



ParkNotes

a semiannual newsletter published by the Lafayette Park Conservancy

Issue 16

Spring 2015

A Blooming Good Time!

After a snowy winter, gardeners are excited to be back in the park. The first official workday was April 11. Flora Conservancy of Forest Park volunteers joined neighborhood gardeners to weed, trim, rake and plant. Efforts were centered around the Washington Statue and the Rock Garden on the west side of the park. The landscaping around Washington Statue has changed many times since its installation in 1869. Two years ago, curbing was installed around the 5 circular beds. Marilyn Lane is lead gardener for the Washington area gardens.

The Rock Garden was originally a water complex with a waterfall and fountains. The rock lining the garden today was part of that 1870 feature. Vickie Houghton heads this garden area.

The beautiful carved stone urn in the northwest quadrant of the park is undergoing a major replanting. Under the leadership of Rob Forrest, soil was removed from the massive urn to open the drainage system. "Urnee" will be replanted later this spring. Thanks Rob, you've "urned" our respect. The urn was an early feature of the park.

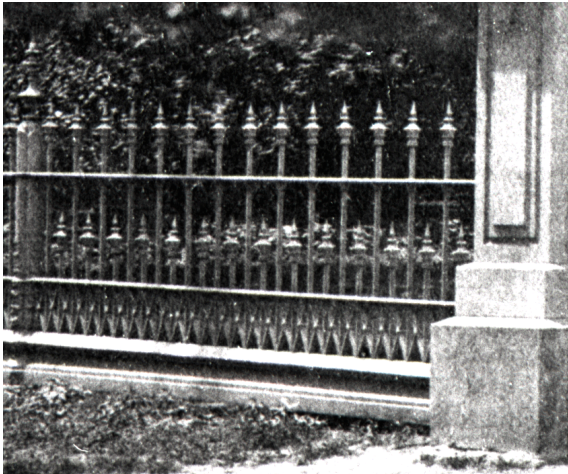
Flora Conservancy of Forest Park returned to the Grotto area to blow leaves out of the flowerbeds and trim back grasses and other plants. Mark Kalk, Susan Pinker-Dodd and Carolyn Willmore are garden leaders for the Grotto. During the early months of 2015, Lafayette Square volunteers have been raising plants for Lafayette Park at the greenhouses in Forest Park. With support provided by the Flora Conservancy of Forest Park over 1500 plants were grown for our use.



Views of neighborhood and Flora Conservancy volunteers working in the park for a recent work day in early spring.



Mending Fences



Lafayette Park fence section circa 1895 showing the complete structure including the skirting at

As the 150th anniversary of the 1869 erection of the Lafayette Park fence approaches, the LPC Fence Committee continues planning for restoration of the park's iconic enclosure. It has been almost 40 years since the fence was last restored. At that time the fence was shortened by about 10 inches with the removal of the skirt that ran along the bottom of each section.

The committee has learned a lot about the fence's construction in the past few months, including having the fence x-rayed in order to see internal post structure. It turns out the missing skirt served as a structural girder and must be replaced to stop the fence sections from sagging.

The fence is a daunting project given its length of more than 4,000 feet and thousands of individual components. In the short term, the LPC is soliciting bids to recreate one of the 14 missing fence gates.

This fence is one of the rarest survivors, an elaborate example of 19th century ironwork built for a public space on a massive scale. "Saving the Fence" will be the Conservancy's major project for the next few years.

President's Report by Ward Buckner

The Park House has been restored, statues have been conserved, the Boathouse has become the Kern Pavilion and work is about to start on repairing the entrance gates and the fence. The word "Conservancy" was chosen for the name of this organization in recognition of the fact that its first duty is to protect what is here. A second duty is to document and restore what has been lost.

We are mindful of the fact that a lot of the park's original features are not here today. The base of the 1876 Music Stand is an obvious reminder of what we have lost. We know that the rock garden was once part of the path around a series of ponds decorated with a spray fountain and water cascades. Other lost items have left no clues that they were here. The iron Chinese Pavilion near the Park and Mississippi corner has vanished. The original music pavilion overlooking the lake on the high ground on its east side is gone. Photographs are the only remains of these and other lost features.

Additional pathway resurfacing should get underway soon. There is a shortfall in funding available for the Grotto Bridge Hand Rail. All of the proceeds from sale of Park Bonds allotted for the park have been committed. We are exploring ways to close the funding gap.

Doggie bag consumption dipped slightly in 2014 to 40,000 bags from the high of 42,000 in 2013. Usage has picked up with the improvement in weather and keeping all four stands in the park fully stocked is a challenge. The restroom doors in the Kern are finally open. The delay in getting them open seems to be due to the lack of enough personnel to open them after seasonal employees are laid off by the Parks Department. What will happen to the port-a-potties is a mystery.

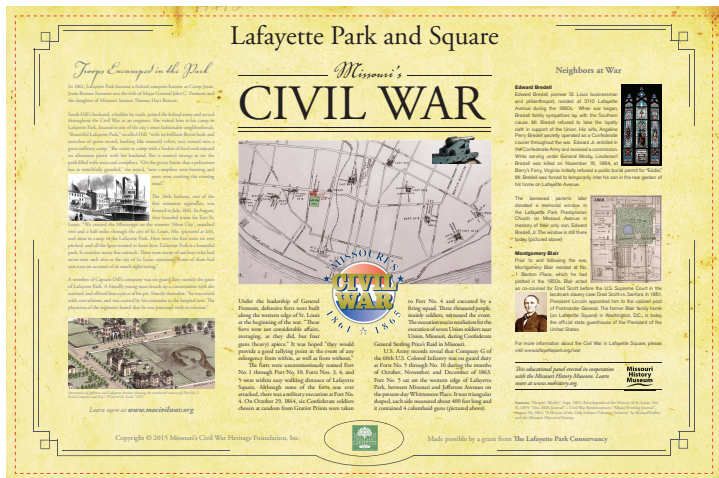
"It's Elementary" Trivia Night a Success

Lafayette Square neighbors and friends gathered at St. Vincent DePaul Church Hall on March 7 for a rousing game of Trivia. This year's theme was "It's Elementary." Several teams came dressed as elementary school children. Principal Rob from the winning best themed table maintained order and handed out hall passes. A silent auction, raffle, 50/50, and games of "Dead or Alive" and "Heads or Tails" filled out the evening. The event raised nearly \$6,000. The proceeds will be used to restore the second of three Revolutionary War guns.

The evening was presented with the help of By-Ron Entertainment.



Civil War Plaque Dedication



The year of 2015 marks the 150th anniversary of the end of the Civil War. In recognition of the anniversary the LPC collaborated with the Missouri Civil War Heritage Foundation to create a panel dealing the many interesting events that happened in the neighborhood during those war years. Montgomery Blair, U.S. Postmaster General and a member of Abraham Lincoln's cabinet, lived on Park Avenue just north of the park at the start of the war. Union soldiers used the park as a campground while they awaited orders to travel south to the fighting. A large earthwork fort sat on the western edge of Lafayette Park, between Missouri and Jefferson Avenues on the present day Whittemore Place. The fort was triangular shaped, each side measured about 400 feet long and it contained 4 large guns. The panel was dedicated on May 16th with a ceremony that featured a Civil War color guard organized as the 8th Missouri Volunteer Infantry as well as dramatizations of life in Lafayette Square during the Civil War by ETC. Senior Theatre. Family activities and refreshments were located in the Kern Lakeside Pavilion.

Read the entire panel shown above on your next stroll through the park or view it online at:

lafayettepark.org/civilwar.pdf

Park and Mississippi Corner Entrance

The four corner entrances to the park were designed to be at once monumental, attractive and inviting. The massive pair of iron carriage gates mounted between tall limestone gate posts flanked by smaller but still imposing pairs of iron gates for pedestrians were designed to impress. The tall gas light fixtures placed on the gate posts a few years later gave more proof that Lafayette Park was not just an ordinary park. The entrance at Park & Mississippi has always been the most heavily utilized entrance and in some ways the least attractive and inviting. It is improving. The cracked and mismatched slabs of concrete between the curb and gates have been replaced but two of the four pedestrian gates are missing. All four of the fence posts mounted beside the pedestrian gates are shattered or missing.

First things first. The Conservancy has ordered a new pedestrian gate from Perpetua Iron LLC, St. Louis. We are negotiating with a major national foundry to cast new fence posts. The missing ironwork there will be replaced when we have all the parts. Then we can move on to the other entrances.



Park and Mississippi entrance gate.

Need a Program for your Organization?

Lafayette Park Conservancy offers two PowerPoint presentations for your meeting or organizational event: "The Man Who Made St. Louis Beautiful" rediscovers the German-American Landscape Gardener who designed many St. Louis parks including Lafayette Park and Forest Park and created the landscape plan for Westmoreland and Portland Places. "The Fascinating History of Lafayette Park" takes you from the St. Louis Common to Lafayette Park today with emphasis on the Victorian Era.

To schedule a program, contact Carolyn at cwillmore@gmail.com. The cost for a program is \$50 for a not-for-profit organization.

Friends are saying,
"Join the Conservancy!"

I/we want to join/renew at the following membership level.

- \$35 - Friend
- \$50 - Family
- \$75 - Botanist
- \$150 - Historian
- \$300 - Preservationist
- \$500 - Benton Society
- \$1000 - Lafayette Society

Name(s):

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Memberships are valid for one year. The Lafayette Park Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. If your contribution is eligible for a matching gift, please include your company's matching form. Return with your order to:

Lafayette Park Conservancy

2023 Lafayette Avenue

St. Louis, MO 63104

Or make your contribution on our website using
PayPal:

www.lafayettepark.org

- I want to donate \$_____ to the Fence Project.
- I want to donate \$_____ to the Guns Project.



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