonprofit's biggest challenge was funding to maintain its extensive educational programming and outreach efforts.<sup>26</sup>

The National Park Service has said no. Education Specialist Maggie Zadorozny explained that the flour must meet Food and Drug Administration standards for human consumption. The historic mill has the potential for insect and rodent infestations, and the National Park Service does not have the capacity to meet the required purity standards. The National Park Service would have to find funds and staff time for laboratory testing. The product could be used for papier-mâché or modeling clay, and the National Park Service also donates the flour for animal feed to Oxen Cove Farm and the Alice Ferguson Foundation for feeding their farm animals.<sup>27</sup>

Many members of friends groups have, perhaps not surprisingly, singled out National Park Service bureaucracy as a hindrance. National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 compliance, as Steve Saari noted previously, meant that some projects ended up costlier or less effective than if the National Park Service did not have to consider the historic scene. Steve Coleman stated that "the rigmarole" has "just been crippling." He wanted the whole idea of volunteering to be a "much more holistic experience." He wanted to make it easier for National Park Service staff "to welcome partners and supporters and volunteers." Instead, Steve Coleman saw barriers. "I just think there are huge, huge opportunities, and values, and assets," he said later, "that are not being leveraged by the Park Service to this day."<sup>28</sup> Steve Dryden echoed this statement, saying that the National Park Service must "find a way to accept more outside assistance and give a little bit more freedom to the friends groups."<sup>29</sup>

Another common complaint among some friends groups has been the National Park

---

<sup>22</sup> Steve Coleman to Adrienne Coleman, December 3, 1999, 3, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR.

<sup>23</sup> Coleman, transcript of interview, 27.

<sup>24</sup> Steve Coleman to Adrienne Coleman, December 3, 1999, 4.

<sup>25</sup> Steve Dryden, transcript of oral history interview with the author, December 21, 2016, 15, ROCR Archives. Richard Abbott, transcript of oral history interview with the author, April 12, 2017, 1–2, ROCR Archives.

<sup>26</sup> Dryden, transcript of interview, 16.

<sup>27</sup> Maggie Zadorozny, transcript of oral history interview with the author, January 13, 2017, 62–65, ROCR Archives. Cindy Cox, transcript of oral history interview with the author, 41–42, ROCR Archives.

<sup>28</sup> Coleman, transcript of interview, 38–39.

<sup>29</sup> Dryden, transcript of interview, 20.

Service's perception about the purpose of friends groups. Adrienne Coleman wrote in 1998 that the primary function of friends groups was fundraising.<sup>30</sup> Friends groups had the legal authority to accept donations and then disburse them to a national park unit. They could also use these donations to contract for work or other activity, which sometimes the National Park Service had difficulty in accomplishing due to its legal commitments.

Ann Satterthwaite bristled at this expectation. She accepted that Friends of Georgetown Waterfront Park raised significant amounts of money to create the park and maintain it. She said that the National Park Service seemed to see friends groups to "really just to get money from us."<sup>31</sup>

Loretta Neumann from the Alliance to Preserve the Civil War Defenses of Washington commented that the fundraising expectation was a big reason why the Alliance founders did not want to create a friends group. Neumann stated that the group wanted to focus on advocacy, not raising millions of dollars, though the Civil War Defenses of Washington sites may need that money. Neumann noted that if people were in friends groups, "how can we poke at the Park Service when it deserves it. And it does deserve it often." She referred to a recent example when Neumann went by Battleground National Cemetery and saw that it hadn't been mowed. The grass was four or five inches tall around the gravestones, and weeds abounded. The contractor had failed to ready the cemetery for the annual Memorial Day service. Neumann called the situation a shame, arguing that the National Park Service needed to rely less on contractors and more on National Park Service employees who took pride in completing such tasks with quality work. The Alliance could advocate for such action, she said.<sup>32</sup>

Another issue has involved decision-making. Satterthwaite thought that if the friends groups brought in money, they should also be invited in the decision-making. Satterthwaite didn't think the National Park Service wanted friends groups involved in decision-making. She indicated that "it comes down to [a mistake]." Satterthwaite went on, saying that "we may be trouble at times to them, but we could also be very helpful." She pointed at permit requests for holding events at the park. Friends of Georgetown Waterfront Park has wanted the opportunity to review these permit requests before they were approved. Satterthwaite argued that she did oppose having Georgetown Waterfront Park used as "a playground for yoga classes, which is what it's being used for now."<sup>33</sup> With the park still in its infancy, she worried that "how that park is used is going to create the image for what the park is for the public."<sup>34</sup>

These formal partnerships with friends groups and other organizations thus have benefits and responsibilities, challenges and repercussions. The groups, when successful, achieve significant goals that the National Park Service may not realize due to funding and staffing limitations. Peirce Mill, as one example, may never have turned its wheel again if not for the Friends of Peirce Mill raising consciousness about its plight and spearheading the rebuilding process. Friends of Peirce Mill has gone on to offer educational and interpretive initiatives that cement the historic site's place in the District. Friends groups also channel citizen interest into active involvement that benefits the park and local communities. Friends of Meridian Hill helped turn the park around, from a drug haven and drive-by shooting area to a vibrant gathering place

---

<sup>30</sup> Email message, Adrienne Coleman to Carlstrom, et. al, April 9, 1998, 2.

<sup>31</sup> Ann Satterthwaite, transcript of oral history interview with the author, July 21, 2017, 7, ROCR Archives.

<sup>32</sup> Loretta Neumann, transcript of interview with the author, September 5, 2017, 19–23, ROCR Archives. Quote on p. 19.

<sup>33</sup> Satterthwaite, transcript of interview, 18.

<sup>34</sup> Satterthwaite, transcript of interview, 8.

for an increasingly diverse neighborhood. Friends of Georgetown Waterfront Park worked with the National Park Service to raise millions of dollars to design, build, and maintain this park. This friends group worked with the federal government to bring Georgetown back to the Potomac River with a contemplative, energizing, and historically conscious park. In each case, the friends groups leveraged their volunteer numbers and passion for the resources to work with the National Park Service toward a common cause.

### **Rock Creek Park Superintendents and Outreach**

Each Rock Creek Park superintendent has interacted with the public and sought some level of communication and cooperation. The depth of this outreach and its level of success has varied, based in part on priorities and National Park Service administrative support. Jim Redmond, according to several who worked with him, made the natural resources his prime concern. He actively supported the first FORCE group to aid him in this effort.<sup>35</sup>

Georgia Ellard, who succeeded Redmond, remembered her many appearances before the District's Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANC). She later joked that "the ANC would put me on their calendar only when they had an issue." Those issues might involve National Park Service removing dangerous trees in Montrose Park or a neighborhood effort to have a lighted path to the Fort Totten Metro station, a path that was a social trail that people wanted formalized. Ellard recognized that she had "a lot of participation from the neighbors" and that the Advisory Neighborhood Commissions were "a very strong group." The park benefited, but she faced a stiff audience when issues went before the Advisory Neighborhood Commissions.<sup>36</sup>

Ellard understood well that she had her work cut out for her in trying to defend park values while also educating the public. She knew the cost of not meeting with the public and resolving problems. She said later that it was her job to ensure that she knew the issues and tried to address them (she used the word "litigate") before the newspaper printed them or the regional director got involved. She tried to resolve issues "before they became a big balloon."<sup>37</sup> National Capital Regional (NCR) Director Joe Lawler, who had served in 1983 as Ellard's deputy superintendent at Rock Creek Park, later commented about her effectiveness. He said in an interview that Ellard "was very skilled at community relations." Lawler pointed out that Rock Creek Park had affluent communities to the west and less affluent communities to the east, and "Georgia was able to deal with both sectors very, very well."<sup>38</sup>

Bill Shields has left little in terms of his record on community outreach. He initiated the development of the General Management Plan and thus had a role in the initial public meetings.<sup>39</sup> Education Specialist Maggie Zadorozny referred to Shields as an "easy-going" and "affable guy."<sup>40</sup> Deputy Superintendent Cindy Cox thought that his focus was more on "pleasing the public—not that that's a bad thing."<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Bill Yeaman, transcript of oral history interview with the author, January 13, 2017, 34, ROCR Archives. Georgia Ellard, transcript of oral history interview with the author, May 8, 2017, 3, ROCR Archives. Robert Stanton, transcript of oral history interview with the author, July 25, 2017, 14, ROCR Archives.

<sup>36</sup> Ellard, 2017 transcript, 10, 14, 17, 24

<sup>37</sup> Georgia Ellard, transcript of oral history interview with Lu Ann Jones, January 16, 2015, 33, ROCR Archives.

<sup>38</sup> Joseph Lawler, transcript of oral history interview with National Capital Regional Historian Gary Scott, November 3, 2006, appendix E, p. 12, in NCR Admin History.

<sup>39</sup> Yeaman, transcript of interview, 34.

<sup>40</sup> Zadorozny, transcript of interview, 38–39.

<sup>41</sup> Cox, transcript of interview, 38.

Rolland Swain came to Rock Creek Park after a tumultuous time as superintendent at Manassas National Battlefield Park. He had maneuvered that park through one of its most controversial periods, when a developer had proposed building a huge shopping mall on contested land adjacent to the park. He had been battle-tested in community outreach.<sup>42</sup> At Rock Creek Park, he fostered the relationship with Friends of Meridian Hill, recognizing that this group could accomplish so much more than the park's limited staff and funding could. Former National Capital Regional Director Robert Stanton praised Swain for working well with Steve Coleman and others. Stanton admitted that during the 1980s and 1990s, "citizen groups became a little bit more vocal" about their expectations of the government. Stanton admitted that sometimes it wasn't easy for "superintendents to go into community meetings where they might be lambasted."<sup>43</sup> Swain fondly remembered working with Coleman, saying, "I enjoyed working with him, and I was really impressed with what he was doing."<sup>44</sup> Such a memory suggests that Swain managed to dodge some lambasting from Friends of Meridian Hill.

People remember Adrienne Coleman having a strained relationship with the public.<sup>45</sup> Julia Washburn, who worked under Adrienne Coleman as Chief of Interpretation and Resources Management, saw Coleman as "very much a defender of the park." Washburn believed that Coleman sometimes "erred on the side of caution." Washburn also recalled that many of Rock Creek Park's partners "expressed frustration with her" because they had some "big ideas" and didn't feel they were getting the responses "from her that they were looking for."<sup>46</sup> Cindy Cox, however, emphasized Coleman's strong defense of the park, saying that when there were differences between the park and the community, Coleman "would really do the research, do her homework," and Coleman, in Cox's mind, was not afraid to say no.<sup>47</sup> Zadorozny characterized Coleman as "very good at keeping the public face, making the park look good."<sup>48</sup>

Chief of Resource Management Nick Bartolomeo worked under Adrienne Coleman, and she emphasized her partnership abilities. He said that "connected with the public" but didn't say just what the public wanted to hear. She defended the resources, followed her staff's advice, and worked hard to "hold the line" against external threats. Bartolomeo agreed with Cox in saying that Coleman clearly defined what friends groups could and could not do. Bartolomeo, however, pointed out that Georgetown Waterfront Park was built and opened under her superintendency, "not something that could have been done without fostering partnerships." Coleman also "successfully guided" the park through the white-tailed deer management Environmental Impact Statement, a feat that Bartolomeo points at as important in the face of strong opposition.<sup>49</sup>

Tara Morrison relished building and maintaining partnerships. Yeaman stated that Morrison was "big on outreach" and "getting people involved in the parks."<sup>50</sup> Cox laughed when she said that Morrison "was very partnership oriented" and "people were happy" to have a Superintendent at Rock Creek Park focused on partnership development.<sup>51</sup> Morrison recognized

---

<sup>42</sup> Joan M. Zenzen, *Battling for Manassas: The 50-Year Preservation Struggle at Manassas National Battlefield Park* (University Park: Penn State Press, 1998).

<sup>43</sup> Stanton, transcript of interview, 14.

<sup>44</sup> Rolland Swain, transcript of oral history interview with the author, August 22, 2017, 7, ROCR Archives.

<sup>45</sup> Adrienne Coleman refused attempts to participate in an oral history interview.

<sup>46</sup> Julia Washburn, transcript of oral history interview with the author, July 10, 2017, 19, ROCR Archives.

<sup>47</sup> Cox, transcript of interview, 38.

<sup>48</sup> Zadorozny, transcript of interview, 39.

<sup>49</sup> Nick Bartolomeo, comments on the first draft of ROCR admin history, 30, ROCR Archives.

<sup>50</sup> Yeaman, transcript of interview, 38.

<sup>51</sup> Cox, transcript of interview, 38.

that Rock Creek Park and its administrative units were surrounded by neighborhoods and that those neighbors shared “passion.” People may be passionate about letting the National Park Service know what it is doing wrong. People may be passionate about protecting natural or cultural resources. But Morrison believed that, either way, “there’s just this underlying theme of passion.” She then asked, “How do we as a park staff interact with all of that?”<sup>52</sup> She used the park’s 125th anniversary as an impetus to start SOLVE, Sustaining Our Lands with Volunteer Energy, one means of channeling that passion.<sup>53</sup>

Morrison fostered the Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy, saying that this group worked collaboratively with Rock Creek Park staff but also as “ambassadors.” She admitted that “these things don’t happen overnight,” and sometimes she found the partnerships to be “a struggle” or “frustrating and overwhelming.” She admitted, though, that once she saw the resource physically transform, then she could smile and say, “This is worth our time and energy to invest in this.”<sup>54</sup>

Morrison saw national parks as outward facing. She said that “having a face of the park outside engaging with people” was important so that park staff was not seen as people with “our arms around the park” and “not wanting to engage with people.” She emphasized that that outreach component was “extremely important, and we’re still working toward that.”<sup>55</sup> Morrison oversaw the hiring of a public information officer, shared half-time with National Capital Parks East. This staff person could shift media relations from a largely reactive mode to an educational one. Morrison provided the example of potholes. The park informed people of its actions to remedy the poor situation but also asked motorists to drive the speed limit to limit car damage and be respectful of maintenance folks working on the roads to fill the potholes.<sup>56</sup> Morrison hired a partnership coordinator to work with the volunteer coordinator and also ensure that the park staff and partners follow the agreements and accomplish the goals. Partnerships have become proactive in communication and outreach as a part of interpretation, Morrison summarized.<sup>57</sup>

Julia Washburn, the most recent superintendent, has been reaching out to the public. She has the experience of previously working at the park and building a portfolio of collaborative relationships. She has a pragmatic vision, acknowledging that “the only way” to continue stewardship of Rock Creek Park “is through partnerships,” recognizing that her staff must become “a lot more open to the partnerships than we have been in the past.”<sup>58</sup> In this capacity, Washburn noted that “we’re going to have to relinquish more power” and build trust to facilitate partnerships. She envisioned that the park would continue to thrive because “we are working hand-and-glove” with partners and treating them as equals.<sup>59</sup>

Washburn has already acted. She has attended many Advisory Neighborhood Commission meetings and is developing relationships with elected officials. She sends out a Superintendent’s Message every Monday for staff and major partners. She writes about what has been going on at the park and what senior management has been doing. Employee surveys had identified such a need for communication. For partners, Washburn wants to nurture these

---

<sup>52</sup> Tara Morrison, transcript of oral history interview, October 28, 2016, 3, ROCR Archives.

<sup>53</sup> Morrison, transcript of interview, 4.

<sup>54</sup> Morrison, transcript of interview, 4–5. Quotes on p. 5. See also Yeaman, transcript of interview, 38.

<sup>55</sup> Morrison, transcript of interview, 6.

<sup>56</sup> Morrison, transcript of interview, 15–16.

<sup>57</sup> Morrison, transcript of interview, 21.

<sup>58</sup> Washburn, transcript of interview, 37.

<sup>59</sup> Washburn, transcript of interview, 38.

relationships with open communication, frequent collaborative meetings, a collaborative work plan, and assistance (as provided by law) in fundraising.<sup>60</sup>

Community outreach has grown in size and importance throughout Rock Creek Park's history. Park superintendents have moved from fostering a few friends groups to taking an active stance in building relationships across neighborhoods and with groups committed to specific goals.

### **Conclusion**

Community outreach has become an essential feature of park management. The National Park Service has emphasized its importance in its recommendations for action and its leadership training. Rock Creek Park has engaged the public in a variety of ways, including youth programs and natural resource protection. Friends groups have assisted the park by raising money, cleaning up areas, and even building new parks. These interactions have sometimes elicited concern about differences in emphases. Friends groups have bristled from National Park Service rules and regulations. They have also wanted more of a role in park decisions, given the fact that they have raised substantial amounts of money. Despite these issues, partnerships and community outreach have been vital to the operation and success of Rock Creek Park.

---

<sup>60</sup> Washburn, transcript of interview, 38–41.



## CHAPTER 16 Memorialization and Commemoration

Rock Creek Park and its larger administrative unit of ninety-nine management areas contain three different memorial types. First, some geographic locations and structures are known by the individuals or families that inhabited them, such as Klinge Mansion and Klinge Barn, or operated them, such as Peirce Mill and Peirce Springhouse. Second, specific statues and monuments mark a historic event or the contributions of a person. Examples include the Joan of Arc statue at Meridian Hill Park or the Jules Jusserand Memorial in Rock Creek Park proper. Third, commemorative activities, such as Fort Stevens Day, held at this Civil War Defenses of Washington site, connect the past with the present. These types of commemorations add an important cultural perspective but also make National Park Service management complicated.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, the general public often does not connect these cultural landmarks to the National Park Service, let alone to Rock Creek Park. In some cases, people do not recognize the significance of these sites. This situation leaves the landmarks orphaned, worsened by the large geographic distance between sites. These statues, monuments, and memorial places also do not have an overall theme that connects them to each other and to the rest of the park. Some memorial areas do attract interest groups, such as Civil War history groups for the Civil War Defenses of Washington, but other areas, such as the Maj. Gen. Artemas Ward statue in Ward Circle, have access challenges due to heavy traffic. This chapter provides an overview of commemoration at Rock Creek Park and looks at some administrative challenges related to some key monuments.<sup>2</sup>

### A Brief History of US Commemoration

Commemoration and memorialization in the United States have evolved in response to social and cultural changes. Largely, legislators and other men of power of the early Republic favored the written word over monuments of stone to preserve the memory of the great men and the heroic events that shaped the beginnings of the democratic nation. Many people of this time period viewed physical monuments with suspicion, arguing that liberty and education truly kept alive the living social memory of the past. Pierre L'Enfant helped shift opinions with his 1791 layout for Washington, DC. He combined ceremonial spaces with grand radial avenues. He specified that monuments, structures, and fountains in open spaces memorialize important people. With the passing of the Revolutionary War generation, many Americans viewed physical monuments more favorably and embraced L'Enfant's plan.<sup>3</sup>

By the time of Rock Creek Park's 1890 establishment, Washington, DC, already had more than two dozen representations of famous men on pedestals dotting its landscape. Those embracing the use of statues argued that these monuments had value because they communicated through the "moral power of example." In particular, the figures on pedestals symbolically and physically presented morally elevated ideas and examples. The statues, which often named the

---

<sup>1</sup> Appendices include a complete listing of the statues and monuments.

<sup>2</sup> ROCR Foundation Document (ROCR 821/129743), September 2015, 36. ROCR, LRIP, 2010, 21.

<sup>3</sup> Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington, DC, the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 1–2, 63–64. NPS, L'Enfant and McMillan Plans, <https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/wash/lenfant.htm>, accessed October 29, 2018.

circles where they stood, connected with other such monuments in the city's grid of streets and thus presented an edifying geographic space for recreation, commerce, and governance.<sup>4</sup>

Monuments are inherently a conservative form of artistic expression. They have fixed inscriptions, they are placed in a defined setting, and they are meant to meet the specific expectations of those who pay for and place these statues. In practice, though, every piece of sculpture placed throughout the city changes in meaning and transforms its relationship to the public.<sup>5</sup>

This capacity for change begins with creation itself. In the mere act of designing, artists draw from the circumstances and styles of their times while attempting to reach back to capture the spirit of their subject. Yet viewers from a later period do not necessarily understand the metaphor and language in which the statues were created and unveiled. A dialog between artist and audience results. That conversation allows for individual interpretation and meaning. Factors such as waysides or ranger talks, the historical knowledge of the viewer, personal experience, and even the weather and conditions on the day of visitation can shape reactions to a piece of outdoor art. Sculptors thus cannot control how people might read their work.<sup>6</sup>

In today's increasingly diversified society, artistic intent and reception diverge considerably. Past art may lose any connection to present considerations, and past historical references may have little to no significance to today's concerns. This situation leaves once-honored statues as curiosities at best and as invisible impediments at worst. Separately, appropriation of a work has the potential to assign new and relevant meaning to the once-abandoned piece. One example from another National Park Service site demonstrates this possibility. Performance artist Krzysztof Wodiczko in 1998 filmed the faces and hands of people whose relatives had been murdered and then projected those contemporary images onto the Bunker Hill monument in Charlestown, Massachusetts. He played their voices in the sixteen-minute film, which captured these family members' anguish and turned the Revolutionary War monument, dedicated to a general statement of valor for the soldiers of that battle, to a personal and universal statement of loss and heroism. Though temporary, Wodiczko's installation brought contemporary concerns to the forefront and gave voice in real and symbolic ways to the unheard. His First Amendment action benefited from the very purposes for which the soldiers fought and died. This chapter focuses upon statues and memorials under Rock Creek Park's jurisdiction and ways in which the public has memorialized the people and events represented in these artworks. The chapter closes with a discussion of twenty-first-century opportunities for remembering, acknowledging changing social and cultural circumstances and the National Park Service's growing restrictions.<sup>7</sup>

### **Battleground National Cemetery**

Battleground National Cemetery contains the graves of forty-one Union soldiers who had fought at the Battle of Fort Stevens in 1864. Fort Stevens is one of the Civil War Defenses of Washington built during the war to protect the federal capital from Confederate incursions. The states of Ohio and Pennsylvania each erected a monument in the name of troops from their

---

<sup>4</sup> Savage, *Monument Wars*, 77–78, 90. Quote on p. 78.

<sup>5</sup> Savage, *Monument Wars*, 10–11.

<sup>6</sup> Dell Upton, "Why Do Contemporary Monuments Talk So Much?," 13, 15–16, 20–21, 24, and David Gobel and Daves Rossell, "Introduction," 2, both in David Gobel and Daves Rossell, eds., *Commemoration in America: Essays on Monuments, Memorialization, and Memory* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Sarah J. Purcell, "Commemoration, Public Art, and the Changing Meaning of the Bunker Hill Monument," *The Public Historian* 25 (Spring 2003): 57, 59, 68–70.

states. New York dedicated two monuments to memorialize two different companies with dead buried at the cemetery. Three iron tablets are placed at different locations in the cemetery, each quoting lines from Theodore O’Hara’s poem “Bivouac of the Dead.” The federal government later built a marble rostrum with white painted sandstone columns in the Doric style. The cemetery also contains the Superintendent’s Lodge, a prominent flagpole, and Civil War cannon on either side of the iron-gate entrance.<sup>8</sup>



*Figure 41. Battleground National Cemetery*  
NPS PHOTO, 2011

Veterans, veterans’ organizations, local residents, and others have commemorated the events at Fort Stevens and honored the dead buried in the cemetery. Memorial Day observances began as early as 1868 at the cemetery. Formal services organized by veterans groups and neighbors began around 1902. The last person buried in the cemetery, Maj. Edward Campbell, at ninety-two years old was allowed this distinction due to his active participation in the Fort Stevens–Lincoln National Military Park Association, attending services until the year before his death. He was buried in March 1936 with full military honors, and the federal government then closed the cemetery to further burials.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Michael Commisso, Battleground National Cemetery CLR, 6, 11–15. Battleground National Cemetery, NRHP Nomination Form, approved 1980, section 7.

<sup>9</sup> Battleground National Cemetery CLR, 16, 21.

## Fort Stevens

Commemorative activities at Fort Stevens have memorialized the soldiers who fought there and recognized Lincoln's presence during the battle. The act of reclaiming this land from development and reconstructing a section of the fort serves as a reminder of this history. People from later generations have memorialized this historic space. The Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) held special ceremonies at Fort Stevens during the years it had national conventions in Washington, which included 1870, 1892, 1902, 1915, and 1936. Other organizations formed, including the Fort Stevens-Lincoln Military Park Association; Associated Survivors of the Sixth Army Corps of Washington, DC; Women's Relief Corps; Loyal Legion of the United States; and Brightwood Avenue Citizen's Association of Washington, DC. They regularly held ceremonies at the fort on Memorial Day, Flag Day, and July 11, the day selected as marking the battle. Individuals and various organizations, including the Union Veterans Union (an alternative organization to the Grand Army of the Republic), pursued park designation of Fort Stevens and even national military park status. William van Zandt Cox, whose father had been killed in the Civil War, bought most of the land where the fort stood and in 1899 offered to donate it. Two other men, who were former Union generals (one had commanded Fort Stevens), evaluated the status of the fort's remains. Congress failed to establish a military park but, by the 1930s, the federal government had acquired parts of the land associated with the 1864 battle.<sup>10</sup>

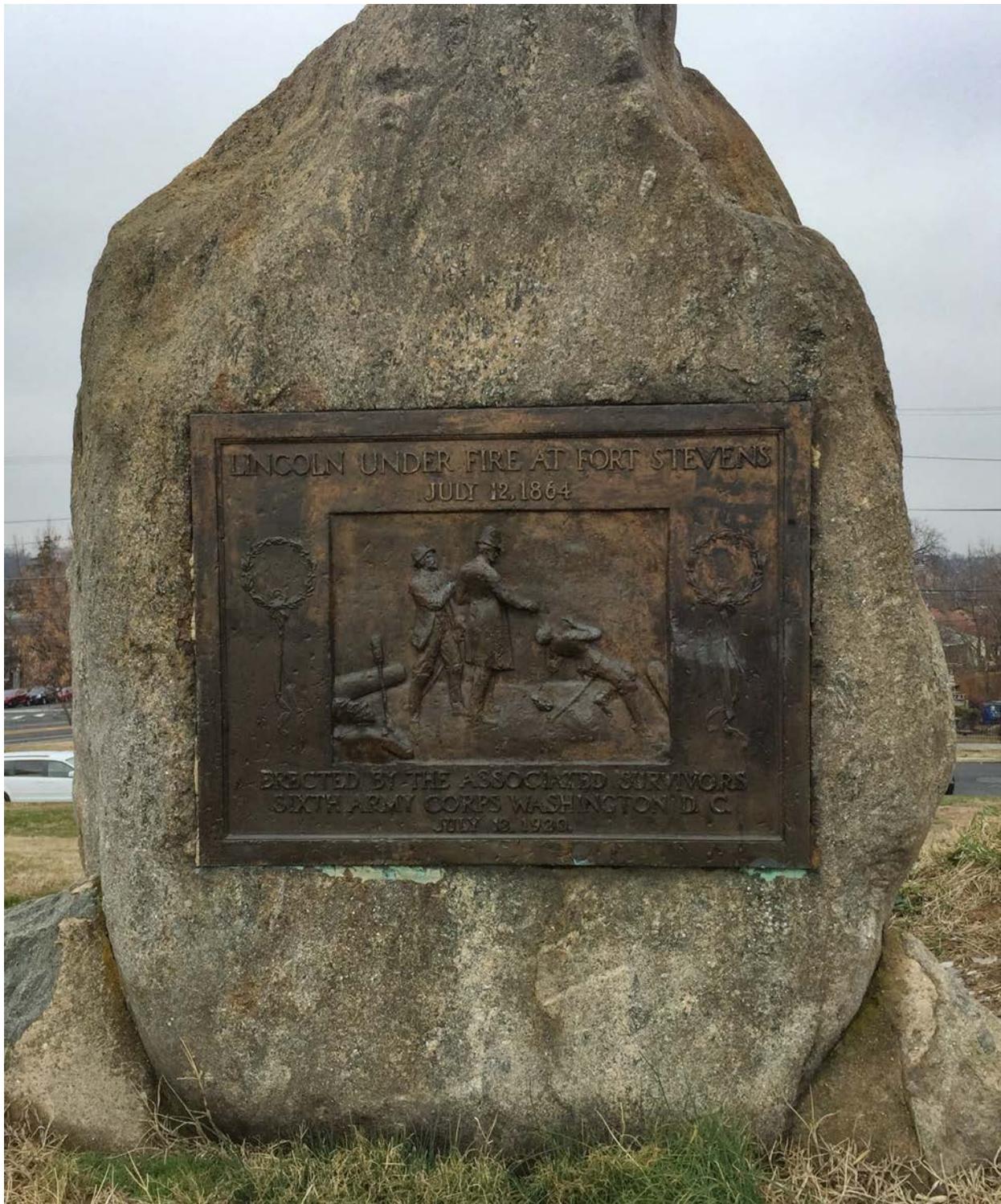
Groups placed various memorials at Fort Stevens over the years. In 1911, the Fort Stevens-Lincoln Military Park Association unveiled a rough boulder on the parapet of the fort, marking the spot where Lincoln may have stood during the battle. The 2.5-ton boulder had come from the grounds of the Walter Reed Army Hospital and was placed on a concrete base. Cox, who had continued to advocate for a military park, stated during the ceremonies that the site of Fort Stevens was more appropriate a location to memorialize Lincoln than the then-lowlands of the Potomac, where Lincoln could never have gone, "even in rubber boots." Cox is referring to the location that Congress eventually chose for the Lincoln Memorial.<sup>11</sup> The VI Army Corps in 1920 placed on the boulder a bronze bas relief depicting Lincoln at the battle. The Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War in 1936 placed a monument, consisting of a bronze bas relief model of Fort Stevens on a concrete base, to honor the Grand Army of the Republic.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Draft CWDW Historic Resource Study (HRS), part II, 1998, chapter II, 13; chapter III, pp. 7, 11. Draft CWDW, NRHP Nomination Form, 2015, section 8, p. 115. CWDW Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI), 1996, 60.

<sup>11</sup> "Unveil Lincoln Stone," *Washington Post*, November 8, 1911.

<sup>12</sup> Draft CWDW, NRHP Nomination Form, 2015, section 7, pp. 32, 103.



*Figure 42. Fort Stevens Monument*  
NPS PHOTO, 2017

One person stands out as a direct connection between Fort Stevens and Lincoln. Elizabeth (Betty) Thomas was a free African American woman who owned part of the land where Union troops built Fort Stevens. Thomas repeatedly told the story of her sorrow over the destruction of

her house and other structures in service of the building of the fort. As the story goes, Lincoln came to console Thomas and promised compensation for her land.<sup>13</sup> Thomas continued living adjacent to the fort, salvaging materials from the unused fort to build a house, smaller than the one from before the battle. She lived there for the rest of her life and regularly met with people visiting the site. During the 1911 ceremonies dedicating the boulder, the veterans of the battle in attendance remembered her and warmly greeted her, recalling that she had extended hospitality to them during the battle. In 1915, a news article referred to Thomas telling her own story of the war from her front porch. Thomas died in 1917.<sup>14</sup>

Following her death, people started holding ceremonies for Elizabeth Thomas in recognition of her relationship to Fort Stevens and Lincoln. In 1924, during its meeting in Chicago, the National Federation of Colored Women's Clubs of America initiated Lincoln-Thomas Day. The first observations, meant to honor both Lincoln and Thomas, were held on September 22, 1924, in various cities across the nation. In 1925, the RW Community Service League, a black organization, held exercises at Thomas's former home. More ceremonies were held at the nearby Military Road School, which had formed soon after the Civil War to educate black students. The National Park Service now annually celebrates Lincoln-Thomas Day around September 22, the date in 1862 when Lincoln issued his preliminary emancipation proclamation. Lincoln-Thomas Day honors Thomas and the remarkable fact that she owned land in a time when few African Americans did. The Washington, DC, government memorialized Thomas in 2012 by renaming a section of Quakenbos Street NW as Elizabeth Thomas Way. During both Lincoln-Thomas Day and Fort Stevens Day (held in July), living history actors, with National Park Service interpreters, bring the story of the battle to life and interact with audience members to share this history.<sup>15</sup>

### Sesquicentennial Observances

Between July 10 and 13, 2014, the National Park Service commemorated the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Fort Stevens. The combination of activities raised awareness of Fort Stevens and the battle. Kym Elder, NPS Program Manager for the Civil War Defenses of Washington, worked in cooperation with as many as 200 National Park Service employees and volunteers to develop a series of special events to mark this battle. The City of Takoma Park, Historic Takoma, and the Alliance to Preserve the Civil War Defenses of Washington kicked off the commemoration with a performance of Civil War-era music and the presentation of photos and video clips on the battle and Montgomery County during the Civil War. Confederate General Jubal Early had marched through Montgomery County on his way to the District before the Battle of Fort Stevens. A Civil War Roundtable met the following evening under a big tent at the

---

<sup>13</sup> It is not known if Elizabeth Thomas, who was also known as Aunt Betty, received compensation for her land. Kym Elder, NPS Manager Civil War Defenses of Washington, personal conversation with the author, August 30, 2016. Elizabeth Proctor Thomas, American Battlefield Trust, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/biographies/elizabeth-proctor-thomas>, accessed November 29, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> "Unveil Lincoln Stone." "Will Tell Civil War Story," *Washington Herald*, September 28, 1915. Bernard Kohn, "Restored Civil War Fort Is New Sightseeing Shrine," *Sunday Star*, July 4, 1937. Lincoln-Thomas Day, press release, <http://emancipation.dc.gov/event/lincoln-thomas-day>, viewed September 4, 2016. Cooling, *The Day Lincoln Was almost Shot*, 36–37, 146, 235, 245.

<sup>15</sup> "Fort Stevens Visited by Colored League," *Washington Post*, March 8, 1925. NPS, CWDW, [https://www.nps.gov/planyourvisit/event-listing.htm?eventID=15374](https://www.nps.gov/planyourvisit/event-listing.htm?eventID=15374;); <https://www.nps.gov/cwdw/planyourvisit/event-details.htm?event=DA401C85-1DD8-B71B-0B328D71F4EFB75A>, both accessed September 4, 2016. Lincoln-Thomas Day, accessed September 4, 2016.

fort. Scholars talked with audience members about the battle and the Civil War's impact on Washington, DC, and the city's African American residents.<sup>16</sup>

On Saturday, July 12, the National Park Service hosted an array of programs. Civil War encampments for both Union and Confederate troops gave visitors the opportunity to walk between the tents and talk to living history actors. The soldiers also performed drills. One living history actor playing Dr. Edward Stonestreet demonstrated the tools used during the war to treat the injured. Other living history actors played Elizabeth Thomas and Anne Maria Weems, the latter a slave who escaped a Rockville plantation. "President Lincoln and his wife Mary Todd Lincoln" appeared both on July 12 and 13. The Roustabout String Band (they had also performed at the Takoma Park festivities) and the Washington Revels Heritage Voices shared period music throughout the day. National Park Service rangers gave walking tours to help visitors experience the historic geography, in which the battle had extended for nearly a mile north to the Walter Reed Army Medical Center (since relocated). The American Hiking Society took visitors on a five-mile Hike through History, traveling from Battery Kemble to Fort Stevens, with stops at other Civil War Defenses along the way.<sup>17</sup>

The July 12 events resonated with many of the people who helped make them happen. NPS Program Manager Elder recalled how emotional it was for her to see the planning enacted. Living history actor Bryan Cheeseboro stated, "It means everything to me to be here." Living history actor David Welker said, "Anytime you can come up and be on hallowed ground, it's always special. It connects you to the men who fought here, and the events." Many of these living history actors, including Cheeseboro, either grew up within a few blocks of the fort or live near it currently, giving them a personal connection to the site.<sup>18</sup>

On Sunday, July 13, the commemorative activities took a quieter tone. A memorial program at Battleground National Cemetery included the reading of the names of the fallen buried at the cemetery and the placing of American flags at each headstone. Washington Revels Jubilee Voices sang spirituals, and Federal City Brass Band performed period music on authentic mid-nineteenth-century instruments while wearing Union uniforms.<sup>19</sup>

The City of Alexandria hosted its own 150th-anniversary events on July 12. This programming distinguished itself from the Fort Stevens events by having a Civil War reenactment at Fort Ward. National Park Service rules do not allow reenactments on Park Service lands, as a way to preserve the historic features and landscape. However, the City of Alexandria owned Fort Ward and did not have a similar policy. The city also owned a sufficient amount of land around Fort Ward, with an adjacent museum and park, to support one hundred reenactors and a display of the fighting, condensed into a one-hour retelling. Fort Ward had similar encampments as Fort Stevens did, with a scattering of reenactors, including President Lincoln, and period music.<sup>20</sup>

## Statues and Memorials

Previous chapters describe the significant sculptures and memorial spaces under Rock Creek Park's administration. The appendices include a list of these monuments and their

---

<sup>16</sup> Loretta Neumann, "Battle of Fort Stevens Brings Civil War Close to Home," *Takoma Park News*, July 2014. Fritz Hahn, "When the Civil War Came to Washington: Reliving the Battle of Fort Stevens," *Washington Post*, July 11, 2014. Sarah Kaplan, "Event Honors Key Civil War Battle in DC," *Washington Post*, July 13, 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Neumann, "Battle of Fort Stevens." Hahn, "When the Civil War Came to Washington."

<sup>18</sup> Kaplan, "Event Honors Key Civil War Battle."

<sup>19</sup> Hahn, "When the Civil War Came to Washington."

<sup>20</sup> Hahn, "When the Civil War Came to Washington."

locations. This chapter emphasizes the different themes that connect the memorials. One popular theme is heroism. The four monuments in Battleground National Cemetery and the two memorials at Fort Stevens mark the heroism of the soldiers who defended Washington, DC, during the Civil War. The boulder to Lincoln at Fort Stevens marks his support for the troops, despite risking his own life by standing in the line of fire. Ward Circle at the intersection of Nebraska and Massachusetts Avenues at American University contains a statue of Maj. Gen. Artemas Ward. Ward served directly under George Washington during the American Revolutionary War. He helped turn the ragtag militia units into the full-fledged Continental Army. He also gave the orders to fortify Bunker Hill in the face of the increased British presence in Boston. Other park statues reinforce the heroism theme, including the Maj. Gen. George McClellan equestrian statue on Connecticut Avenue, the Peter Muhlenberg Memorial with a bronze bust on Connecticut Avenue, and the Serenity statue in Meridian Hill Park (for Lt. Cmdr. William Henry Schuetze).<sup>21</sup>

Patriotism, as another theme, links closely to heroism. The Francis Scott Key Park in Georgetown recalls Key's patriotism in penning the words that would eventually become the National Anthem. Key's house had once stood adjacent to the site of the small formal park, which contains a bronze bust of the author. Waysides and an American flag with the number of stars that would have been on the flag when he wrote the poem "The Star-Spangled Banner" tell the story of his patriotism.<sup>22</sup>

A third theme recognizes service. The James Buchanan Memorial includes a bronze and granite memorial in Meridian Hill Park, flanked by male and female classical figures representing law and diplomacy. In addition to serving as the fifteenth President of the United States, he represented Pennsylvania in the US House of Representatives and Senate. His diplomatic service took him to Russia and the United Kingdom. As an attorney, he famously declared law the ultimate master. In Montrose Park, the Georgetown Garden Club remembered Sarah "Loulie" Rittenhouse by donating an armillary sphere on a marble pedestal for display. Rittenhouse convinced the US Senate to authorize the purchase of the Montrose Estate for a public park because developers had proposed to subdivide the 16 acres for housing. The James Cardinal Gibbons bronze statue of him seated and the Francis Asbury Memorial with a bronze equestrian statue, both on 16th Street, observe the service of these two men, especially their religious affiliations.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Architrave, p.c., architects, Meridian Hill CLR, 2001, Vol. I, 80. John Kelly, "Statue Is a Curious Homage to Naval Officer, Answer Man Finds," *Washington Post*, March 22, 2009.

<sup>22</sup> NPS, Francis Scott Key Park, <https://www.nps.gov/places/francis-scott-key-memorial.htm>, accessed September 7, 2016. ROCR, LRIP, 17–18.

<sup>23</sup> NPS, Montrose Park CLR, 2004, 26–27, 66–67. ROCR, List of Statues and Memorials, <https://www.nps.gov/rocr/learn/historyculture/monuments.htm>, accessed September 7, 2016.



*Figure 43. James Buchanan Memorial*  
NPS PHOTO, N.D.

A fourth theme addresses friendship. Two statues in Meridian Hill Park reflect the friendships between the United States and other countries. The Joan of Arc statue is a copy of the one standing outside Reims Cathedral in France. The Society of French Women in Exile in New York gave the bronze equestrian statue to the United States in recognition of the friendship between the two countries. Also in Meridian Hill Park, Italian-American newspaper editor Carlo Barsotti gave the statue of poet Dante Alighieri, pictured as a standing figure, on behalf of all Italian Americans. He had an identical statue unveiled the same year (1921) in New York City. The Jean Jules Jusserand Bench on Beach Drive near Peirce Mill also represents friendship. Jusserand was the longest-serving French Ambassador to the United States (1902–25) and was a highly regarded and effective diplomat.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Architrave, p.c., architects, Meridian Hill CLR, 2001, vol. I, 80. Scott Einberger, *A History of Rock Creek Park: Wilderness and Washington, DC* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2014), 118–20.

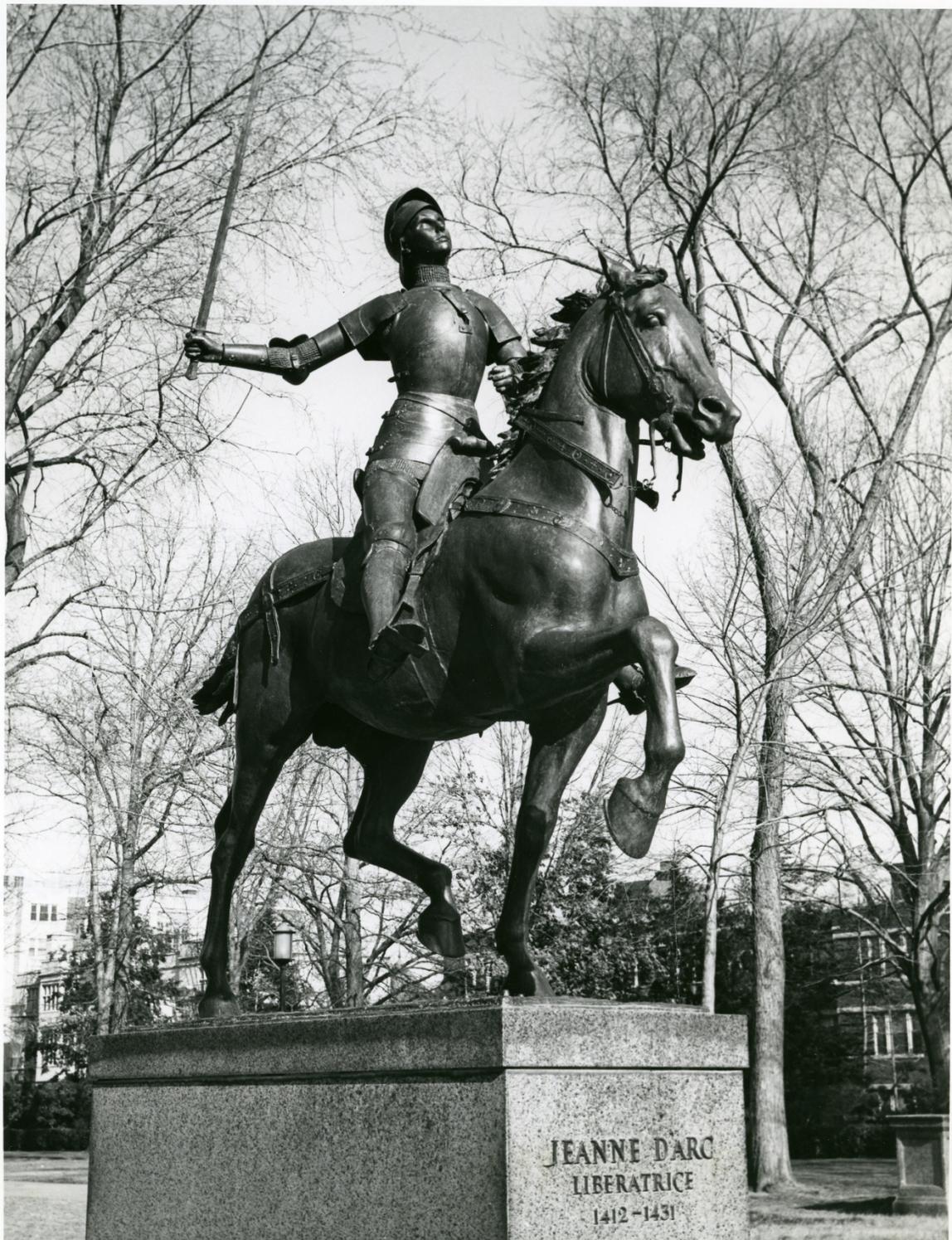


Figure 44. Joan of Arc Statue with Sword  
NPS PHOTO, 1936

Bryce Park, named for British Ambassador James Bryce (1838–1922), represents the friendship between the United States and Great Britain. The area around the cultural landscape was part of a trend of rapidly developing neighborhoods in the early and mid-twentieth century, as neighborhoods such as Massachusetts Avenue Heights, Cathedral Heights, Cleveland Park, and Woodley Park expanded in Northwest Washington. The extension of Massachusetts Avenue NW was particularly responsible for the platting of new streets and parcels in Northwest Washington. That avenue now serves as one of the perimeter streets for the cultural landscape. As one of the parks designed to serve residents in these densifying neighborhoods, Bryce Park offered a new passive green space for residents in the form of a designed pass-through pocket park. It is thus locally significant for its role in the history of postwar community planning and landscape architecture in Washington, DC

William Belden, an NPS landscape architect, designed Bryce Park, beginning in 1962. Belden's design constituted the first formal landscape plan for the triangular site, replacing a gas station that had occupied the northern portion of the site for several decades in the twentieth century. The park was dedicated in 1965, with an unveiling ceremony that featured Princess Margaret of England in a tribute to the park's namesake. As part of the dedication ceremony, a plaque was placed in the park to commemorate James Bryce, who visited the site in 1913 and praised its landscape and views of Washington, DC

In the years immediately following the park's dedication, Belden's planting plans were refined, in keeping with Lady Bird Johnson's contemporary Beautification Program, which promoted seasonally coordinated flower beds and other improvements to the nation's parks and streetscapes. As part of these initial improvements, a plaque was placed southwest of the little leaf linden tree on the southwest terrace, commemorating the leadership of Mrs. James H. Rowe Jr., as chairman of the National Capital Planning Commission. The National Park Service managed these modifications, and subsequent maintenance and upkeep. The current cultural landscape closely resembles Belden's original landscape design, as refined based on the Beautification Program. The period of significance begins with the park's design in 1962 and ends with the placement of the commemorative plaque for Mrs. James H. Rowe Jr. in 1968.

Some statues and memorials in Rock Creek Park embody the theme of empowerment. The Guglielmo Marconi Memorial, a bronze portrait bust on 16th Street, acknowledges how he empowered the world through his invention of the wireless telegraphy, a forerunner to the modern radio. The Kahlil Gibran Memorial on Massachusetts Avenue includes a garden and bronze bust of the Lebanese American poet. Gibran inspired readers in his famous work *The Prophet* to use hope and consolation to fight doubt and despair. The Robert Emmet statue, also on Massachusetts Avenue, recalls Emmet's leadership role in an aborted uprising against the British to gain Irish independence. The Irish equated Emmet to our country's George Washington. The National Park Service, as part of a Capital Beautification program in the mid-1960s, placed the Emmet statue, a bronze standing figure, in a park near the Irish Embassy, and held a dedication ceremony on the fiftieth anniversary of Irish independence, emphasizing the theme of empowerment.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Kahlil Gibran Memorial Garden, Booklet for the Dedication Ceremony, May 23–27, 1991, File Monuments, Statues, and Memorials–Kahlil Gibran Memorial–History–General–Papers–Published History of Creation of KG Memorial, n.d., Box 59, MRCE. All MRCE files from the ROCR Collection. "City Park to Display Irish Statue," *Washington Post*, April 12, 1966. The Smithsonian owns the Emmet statue.

### **Monumental Management Challenges**

The previously provided descriptions of monuments and memorial activities belie some of the challenges Rock Creek Park managers have faced in protecting sites and interpreting them to the public. One recent difficulty arose regarding the Emmet statue. The Robert Emmet Memorial Committee, using funds secured from Irish Americans nationally, presented the statue to the United States through the Smithsonian Institution, in a 1917 ceremony in the National Museum (now the National Museum of Natural History). The Emmet statue, sculpted by internationally known artist Jerome Connor, stood in the building's rotunda until 1964, when it was placed in storage. The Smithsonian loaned the statue to the National Park Service for public placement in the park at Massachusetts Avenue and 24th and S Streets (Reservation 302). The Smithsonian completes biennial conservation treatments of the statue and base, and the National Park Service is responsible for landscaping and maintenance.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> John Kelly, "On Massachusetts Avenue, NW, an Old Statue Gets a New Look," *Washington Post*, May 3, 2016.

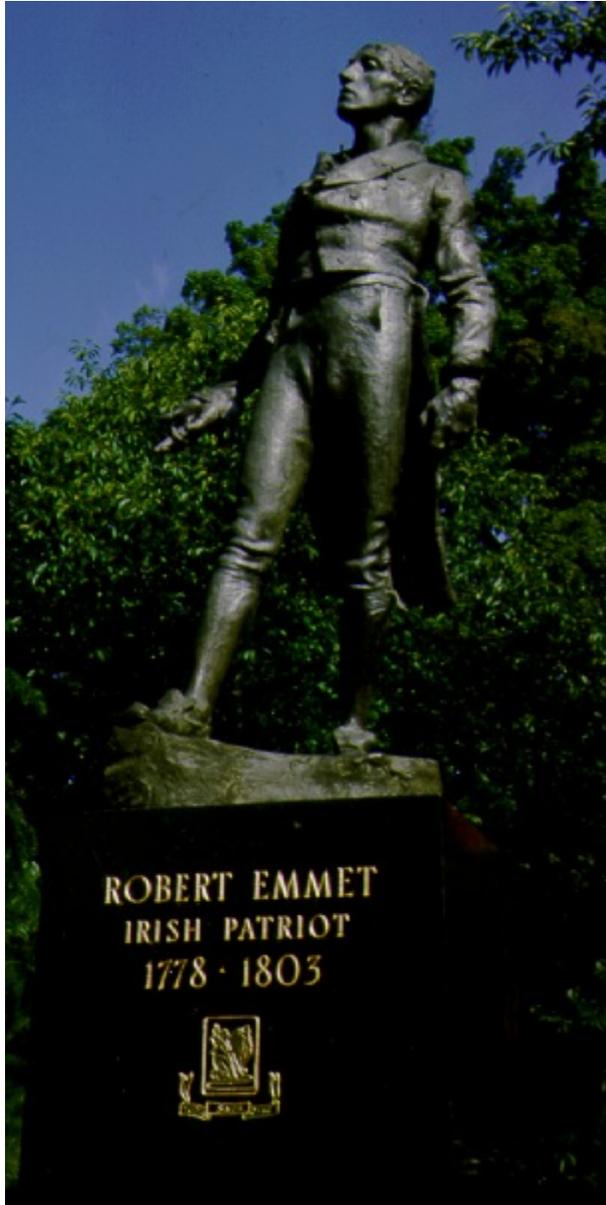


Figure 45. Robert Emmet Statue  
NPS PHOTO, N.D.

In early 2013, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the division assigned to care for the Emmet statue, contacted the National Park Service with concerns about the upkeep of the park where the statue stood. The conservators noted that pine pitch from a cedar and natural debris compromised the statue's condition. They also raised concerns about the overgrowth of trees and bushes, detracting from the overall aesthetic. They threatened to take the statue back if the National Park Service did not clean up the park. The upcoming 100th anniversary of Irish independence drove this interest.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Kelly, "On Massachusetts Avenue." Email communication, Tara Morrison to Cynthia Cox, January 7, 2013; Email Communication, Glenn DeMarr to Peter May, January 7, 2013, File Robert Emmet Statue–Memorials–Glenn

The National Park Service responded through a Section 106 compliance process. Rock Creek Park staff members held public meetings and collected written comments. The National Park Service rehabilitated the park by removing invasive English ivy and planting laurel shrubs. The agency removed the Deodar cedar tree that had been dripping sap on the sculpture and replaced it with three columnar Irish yew trees. These trees were placed in an open arrangement to provide a backdrop to the sculpture without blocking views and light.<sup>28</sup>

In May 2016, the National Park Service participated in a special ceremony rededicating the park. The Emmet statue, from its inception to the present, has had strong political forces supporting its creation, placement, and care.<sup>29</sup>

The NPS rehabilitated the landscaping and portion of the utility infrastructure at US Reservation 302, which is now known as Robert Emmet Park. This work included the installation of lighting around the Emmet statue. NPS removed English ivy and replaced it with sweet woodruff (*Glaium odoratum*), a native groundcover. NPS also pruned existing laurel shrubs and added additional laurel shrubs, removing the Deodar cedar to improve light levels and views into the park from Massachusetts Avenue and S Street NW, as well as to protect the Emmet statue. Other actions included pruning cherry trees, removing a trash container; and re-establishing turf areas.<sup>30</sup>

Another concern about park upkeep was raised concerning the Kahlil Gibran Memorial. To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Lebanese poet's birth, the Kahlil Gibran Centennial Foundation raised approximately \$800,000, of the needed \$1.1 million, to design and build a two-acre memorial across from the British Embassy on Massachusetts Avenue. President George H. W. Bush dedicated the park in 1991 in a weekend-long celebration. The foundation still had to raise the additional funds, which proved difficult due to an economic recession, turbulence in Lebanon, and the inability to motivate funders because the memorial had already been built. The foundation took out a bank loan, and its president William J. Baroody Jr. personally covered the yearly interest payments and loaned the foundation additional funds.<sup>31</sup>

In 2006, Stan Shabaz complained in an *Al Jadid* blog post about the park's condition. He described the brackish green water in the inoperable fountain, the chipped stones containing Gibran quotes, and crumbling stones in the walkway. In 2011, the Arab American Institute announced a rededication ceremony for the newly rehabilitated memorial. In 2018, the fountain remained operational, indicating continued National Park Service upkeep.<sup>32</sup>

---

DeMarr Files–NCR Office. Personal conversation, Josh Torres with the author, October 11, 2016. Personal conversation, Glenn DeMarr with the author, December 19, 2016.

<sup>28</sup> Rehabilitation of Landscaping at US Reservation 302 (Emmet Sculpture Triangle), <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=60430>, accessed October 30, 2018.

<sup>29</sup> Kelly, "On Massachusetts Avenue." Email communication, Tara Morrison to Cynthia Cox, January 7, 2013; Email Communication, Glenn DeMarr to Peter May, January 7, 2013, File Robert Emmet Statue–Memorials–Glenn DeMarr Files–NCR Office. Personal conversation, Josh Torres with the author, October 11, 2016. Personal conversation, Glenn DeMarr with the author, December 19, 2016.

<sup>30</sup> NPS comments, ROCR Admin History, September 16, 2020.

<sup>31</sup> William J. Baroody Jr. to John Parsons, February 9, 1996; Status Report Kahlil Gibran Memorial Foundation, no date, File Kahlil Gibran–Memorials–Glenn DeMarr files–NCR Office.

<sup>32</sup> Stan Shabaz, "Disrepair and Neglect Mar Kahlil Gibran Memorial," *Al Jadid* blog, Summer/Fall 2006, <http://www.aaiusa.org/the-kahlil-gibran-memorial-garden>, accessed October 29, 2018. (Note that *Al Jadid* is a site dedicated to Arab culture and art.) The Kahlil Gibran Memorial Garden, Arab American Institute blog, April 7, 2011, <http://www.aaiusa.org/the-kahlil-gibran-memorial-garden>, accessed October 29, 2018. ROCR News, Fountains, <https://www.nps.gov/rocr/learn/news/index.htm>, accessed October 29, 2018. The author has not found



*Figure 46. Kahlil Gibran Memorial*  
NPS PHOTO, 2018

Sometimes Rock Creek Park has needed to replace features of statues due to vandalism and age. The most famous case has involved Joan of Arc's sword, which had repeatedly been stolen and replaced since its dedication in 1922. Another example was the Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan statue on Connecticut Avenue at California Street and Columbia Road NW. It needed special attention for cleaning, which had never been done after its 1907 dedication, and for replacement of two of its bronze shields. Replacing the shields proved difficult. The museum curator at the National Capital Region Museum Resource Center, according to NCR Memorials Project Manager Glenn DeMarr, suggested that Rock Creek Park Cultural Resources Manager Simone Monteleone document the appearance of the lost shields, or escutcheons, to obtain approval for replication. Monteleone recalled that she tracked down historic photographs and written descriptions. She had to pinpoint which shields were missing, since each one referred to a

---

information about NPS response to these complaints. The ROCR 2010 LRIP does mention having additional occasional interpretive events at the site. See ROCR, LRIP, 2010, 49.

specific battle McClellan had fought in. Then she could work with a foundry to reproduce them.<sup>33</sup>

Historic documentation also resulted in a surprising result for cleaning the McClellan statue. Monteleone had the responsibility of returning the statue to its original color. Research determined that that color was a striking bright green. Monteleone noted that the McClellan statue is imposing, both geographically and size-wise. The bronze statue is fourteen feet tall, but its pedestal and base make it a total of thirty-seven feet tall. To have such a prominent fixture returned to such a shocking color gave her pause. But the demands of historic preservation ruled the final decision, and the statue was returned to its original color, which has slowly faded with time.<sup>34</sup>

In one instance, the National Park Service has brokered an agreement with a developer to memorialize an important person, Montgomery Meigs. Meigs had been an engineer and architect with the US Army and served as Quartermaster General during the Civil War; he most famously designed the Pension Building (now the National Building Museum). He also selected the location of Battleground National Cemetery and helped with its layout and design. In addition, he designed the Pennsylvania Avenue Bridge, which originally had his name. Nearby Reservation 691 became popularly known as Meigs Park when Meigs's name was dropped from the bridge. The developer of an adjacent property has worked with NPS staff to redesign "Meigs Park" and is poised to rebuild and take care of the park in perpetuity. This would involve a donation of material and services to the National Park Service.<sup>35</sup>

### **Memorials for the Future**

Many issues will shape the future of commemoration in Washington, DC, with the potential of impacting Rock Creek Park's administrative role. First, the accumulation of memorials has limited the amount of space in the District for the inclusion of more. Rock Creek Park is the caretaker of 22 memorials and statues, most scattered in small pocket parks or circles. In total, Washington, DC, has more than 155 memorials, as of 2017, with 59 on and around the Mall. In 2003, Congress passed legislation declaring the Mall closed to further building, though exceptions have been made. The Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial now sits in the Tidal Basin, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Visitor Center will appear as an underground building across from the memorial, and the National Museum for African American History and Culture opened in September 2016. The Mall has been prime real estate for memorials, but a simple lack of open land requires other options.<sup>36</sup>

Second, memorials in the District, especially since the 1982 dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, have been land intensive. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial takes up 2 acres on the National Mall. Subsequent memorials have grown larger, with the 1997 Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial at 7.5 acres and the 2004 National World War II Memorial at 7.4 acres. The older memorials to George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln use space not just for the physical monuments but also the surrounding landscapes, which are an inherent

---

<sup>33</sup> Meridian Hill CLR, 81. Personal communication, Glenn DeMarr with the author, December 19, 2016. Simone Monteleone, transcript of oral history interview with the author, December 22, 2016, 12–13, ROCR Archives. Michael E. Ruane, "Neglected DC Statues Restored in Effort to Conserve Public Art," *Washington Post*, August 11, 2009.

<sup>34</sup> Monteleone, transcript of interview, 11–13. Quote on p. 13.

<sup>35</sup> Personal conversation, Josh Torres with the author, October 11, 2016.

<sup>36</sup> Jonathan O'Connell, "Beyond Granite: Architects Envision Washington's Memorials of the Future," *Washington Post*, April 22, 2016. Savage, *Monument Wars*, 311.

aspect of the visitor experience. The sheer cost of maintaining these components, monument and land, has overburdened the National Park Service's limited financial resources.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, the press for new monuments and memorials continues unabated. Kirk Savage, an architectural historian, has proposed switching to ephemeral monuments that would emphasize conversations to remember and honor in limited timeframes. The short-term aspect of projects would encourage their completion despite the prospect of controversy. Designers would have more latitude to foster debate and difference, and projects that would never have met approval on the Mall would have that opportunity, Savage argued. The Mall would become a living landscape.<sup>38</sup>

Rock Creek Park has recognized the evolving state of memorialization. The park is beginning to consider such factors as who or what will be honored and the location and availability of land. Growing operations and maintenance costs have prompted the National Park Service to require upfront funds to cover future costs. National battlefields, for example, now stipulate sufficient maintenance funds for any new monuments that groups request to place on the battlefields. At the same time, Rock Creek Park has identified a shift in commemoration from physical monuments to events and sites, fitting within Savage's vision for the Mall.<sup>39</sup>

Within this changing environment and prompted by its Centennial, the National Park Service and its partners the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) and the Van Alen Institute launched Memorials for the Future in April 2016. The organizers invited artists and designers to develop temporary, mobile, interactive, or adaptive displays that went beyond traditional, permanent memorials. These projects would honor the nation's diverse histories, heritage, and culture in new ways. The jurors chose as the winner Azimuth Land Craft's Climate Chronograph, which put climate change and decay into the forefront of memorialization. The National Park Service, National Capital Planning Commission, and their partners would use the competition results to inform future design and policy opportunities.<sup>40</sup>

## Conclusion

Rock Creek Park administers a disparate array of monuments memorializing different aspects of United States history. Two significant units relate to the Civil War, Fort Stevens and Battleground National Cemetery. These two sites contain physical markers of the July 1864 battle, including monuments in the cemetery and a rough boulder on the supposed spot where Lincoln stood and was almost shot. Veterans groups and local residents have honored the dead with annual ceremonies. Other events have recognized Fort Stevens' role in defending the capital city from attack. Reenactors have also portrayed key individuals, including Lincoln and Elizabeth "Aunt Betty" Thomas, a free African American who owned land used for the fort.

The twenty-two statues and monuments under Rock Creek Park's jurisdiction represent key themes in the nation's history. These include heroism, patriotism, service, friendship, and empowerment. This categorization might assist park managers in interpreting these memorials as interconnected. In the past, the park has had difficulty amplifying their presence. Their upkeep

---

<sup>37</sup> Benjamin Freed, "Washington's National Parks Need Nearly \$1.2 Billion in Repairs," *Washingtonian*, April 6, 2015. "Transforming the National Mall," *The Economist*, August 15, 2015.

<sup>38</sup> "Transforming the National Mall." Savage, *Monument Wars*, 312.

<sup>39</sup> ROCR Foundation Document, 36.

<sup>40</sup> Memorials for the Future, <https://future.ncpc.gov/#timeline>, accessed September 7, 2016. "Finalists Announced for Memorials for the Future Competition," Impact Design Hub, June 17, 2016, <https://impactdesignhub.org/2016/06/17/finalists-announced-for-memorials-for-the-future-competition/>, accessed September 7, 2016.

has sometimes brought challenges related to funding limitations and public expectations. Yet the changing nature of commemoration offers possibilities. Already, park managers recognize that physical memorials require precious funds for maintenance. Any new ones would take up limited space. Interpretive and visitor contact efforts, however, have demonstrated the value of events for engaging the public. Along these lines, the park might use its physical resources in new ways to encourage debate about potentially controversial topics. Performance artist Wodiczko's example might serve as a launching pad for discussion among park staff. Ephemeral monuments, as suggested by architectural historian Savage, might also initiate public conversations about such topics as the meaning of the Civil War in the twenty-first century or heroism throughout the nation's history. Any combination of these approaches promises a renewed relationship between the park and its visitors.

## CHAPTER 17 First Amendment Rights

Activists have used national park units to raise awareness about myriad subjects. Court rulings have defined the National Park Service's responsibilities for allowing citizens to gather and exercise their First Amendment Right of Freedom of Speech. In the Supreme Court's 1939 ruling for *Hague v. CIO*, the court stated that "Such use of the streets and public places [for public assembly and communication] has, from ancient times, been a part of the privileges, immunities, rights, and liberties of citizens." However, the court also noted that the use of streets and parks for public communication "is not absolute, but relative, and must be exercised in subordination to the general comfort and convenience, and in consonance with peace and good order." Agencies could impose limitations, but the basic right "must not, in the guise of regulation, be abridged or denied."<sup>1</sup> In 1972, the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit further refined the issue of First Amendment assemblies by stating in *Women Strike for Peace v. Morton* that "if the state has allowed some to invade that interest [of holding a public assembly], it is obvious that the purpose of a restriction on others is to suppress their speech rather than to vindicate any independent interest."<sup>2</sup> As a result of these rulings, the National Park Service developed guidelines concerning demonstrations and other peaceable forms of assembly and free speech. People wishing to assemble had to obtain a permit specifying the purpose of the assembly, the expected number of participants, its organization or plan, and duration. In historic areas, the National Park Service reserved the right to hold assemblies where they did not threaten imminent danger, through crowding or other threats, to the historic properties. In addition, no group could be discriminated against or denied the right of assembly, so long as it followed the National Park Service's guidelines.<sup>3</sup>

### Protests

In Washington, DC, protesters have used the National Mall, with special attention to the Lincoln Memorial; the White House and Lafayette Park; and the US Capitol as sites for exercising their First Amendment rights. The first national march on Washington happened in spring 1894 when stone quarry owner Jacob Coxey led five hundred unemployed men, dubbed "Coxey's army," from Ohio to the District to petition Congress for relief. The workers left the city in August without having won their demands for a public works program. But Coxey established a precedent for having public demonstrations in Washington, DC, for national issues.<sup>4</sup>

A more effective protest started in 1917 when twelve members of the National Women's Party silently picketed in front of the White House. They sought to persuade President Woodrow Wilson to support a constitutional amendment granting women the right to vote. Wilson reversed his previous opposition to the amendment after a year of such silent witness and the arrest of nearly one hundred suffragists, some of whom were tortured. The Nineteenth Amendment, ratified in 1920, gave women the vote.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Hague v. CIO*, 307 US 496, pp. 515–16.

<sup>2</sup> *Women Strike for Peace v. Morton*, 472 F.2d 1273 (DC Circuit 1972), p. 1285.

<sup>3</sup> NPS Guidelines, VII-26–VII-27, as compiled in File 1, Box 1, Bicentennial Records, Minute Man National Historical Park (NHP) Archives.

<sup>4</sup> NCR Admin History, 142.

<sup>5</sup> NCR Admin History, 143. Terence McArdle, "'Night of Terror': The Suffragists Who Were Beaten and Tortured for Seeking the Vote," *Washington Post* (November 10, 2017).

The number of Civil Rights protests and their size accelerated during the twentieth century. When the Daughters of the American Revolution and the DC Board of Education denied access to mezzo-soprano Marion Anderson to sing in their auditoriums, organizers sought permission to have Anderson perform at the Lincoln Memorial as a symbolic gesture against segregation. Thirty years later, one of the most successful demonstrations (in terms of size and long-lasting influence) occurred in August 1963 when a coalition of civil rights organizations held the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom on the grounds of the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his iconic “I Have a Dream” speech during this protest.<sup>6</sup>

Other protests have encompassed a range of contemporary issues. Anti-war protesters have demonstrated against the Vietnam War (1970s), the Gulf War (1991), and the Iraq War (early 2000s). People have marched for and against women’s reproductive rights. They have raised awareness about the Equal Rights Amendment for women. Anti-nuclear protests happened following the accident at Three Mile Island nuclear power reactor in Pennsylvania in 1979. Gay men and lesbians marched, beginning in 1979, to advocate for equal civil rights. Rolling Thunder began in 1987, with its annual Memorial Day Weekend motorcycle ride to the Vietnam War Memorial Wall to raise awareness for Prisoners of War / Missing in Action soldiers. The protest ride, which ended in 2019, evolved to support active-duty military and veterans. Another annual rally is the March for Life, held each January in protest of the Supreme Court decision providing legal protection for abortion in *Roe v. Wade*. The Million Man March (1995), Million Mom March against gun violence (2000), Millions for Reparations (for slavery) March (2002), and Million Worker March (2004) addressed civil and social issues. The Women’s March on Washington, held the day after President Donald Trump’s inauguration in 2017, had an estimated 1.5 million people in Washington, DC; an estimated 1.3 million people across the country; and another 3.2 million marching throughout the world. This march is the largest combined rally in the history of the United States. Protesters marched for women’s rights; immigration reform; LGBTQ rights; and to address racial, economic, and environmental issues.<sup>7</sup>

### Rock Creek Park Protest Sites

Two locations under Rock Creek Park’s administrative authority have also been frequent sites of protests: Meridian Hill Park/Malcolm X Park and Georgetown Waterfront Park. Political demonstrations in Meridian Hill Park have dated at least as far back as the early 1960s. On September 22, 1963, for example, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) held a protest in Meridian Hill Park in memory of the four girls killed in the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama. Protests began increasing in number in 1978, according to the Meridian Hill Park Cultural Landscape Report. Native Americans and their supporters in July 1978, for example, completed a cross-country Longest Walk with a rally in Meridian Hill Park. They sought to raise awareness for Native American rights in the face of increased despoliation and development of once-Native land. More recently, in 2005, DC Anti-War Network (DAWN)

---

<sup>6</sup> NCR Admin History, 143–44.

<sup>7</sup> See the Wikipedia entry “List of Rallies and Protest Marches in Washington, DC,” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_rallies\\_and\\_protest\\_marches\\_in\\_Washington,\\_D.C.#Before\\_1900](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_rallies_and_protest_marches_in_Washington,_D.C.#Before_1900), accessed October 11, 2018. “Rolling Thunder’s Last Ride,” <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2019/05/21/thunders-end-rolling-thunder-mark-final-memorial-day-event-weekend.html>, accessed November 29, 2019; Lucy G. Barber, *Marching on Washington: The Forging of an American Political Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).; and Keith L. Alexander, Clarence Williams, and Emily Davies, “Demonstrators and DC Police Clash during March in Meridian Hill and Adams Morgan Neighborhoods,” *Washington Post* (August 14, 2020).

held a rally and march at Meridian Hill Park to protest the second inaugural of President George W. Bush. DAWN members and other groups held a series of protests related to the Bush inauguration. As of the 2010s, Meridian Hill Park hosts, on average, ten to fifteen protests of national scope each year. In June 2020, hundreds of Black Lives Matter protesters gathered at the park before heading down 16th Street to the White House. This mass action took place during the COVID-19 pandemic and following the brutal police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. A related August 2020 protest in the park emphasized the need to reduce police violence.<sup>8</sup>

Georgetown Waterfront Park has hosted many protests since its groundbreaking in 2006 and its staggered openings in 2008 and 2011. DC Vote, an organization seeking a full voting seat in the US House of Representatives for Washington residents, held a Tea Party in 2007, complete with tricorner hats and orange pekoe tea offerings. Its director, Ilir Zherka, and his aides dumped crushed up leaves, symbolic of tea leaves, in the Potomac to highlight the historic connection between 1773 and 2007. In October 2013, members of DC's homeless population lined Georgetown Waterfront Park to protest a change in Georgetown University's charity program that provided meals to the homeless. The protesters complained that the university was offering severely substandard food. The protest led Georgetown officials to return to a previous program that donated money to a third-party nonprofit which would provide meals.<sup>9</sup>

## Conclusion

Protests at Rock Creek Park administrative units conducted under the protection of the First Amendment have ranged in both size and topic. They have sometimes been linked to larger protests on the National Mall or at the White House. Some rallies have had national scope, while others have had local interest. The National Park Service has overseen these protests through a permit process and by ensuring the safety of participants and onlookers.

---

<sup>8</sup> ROCR, Draft Foundation Document, August 2014, 39–40. Meridian Hill Park CLR, 2001, 144. Paul W. Valentine and Patricia Camp, "Indians March into Capital," *Washington Post*, July 16, 1978. Meridian Hill Park, Wayside Text final edits, May 13, 2010, ROCR Archives. "January 20, 2005 Counter-inaugural Protest" entry, Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/January\\_20,\\_2005\\_counter-inaugural\\_protest](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/January_20,_2005_counter-inaugural_protest), accessed October 10, 2018.

<sup>9</sup> David Nakamura, "Residents Keep DC Vote Fight Brewing," *Washington Post*, December 17, 2007. Ian Cognito, "DC Homeless: No More Grab-and-Give," *The Georgetown Heckler*, October 22, 2013, <http://georgetownheckler.com/?p=2419>, accessed October 11, 2018.



**PART 6**  
**Other Administrative Histories**



*Figure 47. Battleground National Cemetery Entrance*  
NPS PHOTO, 1936

## CHAPTER 18 Battleground National Cemetery Administrative History

Battleground National Cemetery, the second smallest national cemetery, is the final resting place for forty soldiers killed during the Battle of Fort Stevens on July 11–12, 1864. The cemetery measures 1.03 acres and is located on the east side of Georgia Avenue, at 6625 Georgia Avenue, a half mile north of Fort Stevens in what is known as the Brightwood area of Washington, DC, which is a racially and ethnically diverse area under redevelopment. A fifty-foot flagpole stands in the middle of the cemetery at the end of a walkway leading from the cemetery entrance at Georgia Avenue. Thirty-two graves with headstones surround the flagpole and twelve additional graves, in two groups, lay in an outer circle. The forty dead soldiers are joined by four family members of the second cemetery custodian (marked by three headstones) and Edward Campbell, the last surviving veteran of the Battle of Fort Stevens who was buried at Battleground National Cemetery in 1936. His was the last burial at the cemetery.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter links Battleground National Cemetery to the Civil War Defenses of Washington. The chapter then describes the development of the cemetery, with its overall layout, structures, and memorials. Many ceremonies have taken place at the cemetery. The chapter closes with National Park Service management of the cemetery, including upkeep and refurbishment.

### Battle of Fort Stevens

In 1864, the Union Army's commander General Ulysses S. Grant led the Army of the Potomac into a series of battles against Confederate General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia to exhaust and decimate Lee's forces. These engagements started with the Battle of the Wilderness and culminated at Petersburg. Grant's strategy forced him to pull troops away from the Civil War Defenses of Washington to refill his own staggering losses and support what would become a nine-month siege. The District lost nearly eighteen thousand experienced artillery gunners, among others, who went to Petersburg. Officers in Washington tried to find replacements, but they only managed to produce a skeletal force of nine thousand troops, composed mainly of convalescents, Quartermaster troops, semi-invalids, and poorly trained state militiamen activated for hundred-day terms. War Department clerks also took up arms. The CWDW ideally should have had thirty-seven thousand trained veteran troops.<sup>2</sup>

Lee recognized this situation and acted. He sent Lt. Gen. Jubal Early with twelve thousand to fifteen thousand men north to test the defenses around Washington. Lee hoped that the diversion would force Grant to send some of his troops from Petersburg north, giving Lee's

---

<sup>1</sup> The smallest national cemetery is Hampton National Cemetery in Virginia, which has twenty-two graves for men who died during the yellow fever epidemic in 1898 at this national home for volunteer soldiers and sailors. See <https://www.cem.va.gov/cems/nchp/hamptonvamc.asp>, accessed October 18, 2018. Battleground National Cemetery NRHP Nomination Form, 1980, Description. Architrave PC Architects, Superintendent's Lodge, Physical History and Condition Assessment, Battleground National Cemetery, 2004, 34, 39. Sarah Armbricht, wife of custodian Augustus Armbricht, and three of their children, John, Kate, and Gus, are buried in the national cemetery. Battleground National Cemetery, NRHP Nomination Form, 2010, 4. Battleground National Cemetery, CLR, 2014, 1.

<sup>2</sup> CWDW-Fort Circle Parks, NRHP Nomination Form, Final Draft May 15, 2015, section 8, p. 96. Benjamin Franklin Cooling III, *The Day Lincoln Was Almost Shot: The Fort Stevens Story* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2013), 46–47.

army some breathing room. Lee also imagined that Early might successfully threaten Washington, DC, maybe even capture President Lincoln, and force a negotiated peace to keep the Confederate States intact. Early went up through the Shenandoah Valley toward Frederick, Maryland. His troops engaged Union troops in the Battle of the Monocacy on July 9, with Early's troops prevailing. This battle signaled Early's location and intent and gave Grant enough time to send reinforcements back to Washington. By the time Early arrived at the northern Civil War Defenses of Washington, the Union had three divisions waiting, just arrived via boat at noon of July 11. Early's men, on the other hand, were tired and battle-worn from the Monocacy engagement and extended marching in the intense summer heat.<sup>3</sup>

Union troops greeted Early's forces with barrages of fire from cannon and heavy rifles, plus artillery blasts. Fire burst from Forts Stevens, Slocum, Totten, DeRussy, Bayard, Simmons, Mansfield, and Reno. Early thought to attack Washington the next day, but he gave up this goal when he saw the rest of Grant's reinforcements that morning of July 12. Early did not retreat, though, and instead had skirmishers and sharpshooters take positions near Fort Stevens to see what damage they could cause. They also sought points that might penetrate the defenses, but without luck. Early withdrew his men that evening, ending the first and only engagement of the Civil War Defenses of Washington.<sup>4</sup>

One of the most notable aspects of the Battle of Fort Stevens involved President Abraham Lincoln. He sought to see the battle himself, and he took a carriage ride to Fort Stevens the afternoon of July 12 to satisfy this curiosity. He joined Surgeon Cornelius Crawford on the parapet until a sharpshooter's Minnie ball whizzed by and landed in Crawford's leg. Lincoln knelt in reaction to the sound of the bullet. Medical personnel carried Crawford away, and Lincoln followed reluctantly. This is the only time a US president has come under direct fire during wartime. Some stories relate how one of the commanding officers ordered Lincoln to come down to avoid being hit.<sup>5</sup>

Casualty reports vary, but eyewitnesses noted that losses were high relative to the number of troops. Fifty-nine total Union soldiers died and 145 were wounded, according to one source. Other sources give 874 total casualties for both sides, and another identifies 573 Union and 500 Confederate casualties.<sup>6</sup>

### **Battleground National Cemetery Established**

Soldiers buried their comrades in temporary graves on the battlefield until Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs selected the land for the national cemetery. This farmland, six hundred yards northeast of Fort Stevens, was near the area where some of the heaviest fighting had occurred. Meigs likely designed the cemetery's layout, having the graves circle a flagpole.<sup>7</sup> Edward Campbell, who had fought in the battle, helped bury the soldiers in the new cemetery. He later recalled, as handed down in subsequent sources, how Lincoln had driven up to the burial party in 1864, stepped out of his carriage, held up his hand, and simply stated, as remembered by

---

<sup>3</sup> CWDW NRHP Nomination Form, section 8, p. 96. Cooling, *The Day Lincoln Was Almost Shot*, 52–53, 84–88, 132.

<sup>4</sup> Cooling, *The Day Lincoln Was Almost Shot*, 132–33, 187–88. CWDW NRHP Nomination Form, section 8, pp. 96–98.

<sup>5</sup> Cooling, *The Day Lincoln Was Almost Shot*, 175–76, 179–81. CWDW NRHP Nomination Form, section 8, p. 98.

<sup>6</sup> Cooling, *The Day Lincoln Was Almost Shot*, 187. CWDW NRHP Nomination Form, section 8, p. 98.

<sup>7</sup> CWDW NRHP Nomination Form, section 8, p. 98. Battleground National Cemetery CLR, 6.

Campbell, “I dedicate this spot as the Battle Ground National Cemetery.” Lincoln and his aides then left.<sup>8</sup>

The cemetery land had belonged to James Mulloy of the city’s Metropolitan Police. Mulloy had strenuously fought the taking of his land, wanting to build his family homestead there. An 1867 law determined the process for appropriating land for cemeteries, and Mulloy applied to the local court to determine fair compensation for his land. The US government did not obtain title to the land until 1868, four years after having taken Mulloy’s land, when the Secretary of War ordered the government to pay Mulloy \$2,600 (\$46,200 in 2018 dollars) for his land.<sup>9</sup>

Battleground National Cemetery was part of the nascent national cemetery system. The War Department, responding to the early fighting of the Civil War, ordered in September 1861 the initial steps for establishing national cemeteries. The large number of soldier deaths in far-flung locations during the Civil War required a systematic way for burying soldiers and recording grave locations. The Quartermaster General was tasked with establishing procedures for making and preserving records of dead soldiers and their burial places. Commanding generals had a responsibility to identify land for cemeteries near battlefields, and the president had the authority to purchase land for these national cemeteries. In July 1864, Congress called for the creation of a special Graves Registration unit to identify war dead. Following the Battle of Fort Stevens, such a unit, under Assistant Quartermaster James Moore, identified every Union body and recorded every grave. By 1870, the United States had 73 national cemeteries, where almost 300,000 Union dead were buried.<sup>10</sup>

Congress further defined the look and care of national cemeteries. An 1867 law called for a “good and substantial stone or iron fence” to surround the cemetery. Each grave should have a headstone or block with a number to correspond to the information about the deceased in a burial register kept at the cemetery and at the office of the Quartermaster General. The law required the construction of a porter’s lodge, the hiring of a superintendent, and the completion of annual inspections of the cemeteries. Superintendents were responsible for the landscaping. An 1873 law standardized headstones, to be of marble or granite, with a curved top, recessed shield design, and raised lettering.<sup>11</sup>

Congress and the War Department established national cemeteries to address the sheer volume of war deaths. But the design and memorialization of these cemeteries embodied a growing appreciation of many Americans that these individual deaths had a larger meaning. These Union soldiers, from the perspective of many nineteenth-century Americans, gave their lives for a larger vision. They died to preserve their country and fulfill its democratic principles. Historian Drew Gilpin Faust wrote that “the citizen had a claim in the state; the state had obligations to the individual. And fundamental to this obligation was the acknowledgment of the citizen as a unique and singular person—a person with a name—in death as in life.”<sup>12</sup> Each dead

---

<sup>8</sup> Cooling, *The Day Lincoln Was Almost Shot*, 204.

<sup>9</sup> Cooling, *The Day Lincoln Was Almost Shot*, 203. Architrave, Superintendent’s Lodge, Battleground National Cemetery, 19. Battleground National Cemetery NRHP Nomination Form, 2010, 21. Battleground National Cemetery CLR, 6. Inflation calculator, <http://www.in2013dollars.com/1868-dollars-in-2018?amount=2600>, accessed October 19, 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Battleground National Cemetery NRHP Nomination Form, 2010, 20–21. Drew Gilpin Faust, “‘The Dread Void of Uncertainty’: Naming the Dead in the American Civil War,” *Southern Cultures* 11 (Summer 2005): 24.

<sup>11</sup> Battleground National Cemetery NRHP Nomination Form, 2010, 21–22. Quote from February 22, 1867, Act to Establish and to Protect National Cemeteries.

<sup>12</sup> Faust, “‘The Dread Void,’” 23–24.

soldier deserved a proper marked grave and remembrance for his contributions to the larger war effort.

National cemeteries, including at Battleground, became sites of memorialization that further connected the individual to a larger understanding of the nation. The placement of monuments and annual pilgrimages for Decoration Day, now Memorial Day, represented ways to tie an individual death to the idea of ultimate sacrifice. Death became, according to Faust, “critical to our shared national narrative of the war’s ultimate meaning.”<sup>13</sup> The sheer magnitude of death, as many as 620,000 people from North and South, forced people to make sense of its meaning within the larger context of their country. The evolution of public places, especially cemeteries, and ceremonies aided this transformation.

### **Cemetery Features**

The federal government slowly formalized the landscape at Battleground National Cemetery and thereby made tangible these changing ideas about death and its meaning. By 1867, a wooden caretaker’s lodge stood in the southwest quadrant, and a picket fence surrounded the property. A flagpole was in place by 1869. Once the War Department had formally acquired the land from James Mulloy, 1871 the government in built a one-story Seneca sandstone superintendent’s L-shaped lodge. The Seneca sandstone, quarried in Maryland, has a distinctive red color. This building is in the Second Empire style. Also in 1871, the government built a bluestone coursed-rubble (roughly shaped stones fitting approximately on level beds) perimeter wall. The wall stands four-feet high, with a three-inch sandstone coping (wall cap), on the north, east, and south sections. Due to the low grade along Georgia Avenue, the western section of the wall stands five-feet high with a three-inch limestone coping. At the center of the west wall, dressed bluestone steps and curved walls welcome visitors to the cemetery. In 1900–1901, road widening and construction along Georgia Avenue required relocating the west wall four to five feet back, which made room for the wider street and removed any encroachments of the national cemetery on city property.<sup>14</sup>

In 1872, Quartermaster General Meigs visited the cemetery and remarked that the building should have an attic and mansard roof. The government made this addition in fiscal year 1873. In the early 1870s, Meigs had developed standardized designs for both the one-story hipped-roof lodge and one-story-with-attic mansard-roof lodge plans for national cemeteries throughout the country. He had already produced structured plans for barracks, officers’ quarters, and other buildings at military posts. Both the Battleground National Cemetery one-story and mansard-roof lodges followed Meigs’s plans.<sup>15</sup>

Montgomery Meigs had trained as an engineer and architect at West Point Military Academy. Before serving as Quartermaster General, he completed two important engineering projects: the Washington Aqueduct, which was the District’s first public water source, and the US Capitol dome. Meigs’s water system engineering continues to serve the nation’s capital city today. Meigs had recommended turning a section of the Custis-Lee Estate on Arlington Heights into a national cemetery, which Secretary of War Edwin Stanton approved, leading to the

---

<sup>13</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, “The Civil War Soldier and the Art of Dying,” *Journal of Southern History* 67 (February 2001): 36. See also Faust’s *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008).

<sup>14</sup> Architrave, Superintendent’s Lodge, Battleground National Cemetery, 29–30, 44, 51. Battleground National Cemetery NRHP Nomination Form, 2010, 5, 8.

<sup>15</sup> Architrave, Superintendent’s Lodge, Battleground National Cemetery, 24–25, 31.

establishment of Arlington National Cemetery. Meigs also designed the Pension Building (1887), now the National Building Museum. The Pension Building in Washington, DC, is an Italian Renaissance Revival–style building constructed as a memorial to Union soldiers, sailors, and marines. Meigs designed natural air conditioning and light via exterior wall vents and skylights. The huge Corinthian columns in the Great Hall are among the tallest interior columns in the world.<sup>16</sup>

Further additions to Battleground National Cemetery reinforced its status as a national memorial. The federal government had placed marble headstones with a shield design by 1875. In 1897, Arlington National Cemetery gave Battleground National Cemetery a fifty-foot metal flag pole, painted white. The pole has a gilded orb on top and sits in a cast-iron plinth, decorated with upside-down torches (symbolizing lives tragically ended), festoons (victory in death), acanthus leaves (enduring life), and eagles with outstretched wings and bearing shields on their breasts. In 1904, the federal government installed two smoothbore cannons at the cemetery entrance. These sit on wooden carriages and measure four-feet long. They were used during the Fort Stevens battle. The government initially had the cannons face west but changed their direction to north-south by the 1930s. A cast-iron entrance gate welcomes visitors. The government moved the gates back and forth from the top of the stairs to the bottom. The existing gate, dating from 1916 to 1920, is double-leaf, cast-iron, located at the stair landing. Concrete bowl-shaped urns, placed in 1938 to replace planters, sit on either side of the entrance steps.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Battleground National Cemetery NRHP Nomination Form, 2010, 18–20. Washington Aqueduct, <https://www.nps.gov/places/washington-aqueduct.htm>, accessed October 21, 2018. Pension Building, <https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/wash/dc40.htm>, accessed October 21, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> Battleground National Cemetery NRHP Nomination Form, 2010, 9–10. Architrave, Superintendent’s Lodge, Battleground National Cemetery, 34, 72.



Figure 48. Marble Headstones at Battleground National Cemetery  
NPS PHOTO, 1936

Four granite monuments stand in the cemetery's northwest quadrant, north of the main walkway. The first monument, to the 98th Pennsylvania Volunteers, was erected in 1891. An eight-foot high shaft on a one-foot high base, the monument lists the names of the unit's wounded and casualties during the Battle of Fort Stevens and has a bronze bas relief of the Pennsylvania coat of arms. Thirty veterans from Pennsylvania and the 25th New York Cavalry attended the July 13 ceremony. Survivors of the 122nd New York Volunteers dedicated their monument, a decorated ten-foot-high granite obelisk on a one-foot base, in 1904. The monument has a bronze bas relief of the Great Seal of New York. There is a bronze plaque listing the names of the battles in which the unit fought during the Civil War, and there is a separate listing of the names of the men wounded and killed during the Battle of Fort Stevens. The Company K, 150th Ohio National Guard Infantry granite monument, dedicated in 1907, stands five-feet high on a one-foot base. It has an etched Great Seal of Ohio and a dedication to its men on its smooth and polished front, while the sides and rounded top are rough cut.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Battleground National Cemetery NRHP Nomination Form, 2010, 3, 9–10. Battleground National Cemetery CLR, 12.



Figure 49. Monument to the 122nd New York Volunteers  
NPS PHOTO, 1936

The final monument, to the 25th New York Volunteer Cavalry, has a six-foot pedestal and plinth topped by a life-size statue of a Union cavalryman, all in granite. The New York Department of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) conducted the primary fundraising for this monument. Its unveiling occurred at an elaborate ceremony, attended by hundreds of people, including members of other Grand Army of the Republic posts, during the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the battle, on September 19, 1914. Approximately twenty survivors of the 25th New York Volunteer Cavalry were joined by survivors from other units and many Confederate veterans of the battle. This symbolic demonstration of reunification echoed ceremonies from the turn of the twentieth century onward and, perhaps most strikingly, performed at Gettysburg the previous year. This embrace of reunification and reconciliation, as historian David Blight has argued, made the Southern victory over Reconstruction and its adoption of Jim Crow laws primary over the Union war victory and adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment. Reconciliation overtook emancipation as the central theme for remembering the Civil War and honoring its dead. This situation isolated and threatened the very existence of African Americans.<sup>19</sup>

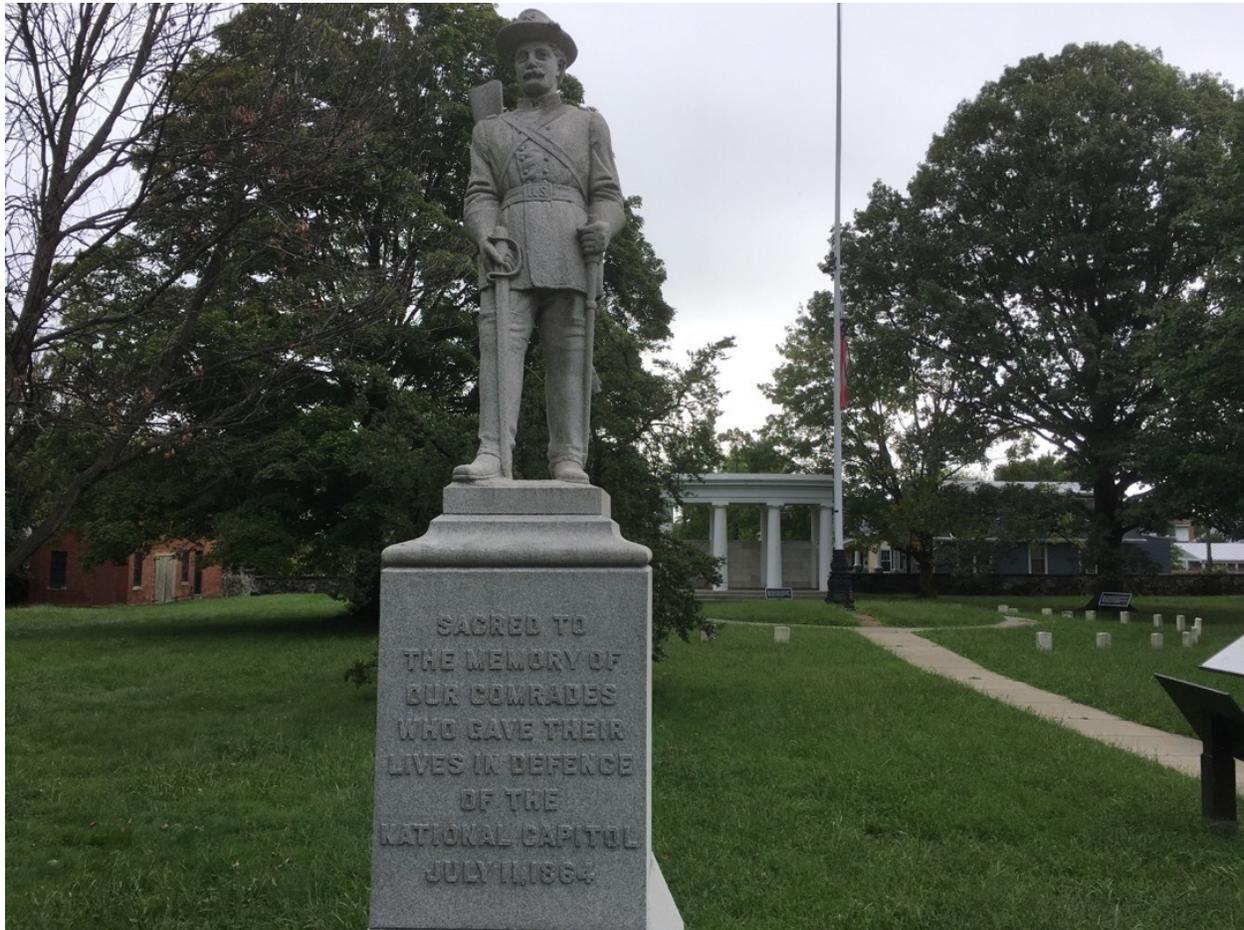


Figure 50. Monument to the 25th New York Volunteer Cavalry  
NPS PHOTO, 2018

---

<sup>19</sup> Battleground National Cemetery NRHP Nomination Form, 2010, 3, 10. David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 354–61, 387–90.

In 1919, the Brightwood Citizens Association successfully joined with the Grand Army of the Republic Department of the Potomac to petition the Quartermaster General and Secretary of War to construct a rostrum at Battleground National Cemetery. Rostrums were speakers' stands, used for commemorative ceremonies. Many used the classical-revival style. Meigs had designed one of the first two rostrums built in 1873 at national cemeteries, and subsequently, he oversaw a standard rostrum design, which was adopted at thirteen high-visitation national cemeteries by 1882 and modified at a fourteenth cemetery in 1883. Funding limitations led to the design of a second, less expensive plan, which the federal government erected in thirty-three cemeteries between 1886 and 1905. The Battleground National Cemetery rostrum, dedicated on Memorial Day 1921, measures twenty-five-feet long, twenty-one-feet tall, and fifteen-feet deep, and it can seat about twenty people. It has eight 15-foot sandstone Tuscan Doric columns, salvaged from the Patent Office in 1877, painted white and set in two rows on a narrow, stepped platform. All architectural features gently bow outwards toward the flag pole and graves. Seven-foot polished marble walls are set between the two columns on each side and four rear columns of the rostrum. The foundations and platform are concrete.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> HABS, National Cemeteries, Rostrums, HALS No. DC-47 (2013), 2, 39–40. Battleground National Cemetery NRHP Nomination Form, 2010, 8, 29. Battleground National Cemetery CLR, 15.



Figure 51. Rostrum at Battleground National Cemetery  
NPS PHOTO, 1936

Five cast-iron tablets, measuring three-feet tall with an angled design, and modern waysides stand at points in the cemetery. Two of the cast-iron tablets, dating from circa 1881, provide information on the War Department's national cemetery regulations. The three other cast-iron tablets, dating from circa 1880–90, reproduce the first stanza and first quatrain of the eleventh stanza of Theodore O'Hara's elegiac poem "Bivouac of the Dead." O'Hara wrote this poem in honor of the soldiers of the Battle of Buena Vista during the Mexican-American War (1846–48). These tablets form an arc around the back row of headstones.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Battleground National Cemetery NRHP Nomination Form, 2010, 10–11. CWDW LRIP, 2012, 19.



Figure 52. “Bivouac of the Dead” Cast-Iron Tablet  
NPS PHOTO, 1936

The federal government added two structures in the twentieth century. A still-standing brick four-bay tool shed, built between 1906 and 1907, stands in the cemetery’s northeast quadrant. It was extended by seven feet in 1935. This outbuilding initially served as a storage area, coal bin, and public restroom. In 1935, the cemetery superintendent reported that the toolshed had been remodeled to house two public toilets, a tool room, and a garage. A brick kitchen addition, built during fiscal year 1930, is located on the lodge’s rear or east elevation. Workers improved the lodge’s interior during the mid-1930s, replacing windows and floors, upgrading the heating system, and installing a new bathroom on the second floor.<sup>22</sup>

Esteemed landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted advised Montgomery Meigs on the landscape design for national cemeteries. Olmsted and his partner Calvert Vaux had designed the layout and landscape of New York City’s Central Park. In 1870, Olmsted urged Meigs to make the cemeteries “studiously simple” to evoke feelings of dignity, tranquility, and sacredness. He

<sup>22</sup> Battleground National Cemetery NRHP Nomination Form, 2010, 6–8, 25–26. Architrave, Superintendent’s Lodge, Battleground National Cemetery, 38–39, 63, 67, 72.

suggested using trees to create a sacred grove to envelope the graves and their visitors. Meigs adopted these ideas and wrote in his annual report to the Secretary of War that wherever size and soil conditions allowed, the federal government use the model of a Gothic cathedral and establish a “sylvan hall” or “temple” of elms and maples. Such trees would provide a protected archway for ceremonies and serve as ornamentation. Meigs also recommended planting a wall of hedges of Osage orange or honey locust. Battleground National Cemetery had a greenhouse built in 1874.<sup>23</sup>

When Meigs inspected Battleground National Cemetery in 1872, he was disappointed not to see the sylvan hall he had thought was planted there. The 1871 Report to the Secretary of War had reported the planting of 1,900 linear feet of Osage orange, along with 44 trees and 26 shrubs. Many of the trees had failed. By 1935, however, the *Washington Post* considered Battleground National Cemetery’s landscape more impressive than its neighbor Arlington National Cemetery. Battleground, according to the newspaper, evoked a “sylvan intimacy,” suggesting that Meigs’s vision had been realized.<sup>24</sup>

### Ceremonies

Americans gathered at national cemeteries and battlefields to honor the veterans and remember the dead in the years after the Civil War. They also sought to preserve the landscape where some of the most intense fighting had occurred. Congress set aside the first five Civil War battlefields in the 1890s, at Chickamauga and Chattanooga (1890), Antietam (1890), Shiloh (1894), Gettysburg (1895), and Vicksburg (1899). Interest in creating more such parks intensified in the first decades of the twentieth century, including having a park at Fort Stevens. These battlefield parks had adjacent national cemeteries.<sup>25</sup>

People had started laying flowers on graves and makeshift memorials even as the battles were still being fought. However, the founding of Decoration Day, when graves are decorated with flowers, is attributed to black South Carolinians and their white abolitionist allies. In Charleston, South Carolina, during the final year of the war, the Confederacy had held Union prisoners under terrible conditions at what had once been the planters’ horse-racing course. At least 257 prisoners died from exposure and disease and were buried in unmarked graves behind what had been the judge’s stand. Charleston’s African American citizens insisted that these soldiers receive a proper burial at the war’s end. On May 1, 1865, an estimated 10,000 people, mainly former slaves, participated in a day-long event that included laying spring flowers on the newly dug graves for these Union soldiers.<sup>26</sup>

Gen. John A. Logan formalized Decoration Day in the North in 1868. As commander-in-chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, he issued General Order No. 11, declaring that May 30th would be set aside for placing flowers on the graves of Union dead. That first year, thousands of people at 183 cemeteries in 27 states participated; the following year, people in 336 cities and towns in 31 states (North and South) held Decoration Day commemorations. Memorial Day in the Confederate South fell on different days in different areas, continuing into the

---

<sup>23</sup> Olmsted and Meigs quoted in Battleground National Cemetery NRHP Nomination Form, 2010, 26. Battleground National Cemetery CLR, 11.

<sup>24</sup> Battleground National Cemetery NRHP Nomination Form, 2010, 26–27. Battleground National Cemetery CLR, 10. *Washington Post* quote on p. 27.

<sup>25</sup> Battleground National Cemetery CLR, 12–13. See also Timothy B. Smith, *The Golden Age of Battlefield Preservation: The Decade of the 1890s and the Establishment of America’s First Five Military Parks* (Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 2008).

<sup>26</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 64–70.

twentieth century. Some locales used Confederate President Jefferson Davis's birth date of June 3, for example, while other places used the anniversary of Stonewall Jackson's death on May 10. Southern Confederates used these ceremonies, along with monument unveilings, to vindicate their war experience and further the Lost Cause tradition, while also grieving the South's immense human losses.<sup>27</sup>

Battleground National Cemetery began hosting annual Decoration Day, later called Memorial Day, ceremonies in the late 1800s, with the earliest reported ceremony held in 1874. The Grand Army of the Republic and the Brightwood Citizens Association coordinated planning by 1900. The commemorative activities usually included an oration, a reading of the Gettysburg Address, music with the playing of taps and sometimes singing by different groups, and the laying of flowers on the graves, often by children from the local area. In 1909, William Shoemaker of the Brightwood Citizens Association stated that this association had initiated the ceremonies some six or seven years prior.<sup>28</sup>

Assistant Attorney General William Brown gave the oration in 1909, and his comments reflect the then-prevalent ideas of reconciliation. He stated "without hesitancy" that the gracious sentiments "manifested in every part of the southland demands our sympathy, our admiration and our gratitude." Brown also argued that "the preservation of the Union was of greater moment . . . to the south than to the north."<sup>29</sup>

Brown hailed from New York and Pennsylvania and had served in the 23rd New York Volunteers and First Pennsylvania Rifles during the Civil War. He served in the US House of Representatives as a Republican from 1883 to 1887 and was Assistant Attorney General from 1907 to 1910, as appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt. This biographical information would lead a reader of his 1909 oration to believe that he would put the North ahead of the South in his statements about the Civil War and its aftermath. Instead, he went out of his way to reconcile the North and South and find common ground. Brown chose to disregard how the South had structured its government and society. Jim Crow laws, which segregated life in the South between whites and blacks, had begun appearing in the 1880s with the ending of Reconstruction. The rise of the Ku Klux Klan, a terrorist organization composed of racist white southerners, terrorized blacks with lynchings and other violence. Brown's oration suggests that Battleground National Cemetery served at least once as a place where reconciliation and reunion had a voice.<sup>30</sup>

John I. White, who once wrote for the *Washington Star*, sent the *Washington Post* a letter in 1990 recounting the ceremonies at Battleground National Cemetery that he had seen while growing up just a few blocks away. His grandfather had lived next door to the cemetery. White, who wrote that these events happened during William Howard Taft's presidency (1909–13), recalled a military band always playing at the ceremonies. Fort Myer brought a horse-drawn

---

<sup>27</sup> Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 71, 77–84. John A. Logan Memorial, <https://www.nps.gov/nama/john-logan-memorial.htm>, accessed October 22, 2018.

<sup>28</sup> Battleground National Cemetery CLR, 11, 14–15. A search of the Library of Congress's Chronicling America newspaper database produces seventy-nine results for "Battleground National Cemetery," dating from 1900 to 1946. Most of the entries are for a short notice of the upcoming Memorial Day services. In a few cases, articles date from after the events and summarize the orations and other highlights. The *Evening Star* (October 4, 1900) noted that memorial exercises had been held on May 30 and that a flag raising had been held at Fort Stevens on Flag Day, June 14. Shoemaker spoke at the 1909 ceremonies, as reported in the *Evening Star*, June 1, 1909.

<sup>29</sup> William Brown, as quoted in *Evening Star*, June 1, 1909.

<sup>30</sup> "William Wallace Brown," Wikipedia entry, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Wallace\\_Brown](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Wallace_Brown), accessed October 23, 2018. The US Army Center of Military History also has supporting materials on Brown.

wagon of artillery. He had marveled at the shiny guns and uniformed artillerymen. He remembered children from Brightwood School placing flowers and small American flags at each gravesite. People gave patriotic speeches. The highlight was when the artillery fired a salute. White's grandfather hosted the surviving veterans, both Union and Confederate, for a light lunch, and as a young boy, White enjoyed hearing the men fight "the battle all over again" on his grandfather's spacious front porch.<sup>31</sup>

### **National Park Service Administration**

The War Department administered an extensive national military park system until 1933 when the National Park Service (NPS) took over the management of these parks and other historical parks. Horace Albright, the second Director of the National Park Service, had sought this change as early as 1917. He believed that the agency would protect these resources better than the War Department and provide better services to visitors. The War Department had largely delegated administration of the military parks to clerks in the Washington office and had focused its battlefield preservation and interpretation on serious students of battlefield tactics and strategy. This approach met the requirements of the legislation establishing these parks.

Albright, who had a keen interest in history, wanted to attract other types of visitors to these military parks. He recognized that his agency could apply its interpretive skills in service to new visitors. He also had an underlying motive to build a constituency for the National Park Service in the populous eastern states. The agency's national parks were located west of the Mississippi. The plethora of historic sites in the East offered an avenue for engaging this audience and thus building national support for his still fledgling agency. He convinced newly elected President Franklin D. Roosevelt of this idea. Roosevelt signed two Executive Orders (EO) in 1933 (EO 6166 and a slightly revised version of it as EO 6288), which together eventually transferred to the National Park Service the military parks; fourteen national cemeteries; all national monuments in the continental United States and under Forest Service administration; and the parks, monuments, and memorials in the District. Battleground National Cemetery came under National Park Service management with this action.<sup>32</sup>

The first half of the twentieth century had its highlights at the cemetery. In 1933, Public Works Administration workers uncovered four shells and an unexploded hand grenade when digging a ditch to drain the cemetery. Inspection proved that the shells were still "live" with fuses and caps intact. Reports on the find did not indicate if the ammunition was of Union or Confederate origin. The cemetery superintendent, also in 1933, remarked that, except on Decoration Day, few visitors stopped at the cemetery. Decreased usage of rostrums in national cemeteries under National Park Service care prompted the agency in 1941 to call for their dismantlement if not in regular use. The rostrum at Battleground National Cemetery was saved due to its usage.<sup>33</sup>

The Department of the Interior declared in 1942 that cemeteries should not have a superintendent if one was not needed. The lodge could be used for other purposes. Battleground National Cemetery stopped employing a superintendent, and the lodge became quarters for

---

<sup>31</sup> John I. White, letter to the editor, *Washington Post*, May 27, 1990.

<sup>32</sup> Battleground National Cemetery CLR, 15. Harlan D. Unrau and G. Frank Williss, *Administrative History: Expansion of the National Park Service in the 1930s* (NPS, 1983), chapter 1 and 2, [https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/unrau-williss/adhlc.htm](https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/unrau-williss/adhlc.htm), accessed October 24, 2018. Eleven cemeteries came to NPS in 1933; one returned to VA, and four came to NPS after 1933.

<sup>33</sup> Battleground National Cemetery CLR, 16. Battleground National Cemetery NRHP Nomination Form, 2010, 30.

National Park Service employees. A carpenter and his wife lived in the lodge for nearly twenty-five years between the 1950s and 1970s.<sup>34</sup>



*Figure 53. Battleground National Cemetery Lodge  
NPS PHOTO, 2011*

---

<sup>34</sup> Battleground National Cemetery CLR, 16. Battleground National Cemetery NRHP Nomination Form, 2010, 30–31.

Despite people living in the lodge, the cemetery itself declined from the 1960s through the 1990s. Photos from the 1960s showed thinning vegetation, including the boxwood hedge. By 1975, the hedge was gone. The landscape continued to deteriorate into the 1980s. One possible reason for this slow decline was the lack of visitation. The cemetery kept large guestbooks. These guestbooks indicate that visitor signatures all but stopped by the late 1960s. Rock Creek Park Interpretive Specialist Steve Strach reported in 1999 that maintenance staff kept the grass cut and occasionally rehabilitated the lodge's interior, but otherwise the property declined. He remarked that this situation persisted even though the cemetery was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.<sup>35</sup>

In 1981, management of Battleground National Cemetery transferred from National Capital Parks—East to Rock Creek Park. Both administrative parks had many units to maintain and the one-acre plot at the cemetery may not have attracted as much attention as other larger units, such as Reservation 339, Rock Creek Park proper. Review of Rock Creek Park annual reports for the period 1981 through 1995 fail to show any specific references to Battleground National Cemetery for maintenance work, though these reports usually specify which park units did receive attention. In 1989, the maintenance section of the annual report lamented that National Capital Region funding for Rock Creek park cyclic and rehabilitation failed to meet park needs. The report singled out Meridian Hill Park, Carter Barron Amphitheater, roads, and comfort stations as the most notable locations requiring help. The DC Preservation League in 2005 highlighted the poor situation by naming Battleground National Cemetery to its “Most Endangered Places” list for that year.<sup>36</sup>

The lodge became office space and the home of the Rock Creek Park Archives, which moved from Peirce Mill in 1996, after residents vacated in the late 1980s. Strach described its status as a “dumping ground” for boxes of brochures and reports, unwanted furniture, and supplies. Resource staff stored part of the herbarium collection at the lodge. They also kept wet gear, frozen dead animals, chemicals, and jarred specimens there. The lodge became an aquatic testing lab. During the summers, temporary staff from that division used the building as a “hang-out.” Strach argued that this use contradicted a regional memo designating the lodge as a cultural resource that should be used as such.<sup>37</sup>

In December 1993, Rock Creek Park and National Capital Regional (NCR) staff toured Battleground National Cemetery to assess the condition of the lodge and other structures. They reported that the lodge needed some exterior repairs, such as painting the roof, clearing out the gutters, and repainting all exterior woodwork. These fixes would go a long way, they said, to improve the building's condition, but the building would deteriorate without such repairs. The rostrum, on the other hand, needed its entire roof replaced. The plastered ceiling had collapsed, and the wood trim and columns needed repainting.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Battleground National Cemetery CLR, 16. Battleground National Cemetery NRHP Nomination Form, 2010, 31. Email, Steve Strach to Julia Washburn, April 13, 1999, File CWDW–BATT–General: Articles 1864–1999, Box 27, MRCE. All files from MRCE are from the ROCR Collection.

<sup>36</sup> Battleground National Cemetery CLR, 16. Battleground National Cemetery NRHP Nomination Form, 2010, 31. Annual reports reviewed for the following years: 1981–1984, 1987–1989. ROCR, Annual Report, 1989, last page addendum, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR.

<sup>37</sup> Quotes from Email, Strach to Washburn, April 13, 1999. See also Battleground National Cemetery CLR, 16. Battleground National Cemetery NRHP Nomination Form, 2010, 30–31.

<sup>38</sup> Memorandum, National Capital Region Regional Director to ROCR Superintendent, March 21, 1994, 4, File OLST–Subject Files–Maint 1959–1997, n.d. (1 of 2), Box 54, MRCE.

One project did make a significant but surprising improvement to the cemetery. In 1999, Rock Creek Park Interpretive Ranger Ron Harvey began what would become a nine-year study of the soldiers buried at the cemetery. His research determined that five graves had been mislabeled, either by misspelling a name or misidentifying the interred soldier. Harvey eventually confirmed four remains and burial sites, but he could not confirm a fifth one, believed to be a civilian. While resetting the headstones in 2006, Harvey found that thirty-seven headstones had other names inscribed in the buried areas. These names do not relate to the deceased soldiers at Battleground National Cemetery; the headstones had been reused for unknown reasons.<sup>39</sup>

Improvements started, driven in part by the upcoming Civil War and Battleground National Cemetery sesquicentennial. In 2001, the NPS Historic Preservation Training Center replaced the rostrum's roof. In 2005, Rock Creek Park maintenance staff stabilized and repaired the cemetery perimeter wall. In 2008, staff repaved the central walkway. Then came an infusion of funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. This act, which granted \$1.2 million for the rehabilitation of the Superintendent's Lodge and cemetery rostrum, was an economic stimulus package signed into law in 2009 by President Barack Obama in the aftermath of the Great Recession. The act required that projects be "shovel-ready," meaning that they could be implemented immediately upon receipt of the funds. Rock Creek Park had overseen the completion of an assessment report of the lodge in 2004.<sup>40</sup>

Work proceeded on both structures. For the rostrum, workers repaired the roof and ceiling, repointed the marble, repainted the columns and wood cornices, redesigned the drainage system, and replaced sections of the concrete slab and stairs. They completed substantial work on the lodge. They removed the non-historic parts and replaced the slate and metal roofs, gutters, downspouts, and drainage system. They repaired the Seneca sandstone and repointed the mortar. Inside, they restored the paint colors. Workers also repaired and repainted the flag pole and base.<sup>41</sup>

Collaboration with neighborhoods and a nonprofit organization resulted in new signage. The communities around Fort Stevens, Battleground National Cemetery, Fort DeRussy, and Fort Totten specifically asked for new waysides for these Fort Circle parks and the cemetery. The National Park Service aluminum waysides for the cemetery, placed in 2008, provide a roll call and brief histories of the battle and the cemetery. The National Park Service partnered with Cultural Tourism DC, a nonprofit coalition of historical and cultural organizations, on another cemetery wayside and on a Brightwood Heritage Trail. The trail opened in 2008, with NPS rangers giving talks and tours.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> Battleground National Cemetery CLR, 16–17. Battleground National Cemetery NRHP Nomination Form, 2010, 31.

<sup>40</sup> NPS Historic Preservation Training Center, Battleground Cemetery Pavilion Roof Replacement Project, FY 2001–2002, Denver Service Center, Technical Information Center. ROCR, Annual Report, 2005, 5, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR. Battleground National Cemetery CLR, 17. Battleground National Cemetery NRHP Nomination Form, 2010, 31.

<sup>41</sup> Battleground National Cemetery NRHP Nomination Form, 2010, 31. Battleground National Cemetery CLR, 17. Architrave, PC, Architects, Superintendent's Lodge, 2004. NPS, Rehabilitate Deteriorated Battleground National Cemetery Superintendent's Lodge and Rostrum, Phase I: Rostrum, 2009, TIC. With the completed rehabilitation, the CWDW Project Manager moved into the lodge. CWDW, LRIP, 2012, 19.

<sup>42</sup> Battleground National Cemetery NRHP Nomination Form, 2010, 11. CWDW, LRIP, 2012, 19. ROCR, Annual Report, 2008, 1–2, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR.

## Conclusion

In September 2009, Katherine Stevenson, NPS Assistant Director, Business Services, spoke before the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. She appeared for an oversight hearing focused on how to better serve America's veterans and their families. One concern raised had been the National Park Service's caretaking of the cemeteries under its management. Stevenson provided a short history of the formation of the national cemeteries and how the agency became the steward of fourteen of them. She then emphasized that because these cemeteries were part of historic park units, the agency applied different procedures for their care than the National Cemetery Administration did. She stated that, for example, the National Park Service realigned headstones less often and did so by hand, not by machine. The agency used pressure washing instead of bleaching chemicals, which left the headstones grayer but also preserved the stones longer. When trees died, the agency replaced them because they were part of a historic cultural landscape. However, this approach meant more shade, a greater chance of moss growing on headstones, and more tree roots to misalign the headstones.<sup>43</sup>

Stevenson's account helps summarize an important aspect of the history of Battleground National Cemetery. This cemetery represents more than the final resting place of forty soldiers who died in the Battle of Fort Stevens and one veteran who had served in the same battle—it acts as a touchstone, some would say a sacred or hallowed touchstone, to a momentous and essential part of US history. The Civil War tore apart the union and then brought it back together as a new entity, a nation without slavery and with the promise of equal rights, though still not fully realized. The post-Civil War nation was also a stronger one, with the loose union of states now firmly formed into a single nation. The Battle of Fort Stevens has the distinction of being the only Civil War military attack on the nation's capital and the only time a sitting president came directly under fire. Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs personally chose the location of Battleground National Cemetery and implemented his designs for national cemeteries at Battleground. These historical connections elevate the meaning of this cemetery, and the National Park Service has worked since 1933 to tie together history, honor, and respect at Battleground National Cemetery and the other cemeteries under its care. The pressure of other obligations and restricted funding have imposed limitations, but the overall intent has endured.

---

<sup>43</sup> Katherine Stevenson, NPS Assistant Director, Business Services, September 24, 2009, before the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Oversight Hearing, "Honoring the Fallen: How Can We Better Serve America's Veterans and their Families?," 1–2.

## **CHAPTER 19**

### **Georgetown Waterfront Park Administrative History**

The National Park Service, with the Georgetown Business Improvement District (BID) as one partner, has integrated Georgetown Waterfront Park into the daily hum of the historic neighborhood. On Tuesday nights during the summer, a visitor could watch a free movie on a huge outdoor screen. Summer Saturday evenings have meant yoga classes for up to one hundred people each week. Along the northern edge of the park, in September people could taste the food and drinks of restaurants and bars in Georgetown. During the December–January holiday season, light installations by artists worldwide have brightened the longest nights. People, whether from the DC region or traveling from afar, have posted on Yelp that they love the park for its views of the water and boating activities, people-watching opportunities, and refreshing fountain.<sup>1</sup>

The park's 1987 master plan set this intention in place. The Georgetown waterfront was the only waterfront area along the Potomac River within the District not managed by the National Park Service. The National Capital Planning Commission, the Commission of Fine Arts, the Secretaries of the Interior for several administrations, and the Mayor of the District of Columbia supported federal ownership and use of the space as a public park for the enjoyment of all. These public agencies and their agents sought to implement the 1930 Capper-Cramton Act. This act had established the federal goal of protecting both sides of the Potomac River from Fort Washington, Maryland, and Mount Vernon, Virginia, to Great Falls.<sup>2</sup>

The 1987 Georgetown Waterfront Park master plan established the overall character and design. Instead of having recreational fields, the park would offer passive opportunities to enjoy the waterfront and connect with the site's history. The latter included improving the remains of the C&O Canal aqueduct and rehabilitating the tide lock at the confluence of Rock Creek and the Potomac River, the historic terminus of the Canal. The plan intended to respect the Georgetown historic district designation by emphasizing preservation, restoration, and enhancement of the area's historic features. This chapter chronicles the five decades of effort that finally led to the 2011 opening of the completed Georgetown Waterfront Park. This effort involved collaboration among the District, friends groups, National Park Service staff from different offices, design and construction firms, and Georgetown residents and businesses.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.georgetowndc.com/events/>; <http://www.tasteofgeorgetown.com/restaurant/> and <https://www.yelp.com/biz/georgetown-waterfront-park-washington>, accessed November 25, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> NPS, Georgetown Waterfront Park and the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park Master Plan, 1987, DSC, TIC.

<sup>3</sup> NPS, Georgetown Waterfront Park and the C&O Canal NHP Master Plan, 1987.



*Figure 54. Aerial View of Georgetown Waterfront Park  
NPS PHOTO, 2008*

## **Beginnings**

The Maryland Assembly in 1751 authorized the establishment of Georgetown, named for King George II, on the Potomac River. The town quickly established itself as a shipping center with Europe and the West Indies in the tobacco and slave trades. Wharves with seagoing ships lined the waterfront. The town aided the American Revolution by serving as a collection and distribution point for military supplies. The town was incorporated in 1789, and soon a textile mill, paper factories, and flour mills appeared. The mills benefited from easy access to wheat from the Maryland hinterlands and strong currents to turn their wheels, in contrast to the smaller Peirce Mill, which relied upon the less powerful Rock Creek. The 1791 incorporation of Washington, DC, as the nation's capital formally brought Georgetown into the District's

boundary, but the town retained its character. Not until 1871, after the Civil War, did Congress legally make Georgetown part of the city.<sup>4</sup>

The C&O Canal, built in the 1820s, was constructed along the eastern bank of the Potomac River, just north of the Georgetown waterfront. The eventual Georgetown Waterfront Park and the C&O Canal both have strong historical relationships to the Potomac River and in the twentieth century connect physically together through a common bike and pedestrian path. The Canal, with its terminus at the Potomac River, ran merchandise between 1839 and 1924. In its most productive year of 1875, the Canal carried nearly one million tons of goods, which included coal, lumber, agricultural products, and building materials downstream and fish, salt, fertilizer, and iron ore north. The C&O Canal's owners faced continual challenges from weather, silting of the canal, and competition from the railroads, specifically the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. The canal operated at a loss for most of its operation. A minor flood in 1924 left the already compromised Canal in ruins, and the B&O Railroad, which had slowly been buying up the Canal's construction and repair bonds and taking over trustee and receiver positions, rebuilt only the lower five miles, from Lock 5 to Georgetown. This section had profited from supplying canal water to mills. Following public lobbying that began in the late 1920s, Congress passed and President Richard Nixon in 1971 signed into law the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park. The national historical park stretches 185 miles, along the original towpath.<sup>5</sup>

Georgetown had a mixed history in the twentieth century, which shaped waterfront uses. The waterfront area initially became an industrial zone. A cement plant, power station, flour mill, meat-rendering plant, and others took over the area. But changes shaped the wharf and surroundings. The Potomac River silted up to the extent that the wharf was no longer usable. The declining usage of the C&O Canal, as early as the 1890s, negatively affected Georgetown. The Canal flooded in 1889, and many businesses that relied on it were forced to close. The area slumped into economic decline by the end of World War I and became known as one of the worst slums in the District. African Americans, who had held multiple jobs in Georgetown, and whose numbers peaked as residents of the area in 1910, slowly lost their jobs. Labor contractions had meant that the lowest-skilled jobs went first, and those were often filled by African American workers. The New Deal period of the 1930s, with its infusion of money for work projects, helped Georgetown rebound economically, but an influx of white government workers, who needed housing, drove prices skyward. Increased housing costs forced many African Americans out of Georgetown. By the 1950s, the preponderance of white residents attracted future President John F. Kennedy to live there. In the 1980s, the Georgetown waterfront, in contrast to the tonier Georgetown residential area, became a municipal operations area. The District government used the waterfront area for its solid waste and leaf collection operations and

---

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/wash/dc15.htm>; <https://georgetownwaterfrontpark.org/about-the-park/the-port-of-georgetown/>. Constance W. Werner, *Georgetown Historic Waterfront: A Review of Canal and Riverside Architecture*, US Commission of Fine Arts and NPS, 1968, 13, <http://www.npshistory.com/publications/georgetown-historic-waterfront.pdf>, accessed November 18, 2017. Stephen Andrew, "Georgetown's Hidden History: First It Was a Slave Port, Later It Was a Thriving Center of Black Life. Today's It's Virtually an All-White Enclave: Why?," *Washington Post*, July 16, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Barry Mackintosh, *Chesapeake and Ohio Canal: The Making of a Park* (NPS, 1991), Prologue, [https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/choh/admin\\_history/history0b.htm](https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/choh/admin_history/history0b.htm), and chapter 5, [https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/choh/admin\\_history/history5.htm](https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/choh/admin_history/history5.htm).

stored its ice and snow removal facilities, including salt for roads, there. It also parked impounded cars at the waterfront.<sup>6</sup>

### Washington Harbour

Transportation planning shaped the development of the Georgetown Waterfront area. In 1942, Congress authorized building part of an envisioned Inner Loop road system of which a skyway section above K Street followed along the Georgetown waterfront. This elevated road was named Whitehurst Freeway, after the DC Director of Highways. The freeway opened in 1949. In 1960, the District's highway department proposed using the Whitehurst Freeway, with a new bridge over Three Sisters Island, the George Washington Memorial Parkway (that section later called the Clara Barton Parkway), and other road additions to connect the system to Interstate 66, which would have linked the District and Virginia.<sup>7</sup>

Neither the District nor the states of Maryland and Virginia built the proposed bridges or road connections to the Whitehurst Freeway. The federal government did not build the proposed inner loop. In the end, the Whitehurst Freeway exists as an elevated roadway, three quarters of a mile long, stretching from Key Bridge and Canal Road to 27th Street NW. The Whitehurst Freeway, as its main advantage, keeps traffic off K Street NW in Georgetown. Its elevated form, however, has struck many people as ugly and a visual barrier to enjoying the waterfront. These detractors have lobbied for tearing down the freeway.<sup>8</sup>

In the early 1970s, the Chessie (CSX) Railroad wanted to sell its six acres at Georgetown Waterfront. The District owned another ten acres of land in this same location. The District land came from the Federal Highway Administration, which did not need the land for transportation purposes and thus gave it to the District, as required by law, for park purposes. Georgetown residents lobbied the US Department of the Interior to buy the railroad land and combine the six acres with the ten to make a park along the waterfront. They went directly to Secretary of the Interior Cecil Anders to make their case. Anders stated that he did not have the money. National Park Service (NPS) assistant planner John Parsons remembered that Anders had a prior commitment to use funds for Big Cypress in Florida, not the Georgetown waterfront, which was not established as a national park unit.<sup>9</sup>

Parsons and his office, as he later recalled, did have a suggestion for protecting some of the waterfront. The United States had acquired the C&O Canal from the receivers of the Canal Company. In 1941, the remaining Canal Company receivers sold a parcel of land to the B&O

---

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/wash/dc15.htm> and <https://georgetownwaterfrontpark.org/about-the-park/the-port-of-georgetown/>. The Georgetown Waterfront Park and the C&O Canal NHP: Approved Master Plan, 1987, 1, TIC. Memorandum of Agreement Relating to the Transfer of Jurisdiction over Georgetown Waterfront Park from the District of Columbia to the National Park Service, signed October 17, 1984, by Mayor Marion Barry and National Capital Region Regional Director Manus J. Fish, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR. Linda Wheeler, "Georgetown Gets a Waterfront Park" *Washington Post*, October 29, 2000. Andrew, "Georgetown's Hidden History."

<sup>7</sup> John Parsons, transcript of oral history interview with the author, September 29, 2017, 2–3, ROCR Archives.

<sup>8</sup> Parsons, transcript of interview, 3. Steven Ginsberg, "District Trying to Topple the Whitehurst," *Washington Post*, May 8, 2005. Benjamin Forgey, "Vision of a Whitehurst Revamped: From the Old Freeway, A Road to the Future," *Washington Post*, October 28, 1989.

<sup>9</sup> Ann Satterthwaite joined with Judy Bonderman and Katharine Sullivan in 1978 to form the Committee for Washington's Riverfront Parks. See <https://georgetownwaterfrontpark.org/about-the-park/history-of-the-park/>, accessed November 8, 2017. Parsons, transcript of interview, 3. Ann Satterthwaite, transcript of oral history interview with the author, July 21, 2017, 4, ROCR Archives. Blair Gately, "Questioning the Waterfront Task Force," *Washington Post*, April 26, 1979.

Railroad. The land was subject to a restrictive covenant limiting the height of buildings to twenty feet. The Department of the Interior and the National Capital Planning Commission had an active role in reviewing drafts of the agreement. The height restrictions likely were meant to restrict the height of industrial uses predominant during this period.<sup>10</sup>

The National Park Service used this height restriction in service to the future Georgetown Waterfront Park. The National Park Service participated as part of the Georgetown Waterfront Task Force, which also included the National Capital Planning Commission and the DC Office of Planning and Development. The task force produced a plan in 1979 with compromises to the major stakeholders. The District needed the plan to provide for a larger tax base. Chessie Railroad needed to have its property rights guaranteed. The Georgetown citizens advocating for the park wanted no development, but the proposed plan did reduce the number of offices, stores, and apartment buildings by 75 percent. This pragmatic plan considered the reality that neither the federal government nor the District had the funds to develop the entire site as a public park.<sup>11</sup>

Washington Harbour Associates built on the Chessie Railroad site.<sup>12</sup> The developer proposed constructing Washington Harbour, 6.25 acres located between Rock Creek and 31st Street NW. The first phase, which bordered K Street NW, the Potomac River, and 30th Street NW, would include retail, office, and condominiums. The District permitted this Phase I development without requiring any public access through the project or any covenants controlling the future expansion of the project.<sup>13</sup>

The second phase involved three parcels south of K Street NW, east of 31st Street NW, north of the Potomac River, and west of Rock Creek. The developer intended to build office space and a hotel. This Phase II development had the 1941 height restrictions. Here, the National Park Service conveyed the height restriction easement to Washington Harbour Associates, thereby lifting this restriction on the hotel and office building. The agency also allowed linkage of the hotel and office building. In exchange, the agency gained one-half acre of scenic and public access easements to allow perpetual 24 hours/day public access along the Potomac Riverfront and along Rock Creek. A second easement for 1.5 acres of scenic easements prohibited buildings and advertising signs. The developer also agreed to stabilize and landscape both banks of the creek and restore the canal tide lock.<sup>14</sup>

The National Park Service gathered public and agency comments during the development of the Washington Harbour agreement. The agency held a public hearing in January 1984. The National Park Service also held a meeting with Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2E, gave tours to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) staff, and met with the Old Georgetown

---

<sup>10</sup> According to Parsons, the National Capital Planning Commission in 1935 had acquired a height restriction of thirty-five feet along Rock Creek to just above Thompson Boat Center. The Commission had had an active land program and acquired a significant amount of lands for parks in the 1930s. See Parsons, transcript of interview, 3. NPS, Environmental Assessment: Exchange of Interests in Land between NPS and Washington Harbour Associates, 1984, 2–6, File OLST–Cult Res–PTM: GTWF–Exchange of Interests in Land–EA 1984, Box 47, MRCE. Files MRCE files are in the Rock Creek Park collection. Barry Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 4, section “The Mouth of the Creek.”

<sup>11</sup> LaBarbara Bowman, “Georgetown Waterfront Park ‘Final Draft’ Reduces Development by 75 Percent,” *Washington Post*, April 5, 1979.

<sup>12</sup> Washington Harbour Associates was the second development company pursuing development of Washington Harbour. The first was Western Development Company.

<sup>13</sup> Western Development Company was the initial name for the development corporation. Bowman, “Georgetown Waterfront Park.” NPS, Environmental Assessment: Exchange of Lands, 6–12.

<sup>14</sup> Parsons, transcript of interview, 3. NPS, Environmental Assessment: Exchange of Lands, 6–12. Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 4, section “The Mouth of the Creek.”

Board, Commission of Fine Arts, and the C&O Canal Historic Park Advisory Commission. The resulting comments led to design modifications for the proposed plan, such as lowering the height of the hotel from sixty to fifty-two feet.<sup>15</sup>

The Committee for Washington's Riverfront Parks initiated a lawsuit against the National Park Service for conveying this easement, which lifted the height restriction. They used Ralph Nader's Public Citizen legal organization to try to force the federal government to maintain the height restriction. Ann Satterthwaite, who helped start the Committee for Washington's Riverfront Parks around this time, recalled that they argued that if the federal government could lift an easement for Georgetown, then a precedent would be set for lifting easements at larger parks, even Yellowstone or Grand Canyon. Despite winning in Federal District Court, the legal team for the Committee for Washington's Riverfront Parks decided not to pursue taking the case to the Supreme Court. The Committee for Washington's Riverfront Parks thus lost its case.<sup>16</sup>

Parsons later dismissed the arguments made by the Committee for Washington's Riverfront Parks, stating that the National Park Service did not have the money to buy the land and thus used the lifting of the height restriction easement to achieve their ultimate goals for a Georgetown Waterfront Park.<sup>17</sup> National Capital Regional Director Manus "Jack" Fish said at the time that the exchange for increased public access and parkland improvements was "very much in the public interest."<sup>18</sup> NPS secured the easements needed for public access through Washington Harbour, thus providing access to river- and-creek-front for the public. Satterthwaite later countered that giving up the height restriction easement was indicative of the National Park Service attitude. Giving up the height restriction allowed for greater development of the site and the loss of that land ownership from NPS. She believed that the location had some unique attributes, such as being at the widest part of the riverfront, and she believed that the public should control that space, not a private developer who granted access to the public through an easement.<sup>19</sup>

The Committee for Washington's Riverfront Parks was part of the eight hundred-member Citizens Association of Georgetown. This latter organization advocated for Georgetown beyond the waterfront park. Issues included zoning fights, unwanted intrusions in historic areas, and alcohol licenses for bars and restaurants along the congested commercial streets. The association worked to preserve Georgetown's village atmosphere. Powerful people made up some of the membership, including influential lawyers, bankers, and architects. The esteemed firm Arnold & Porter sometimes provided free legal advice and representation. Allies on Capitol Hill included one Senator who tried to get legislation passed to help the waterfront park cause. In contrast, Herbert Miller, owner of Western Development Company (predecessor to Washington

---

<sup>15</sup> NPS, Environmental Assessment: Washington Harbour, 42–44.

<sup>16</sup> Satterthwaite, transcript of interview, 4, 6. Ann Satterthwaite, transcript of interview with Catherine Habanananda, June 13, 2012, <http://www.cagtown.com/oral-history/satterthwaite-ann>, accessed November 6, 2017. LaBarbara Bowman, "Court Lifts Development Ban on Georgetown's Waterfront," *Washington Post*, November 14, 1981. Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 4, section "The Mouth of the Creek." On May 30, 1985, US District Court Judge Barrington D. Parker ruled that the Park Service had illegally alienated National Park System property by easing the terms of the covenant protecting the Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway. The developer and the Service filed an appeal, but the prosecution did not seek further action.

<sup>17</sup> Parsons, transcript of interview, 3–4. See also Mackintosh, *ROCR Admin History*, section "The Mouth of the Creek."

<sup>18</sup> Manus "Jack" Fish, as quoted by Mackintosh in *ROCR Admin History*, chapter 4, section, "The Mouth of the Creek."

<sup>19</sup> Satterthwaite, transcript of 2012 interview, 9.

Harbour Associates), was one of the citizen's association's members, though he split with the organization on the waterfront development issue.<sup>20</sup>

### Initial Design Plans

The high-end office space and condominiums would have looked down upon the crumbling asphalt and city trucks used for solid waste and leaf and snow removal. The developer gave the National Park Service one million dollars, as part of the larger agreement, to construct a temporary park with greenery for the building's inhabitants to look out upon. The agency worked with the District to find an alternative location for the trucks, eventually relocating them to the area by the 11th Street Bridge, where they remain.<sup>21</sup>

Next steps involved formal actions for proceeding. The National Capital Planning Commission defined the boundaries for Georgetown Waterfront Park on August 2, 1984. The District and the National Park Service entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) in October 1984 to formalize the intentions of both parties for Georgetown Waterfront Park. The District would transfer to the National Park Service about 10 acres of land between 31st Street NW, and about 150 feet west of Key Bridge, and K Street and the Potomac River. This land had been designated for highway purposes but was no longer needed. This Memorandum of Agreement also assigned existing leases to the National Park Service, with the understanding that any revenue from the leases would go to park development and maintenance. The leases were for a four hundred-car parking lot at the foot of Wisconsin Avenue, a proposed floating restaurant near Key Bridge, and a canoe rental business at Key Bridge. The DC city council in September 1985 reiterated the District's commitment to the National Park Service in transferring the ten acres to the National Park Service. Upon transfer of the ten acres of land from the District to the National Park Service, the agency agreed to start a public planning process for the park. The plans would be submitted to the National Capital Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts, steps required under federal law.<sup>22</sup>

The District did not immediately transfer the ten acres to the National Park Service. The agency, in cooperation with the District, began a public planning process. Georgetown Waterfront Park and C&O Canal shared physical and historical associations and many Canal-related issues needed resolution, and thus the planning process included the Canal from Foundry Branch to Rock Creek. An open house welcomed people all day on November 1, 1984, at Thompson Boat Center, and the National Park Service distributed a questionnaire to collect attendees' concerns and interests. Eighty-two people attended the open house, and a total of 151 questionnaires were submitted. The National Park Service compiled these responses in a slide show and presented it in another public meeting in December 1984 at National Capital Region headquarters. About one hundred people attended. The National Park Service also met with

---

<sup>20</sup> LaBarbara Bowman, "Power in Georgetown," *Washington Post*, October 28, 1981.

<sup>21</sup> Parsons, 4. National Capital Region (NCR) Regional Director Manus Fish to President Urban Division Western Development Company Thomas Regan, October 16, 1984, 1, File OLST-Cult Res-PTM: GTWF-Proposed Exchange of Land Interests 1984, Box 46, MRCE.

<sup>22</sup> NPS, The Georgetown Waterfront Park and C&O Canal NHP Plan, 1985, 1. Memorandum of Agreement Relating to the Transfer of Jurisdiction over Georgetown Waterfront Park from the District of Columbia to the National Park Service, October 17, 1984, 2, 4, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR. Council of the District of Columbia, Resolution 6-284, September 10, 1985, 3-4, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR. NCR NPS, Design Concept Plan for the Georgetown Waterfront Park and C&O Canal NHP (Georgetown Sector), 1986, no pagination (pp. 1-2), File OLST-Cult Res-OTM: Georgetown Waterfront Land Exchange 1986, Box 46, MRCE. NCR Regional Director Terry Carlstrom to Eleanor Holmes Norton, September 20, 1999, 1, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR.

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2E, Citizens Association of Georgetown, C&O Canal Historic Park Advisory Commission, and individuals.<sup>23</sup>

The 1985 draft plan, designed by an Alexandria, Virginia, landscape architecture firm, included several features for Georgetown Waterfront Park. Overall, the park would be passive, without any recreational facilities or parking. The National Park Service would create open lawn spaces using plantings and benches. The National Park Service would place a shoreline promenade along the length of the park, separating a bike path from pedestrian areas through landscape architectural treatments. Bulkhead treatments along the water's edge would add interest, such as steps, esplanades, walls, docks, and natural vegetated slopes. The plan made the intersection with Wisconsin Avenue a focal point. Plazas, fountains, lighting, sculpture, plantings, and a multi-use pavilion would be considerations. The plan recommended using extensive shade trees to hide Whitehurst Freeway as much as possible.<sup>24</sup>

Other features would address boating and bike riding. The park would retain Thompson Boat Center, without any expansion. However, the National Park Service identified a potential need for additional boathouses and thus recommended the study of two possible locations for two more boathouses. There would be limited docking space for visiting boats near 31st Street NW and Washington Harbour. The plan recommended creating a bike path along K Street NW but removing biking on the C&O Canal towpath on the west bank of Rock Creek.<sup>25</sup>

The National Park Service suggested further land acquisitions in the 1985 draft plan. The sites included waterfront offices, originally built as three-story townhouses. More offices were located in the icehouse, a building having no architectural or historic value. The icehouse offices did generate a fair amount of commercial traffic that opened onto the canal towpath. Icehouse demolition would complete the network of parkland surrounding Key Bridge and allow for a bicycle, pedestrian, and service linkage between the canal and the waterfront park. The National Park Service recommended obtaining an easement at the Canal bank site to restore the area to its historic condition and provide public access. Finally, the acquisition of a parking lot at Wisconsin Avenue would prevent future adverse development and provide for a landscaped public plaza.<sup>26</sup>

The National Capital Planning Commission approved the 1985 plan. The commission, however, deleted, pending further study, the docking of the USS *Williamsburg* at Georgetown Waterfront Park. This ship had been a US gunboat then turned into a one-time presidential yacht for President Harry Truman. Developers wanted to convert the ship into a posh restaurant, and the 1985 plan had included this idea. The 1987 plan removed this ship from the waterfront park.<sup>27</sup>

The District, prior to its agreement to transfer the ten acres to the National Park Service, had signed a thirty-five-year lease with a private firm, Clyde's restaurants, for a two hundred-seat floating restaurant and an eighty-six-car parking lot under the Whitehurst Freeway.

---

<sup>23</sup> NPS, The Georgetown Waterfront Park and C&O Canal NHP Plan, 1985, 1.

<sup>24</sup> NPS, The Georgetown Waterfront Park and C&O Canal NHP Plan, 1985, 2.

<sup>25</sup> NPS, The Georgetown Waterfront Park and C&O Canal NHP Plan, 1985, 2-3.

<sup>26</sup> NPS, The Georgetown Waterfront Park and C&O Canal NHP Plan, 1985, 3.

<sup>27</sup> Kenneth Bredemeier, "Panel Approves Georgetown Park," *Washington Post*, May 3, 1985. NPS, The Georgetown Waterfront Park and C&O Canal NHP Plan, 1987, TIC. LaBarbara Bowman and Peter Perl, "City Supports Georgetown Waterfront Building Plans," *Washington Post*, October 21, 1981.

According to the 1987 plan, the restaurant would be moored between 34th Street NW and Key Bridge.<sup>28</sup>

The 1987 plan, which National Capital Regional Director Manus “Jack” Fish signed in January 1987, included some new features. The National Park Service had conducted in 1985 an archeological testing program resulting in the uncovering of small prehistoric findings, early historic deposits, eighteenth-century cobblestone paving, and early-nineteenth-century building walls and flooring. The National Park Service modified the park landscape plan to avoid excavations into the archeological areas and awaited an assessment report to determine the significance of the findings. The agency also designed a three-panel wayside to educate visitors about the archeological discovery.<sup>29</sup>

The 1987 plan included other additions. The plan would provide for a bike and pedestrian path heading west from Georgetown Waterfront Park to the District line. The line would connect the Rock Creek path system to the District line and beyond. The 1987 plan would also preserve the natural conditions of the Palisades. The National Park Service would acquire scenic easements, particularly on the southern edge of the Georgetown University campus, to arrest any intrusive developments. The 1987 plan called for stabilizing and interpreting the C&O Canal’s historic aqueduct. In addition, the plan recommended a study to possibly remove the General Services Administration Coal and Ash House and the West Heating Plant. Both structures were industrial buildings, viewed by the National Park Service to be inappropriate in the rapidly evolving Georgetown setting. Plus, the lots promised an opportunity for more parklands, especially for C&O Canal.<sup>30</sup>

## Redesign

The National Park Service needed two important things before it could build Georgetown Waterfront Park: the transfer of the ten acres from the District to the National Park Service and money. In the case of the former, the District did not transfer the land until March 8, 1999. Initial delays came from technical requirements to survey the land. Then, the District explored how best to address the forty-year-old and crumbling Whitehurst Freeway. As the *Washington Post* reported, many people sought ways to remove and replace what they called an eyesore. Ideas included a tunneled expressway, a depressed roadway, a ground-level boulevard, or some combination of these alternatives. Some people, according to Parsons, even advocated for tearing down the freeway and directing commuters to the surface roads, which would likely have overwhelmed Georgetown. The District spent the next several years studying these possibilities and ultimately determined that costs forced the decision to rehabilitate the existing structure. Once the District completed this refurbishing work, totaling \$35 million, the city transferred the land to the National Park Service.<sup>31</sup>

Next, a lack of adequate funds delayed the building of Georgetown Waterfront Park.

---

<sup>28</sup> The sources do not indicate that the USS Williamsburg would be renovated to become the Clyde’s restaurant. Bredemeier, “Panel Approves Georgetown Park.” NPS, *The Georgetown Waterfront Park and C&O Canal NHP Plan*, 1987.

<sup>29</sup> NPS, *The Georgetown Waterfront Park and C&O Canal NHP Plan*, 1987.

<sup>30</sup> NPS, *The Georgetown Waterfront Park and C&O Canal NHP Plan*, 1987.

<sup>31</sup> Bredemeier, “Panel Approves Georgetown Park.” Forgey, “Vision of a Whitehurst Revamped.” Parsons, transcript of interview, 4–5. Linda Wheeler, “Georgetown Gets a Waterfront Park,” *Washington Post*, October 29, 2000. Petula Dvorak, “Hope for the Waterfront at Last? After Almost 30 Years, Georgetown Park Advocates Making Progress,” *Washington Post*, May 11, 2006. Steven Ginsberg, “District Trying to Topple the Whitehurst,” *Washington Post*, May 8, 2005.

Associate Regional Director of Planning John Parsons stated that Georgetown Waterfront Park existed from the agreement between the District and the National Capital Planning Commission. Congress did not establish the park. When Director Parsons went searching for the National Park Service money to design or build the park, agency officials responded that the area was not a park, and therefore they would not fund it. He then turned to private sources.<sup>32</sup>

Two successive Georgetown citizens organizations responded. In 1991, Max Berry and Ginger Laytham formed the Georgetown Waterfront Arts Commission to use cultural events to foster greater interest in and support for a waterfront park. The arts commission's work achieved its goals so successfully that it asked for a twenty-year lease from the District to turn a 1.5-acre city park into an arts venue with a Victorian-style bandstand. The group would also restore the city park and have permission to offer as many as twenty-four paid events each year. Berry argued in a public hearing that the National Park Service had not come through to fulfill its promised 1987 plan and so the arts commission offered the best possible and immediate chance of renovating the park. Many Georgetown residents opposed the arts proposal, worrying that the park would bring increased commercial traffic and dash hopes for a passive park on the Georgetown waterfront. Parsons stated at the hearing that the National Park Service did not in the "foreseeable future" have the funding to transform the waterfront.<sup>33</sup>

In 1994, Satterthwaite joined others to form the Georgetown Waterfront Park Commission to advocate for the Park. Retired Senator Charles Percy, a Georgetown resident, and Bill Cochran chaired the commission.<sup>34</sup> Satterthwaite later said that National Capital Region Director Robert Stanton encouraged her to form the commission, saying that, as Satterthwaite remembered, "I want to see something happen here."<sup>35</sup> The National Park Service was a joint partner. The group was a force. Senator Percy, with his political connections, proved quite helpful. The commission successfully raised \$3 million by 2003 and aimed for another \$9 million to construct the park, knowing that the National Park Service did not have funds. The National Park Service and the District strengthened their relationship.<sup>36</sup> The park became a physical reality, with the District transferring the ten acres to the National Park Service in 1999. Satterthwaite stated that "it wasn't easy." The commission also attended to the boathouses, wanting to make sure these were integrated into the design.<sup>37</sup>

Members of the Georgetown Waterfront Park Commission in 2005 established Friends of Georgetown Waterfront Park to continue advocacy for the park and complete the fundraising. Satterthwaite explained that the National Park Service had recognized that it could not be a partner for fundraising. The Friends group raised \$22 million between 2005 and 2012. Bob vom Eigen led this fundraising effort. The District was a significant donor, giving the project millions of dollars. Satterthwaite singled out Dan Tangherlini, who served as city administrator during Mayor Anthony Williams's term in office. She also noted that DC Councilman Jack Evans had proved important to the friends' fundraising. Mayor Adrian Fenty was another big supporter. Other people included Eleanor Holmes Norton, DC Delegate to Congress; Secretary of the

---

<sup>32</sup> Parsons, transcript of interview, 13.

<sup>33</sup> Steven Ginsberg, "Best Plan for Park in Dispute: Georgetown Arts Group, Some Residents at Odds," *Washington Post*, September 19, 1996.

<sup>34</sup> Friends of Georgetown Waterfront Park website, <https://georgetownwaterfrontpark.org/about-the-park/history-of-the-park/>, accessed November 8, 2017.

<sup>35</sup> Satterthwaite, transcript of 2012 interview, 10.

<sup>36</sup> Wheeler, "Georgetown Gets a Waterfront Park." Charles Percy, "Editorial: A Park along the River," *Washington Post*, March 1, 2003.

<sup>37</sup> Satterthwaite, transcript of 2017 interview, 5-6.

Interior Bruce Babbitt; and Rep. Tom Davis, who represented northern Virginia and valued the beautiful park for his constituents to look at over the Potomac River.<sup>38</sup>

On the other hand, Georgetown residents did not step up and give substantial amounts of money. Parsons stated that over the course of ten years, Georgetown gave perhaps \$1.5 million. Residents did not see value in the park and complained that they already paid federal government taxes.<sup>39</sup> Satterthwaite said that raising money for a Georgetown location complicated their efforts. The Georgetown connection gave their fundraising a “stigma” because people thought everyone was “loaded” and thus financially supported the park.<sup>40</sup>

The National Park Service had inherited a lease from the District for a four hundred-car parking lot that extended from 31st Street to Key Bridge. Parsons remembers that the lot generated \$2.5 million a year, with the National Park Service getting a percentage. This lucrative funding source, plus money raised by Friends of Georgetown Waterfront Park, allowed the National Park Service to construct Phase I of the park, which went from the west end near Key Bridge toward Wisconsin Avenue.<sup>41</sup>

Crucial funding in the end to complete the park came from the federal government. The 2008 Great Recession led Congress the following year to pass the stimulus package American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. One part of the Act provided matching grants for “shovel-ready projects,” those projects ready to immediately receive funding. The National Park Service had \$750 million to hand out to national park units for such shovel-ready projects, and the agency chose Georgetown Waterfront Park as one of the recipients. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act required that projects match the federal government grants with outside funds. The District came through, thanks to the intervention of Jack Evans, and provided \$3 million to match the NPS \$3 million grant. Parsons called the ARRA grant a “miracle,” and it ensured the completion of the project.<sup>42</sup>

During the fundraising, the National Park Service checked the public’s reaction to the 1987 design of the park. According to Parsons, when the National Park Service reminded people of this approved plan in 1999, people expressed lukewarm enthusiasm. Parsons described this reaction, saying that people saw the plan as “dull and boring” with just grass “and nothing going on.” In response, the agency hired Philadelphia landscape architecture firm WRT (Wallace Roberts & Todd).<sup>43</sup>

WRT hired artist Jody Pinto to join the team. Pinto has worked since the 1970s on projects that integrated art with architecture and landscape. She had collaborated previously with WRT on BIG (Beach Improvement Group Project) in Santa Monica, California. BIG involved redesigning and refurbishing South Beach and Palisades Park, adding such features as a beacon and planning beach restrooms whose shapes echoed the wings of a seagull hovering over the sand. For Georgetown Waterfront Park, Pinto proposed adding modern elements. She designed three cantilevered overlooks, each capped by a wind-filled sail on a fiberglass forty-five-foot

---

<sup>38</sup> Parsons, transcript of interview, 15. Satterthwaite, transcript of 2017 interview, 22–25. Satterthwaite, transcript of 2012 interview, 10–11.

<sup>39</sup> Parsons, transcript of interview, 13–14.

<sup>40</sup> Satterthwaite, transcript of 2017 interview, 25–26.

<sup>41</sup> Parsons, transcript of interview, 14.

<sup>42</sup> Parsons, transcript of interview, 14–15. See also Cindy Cox, transcript of oral history interview with the author, February 2, 2017, 22–23, ROCR Archives. Mike McMahon, transcript of oral history interview with the author, December 13, 2016, 10, ROCR Archives.

<sup>43</sup> Parsons, transcript of interview, 5–6. Quotes on p. 5.

mast, harkening back to Georgetown's early days as a commercial port. Pinto also conceived of two wave-like pergolas with illuminated roofs and seating.<sup>44</sup>

The plan took a low landscape profile so as not to compete with the spectacular views of the Potomac River. The pergolas and cantilevered overlooks instead framed those views. A staircase leading down to the river bank brought visitors to the edge of the water. An interactive fountain beside the river allowed people to play with the splashing water and accompanying lights. A labyrinth set further back gave visitors the opportunity to reflect upon the setting. The park's low profile also linked to other parts of DC, such as Key Bridge, Georgetown, and the Kennedy Center, thus carefully preserving the look and feel of the larger landscape and not overshadowing it. At the same time, the Kennedy Center was embarking upon its own efforts to bring the arts venue and Potomac River together in a sympathetic design.<sup>45</sup>

In public meetings, Some residents of Georgetown vociferously criticized the cantilevered overlooks and wave-like pergolas. According to Parsons, this group wanted to retain Georgetown's historic features, with its red brick and wrought iron benches. Another larger group, as related by Parsons, saw the value of a modern park, in step with the times. The Commission of Fine Arts (CFA), which by law reviewed such proposals, decided in favor of the traditionalists. The park lost its two striking modern elements, the sail overlooks and wavy pergolas.<sup>46</sup> Satterthwaite later said that the landscape firm and artist had misjudged many of the Georgetown residents. "They did not like the sails," she stated.<sup>47</sup> Satterthwaite, on the other hand, remarked that the design "fit in with the river and the waterfront" and that it was "appropriate," with places to sit and a little bit of shelter.<sup>48</sup>

WRT replaced the masts and sails with granite interpretive panels to emphasize the overlook areas. They were based upon historic photos held in collections of the National Park Service and the District. The photos were laser cut into the granite. Parsons noted that if the panels had stood straight up and down, they would have fared well. But WRT placed them at a thirty-degree angle, with the result being, according to Parsons, "a disaster unfortunately." The laser etchings started disappearing from the weather. Parsons hopes the National Park Service will remove them.<sup>49</sup> Satterthwaite wondered if maps enclosed in plastic and somehow affixed to the granite panels might solve the problem. But another issue, according to Satterthwaite, arose when skateboarders began using the panels for tricks and stunts.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Jody Pinto website,

[http://www.jodypinto.com/JodyPinto/Proposals/Pages/Georgetown\\_Waterfront\\_Park\\_.html#3](http://www.jodypinto.com/JodyPinto/Proposals/Pages/Georgetown_Waterfront_Park_.html#3), accessed November 8, 2017. City of Santa Monica website, <https://www.smgov.net/portals/culture/Content.aspx?id=20006>, accessed November 8, 2017. Georgetown Waterfront Park Campaign Committee, *The Final Jewel: Building the Georgetown Waterfront Park* (n.d., circa 2004), 10, TIC. Parsons, transcript of interview, 6.

<sup>45</sup> Georgetown Waterfront Park Campaign Committee, *Final Jewel*, 10, 15. Percy, "Editorial: A Park along the River,"

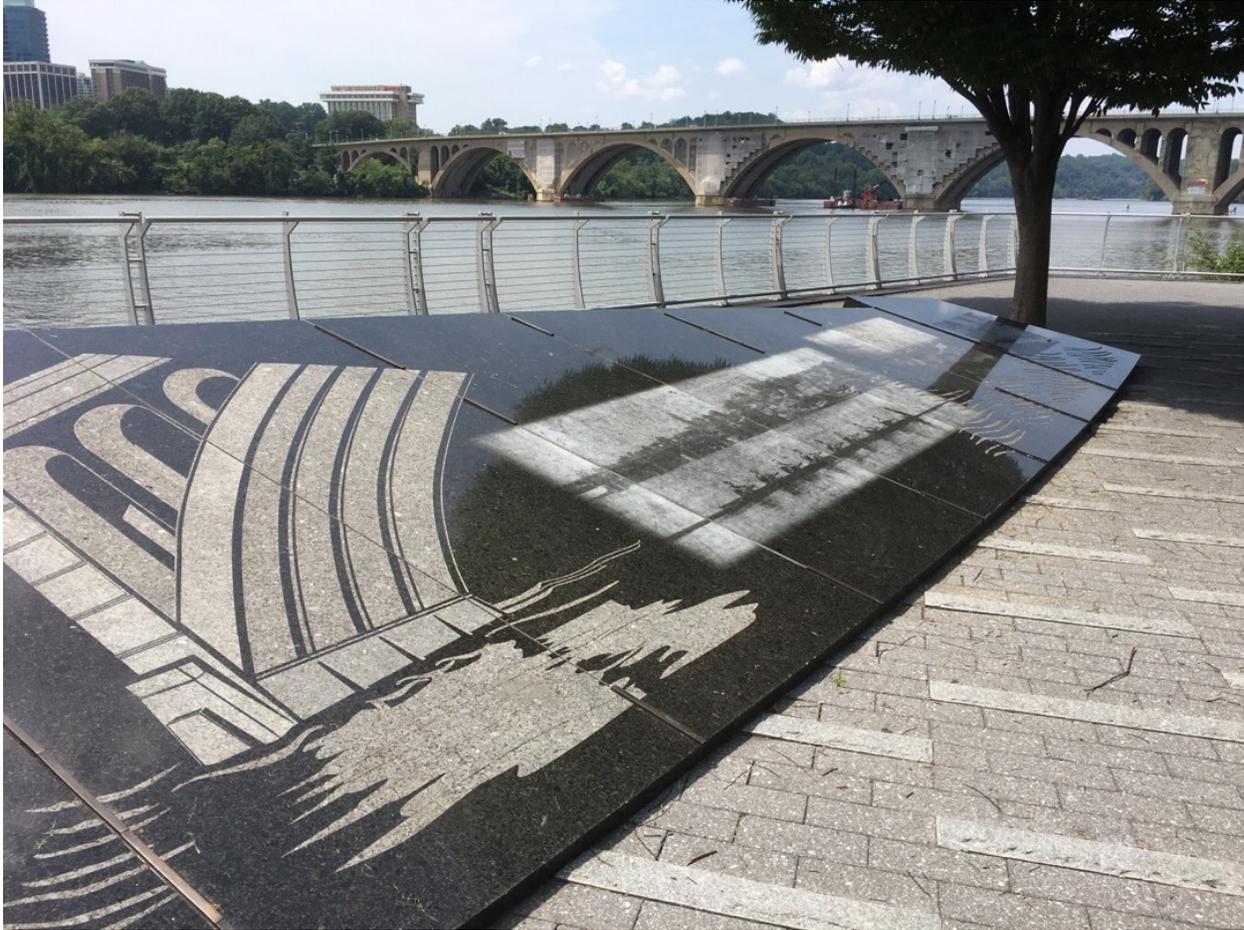
<sup>46</sup> Parsons, transcript of interview, 6–7. The author has not found any news articles about this public opposition, despite repeated searches in the *Washington Post* archives.

<sup>47</sup> Satterthwaite, transcript of 2017 interview, 18–19.

<sup>48</sup> Satterthwaite, transcript of 2012 interview, 19.

<sup>49</sup> Parsons, transcript of interview, 7.

<sup>50</sup> Satterthwaite, transcript of 2017 interview, 19. Satterthwaite, transcript of 2012 interview, 20.



*Figure 55. Granite Interpretive Panels at Georgetown Waterfront Park*  
NPS PHOTO, 2018

Initial design elements remained. Foremost, a fountain serves as a centerpiece, located at the foot of Wisconsin Avenue NW. The playful fountain attracts all ages during warm months and is lit at night for the enjoyment of after-dinner strollers. River steps, another common feature to the 1987 plan and WRT one, allow visitors to relax by the water's edge. Behind the steps is a steel and cable pergola, made of materials reminiscent of Georgetown's industrial past, with granite benches underneath. The vertical beams are angled away from the water, whereas Pinto's would have leaned toward the Potomac River. The as-built beams were shorter than Pinto's proposed forty-five-foot ones. The granite panels replaced the masts and sails originally intended for the overlooks. A larger overlook sits opposite the park's main entrance. A labyrinth made it into the final design. Walking a labyrinth, according to the plan, encouraged a meditative state. Children have also enjoyed walking the flat space and even riding their bikes along the structure's maze.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup> Georgetown Waterfront Park Campaign Committee, Final Jewel. Friends of Georgetown Waterfront Park, website, <https://georgetownwaterfrontpark.org/>, accessed November 9, 2017. Author observations at Georgetown Waterfront Park.



*Figure 56. The Fountain at Georgetown Waterfront Park*  
*PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR, USED WITH PERMISSION, 2017*



*Figure 57. The Labyrinth at Georgetown Waterfront Park*  
*PHOTO BY THE AUTHOR, USED WITH PERMISSION, 2017*



*Figure 58. River Steps at Georgetown Waterfront Park  
NPS PHOTO, 2011*

Both park designs emphasized environmentalism. Rain gardens are located at the intersection of the many paths crisscrossing the park. They are planted with native plants and serve multiple functions. They capture stormwater and rainwater, holding the water, letting it soak into the ground, and keeping the water from flowing into storm drains or across impervious surfaces. This process helps prevent water pollution, erosion, and flooding. The park also has a bio-edge where a crumbling piece of concrete remained from Georgetown's industrial era. Designers decided to bioengineer an alternative that would keep the soil from eroding and allow for a greener appearance than rebuilding the concrete bulkhead. A sheet pile wall at the water's edge keeps the soil in place. Then stepped gradations use a net-like form filled with soil to keep soil and native plants in place. These two green approaches to the park were included in both the proposed and final design. One addition is a stream gauge, which measures river height and provides scientific data for flood forecasting, tidal monitoring, stormwater management, and climate change studies. The US Geological Survey operates the Georgetown stream gauge, in cooperation with NPS and the US Army Corps of Engineers.<sup>52</sup>

Bike paths were an important feature of the original and final park design. Planners intended to have the park's bike path connect to the Capital Crescent Trail (an eleven-mile scenic trail running between Georgetown and Silver Spring, Maryland), Rock Creek Park, and the C&O

---

<sup>52</sup> Georgetown Waterfront Park Campaign Committee, Final Jewel. Friends of Georgetown Waterfront Park, website, <https://georgetownwaterfrontpark.org/>, accessed November 9, 2017.

Canal towpath. Parsons remarked later that pedestrians use the path and cyclists therefore avoid it. The District put a bike path along K Street, an idea that Parsons called unfortunate. The path would end up at a parking lot at Washington Harbour. The National Park Service has studied this idea, recommending taking out the parking lot and making that a dedicated bike path. Studies continue at the time of this writing.<sup>53</sup>

## Obstacles

Several obstacles shaped the construction and final appearance of Georgetown Waterfront Park. These obstacles also slowed down construction for redesign and required additional funding. One significant factor was the previous usage of the site. Georgetown's waterfront had been an industrial zone, going back to its time as an important port in the tobacco and slave trades. Warehouses dotted the waterfront area to store tobacco and allow for its inspection. Various milling buildings started appearing by the end of the eighteenth century. The C&O Canal, which began operations in 1831, brought grain directly to these mills. Slowly, during the first half of the nineteenth century, the ports in Alexandria, Virginia, and Baltimore, Maryland, drew business away from Georgetown, though the latter still maintained a robust tobacco trade. By 1850, the tobacco business gave way to more mills, flour, grist, and cotton. A soap factory, the Godey lime kilns, and an iron foundry joined the mills. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Georgetown became an unloading site for coal barges. Elevated railways transferred coal from the barges to waiting vessels.<sup>54</sup>

By 1890, the Georgetown waterfront no longer served as a competitive shipping port, but its subsequent uses also influenced Georgetown Waterfront Park's construction. The massive Capital Traction Company Powerhouse, a brick structure built in 1911, housed the twelve boilers that operated the five turbo-generators to produce 18,500 kilowatts of electrical power. The building sent this power to substations throughout the District. The imposing building only provided power for twenty-three years, and then a streetcar merger led to the power plant's closure. The new company, Capital Transit, relied upon conventional electric power. Capital Transit decommissioned the closed power plant in 1944, and the building was demolished in 1968. Other buildings constructed in the waterfront area in the early twentieth century included large ice houses for the American Ice Company and the Brennan Construction Company's buildings, where the company produced materials in Georgetown for construction projects throughout the city.<sup>55</sup>

When the National Park Service and its construction contractors began digging for Georgetown Waterfront Park, especially for Phase II, they found the archeological remains of these once-standing buildings. Mike McMahon, who served as Rock Creek Park's landscape architect, recalled that wherever they started digging, they dug into something, such as "old foundations or buried tanks," reminding people that the waterfront area had been a heavily used

---

<sup>53</sup> Parsons, transcript of interview, 7–8.

<sup>54</sup> Werner, Georgetown Historic Waterfront, 13, 15, 19–20, 4, 43–44, 49.

<sup>55</sup> Technological changes in railroads led to the decline of the C&O Canal. Coal reserves were being exhausted, thus reducing a major business for the Canal. Georgetown waterfront, which had thrived with the Canal, did not have alternative sources to support the port. Werner, Georgetown Historic Waterfront, 44, 49, 75, 78–79. HABS, Capital Traction Company and Powerhouse, HABS DC-145, 1, 8, <http://cdn.loc.gov/master/pnp/habshaer/dc/dc0000/dc0047/data/dc0047data.pdf>, accessed November 21, 2017. "On the Waterfront: Capital Traction Company Powerhouse," *The Georgetown Metropolitan*, August 4, 2010, <https://georgetownmetropolitan.com/2010/08/04/on-the-waterfront-capital-traction-company-powerhouse/>, accessed November 21, 2017.

industrial area over time. The tanks had held petroleum products. McMahon admitted that he would not go into some areas without proper equipment and certainly not touch some soils with his bare hands. The National Park Service's contractors removed the contaminated soils.<sup>56</sup>

Building foundations also proved effective as obstacles. National Park Service contractors hit the remains of the Capital Traction Company Powerhouse when trying to site the park's fountain. A 1968 demolition company had let the building's five-foot-thick walls tumble into the basement cavity, likely due to the expense and effort of trying to remove the heavy debris. The National Park Service could not afford removal, but the Powerhouse's foundation blocked the laying of pipes and vaults for the fountain. The agency had to redesign this underground network to make the fountain work. The plaza now sits on top of the Powerhouse ruins.<sup>57</sup>

The old warehouse buildings also proved an obstacle. McMahon stated that though the buildings were gone, their foundations still got in the way of future construction. Originally, Georgetown Waterfront Park's design had flat, grassy spaces. But the foundations did not allow for this terrain. McMahon responded by creating mounds; he used the mounds to suggest a naturalistic appearance that flowed, "a change in topography," McMahon said, "up and over and down to walkways and slowly down to the river."<sup>58</sup>

These obstacles raised the funding requirements and pushed back the timeline. McMahon noted that the National Park Service had to halt construction of Phase II of the project, which included the expensive fountain, due to lack of funds. The Centennial Challenge, which matched funds raised by the community, made a crucial difference. During the first phase, which focused on the western part of the park, the National Park Service ran into a situation with the bio-edge. As the contractor started putting the bio-edge into place, the agency and the contractor realized that they needed more professional guidance. The bio-edge required specialized knowledge. They hired Robin Sentera, the expert on such work. But the agency had to take some park features away to pay for Sentera's time. They cut out the native perennial beds, which were supposed to run from the Potomac through 33rd Street, and replaced them with turf. The Friends of Georgetown Waterfront Park slowly paid for the installation of these gardens, raising money for the 50th anniversary of the Beautification Act (2015) and for the 125th anniversary of Rock Creek Park (2015) and the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service (2016).<sup>59</sup>

One additional obstacle involved the relatively late appearance of Rock Creek Park in the park's development. The National Capital Region Planning Division, led by John Parsons and his deputy Sally Blumenthal, had taken the lead for Georgetown Waterfront Park. Parsons recalled that the region had supported the fundraising, coordinating and partnering with the friends group.<sup>60</sup> Former Rock Creek Park deputy superintendent Cindy Cox characterized the NCR Planning Office as considering Georgetown Waterfront Park a "statement park," similar to the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial. They had hired a famous landscape architectural firm as the designer and were taking the side of this firm, in the opinion of Cox, over the objections

---

<sup>56</sup> McMahon, transcript of interview, 9. PMIS-137484C, Project Funding Component, Georgetown Waterfront Park, Phase II, April 5, 2010, 8, Unprocessed Admin Files, ROCR.

<sup>57</sup> McMahon, transcript of interview, 9. "On the Waterfront: Capital Traction Company Powerhouse." PMIS-137484, April 5, 2010, 8. Satterthwaite, transcript of 2017 interview, 7. Phillip Lucas, "Construction Restarts on Park in Georgetown: Concrete and Electrical Obstacles Had Arisen at Waterfront Site," *Washington Post*, August 6, 2010.

<sup>58</sup> McMahon, transcript of interview, 9–10, 12–13. Quote on p. 13.

<sup>59</sup> McMahon, transcript of interview, 16–18. Cox, transcript of interview, 22. PMIS-137484, April 5, 2010, 8, 11.

<sup>60</sup> Parsons, transcript of interview, 20.

raised by Rock Creek Park.<sup>61</sup> C&O Canal initially served as the park's administrative home. But Rock Creek Park eventually replaced the Canal, in part because Rock Creek Park had a more horticultural experience, in contrast to the Canal, which had the towpath and trees. By the time Rock Creek Park entered the scene, however, design plans had progressed to the 50 or 75 percent stage.<sup>62</sup>

Rock Creek Park staff identified critical concerns with the design, especially with the plantings. The trees proposed by the landscape architecture firm WRT had fine leaves that would pose significant maintenance challenges since they could get into the fountain's waterworks and clog up the piping. The trees also required regular pruning and watering because they weren't native. In McMahon's view, these proposed honey locusts had been popular in mall parking lots in the 1980s, and he did not want Georgetown Waterfront Park to look like a mall parking lot. The National Park Service had also embraced native plantings by the time of Rock Creek Park's involvement, and so McMahon had the design switched to Black Gum trees, a native with brilliant red foliage in the fall.<sup>63</sup>

## Openings

The National Park Service built Georgetown Waterfront Park in two phases. Parsons stated that the agency built the first section, from 34th Street NW to Wisconsin Avenue NW, in part because existing funds could cover that cost and in part because he and others believed that a completed section would drive additional fundraising. That effort was needed to cover the big expensive projects in the second section, including the fountain, the pergola, and the stairs going down to the waterfront. Phase I opened in October 2008. Phase II, which went from Wisconsin Avenue to 31st Street NW, opened in September 2011. Georgetown Waterfront Park completed a 225-mile necklace of parkland along the Potomac River between Cumberland, Maryland, and Mount Vernon in Virginia.<sup>64</sup> Satterthwaite said later that she felt "great joy" in seeing the park she and others had worked so hard to complete.<sup>65</sup>

Parsons recalled that the Phase II opening was delayed due to concern about wheelchairs at the fountain. The National Park Service accessibility person pointed out that wheelchairs could get stuck in the runnels of the fountain. These runnels channeled water back down to the underground system that processed the water and then recirculated it through the fountain. The accessibility manager would not sign off on this second section of the park, arguing that a wheelchair might get its wheels stuck in the grooves, which could potentially drown someone. Parsons noted that some people expressed skepticism over this seemingly highly unlikely scenario, but the park could not open without making the change. However, Parsons knew that the funding was maxed out. They could not redesign the system by removing the granite and finding another way to address the concern. Instead, the agency placed rubber mats over the

---

<sup>61</sup> Cox, transcript of interview, 27, 30–31. Quote on p. 27.

<sup>62</sup> Parsons, transcript of interview, 20–21. Cox, transcript of interview, 30–31.

<sup>63</sup> McMahon, transcript of interview, 13–14. Cox, transcript of interview, 23–24. McMahon used changed orders to make the change in plantings since WRT proved resistant to changing the design plans.

<sup>64</sup> Friends of Georgetown Waterfront Park, website, History of the Park, <https://georgetownwaterfrontpark.org/about-the-park/history-of-the-park/>, accessed November 24, 2017. Parsons, transcript of interview, 13. Michael E. Ruane, "Georgetown Parking Lot Get New Life as Waterfront Park," *Washington Post*, October 16, 2008. Lauren Sauser, "Georgetown Waterfront Park Open at Last," *Patch*, September 14, 2011, <https://patch.com/district-columbia/georgetown/georgetown-waterfront-park-open-at-last>, accessed November 24, 2017.

<sup>65</sup> Satterthwaite, transcript of 2017 interview, 26.

granite to cover the grooves. The drainage system could still work, but on top, wheelchairs would not get caught. Parsons called this a temporary arrangement, and NPS fixed the runnels in 2019.<sup>66</sup>

Georgetown Waterfront Park offers a variety of ways to connect and enjoy its features. The fountain has attracted special attention. Satterthwaite expressed the surprise of many of those involved in the design and fundraising efforts that people come from far away with bathing suits and towels to play in the fountain. Children have turned it into a playground, though adults also enjoy cooling themselves on warm summer days. Lights make the fountain an attractive nighttime destination. Other uses include yoga and film screenings. Bicyclists have a dedicated trail, adjacent to K and Water Street NW, along the north edge of the park. Relaxation is encouraged with a variety of seats and grassy areas. Nature walks along the many paved paths pass the native trees and shrubs, plus the rain gardens, full of native plants. Different views of the Potomac River and Key Bridge connect visitors to the area's waterfront past. The stadium-style seats going down to the water provide excellent views of rowing regattas.<sup>67</sup>

Georgetown Waterfront Park has accommodated bicycling with mixed success. Cyclists can take the Capital Crescent Trail eleven miles from the west end of the park to Silver Spring. At the eastern edge of the park, cyclists can head further into the District. The National Park Service found, however, that when cyclists came off the Capital Crescent Trail, they ran into cars on Water Street. Many of those car drivers want to get on the Whitehurst Freeway above them. Their confused GPS systems had them below their intended road, and these drivers were frustrated and driving fast, making for a dangerous situation. The National Park Service put up barriers to create a no-car zone. Parsons noted that cyclists still won't use the car-free lanes because pedestrians also use them. Instead, the National Park Service is working with the District Department of Transportation (DDOT), which owns the right-of-way, to designate separate pieces for bikes and cars. The National Park Service and the District transportation department are coordinating their action through the nonmotorized boathouse study, described as follows.<sup>68</sup>

## Boathouses

The 1987 approved Master Plan for Georgetown Waterfront Park included the establishment of a nonmotorized boathouse zone (NMBZ) to meet the considerable unmet demand for facilities for nonmotorized boats, including canoes, kayaks, and rowing shells. The recommended location for the nonmotorized boathouse zone would extend west 1,100 feet from Key Bridge, stopping at the Palisades to protect its natural look. From Key Bridge, the nonmotorized boathouse zone would extend east to 34th Street NW. This area, encompassing land and water, included two private operations, the Washington Canoe Club and the Potomac Boat Club. The nonmotorized boathouse zone as designated extends 80 to 100 feet from the shoreline, has 1,500 feet of river frontage, and totals 126,753 square feet. Thompson Boat Center

---

<sup>66</sup> Parsons, transcript of interview, 12–13.

<sup>67</sup> Satterthwaite, transcript of 2017 interview, 26. Friends of Georgetown Waterfront Park, Fountain Splashing, <https://georgetownwaterfrontpark.org/things-to-do/fountain-splashing/>; Cycling, <https://georgetownwaterfrontpark.org/things-to-do/cycling/>; Nature Walks; Visiting the Park, <https://georgetownwaterfrontpark.org/about-the-park/visiting-the-park/>, accessed November 24, 2017. Urban Parkland, A Profile of Urban Parks, Georgetown Waterfront Park, <http://www.urbanparkland.com/georgetown-waterfront-park---washington-dc.html>, accessed November 24, 2017.

<sup>68</sup> Tammy Stidham, transcript of oral history interview with the author, August 4, 2017, 16, ROCR Archives. Parsons, transcript of interview, 7–8.

is located further east at 29th Street NW, thus lying outside the zone, and the 1987 plan intended to keep the boat center at its same size but to explore enhancing its appearance.<sup>69</sup>

During this same period, the National Park Service completed two studies. A 1985 survey examined the demand for nonmotorized boating on the Potomac, analyzed trends, identified where different users clashed, and discussed each nonmotorized boating activity with the associated boat rentals and storage issues. The survey concluded that there was a high and growing interest in nonmotorized boating and that competitive and recreational users needed more storage space for their boats. The study estimated the need for 25 to 30 more spaces for large rowing shells and 150 to 200 spaces for individually owned boats to keep up with 1985 demand.<sup>70</sup>

A 1989 study found that rowing interest had doubled in the five years since the 1985 survey, especially for the scholastic and university rowing communities. The 1989 study suggested four possible locations for boathouses. A small 4,000-square-foot boathouse would potentially sit west of the Washington Canoe Club. Dempsey's Boathouse site, adjacent to the Alexandria Aqueduct, would offer the possibility of a larger 7,000-square-foot boathouse. An even larger 10,000-square-foot boathouse would sit potentially on the current location of the Key Bridge Boathouse, assuming demolition of three townhouses. Finally, at the proposed site for a floating restaurant, boathouse facilities would possibly go in the Icehouse, a warehouse on the north side of Water Street NW. A 2000 study dropped the Icehouse boathouse site due to concerns for rowers, who would have to cross Water Street carrying their boats and walk through the parking lot for the proposed floating restaurant.<sup>71</sup>

Starting in 1995, the National Park Service and Georgetown University explored the possibility of a land exchange. This exchange would provide the university with a site west of the Washington Canoe Club for a rowing facility while the National Park Service would obtain a Georgetown University-owned two-acre undeveloped parcel upstream of the nonmotorized boathouse zone. Georgetown University would also relinquish its right-of-way along the Capital Crescent Trail. In 1997, the National Park Service signed a Memorandum of Agreement that established architectural requirements and the approval process. A 2006 Environmental Assessment (EA) looked at the impacts of the proposed Georgetown University boathouse. The National Park Service received several thousand negative comments on the EA and decided to undertake an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The agency engaged focus groups and determined the need for a study of a broad range of facilities and uses within the nonmotorized boathouse zone. NPS did not publish the 2008 Environmental Impact Statement.<sup>72</sup>

Friends of Georgetown Waterfront Park had long wanted to marry the park to the boathouses. The steps going down to the waterfront were meant for people to watch regattas and other boat activity. The organization had a separate boathouse committee to engage the National Park Service and others during the planning process. As Ann Satterthwaite complained, the Friends found the slow progress trying. More importantly, Satterthwaite argued that the agency needed to do something with Thompson Boat Center. The boathouse was falling apart, in her opinion, and could not accommodate the number of boats needed to meet demand. The Friends

---

<sup>69</sup> NPS, Georgetown Waterfront Park, 1987 Master Plan. NPS, Feasibility Study for the Nonmotorized Boathouse Zone (NMBZ), 2013, 7.

<sup>70</sup> NPS, Feasibility Study for NMBZ, 3.

<sup>71</sup> NPS, Feasibility Study for NMBZ, 3.

<sup>72</sup> NPS, Feasibility Study for NMBZ, 3–5.

wanted to get the universities out of Thompson Boat Center to make room for the high schools and private individuals.

Georgetown University failed to gauge its audience when designing its proposed facility. According to Satterthwaite, some people thought the building was too grand and meant for parties, with its proposed great room with a fireplace and twenty-four-foot ceiling. Plus, some people thought the proposed peak roof was too high and obstructed views of the Potomac River.<sup>73</sup> David Nakamura, in a *Washington Post* article, quoted Larry Schuette, a member of the Washington Canoe Club, saying that the proposed Georgetown University boathouse “is ridiculously tall. It is grotesque in terms of its size.” He did not think the building, which would stand just one hundred feet from the canoe club, was “aesthetically valid.”<sup>74</sup>

The C&O Canal National Historical Park Advisory Commission also raised objections. The commission expressed concern over the size and height of the proposed Georgetown University boathouse. The commission argued that C&O Canal should not have recreation of this type within its boundaries. The nonmotorized boathouse zone would be within C&O Canal’s jurisdiction.<sup>75</sup>

The boathouse project stalled in the face of these significant comments. Finally, NCR Associate Regional Director Peter May assigned planner Tammy Stidham with the project. She started over, saying that public perception had considered the National Park Service and Georgetown University making “backdoor deals.”<sup>76</sup> Environmental groups had also objected to bulldozing what they thought was natural land.<sup>77</sup> Stidham pointed out the land in question had already been cleared in the recent past and was covered in exotics, thus decreasing its environmental value. The environmental groups worried about the Georgetown University plan to extend a pier seventy feet into the Potomac River, taking public land and turning it into private land and building on a flood plain. They also raised concerns about the chlorinated rowing tanks that might leak.<sup>78</sup>

The larger issue, though, as Stidham later stated, was that everyone was angry and holding “misconceptions and all this bad feeling.”<sup>79</sup> Some members of the public attacked Parsons. He later said that “I was being accused of being on the Georgetown University payroll.” Parsons said that in reaction to the controversy, NCR Regional Director Joe Lawler decided to stop the whole project.<sup>80</sup>

With her new assignment, Stidham led a three-year feasibility study. She held workshops and focus groups with different users. Stidham and the National Park Service “met with everybody and anybody who ever wanted to tell us anything,” all with the intention to be “very, very transparent about all of our conversations.” According to Stidham, the resulting 2013 Nonmotorized Boathouse Zone Feasibility Study “mended all the fences, and it changed some of our thinking.” The National Park Service rethought where boathouses should and should not be. The agency then undertook an Environmental Assessment, and Stidham characterized this step

---

<sup>73</sup> Satterthwaite, transcript of 2017 interview, 9–12. Frederick I. Mopsick, “A Boathouse Plan That Should Be Scuttled,” *Washington Post*, July 13, 2003.

<sup>74</sup> David Nakamura, “Boathouse Plan Faces Rising Tide; \$15 Million GU Facility Denounced by Environmentalists, Others,” *Washington Post*, May 14, 2003.

<sup>75</sup> Mopsick, “A Boathouse Plan.” Parsons, transcript of interview, 17.

<sup>76</sup> Stidham, transcript of interview, 13.

<sup>77</sup> Mopsick, “A Boathouse Plan.” Nakamura, “Boathouse Plan Faces.”

<sup>78</sup> Nakamura, “Boathouse Plan Faces.”

<sup>79</sup> Stidham, transcript of interview, 13.

<sup>80</sup> Parsons, transcript of interview, 16–17. Quote on p. 16.

as “not contentious. It was smooth sailing the whole way.” Stidham thought that they ended up with a plan that “everyone feels was the right fit for Georgetown.”<sup>81</sup>

Satterthwaite, along with Bob vom Eigen, both leaders of the Friends of Georgetown Waterfront Park, argued otherwise. According to Satterthwaite, the nonmotorized boathouse zone needed to include Thompson Boat Center. She “found it shocking” that the National Park Service took Thompson Boat Center out of the study, even though the majority of nonmotorized boats currently came out of Thompson Boat Center. She described Thompson Boat Center as falling apart, sinking, and in very bad shape overall.<sup>82</sup>

As of 2017, Thompson Boat Center remained in its same fragile state. Stidham agreed that it was falling apart. The area around the boathouse was included in the 2019 Georgetown Canal Plan Environmental Assessment, but no changes to the structure itself were anticipated under the study. The National Park Service is monitoring the structure’s stability and actively examining options for rehabilitating or reconstructing the boat center’s sea wall. Parsons notes that there was essentially no room to expand Thompson Boat Center and that a second story would not be feasible. The National Park Service could perhaps add a new bay, but then the building would run into the C&O Canal tide lock, which protected Rock Creek from the tide. Even tearing down the building and putting up a new one would have the same size restrictions.<sup>83</sup>

## Conclusion

Georgetown Waterfront Park encompasses some of the characteristics found in other units administered by Rock Creek Park, thus making this new addition to its jurisdiction appropriate. The Old Stone House, also in Georgetown, is a physical reminder of the neighborhood’s eighteenth- to twentieth-century past—especially its commerce. Rock Creek Park proper contains Peirce Mill, which operated during the same era as the Georgetown waterfront mills. Rock Creek serviced many mills along its length in the District. Meridian Hill Park and Georgetown Waterfront Park reflect the park design concepts of their times. Meridian Hill Park drew upon the grand urban park designs of historic European capitals, while Georgetown Waterfront Park reflects early twenty-first-century landscape architectural trends. Both parks took many years to complete, have central water features, and are well-visited.

An environmental focus also connects Georgetown Waterfront Park to Rock Creek Park. Georgetown Waterfront Park’s rain gardens soak up water during storms to address stormwater management, a significant concern of Rock Creek Park managers. They have worked to reduce stormwater in cooperation with the District. Rock Creek Park managers have had stormwater management structures built along Beach Drive NW. Rock Creek Park, with the Dumbarton Oaks Conservancy, has also sought ways to reduce stormwater and its negative effects on Georgetown’s Dumbarton Oaks Park.

Perhaps most importantly, Georgetown Waterfront Park provides a public setting for people to interact with nature, the urban environment, and their inner selves, just as Rock Creek Park and many of its units do. In Georgetown Waterfront Park, visitors can sit on the grassy, gently sloping mounds and look out onto the Potomac River. They can take advantage of the park’s proximity to enjoy yoga classes, movies, or art installations. People can walk the labyrinth in a contemplative state or enthusiastically run through the fountain. Rock Creek Park proper

---

<sup>81</sup> Stidham, transcript of interview, 13.

<sup>82</sup> Satterthwaite, transcript of 2017 interview, 9–12, 27, 30. Quote on p. 30.

<sup>83</sup> Stidham, transcript of interview, 15. Parsons, transcript of interview, 18.

gives people miles of foot and horse trails to explore the natural setting of trees, rocks, and water. Commuters in cars and on bicycles use the vital road network to commute to their workplaces in the District. Anyone can take the time to breathe in the tranquility of the forest, providing dappled shade on sunny days. Rock Creek Park, the park proper and its administrative units, sits in a metropolitan region that is home to more than six million people who need and enjoy the full range of experiences available in places like Georgetown Waterfront Park.



## Conclusion

Melanie Choukas-Bradley, a naturalist and speaker, described the value of Rock Creek Park's Reservation 339, citing that "you just have such a sense of peace" when you are surrounded by natural beauty. "Your heart rate slows down, your racing mind slows down, and you just feel a part of nature, and it's very restorative." She marveled that she could live in this major world capital and have "this wild forest, this stream valley park" in her backyard. Choukas-Bradley referred to the park as "a gift that goes on giving." On more than one occasion when she visited the park, she overheard "really intense conversations, and people discussing policy," and she conveyed that the park was a great place "to bring your conversations." They might be personal or related to important world affairs. "It all goes on here in the park," she said. The park "keeps me sane," she concluded. "Personally, it's my salvation. I consider it my wild home."<sup>1</sup>

Rock Creek Park and its ninety-nine administrative units serve the urban population of the Washington, DC, metropolitan area. Its natural resources provide respite. Its open spaces offer recreational outlets. Its cultural resources preserve touchstones to the past. Visitors benefit from interpretive programming. Commuters have scenic roads and bridges to drive and bike on. People can enjoy musical performances and more.

Park managers have had their share of challenges in trying to meet community needs and expectations. Limited stormwater management, with overflowing sewers and flooding, has wreaked havoc on water quality. At times, crime, vandalism, and graffiti have damaged resources and put visitor safety at risk. An overpopulation of white-tailed deer and the spread of invasive vegetation have threatened park landscapes and native species. Funding deficits have compelled park managers to defer maintenance or reduce treatments, leading to further problems. Complicated relationships with District agencies and the federal government, especially Congress, have made political savviness a key requirement for Rock Creek Park managers. Multiple friends groups have immeasurably helped the park preserve and interpret important resources. Park managers have had to juggle the interests and influence these separate groups, keeping in mind the park's goals.

In 2015, Rock Creek Park celebrated its 125th anniversary. For Rock Creek Park Day that September, park staff members offered open-air programs with nature-poetry readings and water-wise gardening; activities including a rock-climbing wall, arts and crafts, pony rides, roller-skating lessons, a golf clinic, gardening tips, and mushroom identification; and booths from partners such as the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Washington Area Biking Association, the National Park Service Bee-You-Tee-Full Pollinators, and the Rock Creek Conservancy. Rangers gave guided hikes, and the Nature Center held programs in the auditorium. REI sponsored outdoor skills classes.<sup>2</sup>

The anniversary prompted the Rock Creek Conservancy friends group to pursue special activities. The organization completed a green paper, "Revitalizing Rock Creek Park: The Next 125 Years," to assess the state of the park and recommend future actions. Rock Creek Conservancy also hosted a big fundraising gala, with such important attendees as scientist E. O.

---

<sup>1</sup> Melanie Choukas-Bradley, transcript of oral history interview with the author, April 10, 2017, 3–4, Rock Creek Park (ROCR) Archives.

<sup>2</sup> Chuck Baldwin, "Rock Creek Park's 125th Birthday Party, Sept. 27," *The Georgetown* (October 15, 2015), <https://georgetown.com/articles/2015/10/15/rock-creek-parks-125th-birthday-party-sept-27/>, accessed February 7, 2021.

Wilson, to raise the park's visibility while also raising funds for important projects. The combination of both park and friends groups activities at the anniversary celebration spotlighted Rock Creek Park and reminded visitors and residents of its significance to the metropolitan area and nation—a legacy that will continue for years and generations to come.

## Research Recommendations

Research is sometimes a never-ending pursuit, and for this project, at times the author made decisions to follow one lead versus another due to time constraints or ease of access. The following list of research recommendations suggests additional avenues that may fill in any questions raised while reading this administrative history.

1. The reality that records retention has and likely will continue to lose email correspondence and other electronic documents means that Rock Creek Park should pursue an active oral history program. Park staff or outside consultants should conduct exit interviews of significant park managers, including the superintendent and division officers.
2. Rock Creek Park has boxes of unorganized documents in the Klinge Mansion attic and at Battleground National Cemetery's Lodge. These files should be reviewed and incorporated into the already-processed records at the Museum Resource Center. They contain a wide range of topics that can further illuminate management decisions.
3. The District has had an evolving political structure that has shaped how it and Rock Creek Park managers have interacted. Congressional oversight, Home Rule, and the possibility of an independent government make it difficult to know exactly where the District has authority. The National Park Service and the District have changed who maintains the picnic groves and who manages special-use permits, as an example. Research in District government files, along with oral histories, might help shed more light on this topic.
4. Rock Creek Park and the District Department of Transportation have shared responsibility for maintaining roads and bridges that travel through Reservation 339. Oral histories and review of District government documents could help determine exact jurisdiction and authority for maintaining these transportation routes. This information could help Rock Creek Park managers plan for future work.
5. This administrative history focused upon what the author determined were the key issues park managers have addressed, ending with the park's 125th anniversary in 2015. The author did not discuss all ninety-nine administrative units, especially not the traffic circles or parklets. One reason for this absence is that the author did not find records that might have indicated important issues, nor did the author hear of any issues related to these sites during oral history interviews. If key issues are related to these unexamined locations, then oral histories and document research need to be completed.
6. Except in a few cases, this administrative history did not have access to records related to Rock Creek Park units that had previously been administrated non-Rock Creek Park units. Information about Battleground National Cemetery under the War Department or Meridian Hill Park under National Capital Parks—East (and other configurations under the National Capital Region) would help fill in gaps in these stories. Archives II or the Federal Records Center might have these records.
7. During the research for this project, online access to the *Washington Post* changed from a paywall to no access at all for independent scholars. This situation made it difficult to ensure coverage of key topics. Researchers with government or university access may want to check this newspaper archive to fill any gaps.



**APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A**  
**A Timeline of Major Events at Rock Creek Park**

1829	Peirce Mill built
1864	Battle of Fort Stevens
1864	Battleground National Cemetery established
1890	Rock Creek Park established
1898	City highway map included a road called the Fort Drive
1902	McMillan Plan
1906–34	Tea house at Peirce Mill
1911	Montrose Park established
1918	Olmsted Brothers Rock Creek Plan
1919	Washington Board of Trade of the District of Columbia adopted a resolution calling for Congress to acquire tracts of land for a Fort Drive
1921	Beatrix Farrand designs the Blissess's gardens and grounds of their Georgetown home
1925	National Capital Parks Commission established
1926	National Capital Park and Planning Commission established
1930	Capper-Cramton Act of 1930
1933	Executive Order giving management authority of federally owned parkland in the District to NPS
1933	Glover-Archbold Park established
1936	Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway completed
1936	Meridian Hill Park formally opened
1937	Restored Peirce Mill opened to the public
1938	Fort Stevens reconstruction completed
1940	Blissess donate Dumbarton Oaks Park to NPS
1950	Carter Barron Amphitheater opened
1953	NPS acquire Old Stone House
1955	Washington Area Tennis Patrons Foundation established
1956	Klinge Mansion Nature Center opened
1956	National Capital Park and Planning Commission (NCPPC) released a report by urban planner Harland Bartholomew that laid out a proposed overall highway plan for the District
1960	Restored Old Stone House open to the public
1960	Rock Creek Park Nature Center and Planetarium opened
1966	Tunnel built between Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway and Beach Drive
1968	Fort Circle Parks Master Plan
1968	Riots in Washington, DC, and other cities after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.
1969	District ceded the 100-foot-wide, 3-mile-long right-of-way near Glover-Archbold Park to NPS
1969	Annual tennis tournament begins

1971	NPS National Capital Region implemented the NCPC plan and transferred more than 350 municipal park units (totaling about 750 acres), consisting mostly of recreation areas, picnic areas, and traffic islands, to the District
1972	Green Scene started
1976	FORCE is established
1977	Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) formalized its relationship with Rock Creek Park to improve and maintain its foot trails
1987	FORCE dis-established
1988	Tennis Center opens
1990	Ricky Magnus murdered at Meridian Hill Park via a drive-by shooting
1990	Friends of Meridian Hill Park formed
1991	Klinge Road closed
1992	Friends of Montrose and Dumbarton Oaks Parks established
1993	Peirce Mill shut down
1994	Earth Day celebration at Meridian Hill Park with President Bill Clinton
1994	Georgetown Waterfront Park Commission established
1996	ROCR begin work on GMP
1996	Bridging the Watershed begins
1999	Developer Martin Poretsky purchased land next to Military Road School
2000	Two cell phone monopoles went operational in ROCR
2001	Chandra Levy disappearance
2001	National Park Trust purchase land from Poletsky
2002	Chandra Levy skeletal remains found in Rock Creek Park
2003	New Friends of Rock Creek Environment (FORCE) established
2003	NPS purchase land from National Park Trust
2005	ROCR GMP completed
2005	Friends of Georgetown Waterfront Park established
2007	FORCE hires Beth Mullin as its first part-time temporary employee
2007	Peirce Mill dam fish ladder opened
2008	Significant rehabilitation of Fort Stevens completed
2008	The Alliance to Preserve the Civil War Defenses of Washington established
2008	Phase I Georgetown Waterfront Park opened
2010	Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy established
2011	Peirce Mill restored and running again
2011	FORCE became the Rock Creek Conservancy (RCC)
2011	Rock Creek Park, Final White-Tailed Deer Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement released
2011	Phase II and final Georgetown Waterfront Park opened
2013	Archaeological Investigation of Walter C. Pierce Community Park and Vicinity, 2005–12 study completed
2014	150th anniversary of Battle of Fort Stevens
2016	Emory United Methodist Church breaks ground on addition
2017	Klinge Valley Trail opened
2017	Ingmar Guandique, an illegal immigrant from El Salvador and charged with the murder of Chandra Levy, deported

## **APPENDIX B** **Pertinent Legislation**

FIFTY-FIRST CONGRESS, SESS. I. CH. 1001. 1890.

CHAP. 1001.—An act authorizing the establishing of a public park in the District of Columbia.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,* That a tract of land lying on both sides of Rock Creek, beginning at Klinge Ford Bridge, and running northwardly, following the course of said creek, of a width not less at any point than six hundred feet, nor more than twelve hundred feet, including the bed of the creek, of which not less than two hundred feet shall be on either side of said creek, south of Broad Branch road and Blagden Mill road and of such greater width north of said roads as the commissioners designated in this act may select, shall be secured, as hereinafter set out, and be perpetually dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasure ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of the United States, to be known by the name of Rock Creek Park: *Provided, however,* That the whole tract so to be selected and condemned under the provisions of this act shall not exceed two thousand acres nor the total cost thereof exceed the amount of money herein appropriated.

SEC. 2. That the Chief of Engineers of the United States Army, the Engineer Commissioner of the District of Columbia, and three citizens to be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, be, and they are hereby, created a commission to select the land for said park, of the quantity and within the limits aforesaid, and to have the same surveyed by the assistant to the said Engineer Commissioner of the District of Columbia in charge of public highways, which said assistant shall also act as executive officer to the said commission.

SEC. 3. That the said commission shall cause to be made an accurate map of said Rock Creek Park, showing the location, quantity, and character of each parcel of private property to be taken for such purpose, with the names of the respective owners inscribed thereon, which map shall be filed and recorded in the public records of the District of Columbia, and from and after the date of filing said map the several tracts and parcels of land embraced in said Rock Creek Park shall be held as condemned for public uses, and the title thereof vested in the United States, subject to the payment of just compensation, to be determined by said commission, and approved by the President of the United States: *Provided,* That such compensation be accepted by the owner or owners of the several parcels of land.

That if the said commission shall be unable by agreement with the respective owners to purchase all of the land so selected and condemned within thirty days after such condemnation, at the price approved by the President of the United States, it shall, at the expiration of such period of thirty days, make application to the supreme court of the District of Columbia, by petition, at a general or special term, for an assessment of the value of such land as it has been unable to purchase.

Said petition shall contain a particular description of the property selected and condemned, with the name of the owner or owners thereof, if known, and their residences, as far as the

same may be ascertained, together with a copy of the recorded map of the park; and the said court is hereby authorized and required, upon such application, without delay, to notify the owners and occupants of the land, if known, by personal service, and if unknown, by service by publication, and to ascertain and assess the value of the land so selected and condemned, by appointing three competent and disinterested commissioners to appraise the value or values thereof, and to return the appraisement to the court; and when the value or values of such land are thus ascertained, and the President of the United States shall decide the same to be reasonable, said value or values shall be paid to the owner or owners, and the United States shall be deemed to have a valid title to said land; and if in any case the owner or owners of any portion of said land shall refuse neglect, after the appraisement of the cash value of said lands and improvements, to demand or receive the same from said court, upon depositing the appraised value in said court to the credit of such owner or owners, respectively, the fee-simple shall in like manner be vested in the United States.

SEC. 4. That said court may direct the time and manner in which possession of the property condemned shall be taken or delivered, and may, if necessary, enforce any order or issue any process for giving possession.

SEC. 5. That no delay in making an assessment of compensation, or in taking possession, shall be occasioned by any doubt which may arise as to the ownership of the property, or any part thereof, or as to the interests of the respective owners. In such cases the court shall require a deposit of the money allowed as compensation for the whole property or the part in dispute. In all cases as soon as the said commission shall have paid the compensation assessed, or secured its payment by a deposit of money under the order of the court, possession of the property may be taken. All proceedings hereunder shall be in the name of the United States of America and managed by the commission.

SEC. 6. That the commission having ascertained the cost of the land, including expenses, shall assess such proportion of such cost and expenses upon the lands, lots, and blocks situated in the District of Columbia specially benefited by reason of the location and improvement of said park, as nearly as may be, in proportion to the benefits resulting to such real estate.

If said commission shall find that the real estate in said District directly benefited by reason of the location of the park is not benefited to the full extent of the estimated cost and expenses, then they shall assess each tract or parcel of land specially benefited to the extent of such benefits as they shall deem the said real estate specially benefited. The commission shall give at least ten days' notice, in one daily newspaper published in the city of Washington, of the time and place of their meeting for the purpose of making such assessment and may adjourn from time to time till the same be completed. In making the assessment the real estate benefited shall be assessed by the description as appears of record in the District on the day of the first meeting; but no error in description shall vitiate the assessment: *Provided*, That the premises are described with substantial accuracy. The commission shall estimate the value of the different parcels of real estate benefited as aforesaid and the amount assessed against each tract or parcel, and enter in all in an assessment book. All persons interested may appear and be heard. When the assessment shall be completed it shall be signed by the commission, or a majority (which majority shall have power always to act), and be filed in

the office of the clerk of the supreme court of the District of Columbia. The commission shall apply to the court for a confirmation of said assessment, giving at least ten days' notice of the time thereof by publication in one daily newspaper published in the city of Washington, which notice shall state in general terms the subject and the object of the application.

The said court shall have power, after said notice shall have been duly given, to hear and determine all matters connected with said assessment; and may revise, correct, amend, and confirm said assessment, in whole or in part, or order a new assessment, in whole or in part, with or without further notice or on such notice as it shall prescribe; but no order for a new assessment in part, or any partial adverse action, shall hinder or delay confirmation of the residue, or collection of the assessment thereon. Confirmation of any part of the assessment shall make the same a lien on the real estate assessed.

The assessment, when confirmed, shall be divided into four equal installments, and may be paid by any party interested in full or in one, two, three, and four years, on or before which times all shall be payable, with six per centum annual interest on all deferred payments. All payments shall be made to the Treasurer of the United States, who shall keep the account as a separate fund. The orders of the court shall be conclusive evidence of the regularity of all previous proceedings necessary to the validity thereof, and of all matters recited in said orders. The clerk of said court shall keep a record of all proceedings in regard to said assessment and confirmation. The commission shall furnish the said clerk with a duplicate of its assessment book, and in both shall be entered any change made or ordered by the court as to any real estate. Such book filed with the clerk when completed and certified shall be prima facie evidence of all facts recited therein. In case assessments are not paid as aforesaid the book of assessments certified by the clerk of the court shall be delivered to the officer charged by law with the duty of collecting delinquent taxes in the District of Columbia, who shall proceed to collect the same as delinquent real estate taxes are collected. No sale for any installment of assessment shall discharge the real estate from any subsequent installment; and proceedings for subsequent installments shall be as if no default had been made in prior ones.

All money so collected may be paid by the Treasurer on the order of the commission to any persons entitled thereto as compensation for land or services. Such order on the Treasurer shall be signed by a majority of the commission and shall specify fully the purpose for which it is drawn. If the proceeds of assessment exceed the cost of the park the excess shall be used in its improvement, under the direction of the officers named in section eight, if such excess shall not exceed the amount of ten thousand dollars. If it shall exceed that amount that part above ten thousand dollars shall be compensation of refunded ratably. Public officers performing any duty hereunder shall be allowed such fees and compensation as they would be entitled to in like cases of collecting taxes. The civilian members of the commission shall be allowed ten dollars per day each for each day of actual service. Deeds made to purchasers at sales for delinquent assessments hereunder shall be prima facie evidence of the right of the purchaser, and any one claiming under him, that the real estate was subject to assessment and directly benefited, and that the assessment was regularly made; that the assessment was not paid; that due advertisement had been made; that the grantee in the deed was the purchaser or assignee of the purchaser, and that the sale was conducted legally.

Any judgment for the sale of any real estate for unpaid assessments shall be conclusive evidence of its regularity and validity in all collateral proceedings except when the assessment was actually paid, and the judgment shall estopall persons from raising any objection thereto, or to any sale or deed based thereon, which existed at the date of its rendition, and could have been presented as a defense to the application for such judgment.

To pay the expenses of inquiry, survey, assessment, cost of lands taken, and all other necessary expenses incidental thereto, the sum of one million two hundred thousand dollars, or so much thereof as may be necessary, is hereby appropriated out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated: *Provided*, That one-half of said sum of one million two hundred thousand dollars, or so much thereof as may be expended, shall be re-imbursed to the Treasury of the United States out of the revenues of the District of Columbia, in four equal annual installments, with interest at the rate of three per centum per annum upon the deferred payments: *And provided further*, That one-half of the sum which shall be annually appropriated and expended for the maintenance and improvement of said lands as a public park shall be charged against and paid out of the revenues of the District of Columbia, in the manner now provided by law in respect to other appropriations for the District of Columbia, and the other half shall be appropriated out of the Treasury of the United States.

SEC. 7. That the public park authorized and established by this act shall be under the joint control of the Commissioners of the District of Columbia and the Chief of Engineers of the United States Army, whose duty it shall be, as soon as practicable, to lay out and prepare roadways and bridle paths, to be used for driving and for horseback riding, respectively, and footways for pedestrians: and whose duty it shall also be to make and publish such regulations as they deem necessary or proper for the care and management of the same. Such regulations shall provide for the preservation from injury or spoliation of all timber, animals, or curiosities within said park, and their retention in their natural condition, as nearly as possible.

Approved, September 27, 1890.

SEC. 22. That for the purpose of preventing the pollution and obstruction of Rock Creek and of connecting Potomac Park with the Zoological Park and Rock Creek Park, a commission, to be composed of the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of War, and the Secretary of Agriculture, is hereby authorized and directed to acquire, by purchase, condemnation, or otherwise, such land and premises as are not now the property of the United States in the District of Columbia shown on the map on file in the office of the Engineer Commissioner of the District of Columbia, dated May seventeenth, nineteen hundred and eleven and both sides of Rock Creek, including such portion of the creek bed as may be in private ownership, between the Zoological Park and Potomac Park; and the sum of \$1,300,000 is hereby authorized to be expended toward the requirement of such land. That all lands now belonging to the United States or to the District of Columbia lying within the exterior boundaries of the land to be acquired by this act as shown and designated on said map are hereby appropriated to and made a part of the parkway herein authorized to be acquired. One-half of the cost of the said lands shall be reimbursed to the Treasury of the United States out of the revenues of the District of Columbia in eight equal annual installments, with interest at the rate of three per centum per annum upon the deferred payments. That should the commission decide to

institute condemnation proceedings in order to secure any or all of the land herein authorized to be acquired, such proceedings shall be in accordance with the provisions of the act of Congress approved August thirtieth, eighteen hundred and ninety, providing a site for the enlargement of the Government Printing Office (United States Statutes at Large, volume twenty-six, chapter eight hundred and thirty-seven).

**APPENDIX C**  
**Superintendent Timeline**

1975–83	James Redmond
1983–88	Georgia Ellard
1988–91	Rolland Swain
1991–97	William Shields
1997–2010	Adrienne Coleman
2011–16	Tara Morrison
2017–present	Julia Washburn

**APPENDIX D**  
**Rock Creek Park Memorials and Statues (from LRIP 2010)**

1. Guglielmo Marconi Memorial, 16th Street NW
2. James Cardinal Gibbons Statue, 16th Street NW
3. Francis Asbury Memorial, 16th Street NW
4. Newlands Memorial Fountain at Chevy Chase Circle, Connecticut Avenue NW
5. Meridian Hill Park—Dante Memorial Statue
6. Meridian Hill Park—Serenity Statue
7. Meridian Hill Park—James Buchanan Memorial
8. Meridian Hill Park—Jeanne D’Arc (Joan of Arc) Statue
9. Battleground National Cemetery—150th Ohio National Guard Monument
10. Battleground National Cemetery—122nd New York Volunteer Monument
11. Battleground National Cemetery—25th New York Volunteer Cavalry Monument
12. Battleground National Cemetery—98th Regular Pennsylvania Volunteer Monument
13. Fort Stevens—Sixth Army Corps Monument
14. Rock Creek Park—Jules J. Jusserand Memorial Bench
15. Major General Artemas Ward Monument, Ward Circle
16. Montrose Park—Sarah Rittenhouse Memorial
17. Francis Scott Key Park—Key Memorial
18. Major General George McClellan Monument, Connecticut Avenue NW
19. Kahlil Gibran Memorial, Massachusetts Avenue NW at Normanstone Parkway
20. Peter Muhlenberg Memorial, Connecticut Avenue NW
21. Garden Club Monuments at Westmoreland Circle
22. Robert Emmet Statue, Massachusetts Avenue NW (Note: This statue is on long-term loan from the Smithsonian Institute and is not owned by the National Park Service.)

**APPENDIX E**  
**Oral History Interviews**

Richard Abbott	Friends of Peirce Mill
Melanie Choukas-Bradley	Naturalist, author
Steve Coleman	Friends of Meridian Hill
Cindy Cox	Former ROCR Deputy Superintendent
Steve Dryden	Friends of Peirce Mill
Georgia Ellard	Former ROCR Superintendent
Ken Ferebee	ROCR Resource Management Specialist
Allan Griffith	US Park Police
Rita Gunther	Carter Barron Amphitheatre
Steve LeBel	Tennis, concessions
Mike McMahon	ROCR Landscape Architect
Lindsey Milstein and Lou Slade	Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy
Simone Monteleone	ROCR Cultural Resources Manager
Tara Morrison	Former ROCR Superintendent
Beth Mullin	FORCE, Rock Creek Conservancy
Loretta Neumann	The Alliance to Preserve the CWDW
Eleanor Holmes Norton	District Delegate to US House of Representatives
John Parsons	NCR Chief of Planning
Steve Saari	FORCE
Ann Satterthwaite	Friends of Georgetown Waterfront Park
Robert Stanton	National Capital Regional Director, NPS Director
Tammy Stidham	NCR Chief of Planning
Rolland Swain	Former Superintendent
Stephen Syphax	Green Scene
Julia Washburn	ROCR Superintendent
Bill Yeaman	ROCR Resource Management Specialist
Maggie Zadorozny	ROCR Education Specialist

## APPENDIX F Maps

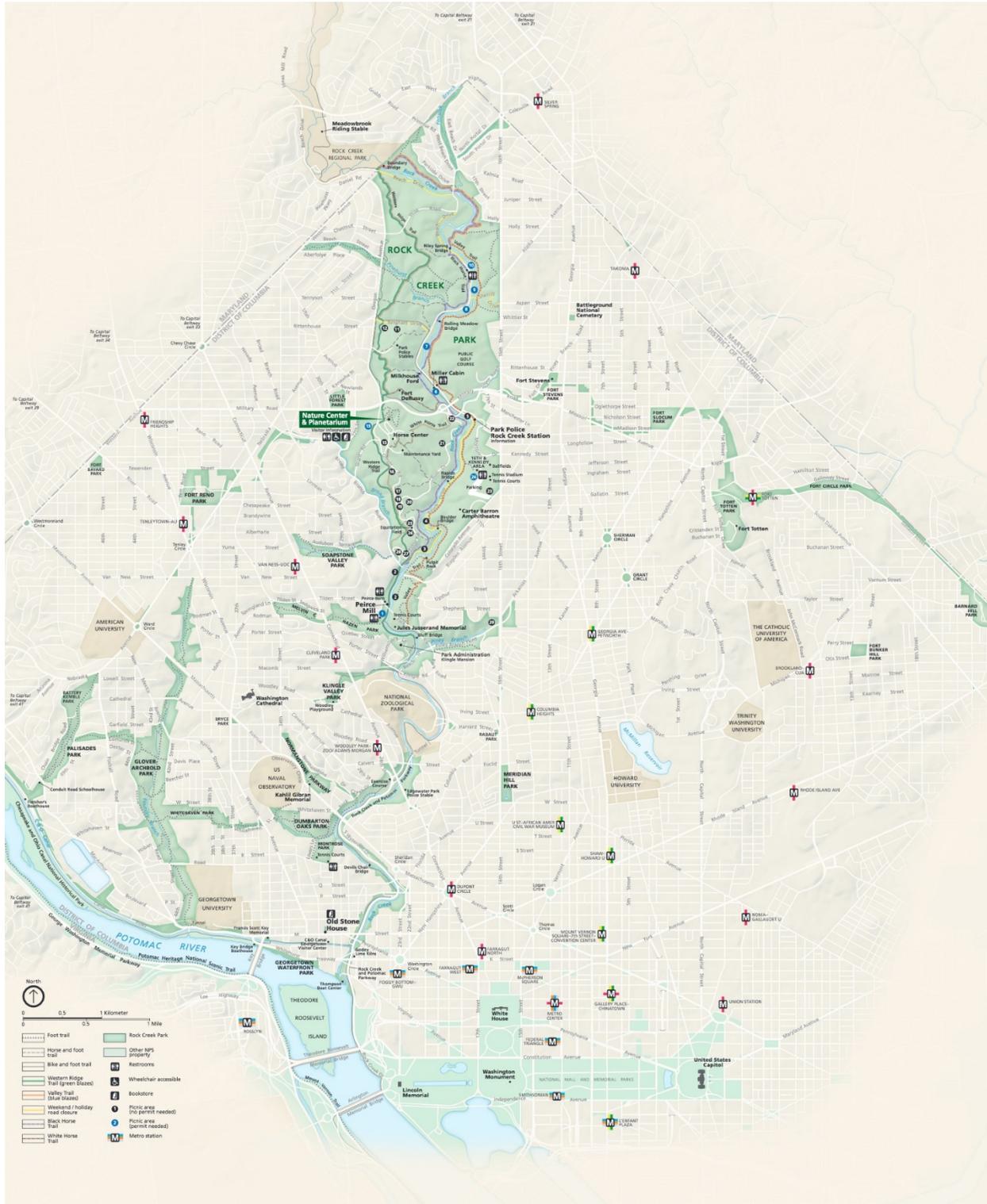


Figure 59. Map of Areas Administered by Rock Creek Park

NPS PHOTO, N.D.



Figure 60. Civil War Defenses of Washington

NPS PHOTO, N.D.



## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

The Museum Resource Center in Landover, Maryland, contains a vast amount of primary source documentation about Rock Creek Park. These records have been processed, though the finding aid is out-of-date due to significant additions to the collection. Records span the breadth of Rock Creek Park's ninety-nine management units and include correspondence, reports, maps, and photographs. Access is limited to staff availability.

Rock Creek Park's headquarters office in Klinge Mansion contains active files and many boxes of unprocessed administrative files in the attic and corners of offices. These records will eventually be evaluated for retention and, if kept, processed at the Museum Resource Center.

The National Archives at College Park, Maryland, also known as Archives II, holds Record Group 79 National Park Service records with subject files on Rock Creek Park and its administrative units. There are some annual reports, correspondence, and other documentation.

The Washington Federal Records Center in Suitland, Maryland, holds National Park Service records still under agency control. Records include correspondence on memorials, the Nature Center, and exhibits.

The Denver Service Center Technical Information Center has digitized versions of myriad reports and maps. There are some finding aids and public online access, but comprehensive searching relies upon Technical Information Center staff.

The National Park Service Archives at Harpers Ferry Center contains park-specific records that include ephemera, photographs, correspondence, and reports. The records sit in Charles Town, West Virginia, and access is given by appointment.

### Secondary Sources

Agnew, Eleanor. *Back from the Land: How Young Americans Went to Nature in the 1970s, and Why They Came Back*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2004.

Allaback, Sarah. *Mission 66 Visitor Centers: The History of a Building Type*. Washington, DC: National Park Service, 2000.

Babin, Patricia Kuhn. *Links to the Past: A Historic Resource Study of National Park Service Golf Courses in the District of Columbia*. Washington, DC: National Park Service, 2017.

Barber, Lucy G. *Marching on Washington: The Forging of an American Political Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

Barthold, Elizabeth. "The Predicament of the 'Parklets': Understanding Washington's Smaller Parks," *Washington History*, 5 (Spring/Summer 1993): 28–45.

Blight, David W. *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001.

Bliss, Mildred B. "An Attempted Evocation of a Personality," *Landscape Architecture Quarterly* (Summer 1959): 222–23.

Bushong, William, and Piera M. Weiss. "Rock Creek Park: Emerald of the Capital City," *Washington History* 2 (Fall/Winter 1990/1991): 4–29.

Carr, Ethan. *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007.

Coggins, Allen R. "The Early History of Tennessee's State Parks, 1919–1956," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 43 (Fall 1984): 295–315.

Cooling III, Benjamin Franklin, and Walter H. Owen II. *Mr. Lincoln's Forts: A Guide to the Civil War Defenses of Washington*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010.

Cooling III, Benjamin Franklin. *The Day Lincoln Was Almost Shot: The Fort Stevens Story*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2013.

DeVoto, Bernard. "Let's Close the National Parks," *Harper's Magazine* (October 1953): 49–52.

Dryden, Steve. *Peirce Mill: Two Hundred Years in the Nation's Capital*. Washington, DC: Bergamot Books, 2009.

Einberger, Scott. *A History of Rock Creek Park: Wilderness and Washington, DC*. Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2014.

Faust, Drew Gilpin. "'The Dread Void of Uncertainty': Naming the Dead in the American Civil War," *Southern Cultures* 11 (Summer 2005): 7–32.

Faust, Drew Gilpin. "The Civil War Soldier and the Art of Dying," *Journal of Southern History* 67 (February 2001): 3–38.

Faust, Drew Gilpin. *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*. New York: Vintage Books, 2008.

Fernlund, Kevin. *William Henry Holmes and the Rediscovery of the American West*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2000.

Glines, Timothy, and David Grabitske. "Telling the Story: Better Interpretation at Small Historical Organizations," *History News* 58 (Spring 2003): 1–8.

Hartzog Jr., George B. *Battling for the National Parks*. Mt. Kisco, NY: Moyer Bell, 1988.

Hines, Thomas S. "The Imperial Mall: The City Beautiful Movement and the Washington Plan of 1901–1902," in *The Mall in Washington, 1791–1991*, ed. by Richard Longstreth. Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1991.

Jackson, John Brinkerhoff. *Discovering Vernacular Landscapes*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984.

Kaynor, Fay Campbell. "Thomas Tileston Waterman: Student of American Colonial Architecture," *Winterthur Portfolio* 20 (Summer/Autumn, 1985): 103–47.

Larsen, David L., ed. *Meaningful Interpretation: How to Connect Hearts and Minds to Places, Objects, and Other Resources*. Fort Washington, PA: Eastern National, 2003.

Mackintosh, Barry. *Interpretation in the National Park Service: A Historical Perspective*. Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1986.

Mackintosh, Barry. *Rock Creek Park: An Administrative History*. Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1985.

Mackintosh, Barry. *Chesapeake & Ohio Canal: The Making of a Park*. Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1991.

McDonnell, Janet A. "World War II: Defending Park Values and Resources," *Public Historian* 29 (Fall 2007): 15–33.

Meringolo, Denise D. *Museums, Monuments, and National Parks: Toward a New Genealogy of Public History*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012.

National Park Service. *The Vail Agenda: National Parks for the 21st Century*. Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1992.

Olmsted Brothers, Rock Creek Park Report, 1918.

Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, Report to the President and the Congress. Washington, DC, 1962.

Patterson, William W. "Beatrix Farrand, 1872–1959: An Appreciation of a Great Landscape Gardener," *Landscape Architecture Quarterly* (Summer 1959): 216–24.

Robinson & Associates, Inc. *National Park Service National Capital Region Administrative History, 1952–2005*. 2008.

Rosenzweig, Roy, and Elizabeth Blackmar. *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992.

Rothman, Hal K. *The New Urban Park: Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Civic Environmentalism*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004.

Rymsza-Pawlowska, M. J. *History Comes Alive: Public History and Popular Culture in the 1970s*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017.

Sears, John F. *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Sellers, Richard West. *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997.

Simon, Nina. *The Participatory Museum*. Self-published, 2010.

Smith, Timothy B. *The Golden Age of Battlefield Preservation: The Decade of the 1890s and the Establishment of America's First Five Military Parks*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2008.

Sprinkle Jr., John H. "Operation Overview and the Creation of Piscataway Park," *The Public Historian* 38 (November 2016): 79–100.

Tilden, Freeman. *Interpreting Our Heritage*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1977.

Toothman, Stephanie S. "Cultural Resource Management in Natural Areas in the National Park System," *Public Historian* 9 (Spring 1987): 64–76.

Unrau, Harlan D., and G. Frank Williss. *Administrative History: Expansion of the National Park Service in the 1930s*. Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1983.

US Department of the Interior. *The Creek and the City: Urban Pressures on a Natural Stream, Rock Creek Park and Metropolitan Washington*. 1967.

Verbrugge, Martha H., and Drew Yingling. "The Politics of Play: The Struggle over Racial Segregation and Public Recreation in Washington, DC, 1945–1959," *Washington History*, 27 (Fall 2015): 56–69.

Welsh, Bill. "Restoration of Dumbarton Oaks Park Gains Momentum," *Land* (October 1998): 4–5.

Whisnant, Anne Mitchell, Marla R. Miller, Gary B. Nash, and David Thelen. *Imperiled Promise: The State of History in the National Park Service*. Bloomington, IN: Organization of American Historians, 2011.

Whisnant, Anne Mitchell. *Super-Scenic Motorway: A Blue Ridge Parkway History*. Charlotte: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

Wirth, Conrad L. *Parks, Politics, and the People*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980.

Zenzen, Joan M. *Battling for Manassas: The Fifty-Year Preservation Struggle at Manassas National Battlefield Park*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998.

## Index

- Abbott, Richard, 94, 95, 97, 195, 244  
African American cemetery, 236  
African Americans, 88, 99  
    and Carter Barron Amphitheater, 224  
Albright, Horace, 288  
Aldrich, Ann, 118  
Alice Ferguson Foundation, 40, 214, 218, 244  
    and cooperative agreement, 216  
    and NPS partnership, 216  
Alliance to Preserve the Civil War Defenses of Washington, 55  
    and Emory Church, 86  
    and NPS relationship, 245  
    and programming, 190, 191, 193  
    and sesquicentennial, 256  
    establishment of, 192  
American Bird Conservancy, 66  
American Ice Company, 309  
American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, 96, 291, 304  
Anders, Cecil, 297  
Archbold, Anne, 23, 169, 170  
Armillary Sphere, 45, 154, 156  
Arnold & Porter, 299  
Art Barn, 98  
Art Barn Association, 54, 98  
Artemas Ward statue, 251  
Ashe, Arthur, 226  
Associates of Artists Equity of Washington, 98  
Audubon Naturalist Society, 40, 58, 66  
B&G Outdoor Recreation, 146  
Babbitt, Bruce, 304  
Barnard, John G., 15  
Baroody Jr., William J., 264  
Barron, Carter, 221, 223  
Bartholomew, Harland, 23  
Bartolomeo, Nick, 247  
Battery Kemble, 80, 143, 144, 171  
Battery Kemble Park, 77, 238  
Battery Kingsbury, 80  
Battle of Fort Stevens, 252, 276  
    anniversary of, 186, 192  
    sesquicentennial of, 256  
Battleground National Cemetery, 185, 227  
    and national cemetery system, 277  
    and Rock Creek Park management of, 290  
    and sesquicentennial, 257  
    burials at, 291  
    ceremonies at, 190, 287  
    Decoration Day at, 287  
    dedication of, 283  
    description of, 252  
    features of, 278  
    improvements of, 291  
    location of, 266  
    maintenance of, 245  
    Memorial Day at, 287  
    monuments in, 258, 280  
    rostrum at, 283, 288, 291  
    Superintendent's Lodge at, 278, 288, 290, 291  
    superintendents of, 288  
    waysides at, 291  
Baxter, Frank, 146  
Baxter, John W. "Jack," 146  
Beach Drive, 3, 21  
    air quality of, 42  
    and road closures, 138  
    as commuter route, 22, 25, 29, 33  
    construction of, 135  
Bearss, Ed, 192  
Belcher, Mary, 57  
Belden, William, 261  
Bell Atlantic Mobile, 57, 58  
Berberich, Henry, 162  
Berry, Max, 303  
Biddle, John, 140  
Bike Share, 29  
Black, Gale, 30  
Bliss, Mildred, 108, 109, 112  
Blue Plains Wastewater Treatment Plant, 34, 38  
Blumenthal, Sally, 310  
Boasberg, Teresh, 191

- Boulder Bridge, 121, 135, 139
- Boundary Bridge, 1
- Boyce, Mary McEwen, 164
- Brennan Construction Company, 309
- Bridging the Watershed
  - and Alice Ferguson Foundation, 215
  - and funding, 216
  - and high school science, 218
  - and supporters, 215
  - awards for, 218
  - concerns about, 218
  - start of, 214
- Brightwood Citizens Association, 283, 287
- Brightwood Heritage Trail, 291
- Brightwood School, 287
- Brown, G. Gratz, 7
- Brown, William, 287
- Bryce, James, 261
- Bryce Park, 261
- Buchanan Memorial, 3, 45, 154, 258
- Buchanan, James, 3
- Burnap, George, 150, 151, 156, 165
- Burnham, Daniel, 10
- Bush, George H. W., 264
- Bush, George W., 270
- C&O Canal, 16, 88, 136, 182, 295, 297, 300, 302, 308, 310, 315
- C&O Canal Historic Park Advisory Commission, 299
- C&O Canal National Historical Park Advisory Commission, 314
- Cafritz Foundation, 167
- Caine, Brian, 28
- Camp David, 53
- Camp Good Will, 10
- Campbell, Edward, 253, 276
- Capital City Little League, 172
- Capital Crescent Trail, 308, 313
- Capital Enterprises, 101
- Capital Traction Company Powerhouse, 309, 310
- Capper-Cramton Act, 17, 35, 80, 127, 295
- Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, 136
- Carter Barron Amphitheater, 13, 100
  - and bookings, 222
  - and concessions, 146
  - and neighbors, 225
  - and open to all races, 223
  - and programming, 223, 224
  - and tennis, 129, 225
  - description of, 221
  - management of, 223
  - programming at, 223
- Carter, Jimmy, 64
- Cellar Door—Dimensions, 223
- Centennial Challenge, 310
- Center for Urban Ecology, 37, 43, 67, 68, 72
- Central Park, 9
- Chapman, Oscar, 223
- Chesapeake & Ohio Canal, 296
- Cheeseboro, Bryan, 257
- Cheh, Mary, 30
- Chesapeake Bay Commission, 74
- Chick Jr., W. Drew, 63
- Choukas-Bradley, Melanie, 40, 238
- Christiansen, Milo F., 225
- Citizens Association of Georgetown, 299
- City Beautiful, 10, 22
- Civic engagement, 178, 239
- Civil War Centennial, 84
- Civil War Defenses of Washington
  - and African Americans, 193
  - and Civil War, 15
  - and Civil War battles, 275
  - and development threats, 87
  - and Fort Drive, 14
  - and programming, 193
  - and recreation, 144, 173, 187
  - and trails, 138
  - as a separate park unit, 191
  - cultural resources of, 80
  - interpretation of, 185, 189
  - small parks and, 171
- Civil War Preservation Trust, 86
- Civil War Sesquicentennial, 85, 291
- Civilian Conservation Corps, 9, 14, 17, 81, 84, 198
  - and Fort Stevens, 171
  - and trails, 136
- Clinton, Bill, 50, 57, 162
- Clover, Blaine E., 90

- Clusen, Charles, 231  
Clyde's Restaurant, 301  
Cochran, Bill, 303  
Cochran, William, 116  
Coleman, Adrienne, 25, 26, 59, 147  
    and Friends groups, 245  
    and Meridian Hill Park, 243  
    and Montrose Park, 169  
    and outreach, 247  
Coleman, Howard, 160  
Coleman, Steve  
    and access to Rock Creek Park, 28  
    and NPS relationship, 161, 243, 244, 247  
    and Ricky Magnus, 159  
    and start crime patrol, 49  
    biography of, 160  
Collins, Laurie, 31  
Colored Union Benevolent Association, 56  
Commission of Fine Arts, 24, 150, 162, 169,  
    295, 299, 300, 305  
    and tennis, 130  
Committee for Washington's Riverfront  
    Parks, 299  
Committee of, 100 on the Federal City, 24,  
    162, 191  
Condit, Gary, 50  
Conduit Road School House, 197  
Connor, Jerome, 262  
Conservation Study Institute, 239  
Cooling, Benjamin Franklin, 15, 192  
Cox, Cindy, 45, 59, 117, 168, 196, 247, 310  
Cox, Joseph, 51  
Cox, William van Zandt, 254  
Crawford, Cornelius, 276  
CSX Railroad, 297, 298  
Cultural Tourism DC, 291  
Daniels Jr., Joseph W., 85  
Dante statue, 154, 162, 259  
Daughters of the American Revolution, 154  
Davis, Angela, 150  
Davis, Tom, 304  
DC Central Kitchen, 70  
DC Preservation League, 290  
Dell, Donald, 129, 226  
DeMarr, Glenn, 265  
Dempsey's Boathouse, 313  
District Department of Energy and  
    Environment, 40, 42  
District of Columbia  
    and federal government, 127  
    and fish barriers, 74  
    and Fort Drive, 16  
    and golf, 140  
    and highways, 23  
    and Home Rule, 56, 127  
    and Klinge Road, 29  
    and National Park Service, 3  
    and politics, 55  
    and Walter Pierce Park, 56  
    parks transferred to, 56  
    protests in, 48  
    sewers of, 34, 36  
District of Columbia Water and Sewer, 37  
District of Columbia Water and Sewer  
    Authority, 37  
Dowd, Maureen, 86  
Dryden, Steve, 95, 97, 196, 244  
Dumbarton Oaks Park, 51, 115, 143  
    and deeded to NPS, 108  
    and interpretation, 196  
    and NPS caretaking of, 113  
    and stormwater management, 113  
    and trails, 237  
    restoration of, 119  
    stormwater management of, 120  
Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy, 41,  
    117, 118, 120, 237  
    and environmental education, 201  
    and outreach, 248  
    and Signature Project, 118, 120  
    and volunteers, 241  
    origins of, 117  
Earley, John J., 150  
Early, Jubal, 15, 185, 256, 275  
Earth Day, 91, 160, 162, 182  
East Potomac Park, 140  
East Potomac Park Golf Course, 140, 143  
Eastern National, 178, 196  
Edwards, Donna, 192  
Elder, Kym, 192, 193, 256  
Eliot II, Charles, 17  
Ellard, Georgia, 39, 54, 98, 130, 132

- and Montrose Park, 167
- and outreach, 246
- and trails, 138
- Emory United Methodist Church, 85
- Equitation Field, 136
- Evans, Jack, 303, 304
- Evans, Oliver, 87, 89, 91
- Every Kid in a Park, 197
- Exploring the Sky, 211
- Faith of Our Fathers play, 221
- Farrand, Beatrix, 109, 112, 113, 116, 119, 120, 237
- Federal Highway Administration, 29
- Feld, Irvin and Israel, 222
- Fenty, Adrian, 303
- Ferebee, Ken, 59
  - and deer management, 66, 70
  - and trails, 138, 139
- Ferguson, Alice, 216
- Ferguson, Henry Gardiner, 216
- Finley, David, 158
- Finnan, C. Marshall, 156, 165
- Fish, Manus "Jack," 232, 299, 302
- Fitz Water Wheel Company, 89
- Fitzgerald, William HG, 134
- FitzGerald, William HG, 130
- Fleming, Peggy, 65, 72
- Fletcher's Boathouse, 146
- Flynn, William S., 141
- Ford, Bob, 114
- Fort Bayard, 81, 144, 171, 276
- Fort Bunker Hill, 80, 84, 144, 171
- Fort Bunker Hill Park, 52, 189
- Fort Circle Parks, 172, 185
- Fort Circle Parks National Recreation Trail, 138
- Fort Circle Trail, 187
- Fort DeRussy, 37, 60, 80, 122, 138, 171, 185, 276, 291
- Fort Drive, 80, 138, 185, 187
  - and, 1940s planning, 17, 18
  - and early planning, 16, 17
  - and Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., 14
  - beginnings of, 15
- Fort Dupont, 138, 186, 224
- Fort Mansfield, 276
- Fort Reno, 17, 144, 160, 171, 227, 240, 276
  - and cell phone tower, 60
  - and cultural resources, 80
  - and recreation, 171
- Fort Reno Park, 81
- Fort Simmons, 276
- Fort Slocum, 80, 144, 171, 185, 276
- Fort Stevens, 171
  - and cell phone tower, 60
  - and Civil War, 15, 80, 185
  - and nearby development threats, 85
  - and recreation, 144
  - and restoration of, 9
  - ceremonies at, 190
  - commemoration at, 254
  - community garden in, 240
  - concerts at, 227
  - interpretation of, 186
  - monuments at, 258
  - reconstruction of, 171
  - rehabilitation of, 84
  - restoration of, 81
  - waysides at, 291
- Fort Stevens Day, 171, 186, 190, 256
- Fort Stevens-Lincoln National Military Park Association, 253, 254
- Fort Totten, 54, 85, 121, 144, 171, 186, 188, 235, 246, 276, 291
- Fort Totten Park
  - and crime, 52
- Fort Ward, 257
- Francis Asbury Memorial, 258
- Francis Scott Key Park, 197, 258
- Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, 266, 310
- Fred Tuemmler and Associates, 187
- Friends of Fort Stevens, 171
- Friends of Georgetown Waterfront Park, 310
  - and boathouses, 313
  - and NPS relationship, 245
  - establishment of, 303
- Friends of Meridian Hill, 3, 227
  - and crime, 45
  - and interpretation, 201
  - and maintenance of park, 161, 162
  - and NPS relationship, 160, 243, 246, 247

- and park design, 162
- establishment of, 49, 160
- Friends of Montrose and Dumbarton Oaks Parks, 116, 117, 168
  - and maintenance of parks, 168
  - end of, 169
- Friends of Peirce Mill, 94, 178, 196
  - and education, 201
  - and funding restoration, 96
  - and mill reopening, 97
  - and NPS relationship, 244, 245
  - and Peirce Mill restoration, 95
  - and programming, 195
  - and school programs, 195
  - establishment of, 94
- Friends of Rock Creek Environment, 178
- Friends of Rock Creek's Environment, 242
  - and interpretation, 201
  - as first friends group, 39
  - restart of, 39, 55
- Friends of Rock Creek's Environment
  - and staff, 40
  - and trails, 137
- Galvin, Denis, 58
- George McClellan statue, 258, 265
- George Washington University, 73
- Georgetown
  - and African Americans, 296
  - history of, 295, 309
- Georgetown Business Improvement District, 295
- Georgetown Citizens' Association, 166
- Georgetown Garden Club, 166
- Georgetown University, 302, 313, 314
- Georgetown Waterfront Arts Commission, 303
- Georgetown Waterfront Park
  - and bicycles, 308, 312
  - and boat studies, 313
  - and easements, 298
  - and environmentalism, 308
  - and land transfer, 300, 303
  - and nonmotorized boathouse zone, 312, 314
  - and parking lot, 304
  - and protests, 270, 271
  - archeological work at, 302
  - boundaries of, 300
  - construction of, 309
  - design of, 304
  - draft design of, 301
  - fountain in, 305, 306, 310, 311
  - fundraising for, 303, 304, 311
  - granite interpretive panels in, 305
  - interpretation of, 197
  - labyrinth in, 306
  - land transfer for, 302
  - Phase I of, 304, 310, 311
  - Phase II of, 310, 311
- Georgetown Waterfront Park Commission, 303
- Georgia-Pacific Foundation, 95
- Girl Scouts of America, 88
- Glover, Charles Carroll, 23, 169
- Glover-Archbold Park, 160
  - and deer, 66, 67
  - and highway, 23
  - and neighbors, 231
  - and trails, 139, 143, 170
  - archeology of, 121
  - community garden in, 240
  - origins of, 169
- Gordon, William F., 142
- Gore, Al, 50
- Grand Army of the Republic, 254, 282, 287
- Grant, Ulysses S., 275
- Green Scene, 100, 240
- Griffith, Allan, 45, 236
- Guandique, Ingmar, 50
- Guest Services Inc.
  - and boathouses, 146
  - and tennis, 134
- Guglielmo Marconi Memorial, 261
- Gunther, Rita, 223, 242
- Hagner, Adlunia "Lummy," 94
- Hard Bargain Farm, 215
- Harris, John, 129
- Harrison, Benjamin, 1
- Hartzog, George, 8, 64, 240
- Harvey, Ron, 291
- Hausmann, William, 102, 103, 209
- Haygood, Flip, 215

- Hazen, Ted, 91, 94, 194, 195  
Heine, Cornelius, 104, 184  
Henderson Castle, 150  
Henderson, John, 150  
Henderson, Mary Foote, 150  
Historic Georgetown Inc., 101  
Historic Structures Inc., 95  
Holmes Norton, Eleanor, 52, 55  
Homes, William Henry, 121  
Howard University, 56  
Hunsaker, George, 108, 183  
Hutchison, Ira, 159  
Ickes, Harold, 89, 90, 140  
Illige, Laura, 218  
Ingram, Catherine, 182  
Jack's Boathouse, 146  
James Bell Ford Foundation, 94  
James Cardinal Gibbons statue, 258  
Jarvis, Jon, 146  
Jean Jules Jusserand Bench, 259  
Jett, T. Sutton, 223  
Jim Crow, 128, 287  
Joan of Arc statue, 45, 154, 156, 163, 259, 265  
Joaquin Miller cabin, 151, 197  
John Hans Graham & Associates, 142  
Johnson, Lady Bird, 261  
Johnson, Lyndon, 136  
Jones, Ellen, 28  
Junior League of Washington, 100  
Junior Naturalist Training Course, 207  
Kahlil Gibran Memorial, 122, 261, 264  
Kanal, Raclare, 65  
Kennedy, John F., 296  
Key Bridge Boathouse, 145, 146, 147, 313  
King Jr., Martin Luther, 3, 48, 150, 156, 189, 240  
Kiorpes, Gus, 96  
Kline, Donald, 113  
Klinge Mansion, 27, 99  
    and Green Scene, 241  
    and interpretation, 197  
    and New Deal, 89  
    improvements of, 101  
    Nature Center in, 202, 208  
    origins of, 99  
    preservation of, 100  
Klinge Road, 21, 29, 143  
Klinge Valley Trail, 30, 31  
Klinge, Joshua Peirce, 99  
Knepper, Dennis, 122  
Koch, Rae, 108  
    and her knowledge, 180  
    and start at Old Stone House, 180  
    as ambassador, 181  
Krueger, Brad, 108  
Lake Frank, 36  
Lake Needwood, 36  
Langston Golf Course, 140  
Lantz Jr., Hays B., 215  
Lawler, Joe, 246, 314  
Laytham, Ginger, 303  
LeBel, Steve, 54, 132, 133, 147  
Lee, Robert E., 15, 275  
Legardere, 134  
Leoffler, Severine G., 141  
Leopold, A. Starker, 64  
Leopold Report, 72, 77, 114  
Leslie, Ann, 73  
Levy, Chandra, 50  
Lincoln, Abraham, 15, 80, 185, 190, 255, 276  
Lincoln-Thomas Day, 190, 256  
Linnaean Hill, 99  
Linnaean Hill house, 89  
Little, Robert, 193  
Louis Berger Group Inc., The  
    and archeology of Rock Creek Park, 122  
    and Klinge Road, 30  
Lucero, Anthony, 185  
Mack, Mark, 56  
Mackintosh, Barry, 10, 34  
MacLeish, Jane, 117  
Magnus, Ricky, 49, 159  
Maintenance Yard  
    and cell phone tower, 58, 59  
Malcolm X Park, 3, *See* Meridian Hill Park  
    and protests, 270  
Manassas National Battlefield Park, 53, 171  
Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial, 266  
Maryland-National Capital Park and  
    Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), 34

- May, Peter, 314
- McCracken, Bob, 211
- McGrory, Mary, 31
- McHenry, Donald, 63
- McKay, Douglas, 225
- McKean, Robert, 81
- McKim, Charles, 10
- McMahon, Mike, 117, 119, 162, 168, 309, 311
- McMillan, James, 10
- McMillan Commission, 7, 19, 127, 150
- McMillan Plan, 10, 11, 16, 19
- McMillan Report, 22
- Meigs, Montgomery C., 276, 278, 285
- Melvin C. Hazen Park, 143
- Meridian Hill Park, 3
  - and African American community, 151
  - and crime, 45, 49
  - and graffiti, 51
  - and interpretation, 196
  - and protests, 270
  - and volunteer help, 160
  - concerts in, 156, 227
  - description of, 149
  - maintenance of, 158
  - rehabilitation of, 163
  - sculptures in, 154
- Metrorail, 23, 24, 121, 172, 235, 246
- Michler, Nathaniel, 7, 10
- Military Road School, 86, 256
- Miller, Herbert, 299
- Milstein, Lindsey, 118, 120
- Mission, 66, 113, 135, 136, 142, 145, 208
- Monteleone, Simone, 79, 118, 119, 156, 163, 265
  - and Nature Center, 205, 210
  - and Peirce Mill, 201
- Montgomery County, 23, 25, 36
  - and deer, 68
- Montgomery Meigs Park, 266
- Montrose Park
  - and interpretation, 197, 208
  - and recreation, 143, 166
  - and Ropewalk, 143, 164, 168
  - and tennis, 129
  - Armillary sphere in, 258
  - gas lights in, 167
  - landscape of, 165
  - maintenance of, 167
  - origins of, 164
- Moran, James, 192
- Morris, William R., 130
- Morrison, Tara, 134, 242
  - and dogs, 237
  - and outreach, 248
- Moses, Robert, 14
- Mott Jr., William Penn, 100, 132
- Mount Pleasant Plains Cemetery, 56
- Mullin, Beth, 40, 243
- Mullins, Agnes Downing, 179
- Mulloy, James, 277, 278
- Museum Resource Center, 45
- Nader, Ralph, 299
- National Capital Astronomers Association, 211
- National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 16, 17, 18, 23, 34, 170, 187
- National Capital Planning Commission, 22, 34, 56, 59, 187, 192, 261, 267, 295, 300, 301
  - and Georgetown Waterfront Park, 298
  - and tennis, 130
- National Capital Region
  - and Fort Drive, 18
  - and water quality, 35
- National Capital Region Network, 77
- National Capital Region Planning Division, 310
- National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board, 26
- National Federation of Colored Women's Clubs of America, 190, 256
- National Park Service
  - and archeology, 123
  - and cell phone towers, 58
  - and commuter traffic, 22
  - and cultural resources, 79
  - and deer management, 68
  - and District of Columbia, 56
  - and fish barriers, 74
  - and Fort Drive, 17
  - and funding, 94

- and General Management Plan, 25
- and growth of system, 64
- and interpretation, 177
- and invasives, 72
- and Klinge Road, 29
- and natural resources, 64
- and resource monitoring, 76
- and scientific studies, 42
- and security, 53
- National Park Service Centennial, 139, 177, 217
- National Park Trust, 87
- National Parks and Conservation Association, 64
- National Parks Conservation Association, 192, 239
- National Zoo, 11, 21, 22, 29, 35, 65, 233
  - and fish barriers, 75
- Natural Resource Inventory & Monitoring (I & M) Program, 76
- Neal, Darwina, 115, 167, 168
- Neumann, Loretta, 86, 87, 191, 192
  - and NPS relationship, 245
- New Deal
  - and Georgetown, 296
  - and trails, 135
- Nixon, Richard, 24
- Norton, Eleanor Holmes, 26, 133, 142, 172, 233, 303
- Noyes, Edith, 154
- NPS Connect Trails to Parks, 189
- O'Dell, Peggy, 96
- O'Rourke, John, 96
- Obama, Barack, 291
- Ogden, Derek, 95
- Old Georgetown Board, 169, 299
- Old Stone House
  - and A Day in the Life of an Eighteenth-Century Child, 180
  - and garden, 183
  - and living history, 179
  - and NPS acquisition of, 101
  - and staff, 182
  - and tours, 182
  - concerts at, 227
  - interpretation of, 107, 179
  - interpretive period of, 183
  - opening of, 104
  - rehabilitation of, 108
  - repairs of, 108
  - restoration of, 103
- Olmsted Jr., Frederick Law, 7, 10, 13, 222
  - and, 1918 Report, 11, 13, 19, 27, 128, 135, 141
  - and, 1918 Rock Creek Park Plan, 11, 13
  - and Fort Drive, 14, 17
  - and McMillian Plan, 11
- Olmsted, Frederick Law, 9, 10
  - and Battleground National Cemetery, 285
- Olmsted, John C., 11, 13, 19
- Ortado, Steve, 95
- Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, 144
- Owen II, Walter H., 15
- Oxon Hill Farm, 91
- Palisades Park, 143
- Parkway Motor Company, 102, 183
- Parrott, Richard, 164
- Parsons, John, 58
  - and Georgetown Waterfront Park funding, 303
  - and Georgetown Waterfront Park plan, 304
  - and height restrictions, 297, 299
- Payson, Lewis E., 54
- Peaslee, Horace, 150, 152, 156, 158, 162, 163, 165
- Peirce Barn, 97, 196
  - as Art Barn, 98
  - origin of, 87
  - relandscaping of, 97
- Peirce Mill
  - and the 1970s, 91
  - and the 1993 shutdown, 94
  - and breakdowns, 195
  - and concessions, 146
  - and fish barriers, 242
  - and interpretation, 194
  - and living history, 194
  - and New Deal, 88, 90
  - and other mills, 87
  - and restoration of, 27

- and selling flour, 90, 91, 244
- and tea house, 88
- and tennis, 129
- and trails, 135, 136, 236
- interpretation of, 193
- origin of, 87
- restoration of, 96
- visitation at, 194
- Peirce Mill Barn, 54
- Peirce Mill dam, 66, 74, 75
- Peirce, Isaac, 87, 88, 99
- Peirce, Joshua, 99
- Percey, Charles, 303
- Peter Muhlenberg Memorial, 258
- Piney Branch Parkway, 27
- Pinto, Jody, 304, 306
- Ploger, Sheila, 94
- Popoff, Anna, 146
- Poretzky, Martin, 86
- Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, 135, 137, 139
- Potomac Boat Club, 312
- Potomac Conservancy, 145
- Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, 189
- Potomac River
  - and Georgetown, 296
  - and pollution, 145
- Potter, Stephen, 122
- Powell, Kay, 215
- Powers, David, 115
- Prince George's County, 23
- Princess Margaret, 261
- Progressive Citizens Association of Georgetown, 102, 179
- ProServ, 134
- Public Citizen, 299
- Public Works Administration, 136, 193, 288
  - and Battleground National Cemetery, 288
- Quaker cemetery, 236
- Quinn Evans Architects, 95, 96
- Racial segregation, 128
- Redmond, Jim, 2, 39, 114, 116, 137
  - and Meridian Hill Park, 159
  - and Montrose Park, 167
  - and outreach, 246
- Reservation, 339, 79
  - and crime, 45, 51
  - and external pressures, 55
  - and recreation, 143
  - and trails, 235
  - boundary markers in, 231
  - definition of, 2
- Rev. Samuel, Morris, 160
- Rittenhouse, Sarah Louisa ("Louie"), 166
- river herring, 74
- Robert Emmet Memorial Committee, 262
- Robert Emmet statue, 261
- Rock Creek
  - and early mills, 87
  - and fish barriers, 75
  - and fish species, 74
  - cleanup of, 40
  - origins of, 33
  - water quality of, 34, 35, 37, 43
- Rock Creek & Potomac Parkway, 3, 21, 22, 26
  - air quality of, 42
  - beauty of, 54
- Rock Creek Conservancy, 33, 41, 233, 240
  - and interpretation, 201
  - and rename Rock Creek Park, 55
- Rock Creek Golf Course, 140
  - and clubhouse, 142
  - and National Register, 143
  - and racial segregation, 140
  - boundary of, 232
  - design of, 141
  - deterioration of, 142
  - location of, 141
- Rock Creek Park
  - access points for, 27
  - administration of, 1
  - and, 1918 plan, 10
  - and archeology, 121, 198
  - and Black History Month, 214
  - and boundary markers, 231
  - and cell phone towers, 57
  - and community gardens, 240
  - and commuter traffic, 23
  - and deer management, 3, 66
  - and early interpretation, 207
  - and fish barriers, 75

- and funding, 96
- and green infrastructure, 38
- and interpretation staffing, 200
- and invasives, 72
- and Long-Range Interpretive Plan, 147, 178, 188, 200
- and management of Georgetown Waterfront Park, 311
- and National Register of Historic Places, 123
- and natural resources, 63, 65
- and politics, 54
- and Reservation, 339, 67, 199
- and resource monitoring, 76
- and scientific studies, 65
- and social trails, 235, 236
- and Spanish-language visitors, 214
- and Stormwater management, 33
- and visitors, 213
- animal sacrifices in, 51
- design of, 10, 13
- establishment of, 1
- General Management Plan of, 25, 27, 33, 42, 65, 240
- legislation of, 1
- management of, 2
- staffing of, 43
- trails of, 134
- visitor study of, 200
- Rock Creek Park Day, 39, 64
  - and Art Barn Association, 99
- Rock Creek Park Historic District, 75, 123
- Rock Creek Park Nature Center, 186
  - and auditorium, 211
  - and deer management, 69
  - design of, 209
  - exhibits in, 209
  - in Klinge Mansion, 100
  - location of, 208
  - opening of, 205
- Rock Creek Park Planetarium
  - and Ms. Seymour system, 213
  - and programming, 213
  - opening of, 211
- Rock Creek Stables, 35, 136
- Rock Creek's Environment
  - and watershed, 33
- Rogers, Elizabeth Barlow, 118
- Roosevelt, Franklin D., 88, 288
- Roosevelt, Theodore, 287
- Rowe Jr., James H., 261
- Saari, Steve, 39, 41, 55, 242, 244
- Saint-Gaudens, Augustus, 10
- Satterthwaite, Ann, 245
  - and boathouses, 313, 315
  - and design of Georgetown Waterfront Park, 305
  - and fundraising, 304
  - and Georgetown Waterfront Park Commission, 303
  - and height restrictions, 299
  - and NPS relationship, 245
- Savage, Kirk, 266
- Scheutze, Henry, 154
- Scott, Gary, 184
- Scott, Pamela, 185
- Sentera, Robin, 310
- Serenity statue, 154, 258
- Sewell, Hattie, 88
- Shabaz, Stan, 264
- Shakespeare Theater Free for All, 224
- Sherrill, Clarence O., 141
- Shields, William, 25, 52, 147, 232, 243, 246
  - and Montrose Park, 168
  - and recreation, 172
- Shoemaker, Louis Peirce, 87
- Shoemaker, William, 287
- Simkin, Paul, 146
- Slade, Lou, 117, 119
- Smaroff, Nancy, 216
- Smith, Clement, 164
- Smith, Frank, 192
- Smith, G. Hubert, 104
- Soapstone Valley Park, 143
- Stanton, Robert, 39, 50, 54, 161, 224, 233, 247, 303
- Stephenson, Brian, 168
- Stevenson, Katherine, 292
- Stewardship Institute, 239
- Stidham, Tammy, 25, 29, 59, 146, 314, 315
- Stoddert Soccer League, 172
- Stonestreet, Edward, 257

- Strach, Steve, 290  
    and Old Stone House, 184  
Student Conservation Association, 139, 215  
Summer in the Parks, 49, 100, 156, 240  
Super Attractions Inc., 222  
Sustaining Our Lands with Volunteer  
    Energy, 241, 248  
Sutton, Robert, 192  
Swain, Rolland, 100, 132  
    and Meridian Hill Park, 160, 243  
    and outreach, 247  
    and politics, 54  
Syphax, Stephen, 235, 241  
Taft, William Howard, 140, 287  
Tangherlini, Dan, 303  
Telecommunications Act of, 1996, 57  
Tennis, 128  
    and CitiBank, 130  
    and Environmental Impact Statement, 133  
    and foundation's contractor, 132  
    and indoor stadium, 130, 132, 133  
    and Legg Mason, 130  
    and Sovereign Bank, 130  
    and tournaments, 226  
    and Virginia Slims, 132  
Tennis Center  
    and cell phone tower, 58  
Thacher, John, 114  
Thomas, Betty, 80, 190, 255  
Thomas, L. Kay, 72  
Thompson Boat Center, 55, 301, 313, 315  
    and concessions, 146, 147  
    condition of, 313  
    construction of, 145  
    student use of, 147  
Thompson, Harry, 110, 113, 114  
Three Sisters Bridge, 23  
Tilden, Freeman, 177  
Toothman, Stephanie, 79  
Trafton, Rebecca, 117  
Trails, 134  
    and bicycles, 138  
    and bridle trails, 135, 136, 137  
    and foot trails, 135, 136  
    and social trails, 134  
Truman, Harry, 221, 301  
Trump, Donald, 9  
Udall, Stewart, 24  
US Environmental Protection Agency, 33,  
    42  
US Park Police, 45, 100, 139, 198, 236, 237  
    and cell towers, 58  
    and Meridian Hill Park, 159, 162  
    and trails, 138  
USS Williamsburg, 301  
Vaux, Calvert, 9, 10, 285  
Victory Garden, 170  
Vietnam Veterans Memorial, 266  
Vitale, Ferruccio, 152  
vom Eigen, Bob, 303, 315  
Wallace Roberts & Todd (WRT), 304  
Walter Pierce Community Park, 56  
Wanderbirds, 135  
Wanderlusts, 135  
Ward Circle, 258  
Washburn, Julia  
    and Adrienne Coleman, 247  
    and Bridging the Watershed, 215, 218  
    and Dumbarton Oaks Park, 114  
    and Old Stone House, 184  
    and outreach, 248  
    and Peirce Mill, 94, 97  
    as superintendent, 28  
Washington, Harold, 48  
Washington Area Bicyclist Association, 26,  
    28, 138, 189, 192  
Washington Area Tennis Patrons  
    Foundation, 129, 130, 225  
Washington Canoe Club, 312  
Washington Committee of, 100, 16  
Washington Harbour, 309  
    and height restrictions, 298  
Washington Harbour Associates, 298, 300  
Washington Hebrew Congregation, 86  
Washington Parks & People, 28, 243  
Washington Star International Tennis  
    Championships, 129  
Washington Tennis & Education  
    Foundation, 129, 226  
Washington Tennis Foundation, 129, 134  
Water recreation, 144  
Waterman, Thomas, 89

- Watt, Raymond, 194
- Weaner, Larry, 119
- Weed Warriors, 241
- West Sellars, Richard, 42
- Western Development Company, 299
- Wheelock, Perry, 122
- Whitby, Sarah, 122
- White, John I., 287
- Whitehaven Park, 143
- Whitehurst Freeway, 297, 302
- Williams, Anthony, 303
- Wilson Bridge
  - and fish migration, 75
- Wilson, Edward O., 117
- Wilson, Woodrow, 140
- Wirth, Conrad, 102, 113, 158, 170
- Wodiczko, Krzystof, 252
- Wolf, Frank, 192
- Wolf, John, 194
- Woods, Robert, 108
- Woodsmen's Club, 208
- Works Progress Administration, 128
- Wright, George Melendez, 72
- WRT, 305, 311
- Yeaman, Bill, 235
  - and cell phone towers, 59
  - and deer management, 70
  - and fish migration, 76
  - and park superintendents, 248
  - and Planetarium, 211
  - and water resources, 33, 36
- Young, John Russell, 18
- Youth Conservation Corps, 121, 231
  - and invasives removal, 73
- Zadorozny, Maggie, 199
  - and Bridging the Watershed, 215, 217
  - and FORCE, 39
  - and interpretation staffing, 200
  - and park superintendents, 246, 247
  - and Peirce Mill, 244
- Zherka, Ilir, 271