



Essex County Parks Archives

Essex County Department of Parks,
Recreation, and Cultural Affairs

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News:

Visit Our Facebook Page

As we celebrate the year's end, please visit, like and comment our Facebook page: Archives of the Essex County Parks System.

There you will find updates, photos and posts that are not available on our monthly newsletter. As part of the 125th anniversary of the Essex County Parks System next year, we will be posting frequent updates.

Upcoming:

2020 NAOP Conference

For our anniversary celebration, Essex County is partnering with the National Association for Olmsted Parks on a symposium titled "The Olmsted Legacy Honoring the Past, Treasuring the Present, Shaping the Future: Park Preservation, Maintenance and Stewardship in the 21st Century". The dates are April 24th and 25th. The public is invited.



Essex County Executive
Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr.
and the Board of Chosen Freeholders

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Putting Essex County First



Surveying the County for Future Parks

As 1894 was coming to an end, the preliminary park commission was thrilled to visit and inspect the many possible park locations suggested by Essex County residents and professional landscape architects. As Frederick Kelsey noted, the board belonged to a numerous contingent within Essex County who "live in New York and sleep in New Jersey." Despite their interest and pride in their locality, most members of the preliminary commission discovered natural scenery new to them and became more familiar with the county's topography during the process.

The preliminary park commission's excursions across the county took them to locales like Millburn, Montclair, the Oranges, and Belleville. Most of the men were less than impressed by Weequahic's "mosquito-breeding and buzzing locality." The area around the Newark Reservoir, which would become the Southern

Division of Branch Brook Park, was unsightly, as was the Blue Jay Swamp just to the north. But as Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. had stated nearly thirty years before, land deemed unattractive for development held potential to be beautiful parkland.



The bog that later became Weequahic Lake

In contrast to their distaste for some locations, the commission was in awe of Orange Mountain of the Watchung Mountain range, particularly what is now known as South Mountain. Overlooking the county to the east and west from various points along the crest, the commission found the county's plains, farms, trees and buildings to be sublime and picturesque. Such an inspiring panorama led the commission to undoubtedly favor acquiring much of Orange Mountain for the future park system.