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FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED PARK AND ARBORETUM Newport's Newest Arboretum

The Frederick Law Olmsted Park and Arboretum at the world-renowned National Museum of American Illustration (NMAI), located on Newport's famed Bellevue Avenue, is Rhode Island's newest accredited Level I Arboretum certified by the international ArbNet program. The F. L. Olmsted Park and Arboretum is adjacent to the NMAI at Vernon Court, 492 Bellevue Avenue, Newport, RI 02840.

The F. L. Olmsted Park and Arboretum at the NMAI is the fourth arboretum in Newport, RI to be recognized by the Illinois-based Moreton Register of Arboreta, a database of the World's arboreta and gardens dedicated to woody plants. The Moreton Register recognized Newport's Tree Society in 2014, and in 2015 the grounds and landscape owned by the Preservation Society of Newport County were also added to the registry. Joining the F. L. Olmsted Park and Arboretum on the registry this year is the Salve Regina University Campus.

"This prestigious accreditation from ArbNet is welcome public recognition and endorsement of the efforts that have been made over the past two decades to preserve and showcase two historically important 'Gilded Age' landscapes," said Laurence S. Cutler, AIA, RIBA, Co-Founder with Judy Cutler of the NMAI and F. L. Olmsted Park and Arboretum. *"In addition, the resources offered by ArbNet will assist in our efforts to continue developing the Arboretum for public enjoyment and enlightenment."*

The Mission of the Frederick Law Olmsted Park and Arboretum at the NMAI is to honor the pioneering work of Frederick Law Olmsted, the "Father of Landscape Architecture," and to promote an understanding and appreciation of the extraordinary array of trees on the two properties facing Bellevue Avenue (F. L. Olmsted Park and Vernon Court, separated by Victoria Avenue). While different in concept and execution, each comprises a unique historically landscaped garden.

The gardens at Vernon Court—an adaptation of an early 18th century French Château designed and built by noted architecture firm Carère and Hastings in 1898—were landscaped in homage to Hampton Court Palace's "Pond Garden," built by King Henry VIII for his Queen, Anne Boleyn. The Olmsted Park and Arboretum garden was previously the location of Stoneacre, a mansion designed in 1884 and landscaped by Olmsted. The Stoneacre lot was Olmsted's first commission after he established the profession of "landscape architecture."

By the 1960's Vernon Court was used as a short-lived Women's Junior College, and Olmsted's park-like setting across the street became a neglected parking lot. Laurence and Judy Cutler purchased the properties in 1998 as the perfect setting to house their world-renowned art collection from the "Golden Age of American Illustration." A long process was initiated to bring these historic gardens back to their original condition.

Today, both gardens at the NMAI are close to their original design. The gentle manmade earthen contours of the Olmsted Park and Arboretum, designed to give a rolling and more interesting perspective to the originally flat site, have been restored using Olmsted's original plans. Efforts to revitalize the historic trees in both sections are ongoing and select specimens were added with a keen respect to the original concepts.

Four State Champion trees, selected by Olmsted, make up the Arboretum's "Signature Collection." In 2015, the Rhode Island Helen Walker Raleigh Champion Tree Program field examiners identified these four trees as unique specimens: 1.) a magnificent Cutleaf European Beech (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Asplenifolia'), 2.) a native Magnolia (*Magnolia acuminata*), 3.) a rare Japanese Yeddo Spruce (*Picea jezoensis* var. *hondoensis*), and 4.) a *Zelkova Serrata*, the largest in RI and believed by some to be the largest in the United States. What makes the F. L. Olmsted Park and Arboretum at the NMAI an exceptionally special place is that the park where these RI Champion trees are located is open free to the public during NMAI General Admission hours.

For more information, contact the NMAI at (401) 851-8949, email art@americanillustration.org, or visit our website at www.americanillustration.org. Off-season hours (Labor Day–Memorial Weekend): Fridays, 11am–5pm. Summer hours (Memorial Weekend–Labor Day): Thursday through Sunday, 11am–5pm. Guided tour given on Fridays at 3pm, year-round. \$18 adults, \$16 seniors/military, \$12 children ages 4–12. Children under 4 not admitted. Schedule subject to change; please call to confirm.