Olmsted Park Furniture Standards

Seattle Parks and Recreation

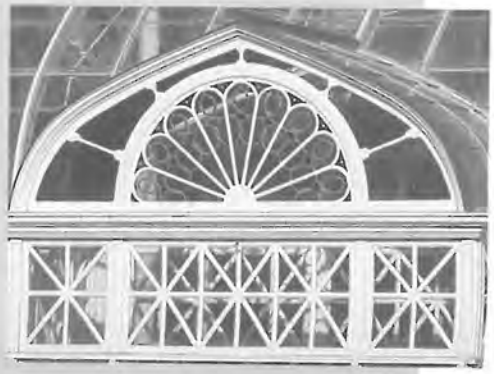
Dear Friends:

In 2003, we will mark the 100th anniversary of our splendid Olmsted legacy.

Since the Seattle City Council hired the Olmsted Brothers landscape architecture firm, our parks system has grown in size and stature. What once was a handful of parks covering a few hundred acres, is now more than 400 parks totaling 6,000 acres. More important than quantity, is the enduring value and beauty of our green spaces—none more so than the Olmsted-designed parks and boulevards.

I am proud that 100 years later, we recognize the importance of preserving this living heritage. One key way we are extending the legacy is by establishing and implementing standards for park furniture and amenities in Olmsted parks. This booklet is part of this effort. It will serve as a guide for park planners and designers as we make improvements to Olmsted Parks in the coming years.

Ken Bounds
Superintendent
Seattle Parks and Recreation



Development of Park Furniture Standards for Seattle's Olmsted Parks

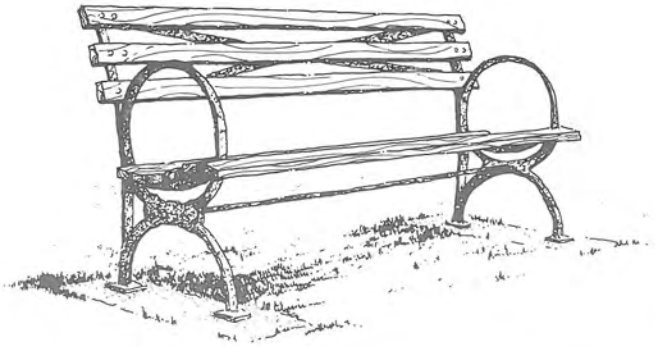
As Seattle becomes more dense, parks play an increasingly important role as places where harried city dwellers can play, gather and contemplate. Olmsted parks offer a unique kind of refuge. Many of them are located in historic neighborhoods and were designed to provide a simple but elegant park experience through a network of connected parks and boulevards.

One method of preserving the character of Olmsted parks is to develop standards for park furniture and other park amenities. The establishment of park furniture standards for Seattle's Olmsted parks has long been important to Seattle Parks and Recreation, the Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks, and other groups and individuals who value the historic character and significance of these parks in the Seattle Parks system.

Olmsted Park Furniture Standards were chosen on the basis of several factors:.

- Appropriateness to park setting and aesthetic resemblance to historic park furniture, preserving the historic park character
- Durability of the park furniture to withstand outdoor elements
- Ease of maintenance and replacement
- Affordability of furniture, given increasingly scarce public funding
- Agreement on standards by Seattle Parks and Recreation's Standards Committee and the Friends of Olmsted Parks

Seattle Parks and Recreation has made a concerted effort to establish uniform guidelines for park furniture and amenities in Olmsted parks. As improvement projects in parks are designed and implemented, staff and consultants will have a resource for choosing appropriate park furniture for the site. This booklet is intended to serve as a guideline for park furniture. Standard design details and specifications are available from the Seattle Parks Engineering and Design Section.

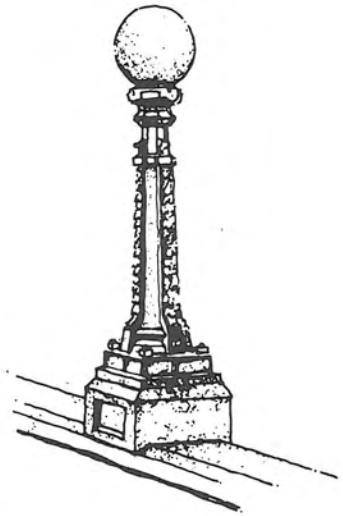


Central Park Settee

Six- or eight-foot bench with cast iron frame and wood slats for seat and back

Worlds Fair Bench

Six- or eight-foot bench with heavy cast iron frame and wood slats for seat and back



Olmsted Wall Light

Six-foot powder coated cast aluminum post with twelve-inch diameter round frosted plastic globe for 100-watt metal halide lamp

Other Park Design Elements

Other park elements that may be influenced by the Olmsted design ethic include bridges, walkways, stairs, walls (as shown below), monuments, memorials and paving. These elements must also be appropriate to the park setting to preserve the historic feel and character of the park.

Credits

Park Furniture Drawings – Kim Baldwin

Photographs – Jen Newton, Peter Newton

Historical Photographs – City Archives, Anne Frantilla

Editor – David Takami

Designer – Margarite Hargrave

Frontispiece – *Volunteer Park, 1926*