



ParkNotes

A semiannual newsletter published by the Lafayette Park Conservancy

Issue 28

Spring 2021

Preserve The Past In The New



Old (on left) and new fence sections flank the path to the Park House.



Work in progress on the new fence sections.



Six new sections were completed just before ParkNotes was printed.

Six sections of the new fence were erected along Lafayette Avenue near the Park House this spring. Be on the lookout as more sections go up in the future.

The fence has undergone a transformation since it was first erected in 1869. By the 1970s it had become structurally unsound and the City was forced to take action. New, and shorter, fence posts were cast and the fence's base element was eliminated. A new support system was used but it began to fail shortly after the fence was reinstalled.

Neighborhood surveys showed that "Fixing the Fence" was a top priority item. The Lafayette Park Conservancy (LPC) undertook the project with the intention to reconstruct it according to the original design of Francis Tunica. Tunica was an engineer who worked with Henry Shaw in Tower Grove Park and was the winner of a design competition for Lafayette Park's fence.

The LPC's first attempt to reconstruct the fence was hampered by changes made to the fence in the 1970s and some slight changes had to be made. The sections erected recently use new, and taller, fence posts and structural base girders made according to Tunica's design.

The fence is composed of both new and old parts but faithfully resembles Tunica's design. The LPC will add new sections moving west along Lafayette Avenue. It is a huge project. The fence sections are 15 feet long; the whole fence is 4,400 feet long.

1876 Bandstand Update: New Technology Preserves The Past

In January, Frontenac Engineering came to Lafayette Park and made 3D laser scans of the existing stone base of the bandstand and a topographic survey of the site.

In February, Baltis Architects began design meetings with John Vinci of Vinci Hamp Architects. The first meeting reviewed all of the original historic photographs and the recent 3D scan documentation, as well as initial design drawings and material studies for the columns. The topographic survey from the civil engineer will be used to develop site studies and a grading plan for ADA access based on John Vinci's recommendations.

During the past two months work has focused on developing architectural drawings of the pavilion floor plan, columns & column details, spandrel arches and brackets above the columns, and roof profile drawings based on the original photographs. Baltis Architects meets weekly with John Vinci via Zoom to screen-share the drawings and discuss his recommendation. To date, dimensioned AutoCAD floor plan drawings with accurate geometry, including the column and column locations, stairs, and an accurate tile pattern layout based on the existing remnants of the original tile have been made. Roof profile/elevation studies in AutoCAD based on the original photos are currently being developed.

John Vinci is quite enthusiastic about working with the Lafayette Park Conservancy on this historic project and he is working closely with Baltis Architects to provide ongoing design input and guidance.



Photo of the 1876 bandstand in Lafayette Park from the State Historical Society of Missouri in Columbia.



Frontenac Engineering made 3D laser scans and topographic survey of bandstand ruins and surrounding area.

The LPC offers these presentations for you organization:

- “Dr. William Swecosky: The Dentist Who Became the Pallbearer of Old St. Louis”
- “Harriet Hosmer's Statue of Thomas Hart Benton: St. Louis' First Piece of Public Art”
- “The Guns of Lafayette Park: St. Louis' Monument to the Revolutionary War”
- “The Fascinating History of Lafayette Park”
- “The Man Who Made St. Louis Beautiful”

For information, contact the Lafayette Park Conservancy at:
secretary@lafayettepark.org

Senior Residents Defy the Forces of Nature

Retired, but not resting, several hardworking senior residents tackled a project that became necessary after critters and weather caused damage to the Cook Pavilion. To this editor's knowledge, none of these flexible, gravity-defying folks was older than the Pavilion. The Lafayette Park Conservancy is restoring the decorative fascia below the roof of the Cook pavilion. Since the pavilion was built in the early 1900s, the wood had been repainted many times. The woodwork is being stripped and damaged wood replaced. Lead paints were used when the pavilion was built, so the paint was stripped using proper lead abatement techniques.

Squirrels chewed through the edge of the roof and set up living quarters in the space between the roof and ceiling. Tom Dahms and Ward Buckner, two longtime residents with tons of restoration experience, hoped to finish repairs before the May wedding season began. April showers slowed progress, but 6 of the 8 sides were restored by May 1. Merry Dahms and Warren Hoffmann undertook the task of painting the intricate woodwork. The paint colors were chosen to match the earliest paint found in the stripping process.

The composition roof needs to be replaced. Squirrels chewed the edge of the composition roofing on the front of the pavilion. It is estimated the pavilion will need a new roof in a year or two. According to the Lafayette Square Archives files, the roof was last replaced in 1987, making it 34 years old. This pavilion was built after the 1896 tornado. When built, the pavilion had a red clay tile roof. Hopefully that clay tile roof can be replicated.



Left: Ward Buckner, Warren Hoffmann and Tom Dahms reassembled the intricate fascia.



Right: Merry Dahms and Ward Buckner painting decorative woodwork.



Community Volunteer Bob Bischoff Passes Away

The Lafayette Park Conservancy lost a dedicated member on December 23, 2020. Robert Bischoff passed away after an illness at the age of 76. Bob was a treasured resident of the Lafayette Square community, and will be sorely missed. Robert Bischoff served as President of the Conservancy from 2007 to 2011. *ParkNotes*, the Conservancy's newsletter, was his creation. Bob was responsible for the Conservancy's first major grant from the Whitaker Foundation. The \$75,000 grant was used to restore the pathways in the south-east quadrant of the park, stabilize the Grotto Bridge and reconnect the bridge to the park's pathway system. As a Master Gardener, he maintained the Washington Monument gardens for many years. After his term as President, he continued to serve on the Lafayette Park Conservancy Advisory Board.

To honor Bob, the Conservancy and neighborhood friends will place a memorial bench in one of his favorite spots in Lafayette Park.

The mission of the Lafayette Park Conservancy is to restore and preserve the historic legacy of Lafayette Park, the first developed urban park in the Louisiana Purchase Territory, and to raise funds for those purposes.

I want to begin or renew my membership to the Lafayette Park Conservancy

Membership Level:

- \$35 - Friend (one named member)
- \$50 - Family (two named members)
- \$75 - Botanist (two named members)
- \$150 - Historian (two named members)
- \$300 - Preservationist (two named members)
- \$500 - Benton Society (two named members)
- \$1,000 - Lafayette Society (two named members)
- My company will match my gift (include a matching form from your employer)*
- In addition to my membership, or instead of, I'd like to make a special donation toward*

\$ _____ Fence Restoration. \$ _____ Tree Maintenance.
 \$ _____ 1876 Bandstand. \$ _____ Other Projects.

*Memberships are valid for one year from date of joining and are tax-deductible to the extent allowable under IRS regulations.
 The LPC is a 501(c)3 organization.*



Name(s): _____
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Please return with check or money order payable to:
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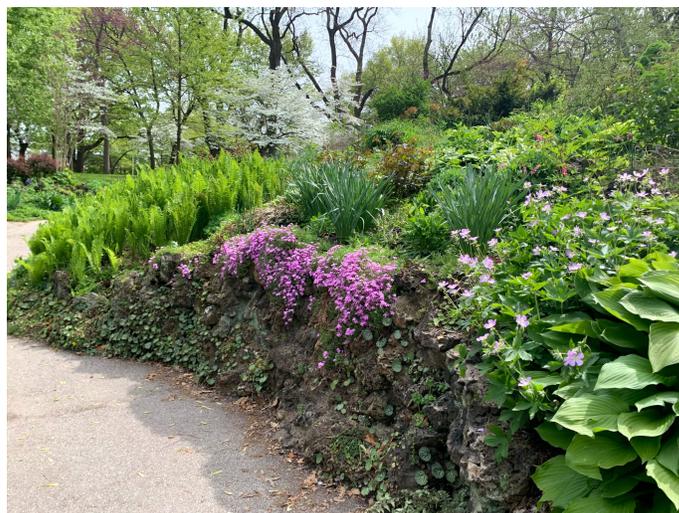
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Springtime in the Grotto area behind the Pavilion.



Heartfelt thanks to the Arts Council of Lafayette Square for this beautiful Valentine's Day display.