The Book Corner: Notes on the Olmsted Collection
by Jane Kunka

Library Committee New Acquisitions:

The Library Committee recently purchased the “Poetical Works of Akenside”. This book has been sought after for many years, but has been out of print, and existing copies were prohibitively expensive. This volume represents an authentic text as printed by the original publisher. The current publisher is Biblio Bazaar, LLC. Their goal is publishing works that are culturally important, and making them available at a reasonable cost.

Olmsted named many of Riverside’s roads for writers he admired and who influenced him. Many were mentioned in the Olmsted Papers, e.g. Repton, Loudon, Shenstone, Uvedale Price, Audubon, etc. Mark Akenside was not mentioned by Olmsted, but his most famous poem, “The Pleasures of the Imagination”, written in the 18th century remained very popular in the 19th, and was widely read.

This volume opens with a brief biography of Akenside with critical remarks about his work. Akenside was born in England in 1721 at Newcastle Upon Tyne. The son of a butcher, he studied for the pulpit, but later changed his mind and studied medicine. He earned a doctor’s degree from Cambridge, and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society and the College of Physicians. He wrote poetry from an early age. Mark Akenside’s poetry is very beautiful, but a challenge for 21st century readers.

“The Pleasures of the Imagination” begins:

With what attractive charms this goodly frame
Of Nature touches the consenting hearts
Of mortal men; and what the pleasing stores
Which beauteous imitation thence derives
To deck the poet’s or the painter’s toll
My verse unfolds.
Every so often, our attention is called to a local preservation issue of great importance. The Arcade Building, in the center of our village, is facing an uncertain future.

Olmsted’s original plan called for a block of stores to fulfill every day needs. The partner of Calvert Vaux, Frederick C. Withers, was hired by the Riverside Improvement Company in 1871 to design the Arcade Building (as well as the Riverside Presbyterian Church, which has been much altered, but I digress.) At the time, Harper’s Weekly described Withers as "a man of exceptional talent . . . insistent upon an adherence to the highest ideals . . . [and] no lack of imagination." The Olmsted Collection at the Riverside Library has several books about Withers, one of which tells the story about the birth of the Preservation movement in the early 1960’s. Oddly enough, the very genesis of this movement involved the saving of a Withers’ building, the Jefferson Market Courthouse in New York City!

With the arrival of spring, the winter related threats to the abandoned Arcade Building are temporarily behind us, but the neglect, lack of ownership, and exposure to the elements continue to wear on it. According to published reports, the ownership currently is in limbo between the receiver and the mortgage holder.

This past fall, FLOS Board member Aberdeen Marsh-Ozga tirelessly worked toward drawing attention to the fate of this historic building by applying to two endangered building lists, one by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the other by Landmarks Illinois. According to the Landmarks IL website, “The purpose of the ‘Ten Most’ list is to focus attention on sites threatened by deterioration, lack of maintenance, insufficient funds, or inappropriate development. Since the program’s inception in 1995, 132 properties have been identified on the endangered list, calling attention to statewide resources in need of preservation.” Landmarks IL will be announcing its 10 Most Endangered List on April 28th. Should the Arcade make the list, it would create desired publicity and ensure that preservation minded buyers would learn of its current predicament. Hopefully, positive action would soon follow.

On to the pragmatic. We find that a significant amount of money, generously donated by you through your membership support, is spent on paper and postage, in lieu of programs supporting our core mission. In this day and age, with all the technology available to us, and with a fantastic new website www.olmstedsociety.org, a quarterly newsletter mailing is a waste of 1. paper, resulting in less trees, 2. money, which we could be spending on more TREES!
Please celebrate Earth Day & Turn Off Week & Arbor Day by helping to weed & maintain a landmark of Riverside on **Saturday, April 25th, 2009  9am - 12pm**

**The Scottswood Common**

The Riverside Public Works Department & the Riverside Frederick Law Olmsted Society have teamed up in 2009 to help beautify Riverside’s public parks. **Scottswood Common & the Longcommon** serve as the backbone of Riverside’s landscape architecture. Both were intended to be part of a green space stretching all the way to downtown Chicago. Frederick Law Olmsted designed these parks to provide changing vistas for both pedestrians & vehicles. His plan can be better realized by reducing shrub overgrowth & eliminating weeds. Join us as we tame, and then maintain your public parks of Riverside.

**Future Workdays:**
Scottswood Common:  May 9th & October 3rd
Longcommon & Downing triangle: May 30th, June 13th, July 18th & October 24th
Along Riverside Road: August 8th, August 29th, September 12th & November 14th

All workdays are scheduled for **Saturdays from 9am-12pm**. Look for the Riverside Public Works dump truck. Come for an hour or three, whatever your schedule allows. Supervised children are welcome. Service hour credits are available. Bring your favorite work gloves & a water bottle. All other supplies & snacks will be provided.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact:
Holly Machina or Cindy Kellogg, Olmsted Society Landscape Committee Chairpersons
[landscape@olmstedsociety.org](mailto:landscape@olmstedsociety.org) or 447-0226 or [www.olmstedsociety.org](http://www.olmstedsociety.org)
Mike Collins, Riverside Forester  [mcollins@riverside.il.us](mailto:mcollins@riverside.il.us) or 442-3590 ext. 502

Volunteers spreading mulch on Scottswood Common at the Saturday morning workday in March.
Thus said, we intend to email our newsletter to you in the future. If you have not already done so, please ensure that we have an email address for you by notifying our membership chair, Joanna Beaumont at membership@olmstedsociety.org. However, if you would still like to receive a hard copy of your newsletter, please notify us and we will see to it that it is delivered to your door.

Over these past three years, Jim Reynolds has lead the society with passion and determination. He has earned, above all, a designation of steward. In the name of the entire society, I would like to extend our gratitude for his years of service. We wish him, as well as all our new Village Trustees, Riverside Township Trustees, and District 96 & 208 School Board members the best, and look forward to forging ahead on our Riverside journey together.

As the new President of the Olmsted Society, it is my goal to improve our research and knowledge, thus remaining relevant; that we stay true to our mission to preserve and protect our legacy; that we continue respectful dialogue and collaboration with our village; and finally, that we continue our strong ethic of volunteerism. Feel free to contact me at any time. I am humbled to be of service to you.

Kim Jacobs
president@olmstedsociety.org

### FLOS Website is New and Improved!

By Tim Ozga

A key part of The Olmsted Society’s mission is providing information and education about the environment, culture, and physical heritage of Riverside. To better meet those goals the Society’s website (www.olmstedsociety.org) has undergone a complete overhaul.

The site looks much better. Menus are easier to use. Pay special attention to the column on the right side of most pages. The right column contains three parts, the Mission Statement, a box listing Upcoming Events, and links to Learn More. Most importantly, new content has been added, and is being updated and added to all the time.

Landscape workdays are a regular Society event. The next scheduled workday is listed under Upcoming Events. Past workdays have their own page, with stories and pictures describing the days’ accomplishments.

The first video on the website is under the Landscape Resource page. The fourteen minute video describes the garlic mustard plant, the problems it causes, and how to remove it. Garlic mustard is infesting Riverside and killing and crowding out other plant species.

The Olmsted Collection at the Riverside Library contains books and documents about the works and history of Olmsted, his associations, about Riverside, and about many aspects of landscaping. A list of the collection, containing over 700 titles, is now available online. This draft is still a little rough, but it shows the range of books available.

The yearly “Reflections on Riverside” poetry contest has a web page. The rules and forms are available for download and the names and pictures of previous year winners are posted.

### A Letter From the President, continued

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Kim Jacobs
president@olmstedsociety.org
Walking Tours Schedule for 2009

The Olmsted Walking Tours of Riverside are getting cranked up again for 2009. If you have never taken the tour, this is the year to do it. There is so much to learn about the history of Riverside, and much of it is truly amazing! The tours meet at the train station each month at 2 pm. The North side of town is one month, the South side is the next. Tours last about 2 hours, so bring your walking shoes!

Tickets: $10, $7. Seniors and FLOS members

2009 Schedule

During the Art Fair in May there will be two special half price tours offered:

Saturday May 16th (North Side) and Sunday May 17th (South Side)

Our Regular Season Schedule Resumes: June 28th (South side)
    July 26th (North side)
    August 30th (South side)
    September 27th (North side)
    October 25th (South side)

For additional information, or to arrange a private tour, just call 442-7675 or 442-0845

From the FLOS Archives: 1975
( The more things change, the more things stay the same)

"News from the Poets Corner"

Our annual "Reflections on Riverside" student poetry contest is well under way! In celebration of National Poetry Month and the advent of spring in Riverside, the contest, held in April, encourages children to spend time out in Riverside's natural spaces and create original poetry reflecting upon their experiences and impressions.

Look for an announcement of the winners from each school in your next newsletter!
2009 Membership

Membership is for the calendar year. If you have not renewed your membership for 2009, please return this form with your check payable to: Frederick Law Olmsted Society, P.O. Box 65, Riverside, Illinois 60546

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The Olmsted Society welcomes your participation in our ongoing activities. Put your talent to work and your energy to good use by joining a committee! Check off the committees that interest you. The Chairman will contact you with more information.

- Architecture
- Landscape
- Housewalk
- Membership
- Library
- Public Relations
- Newsletter
- Website
- Tours/Education
- Other Talents _________________________

Name: ____________________________
Address: ____________________________________________
Phone: ____________________________
Email: ____________________________

Please give us your email address, so we can save paper and trees!
Contact Joanna Beaumont at membership@olmstedsociety.org

Please Renew Today!
Dues Are Now Due
2009 Membership
Your
Olmsted Society of Riverside
P.O. Box 65
Riverside, Illinois 60546

www.olmstedsociety.org