

“Your resources, time, and insights were extremely helpful to putting all this history together cohesively. Thank you.”
 Caitlin Sharp

Turtle Back Zoo



FIFTY-EIGHTH REPORT
 ESSEX COUNTY
 PARK COMMISSION
 1956

Verona Park Lake



“Those scrapbook pages of newspaper clippings, used in your office, were extremely helpful in targeting key events in our park’s development. You and your staff have provided us with excellent support in our efforts to document our park’s history.”

Richard Cummings

Grover Cleveland Park Conservancy

How can the Archives help you?

If you have a research question regarding Essex County’s parks, the Archives are a good place to start.

- ◆ Find historical statistics, such as dates, costs, usage, and acreage.
- ◆ Determine the original design of a park as planned by the Olmsted Brothers landscape architecture firm.
- ◆ See the specifications for a particular park feature and identify subsequent changes.
- ◆ Confirm an ancestor’s involvement with the parks.



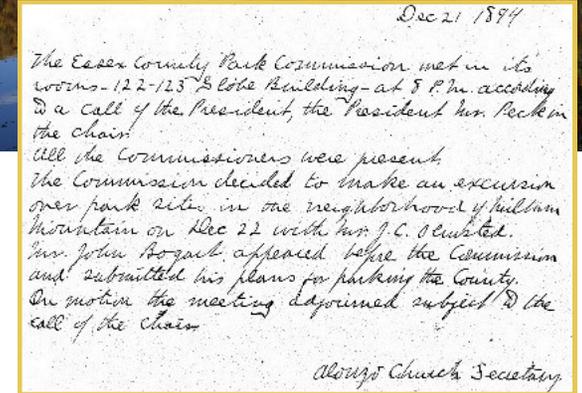
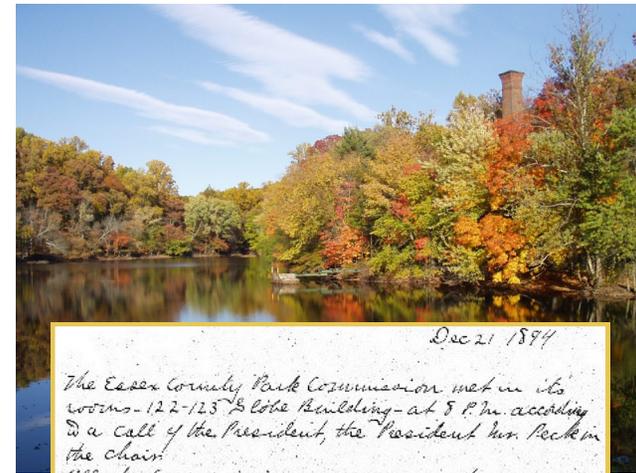
**Essex County Executive
 Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr. and
 the Board of Chosen Freeholders**



**Department of Parks, Recreation,
 and Cultural Affairs**

115 Clifton Avenue
 Newark, New Jersey 07104

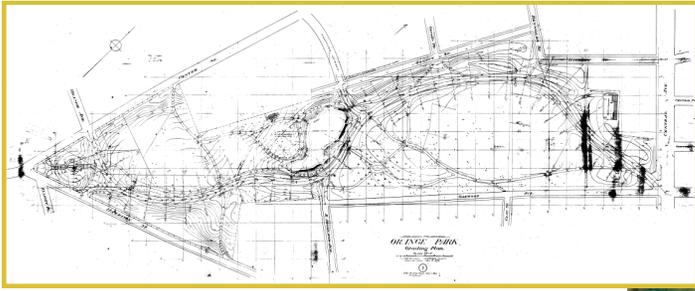
Putting Essex County First



Park Commission Minutes from 1894 documenting Olmsted tour of lands that would eventually become South Mountain Reservation.

**ARCHIVES OF THE
 ESSEX COUNTY
 PARK SYSTEM**

**973-268-3500
 archives@parks.essexcountynj.org**



Olmsted grading plan for Orange Park, 1899

The Parks

On March 5, 1895, with a sweep of his pen, New Jersey's Gov. Werts signed legislation creating the first county park system in the United States. The resulting Essex County Park Commission invited prominent landscape architects to submit plans for a system of parks and parkways. Then they quickly got to work acquiring land and developing parks throughout the county. The Commission engaged the renowned Olmsted Brothers landscape architects in 1898 to finalize the early plans. The firm went on to design all the parks and reservations of the Essex County Park System for the next 60 years.

In 1979, the Park Commission was replaced by the Essex County Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs. The department maintains over 6000 acres of open space, including large undeveloped reservations, heavily used neighborhood parks with an abundance of recreational facilities, and over 140 buildings. The department operates Turtle Back Zoo, Richard J. Codey Arena at South Mountain, the Essex County Environmental Center, and three golf courses. Serving a population of over 780,000 residents, the Essex County Park System includes parkland in all of the county's 22 municipalities.



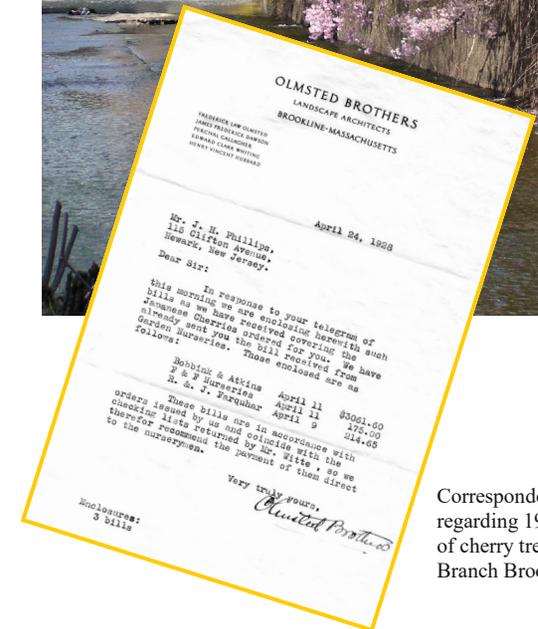
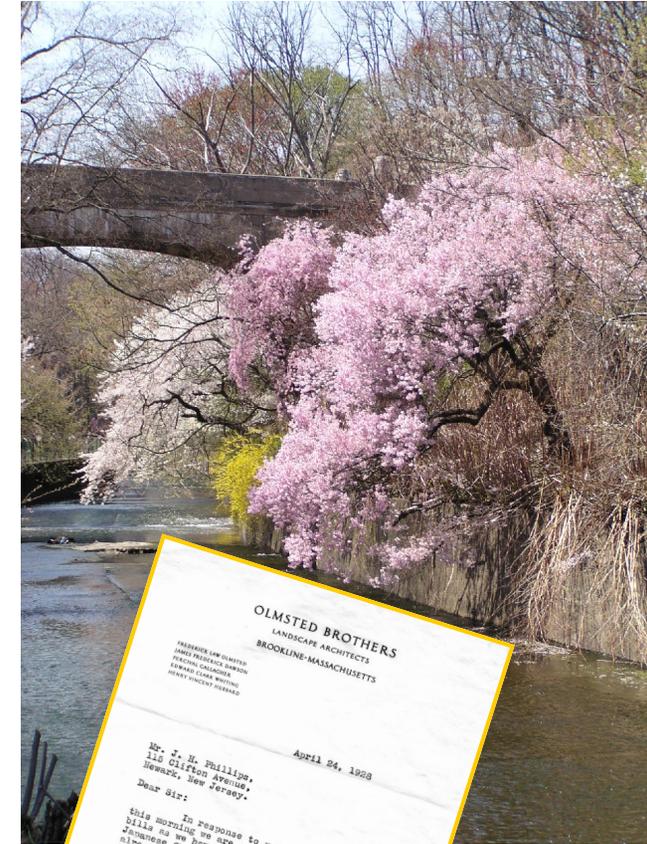
The Archives

Developing public parks involves a complex design and construction process. The Parks Archives, contain the Essex County Park Commission's papers, some over 100 years old, documenting this process. A concerted effort to preserve the collection began in the 1990s. Since then much of the collection has been inventoried, indexed, and stored properly to preserve it for another 100 years. Several thousand maps and plans, as well as the Commission minutes and annual reports, are digitized and available for viewing on a public workstation.

The collection includes:

- Commission Minutes
- Annual Reports
- Plans and Maps
- Correspondence
- Photographs
- Newsletters
- Legal Agreements
- Engineering Papers
- Financial Reports
- Planting Plans and Lists

Research requests may be initiated by email (archives@parks.essexcountynj.org) or phone (973-268-3500). The Archives are open 8:30 to 4:00 Monday through Friday by appointment. Records shall be handled with care. Fees for copying services and research assistance of more than one hour are stated in the Policies and Procedures. Items in the historical collection are not loaned out.



Correspondence regarding 1928 purchase of cherry trees for Branch Brook Park