



Essex County Parks Archives

Essex County Department of Parks,
Recreation, and Cultural Affairs

SEPTEMBER 2019

ISSUE 20

News:

Historic Prints Donated

The Mattia family recently donated prints of a lovely pastel of Branch Brook Park in autumn by family patriarch Petrino B. Mattia, who immigrated here in 1873.

Be part of the 125th Anniversary celebration of the Essex County Parks, too! If you have old photos taken by your family in any of the Essex County parks, the Parks Archives would enjoy seeing them and hearing your cherished park memories as we prepare for this special anniversary in 2020. Send digital images and written stories to archives@parks.essexcountynj.org or call 973-735-6230 to discuss.

Upcoming:

Newark Parks Talk

“The Essex County Park System: A Solution to Newark’s Struggle for Parkland” will be presented by archivist Kathy Kaulh at the meeting of the Newark History Society at NJPAC on Mon., Sep. 16 at 6 pm. The public is invited.



Essex County Executive
Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr.

and the Board of Chosen Freeholders

115 Clifton Ave., Newark, NJ 07104

www.essex-countynj.org

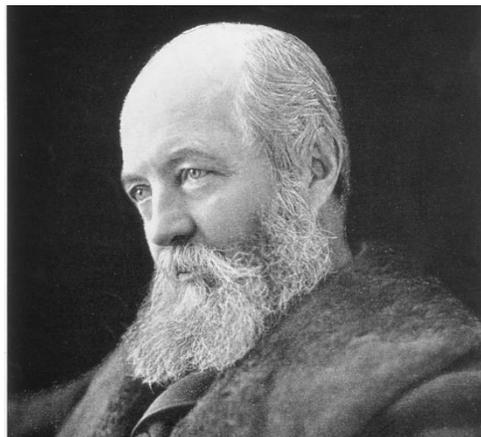
973-735-6231

Putting Essex County First

Calling on the Experts: Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.

In September 1894, having heard many suggestions from local municipalities and organizations, the Essex County Park Commission clamored for expert advice. They planned to meet with five landscape architecture firms with experience on large urban parks.

The first of the firms to be contacted was Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot, headed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. At that time, the other principals were his son John Charles Olmsted and Charles Eliot. In their correspondence, the Park Commission explicitly stated their "wish and expectation that the commission obtain the personal services and report of Frederick Law Olmsted."



Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.

Olmsted had previously been invited to Essex County in regard to parks. After the Civil War, during which he ran the U.S. Sanitary Commission, he was already well-known for his landscape design, and New York’s Central Park in particular. In 1867, at the invitation of a Newark Park Commission, Olmsted had reported on the benefits of a park at Branch Brook in the

northern part of the city. Despite his endorsement, Newark was unable to create the park at that time. In 1886, he ruefully stated that Newark was a town without a park and that, "there is not another (city) in the country that is more in need of one."

Now a quarter century later, Essex County sought the prestige associated with the pre-eminent landscape architect and hoped work in Newark would have a deep significance for the senior Olmsted, as well. However, Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. was retiring, and the firm he had created was busy with other projects.