BEYOND THE BRASS PLAQUE:

REINTERPRETING ROCK CREEK PARK

by

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(Under the Direction of Marianne Cramer)

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of an urban, wilderness park, the National Park Service's Rock Creek Park in Washington, DC and the ways this park is interpreted. The first part of this thesis discusses landscape interpretation in general and specifically investigates the manifestation of interpretation in Rock Creek Park. It analyzes and discusses the existing interpretation methods the National Park Service uses in the park. Next, it explores new or different methods of interpreting by examining related examples, from art installations, other landscape architecture projects, museum exhibits and land art, that help to expand traditional interpretation. Finally, using the broader ideas about interpretation, it develops schematic design examples of new and creative ways to reinterpret Rock Creek Park. The end goal of this thesis is to develop new methods of interpretation in hopes of reaching more of the variety of users in the Park, giving them a broader understanding of the Park and its resources.

INDEX WORDS: Interpretation, Rock Creek Park, National Park Service, Urban Parks

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Thomas Rainer, my fiancé. In many ways, this was a team project. Without his love, encouragement (and editing skills!) I might still be revising my outline. A simple thank you does not seem to do it justice.

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CHAPTER ONE

SEARCHING FOR PHOSPHORESCENCE

The American poet Emily Dickinson explained that there were those who had 'the facts but not the phosphorescence of learning.' This thesis, while peripherally exploring learning and education, focuses on the phosphorescence, those intangible moments of discovery. Specifically, this paper searches for examples of 'phosphorescence' in the interpretation of landscapes, with the intent of applying it to interpretation in Rock Creek Park in Washington, DC. The goal of this study is to examine both the concept and application of interpretation in a National Park; to see whether current landscape interpretation achieves its proposed mission; and, if not, to offer alternative design strategies in pursuit of phosphorescence.

Prior to graduate school, I was fortunate to live in an apartment in the District on the edge of Rock Creek Park. I frequently took advantage of many of the amenities the park offered: running, hiking, parcourse trails, meanderings in the quiet forest landscape and, of course, the parkway for easy access in and out of the city. I did not realize until later that Rock Creek Park was part of the National Park Service system of parks. When time came to choose a thesis topic to investigate, I gravitated toward the enchanting park that made living in Washington more pleasurable on a daily basis.

Landscape interpretation is defined simply as the content and delivery of a message. At the heart of this thesis are two modest claims. First, that most of the delivery of landscape interpretation today, particularly in National Parks, is banal and prosaic. Seldom does

interpretation push beyond the routine conventions of the brass plaque, pamphlet, or historic marker. And second, that the challenges to effective interpretation can be overcome by enlivening it with the limitless tools of artistic imagination; that the dynamic interplay of art and landscape can help visitors build bridges between their everyday lives and the land they inhabit. To support these claims, this thesis will analyze interpretation both in concept and application. Chapter Two takes a broad look at how the concept of interpretation has evolved and ultimately been adopted by the National Park Service. Chapter Three then examines the existing application of interpretation in Rock Creek Park to see whether the interpretation meets its goals. Chapter Four once again focuses on how the concept of interpretation, particularly its delivery, can be improved by looking at case studies of effective interpretation. Chapter Five offers applied design studies to show how interpretation could be improved in Rock Creek Park. By alternating between concept and application, problem and solution, this thesis hopes to ground abstract principles in a specific landscape.

Because the concept of interpretation is both broad and highly subjective, any analysis of interpretation is likely to unearth a host of related issues. As a result, it is necessary to describe the scope of this thesis. This is not a study of what should or should not be interpreted. Nor is it concerned with the controversial agendas of those interpreting landscapes. Instead, this thesis will focus more on methodology than message—how can messages be presented in a more compelling way to be, in a word, phosphorescent. The analysis of current forms of interpretation presented here is by no means exhaustive or scientific. What is presented is a brief look at a history of ideas of interpretation in order to glean the critical concepts that shape today's reality. Finally, it is important to note that the proposed designs offered here are not blanket

prescriptions for all landscapes of all times; instead, it is recognized that each site should be interpreted uniquely.

Because interpretation describes a subjective human experience, this thesis will be structured around a series of themes that depict parts of an interpretive experience: interruption, illumination, imagining, and involvement. More poetic than scientific, these themes describe stages of a discovery experience. *Interruption* represents the moment something breaks the monotony of our day and seizes our attention; *illumination* portrays the light bulb experience of seeing something in a new way; *imagining* deepens the experience by engaging our emotions and personalizing the event; finally, *involvement* takes the lessons learned and involves others in their meaning. Together, these themes give structure and meaning to an event that is inherently subjective and difficult to define.

Any proposal to change the status quo merits the simple question: why? The answer is more complex: the need for effective landscape interpretation has never been greater. Environmental writer Barry Lopez notes that, "Year by year, the number of people with firsthand experience in the land dwindles. Rural populations continue to shift to the cities . . . In the wake of this loss of personal and local knowledge, the knowledge from which a real geography is derived, the knowledge on which a country must ultimately stand, has come something hard to define but I think sinister and unsettling" (qtd. in Orr 10). We are separated from our environment. Today, many of society's *landscapes of meaning* face serious threats from development, neglect, misuse, and disinterest. Landscapes of meaning are special natural and cultural places of each society that gives meaning to our social and cultural lives. These include spaces of memory such as cemeteries and memorials; spaces of connection such as town squares for civic events, piazzas for people watching, and sandlots for children; places of discovery such

as wilderness, shorelines, or lakes. From the earliest civilizations, these landscapes shaped our communal identity. But sweeping economic and cultural changes have seriously threatened or destroyed these landscapes. What has not been destroyed has been forgotten. In this age of information and global economies, we spend more and more time in front of computers or in our cars. Public spaces have been swallowed by shopping malls and other sanitized consumer sanctuaries. Urban sprawl erodes farmlands and wilderness. In our daily experience, we are physically separated and psychologically divorced from these landscapes of meaning.

More than ever, we need effective and inspiring interpretation to reconnect us to these landscapes. It is no longer enough merely to visit landscapes, for we have forgotten the rituals and ceremonies of public life. Stripped of its collective use, these landscapes lose their meaning. We pass through land and do not hear its stories. We degrade the environment without awareness. We continually yield our public spaces to private enterprise. Perhaps the best cure for our cultural amnesia is transformative interpretation. What is needed is interpretation that transforms the raw data, the physical facts, and the historical record into an understandable vision of our place in the world. Interpretation that resurrects forgotten histories, challenges conventional thinking, and integrates man into his surrounding environment. Above all, we need interpretation that engages us emotionally and connects our lives with the continuing narratives of the landscapes.

CHAPTER TWO

INTERPRETING INTERPRETATION

At its most basic level, interpretation describes what we do everyday. The themes that coalesce around the ideas of interpretation are epistemological in nature: it is the process of how we make sense of the world around us. "Interpretation of natural and cultural heritage must be as old as humans," writes the interpreter's professional membership organization, the National Association for Interpretation, "The shaman, storytellers, and elders of tribal groups carried the oral history of their people forward from generation to generation. Before books and modern methods of recording stories, these oral traditions were key to the survival and evolution of cultures" (NAI website).

Yet while its philosophical underpinnings are endlessly broad, most landscape architects understand the term in a specific, technical sense—landscape interpretation. In this meaning, interpretation is often associated with the National Park Service, although the last few decades has seen interpretation performed as well by tourist industries (zoos, aquaria, museums,) theme parks, and cultural groups. Through the collective effort of these industries, interpretation explodes around us. Placards, brochures, visitor centers, museums, maps, documentaries, and interactive exhibits bombard visitors with information about the unique features of parks and special places. And yet in this age of endless information, the critical question remains: does all this quantity of information shape us in a qualitative way? Is landscape interpretation still relevant and important in an age of too much information? Does defining interpretation in

narrow, technical ways betray its philosophical richness? Are the National Park Service's interpretative efforts *effective*? This chapter will examine these questions by looking at the concept of interpretation, its relevance today, and the National Park Service's interpretive efforts.

DEFINING THE CONCEPT

What exactly does interpretation *mean*? In simple terms, and probably familiar to most people, interpretation is a word used to describe the practice of translating one language into another language. But the term is used to describe a much broader theme—a whole range of activity—as well. Freeman Tilden, the author of the 1957 classic interpretive tome, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, is widely quoted discussing interpretation. "Ploughing a virgin field so far as a published philosophy of the subject is concerned," Tilden created six guiding principles (*see Appendix A*) for interpretation and wrote about the fundamentals of the interpreter's art and craft (Tilden, "Heritage" 9). Describing the difficulty in defining the term, Tilden referred to interpretation as "a public service that has so recently come into our cultural world that a resort to the dictionary for a competent definition is fruitless." In the 1988 book *Travels with Freeman*, Tilden elaborated stating, "I've been working with the concepts of interpretation for about 25 years, and I still don't know what it is, though I've got some ideas, and I've written a lot of definitions. But I was never completely satisfied with them" (Beck and Cable 9). In *Interpreting Our Heritage*, his compulsory definition is, "an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information" (Tilden, "Heritage" 8). For Tilden what distinguished interpretation from other forms of education was

interpretation's unique methods of delivering its message: that walking over an actual Civil War battlefield, for example, could engage a visitor in a way that reading a textbook could not.

Like Freeman Tilden, many others have defined interpretation in their attempts to adequately describe the elusive idea: An attempt to create understanding (Rumble 27); An informational and inspirational process designed to enhance understanding, appreciation, and protection of our cultural and natural legacy (Beck and Cable 1); (i) The skills, practice or profession of explaining to the general public features of our natural, historical or cultural environment; (ii) the educational process or experience of enlightenment resulting from such explanation (Pierssené 1). (*See Appendix B for more examples.*)

In the definitions listed above, certain words or phrases are significant: understanding, inspirational, protection, process and enlightenment. Interpretation is not simply the presentation of hard facts or droning data, it is about learning to experience and engage in the world in a whole new way.

INTERPRETATION INSTITUTIONALIZED BY THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The National Park Service has remained the institution that is most associated with landscape interpretation in this country. Over time, this connection has only grown deeper and stronger. Naturalist and former National Park Service employee C. Frank Brockman wrote, "Although the National Park Service did not invent interpretation, that organization was largely responsible for the broad public recognition of its values in developing understanding and appreciation of nature and history. The National Park Service effectively modified formal educational processes to arouse the latent interests and desires of park visitors, and, as a result of

ever-increasing numbers of such visitors over the years, interpretation has become practically a household word" (qtd. in Macintosh, “Interpretation” v)

The National Park Service was founded in August of 1916, when President Woodrow Wilson signed the National Park Service Organic Act, 16 U.S.C.1. and created a new federal bureau in the Department of the Interior. The Act stated that:

> The Service thus established shall promote and regulate the use of Federal areas known as national parks, monuments and reservations . . . by such means and measures as conform to the fundamental purpose of the said parks, monuments and reservations, which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

The Park Service began operating a year later with Stephen T. Mather at the helm. The high level of publicity that helped to influence and form the creation of the Park Service continued, with the heavy promotion of park tourism in its early years. What also continued to develop was the notion of educating park visitors. In a 1918 letter to the Secretary of the Interior, Director Mather stated, “the educational, as well as the recreational, use of the national parks should be encouraged in every practicable way” (Macintosh, “Interpretation” 6). Initially thought of as synonymous, the ideas of education and interpretation would continue to be adapted as the new bureau matured and grew. Indeed, it was through this initial resolve for park education, that the concept of interpretation in the National Park Service was formed.

From the beginning, it was visitors, not professional Park Service employees, who conducted most of the interpretive activities of the park. In the earliest parks, Yosemite and Yellowstone, nature exhibits were established; outside speakers were brought in to lecture on topics such as botany, archeology, Indians, John Muir and geology; guided hikes were conducted as well as talks around a campfire. It was not long after that these pioneering proceedings became the norm rather than exception at other national parks—and employees were hired to

fulfill these responsibilities. Many of these initial techniques are still used today throughout the National Park system. Over time, as technology developed and park staff and visitors ebbed and flowed, new media and methods were introduced. Some, such as slides, 'living history,' informational brochures, sound recordings and films have remained while other interpretation forms proved to be only temporary excursions (i.e. automotive caravans through Yosemite, airplane flights over the Grand Canyon).

Regardless of the methods, the mission of interpretation in the National Park Service has been, over time, often discussed and defined. According to Barry Mackintosh, who wrote in 1986 the history of Park Service interpretation:

> Even while the term "education" was still being applied to interpretation, those involved with it were taking pains to distinguish it from traditional academic instruction. "Our function lies rather in the inspirational enthusiasm which we can develop among our visitors—an enthusiasm based upon a sympathetic interpretation of the main things that the parks represent, whether these be the wonder of animate things living in natural communities, or the story of creation as written in the rocks, or the history of forgotten races as recorded by their picturesque dwellings," a guideline distributed by the Education Division in 1929 declared. It urged simple presentations "that will make even the most complicated natural phenomena understandable to visitors from all walks of life," and communication of concepts rather than data: "beware of merely giving names or introducing a great number of irrelevant observations. Leave your party with natural history ideas rather than with a catalog of facts." ("Interpretation" 83)

A committee established later in 1929 to study educational problems in the National Parks, echoed the same idea of 'inspirational enthusiasm' by encouraging stimulating the thinking of the visitor. Others since then have also encouraged this approach. Indeed, it is these thoughts that have ricocheted the idea and model of the national parks and landscape interpretation around the world and into mainstream thinking. Dr. Alan Craig of Ireland's National Parks and Monuments Service stated, "that the concept of a national park was the only truly original and important contribution by the U.S. to world conservation. Whether or not it is, when [he] found out that [he] was part of the panel on interpretation, [he] realized that there was another related

concept just as original and just as much an American contribution. And that is the concept of interpretation and its relation to the environment" (Craig 102). So while interpretation 'must be as old as humans,' the *institution* of interpretation (and its accompanying mission of inspiration or phosphorescence), which started with the establishment of the National Park Service, has not yet reached its centennial.

Close to ten years shy of this important milestone in the National Park Service, it is worth exploring whether or not the noble goals of interpretation—creating enthusiasm and inspiration and not simply traditional academic instruction—is fulfilled in the Park Service's parks. The mission, as stated on the Park Service website is:

> The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

Accordingly, 'guiding principles' are also listed in order to achieve its mission. While excellent service, citizen involvement, heritage education, outstanding employees and wise decisions, just to name a few, are listed, there does not seem to be a principle that specifically addresses the goal of interpretation. Park Service literature stresses its traditional methodology of interpretation, but rarely the end goal. What is missing in all the mission statements and guiding principles is a deeper recognition of the inspirational potential of interpretation. Forgotten is Freeman Tilden's maxim that states, "the chief aim of interpretation is not instruction but provocation." Besides 'educating park visitors and the general public about their history and common heritage,' there was no mention of provocation, or other passionate ideas found in any of the guiding principles that could be construed as heralding interpretation. Does this omission mean that the Park Service falls short of its stated mission of 'inspiration of this and future

generations'? Is the Park Service's 'heritage education' enough? Further and in a more general way, is landscape interpretation still relevant in the world today?

IS INTERPRETATION STILL RELEVANT?

All too often, interpreters face the challenge of justifying the importance of interpretation to the public and to their administrators (Beck and Cable 147). Most certainly interpretation is not a luxury, but is an essential component of the National Park Service and other traditional interpretive groups, with a key role to play in today's society. "The fullest approach to interpretation involves the shaping of attitudes and values that carry beyond the park experience and whose full impact may not be felt until the visitor is back in his own familiar world once more" (Eddy 143). In a time when many Americans fail to notice their surroundings, interpretation can help open their eyes and reconnect them to the landscapes of meaning and their forgotten messages and rituals.

More specific to the National Park Service, and vital to the continued success and long-term preservation of the national parks, is engendering public support for the park and its resources. More and more, national park boundaries are vulnerable to outside threats. Pollution, urban sprawl, dwindling natural resources, habitat reduction and visitor overcrowding pose potential threats to the parks. Hobart G. Cawood, the Superintendent of Independence National Historical Park, maintains this point, "…interpretation is a *critical* element that helps hold the parks and the National Park System together. People care about things they know, appreciate, and understand. Things that people care about are perpetuated; things they do not care about are forgotten. Interpretation is a keystone in that it helps people to appreciate, understand, and care about the parks" (Cawood 61). Thus the benefits of resource interpretation are many: a better

informed public and therefore empowered constituency of park supporters, a closer bond between parks and neighbors, and a public vested in the care of the park and its resources. Better interpretation may mean a better visitor experience and a brighter future for the National Parks.

Interpretation can be important for additional, broader reasons as well. Increasingly, we, in the developed world, are living in an age of specialization. Most Americans, while living in one of the most educated countries in the world, lack an understanding of larger processes and traditional knowledge. There is a lack of connectedness and rootedness to their environment. As higher education is increasingly specialized, many Americans have no idea how to grow their own food, what happens to water after it rains, the importance of soils and forests, or how to fix an automobile. Everything is left up to 'experts' with their own set of skills which means a lack of knowledge or helplessness in many others fields. Author of *Explaining Our World: An Approach to the Art of Environmental Interpretation*, Andrew Pierssené confirms:

> Paradoxically, as our collective wisdom grows, so does our individual ignorance . . . and yet decisions about such matters as conservation, planning, manufacturing processes, medicine, raw materials, law and order, design and education have to be taken at national, county, district and parish level by representatives of the community. If there is not a general understanding of the basic principles on which the world works, we can only expect that our lives will be managed or mismanaged by others no wiser than we are. (23)

Simply, interpretation can provide insights that can help guide our decisions. Larry Beck and Ted Cable, authors of *Interpretation for the 21st Century*, point out that in the dictionary, the words 'healed' and 'restored' are listed as synonyms of 'whole,' noting that, "interpretation toward a whole seeks to restore the whole person" (68). So while it is true that the act of interpretation will not educate one about all the wonders of the world, it can create a 'trickle-down' effect revealing *principles* which might then have an impact in leading to a deeper understanding of the surrounding world.

It has been established that good interpretation can lead to a resource's support, conservation and a broadening of a person's knowledge base. Despite these obvious benefits, can interpretation remain relevant in an age of endless information? Increasingly, Americans are becoming harder and harder to reach. We are satiated with information and data. This trend poses quite a challenge to an interpretive message trying to get through the endless stimuli of information. Linda Costigan Lederman is quoted in *Information Anxiety*, "In one year, the average American will read or complete 3,000 notices and forms, read 100 newspapers and 36 magazines, watch 2,463 hours of television, listen to 730 hours of radio … and read three books" (qtd. in Wurman 203). Add to that litany, a tiny slice of communication in the form of interpretation and it is easy to understand the challenge of reaching an audience. Additionally, the Park Service faces competition not only from the outside, but also from other tourist-dependent industries, such as museums, zoos, and aquariums, who offer increasingly sophisticated interpreted messages. As a result of today's information bombardment, the *way* in which a message is delivered becomes crucial. Poorly delivered communication will likely not compete under the barrage and reach its intended audience.

In order for interpretation to stand out from the constant stream of information, efforts should be made to return to interpretation's inherent strength: its unique power to educate through discovery. Recent studies show that people learn best and are most often captivated when they feel a sense of discovery. In his book, *Information Anxiety,* Richard Saul Wurman states, "In order to acquire and remember new knowledge, it must stimulate your curiosity in some way…Learning can be defined as the process of remembering what you are interested in" (138). Indeed, there is an entire branch of education theory, heuristic education, that supports the importance of learning by open-ended discovery. From Greek *heuriskein*, (to find, discover)

heuristic education is a method in which learning takes place through discoveries and exploration that result from investigations, rather than by formula. Beck and Cable concur writing, "Most people enjoy the sense of accomplishment that comes from making 'discoveries'. Discovery-oriented programs in interpretive settings allow people to gain new insights and to see previously known facts in new ways" (24).

The concept of heuristic education does not seem to be completely foreign to the National Park Service. Culled from various Park Service publications and written in *Interpretation for Park Visitors*, by "a career-seasonal employee of the National Park Service since 1949," there is a list of basic, commonly accepted assumptions about learning. Some of these guiding principles include: "(6) That which people discover for themselves generates a special and vital excitement and satisfaction. (13) Increasing the ways in which the same thing can be perceived helps people derive meanings. (16) Using a variety of approaches will enhance learning" (Lewis 27). It would follow that since these ideas about learning are from Park Service publications, that they would manifest in the most likely place: in the Park Service's own interpretation programs.

A story is relayed in the book *Interpretation for the 21st Century*: "When Diaghilev commissioned Stravinksy to write the ballet score for 'The Rite of Spring' Stravinsky asked what sort of music he should compose. Diaghilev answered, "*Itonnez-moi*!" (Astonish me!). Immediately following the account, the authors state, "Today, visitors come to our museums and parks with the same request, "*Itonnez-moi*!" (Beck and Cable 113). If this is indeed the case, how is the National Park Service responding to this request? Are park visitors regularly delighted, provoked with their own sense of discovery as a result of innovative interpretation or is it more likely they are fed messages in the typical, mundane ways?

INTERPRETATION IN TODAY'S NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Since 1979, recreational visitation to U.S. National Parks has increased by more than 70 million visits per year. In Rock Creek Park alone there was an increase of over one-and-a-half million park recreation visits. The general trend is that more and more people are visiting national parks, creating more and more opportunities for the Park Service to inspire, enlighten, astonish its visitors than ever before. So how is it reacting?

According to Destry Jarvis who was a Vice President at the National Parks and Conservation Association, "…the Service has continued to relegate interpretation to such a low priority for so many years that too few visitors have truly experienced quality interpretation—the kind that can unlock park mysteries and provide a truly transcendent experience of contemplative 'recreation'" (Jarvis 147). And while Jarvis and others have stated that the Park Service's attitude towards interpretation was to demote it, others have suggested that even if interpretation has remained status quo, the interpretive competition has exceeded it. While some interpretive venues might have surpassed the Park Service interpretation by reaching for the outlandish, by creating a spectacle, this form of interpretation is not now, nor should it be in the future to what the Park Service should aspire. Instead, it is the interpretation that does *not* strive for spectacle but rather to present information in compelling, phosphorescent ways—stepping beyond the glass case and picture on the wall interpretation—that the Park Service should turn to for inspiration. However, with or without spectacle, the fact still remains that much of the competition has exceeded the National Park Service. Macintosh confirms, "…The criticism is doubtless influenced by the stiffer competition that park interpretation faces. … Even if park interpretation is no worse than it used to be, its position has probably fallen somewhat relative to other interpretive opportunities available to the public" (Macintosh, "Interpretation" 102).

Certainly compounding this issue is the perennial problem of the lack of funding for these programs. Jarvis also states, "…interpretation should be the highest priority visitor service function in the National Park Service. Unfortunately, interpretation has never enjoyed such high priority, and in recent years it has be relegated to such a low rung on the priority ladder that it is among the very first programs cut when budget or staffing constraints are imposed" (145). And budget cuts have certainly been necessary as "research has shown that the national parks are operating with only two-thirds of the needed funding—an annual shortfall of more than $600 million" (*U.S. Newswire*). An internal memo released in February, 2004 to park superintendents in twelve northeastern states confirms, asking them to compile a list of 'service level adjustments' they plan to make. The memo includes suggestions as to where the cuts might be made: close the visitor center on all federal holidays; eliminate all guided ranger tours; let the manicured grasslands grow all summer; close the park every Sunday and Monday, to list a few (Faler). To be sure, there are not a lot of dollars to allocate by the Park Service for interpretive agendas.

To some, this dose of financial reality might mean that the fate of interpretation in the National Park Service is sealed. However, good interpretation is not evaluated by the cost of production but, rather, its ability to inspire. All too often the Park Service does not expand its thinking to extend 'outside the box,' to creative thinking. Furthermore, high-tech media is not necessarily needed in this step towards more effective interpretation. "Innovation in interpretation is not so much a matter of new media, but the more imaginative use of what we have already got. What makes interpretation occasionally boring is uninspired copycat work…" (Pierssené 215). The usual predictability of the National Park Service, while perhaps comforting in its uniformity, is so formulaic that it was recently parodied in a commercial. A television ad

for Metamucil, a fiber dietary supplement, shows the ubiquitous dark-brown-with-yellow-writing-sign next to a park ranger in a broad hat answering questions from a group of sweaty tourists. One could easily make the association between the always-predictable National Park Service and digestive regularity. It makes a light, but perhaps telling point about public perception of the clichéd elements and programs of the Park Service.

In contrast, a certain amount of spontaneity enhances the learning process. The following story is relayed in the book *Explaining Our World*, "A few years ago, a double-decker bus half-fell down a deep subsidence hole in a Norwich street. Besides being topical and relevant, what fun it would have been to produce an instant, temporary interpretive panel, expounding this unexpected interconnection between twentieth century public transport, local chalk geology and medieval mining!" (Pierssené 220). While no one is suggesting the likely occurrence of a double-decker bus plunging into a hole in an American national park, the suggestion of spontaneity, of instant, temporary interpretive panels reacting to an event provides a moment of phosphorescence. It offers a complete break from the usual.

Suggesting that the Park Service think about doing interpretation in new, unusual ways, does not mean that the traditional ways of interpreting should fall by the wayside. In fact, the current, customary delivery should remain. Pierssené discusses the non-revolutionary idea that different people have different bits of information in their heads. While not particularly profound, he continues by noting, "This may be a good reason for an Interpreter sometimes to make a point in two or more different ways—if you deal out two or three dominoes instead of one, there is more chance of a player making a connection." Perhaps new ways of interpretation will inspire connections in new ways in *addition* to the connections being made in the customary manner.

And certainly not all of interpretation being done by the Park Service is bland and banal. "We have the best technical training in interpreting," states Michael Frome (99). And, in some cases, the innovation and passion shines. An account by a visitor to Gettysburg National Military Park illustrates this point as he describes a visit:

> I was a knowledgeable student of the battle and enjoyed the park visitor center with its exhibits and cyclorama. I took the High Water Mark walking tour to the copse of trees and gazed across the field where the great charge from the Confederates had come. As I moved further south along the Union line, I encountered a small wayside exhibit between two cannons marking Cowan's Battery. The text is as follows:
>
> A band of Confederates pour over the wall shouting "Get the Guns."
>
> Cowan orders 'double canister' and loads the last rounds. At ten yards distance he shouts "fire."
>
> It was like a hundred shotguns fired at point blank. When the smoke clears, no Confederate stands. (Cawood 62)

While simple in construction, this small description was all that was needed for the profundity of the place and the moment to be revealed to the visitor. This minimal sign was able to establish the crucial emotional connection that many interpretive exhibits lack.

As interpretation in the National Park Service approaches its hundredth anniversary, it seems clear that despite some notable examples, the Park Service interpretive efforts suffer from an overly formulaic methodology. The need for effective interpretation remains strong, especially to combat the hyper-specialization and over-saturation of the information age. Can National Parks regain the vision that Freeman Tilden describes:

> One thing is sure, and must be underlined: that what one sees with the eyes is not enough for the attainment of understanding, either of the natural world or the social world of man. As Charles Darwin said, "We must see with the eye of the mind." Interpretation, whether in the national park system or in any other place where it is offered, promotes that mindsight. (Tilden, "Mindsight" 9)

The next chapter will examine the National Park Service's Rock Creek Park in Washington, DC, to explore more specifically the current state of interpretation in the Park Service.

CHAPTER THREE

INTERPRETATION IN ROCK CREEK PARK

Figure 3.1 View of Rock Creek Park from Taft Bridge

Viewing Washington DC from above, the most striking feature is not L'Enfant's grid of streets with diagonals; it is not the National Mall or its axial monuments; nor is it the massively scaled public buildings such as the Pentagon or the Capitol; instead, it is the immense forested void, a jagged slash of wilderness that stretches from Maryland all the way to the Potomac like a great green scar. Rock Creek Park is *the* National Park in the nation's capital. And yet rarely

has a feature so prominent suffered so much obscurity. Often used but little understood, Rock Creek Park becomes the perfect case study for an improved interpretive agenda. This chapter will inventory and analyze the current state of interpretation in Rock Creek Park by briefly delving into the park's characteristics and history. It will then focus on the interpretation: what is happening in Rock Creek Park at the present time, what is successful, what is not, and why.

ROCK CREEK PARK CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

The language of its authorizing legislation stated that it was "dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasure ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people." It also called for regulations to "provide for the preservation from injury or spoliation of all timber, animals, or curiosities within said park, and their retention in their natural condition, as nearly as possible." And thus, in September of 1890, Rock Creek Park was officially formed and designated. Described in simple terms, it is a delineated swath of dense forest and meadows in the middle of bustling, urban Washington, DC. It stretches from the Maryland state line (the northern tip of the District's diamond) south to the National Zoo and totals 1,754 acres, two and half times the size of Central Park in New York City. A September 1999 article in the *Washington Post*'s Road Trip column describes a hiker's venture through the park, "I continue down the lovely Western Ridge Trail, where gently falling slopes on either side offer views that half convince me I'm in West Virginia foothills. But the trail's losing altitude, and I feel myself gradually descending toward the jungle of downtown Washington. Near the historic stone building called Peirce Mill, a trail sign points west, saying: 'Netherlands Embassy, .5 miles'" (Tidwell). Indeed, the location and character of the Park in the middle of the city makes for a constant game of forgetting—and then suddenly remembering—just where you are and the surprise you feel about your

surroundings. There are few interpretive programs that accompany a visit to the park. (*See Figure 3.11, Map of Existing Conditions*.) What are there are fairly traditional in nature and centralized around the Park's Nature Center and Peirce Mill. *(See Appendix C for legislative language.)*

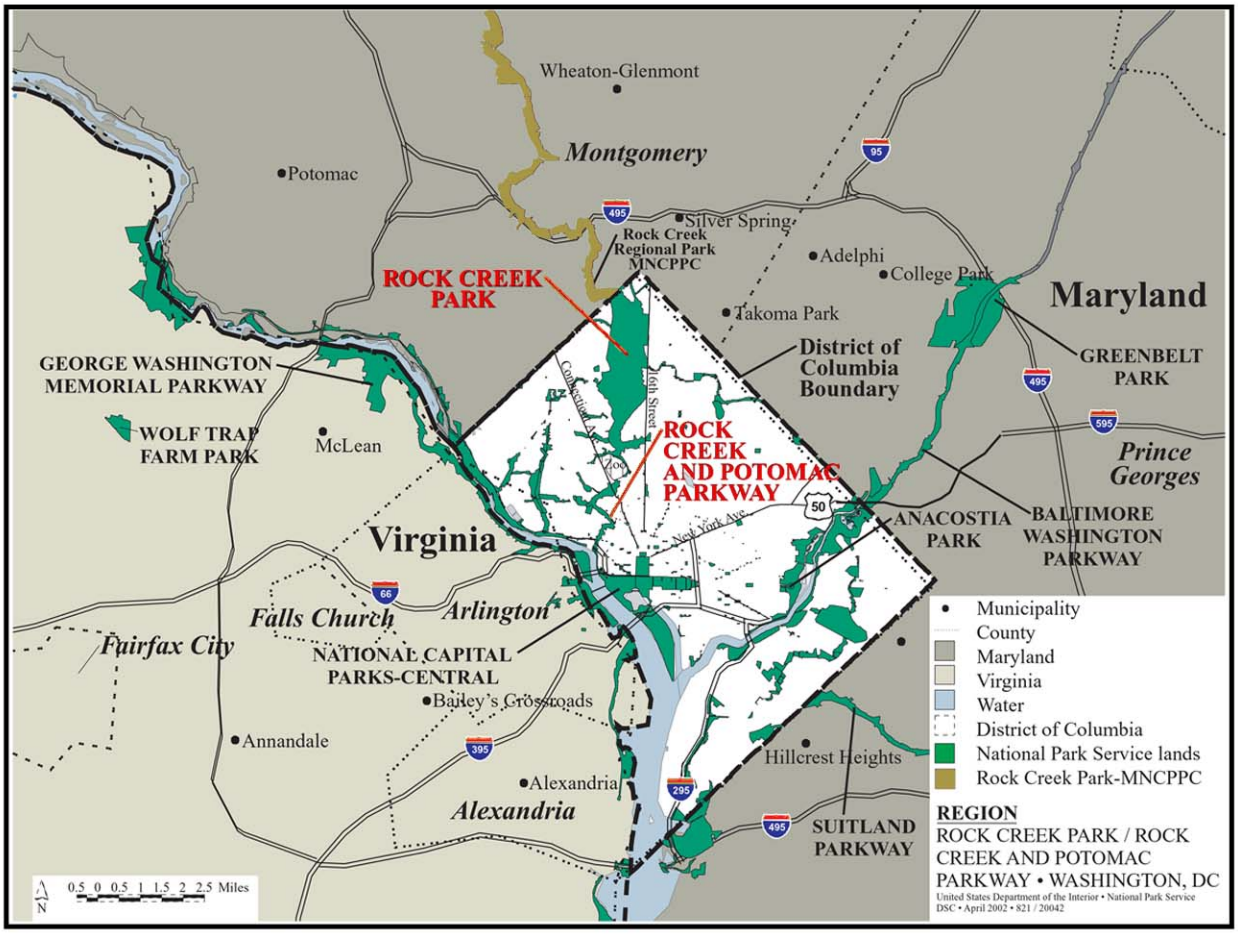


Figure 3.2 Map of the region of Rock Creek Park and Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway

Rock Creek Park's many distinctive features make it an especially relevant site to study interpretation. First, it is a wilderness preserved. Unlike other urban parks in America created in the nineteenth century which were actually designed and then built (Central Park, Golden Gate Park, Boston Metropolitan System), Rock Creek Park was primarily conserved, and then only rarely tweaked by designers. The park has historically lacked master planning. Its current state is

a forest of trees and diverse wildlife habitats, sprinkled with open meadow spaces. Traversing the park are roads, bridle paths and foot trails that are nestled in a wooded valley with associated tributaries and some uplands. A *Washington Post* editorial states that it offers "a blend of worthy uses as an urban retreat, a recreational area and a vital scenic route for travel by foot, bike, horse or motor vehicle" (Rock Creek ed.). Second, the park is a green swath in the middle of dense, urban fabric. When wandering the trails and moving through the heart of Rock Creek Park it is very hard to believe one is in the core of an expansive city. Indeed, the park is completely surrounded by the heavily urbanized metropolitan Washington, DC area. Finally, Rock Creek Park happens to be in the middle of the nation's capital and therefore about a mile away from the Department of Interior, home of the National Park Service.

Figure 3.3 Scenes from the park: on a stroll and a community garden in winter

The major landscape feature is Rock Creek, a perennial stream that extends south for thirty-three miles from its headwaters near Laytonsville, Maryland, and along the length of the park before joining the Potomac River south of the park between Georgetown and the Kennedy Center. Its watershed encompasses a seventy-seven square mile area that includes a variety of

land uses—urban, suburban residential, agricultural, and parkland. About seventy percent of the watershed is developed. (*See Figure 3.13, Watershed Map for Rock Creek Park*.)

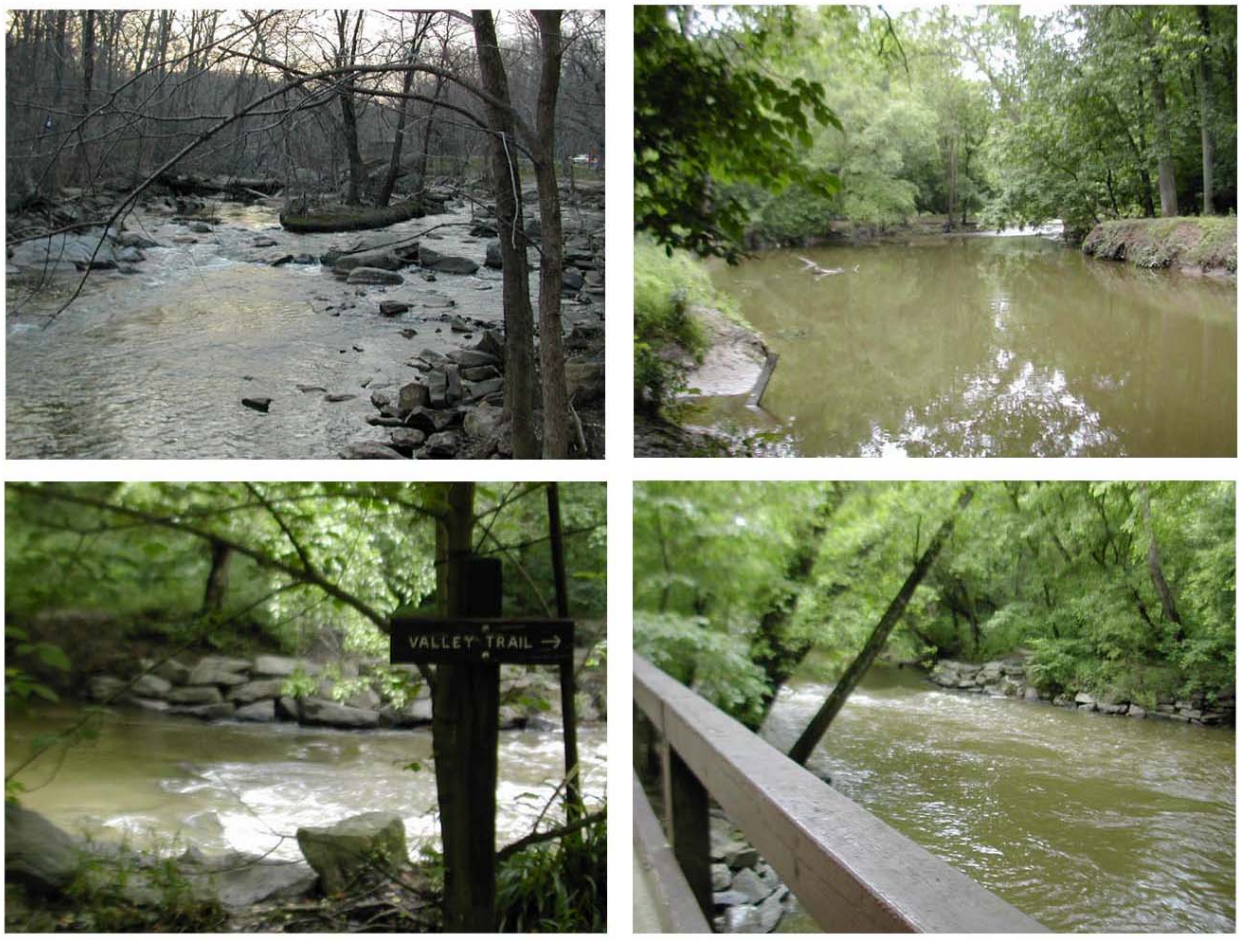


Figure 3.4 Views of Rock Creek

If the creek is the most notable natural Park feature, the bridges that crisscross the valley are the stunning, impressive man-made features. "The monumental bridges arching over Rock Creek contribute greatly to the parkway's appearance. Partially concealed by the surrounding vegetation, they evoke the aqueducts and ruins found in romantic landscape paintings. In addition to framing vistas and providing striking contrasts to the parkway's natural features, they serve as convenient platforms for viewing the verdant parkway landscape" (Davis). Many were originally wood-framed and elaborately iron-trussed, however most are now concrete and

masonry and built in a variety of shapes and styles. In fact, the bridges are so identified with Rock Creek Park that the 1902 Boulder Bridge became the Park's principal icon. That bridge

Figure 3.5 Iconic Boulder Bridge in winter

blends "admirably with its surroundings and survives as an outstanding specimen of naturalistic 'parkitecture'" while others have monumental, graceful spans and towering presence (Macintosh, "Rock Creek" 22). Numerous different bridges (for foot and for car) span the valley, over creek and over road, to create a continuous urban fabric over the steep cliffs and wooded terrain. (*See Figure 3.22, Park Features and Character: Bridges*.)

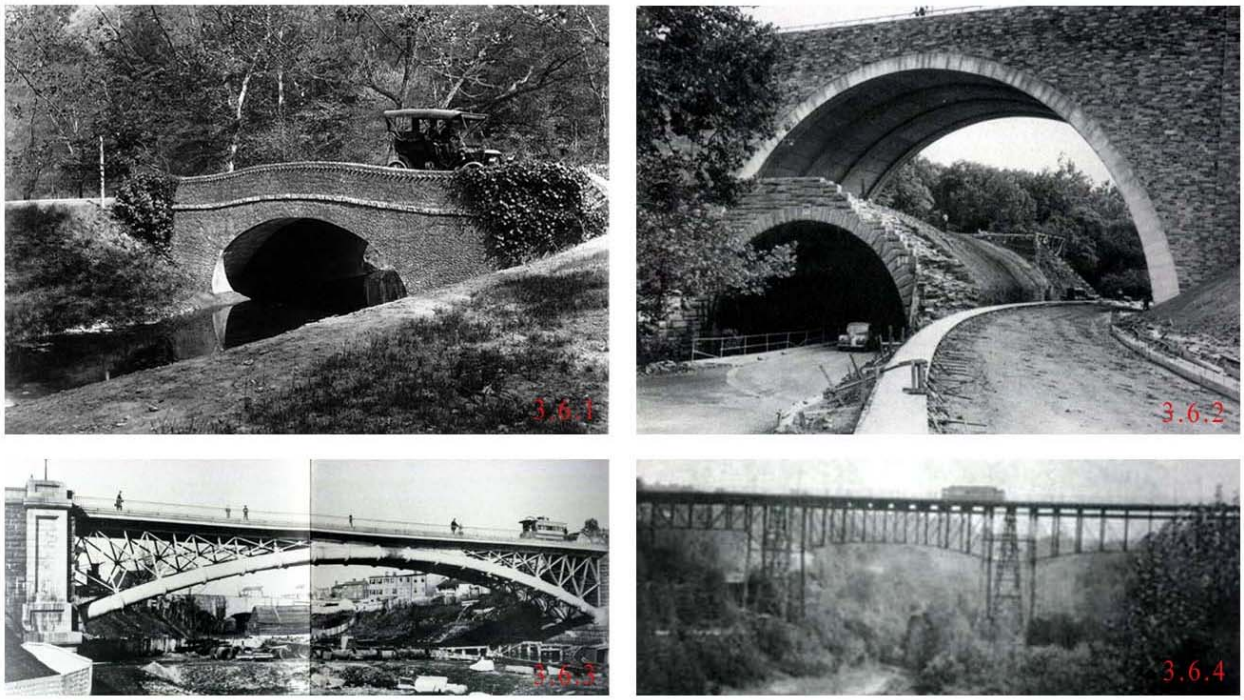


Figure 3.6 Pebble Dash Bridge, replaced in the 1960's (3.6.1); New Massachusetts Avenue bridge and old culvert, 1941 (3.6.2); Cast-iron Pennsylvania Avenue aqueduct bridge, rebuilt in 1916 (3.6.3); Iron truss Calvert Street bridge for streetcars on the Rock Creek railway line, replaced in 1935 (3.6.4)

While Rock Creek Park was established in 1890, the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, the first federally constructed parkway—and still one of the best examples of early parkway design—was authorized by Congress in 1913. According to Jere L. Krakow in his 1990 historic resource study of parkways in the Washington area, Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway "exemplifies a road that preserves resources, links the monumental core to residential areas to the north and west, and illustrates the continuum from the horse and carriage to the automobile" (25). The 2.5 mile long parkway stretches from the National Zoo to Virginia Avenue, serving as the scenic connector from Rock Creek Park to the heart of Washington, DC.

While Rock Creek Park and Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway are two separate parks, they are both National Park Service properties, contiguously managed and "both were intended

to blend recreation with the preservation of natural scenery and environmental quality" (Plan 4). They are often considered and experienced as one in the same park. Accordingly, for the purpose of this thesis, they will be combined—the whole National Park Service property from the Maryland State line south to Virginia Avenue—and referred to generally as Rock Creek Park.

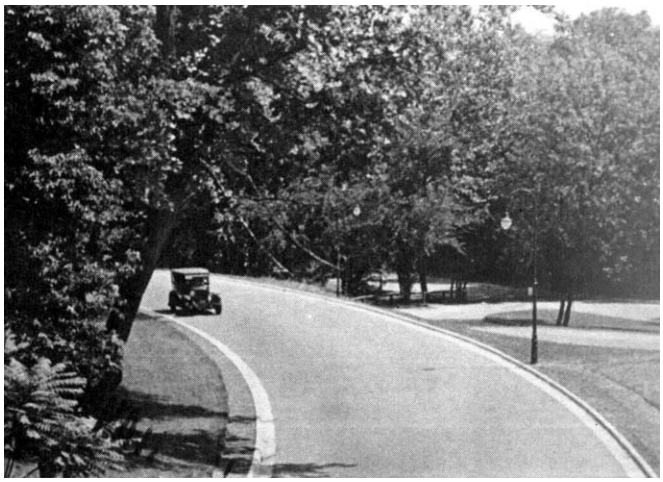


Figure 3.7 Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway in 1933

However, the park and parkway were created for different purposes. While Rock Creek Park was set aside to be a pleasure ground, Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway was established for "the purpose of preventing pollution and obstruction of Rock Creek and of connecting Potomac Park with the Zoological Park and Rock Creek Park." The character of the primary roads running through the two parks shifts between them: Beach Road (in the Park) is two-laned, winding and perfect for light traffic and pleasure-driving while the Parkway (that links to Beach Road), also originally conceived for recreational driving, is four-laned, wider and used primarily as the major commuting artery between northwest DC and downtown. The management plan explains:

> Since the parkway opened in 1936, it has served as a scenic roadway in the city. Since 1937, the National Park Service has been managing traffic on weekdays by making the

> parkway one-way inbound during the morning rush hour and one-way outbound during the afternoon rush hour. … The opening of the Zoo Tunnel in 1966 removed a major impediment to traffic. The inadvertent result was to make the corridor consisting of Beach Drive and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway into a preferred commuter route for many residents of northwest Washington, DC and suburban Montgomery County, Maryland. (Plan 6)

Nevertheless, the Park and Parkway both surround the motorist with a natural setting and the Parkway "survived the freeway-building era generally intact." A brochure about the parkway notes, "Its intimate scale, narrow roadway, sharp curves, slow speeds, abrupt entrances, and minimal median strips provide a rare glimpse of the transitional stage between yesterday's meandering carriage roads and today's efficient but visually bland modern roadways" (Davis).

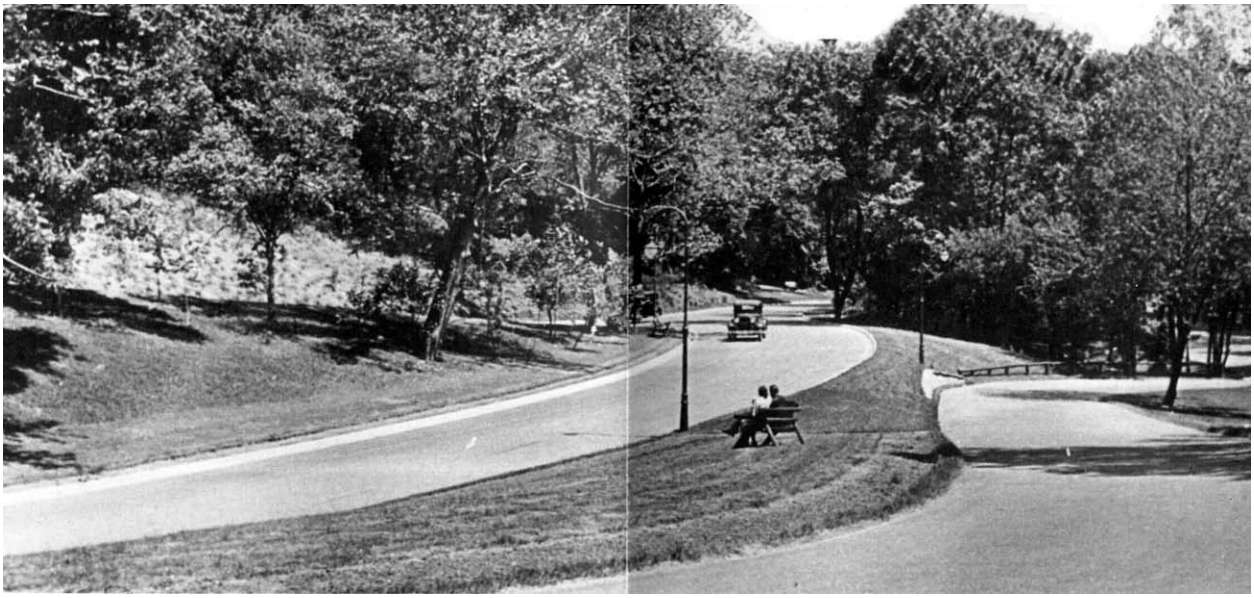


Figure 3.8 Parkway south of Massachusetts Avenue, circa 1937

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF ROCK CREEK PARK

Before 1790, when George Washington chose the location for the nation's capital city, the land that would later become Rock Creek Park was uninhabited but used by Native Americans for game and other resources. Several generations later, the area was used as a

trading post, aided by the active ports of Georgetown and Alexandria. Mills sprang up along the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, flourishing during the first half of the nineteenth century. Rock Creek also had eight mills, but they were less profitable as they lacked an easily navigable route to the transit lines. A new milling process eventually rendered the water-powered mills obsolete.

In 1861, Washington, DC had only one fortification for defense that had been built years earlier to guard against enemy ships after the War of 1812. "The Civil War marked a turning point in the District's history and also affected Rock Creek Park's northern landscape, where in 1862 large forest tracts were cut down to build Military Road and Fort DeRussy, and create sight lines for the fort's guns. In 1863, forty-eight forts ringed the city, joined in the northern part and through Rock Creek Park by a 1.5-mile swath of stump-strewn land" (Spilsbury 3).

Besides the growth of forts, Washington DC's population doubled during the Civil War period—in both the city proper and its expanding suburbs. Like other urban centers at that time, conditions in the District of Columbia grew progressively more unsanitary. With the unhealthful situation, residents had "discovered the mesmerizing beauty and recreational potential of Rock Creek Valley. People made use of the transit routes and bridle paths that crisscrossed the picturesque ravines, and pleasure drives in carriages afforded a welcome escape not only from daily life but also from Washington's increasingly unhealthy conditions brought on by rapid city growth and crowding" (Spilsbury 4). President and Mrs. Lincoln were among the city residents that sought refuge from the squalor by retreating to Soldiers Home and the countryside outside the city limits.

It was this presidential escape that first spurred the search for a large tract of land that could be acquired to build a new presidential retreat and a surrounding park. The assignment for this task fell to Major Nathaniel Michler whose report, deviating from the original intention,

suggested it be a public park, separate from the secluded presidential residence and generally accessible. It was within this report that the seed for the establishment of Rock Creek Park was planted. About the Rock Creek Park land he says:

> All the elements which constitute a public resort of the kind can be found in this wild and romantic tract of country. With its charming drives and walks, its hills and dales, its pleasant valleys and deep ravines, its primeval forests and cultivated fields, its running waters, its rocks clothed with rich fern and mosses, its repose and tranquility, its light and shade, its ever-varying shrubbery, its beautiful and extensive views, the locality is already possessed with all the features necessary for the object in view. (qtd. in Macintosh, "Rock Creek" 3)

As noted, Rock Creek Park was officially designated in 1890. More than a century later, the major features that attracted visitors then still draw people to the park today. Its authorization came after Yellowstone Park (in 1872) and was on the same day that Sequoia National Park was authorized and it remains one of the oldest and largest natural urban parks in the United States.

Rock Creek Park was fortunate in its formative years to have the visionary input of the Olmsted landscape architecture firm, particularly from Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. whose work and insight left a deep imprint on Washington, DC's parks and monumental spaces. Olmsted was hired to study Rock Creek Park and offer suggestions for its management. "Sadly lack of sufficient funds, a problem that persists today, left much of the inspired Olmsted plan unrealized. Fortunately, the values articulated in the report have endured, and the document has served as a canon for park administrators since it first appeared" (Spilsbury 31). To be sure, the foreword of the report illustrates its tone and the passion for the park: "The dominant consideration, never to be subordinated to any other purpose in dealing with Rock Creek Park, is the permanent preservation of its wonderful natural beauty, and the making of that beauty accessible to the people without spoiling the scenery in the process" (Macintosh, "Rock Creek" 40). It is the result of the early park promoters that a nature walk brochure from today's Rock Creek Park can

boast, "Rock Creek Park continues to serve as a refuge; not only an essential habitat for animals, but also a place of solitude for people. Time appears to slow down in the Park; in certain places, the busy city seems to vanish; the sound is lost in the trees. With a variety of natural, cultural and recreational opportunities, there is something for everyone at Rock Creek Park."

VISITORS TO ROCK CREEK PARK

Rock Creek Park is a popular unit of the National Park Service properties. The draft Management Plan adds, "The park offers a variety of views, from rugged expanses of mature, second-growth forest with little recent human disturbance to landscapes from the rural past. The engineered bridges are reminders of the monumental city to the south. Rock Creek Park provides a visual respite from the urban surroundings, an experience that draws almost 14.5 million visitors each year" (Plan 141). Reflective of the bordering neighborhoods and the greater society at large, the park's recreational visitors cut a wide demographic swath, representing many ethnic, racial and economic groups (Plan 142). While the majority of visitors are local Washington, DC residents, there are also a significant number of national and international travelers to the city that also visit the park. (*See Figure 3.21, Park Features and Character: Users*.) Today the visitor to Rock Creek Park will see a variety of activities.

> Most visitors to interpretive centers, concessions, and picnic areas drive to the park in private automobiles. Many users of trails and Beach Drive arrive on foot, bicycle, or in-line skates. Visitors come to the park for a wide variety of reasons, including walking, hiking, jogging, bicycling, communing with or studying nature, studying history, picnicking and family reunions, interpretive and educational programs, spiritual meditation, reading, writing, and creating art. The length of a visitor's stay depends on the purpose of the visit. A jogger may only stay an hour while a picnicker may stay all day. Many visitors come to Rock Creek Park on a regular or frequent basis. (Plan 142)

However, the vast majority of the park's visitors are the daily vehicular commuters.

Figure 3.9 Crossing the creek at Klingle Ford, an early 20th-century photograph

The centrality of the park, while one of the features that makes it easily accessible, also helps to compound the many obstacles it faces. It is the issue of balancing the growing needs of commuters with the goal of preserving and protecting the park's resources that remains an impressive challenge for the park management. According to the 1997 traffic study conducted by Robert Peccia & Associates the weekday traffic averages 9,000 vehicles per day on parts of Beach Drive, while 55,000 vehicles typically use the busiest portion of the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway. (*See Figure 3.14, Average Traffic Volumes*.) More than ninety-five percent of the vehicles entering the park during commuting hours pass through without stopping (Summary 5). Further, not only are the commuters not stopping in the park, many seem to have little understanding of the park, its missions and challenges.

In 1996, the Park Service began to develop a management plan to determine a course for the Park's future. In March 2003 the long-awaited draft of the *General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement for Rock Creek Park and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway* was released. (*See Figure 3.12, Future Management Plan*.) It confirmed a discussion about the park's current interpretive position stating that it is "difficult to reach the thousands of visitors who recreate each week in the Rock Creek valley, especially those who are unfamiliar with the park and its broader purposes. Visitors to Rock Creek Park often do not receive any initial orientation to the park, what it has to offer, or how to safely and appropriately experience park resources. As a result, many visitors do not even know that they are in a national park" (Plan 30). Most visitors go through Rock Creek Park rather than going to it. Because of the lack of controlled gateways, the distinction between the park and the city often blur. Like most of the National Park Service properties, Rock Creek Park is ever conscious of its surroundings and the impact those surroundings have on park resources. "The Washington, DC metropolitan area completely surrounds Rock Creek Park, so that the park in effect is an island of natural resources within an urban zone. In the area around the park, forests and fields have been replaced by streetscapes, creeks have been routed into storm sewers, and archeological and historic sites were lost during construction of the city." (Plan 42). Its location within a growing metropolis causes significant concern about the impact on the park's resources. There is special concern for how to maintain and preserve the creek, one of the reasons behind Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway's establishment. Problems within the park that have been produced by upstream development include increased flooding from rapid runoff, abnormal stream bed scouring in some places and sedimentation in others, bank erosion, organic and chemical pollution, and accumulation of litter and other solid waste (Plan 17). In summary, the management of Rock Creek Park's resources—

including the receptivity of its myriad of visitors and uses—is a great challenge for today and in the future.

EXISTING INTERPRETATION IN ROCK CREEK PARK

With the release of the Draft Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement, there are statements that indicate that the managers of Rock Creek Park are aware of the current problem with the park's lack of interpretation. The report states:

> Interpretive programming in the park has evolved without the benefit of an interpretive plan. This has resulted in a hodgepodge of stories and facts that may not help the public understand the significance of the park and its resources. Many opportunities for reaching the public in the park are unrealized.
>
> Over the past two decades, recreational visitation to Rock Creek Park has almost doubled while the park's visitor services have been severely reduced because of funding limitations. This has resulted in a substantial decline in visitation to the main interpretive sites in the park, which consist of the nature center and planetarium, and Peirce Mill…
>
> In spite of current limitations, Rock Creek Park has a long tradition of providing a wide range of visitor interpretive and educational services. Its location in the nation's capital makes the park particularly well suited to provide a large, richly diverse population with resource interpretation and educational opportunities… (30)

However, while these statements certainly indicate a concern, there are no clues that additional, *different* kinds of interpretation—the kinds that are needed—feature prominently on the park's 'to do' or 'wish' list for the future.

Currently the park employs only modest, very traditional interpretation of its resources. The Nature Center and Planetarium and Peirce Mill are the central hubs of interpretation. (*See Figure 3.15, Interpretive Centers & Adjacent Neighborhoods*.) Yet, the draft management plan states that, "…the park's visitor services have been severely reduced, resulting in a substantial decline in visitation to the park's two interpretive centers. The nature center and planetarium's visitation has dropped by more than half, from 49,000 visitors in 1979 to 24,000 visitors in 1997.

Peirce Mill visitation had a similar decline, from 31,000 visitors in 1979 to 12,000 visitors in 1997" (143). No matter the message, the delivery systems of interpretation throughout the park seem to be the habitual, fixed, humble interpretation used throughout National Parks. Further, the people who visit Rock Creek Park are not getting the messages from the typical shellacked plaques and brown signs that constitute the majority of the park's interpretation efforts. It is an interesting contrast that while there has been a decline in interpretive visitation, there has been a substantial *increase* in recreational visits. With the introduction of the right *kind* of interpretation, perhaps more of the recreational visits could translate into interpretive visits.

Under a 'Highlights' headline, the Nature Center Trail brochure (used as a guide for "a 1.5 mile moderately strenuous hike from the Nature Center down to Rock Creek and back") introduces the Nature Center in the following way:

> Stroll into the Nature Center to learn more about this fascinating park nestled in the middle of Washington, DC. A beautiful exhibit hall introduces you to many of the plants and animals you may encounter along the trail. The Nature Center also contains live animals native to the Park, a discovery room for small children and the only planetarium in the National Park Service.

While the Nature Center is the hub for many high-quality and important educational programs, most of the subject matter is geared toward young children. With the exception of the ranger lectures, most of the displays here are permanent. Minus the planetarium, it is the stereotypical Park Service visitor's center, complete with animal pelts and snake-skins for visiting children to touch. (*See Figure 3.16, Interpretive Center: The Nature Center and Figure 3.17, The Nature Center Trail*.)

However, the Nature Center is the point of origin for the Ranger Led Programs. A schedule of these programs is produced each month and presents a wide variety of interpretive offerings. Many are connected to the Old Stone House (a National Park Service property located

in the heart of Georgetown and not within Rock Creek Park borders) and others with the Nature Center's planetarium. There are also guided walks to learn about animal track identification, signs of the seasons, Fort DeRussy and other forts as a part of Washington's Civil War defenses, birding, the waterfront ("Discover how these historic waterways influenced the settlement of this area from colonial times to today."), the 'leave no trace' principle, nature photography (a "Photo Safari"), the water in Rock Creek, trees, Beatrix Farrand's Dumbarton Oaks and even "Walking in Roosevelt's Footsteps" along the Theodore Roosevelt Trail, to highlight some of the tours. There are hands-on programs offered, from learning about—and then creating from clay—a turtle, making cornhusk and rag dolls, to a hands-on removal program about the non-native vines in the park. While many of these programs are geared more towards children and only offered on the weekends, they are a substantial, welcome and appropriate piece of Rock Creek Park's interpretive program. They should be maintained as much as possible.

Figure 3.10 1957 guided walk in Rock Creek Park

Peirce Mill is the alternate, major interpretive site in Rock Creek Park. Since its construction, the mill has been in and out of service. It is the only mill remaining of the eight that used to dot the Rock Creek valley. The National Park Service assumed responsibility for the mill in 1933 when it took over Rock Creek Park. It has restored Peirce Mill twice as a historic site for public demonstrations of old-style grist milling. However, in 1993, the wooden gears again wore out and were not repaired. In 1996 Friends of Peirce Mill was established to raise funds to restore the entire mill—including the actual building. An article in the *Washington Post* explains:

> In the meantime, Peirce Mill, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, is hardly idle. The Park Service offers talks about the mill and Rock Creek Park history, and group tours or films on milling and the park are available on request. In addition to museum visitors, the mill hosts a variety of school groups, pre-kindergarten through high school. Younger children learn to de-shell and grind corn by hand and are taught about life during the 1800s and how water power and gravity helped make large machines work. Older students study freshwater ecosystems and test the water quality of Rock Creek. The mill also has been a hands-on learning laboratory, offering workshops on window restoration, timber framing and home maintenance — "all the things applicable to what people who own a house have to do," [member of Friends of Peirce Mill and preservationist contractor Stephen] Ortado said. (Barker)

Overall, the interpretive programs in Peirce Mill are strong—but they are obviously limited by their focus on the mill as a working operation. (*See Figure 3.18, The Other Interpretive Center: Peirce Mill*.)

By concentrating almost all interpretation into two central areas, park administrators may have missed a key opportunity to reach the daily users. The Nature Center, in particular, is located far off the main roads away from the central park circulation. In addition, the scheduled events take place mostly during brief periods on weekends, leaving these interpretive centers empty most of the week. There are some other interpretive signs in the park, particularly in association with Fort DeRussy (*see Figure 3.19, Fort DeRussy*), but overall there is little other

interpretation besides the Mill and the Nature Center. Because of the paucity of existing interpretive activities, the park fails to take advantage of the rich diversity of visitors and their interests and capacity for phosphorescence in the park.

The follow pages highlight some of the park features and express visually the character of Rock Creek Park and its interpretation.

Figure 3.11
Map of Existing Conditions

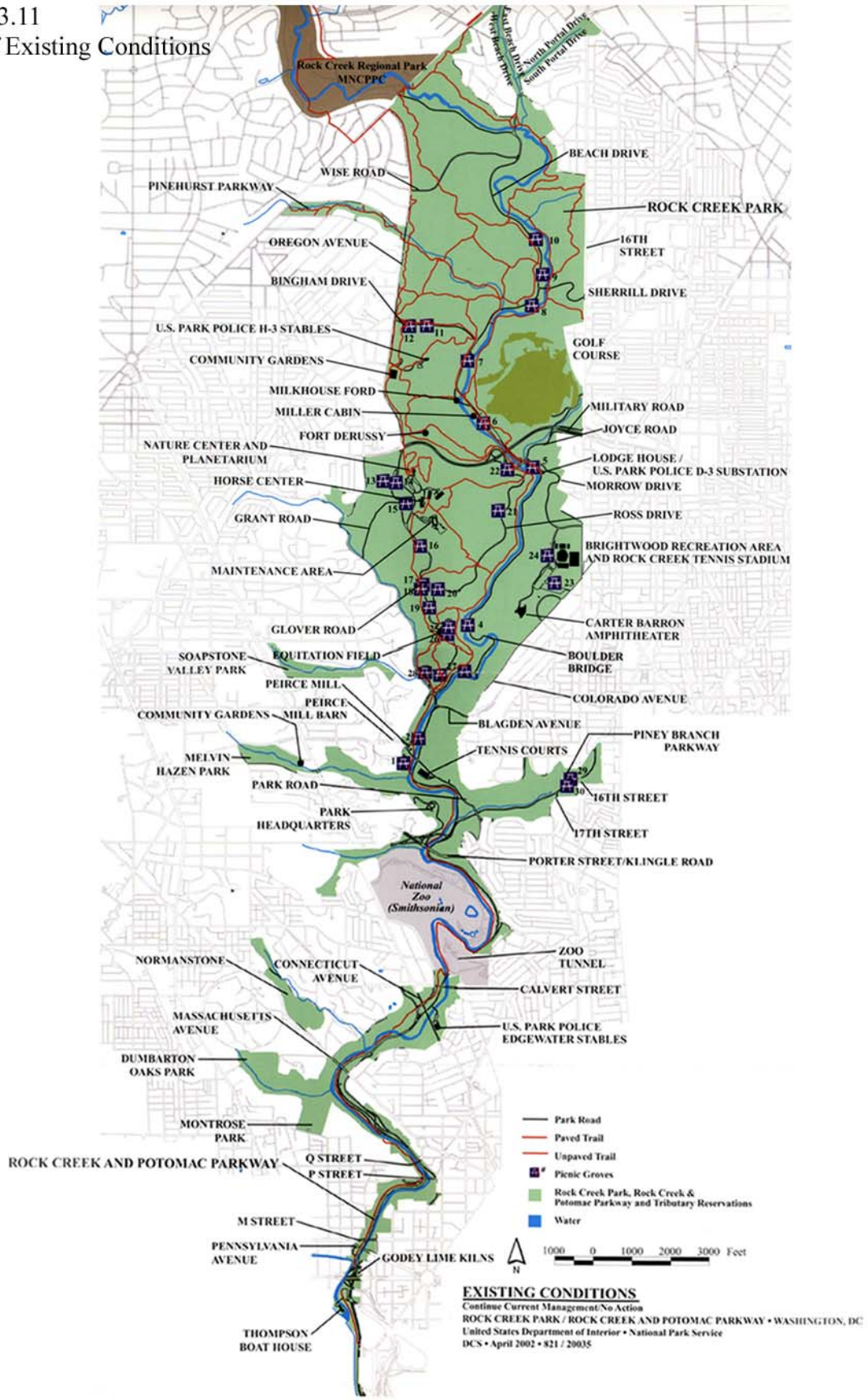
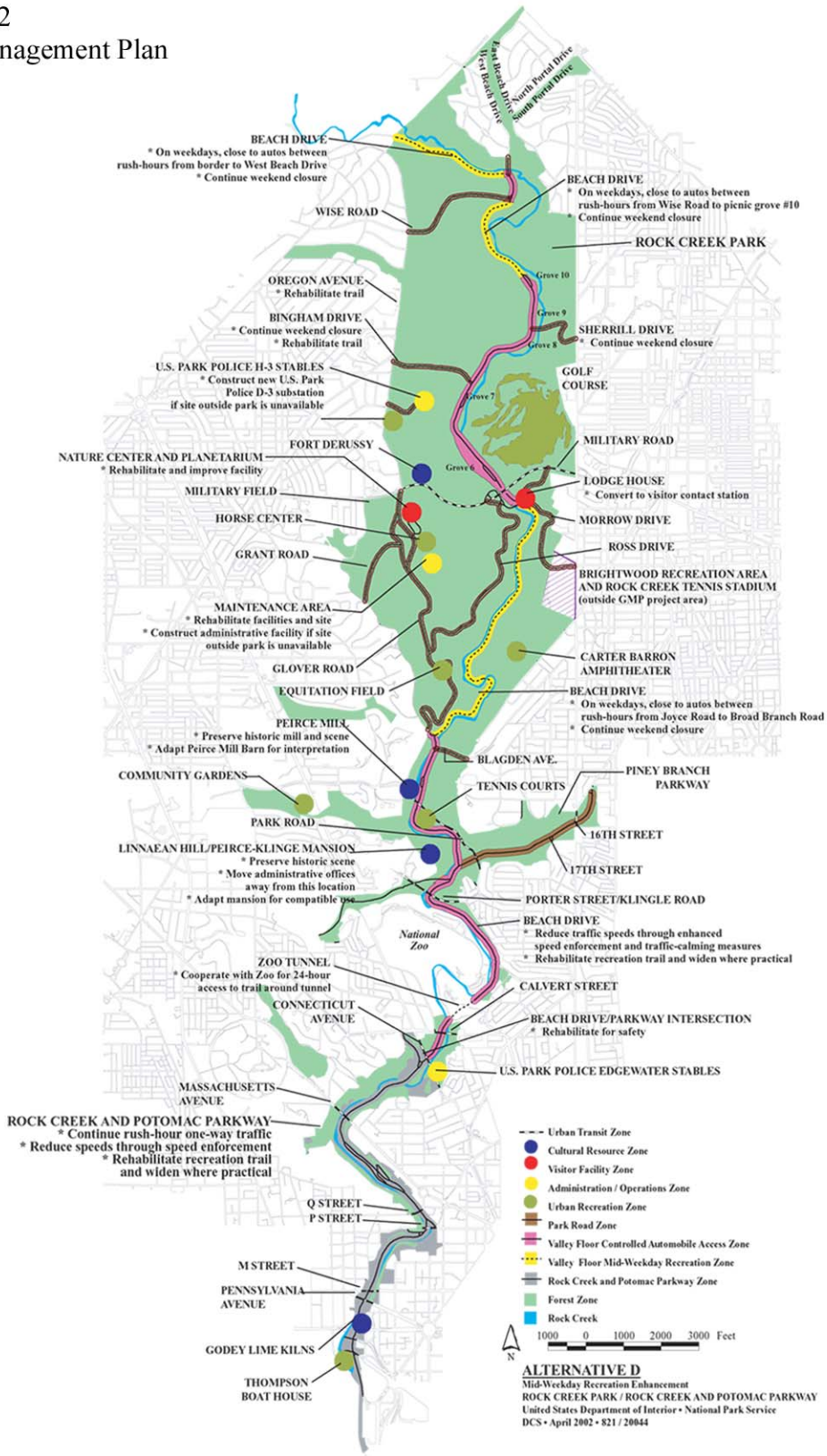


Figure 3.12
Future Management Plan



The National Park Service, with ample public input, introduced four alternatives for Rock Creek Park's future management strategies. Alternative D, graphically represented here, is the Park Service's choice.

Figure 3.13
Watershed Map for Rock Creek Park

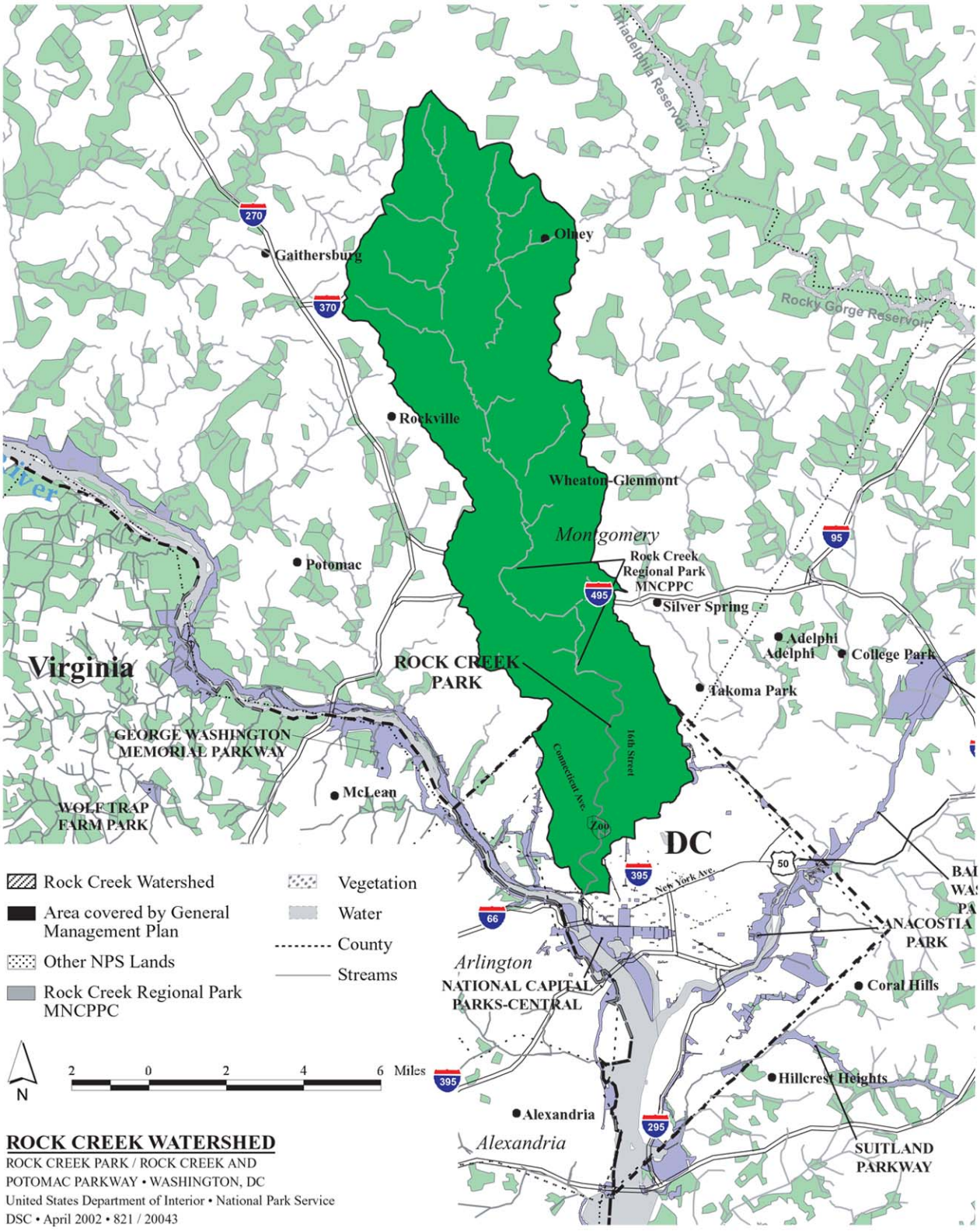


Figure 3.14
Average Traffic Volumes
(Weekday, 1990)

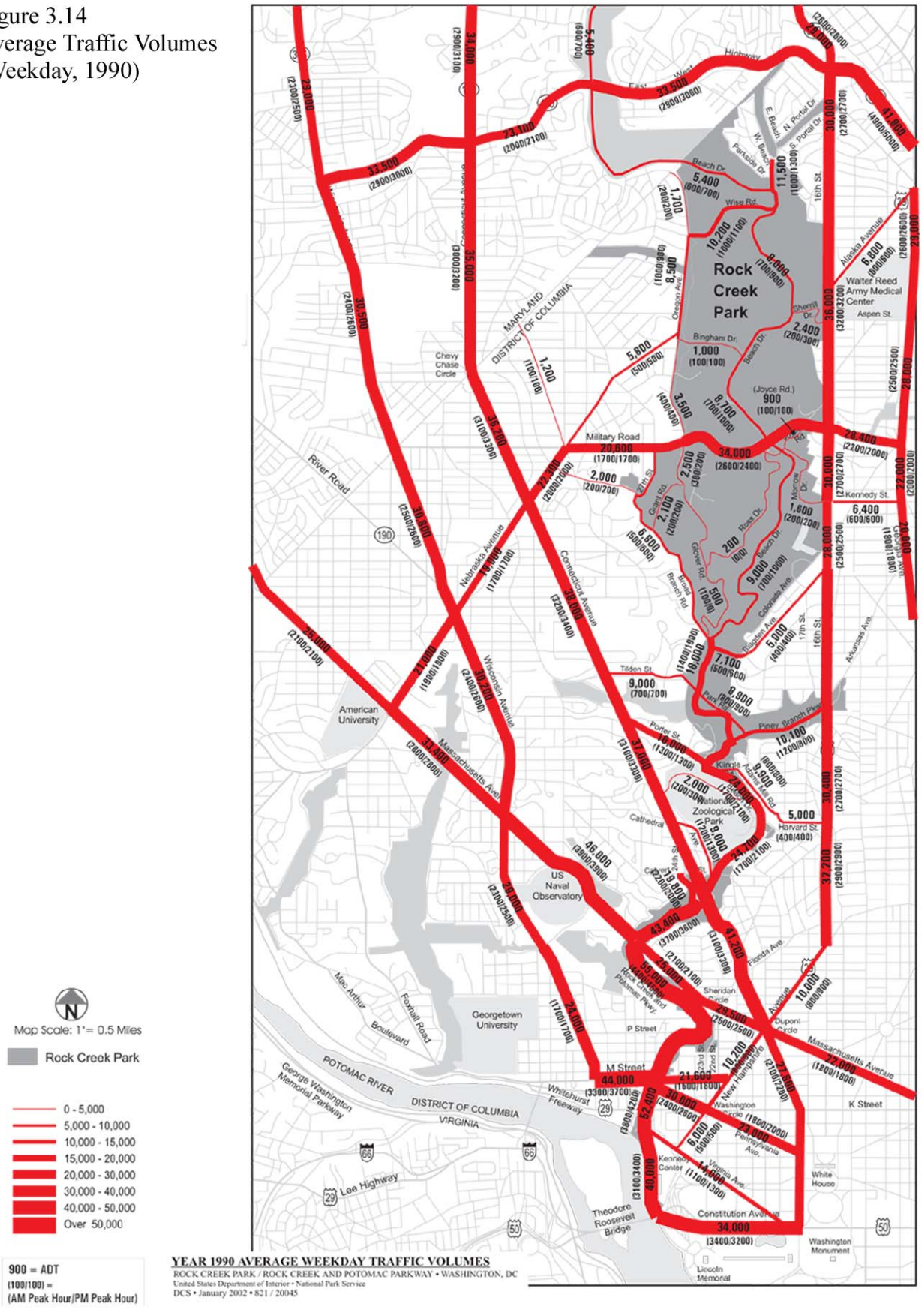


Figure 3.15
Interpretive Centers &
Adjacent Neighborhoods

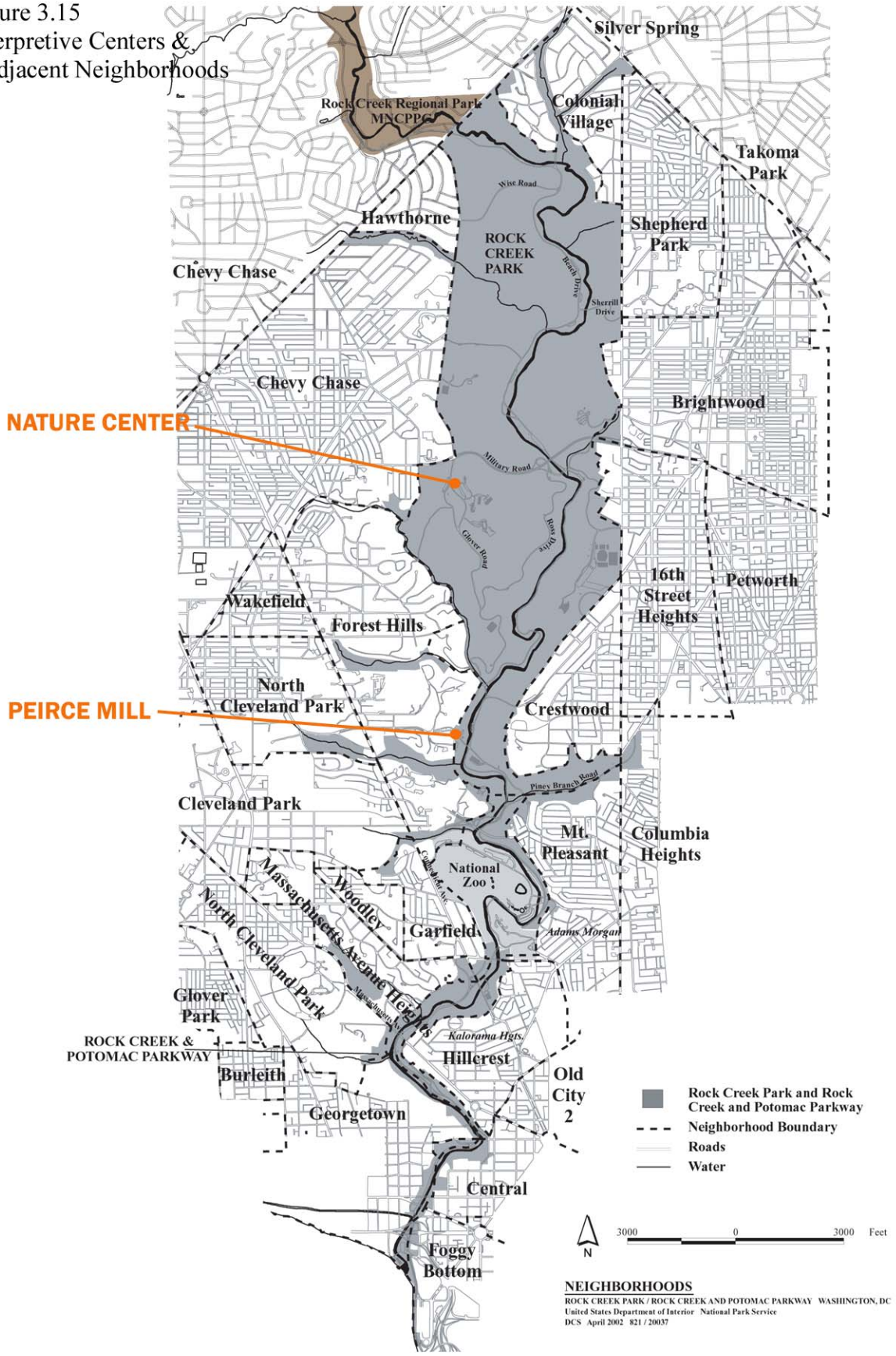
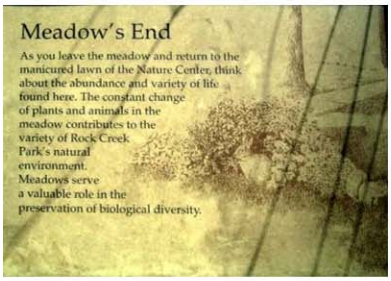
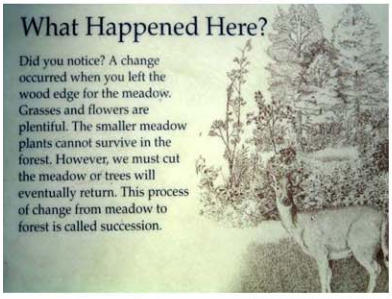


Figure 3.16
Interpretive Center: The Nature Center

Figure 3.17
The Nature Center Trail





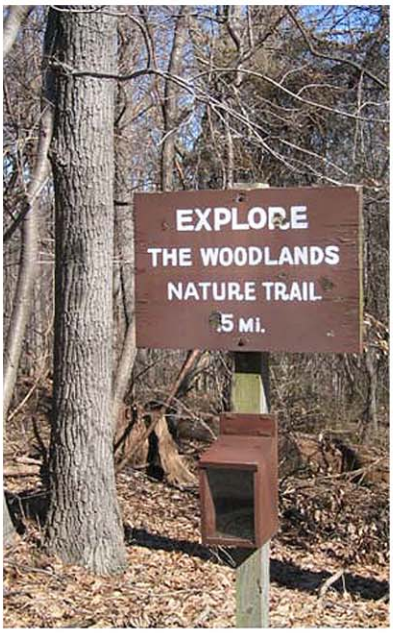
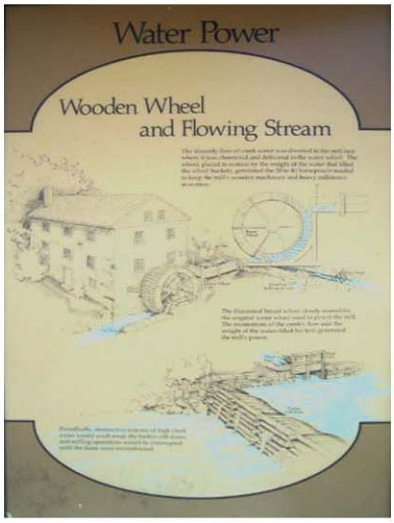


Figure 3.18
The Other Interpretive Center:
Peirce Mill



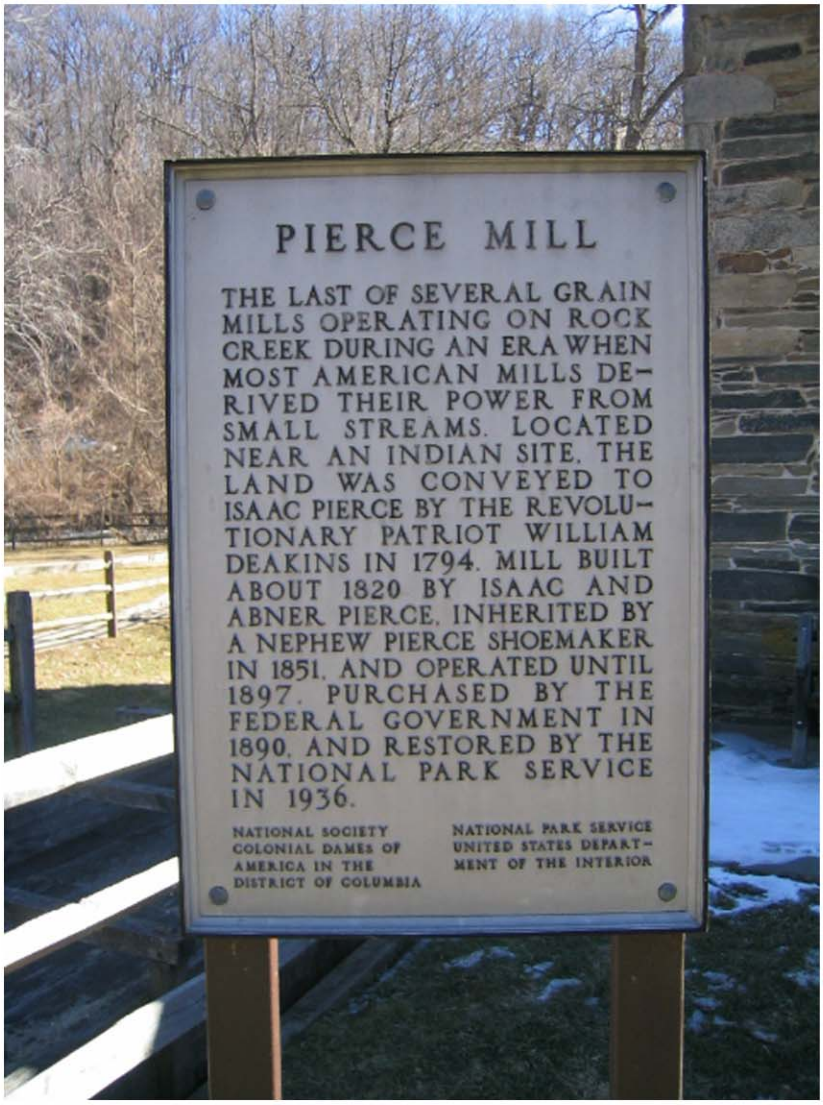
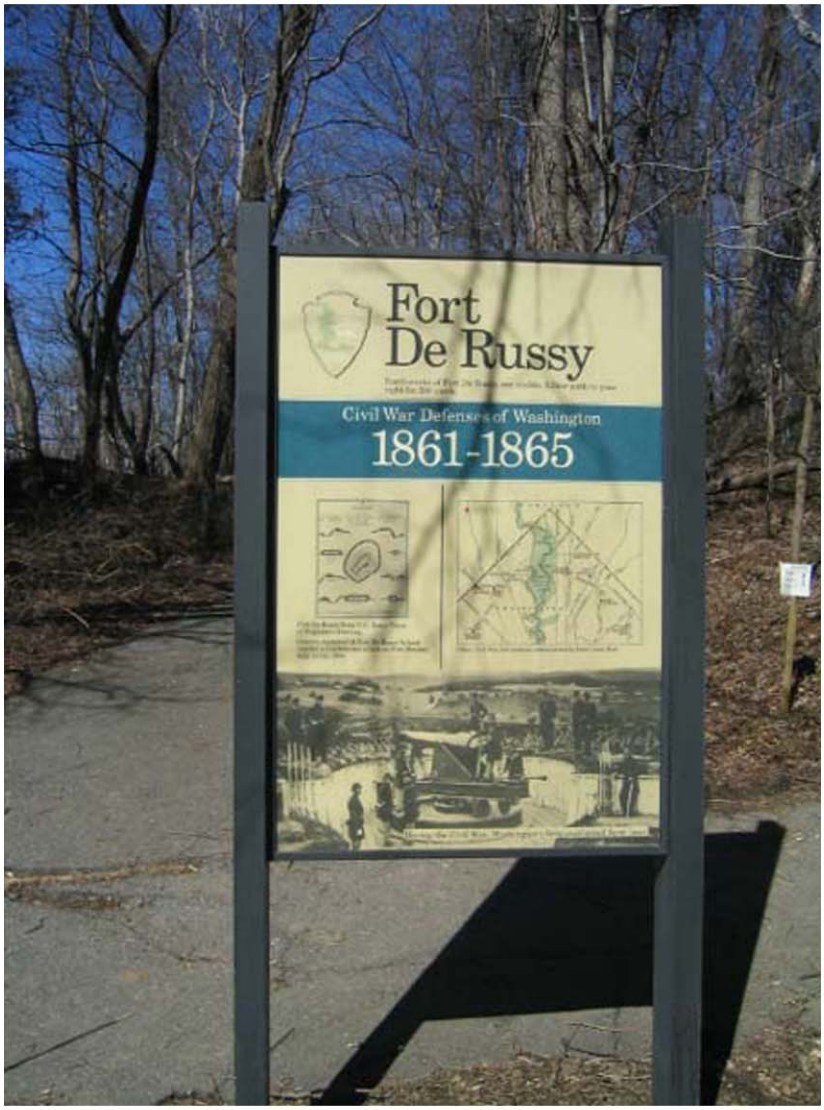


Figure 3.19
Fort DeRussy



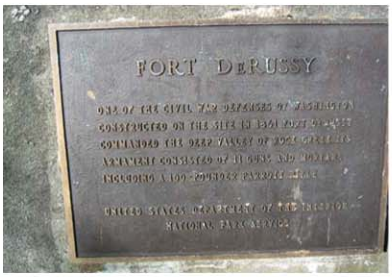
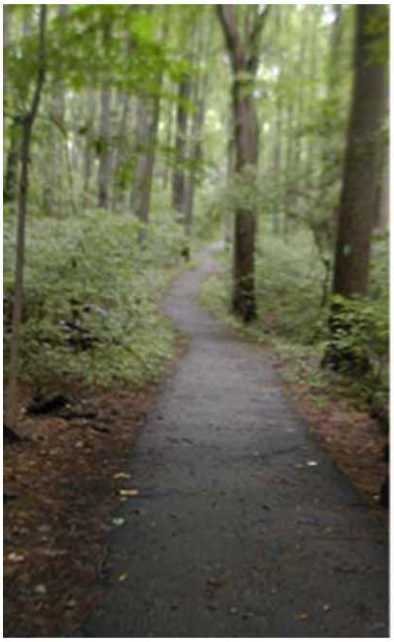


Figure 3.20
Park Features and Character:
Circulation



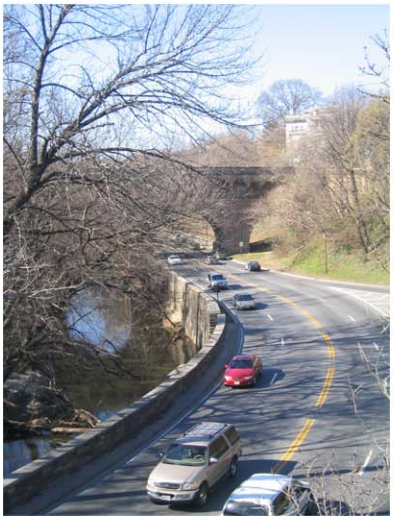


Figure 3.21
Park Features & Character: Users

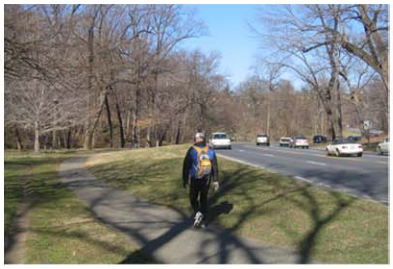


Figure 3.22
Park Features and Character: Bridges













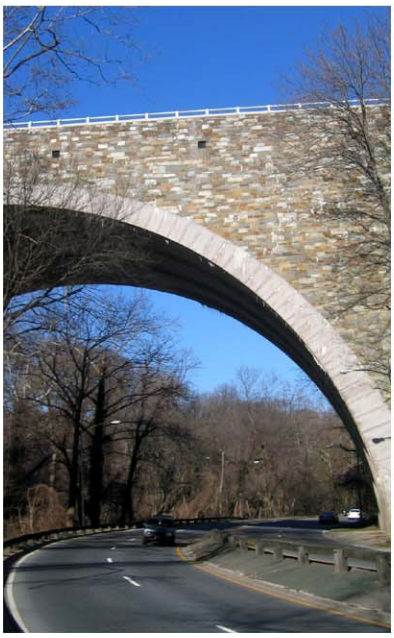
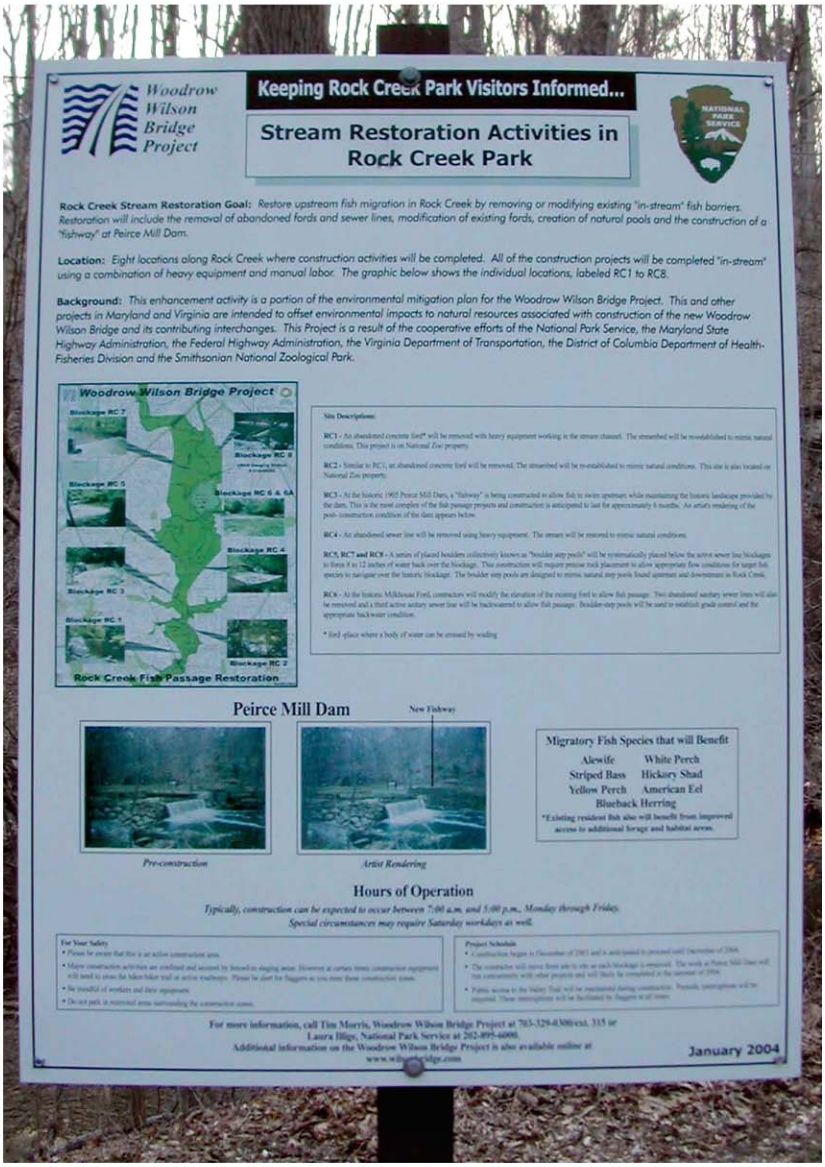


Figure 3.23
Additional Interpretive Signs



EVALUATION OF INTERPRETATION IN ROCK CREEK PARK

The park's porous borders, its lack of gateway entrances, and its limited interpretive activities make it difficult to reach the majority of the park's daily users. The National Park Service's draft management document concedes, "many visitors do not even know that they are in a national park." Because of the park's many entrances and its pervious, indeed welcoming border to the surrounding city, it is without a doubt a challenge to alert its users to its status. What compounds this challenge is that currently Rock Creek Park does very little interpreting overall—and what it does do is in localized areas. "Visitor services such as publications and wayside exhibits . . . are inadequate . . . Most [visitors] never have contact with park rangers or receive any basic orientation or visitor services" (Plan 143). To be sure, the interpretation in Rock Creek Park is surprisingly scarce.

Evaluating the park's existing interpretation in light of the narrative strategies presented in the introduction further highlight the inadequacy of the park's existing interpretation. The four narrative strategies broadly describe stages in the subjective experience of discovery. Taken together, *interruption*, *illumination*, *imagining*, and *involvement* outline the contours of an innovative program, making these strategies useful criteria to evaluate the present programs. When it comes to the first theme, *interruption*, little in the park's current interpretive repertoire actually interrupts visitors. All of the major interpretive features (the Nature Center, Peirce Mill, and Fort DeRussy) are located off major circulation routes, making it difficult to seize the attention of users. Users must intentionally seek these sites. But the park's linear character and thousands of pass-through users make it an ideal site for interruption. While most National Parks are located far away from metro areas, Rock Creek Park's various roads and paths facilitate the passage of thousands of users through the park on a daily basis. By targeting interpretive

activities along the major circulation routes, interpretation can interrupt the daily passage of users, creating moments of contemplation and inspiration.

When it comes to *illumination*, few of the park's existing activities actually illuminate a new way of seeing the park. Perhaps the best example of interpretation that does illuminate is a Historic Landmark sign for Mt. Zion cemetery. The sign describes the former existence of an African-American cemetery where some of the nation's first free blacks were buried. It illuminates a forgotten history of a sacred place not otherwise marked in the land. Despite this notable exception, most interpretation in the park is so conventional that it rarely challenges visitors to see something in a new light. Interpretation is centralized in a few nodes and users of the park expect to find interpretation in those places. Descriptions of how a mill works or signs that label tree species hardly challenge visitors in a meaningful way. Because the best discovery experiences defy our expectations, they change our vision of the world.

Likewise, the park's predictable interpretative activities rarely engage the emotions of the visitors. If learning is indeed "inseparable from emotional engagement," then much of the park's interpretation fails to truly engage its visitors. The narrative strategy of *imagining* asks people to envision a concept in a personally relevant way. One exceptional example of *imagining* is a ranger-led walk where visitors retrace the steps of Theodore Roosevelt's favorite hikes, imagining a day with the President on his favorite retreat. But most of the park's signs and interpretive centers hardly go beyond a simple presentation of facts, failing to create an atmosphere of inspiration, intrigue, and beauty that resonate with visitors. There is no evidence of Freeman Tilden's provocation.

Of the four narrative strategies, Rock Creek Park does the best with *involvement*. Several of its ranger-led activities involve visitors. The park's "Ecosearch" asks local citizens to hunt for

different types of trees and learn how each is important to the forest ecosystem. Another program "Making Memories" constructs a special journal to record your thoughts and drawings of nature. "Vicious Vines!" asks visitors to join in to remove Rock Creek Park's non-native vines. Local residents bring shovels, gloves, and bags to remove the many invasive vines choking out the park's native vegetation. All of these activities involve local citizens in learning about issues that affect the park. By recruiting residents to active involvement in programs, the park gains the personal investment of local communities to care for the land. Unfortunately, most of these programs target only a select or small group of committed citizens. What is missing is interpretation that involves the larger DC community, such as the thousands of daily commuters, bikers, and hikers that pass through the park. Rock Creek Park's unique and symbolic location in the heart of DC raises the standard for the park to deliver interpretation that truly inspires.

It is ironic that Rock Creek Park is one of the few places in Washington, DC that is without heavy, explicit interpretation. It is an oasis from the overly decoded, endlessly annotated Washington Mall. The 2003 draft management plan for Rock Creek Park states that a series of "significant statements capture the essence of the park's importance to the nation's natural and cultural heritage" (13). The management plan continues:

> *Located in the heart of a densely populated cosmopolitan area, Rock Creek Park serves as an ambassador for the national park idea, providing outstanding opportunities for education, interpretation, and recreation to foster stewardship of natural and cultural resources*. (13)

The irony compounds with the plan's statement that the park "serves as an ambassador for the national park idea." In fact, Barry Macintosh points out that one of the very reasons the park was incorporated by the National Park Service was for the Park Service to duly interpret the park. "One of the justifications for consolidating federal parklands under the National Park

Service in 1933 was the Service's reputation for communicating, through educational or interpretive programs and media, the values of its parks to the public," writes Macintosh, "the offices previously responsible for Rock Creek Park had done little of an interpretive nature, and the Service sought to make its mark there in this regard" (Macintosh, "Rock Creek" 109). Interpretation is one of the cornerstones upon which the National Park Service was founded and yet, in reality, its 'ambassador' boasts little of this important national park characteristic. What is worse, the head office for Park Service interpretation is located only a few miles away. "Within a year after the National Park Service was organized, an educational division was formed which prepared information circulars and cooperated with various universities that were using the new parks as educational scientific laboratories. Seven years later, this office was moved to Washington, DC, where it has since remained" (Lewis 17).

Should not Rock Creek Park, therefore, be a stellar example, or better, a laboratory for experimentation and advertise just how rich and varied an interpretive program can be? According to the draft management plan, as the population of Washington, DC has increased, so has the demand for recreational opportunities. The demand and expectation for interpretation should also have risen—within the park management and within the park's myriad of visitors. The park's prominent location in the heart of urban DC makes it a perfect setting for a model and progressive interpretive program. Adrian Phillips in his article "Interpreting the Countryside and the Natural Environment," confirms:

> If we recall that part of the definition of interpretation is concerned with explaining the significance of a site, then its significance can be a function of location as well as intrinsic value. A small woodland on the edge of a large city may have greater interpretive potential than a fine forest 100 miles away, precisely because of its accessibility, especially to children. Some of the most exciting developments in interpretation have been in such areas, particularly where they are linked to community participation in the care of such sites. (125)

It is true that Rock Creek Park continues to surprise and delight its visitors much as it did when our nation's capital was first being formed. Rock Creek Park was initially set aside as an intact natural asset, anticipating and acknowledging envelopment by the District's metropolis. Rock Creek Park should be expanding its interpretive programs to reach more of the users of the park, to relay the many messages embedded in the park and live up to its ambitious title as 'ambassador' of the National Park Service. But just where are there examples of this kind of visionary interpretation? What sources can inspire new models for an expanded interpretive program in Rock Creek? The next chapter will examine successful case studies that demonstrate fresh and creative approaches to landscape interpretation.

CHAPTER FOUR

NEW INTERPRETIVE PARADIGMS

The previous chapters outline the many challenges to effective interpretation. Today's National Parks suffer from limited funding, lack of creative vision, and an audience already saturated with too much information. It is the contention of this thesis that these challenges can be overcome by enlivening interpretation with the limitless tools of artistic imagination; that through the dynamic interplay of art and landscape can visitors build bridges between their everyday lives and the land they inhabit. This chapter presents case studies of interpretive projects that effectively narrate forgotten histories, create awareness of ecological processes, and enrich the cultural landscape with social and poetic meaning. They all respond to Tilden's fourth guiding principle of interpretation, they aim not merely to instruct but provoke. They were chosen both for their strong interpretation and their blend of information and art. They rely on different materials, forms or unusual provocative designs to deliver their messages. They were chosen for their phosphorescence.

The case studies are organized around a series of themes: Interruption, Illumination, Imagining, and Involvement. Each study may exhibit elements of several themes, but it is significantly illustrative of one. These themes are not intended to provide a comprehensive classification of interpretive projects. Rather, they model fresh approaches to communicating values and ideas about the cultural and natural landscape. These themes are *narrative strategies*: they describe the process of a discovery experience. This chapter is not in itself

designed to generate new criticism of the following case studies, but rather to bring together an array of observations, descriptions, and meditations in the context of these larger themes of interpretation.

INTERRUPTION

Art possesses the unique ability to seize our attention, to disrupt the flow of our lives and make us think—provocation by interruption. The following two case studies, *Stolpersteine* and *Time Landscape*, achieve this same effect by physically *interrupting* a typical landscape with designs that call special attention to their message. The incongruity of these projects with their surrounding context forces a moment of contemplation. In some ways, the concept of interruption is similar to a folly in the landscape. Their unexpectedness jolts and disturbs one's perception of everyday surroundings, causing reflection of the piece's location and message.

Case Study One: *Stolpersteine (Stumbling Blocks)*
Gunter Demnig, towns across Europe

Figure 4.1 *Stolpersteine* (Stumbling Blocks) by Gunter Demnig

Scattered and embedded in the sidewalks and pavement in towns across Germany are *Stolpersteine*—Stumbling Blocks—created by artist Gunter Demnig. These stumbling stones

have become so popular that they have spread across the continent. There are two in Austria, several planned for Paris, France and interest has been expressed in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, Antwerp, Belgium, and Thessaloniki, Greece. The *Stolpersteine* are tiny memorials, remembrances to recall the individual fates of the anonymous victims of the Holocaust. The artist first forms small concrete blocks. He then crowns them with four-by-four inch brass plates that are simply inscribed with an individual's name, birth date and, if it is known, what happened to the victim. Some contain the word 'deported' while many others end in the word Auschwitz. They are embedded into the sidewalk in front of the house where the person used to live.

According to the artist, "My idea was I wanted to bring the names of the people who were deported back to their home, their houses, where they had lived" (Edwards). Demnig wants the often-forgotten people to be noticed by those who are going about their everyday lives, for them to stumble on them, to think, remember and acknowledge the people and groups who were persecuted and killed by the Nazis. "It goes beyond our comprehension to understand the killing of six million Jews," Mr. Demnig said. "But if you read the name of one person, calculate his age, look at his old home and wonder behind which window he used to live, then the horror has a face to it." The artist pointed out that his memorial also honored other victims of the Nazis, like Gypsies, homosexuals and resistance fighters (Grieshaber).

The *Stolpersteine* also acknowledge and begin to interpret the history of the area, in which Germans lived next door to Gypsies and Jews. Historian Barbara Becher-Yachtley states that, "People come upon the blocks for the first time and want to find out more about the people who are mentioned on them. They come to us asking for information and photographs. We're seeing a growing interest in this part of our history, not one that's dwindling" (Edwards). Many

look upon the plaques as gravestones the victim never had, a decentralized memorial fanning out across Europe. While some stones have been vandalized or the location was protested, the *Stolpersteine* are reminiscent of the shoes piled high in the Holocaust Memorial Museum (discussed in Case Study Seven). The installation of the simple brass plates helps people to understand the magnitude and to process the horror of the holocaust.

Case Study Two: *Time Landscape*™
Alan Sonfist, New York City, New York

Figure 4.2 *Time Landscape*, by Alan Sonfist

According to Alan Sonfist, in a statement delivered at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, "Natural phenomena, natural events and the living creatures on the planet should be honoured and celebrated along with human beings and events" (qtd. in Kastner 258). During this speech, he also discussed his work, *Time Landscape*, his earliest environmental narrative landscape. Started in 1965—the same year Sonfist, according to his autobiography, "ran until [he] was out of breath, then ran twice as far"—*Time Landscape* was a massive project that was intended to reclaim and convert anonymous urban sites in five New York City boroughs to the way they once were before the arrival of settlers. The most visible section of his project is on an eight

thousand square feet plot of land on the corner of Houston and LaGuardia Place in New York City (Wallis 33). "Once an urban wasteland, Sonfist planted this abandoned lot covered with rubble with forest plants indigenous to Manhattan, and re-created the soil and rock formations that had once existed there before the Western settlers arrived" (Kastner 150). A sign on the fence surrounding the piece reads:

> Time Landscape
> An environmental sculpture of a precolonial forest, showing how this area looked in the fifteenth century.

The piece took ten years of research and negotiations with the City.

Sonfist's ultimate goal is ambitious and complex. Just as architects come into cities and renew the architecture, so would *Time Landscapes* renew the natural environment with all indigenous species. He states, "thus as the city renews itself architecturally, it will re-identify its own unique characteristic natural origins and its own natural traditions" (qtd. in Kastner 257). Sonfist goes further with his broad idea:

> Because of human development, the island of Manhattan has totally lost its natural contour. By creating markings throughout the streets, the natural outline could be observed again. Indian trails could also be followed with an explanation of why the trail went over certain terrain that no longer exists. The natural past can be monumentalized also by sounds. Continuous loops of natural sounds at the natural level of volume can be placed on historic sites. Streets named after birds can have sounds of those birds or animals played on occasions such as when animals come out of hibernation or at mating time. The sounds, controlled by the local community, change according to the natural pattern of the animals and the rhythmic sounds return to the city. Natural scents can evoke the past as well. At the awakening of a plant at its first blooming, the natural essence can be emitted into the street. (258)

While this grand vision currently remains unfulfilled, the smaller piece is still a part of the Manhattan streetscape and serves as an important reminder of the earlier vegetation and ecology that once covered the island.

Alan Sonfist's installation is a living connection to what once covered New York City. For New Yorkers that live and work near the piece, it offers interpretation of how the exact land under their feet looked centuries ago. The contrast to its surroundings does interrupt the urban monotony yet the interpretation does not overwhelm. A wooded lot may or may not catch the eye of a passer-by. They may or may not hear the sounds of cardinals on Cardinal Street. The placement of this primeval forest into the urban fabric is both subtle and incongruous. Like *Stolpersteine, Time Landscape's* juxtaposition with its hyper-urban context creates a point of contemplation, enriching the city with its timeless narrative.

ILLUMINATION

One of the most oft-quoted definitions of postmodernism is from French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard who defined it as "incredulity toward metanarratives" (xxiv). Metanarratives are understood as the great stories that define civilization—stories of religion, gender, and politics. The postmodern age has pronounced metanarratives dead; instead, postmodernism celebrates "micronarratives," the forgotten histories of minorities, women, and society's repressed masses. Micronarratives are important because they tell the forgotten histories of those marginalized by culture. They offer different perspectives on the same history.

The three projects mentioned here—*Four Letters Home*, *Shore View Points*, and *Buttermilk Bottom*—celebrate, in true postmodern fashion, the forgotten histories of immigrants, Native Americans, and a displaced African-American neighborhood. By *illuminating* what is forgotten, these projects draw the visitor into a past too often marginalized by conventional histories. Illumination is described here simply as the act of casting light on a topic, history, message or place in order to stimulate and encourage seeing it in a new or different way.

Case Study Three: *Four Letters Home*
Will Holton, Roxbury, Massachusetts

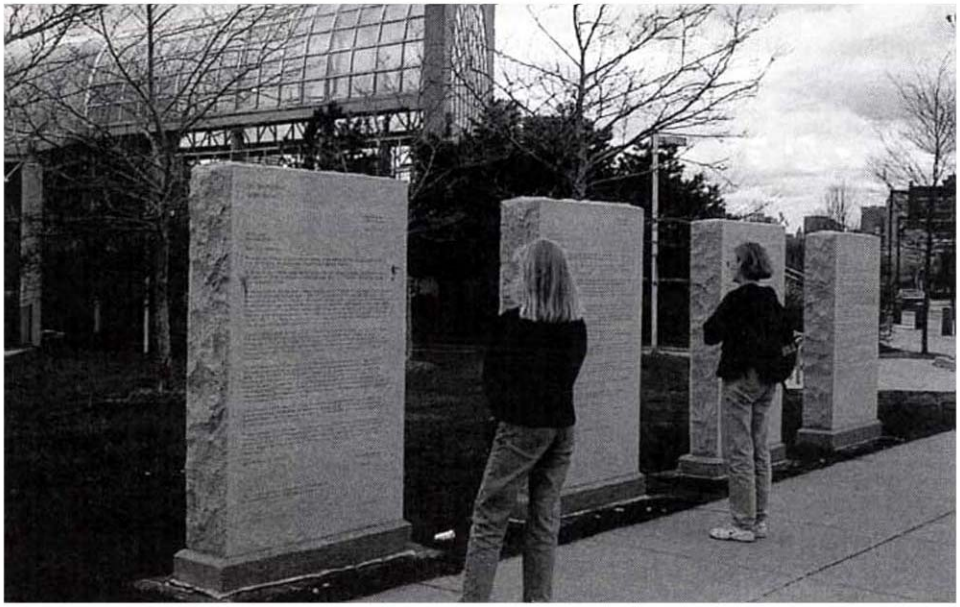


Figure 4.3 *Four Letters Home*, by Will Holton

Outside the Boston T subway station in Roxbury, Massachusetts stand four granite tablets. Each tablet is inscribed with a letter that reflects and intertwines with a part of the surrounding area's history and is a part of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's "world class public art program and collection that has grown to include over seventy pieces on six transit lines" (MBTA). Created by artist and Northeastern University sociology professor, Wilfred E. Holton, *Four Letters Home* is a group of fictional letters written by recent immigrants to their family and friends back home. One of the letters is written to rural Maine in 1830s, one to Ireland in the 1880s, to Poland in the 1920s and to Georgia in the 1960s and each corresponds to the immigration patterns in the Roxbury area of Boston (the sequence of groups represented are New England farmers, Irish, Polish Jews and southern blacks, respectively). "A series of changes, from the condition of housing to treatment of immigrants to the quality of the

landscape, may be deciphered from the letters, all sent from the same place. Each letter also anticipates upcoming changes in transportation and media" (Potteiger and Purinton 129).

Excerpts of the some of the letters inscribed into the large, vertical granite slabs are:

> April 30, 1834
> To Wendell Jones
> Vassalboro, Maine
> Changes are coming to our small town. The big news these days in Roxbury is that a railroad from Boston to Providence, in Rhode Island, will be started within a year. The plan is to have a trestle across Back Bay marsh and run the rail south through the Stoney Brook valley. It will come near our farm and perhaps force us to move.
>
> July 16, 1886
> To Patrick Kelley
> Kilcogan, County Galway, Ireland
> We try to take the family on a horsecar ride some Sundays after Mass. Recently we went up to Franklin Park, which is now being finished at the edge of Dorchester.
> . . . More telephones are being put in all the time. Many new 3-family houses are going in on farm land.
>
> February 2, 1960
> To Albert and Hattie Robinson
> Pleasant Hill, Georgia
> Our apartment is on Ruggles Street near Westminster Street in Lower Roxbury. The roof leaks in heavy rains. There are vacant apartments, and some wooden houses nearby are empty...Change is coming. We hear that two big highways will be built and join at the corner of Ruggles Street and Columbus Avenue. Our building will probably be torn down in a few years for the Inner Belt Highway. We hope we can find a better place.

(letter excerpts taken from *Landscape Narratives*, Potteiger and Purinton, 129 and 242)

Four Letters Home is a powerful reminder of the former residents of the neighborhood and translates the dramatic changes that the neighborhood underwent as it grew into its urban environment. Reading the names of former and current streets, glimpsing in to the lifestyles of the letter writers, understanding their concerns for their future, this art piece interprets the past with a punch. It illuminates the history of a community and how it was formed (both by the influx of immigrants and infrastructure) in an original, dynamic and compelling way.

Case Study Four: *Shore View Points and Voice Library*
Gloria Bornstein and Donald Fels, Seattle, Washington

Figure 4.4 *Shore View Points and Voice Library*, by Gloria Bornstein and Donald Fels

In 1991, the dual-careered community artist and psychotherapist Gloria Bornstein, based in Seattle, Washington teamed up with painter-sculptor Donald Fels to create interpretive signage to counterbalance the historical markers along Seattle's waterfront:

> Official signs extolled pioneer and military events that displaced the indigenous population, filled in tidal flats, and created the commercial port. The new signs addressed histories not officially recognized but particular to the site, with images and text that acted as an ironic approximation of the historical markers. Next to a sign denoting a "Shore View," the artists' sign read, "WILL IT WORK TO HAVE A HARBOR THAT EXISTS ONLY FOR VIEWING? WILL WE JUST SEE OURSELVES LOOKING?" Other signs directed visitors to a nearby park without amenities occupied by homeless Native Americans—the irony being that the park is set on filled-in tide flats taken from their ancestors. (eportfolio)

The juxtaposition of the alternative history signs (i.e. displaced communities versus the Washington State settler's 'success' stories) created a stir amongst waterfront visitors. At the bottom of each sign was a telephone number where callers were invited to leave messages

voicing their opinions, or listen to the recorded messages of other callers. Differing viewpoints were recorded and offered (shared through the various questions and answers left by tourists and residents) on six channels of information. Authors Matthew Potteiger and Jamie Purinton present some of the recorded opinions on the piece:

> Hundreds of messages were left, including one by Carl Nordstrom, who stated: I saw the signs alongside the historic markers on the waterfront today, and I have a question as to how long they are going to be up. I don't think they should be there very long. My ancestors were part of the building of early-day Seattle, and we wrested the land from nature and the Indians and we don't want to give it back.
>
> Another person identifying himself as a Cherokee Indian left a message about how people are custodians of the land and do not own the lands. (199)

The provoking installation of the *Shore View Points* signs provides an example of interesting and compelling interpretation. While the act of interpretation is not about telling a story in its entirety, including every nuance and factoid, it becomes important to consider the ramifications from different perspectives, the micronarratives, and how those alternative ideas can be included in the interpretation programs in alternative ways.

Case Study Five: *Buttermilk Bottom*
REPOhistory, Atlanta, Georgia

Figure 4.5 *Buttermilk Bottom* signs by REPOhistory

In many large cities in the United States in the 1960s, urban renewal swept through and erased communities and simultaneously, layers of history. With this 'renewal,' "all the differentiated places, landmarks, streets, and houses were cleared to make a blank slate for the modern vision of the city. If one looks at any of the Sanborn maps prior to demolition, there is a wealth and diversity of names that 'disappeared' with 'urban removal,'" wrote Pottieger and Purinton in *Landscape Narratives* (99). Buttermilk Bottom, a vibrant African-American community in downtown, Atlanta, Georgia, fell prey to the 'renewal.' What took its place once the area was leveled and cleared? The Fulton County Stadium, Civic Center, expansive parking

lots, Georgia Power and (once home to Martha Schwartz' gilded frogs) the Rio Shopping Center were built. The low-lying, segregated area of shot-gun shacks, African-American schools and churches, many of the interior roads and the residents were wiped off city maps.

However, in 1989 a New York based collective of artists, writers, scholars, activists and performers founded REPOhistory (repossessing history) for the purpose of addressing—and illuminating—forgotten or ignored histories. Their works are informed by multicultural readings of lost, forgotten, or suppressed narratives that are designed to re-map an area, provoke alternative readings and remind viewers of the relationship of history to contemporary society. A member of REPOhistory from Atlanta shared the story of the disappearance of Buttermilk Bottom and a project was devised to reinstate the area on local maps. Pottieger and Purinton write, "based on interviews with former residents, REPOhistory artists attempted to reconstruct aspects of the life of the now dispersed community tied to vanished streets, houses, and other landmarks" (100). The reconstruction and subsequent illumination of the area's past was accomplished through a variety of interpretive installations.

The most common installation was a wide variety of signs. Reflecting history that a visitor to downtown Atlanta might never know, some signs had photos of past inhabitants, sharing the resident's name and former address. Others—contrasting with the skyscrapers surrounding the site—show the common form of housing in the area, in a photograph of a shotgun shack as well as one of the current glass-clad buildings. Still, other signs share the typical jobs Buttermilk Bottom residents had, where the former borders of the area were, and the racially-biased renaming of the portions of major streets in Buttermilk Bottom.

Figure 4.6 Street stencils in *Buttermilk Bottom*, by REPOhistory

Besides the installation of signage, artists delivered other stories of the history of the area. Some examined old city maps from the 1930s and then stenciled the "footprints of shotgun houses with the names of residents, churches and other neighborhood structures . . . onto the parking lot of the Atlanta Civic Center" (REPOhistory). Formerly forgotten names of streets that had been realigned or removed were also stenciled on the paving in Buttermilk Bottom. Overall, the powerful re-introduction of the area's lost history, as the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* stated regarding the pieces, "movingly illustrates an expanded vision of what art can be . . ." (qtd. in REPOhistory). No longer was the singular narrative of parking lots, large block-buildings and grided streets the story told. As a result of the installations by REPOhistory, visitors and residents of Atlanta were shown a piece of almost-forgotten history and were able to see the area in a different way.

IMAGINING

All narratives require imagination. But the most effective narratives create more than just a mental concept; they create an emotional memory whose power can change the way we see the world. The two projects mentioned here, *Kelly Ingram Park* and *The Holocaust Memorial Museum*, engage visitors in an emotional re-creation of the events they portray. *Kelly Ingram Park* places the visitor in the role of a persecuted civil rights protestor in Birmingham; *The Holocaust Museum* uses an accumulation of everyday items such as shoes and turns them into a moving monument to senseless slaughter. The emotional richness offered by each of these designs engages the visitor in a kind of empathetic role-playing, deepening their appreciation for the events represented.

Case Study Six: *Kelly Ingram Park*
Grover Harrison Harrison, sculpture by James Drake, Birmingham, Alabama

Figure 4.7 *Children's March* and *Police Dogs Attack*, by James Drake

Encompassing one square block across from the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute and the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church is Kelly Ingram Park. A plaque at its entrance reads, 'A Place of Revolution and Reconciliation.' The interpretation of the history of the park attempts to reflect the significance of the site as an important location in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

According to University of Georgia Professor Ian Firth, "Kelly Ingram Park epitomized [the] racial segregation of public space. The park was a 'whites' only area, off-limits to African-Americans who dominated the surrounding neighborhoods" (Firth). Birmingham, Alabama was the site of the first mass beatings of the Freedom Riders and it was Kelly Ingram Park that was selected by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to be a place of assembly for a non-violent demonstration (sit-ins, boycotts, marches, arrests) in an attempt to protest and end the segregation policies in Birmingham. Led by the SCLC president, Martin Luther King, Jr., many protestors were arrested for their involvement. A National Park Service website explains:

> When police filled the jails with mass arrests and depleted the ranks of adult demonstrators, the SCLC called on the city's children to join the protests. On May 2, under orders from Public Safety Commissioner Bull Connor, police arrested 600 child picketers (some as young as six years of age); by the next day, 1,000 children had been jailed. In the days that followed, firemen blasted the protestors, including children, with high-pressure fire hoses, and police used their nightsticks indiscriminately. Police K-9 units loosed their dogs into crowds of peaceful demonstrators, pinning down one woman and severely wounding three teenagers. One young bystander was whirled around by a policeman into the jaws of his German Shepherd. An *Associated Press* photographer standing nearby captured the incident, which quickly became the symbol of the unrest in Birmingham. (NPS cultural resources)

Commissioned to commemorate the 30th anniversary of this unrest, a new design for the park was done by the local landscape architecture firm, Grover, Harrison and Harrison. A sculptor, James Drake was also retained. Many of the original characteristics of the park were retained: the four-part division and the existing trees. In the center, and in sharp contrast to

scenes from the 1960s, paths converge to reveal four pools for peaceful contemplation. However, it is the circular 'Freedom Walk' that primarily interprets the 1963 experience and journey of the SCLC's protest.

"Along this walk," wrote Professor Firth, "sculptor James Drake, known for including controversial social commentary in his work, installed three bronze and steel sculptures that refer to some of the historic events" (Firth). The first sculpture, *Children's March* remembers and portrays the children being jailed. Drake's second sculpture, *Fire Hosing of the Marchers* has a fire hose gunning African-American protesters who cringe against a brick wall. The third sculpture, *Police Dogs Attack*, depicts three attack dogs, protruding and lunging inward from two parallel steel walls along the sidewalk. The sculptures span the width of the walkway and when visitors move through the park, they also move through and experience the sculptures and space as the protestors might have four decades ago.

Figure 4.8 Entry sign and additional sculpture in *Kelly Ingram Park*

In 1996, an additional sculpture, the foot soldier monument, was added: that of a young protestor facing and cowering in the presence of a policeman and his enormous attack dog. Other sculptures, such as a group of praying pastors were also commissioned. Experiencing the

park in its entirety, moving around the 'Freedom Walk,' it is difficult to move through Kelly Ingram Park and not have a strong reaction to the site's interpretive sculpture and design. Indeed, the interaction between the subject of the sculpture and the viewer is powerful. Similar to the interpretation of *Shore View Points*, linking a precise event or action to a place, and revealing enough of the narrative in an original way, can elicit a strong reaction. The vivid portrayal of the events that occurred in Kelly Ingram Park is a perfect case study of approaching interpretation in a different way.

Case Study Seven: *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Exhibits*
Ralph Appelbaum and Associates Incorporated, Washington, DC

Figure 4.9 Groupings of valises, shoes and concentration camp uniforms at the Holocaust Memorial Museum

In April 1993, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum opened in Washington, DC. The response to its opening was substantial, over one million visitors in the first year alone. A half a year after it opened, the Deputy Museum Director stated, "We are uniformly thrilled, but we are equally tired by our success. If you are thinking of visiting the museum, we ask that you delay your visit. Please don't come" (Connell). So successful was the museum, that in a Lexis-Nexis search on the first year, the articles were as much about the crowds and the

building's growing pains as they were about the overwhelming exhibits it contained. By all accounts, the Holocaust Memorial Museum is a success.

According to Ralph Appelbaum, one of the nation's leading interpretive designers, his firm's philosophy is "that learning is inseparable from emotional engagement. To this end, [they] strive for the greatest possible fusion of the exhibition subject and the design environment in which it is presented. Through architectural metaphor and all environmental means at our disposal, [they] seek to go beyond the presentation of artifacts, specimens, and information to create atmospheres of intrigue, inspiration, and beauty that immerse visitors in some of the less tangible qualities of an exhibition's subject" (Appelbaum website). To be sure, a visit to the Holocaust Memorial Museum is evidence Appelbaum succeeded. In fact, so powerful and emotional is the presentation of the artifacts that many visitors leave the museum wide-eyed, worn and overwhelmed by the experience.

However, certain interpretive exhibits stand out in the museum for their simplicity and effectiveness. That distinction goes to the display of the personal items taken off Holocaust victims as they arrived at the camps. In one large, unadorned room there are four thousand shoes from Majdanek, from concentration camp victims. The sandals, boots, slippers, and heals in every shape color and size, are presented not 'preciously' in display cases but instead openly filling the floor space of the room with deep piles of shoes. The magnitude of this austere display comes from the sheer volume of the artifacts. Again and again this is done in the museum through the hanging of groups of actual wide-striped prison uniforms, piles of valises, eating utensils, toothbrushes, dentures and hairbrushes and eyeglass cases.

Figure 4.10 *Indigo Blue* by Ann Hamilton

In a similar vein, in 1991 for the Spoleto Festival in Charleston, South Carolina, artist Ann Hamilton did an installation entitled *Indigo Blue* that displayed 7 tons of different blue-colored clothing all perfectly folded and piled on an enormous platform in a cavernous warehouse space. The description of the piece and materials reminds the reader that, "nonart materials . . . lose their ordinariness and are made significant and valuable through sheer accumulation" (Jacob 73). The same principle is operating at the Holocaust Museum where the horror is interpreted in many forms—videos, photographs, scale models and labels—and yet it is in the interpretive displays of the volume of common artifacts that help a visitor experience and imagine the true magnitude of the holocaust events.

INVOLVEMENT

As our work becomes increasingly specialized, as our landscapes become increasingly domesticated, we become the unfortunate byproducts of a global economy: blissfully unaware of the larger processes that sustain us. Gary Paul Nabhan and Stephen Trimble, in their book *Geography of Childhood* noted the results of a 1992 survey of fifth and sixth graders in the U.S.

where over half of the children surveyed claimed they learn more about "nature" from the media than from school, home or in the wild; Kids growing up in Native American villages now say they see more wildlife on TV than they do in the flesh (88). More than ever, we need interpretation that gets us involved and effectively shows how we participate in the processes around us. The case studies presented here, *Flow City* and *Place Matters*, increase connectedness with these daily processes by *involving* people in both flows of garbage and the forgotten histories of special places.

Case Study Eight: *Flow City*
Mierle Laderman Ukeles, 59th Street and Hudson River, New York City, New York

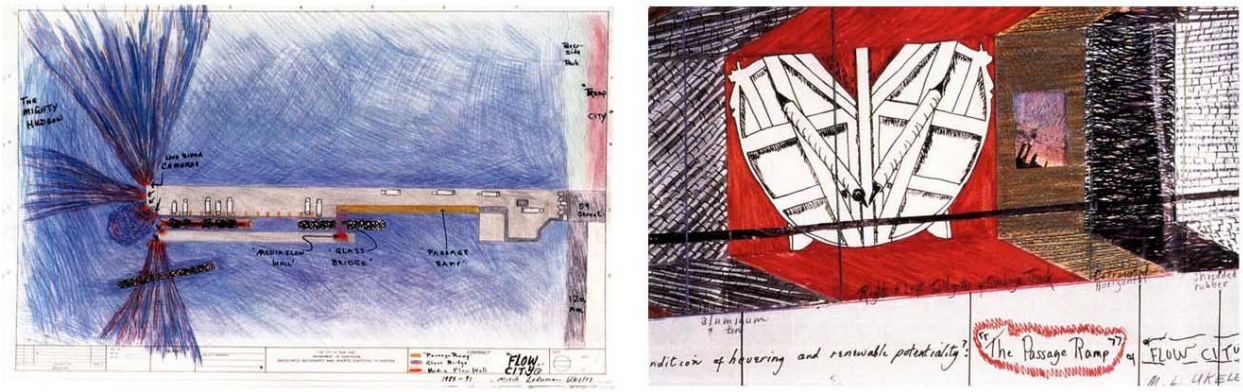


Figure 4.11 Mierle Laderman Ukeles concept drawings of *Flow City*

"It took about two years in the construction of the facility to build in public access for everybody. When we first proposed *Flow City*, the Department of Ports and Terminals said, 'You can't do that because it's never been done before.' The sanitation department replied, 'Yes we can. It is time to lift the veil on the subject, and this is the way to do it'" wrote Mierle Laderman Ukeles in the book *Sculpting with the Environment—A Natural Dialogue* (184). The subject under discussion was waste disposal and New York City. Ukeles, whose official title was Artist in Residence with the New York Department of Sanitation (an unsalaried position),

proposed to the department a "permanent public environment that would become an organic part of an operating garbage facility" (184). With the assistance of engineers from Greeley Hanson, she designed *Flow City* to be a part of a midtown garbage transfer station on "a vast pier in the Hudson River where huge garbage trucks continually rumble through to dump tons of urban trash onto barges headed for landfill dumping sites. Within this switching place, a geographical passage between use and disuse, Ukeles has built a kind of visitors center that allows tourists to observe and understand this process" (Wallis 39). The work elucidates the monumental process of trash disposal in the city—with hopes that the knowledge and understanding gained from the visit will result in the public internalizing its role in controlling the vast tide of waste discarded each day. On both an individual and macro level, *Flow City* interprets how a piece of trash flows through the current disposal system.

However, instead of simply a large, stark room with flow-charts and recycling messages, Ukeles interprets the disposal process in three sections. The first section is *Passage Ramp* that is a 248-foot-long walkway that surrounds a visitor with recycled materials. It is essentially a tube that is spiraled with twelve different materials—a ring of crushed aluminum cans followed by a ring of crushed glass, shredded rubber, and so on. Ukeles wants "visitors to feel the extreme diversity in different materials, because if you can appreciate this, then you can't watch them all getting dumped together in a barge without thinking, 'How stupid.' [She wants] visitors to see the materials in a kind of hovering state of flux: thrown out, not yet back. [She wants] visitors to pass through a state of potentiality" (186).

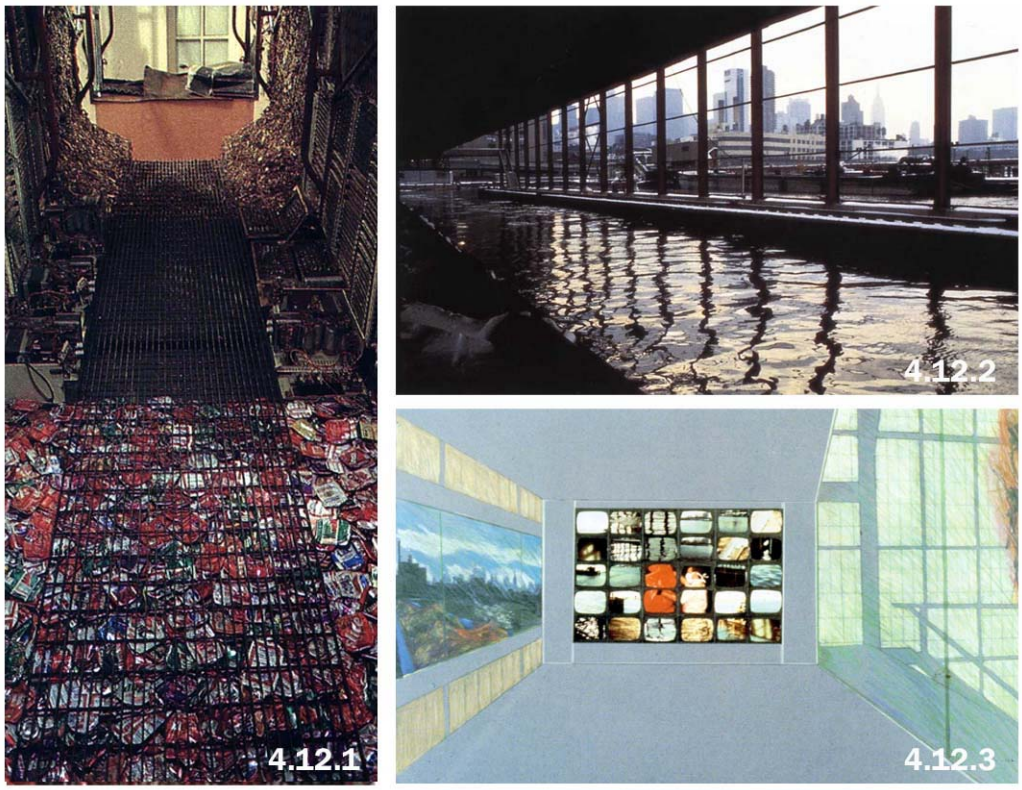


Figure 4.12 *Passage Ramp* (4.12.1) *Glass Bridge* (4.12.2) and *Media Flow Wall* (4.12.3), by Mierle Laderman Ukeles

Once at the top of the ramp, visitors will enter the next section, *Glass Bridge*, which is forty feet long and eighteen feet wide. From the bridge, the viewer can watch the garbage trucks below them dump their contents into waiting barges. Once loaded, the barges will pass under the bridge—under the visitors—and join the flow of the Hudson River in the journey to a landfill. Ukeles refers to this as "The Violent Theater of Dumping."

Finally, at the end of the bridge is *Media Flow Wall* that is a ten by eighteen-foot wall of crushed glass that has twenty-four monitors set into it. Ukeles explains:

> The video wall will be programmed with live cameras, located on and off site, and prepared disc and tape sources. It is an electronic permeable membrane that will enable visitors to pass 'through' this physical point in order to get a broader understanding how this kind of place links up with the systems of the planet. The wall will transmit three kinds of flow-imagery: river, landfill and recycling. (187)

To help educate people about the issues, scientists, ecologists, artists, and others were invited to contribute information for the video displays. The different perspectives provided a range of views for visitors to see and to question their consumer choices, and learn more about the consequences of their lifestyle on the prospects for a healthy environment in the future. The wall also documents the accumulation of trash at the nearby Fresh Kills Landfill. In the future, Ukeles wants to have an intercom system installed in order to create the flow of communication between the visitor and any available sanitation worker. "As citizens, we consume the services of those who work in the places; we produce the product that is serviced in these places; we own these places," writes Ukeles (189). The optimism behind *Flow City* is that if people can see and understand how the city works then they can direct their actions and ideas to create a better working city.

Case Study Nine: *'Marking Places That Matter' Competition*
Sponsored by Place Matters**,** New York City, New York

Figure 4.13 Collage of some of the entries from the 'Marking Places That Matter' Competition

"How do we crack the silence of these sites," asks Marci Reaven, Place Matters codirector. "What we were trying for was an informational or artistic system," she continues (Ringen). Concerned about New York's less visible places (places of history, story and tradition) in 1998, Place Matters began reaching out to New Yorkers to identify and nominate culturally significant locations that have helped make the city of New York what it is today. The result is filed into an expanding catalogue creating the 'Census of Places That Matter,' a 500+ inventory of locations. So far, New Yorkers have nominated public markets and street corners, a beer garden and a bird garden, basketball courts and stickball blocks, industrial signs and union halls, war memorials and graffiti murals, dance halls and gay theaters, artist lofts, housing projects, and more (Placematters). Four years later the organization, acknowledging that some of these 'silent sites' must be interpreted to give them a voice and recognition, held a competition. On the Place Matters website, they state "In February 2002, Place Matters issued an open call to architects, artists, and graphic designers to 'think outside the plaque' in developing ideas for place-markers. More than 100 design teams responded with innovative place-marker concepts—ranging from large-scale image projections to sidewalk sculpture" (Placematters).

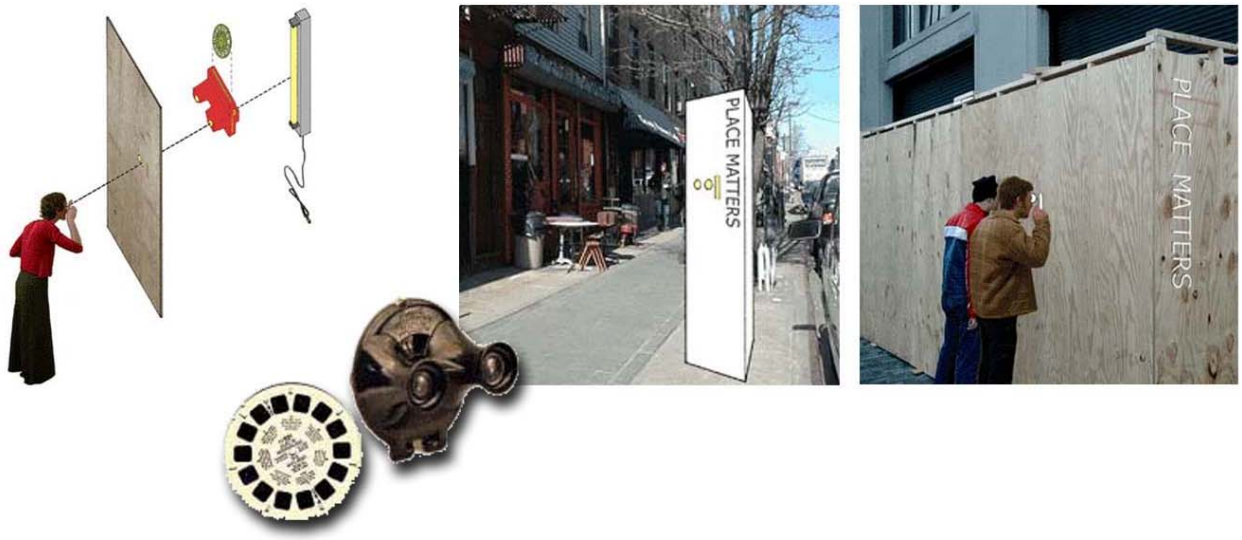


Figure 4.14 Competition entry: *Stereoscapes*

As their website illustrates, the eight finalists provide model examples of innovative interpretive programs. Most models take it even further and propose installations with which passersby cannot help but interact and be involved. Like the View-Masters of childhood, one interpretive approach, entitled *Stereoscapes*, suggests the use of stereoscope technology on a variety of plain exteriors throughout the city. The accompanying text of the entry notes:

> City streets are full of blank surfaces: plywood construction hoardings, boarded-up windows, and permanently closed storefront roll-downs. Wind-holes cut into construction fences attract viewers curious to see what's going on inside; posters and flyers are plastered on fences and walls. Stereoscapes fuses these vernacular viewing patterns with the tradition of stereo imaging. By placing stereoscopic viewers behind peepholes cut into the blank surfaces that line our sidewalks, the project exploits curiosity and voyeuristic desire to draw the passerby into an interactive encounter with local history.

To be sure, this alternative to the traditional brass-plaque approach to site interpretation envelopes and involves onlookers encouraging a strong link to the site and its significance.

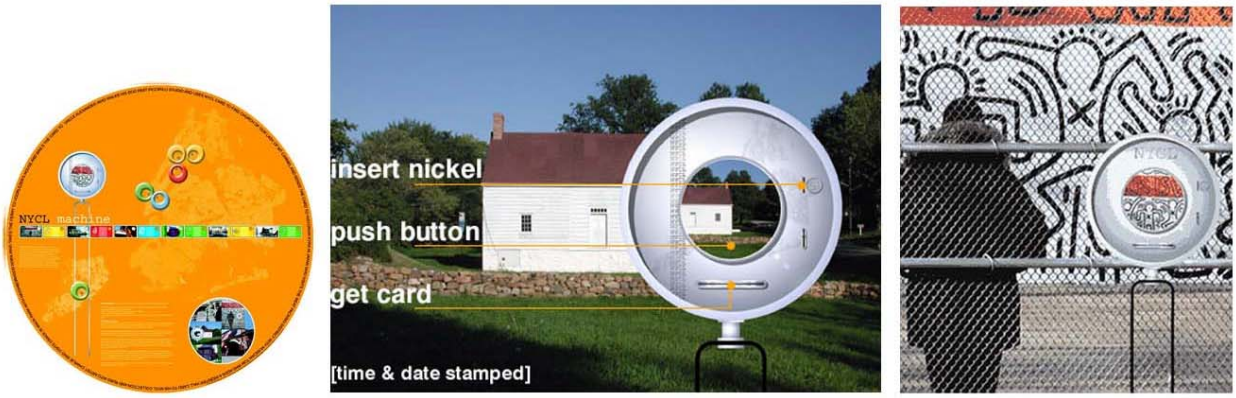


Figure 4.15 Competition entry: *NYCL System: Interweaving New York City Lives and History*

Another project from the competition is the *NYCL System: Interweaving New York City Lives and History*. This entry suggests that "places of cultural and historical importance will be marked with an iconic example of street furniture that distributes an educational, collectible, and postage-ready card that showcases the history of the site and includes a map of other nearby sites to create a web of historically significant stories about New York" (Placematters). In other

words, these machines, once fed a nickel, will dispense a card that tells the visitor about the important surrounding sites. The City Lore postcard is an invitation to learn more about a variety of sites and is a tangible reminder of interaction with the significant locations in the 'Census of Places That Matter.'

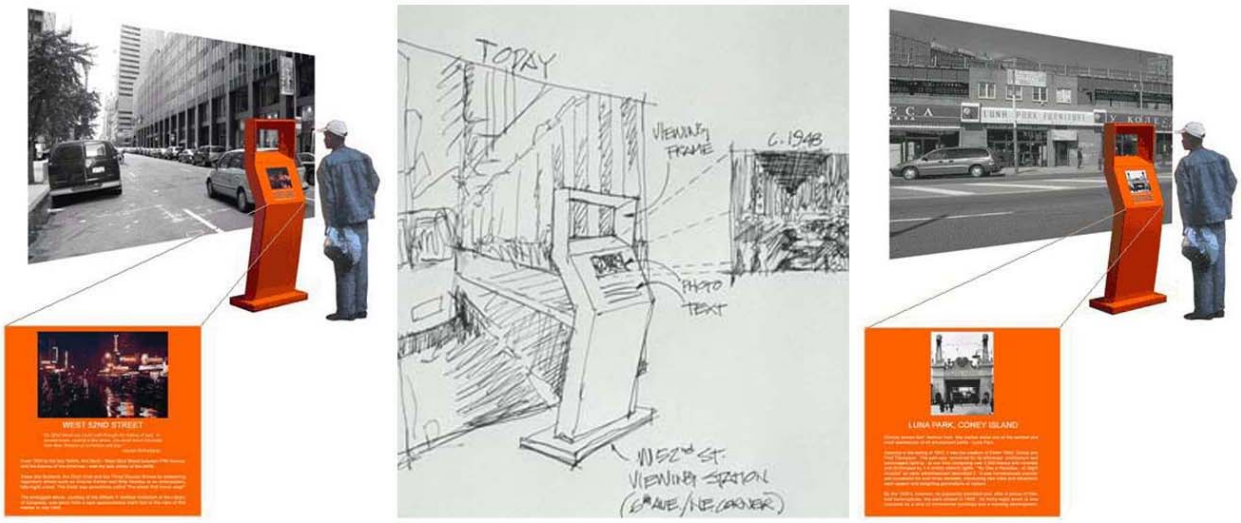


Figure 4.16 Competition entry: *Historic Overlay*

Other entries suggested custom-made Place Matters maps and corresponding subway cards, a cell-phone accessed audio program and signage with iconographic representation of the site. Another proposal, entitled *Historic Overlay*, cleverly combines historic photos of 'lost New York' and brightly colored street furniture. Displayed on the marker is a historic photo taken of a site that no longer exists. Positioned exactly where the photo was originally taken, the marker also serves as a frame of what is currently in the location. With this format, the viewer can look at the picture and then through the frame to experience how the city once was and how it differs today. In a sense, the archival photos are overlaid upon the site, presenting viewers "with a glimpse of their current surroundings through the windows of the past" (Placematters). A block of explanatory text is under the historic photograph to provide additional information. In these

days of instant, before-and-after makeover pictures, a viewer can experience how, over time, the city has been made over.

Many of the sites nominated in the 'Census' may not be otherwise noticed without these interpretive devices. Place Matter's website contends the places, "do not always reach out and grab the passerby's attention, or make their significance known." Many of the entrants not only grab the attention but come close to physically grabbing, by personally involving, viewers. Far beyond the brass plaque, the competition's artistic responses encourage interaction with past, present and future of New York City's culturally significant sites.

In 1817, the French novelist, Stendhal, visited Florence, Italy and soon found himself overwhelmed by the city's intensely rich legacy of art and history. Today, 'Stendhal's Syndrome' refers to the state of being profoundly affected by art, dizzy by it, often to the point of temporary madness. While the case studies discussed in this chapter are certainly not likely to lead to lunacy, they do have the potential to profoundly affect those experiencing the piece. Much interpretation done by the National Park Service today falls short of inspiring park visitors. The case studies discussed in this chapter explored some alternatives and raise a number of issues. From stories to processes long forgotten, they often share a story that is *not* about the majority; instead, they elucidate the stories or processes too often marginalized by society. They use tactics and approaches to delivery that are far from what is customary with National Park Service interpretation. But there are also important parallels with Park Service programs. In many cases, the artists and designers were dealing with many of the same issues facing the Park Service: environmental issues, literacy, historic events, cultural landscapes (some

present, some not) and alternative histories. The content is the often the same. What differs is the approach to delivery.

The sources for the case studies were not traditional interpretation programs, but ones that the Park Service might nevertheless investigate as possible models. The studies were art installations, museum exhibits, a competition and a variety of landscapes where events happened. Categorized under a series of themes—Interruption, Illumination, Imagining, and Involvement—they elucidate and provide alternative tactics to help reach visitors and explain the true essence of a location or event. In the next chapter, approaches discussed in the case studies will be applied to schematic designs particularly focused on Rock Creek Park.

CHAPTER FIVE

APPLIED DESIGN STUDIES

Writer, critic and Nobel Prize winner Anatole France wrote, “Do not try to satisfy your vanity by teaching a great many things. Awaken people’s curiosity. It is enough to open minds; do not overload them. Put there just a spark. If there is some good inflammable stuff, it will catch fire.” This chapter is an exploratory process presenting a handful of design schemes for Rock Creek Park that respond to the ideas and principles drawn from Chapter Four. Like the previous case studies, these design explorations are organized around a sequence of discovery (interruption, illumination, imagining and involvement). They are schematic examples, merging raw information with art to create new methods for interpretation in Rock Creek Park. They are not intended to replace the current, standard interpretation but rather supplement it. Recognizing and responding to the need, they show the potential for an expanded interpretive agenda.

Throughout this thesis, there has been an emphasis on Rock Creek Park as a physical site to apply the discussed concepts. In addition to the Park itself, the following designs also try to relate to the ‘big picture,’ the urban fabric that surrounds and is part of the park. While each of the proposed designs focuses on a different part within Rock Creek Park, each also engages issues that reach beyond the park. The designs are meant to be provocative. Each design has a temporal quality. They are not meant to be installed then left to weather. Some might become annual events. Concurrent with each installation, an interpretive campaign can be waged. As each design by itself does not tell the entire story, the Nature Center or Peirce Mill (the park’s

current interpretive hotspots) can launch exhibits explaining further the issues surrounding each of the designs. Each new story adds an additional, provocative layer of interpretation. Press Releases and articles can be posted to the National Park Service/Rock Creek Park website. Perhaps the *Washington Post* will be inspired to write a piece in its "Style" section. Or, there could be a link with other events or features throughout Washington, DC. In short, each design should not be solitary and static.

INTERRUPTION

Litter Luminaries, Interrupting a Journey

In Germany since the fall of the Berlin Wall, an interpretive center has been set up to tell the story of the Wall's history and relay some of the tales of those who tried to pass from East to West Berlin. In *Heritage Interpretation*, editor and author David L. Uzzell describes Das Haus am Checkpoint Charlie and then asks, "Should not more—not all, but more—interpretation arise out of this same sense of outrage? . . . The stories and issues that interpreters address daily are no less worthy or capable of this type of treatment" (35). Consider a response to the reasonable frustration and indignation that the presence of trash in Rock Creek Park elicits.

As noted in Chapter Three, Rock Creek Park faces many challenges that stem from its unusual situation as a park in the middle of a bustling metropolis. One of these challenges is the presence of trash in the park. While the park is not covered with trash, there are occasions where the accumulation of litter and other solid waste is obvious, offensive, and problematic. On some parts of Rock Creek, trash pools and gathers in masses by the creek's bank. During a summer walk along Valley Trail, the path that closely follows the creek's course, one comes upon a high

volume of trash. Gail Spilsbury writes, “The creek…must receive better protection from abuses that include littering, storm runoff contamination, and chemical spills” (10).

Figure 5.1 Trash accumulation in Rock Creek

What is most disappointing and surprising is the general makeup of the trash. While some was likely tossed from moving cars or blown out of open car windows, most items were the careless accumulation of recreation and leisure—tennis balls, softballs, bouncy balls, large plastic jugs, and heaps of plastic water bottles. More than anything, the accumulation of trash illustrated the nature of watersheds—how small pieces of neglect accrue into a regional problem. It is likely, however, that many visitors to Rock Creek Park never see or notice the buildup. Former owners of the pieces of litter, zooming along on their morning commute, do not realize how their small actions impact the watershed and how much individual actions play a key role. The temporary installation of *Litter Luminaries* will help reveal these truths.

Placed in a low, flat meadow area close to the creek and along side the busy parkway, three 30’-to-40’ tall, rectangular, clear tubes will be installed. Clumped like a small grove of trees or standing like the ruined columns of a Greek temple, each tower will be filled with trash

collected from within the park's boundaries. The litter will be grouped together according to its type—tennis balls, golf balls and softballs in one, plastic water bottles in another, yard litter in another. Trash speaks volumes about a culture's values. These towers will serve as testament to the neglect and consumption of today's culture. When dusk falls, the tubes can be lit, softly illuminating the refuse contents. Passers-by will be jolted from their usual routines and will notice the towers and wonder. As a supplement, an interpretive exhibit about the challenges of the large watershed and the issue of trash in the park can be installed at the Nature Center or Peirce Mill. Whether in an automobile, roller-blading, cycling or on-foot, the *Litter Luminaries* will interrupt the tranquil meadow space and call attention to the issue of litter and the monumental watershed concern.

Figure 5.2 *Litter Luminaries* of trash lit at dusk

The tubes offer an additional layer of meaning by relating to the history of the site. Before Rock Creek Park was established, the site was filled with the city's litter. The National Park Service publication, *Highways in Harmony*, describes the scene, "by the end of the nineteenth century, lower Rock Creek valley had become an eyesore and public health hazard . . . below P Street the valley served as a sewer and public dumping ground. Towering banks of ashes, construction debris, and rubbish choked the valley" (Davis). Unfortunately, the current trash build-up also negates one of the original missions of the park; one of the arguments for creating the parkway was to clean up the area and prevent the pollution and obstruction of Rock Creek.

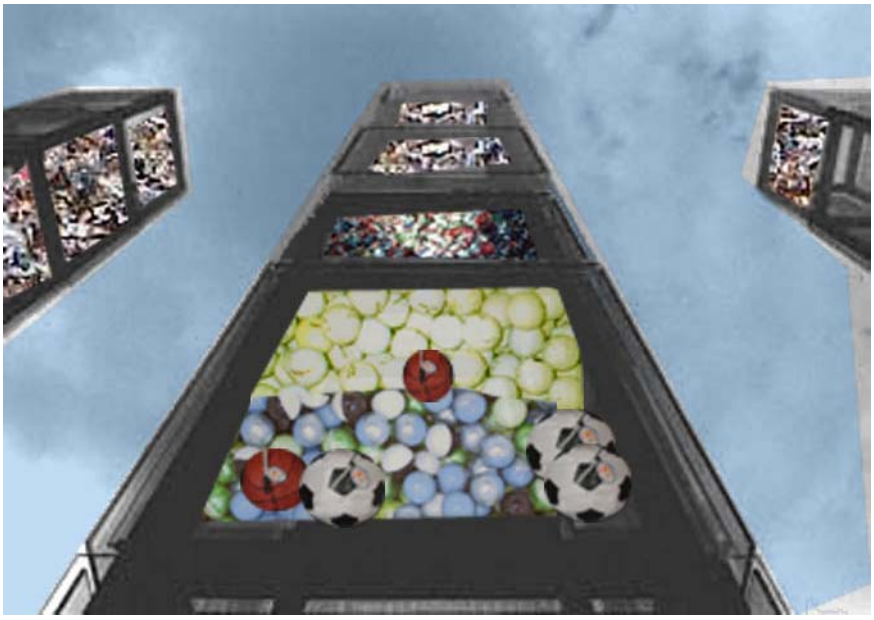


Figure 5.3 Worm's eye view of *Litter Luminaries*

Further, the *Luminaries* will be placed in the land adjacent to the parkway, monuments to the garbage that actually used to fill the lower part of the valley. The towers will be placed in the same area once strewn with trash and will offer parallels to the park's early history. Like the piles of shoes in the Holocaust museum, the *Luminaries* tell a story through accumulation and

synecdoche—a narrative device where a part represents the whole. Each piece of trash tells a small story about what we throw away: a baseball makes one imagine a child losing a ball to a gutter, a water bottle reminds one of missing the trashcan and not picking it back up. These towers will be moments to our consumption and neglect and the effects our actions can have on the Park.

Figure 5.4 *Litter Luminaries* amongst the trees

ILLUMINATION

Casting Light on Rock Creek Park's Bridges

There are numerous bridges that leap across the Rock Creek Park ravine, creek, roads and trails. Some of the bridges are massive structures while others seem quite demure, almost skimming the top of the creek. Each bridge has its own unique character. Smaller bridges covered in native boulders fit a picturesque woodland setting. The large bridges are monumental

in scale, great feats of architecture and engineering. From atop these largest bridges, one can survey the majesty of the rocky valley below from high above the treetops. For many visitors *in* the park, "the presence of bridges and cross roads reminds visitors that they are still within the city while in Rock Creek valley" (Plan 58). The bridges are prompters of contrast: from the urban to the wilderness; the architectural, built environment to the natural, vegetated landscape. As the Parkway and other roads lead into the monumental core of Washington, the bridges seem to be the precursors of the city's character—the monuments in the park before the monuments on the Mall. Attention should be focused on the bridges, so they can be appreciated with their unique qualities, their importance and history. They are more than conduits for foot and tire traffic and it is through illumination that visitors to the park could rediscover the bridges.

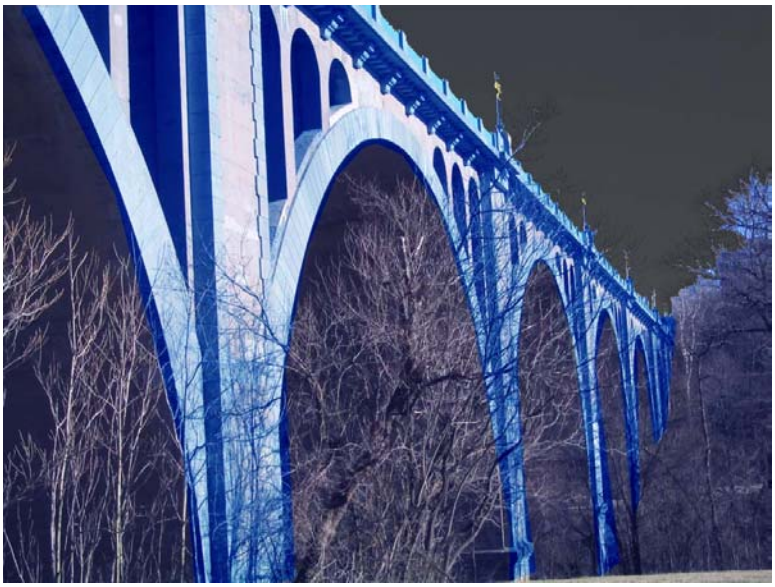


Figure 5.5 The William Howard Taft bridge awash with blue light

The illumination of park resources highlights things a visitor does not know or notice. The bridges are historic monuments to the past. In fact, in the list of resources classified as contributing to the significance of the Rock Creek Park historic district, over a third of the structures are bridges. They are greatly important to the park. The second idea for Rock Creek

Park literally and figuratively enlightens. Throughout the park (though not necessarily every one) the bridges will be fantastically lit with bright colors or shapes. In some cases, where a bridge was replaced, perhaps the shadow of the former bridge structure could be super-imposed on the current, existing one, projecting history on the veneer. Or perhaps the focus is on the arches of the larger bridges and the wash of light isolates and highlights just one architectural detail. In some ways, the bridge illumination has a modest goal of simply getting park visitors to *see* their surroundings, marvel at the engineering or the color, the material or size.

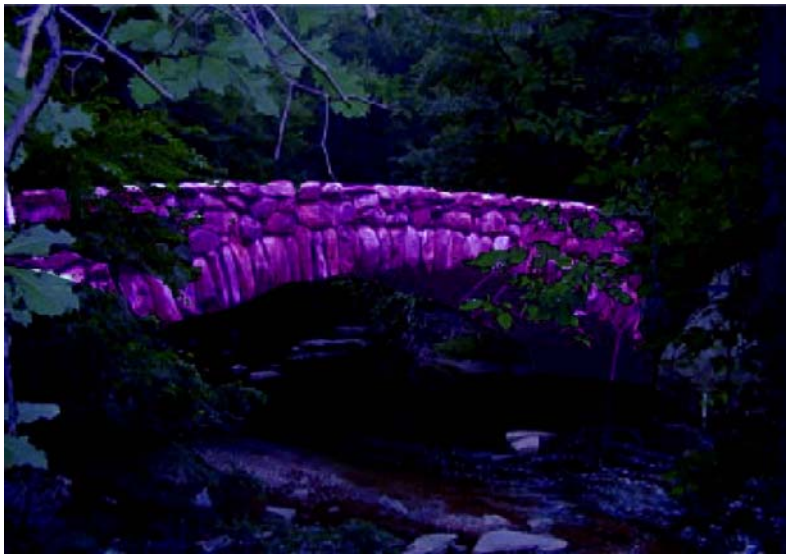


Figure 5.6 A softly glowing Boulder Bridge at night

The park's draft management plan acknowledges that Rock Creek Park's surroundings can have an effect on park resources and visitor experiences. It also recognizes that, "similarly, NPS activities may have impacts outside of the park's boundaries" (27). The bridge illumination is a piece of interpretation that could extend past park borders. Maybe it is first the catalyst and then a part of a larger campaign that highlights and features some of the many other fabulous bridges throughout the District. Highlighting the bridges, then, becomes a platform for publications, signage, education, and a *Washington Post* article. It could become an annual or

seasonal cultural event in the city that Washingtonians look forward to each year. Illuminating the bridges would enable the park to highlight and interpret one of its most outstanding features for everyone to see.

IMAGINING

(Almost) History of the Park

Bruce Craig in his article "Interpreting the Historic Scene: The Power of Imagination in Creating a Sense of Historic Place," from the book *Heritage Interpretation* states, "If feelings are the pass-key to history, then imagination is the latch that must be unhooked to open the door to the past. Calling upon the visitor's imagination is an often neglected tool of 'provocation'. If we can unlock the visitor's imagination, we can promote revelation, education and perhaps help an individual gain a greater appreciation for and sense of historic place" (106). The idea of *Nearly History* focuses on the park's interesting history—or what was *almost* its history.

Rock Creek Park's location certainly played a key role in the history of its designation and features. As a major portion of land in the middle of the relatively small capital city, many people were interested in the park and its development. Some treasured Rock Creek Park for the impressive role it could play 'as-is.' Many others had alternative plans in mind. These proposals that ultimately were not instated add another layer to the park's history, its *Nearly History*.

Time and time again, the park narrowly averted a sure disaster with its escape from the building of a four-lane arterial highway that would link DC's 495 Beltway and I-270 spur straight through the park to the heart of downtown. In 1883, Captain Richard L. Hoxie (assistant to the engineer commissioner of DC) proposed a major dam across the creek just above Georgetown that would submerge the valley (including what is currently the National Zoo) and

create a four-mile-long reservoir (Macintosh "Rock Creek" 7). Just before the turn of the century, two U.S. Representatives (one from Pennsylvania, the other from Missouri) introduced bills that would allow each state in the union one to six acres to erect exhibition buildings. Another Senator suggested building a large bathing pool in the park and, in 1890, a legislative effort failed that suggested naming the park the Columbus Memorial Park in commemoration of the approaching anniversary of Columbus' discovery of America (Spilsbury 6). Indeed, the park has a history of *Nearly History* events.

To acknowledge these historical episodes and to spark the visitor's imagination, wondering just what Rock Creek Park would be like if any of the ideas came to fruition, a series of *Nearly History* signs will be made. Similar to the large billboards seen around many towns that announce that a location is a "Future Site of _____," the *Nearly History* signs will mark not what is really coming, but what *almost* came—the (almost) Future Site of! The litany of items given above might receive a sign. Two examples illustrate the concept, the first is the *Future Site of the United States Arboretum (Almost)* and the second is the Future Site of a *Formal Promenade (Almost).*

Figure 5.7 The Future Site of the United States National Arboretum (Almost)

Figure 5.8 The Future Site of a Formal Promenade (Almost)

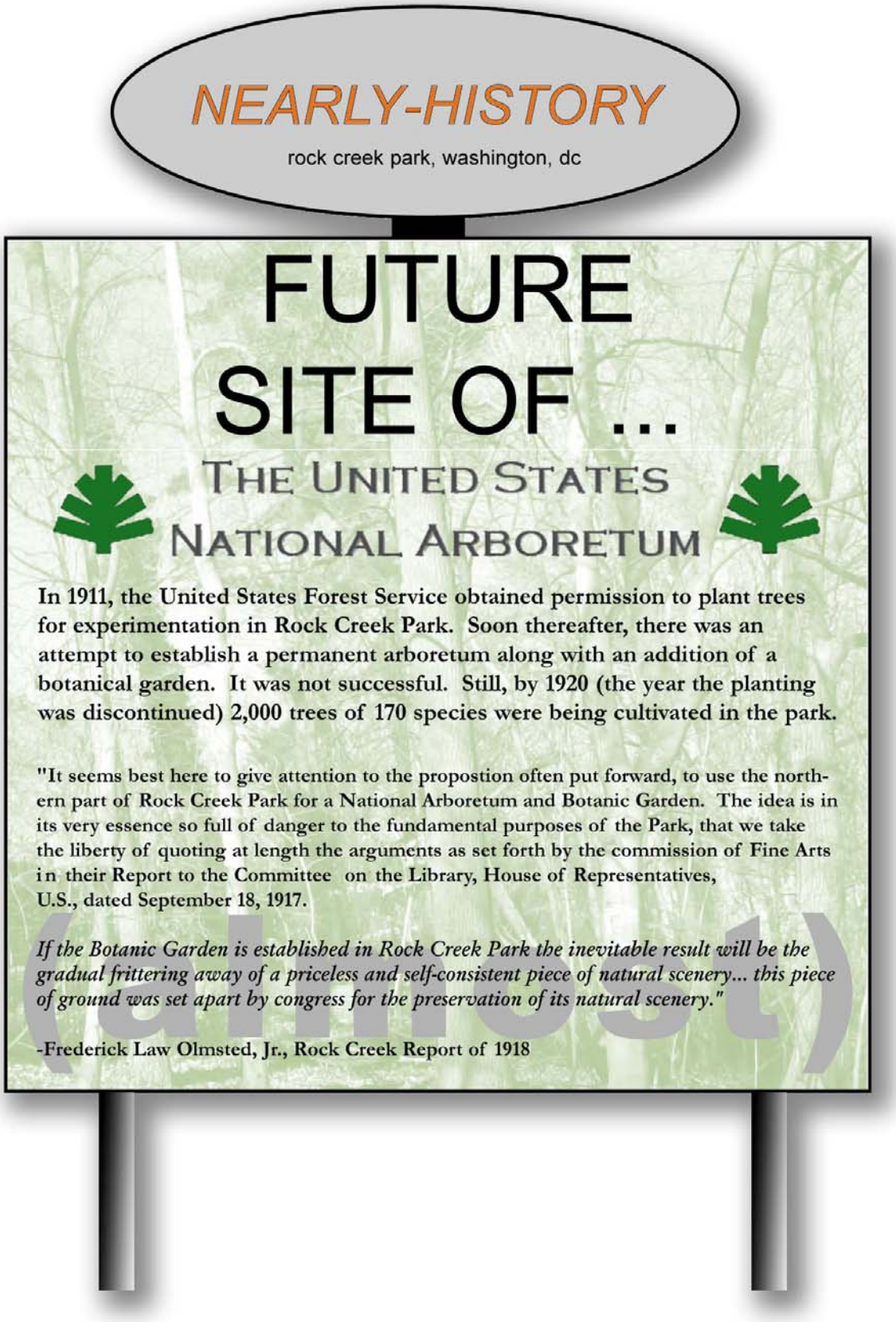


Figure 5.9 Sign close-up: The Future Site of the United States National Arboretum (Almost)

Figure 5.10 Sign close-up: The Future Site of a Formal Promenade (Almost)

There have been many suggestions made for the future use of Rock Creek Park. Learning about and imagining the results adds another layer to the historical fabric of the park. Rock Creek Park could be a very different place today. The surprise of some, the indignation of others in seeing a "Future Site of" sign might be the perfect catalyst by illuminating some of the park's *Nearly History*.

INVOLVEMENT

Invasive Involvement

In May of 1983, artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude completed their installation, *Surrounded Islands* in Miami, Florida. This work involved the careful encircling of the eleven man-made islands that are sprinkled along Miami's mainland coast with a wide band of ultra hot pink fabric. It was a scene that was difficult to forget. One volunteer recalled the scene of "seeing a dozen pelicans fly in low over his island and turn a hot pink from the reflection" (Beardsley 120). According to Sam Ham in *Environmental Interpretation: A Practical Guide for People with Big Ideas and Small Budgets*, when psychologist P.W. Thorndyke tested people to find out what they remembered from stories, he discovered that they tended to remember the big picture/main ideas but not the subordinate facts and details (39). It is with this principle in mind that the fourth schematic design is introduced: one simple striking, shocking idea.

Imagine meandering through Rock Creek Park on the Parkway heading for work downtown. It is November and most of the trees have lost their leaves and the surrounding woods are primarily shades of gray and brown. However, you notice a flash of pink across the ground. Vines going up a tree are hot pink, too. And then you realize that huge portions of the

forest's plant life have been painted this bright color! The fourth schematic interpretation design is about the continual problem with exotic invasive plant life in the park.

According to Rock Creek Park's Draft Management Report, an inventory of park vegetation conducted between 1986 and 1994, counted 656 species of vascular plants in Rock Creek Park between the National Zoo and the Maryland boundary. However, the report also revealed information about invasive flora:

> The recent inventory of park vegetation also determined that 238 of the plant species were introduced species, not native to the area. Of this number, 42 species have been judged to be invasive exotic species that, unless controlled, are likely to spread and adversely affect native plant populations. Control of these invasive exotic plants is a serious problem in the park. A program now underway is selectively applying approved herbicides to invasive species in a limited portion of the park. However, control efforts are not able to keep pace with the rate of invasive plant introduction and spread. Management of invasive species will be a continuous need in the park and operational plans will be updated as control strategies and funding evolve. (127)

The report goes on to say that the park is the only large area of deciduous forest in the metropolitan area and that the forest plays a major part in defining the park's character. As a result, park management treats changes in the forest's area or character seriously. (176) Certainly the increase of exotic, invasive vegetation in Rock Creek Park would, over time, have a serious impact on the plant composition present across the park.

Figure 5.11 Invasive vegetation sprayed pink

Figure 5.12 Invasive vegetation sprayed pink II

Rock Creek Park, as we know, has a huge number of daily visitors: more than 2 million recreational visits annually and almost 12.4 million non-recreational visits per year. In short, there are a lot of people doing a variety of activities throughout the park on a daily basis. Even when poor weather repels the outdoor lovers, vehicular commuters continue to race along the parkway. While this schematic design addresses a myriad of park users it is primarily geared toward the people in the park in their cars. According to Beck and Cable, "Even when people plan trips to places of natural or cultural significance they often isolate themselves from the resource itself" (48). Terry Tempest Williams bemoans "a society of individuals who only observe a landscape from behind the lens of a camera or the window of an automobile without ever entering in." The first challenge may well be to get people out of their cars. Edward Abbey asked, "What can I tell them? Sealed in their metallic shells like mollusks on wheels, how can I pry the people free?" (qtd. in Beck and Cable 48) While the design scheme does not aim to physically pull commuters out of their cars, its aim *is* to free and engage them to notice their surroundings.

The interpretation presented here is about the problem of invasive vegetation in the park. Over a weekend, park staff and volunteers would attack by marking the invasive plants, primarily along the edges of the parkway and key walking trails, with a hot pink herbicide that adheres to the leaves of the invasive vegetation. As some parts of the park are blanketed with invasive species, they would then be blanketed with color. Other areas would have much less color according to its vegetation makeup. As a result, for the next week or two, the forest would be awash with eye-popping color. Perhaps on the busiest portion of the parkway, a large banner—in the same color pink would read simply: Exotic Invasive Vegetation. The National Park Service's Rock Creek Park website would post a press release and the Nature Center would

also tell the story behind the hot pink glossing of the forest. Some motorists might delight over the color. Others may be angry. While still others will be curious enough to find out what it all means.

On one of the following weekends after the initial paint spray, a large crew of volunteers (perhaps, for example, members of park advocacy group, PARC, Peoples Alliance for Rock Creek) will be assembled to attack the marked vegetation in a different way: by permanently removing it. This sequence will happen each year at the same time—with the hopes that each year there will be less and less pink in the forest and more and more awareness and volunteers to remove it as the constant battle with invasive vegetation species in Rock Creek Park is slowly won.

With the flourishing of innovative interpretation that includes both traditional and non-traditional interpretive sources, it seems that the thirst for phosphorescence is increasing. The audience with the expectance and desire for a heuristic learning continues to seek additional venues for advancing interpretation. Our National Parks, particularly cultural landscapes, can become these venues for interpreting environmental and cultural literacy. The design ideas discussed above illustrate how the National Park Service and Rock Creek Park might try an alternative approach to park issues. However, these design schemes are about reaching more visitors who come through the park and telling alternative narratives that reach people who might not respond to the current traditional interpretation.

These suggestions were not chosen based on any quantifiable criteria. It is the contention of this thesis that the grounds for interpretation ought to be expanded rather than restricted by narrow definitions and interpretations or operational conditions. However, taken collectively,

these designs illustrate certain themes. That each of these designs is temporary is no accident. This has several advantages. First, it prevents these designs from becoming static and forgotten. The forest floor should not stay pink forever. Bridges lit every night would no longer be noticed. Part of what makes these transient creations powerful is that they are ephemeral. Second, all of these designs are intended to be provocative. Whether huge columns of trash, a pink forest floor, or a wildly lit bridge, these designs are meant to challenge users to see the park differently. Third, all of the projects are designed to engage a great diversity of users—particularly the commuters who are probably the most disengaged users in the park. The location, scale, and slant of each of the projects engage commuters, bicyclists, runners, and tourists. Finally, the issues that are part of these designs reach out beyond the boundaries of the park. Whether issues of the regional watershed, invasive exotics, or the city's history, the designs here are meant to remind the visitor of the special connection between this park and the city.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

This thesis has examined interpretation in concept and application, making the argument for an expanded interpretive agenda. Tying these chapters together are two basic claims. First, as shown in Chapters Two and Three, most forms of landscape interpretation, particularly in National Parks, are uninspiring, prosaic deliveries of raw information. However, the second claim shows how artistic imagination can enliven interpretation and transform raw information into vital narratives. The case studies presented in Chapters Four and Five offer models of interpretation revived by artistic intervention.

If landscape interpretation should be more artistic, what then is the difference between art and interpretation? Much can be made about the distinction between these two terms although the difference may be more semantic than actual. If one were to chart a continuum with raw data on one end and art at the other, interpretation would fall somewhere in between. In this sense, interpretation mediates between information and art, translating content to a user in a meaningful way. Interpretation loses its effectiveness when it leans too far in either extreme. When interpretation becomes too much raw information (as in the Park Service's brass plaques), it loses its ability to inspire. When interpretation becomes art for its own sake (as in some esoteric land art), it loses its ability to speak to people. But in truly meaningful works, the artificial boundaries between art and interpretation are blurred. The best pieces of art need no further interpretation; and the best examples of interpretation are, in themselves, art. Former University

of Georgia professor of landscape architecture and historic preservation, Catherine Howett writes:

> Great art of any kind takes chances, breaks out of conventional ways of approaching the work, surprises and delights, sometimes even shocks. If we saw our task from the beginning as transformative—artfully to transform the raw data, the physical facts, the historical record, into a comprehensible vision with potential meaning for men and women today (even if the meaning has to do with the discovery of otherness, difference, the mysterious or finally unknowable)—we might be less afraid to expand rather than to restrict the options for interpretation. (207)

Ultimately, the goal of landscape interpretation should be to transform information into experience. The great task of the interpreter is to artfully weave important information into the continuing narratives of our lives. The themes proposed in Chapters Four and Five present one possible model for transforming information into narrative. The purpose of discussing interpretation in terms of these themes is to give structure and meaning to an event that is in essence highly subjective and personal. The moment of discovery and inspiration that interpretation aspires to is an ephemeral, individual event. Thus, any attempt to define or categorize interpretation ultimately betrays the poetic richness of an undefinable event. The rationale for the themes presented here is that they represent a part of the discovery cycle. *Interruption* describes the moment something seizes our attention—that inward moment we first open ourselves to otherness. Then comes *illumination*, that point of awakening where we see what was previously dark to us. After seeing, *imagining* deepens our understanding by engaging our emotions. Once we have internalized the experience, we seek the *involvement* of others. The best examples of landscape interpretation, such as those mentioned in Chapter Four, harmonize with this enduring cycle.

Rock Creek Park in Washington, DC, has been the conceptual staging ground for the studies in this thesis. Symbolic in terms of its location and history, Rock Creek Park becomes an

ideal setting for experiments in interpretation and encouragement of the value of learning heuristically. The park is a study in contrasts—at once both dense city and remote wilderness. It is a place where highway and creek, valley and bridge, city and nature merge into one living artery that connects the District of Columbia. All of the themes of contemporary landscape architecture—ecology, urbanism, transportation, and infrastructure—seem to converge in the physical site of Rock Creek Park. Most of the park's current interpretation focuses too much on content and not enough on delivery. Perhaps the National Park Service, whose headquarters are conveniently located blocks from the park, should use Rock Creek Park as a laboratory for expanded forms of interpretation. The tens of thousands of people who rely on Rock Creek Park for their daily use present a huge untapped target audience. Successful strategies could then be exported and adapted to other sites.

The practicalities of ever-shrinking government budgets need not be a constraint in achieving transformative interpretation. The same creativity necessary to create good interpretation should also be applied to funding these projects. By partnering with the business community, holding open competitions for designs, applying for art-related grants, or involving talented community members, for example, parks can actualize interpretive projects that truly inspire. In fact, some interpretive projects might generate revenue themselves. The best projects holistically integrate creativity into the process as well as the final product.

The standards by which we judge landscape interpretation should be raised. The National Park Service has, embedded in its history, the knowledge and precedent for returning to an expanded interpretation model. In some ways, the Park Service should look to the past as much as it does to the future and search for the provocation, phosphorescence and inspiration missing in much of the current interpretation. The old methods of interpretation—though some still

relevant—should be expanded to include new techniques that connect information with the visitor in a more meaningful way. Transformative interpretation offers perhaps the best chance to restore relevance to our neglected landscapes of meaning.

The ongoing culture wars within landscape disciplines between art and ecology, preservation and design miss the point with their needless polarization. Transformative interpretation blurs these distinctions and leaves the visitor with a vision of how he fits into nature. The great hope for conserving nature relies on human understanding. As environmentalist Wendell Berry writes, "The only thing we have to preserve nature with is culture; the only thing we have to preserve wilderness with is domesticity."

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APPENDIX A

FREEMAN TILDEN'S SIX GUIDING PRINCIPLES

I. Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile.
II. Information, as such, is not Interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based on information. But they are entirely different things. However, all interpretation includes information.
III. Interpretation is an art, which combines many arts, whether the materials presented are scientific, historical, or architectural. Any art is to some degree teachable.
IV. The chief aim of Interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.
V. Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part, and must address itself to the whole man rather than any phase.
VI. Interpretation addressed to children (say, up to the age of twelve) should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults, but should follow a fundamentally different approach. To be at its best it will require a separate program.

Source: *Interpreting Our Heritage.*

APPENDIX B

ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES OF INTERPRETATION DEFINITIONS

interpretation (n). (i) The skills, practice or profession of explaining to the general public features of our natural, historical or cultural environment; (ii) the educational process or experience of enlightenment resulting from such explanation.
—Andrew Pierssené, *Explaining Our World: An Approach to the Art of Environmental Interpretation*

Interpretation is a communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the inherent meanings in the resource.
—*National Association for Interpretation*

Interpretation is the process of communicating to people the significance of a place or object so that they may enjoy it more, understand their heritage and environment better, and develop a positive attitude to conservation.
—*Society for the Interpretation of Britain's Heritage*

Interpretation is an educational activity that aims to reveal meanings about our cultural and natural resources. Through various media—including talks, guided tours, and exhibits—interpretation enhances our understanding, appreciation, and, therefore, protection of historic sites and natural wonders.
—Larry Beck and Ted Cable, *Interpretation for the 21st Century*

An informational and inspirational process designed to enhance understanding, appreciation, and protection of our cultural and natural legacy.
—Larry Beck and Ted Cable, *Interpretation for the 21st Century*

An educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information.
— Sam Ham, *Environmental Interpretation*

The chief aim of interpretation is not instruction but provocation.
—Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*

The internal process by which ideas communicated via an Interpreter actually create a sense of enlightenment in the receiver.
—Andrew Pierssené, *Explaining Our World: An Approach to the Art of Environmental Interpretation*

An attempt to create understanding
Peter Rumble, "The Built and Historic Environment," *Heritage Interpretation*

APPENDIX C

LEGISTLATIVE LANGUAGE ESTABLISHING ROCK CREEK PARK & ROCK CREEK AND POTOMAC PARKWAY

THE ROCK CREEK PARK AUTHORIZATION

FIFTY-FIRST CONGRESS. SESS. I. CH. 1001. 1890.

September 27, 1890.

CHAP. 1001.—An act authorizing the establishing of a public park in the District of Columbia.

District of Columbia.

Rock Creek Park established.

Location.

Description.

Dedication.

Proviso.

Maximum size and cost.

Commission to be appointed.

Duties.

Executive officer.

Map to be filed.

Condemnation.

Title.

Compensation.

Proviso.

Acceptance by owners.

Failure to agree.

Judicial procedure.

Application for assessment.

Petition and map.

Notification.

Appraisal commission.

Ascertainment of value.

Payment.

Title.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That a tract of land lying on both sides of Rock Creek, beginning at Klingle Ford Bridge, and running northwardly, following the course of said creek, of a width not less at any point than six hundred feet, nor more than twelve hundred feet, including the bed of the creek, of which not less than two hundred feet shall be on either side of said creek, south of Broad Branch road and Blagden Mill road and of such greater width north of said roads as the commissioners designated in this act may select, shall be secured, as hereinafter set out, and be perpetually dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasure ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of the United States, to be known by the name of Rock Creek Park: *Provided, however*, That the whole tract so to be selected and condemned under the provisions of this act shall not exceed two thousand acres nor the total cost thereof exceed the amount of money herein appropriated.

SEC. 2. That the Chief of Engineers of the United States Army, the Engineer Commissioner of the District of Columbia, and three citizens to be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, be, and they are hereby, created a commission to select the land for said park, of the quantity and within the limits aforesaid, and to have the same surveyed by the assistant to the said Engineer Commissioner of the District of Columbia in charge of public highways, which said assistant shall also act as executive officer to the said commission.

SEC. 3. That the said commission shall cause to be made an accurate map of said Rock Creek Park, showing the location, quantity, and character of each parcel of private property to be taken for such purpose, with the names of the respective owners inscribed thereon, which map shall be filed and recorded in the public records of the District of Columbia, and from and after the date of filing said map the several tracts and parcels of land embraced in said Rock Creek Park shall be held as condemned for public use, and the title thereof vested in the United States, subject to the payment of just compensation, to be determined by said commission, and approved by the President of the United States: *Provided*, That such compensation be accepted by the owner or owners of the several parcels of land.

That if the said commission shall be unable by agreement with the respective owners to purchase all of the land so selected and condemned within thirty days after such condemnation, at the price approved by the President of the United States, it shall, at the expiration of such period of thirty days, make application to the supreme court of the District of Columbia, by petition, at a general or special term, for an assessment of the value of such land as it has been unable to purchase.

Said petition shall contain a particular description of the property selected and condemned, with the name of the owner or owners thereof, if known, and their residences, as far as the same may be ascertained, together with a copy of the recorded map of the park; and the said court is hereby authorized and required, upon such application, without delay, to notify the owners and occupants of the land, if known, by personal service, and if unknown, by service by publication, and to ascertain and assess the value of the land so selected and condemned, by appointing three competent and disinterested commissioners to appraise the value or values thereof, and to return the appraisement to the court; and when the value or values of such land are thus ascertained, and the President of the United States shall decide the same to be reasonable, said value or values shall be paid to the owner or owners, and the United States shall be deemed to have a valid title to said land; and if in any case

the owner or owners of any portion of said land shall refuse or neglect, after the appraisement of the cash value of said lands and improvements, to demand or receive the same from said court, upon depositing the appraised value in said court to the credit of such owner or owners, respectively, the fee-simple shall in like manner be vested in the United States.

Possession. Process.

SEC. 4. That said court may direct the time and manner in which possession of the property condemned shall be taken or delivered, and may, if necessary, enforce any order or issue any process for giving possession.

No delay in assessment, etc.

SEC. 5. That no delay in making an assessment of compensation, or in taking possession, shall be occasioned by any doubt which may arise as to the ownership of the property, or any part thereof, or as to the interests of the respective owners. In such cases the court shall require a deposit of the money allowed as compensation for the whole property or the part in dispute. In all cases as soon as the said commission shall have paid the compensation assessed, or secured its payment by a deposit of money under the order of the court, possession of the property may be taken. All proceedings hereunder shall be in the name of the United States of America and managed by the commission.

Disputed claims. Possession. Proceedings.

Proportionate assessment of cost, etc., on benefited lands.

SEC. 6. That the commission having ascertained the cost of the land, including expenses, shall assess such proportion of such cost and expenses upon the lands, lots, and blocks situated in the District of Columbia specially benefited by reason of the location and improvement of said park, as nearly as may be, in proportion to the benefits resulting to such real estate.

If said commission shall find that the real estate in said District directly benefited by reason of the location of the park is not benefited to the full extent of the estimated cost and expenses, then they shall assess each tract or parcel of land specially benefited to the extent of such benefits as they shall deem the said real estate specially benefited. The commission shall give at least ten days' notice, in one daily newspaper published in the city of Washington, of the time and place of their meeting for the purpose of making such assessment and may adjourn from time to time till the same be completed. In making the assessment the real estate benefited shall be assessed by the description as appears of record in the District on the day of the first meeting; but no error in description shall vitiate the assessment: *Provided*, That the premises are described with substantial accuracy. The commission shall estimate the value of the different parcels of real estate benefited as aforesaid and the amount assessed against each tract or parcel, and enter all in an assessment book. All persons interested may appear and be heard. When the assessment shall be completed it shall be signed by the commission, or a majority (which majority shall have power always to act), and be filed in the office of the clerk of the supreme court of the District of Columbia. The commission shall apply to the court for a confirmation of said assessment, giving at least ten days' notice of the time thereof by publication in one daily newspaper published in the city of Washington, which notice shall state in general terms the subject and the object of the application.

Notice by publication.

Adjournments of commission.

Record description.

Errors.

Proviso.

Substantial accuracy.

Entries in assessment book.

Hearings.

Commission to file assessment.

Application for confirmation.

Notice.

The said court shall have power, after said notice shall have been duly given, to hear and determine all matters connected with said assessment; and may revise, correct, amend, and confirm said assessment, in whole or in part, or order a new assessment, in whole or in part, with or without further notice or on such notice as it shall prescribe; but no order for a new assessment in part, or any partial adverse action, shall hinder or delay confirmation of the residue, or collection of the assessment thereon. Confirmation of any part of the assessment shall make the same a lien on the real estate assessed.

Powers of court in determining, etc.

Confirmation.

Lien.

Payment of assessment by installments, etc.

The assessment, when confirmed, shall be divided into four equal installments, and may be paid by any party interested in full or in one, two, three, and four years, on or before which times all shall be payable, with six per centum annual interest on all deferred payments. All payments shall be made to the Treasurer of the United States, who shall keep the account as a separate fund. The orders of the court shall be conclusive evidence of the regularity of all previous proceedings necessary to the validity thereof, and of all matters recited in said orders. The clerk of said court shall keep a record of all proceedings in regard to said assessment and confirmation. The commission shall furnish the said clerk with a duplicate of its assessment book, and in both shall be entered any change made or ordered by the court as to any real estate. Such book filed with the clerk when completed and certified shall be prima facie evidence of all facts recited therein. In case assessments are not paid as aforesaid the book of assessments certified by the clerk of the court shall be delivered to the officer charged by law with the duty of collecting delinquent taxes in the District of Columbia, who shall proceed to collect the same as delinquent real estate taxes are collected. No sale for any installment of assessment shall discharge the real estate from any subsequent installment; and proceedings for subsequent installments shall be as if no default had been made in prior ones.

Interest.

Separate Treasury fund.

Validity of proceedings.

Court record.

Duplicate assessment book to be filed.

Evidence of recited facts.

Delinquent assessments.

Collection.

Payment of compensation by Treasurer.

All money so collected may be paid by the Treasurer on the order of the commission to any persons entitled thereto as compensation for land or services. Such order on the Treasurer shall be signed by a majority of the commission and shall specify fully the purpose for which it is drawn. If the proceeds of assessment exceed the cost of the park the excess shall be used in its improvement, under the direction of the officers named in section eight, if such excess shall not exceed the amount of ten thousand dollars. If it shall exceed that amount that part above ten thousand dollars shall be refunded ratably. Public officers performing any duty hereunder shall be allowed such fees and compensation as they would be entitled to in like cases of collecting taxes. The civilian members of the commission shall be allowed ten dollars per day each for each day of actual service. Deeds made to purchasers at sales for delinquent assessments hereunder shall be prima facie evidence of the right of the purchaser, and any one claiming under him, that the real estate was subject to assessment and directly benefited, and that the assessment was regularly made; that the assessment was not paid; that due advertisement had been made; that the grantee in the deed was the purchaser or assignee of the purchaser, and that the sale was conducted legally.

Commission orders.

Proceeds in excess of cost.

Compensation of public officers.

Compensation of civilian commissioners.

Delinquent assessment sale deeds.

Evidence of.

Judgment of sale.

Any judgment for the sale of any real estate for unpaid assessments shall be conclusive evidence of its regularity and validity in all collateral proceedings except when the assessment was actually paid, and the judgment shall estop all persons from raising any objection thereto, or to any sale or deed based thereon, which existed at the date of its rendition, and could have been presented as a defense to the application for such judgment.

Estoppal, etc.

Appropriation.
For total cost, etc.

To pay the expenses of inquiry, survey, assessment, cost of lands taken, and all other necessary expenses incidental thereto, the sum of one million two hundred thousand dollars, or so much thereof as may be necessary, is hereby appropriated out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated: *Provided*, That one-half of said sum of one million two hundred thousand dollars, or so much thereof as may be expended, shall be re-imbursed to the Treasury of the United States out of the revenues of the District of Columbia, in four equal annual installments, with interest at the rate of three per centum per annum upon the deferred payments: *And provided further*, That one-half of the sum which shall be annually appropriated and expended for the maintenance and improvement of said

Provisos.
Half from the District revenues.

Reimbursed in installments.

Interest.

Maintenance, etc.
Half from District revenues.

lands as a public park shall be charged against and paid out of the revenues of the District of Columbia, in the manner now provided by law in respect to other appropriations for the District of Columbia, and the other half shall be appropriated out of the Treasury of the United States.

Control, etc., of park.

SEC. 7. That the public park authorized and established by this act shall be under the joint control of the Commissioners of the District of Columbia and the Chief of Engineers of the United States Army, whose duty it shall be, as soon as practicable, to lay out and prepare roadways and bridle paths, to be used for driving and for horseback riding, respectively, and footways for pedestrians; and whose duty it shall also be to make and publish such regulations as they deem necessary or proper for the care and management of the same. Such regulations shall provide for the preservation from injury or spoliation of all timber, animals, or curiosities within said park, and their retention in their natural condition, as nearly as possible.

Regulations, etc.

Approved, September 27, 1890.

THE ROCK CREEK AND POTOMAC PARKWAY AUTHORIZATION

(From the Public Buildings Act of March 4, 1913)

Washington, D. C. Commission to acquire land adjoining Rock Creek to connect Zoological and Potomac Parks.

SEC. 22. That for the purpose of preventing the pollution and obstruction of Rock Creek and of connecting Potomac Park with the Zoological Park and Rock Creek Park, a commission, to be composed of the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of War, and the Secretary of Agriculture, is hereby authorized and directed to acquire, by purchase, condemnation, or otherwise, such land and premises as are not now the property of the United States in the District of Columbia shown on the map on file in the office of the Engineer Commissioner of the District of Columbia, dated May seventeenth, nineteen hundred and eleven, and lying on both sides of Rock Creek, including such portion of the creek bed as may be in private ownership, between the Zoological Park and Potomac Park; and the sum of $1,300,000 is hereby authorized to be expended toward the requirement of such land. That all lands now belonging to the United States or to the District of Columbia lying within the exterior boundaries of the land to be acquired by this act as shown and designated on said map are hereby appropriated to and made a part of the parkway herein authorized to be acquired. One-half of the cost of the said lands shall be reimbursed to the Treasury of the United States out of the revenues of the District of Columbia in eight equal annual installments, with interest at the rate of three per centum per annum upon the deferred payments. That should the commission decide to institute condemnation proceedings in order to secure any or all of the land herein authorized to be acquired, such proceedings shall be in accordance with the provisions of the act of Congress approved August thirtieth, eighteen hundred and ninety, providing a site for the enlargement of the Government Printing Office (United States Statutes at Large, volume twenty-six, chapter eight hundred and thirty-seven).

Amount authorized.

Public lands added.

One half of cost from District revenues, in installments.

Condemnation proceedings.

Vol. 26, p. 412.

FIGURE SOURCES

Figure 3.1 Photo by author

Figure 3.2 *Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* adjusted by author

Figure 3.3 Photos by author

Figure 3.4 Photos by author

Figure 3.5 Photo by author

Figure 3.6.1 Gail Spilsbury, *Rock Creek Park*

Figure 3.6.2 *Highways in Harmony: Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway*

Figure 3.6.3 *Highways in Harmony: Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway*

Figure 3.6.4 *Highways in Harmony: Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway*

Figure 3.7 *Highways in Harmony: Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway*

Figure 3.8 *Highways in Harmony: Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway*

Figure 3.9 Gail Spilsbury, *Rock Creek Park*

Figure 3.10 Barry Macintosh, *Rock Creek Park: An Administrative History*

Figure 3.11 *Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement*

Figure 3.12 *Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement*

Figure 3.13 *Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement*

Figure 3.14 *Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement*

Figure 3.15 *Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* adjusted by author

Figure 3.16 Nature Center photo by author. Publications by the National Park Service

Figure 3.17 Photos by author

Figure 3.18 Photos by author

Figure 3.19 Photos by author

Figure 3.20 Photos by author and, where noted, from *Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* (mgmt. plan)

Figure 3.21 Photos by author and, where noted, from *Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* (mgmt. plan)

Figure 3.22 Photos by author

Figure 3.23 Photos by author

Figure 4.1.1 <http://www.exil-archiv.de/html/themen/stolpersteine/stolpersteine.htm>

Figure 4.1.2 <www.tagesschau.de/aktuell/meldungen/0,1185,OID2869374_REF2_NAV,00.html>

Figure 4.1.3 <www.tagesschau.de/aktuell/meldungen/0,1185,OID2869374_REF2_NAV,00.html>

Figure 4.1.4 *Associated Press*

Figure 4.2 Kastner, Jeffery (editor). *Land and Environmental Art*.

Figure 4.3 Potteiger, Matthew, and Jamie Purinton. *Landscape Narratives: Design Practices for Telling Stories.*

Figure 4.4 Potteiger, Matthew, and Jamie Purinton. *Landscape Narratives: Design Practices for Telling Stories*.

Figure 4.5 <www.repohistory.org/work.html>

Figure 4.6 <www.repohistory.org/work.html>

Figure 4.7.1 < http://www.sptimes.com/News/120201/Travel/Birmingham_embraces_i.shtml>

Figure 4.7.2 <http://raminaka.hp.infoseek.co.jp/photo/Birmingham1.jpg>

Figure 4.8.1 <http://www.proseandphotos.com/birmingham.htm>

Figure 4.8.2 < http://www.proseandphotos.com/birmingham.htm>

Figure 4.8.3 < http://www.bcvb.org/ttd-aframheritage.html>

Figure 4.9.1 Holocaust Museum <www.ushmm.org/uia-cgi/uia_doc/photos/10942?hr=null>

Figure 4.9.2 <www.ftmeade.army.mil/SoundOFF/archives/SO2002/Apr18/images/holocaustG.jpg>

Figure 4.9.3 Holocaust Museum <www.ushmm.org/uia-cgi/uia_doc/photos/10964?hr=null>

Figure 4.10 Jacob, Mary Jane. *Places with a Past: New Site-Specific Art at Charleston's Spoleto Festival*

Figure 4.11 Kastner, Jeffery, Editor. *Land and Environmental Art*

Figure 4.12.1 *Progressive Architecture*, v.72, 3/91

Figure 4.12.2 Kastner, Jeffery, Editor. *Land and Environmental Art*

Figure 4.12.3 Ukeles, Mierle Laderman. *Sculpting with the Environment: A Natural Dialogue*

Figure 4.13 Placematters website <www.placematters.net>

Figure 4.14 Placematters website <www.placematters.net>

Figure 4.15 Placematters website <www.placematters.net>

Figure 4.16 Placematters website <www.placematters.net>

Figure 5.1 Photos by author

Figure 5.2 Illustration by author

Figure 5.3 Illustration by author

Figure 5.4 Illustration by author

Figure 5.5 Illustration by author

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Figure 5.9 Illustration by author

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Figure 5.11 Illustration by author

Figure 5.12 Illustration by author