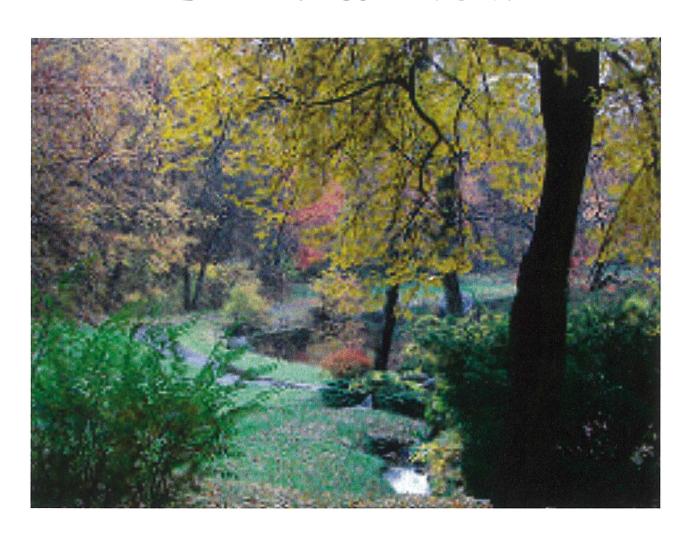
# Lewis E. Fulton Memorial Park Then & Now



# A Tour of Historic Fulton Park

This guide was designed and created by the Historic Overlook Community Club (HOCC) and made possible through support from the Backhus Foundation. Their support of this project is greatly appreciated.

Historic images, maps and photographs are courtesy of HOCC members; the Silas Bronson Library; the Republican-American newspaper; the internet; and, the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, National Park Service

The HOCC encourages your support of the restoration of Lewis E. Fulton Memorial Park.

2016



Historic Overlook Community Club (HOCC) is a nonprofit community organization dedicated to the preservation and improvement of the Historic Overlook Neighborhood of Waterbury, Connecticut.

The future of historic Fulton Park is near and dear to the mission of our organization. If you've enjoyed this self-guided tour, we would appreciate your support. Your contributions now will make it possible for the Park's restoration to move forward for years to come!

Historic Overlook Community Club 551 Willow Street Waterbury, CT 06710 www.msalvio1.wix.com/minimal-layout

# Lewis E. Fulton Memorial Park Then and Now: A Visitor's Guide

# Fulton Park in a Snapshot

Lewis E. Fulton Memorial Park (Fulton Park) is the "Central Park" of Waterbury, Connecticut and the region. Located in the center of Waterbury, this 70-acre treasure was designed by the Olmsted Brothers, the successor landscape architecture firm to Frederick Law Olmsted, renowned designer of New York City's Central Park and recognized "Father of American Landscape Architecture."

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), Fulton Park is a prime example of classic Olmsted design and is a great park to explore if you want to learn about what makes Olmsted parks so special and so uniquely American. A picturesque park with rolling terrain and broad vistas framed by trees, meadows punctuated by ponds and streams, woodlands filled with old stone walls and hiking paths, rubblestone Arts and Crafts buildings, lush gardens and recreational facilities, Fulton Park is a true oasis from urban life. It also embodies Olmsted's democratic approach to designing parks - to him they were an escape to the country for city residents - a place that would nourish their physical, social and emotional needs. To Olmsted, a park was not decoration; it had real purpose.

How did Fulton Park come to be? Fulton Park sits on what was originally a reservoir. In the early 1900s, Waterbury was a prominent New England industrial center, a world leader in the manufacture of brass. The impetus to create Fulton Park came from William E. Fulton, President of the Waterbury Farrel Foundry and Machine Company. In 1919, he acquired land around the reservoir which was no longer used by the City. With a dream of creating a magnificent park, he contracted with the Olmsted Brothers landscape firm in Brookline, Massachusetts to begin designs. A year later, in 1920, William Fulton and his wife Ida met with Waterbury Mayor Sandlar. The Fultons and the City agreed to jointly fund construction of the Park. The Park was constructed from 1920-1925 and was then donated by the Fultons to the City and dedicated by them to their recently deceased son, Lewis.

Today, the Park retains most of the original buildings and structures designed by the Olmsted Brothers. Larger landscape features such as maples, some pines, mountain laurels, rhododendrons, and lilacs have survived, but in many cases are overgrown or damaged by storms, disease etc. The various gardens and naturalistic planting areas retain their outlines, but most of the smaller perennial plantings no larger exist. These features are awaiting restoration. The overall integrity of major landscape elements such as the ponds, stone walls, arched bridges, terraces, and walkways remains intact and conveys the character of the cherished classic Olmsted American landscape.

# The Olmsted Legacy

What are the hallmarks of an Olmsted Park? The answer is quite simple - to create a naturalistic setting where the whole effect outweighs the individual details and nourishes the mind, heart and soul of each person. A lofty ambition - but how is this achieved? Olmsted's approach was to:

- Recognize the genius of the individual place take advantage of unique characteristics of the land and local materials
- Create a unified composition rather than a sum of many parts. Subordinate details to the "elegance of design."
- Think of landscape as "art to conceal art," a wonderful succession of framed vistas, a composition of elements framing the whole, a play of contrasting light and darks and perspective effects
- Aim to create a peacefulness of spirit, creating a pastoral, countryside setting with picturesque and complex layers of landscape forms. Layer ground cover, then shrubs, trees and vines. Express the lushness and naturalness of the site as if nature itself designed the park.
- Emphasize the organic, not the decorative; and
- Maintain the functionality and sustainability of a park.

Unlike European gardens of the day, an Olmsted Park is rarely a display of symmetric geometric shapes. Paths and roads wind around the contours of the land in asymmetric fashion. Ponds and streams are visual elements in a perspective setting while also serving public recreation needs. Gardens are not imposed on the land. Instead, trees, shrubs, flowers and vines work in harmony within the natural landscape as if always there. Olmsted was not shy in rebuking the popular gardening fads of the day, where showy, bright flowers were planted like soldiers in a row. As he pointed out, he much preferred a wild flower on a grassy bank to a gaudy hybrid flower that attracted immediate attention.

## Using this Guidebook

Welcome to Fulton Park. This guidebook is a tool...we hope you will find it both helpful and informative as you explore the many fascinating features and "nooks and crannies" of Fulton Park. We won't tell you which paths to take, since the Park's walkways curve and loop and you'll be crisscrossing the park continuously. In many cases, you'll just have to make your own choice as to what you want to explore first. So put on your walking shoes, relax and enjoy the experience, just as Olmsted would want you to do. You won't get lost!

We're starting at the entrance to the southern section of the Park, the area first designed and completed from 1920-23. We'll be highlighting various points of interest as we move from south to north following the Park's original construction from 1920-25. We are not attempting to discuss all the Park's features. Some will be left for your discovery. Historic photos, when available, will be used to provide you with an appreciation of the Park's history and Olmsted design aesthetics, along with an understanding of what changes have occurred in the past 100 years, what restoration projects have been completed, and what's left to come. As you tour the Park, please be mindful that the restoration is still in progress and will continue throughout years to come.

# Fulton Memorial Park Walking Tour Let's Go!

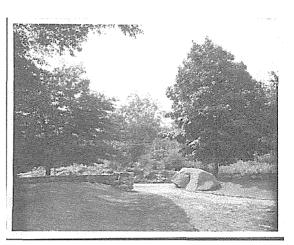


### 1. Fulton Park Southern Entrance

A walking tour of Fulton Park starts at the Park's original southwest entrance located at the intersection of Cooke and Pine Streets. Early photographs show that the large entrance boulder (found and shaped on site) and its commemorative plaque were in place by September 20, 1920. The entrance today is nearly identical to how it looked in 1920, with the exception of asphalt paving which has replaced what originally appears to be crushed stone on the walking paths. Even the large yew shrub, though now overgrown and somewhat obstructive of the view, appears on the original planting plan. This southern area of the Park was the first section to be designed and completed by the Olmsted Brothers. Literature on the Park suggests that this southern area benefitted from the greatest investment and the most lavish planting scheme, as funds for Park sections to the north had to be stretched thinner as the Park's construction stretched on throughout the next five years.



Park Entrance today. The memorial plaque dedicates the Park to the Fultons' son Lewis, who died in 1917.



1920 view looking through the entrance from inside the Park.

### 2. Lilv Pond

Passing through the entrance, walking paths divert to the right and left. Looking straight ahead, you see a grassy outcropping - what was originally a lovely lily pond. This is not a surprising Olmsted choice. The informal lily pond was selected to reflect ever-shifting patterns of light, shade and color across the water's surface. The lily pond is not unlike what you would expect to see in the countryside or in a Monet waterlilies painting. Unfortunately, today the lily pond is filled with sedimentation and grasses. Good news - a long-term pond and watercourse restoration project bodes well for bringing the lily pond back!



Lily Pond Today

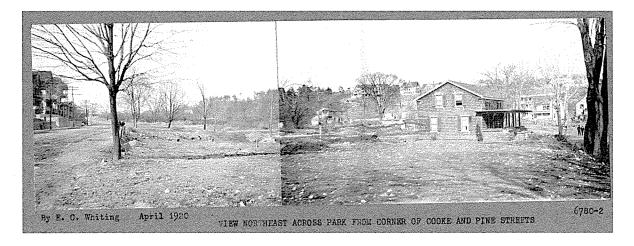


Looking toward the Lily Pond (on right) under construction from the entrance. Future hemlock grove at left of photo

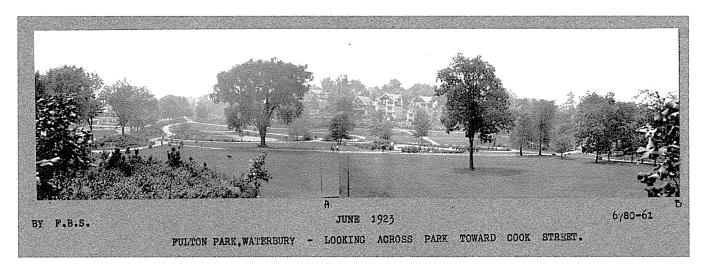
### 3. Southern Meadow

As you stand at the entrance, should you choose to go to the right, you'll be walking along a beautiful rubblestone wall bordering the length of Pine Street. With all their stones gathered on site, the Park's walls are not just beautiful, but functional, as they shelter park visitors from the nearby traffic and noise of the urban environment. In the 1920s, the wall's border featured the "layered" planting approach that Olmsted so often used. Here, the existing maples and newly planted white and red pines are placed to the rear; the shorter, flowering dogwoods, magnolia and hawthorn trees are in the middle landscape; and, clusters of yellow forsythia bushes and wild shrub roses are interspersed with ground covers planted underneath. Today, only a few maples and isolated pines remain. However, in the 1920s, the border with its curved edges would have been a riot of color in the spring, with the greens of the conifers carrying the day in the wintertime. Nearer the entrance, the visitor would have been greeted by a curved bed of shrub roses and euonymus.

This deeply planted border helped create the illusion of a serene country meadow where families could picnic, play lawn games or escape the toils of city living. Olmsted kept the space open and expansive, expressly for that functional purpose. Today, although the lush border no longer exists, the meadow has been kept largely as Olmsted envisioned.



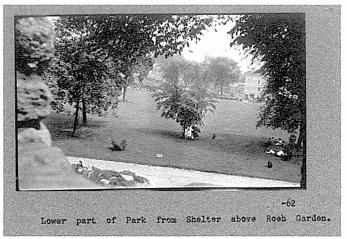
View across the corner of Pine and Cooke Streets in 1920 before construction of the southern meadow and walls



View across the southern meadow in 1923. Pine Street is on the left, Cooke along the rear of the photo. The lily pond and wading pool are visible in the center of the photo. Note the curving outlines of the shrub borders and the way the trees frame a view through the center of the landscape.



Southern meadow today with new copper beech trees



1920s view of picnickers with shade umbrellas in the meadow

### 4. Lilac Grove

Going back to the southern entrance, let's go left this time along Cooke Street. Though paralleling the layered wall planting scheme we saw along Pine Street, the experience is quite different and more intimate. In the 1920s, the border along Cooke Street would once again have been again planted with shrub roses, dogwoods, white pine trees, forsythia, honeysuckle, plum trees and more, but there would have been a prominent hemlock grove to your right as you walk north, creating a quiet area of shade. Emerging from the shade of the hemlocks, you would then walk into the sunlight of a colorful grove of 111 lilac trees. A favorite of Olmsted, lilac groves appear in numerous Olmsted parks throughout the country. As we examine what remains today of the original design, you'll notice a few maples along with with a handful of lilac shrubs. Changes are coming soon though, as community volunteers are working to replant the lilac grove in 2015 following the original Olmsted planning plan.



The lilac grove today with its narrow winding garden paths. An old-fashioned garden shrub, lilacs are prominent in numerous Olmsted-designed parks and evoke a sense of American nostalgia and comfort.



Photo taken by Mr. Fulton in 1922 shows the southern area of the park laid out with plantings in place, and a kidney-shaped wading pool in the center. The Cooke/Pine Street entrance is on the lower left. The large body of water in the upper center is the old reservoir. By 2016, many of the southern walking paths will be reconstructed and repaved by the City as part of ongoing Park restoration efforts.

### 5. Southern Rubblestone Fountain (former Wading Pool)

Just north of the lily pond stands a circular rubblestone fountain. No longer in operation, it has long been thought to be original to the Park, until recently discovered historic photos reveal otherwise. These photos reveal that a kidney-shaped, almost modernistic wading pool was originally located here. The organically-shaped wading pool is in keeping with Olmsted's view that parks should integrate recreational features into their design. The curvilinear shape would have complemented the winding walkways and shrub borders, while offering picnickers a place to cool off on a hot summer day. There is no information as to when the original wading pool was removed and the rubblestone fountain installed, but it may coincide with the later construction (date unknown) of a newer wading pool in the picnic area near the Park's Warming Hut. Although the present fountain is constructed of rubblestone, the fountain's scale, regularity of shape and lack of relationship to its setting, reveal it as non-original to the Olmsted design.



Today's rubblestone fountain (not in operation)

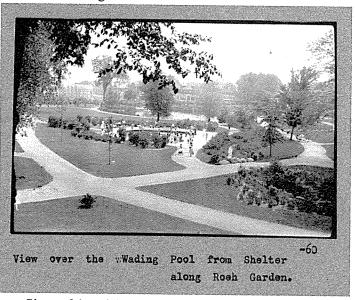


Photo of the original wading pool with surrounding planted berms. What a beauty!

### 6. Rock Garden and Fulton Memorial

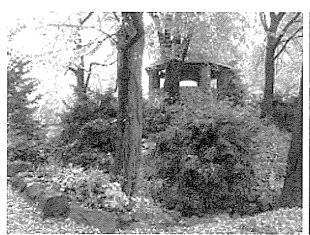
Walking north from the rubblestone fountain and crossing the small brook, you will next encounter a rise of land and embankment with an octagonal gazebo located on its top. The embankment, surrounding areas and stream beds are the site of the Park's original rock garden. While overgrown today, and unrecognizable compared to its former glory, the rock garden is slated for a multi-year restoration beginning in 2015. With the mixed shrub and perennial garden above the embankment, rock garden plants covering the banks, flowering ornamental trees along the stone staircases, naturalized plantings along the stream beds, and the lilac grove to the south, springtime in this area of the Park would have been spectacular. Original rock garden planting plans are evidence of the Olmsted approach to landscape design - naturalistic, often understated, with plants subordinated to the painterly impression of the whole. If you have a chance, take a look at the Fulton memorial at the bottom of the rock garden stairs. Though the original bronze plaque is absent (now on display in the Park's Warming Hut), there are plans to install a replica on the monument.



Memorial to the William and Ida Fulton.

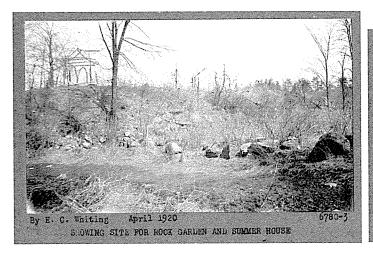


The memorial plaque now on display in the Park's Warming Hut.



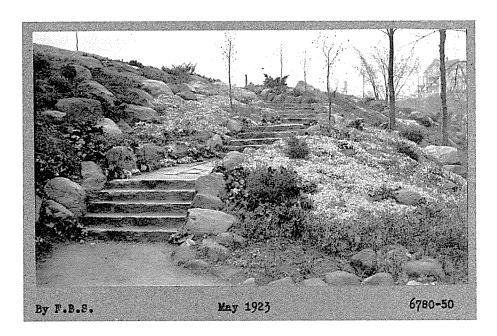


Views of the overgrown rock garden today

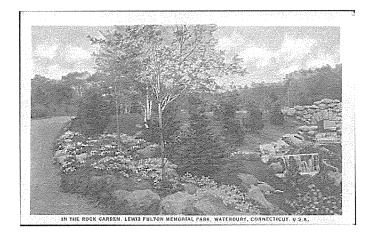




Left- Photos of 1920 rock garden site before construction with pencil drawing of gazebo by E.C. Whiting, Park landscape architect Right- Photo of constructed gazebo and rock garden contours showing the vast extent of the rock garden as a park feature



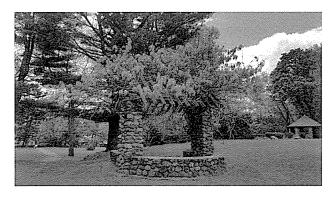
1923- Young garden in bloom showing planted flowering trees up the stairway and naturalistic garden plantings



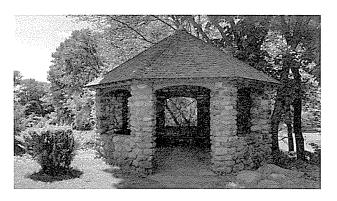
Early color postcard of the Fulton Park rock gardens

### 7. Gazebo

Overlocking the vast rock garden is the Park's gazebo." It was likely intended as a shelter from the elements and an "overlook" from which to view the southern meadow and extensive gardens below. Constructed in native rubblestone, there are built-in benches for seating and large arched windows for gazing at the Park in all directions. The octagonal gazebo sits on the edge of the overlook and can be approached either from below via stone staircases built into the hillside or from above, across the lawn from the walking path adjacent to the central pond. As historic photos indicate, the present-day lawn was once a larger mixed shrub and perennial garden with winding footpaths connected to the gazebo and the still-existing pergola. Today, the gazebo sits disconnected (without an entrance path) from the main walkway. The City has recently restored the gazebo and intends to install a new access walkway across the lawn as part of a 2016 walkway reconstruction project.



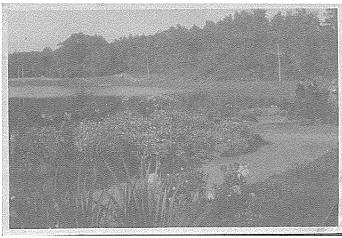
Gazebo, pergola and lawn today (replacing former garden); wisteria in bloom



Gazebo today, restored in 2015



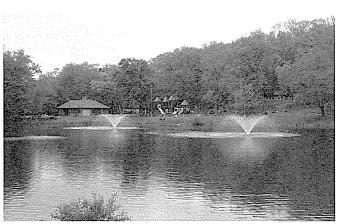
1923 photo of gazebo, pergola in construction and future garden paths. At top right, the future pine grove is planted.

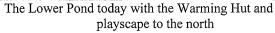


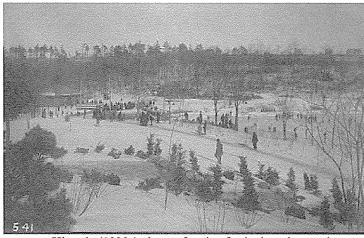
1920s photo - People strolling through the lush gazebo garden

### 8. Lower (central) Pond

As you look north from the gazebo, your focus shifts once again to a large open expanse of water, referred to as the "Lower Pond" in historic documents. This pond sits on the site of a former City reservoir and was intended to be used for swimming in the summer and public ice skating in the winter. In early decades, winter festivals and public skating took place on the pond. Today, the pond rarely freezes long enough for skating, but is experiencing new use for recreational boating. Community efforts and an environmental grant resulted in the removal of invasive plants from the pond in 2015. A boat dock on the pond's south shore is due for installation in 2016.







Historic (1920s) photo of an ice festival on the pond

### 9. Pine Grove

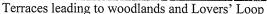
Along the southwestern side of the Lower Pond, bordering Cooke Street, are the remnants of what used to be a large pine grove. Still beautiful today, the stately pines have been hit hard and damaged by storms.



### 10. Woodlands and Lover's Loop

A walk along the eastern side of the Lower Pond will lead you to natural woodlands occupying an embankment bordering the pond. A series of terraced steps leads up to a natural path which loops throughout the woodlands. This circular path has appropriately been dubbed "Lovers' Loop" Additional hiking paths are interspersed throughout the woodlands. In the past several years, community volunteers have put in thousands of hours of volunteer labor, clearing the woodlands to reveal historic paths and stone walls. The removal of underbrush has resulted in the reappearance of decades-old daffodils.



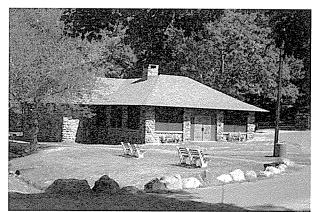




1920 view of the bare woodlands embankment

### 11. Warming Hut

A well-recognized symbol of Fulton Park is the rubblestone Arts and Crafts-style building sitting on the northern edge of the Lower Pond. Originally a "Warming Hut" for public skating and community facility in the early decades of the park, it fell into disrepair in the late 1900s. Newly restored by the City in 2015 through local, state and federal funding, this historic structure is once again a community building available for public use. Its architectural details, such as the natural stonework and low hipped-roof, are repeated in buildings throughout the park and are characteristic of the American Arts and Crafts movement. The "woodsy" style of the building, its colors and materials blend seamlessly into the Olmsted landscape.



Newly-restored Warming Hut re-opened for public use in 2015



Warming Hut interior with original Fulton entrance plaque



View of new playground adjacent to Warming Hut

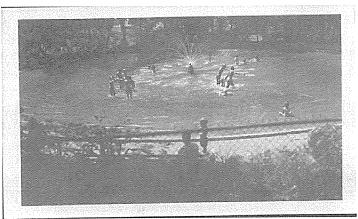
### 12. Outdoor Barbecue Circle

If you want to feel a bit of nostalgia, take a short walk from the Warming Hut to the back of the adjacent playground. You'll find a barbecue circle with amphitheater-style rows of rubblestone seating - a quaint bit of history that has been well-used over the decades. Close your eyes and imagine rows of children roasting marshmallows on a summer evening!

### 13. Central Park Wading Pool

Located on a rise above the Park playground is a large 80-ft wide circular wading pool surrounded by park benches, two historic rubblestone bathhouses, a shaded sitting area and a small connecting rubblestone fountain. A popular attraction throughout the years, this amenity is showing its age and is due for a complete renovation in 2016. Park documents indicate that the wading pool is not original to the Park. This was originally a picnic area with two bath houses, which may have also been used as concession stands. If that is the case, it might explain the disappearance of the original kidney-shaped wading pool in the southern area of the Park, as this newer wading pool was later constructed on this site, thus replacing the need for the southern Olmsted original.



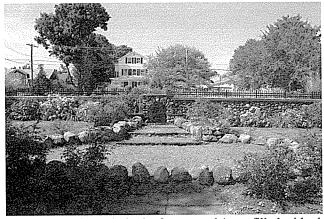


Wading Pool today

Photo from the mid-1900s

### 14. Rose and Perennial Gardens and Fountain

While public recreation is the focus to the right of the Warming Hut, the area to the left along Cooke Street features a picturesque stone bridge, winding drive, rubblestone wading fountain and gardens. The tiered fountain is no longer in operation and its basins are filled with earth and flower plantings until funds are available for its restoration. Surrounding the former fountain is a small rose garden with hydrangeas along the rubblestone wall to the rear. Above the fountain, accessed by stairs, is an enclosed, walled, perennial garden (site of the original rose garden) created by community volunteers. This garden area, along with the terraced rhododendron garden to the north, is one of only two gardens in the park north of the Lower Pond. The walled garden displays a slightly more formal approach to design than is seen in the rest of the Park. The formality becomes slightly relaxed when the fountain's wide basins were full of children wading and splashing in the summertime!



Tiered cascading fountain in the foreground (now filled with plantings) with the walled perennial garden above

### 15. Central Meadow

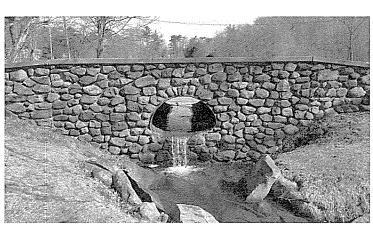
If you walk north of the Warming Hut, you will pass by the Park's large central meadow situated on what was originally a flat, marshy area of land. In general, the central meadow is simpler in it plantings, has more trees, and is shadier and more intimate than the southern meadow with its large open center and lush perimeter planting. The central meadow serves as a beautiful backdrop for the small steam and picturesque arched bridges that appear throughout this area of the Park.



Central meadow with arched stone bridge in the background

### 16. Arched Stone Bridges

There are five arched stone bridges in the park, primarily in the central section. Their fine stone craftsmanship is complemented by the simplicity of the natural surroundings in the tradition of Central Park in New York City. In addition to their beauty, Fulton's stone bridges facilitate park maintenance, while defining and separating various areas of the park. Frederick Law Olmsted often wrote of his greater interest in planning the larger structural features of a park - the carriage roads, trails, ponds, bridges, ledges and greenways. It was also important to him that his parks be physically connected to the community. When given the opportunity, he would connect several parks to each other through greenway systems, leading him to be considered the founder of the American greenway movement.





### 17. Wetlands and Bird Sanctuary

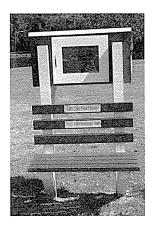
Directly north of the Warming Hut, the Park's wide, central walking path is sandwiched between the Park's stream and a verdant wetlands system to the east. Prone to flooding from deposited road sediments that have raised the level of the stream bed, this walking path will be diverted away from the wetlands as part of a large future drainage improvement project. As you walk north, the wetlands slowly transition into woodlands. This area was designated as a Bird Sanctuary.

Look carefully and you will see a small monument that marks this passive recreation site, a tribute to Ida Fulton by the Waterbury Bird Club



### 18. Lili's Little Free Library

Located along Cooke Street at the western edge of the Central Meadow is Lili's Little Free Library. Opened in November, 2013 by 13-year old Lilian Negron, it is a small lending library station that aims to put books into the local community. The theory is simple - take a book, leave a book. This creative act of good will by a local 14-year old has resulted in the recycling of approximately 200 books throughout the community each month.



### 19. Upper Pond

The northernmost Upper Pond is beautiful and serene, surrounded by a wide walkway and a carriage road with an arched bridge along the southern shoreline. With many small winding paths and ornamental flowering trees throughout the area, the view looking south from the pond's northern shore is nothing short of stunning. This may be the best example of the classic Olmsted perspective or view, with sharper details in the foreground and background trees fading into a misty haze of light and pale colors. Unfortunately, planting plans for the northern area of the Park have been lost, so future restoration efforts will have to rely primarily on historic photos.



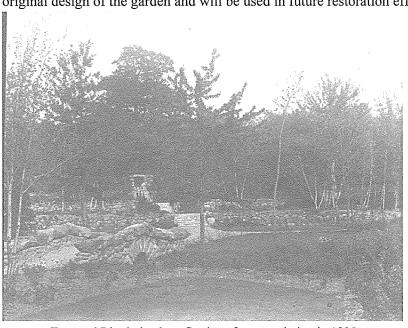
View south from the Upper Pond

### 20. Terraced Rhododendron Gardens and Grotto

As you stand looking south through the Park from the pond's north shore, take some time to wander east to a quiet shady nook just below Greenwood Avenue. That's where you will find a terraced rhododendron garden tucked away in a shady corner of the park. A shadow of its former glory, the garden's cedar trees are overgrown, the rhododendrons are few and straggly, juniper shrubs are unattractive and the stone grotto is in need of graffiti removal. However, look beyond your immediate impression and you will discern a composition of broad terraced lawns, expansive, tiered rock walls, and a series of central stone staircases that draw your eyes to a curved stone grotto nestled in the hillside. Photos from the 1920s reveal the amazing "bones" of this garden with the newly-planted lines of white birches along the walls and contrasting dark green cedars and rhododendrons, the beautiful shrub borders and underplantings, and the additional gardens near the arched bridges. With original plans no longer in existence, these photos provide important clues as to the original design of the garden and will be used in future restoration efforts.



Terraced Rhododendron Garden today



Terraced Rhododendron Garden after completion in 1925



Memorial to Irving Kent Fulton at entrance to Rhododendron Garden

### 21. Ballfields and Tennis Courts

If you are interested in sports, talk a walk across Greenwood Avenue. The avenue separates the central and southern sections of the park, from the northern section of the Park which was developed intensively for recreational use. Originally graded for the existing ballfields, the area also features a hill to the east that was used for skiing. To the north of the ballfields are tennis courts which were renovated several years ago and a rubblestone bathhouse which was recently renovated (2016).



22. Public Swimming Pool

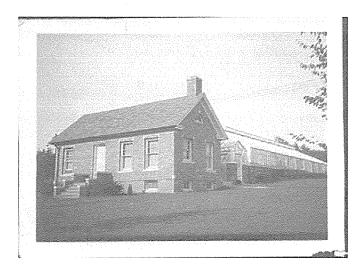
Waking east up Greenwood Avenue, you'll reach the public swimming pool facility. Not original to the park, the facility was constructed in the 1960s and is in high demand in the summertime.

### 23. Former Caretaker's House (now Park Office)

The upper east edges of the park above the steep woodlands is home to what use to be the Park caretaker's house and a large greenhouse, which was dismantled several years ago. Park documents indicate that the caretaker's house was not original to the Park and may pre-date the Park. The greenhouse was much loved by generations of residents and school children and bears witness to the magnitude of the Park's local planting operation. Alongside the greenhouse was a large outdoor nursery where park caretakers cultivated many of the shrubs and trees that would be later transplanted on Park grounds. In 2015, the City restored the caretaker's office and turned it into an office for park staff. In addition, a new equipment shed was constructed.



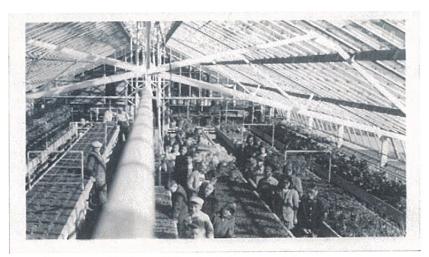
Caretaker's cottage now an office



Caretaker's cottage with greenhouse



Former nursery adjacent to the greenhouse



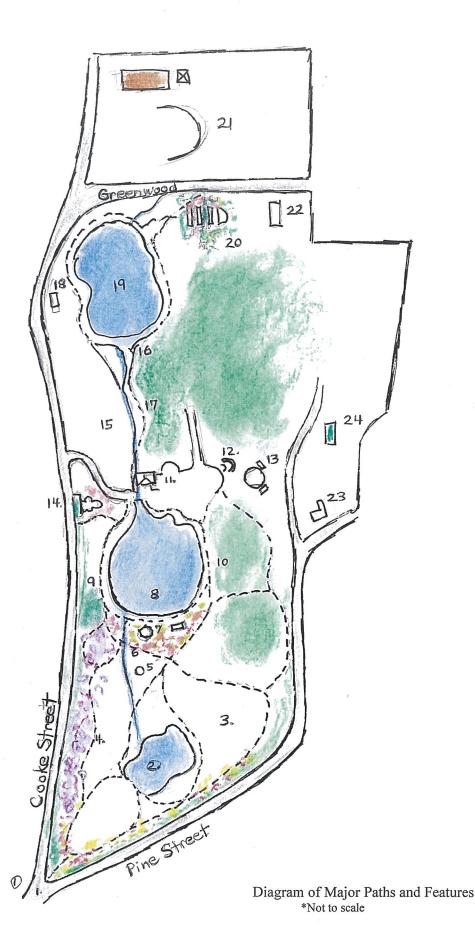
Children visting the Fulton greenhouse

### 23. Community Garden

Our tour of Fulton Park concludes with a stop at Fulton's Community Garden. A recent addition to the Park, it is safe to say that Frederick Law Olmsted would have appreciated the inclusion of this community garden, as he understood so well the democratic value of urban parks. Just follow the access road from the Park Office a few hundred feet and you'll run into this produce garden, which features over 100 raised garden beds. Operated by the nonprofit Brass City Harvest and staffed by volunteer community support, the garden's bounty is distributed to city soup kichens!

We want to thank you for taking part in the Fulton Park experience. We hope you will join us in our efforts to restore this historic legacy!

# Fulton Park Artistic Map



- 1. Southern Entrance
- 2. Lily Pond
- 3. Southern Meadow
- 4. Lilac Grove
- 5. Southern Fountain
- 6. Rock Garden & Fulton Memorial
- 7. Gazebo & Pergola
- 8. Lower Pond
- 9. Pine Grove
- 10. Woodlands & Lover's Loop
- 11. Warming Hut
- 12. Outdoor Barbecue Circle
- 13. Central Park Wading Pool
- 14. Rose /Perennial Gardens and Fountain
- 15. Central Meadow
- 16. Stone Arched Bridges
- 17. Wetlands and Bird Sanctuary
- 18. Lili's Little Free Library
- 19. Upper Pond
- 20. Terraced Rhododendron Garden and Grotto
- 21. Ballfields and Tennis Courts
- 22. Swimming Pool
- 23. Caretakers House
- 24. Community Garden ----- Major Trails