

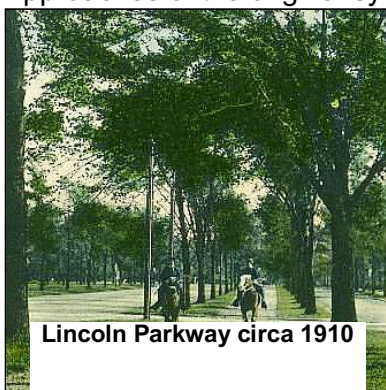
**DRAFT – Proposal for Historic Restoration of Soldiers Circle
September 2007**



Conceptual Rendering of Soldiers Circle after Historic Restoration

Buffalo Olmsted Park Approaches

The unique feature of the original Olmsted park system plan implemented in Buffalo was the extension of the park experience well beyond the confines of the acreage set aside for park grounds through a system of connecting parkways. The so-called Park Approaches of the original system consisted of four "parkways", which were 200 feet in width and totaled 3 miles in length, three "avenues", 100 feet wide and totaling 4 miles in length. The parkways (Chapin, Bidwell, Lincoln and Humboldt, each were designed with 2 drives, wide greensward spaces and several rows of trees. The trees were chosen so as to



Lincoln Parkway circa 1910

provide uniformity of species and age, and were planted equidistantly along each row. Unfortunately the most grand of the parkways, Humboldt Parkway, was sacrificed to the construction of the Kensington Expressway. It had extended for over 3 miles, linking the Park (Delaware Park) and the Parade (Martin Luther King, Jr. Park) with a magnificent swath of greenspace. The avenues, (Porter Avenue, Richmond Avenue - originally called simply "The Avenue" - and Fillmore Avenue) had a single drive each, lined by uniformly planted trees on each side.

Along the Park Approaches, several important junctions were specially laid out and landscaped. Symphony Circle (originally, simply "The Circle", is at the junction of Porter and Richmond Avenues. Agassiz Place, now greatly modified, is at the junction of former Humboldt Parkway and the Park's carriage concourse, at Parkside Avenue. Soldier's Place at the junction of Lincoln, Chapin and Bidwell Parkways; Colonial Circle (originally, Bidwell Place), at Bidwell Parkway and Richmond Avenue; and Gates Circle (originally Chapin Place; it was redesigned in the Beaux Arts fashion and re-named in 1902) at the southern terminus of Chapin Parkway, where it joins Delaware Avenue (originally Delaware Street. The smallest of the Olmsted circles, Ferry St. Circle, is at the junction of Ferry Street and Richmond Avenue.

All of these circles had center planting spaces, which added greenspace to the vista down the roadway, breaking the appearance of unending roadway. They also provided extra setbacks for the houses built along their periphery, with sweeping walkways nestled amidst trees.



The Buffalo park approaches were significant in that they were constructed and controlled by the Board of Park Commissioners, not the regular city authorities. The Board prohibited commercial traffic, and was also able to exert some control over where normal city streets could access the major parkways. Commercial businesses were also restricted along the approaches, with the Board able to regulate signs and similar non-residential aspects of these special parts of the Buffalo park system.

Soldier's Circle History

Soldier's Place, also called Soldier's Circle, forms the central connecting point of Buffalo's parkway system, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted. Soldier's Place is the point at which Lincoln, Chapin, and Bidwell Parkways converge. The parkways in Olmsted's day were smoothly paved and intended solely for use of private carriages. Featuring 200-foot rights of way and flanked by several rows of trees, they were designed to provide open space for the neighborhoods through which they passed.

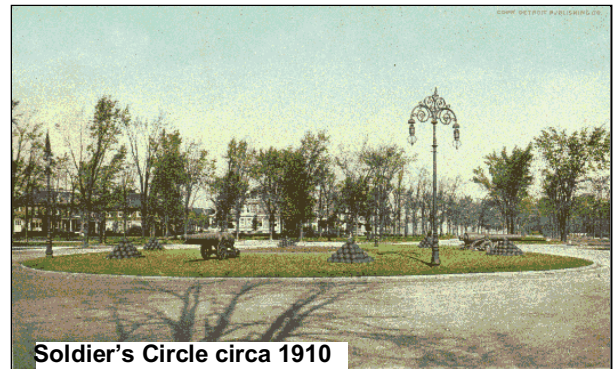


Soldier's Circle circa 1910

Soldier's Place was originally a very large circle that was meant to hold the likes of the Soldiers & Sailors monument now gracing Lafayette Square. When the monument was erected downtown, Soldier's Place received four large naval Parrott

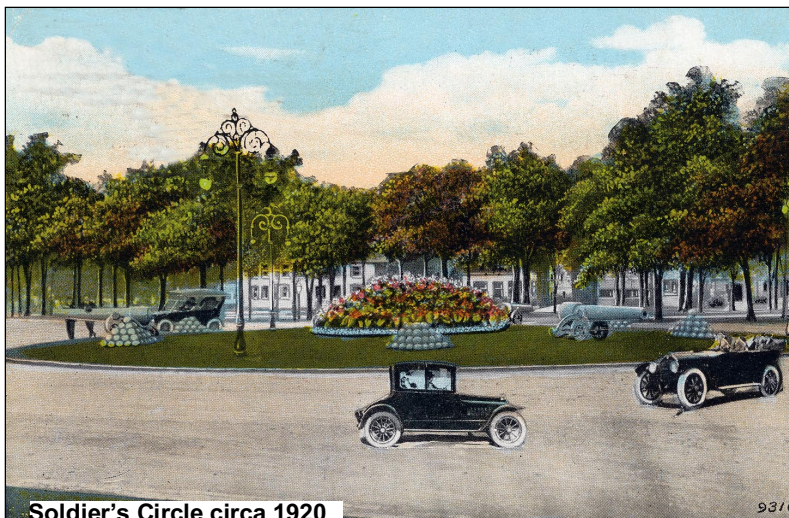
rifles mounted on Grand Army of the Republic carriages and accompanied by stacks of cannon balls. Colonial Circle also had similar guns and projectiles. From the very start, junkmen found the cannon balls irresistible.

The cannons and ammunition stacks were removed from Soldiers Place in 1937 by Parks Commissioner Frank A Coon who condemned them as traffic hazards. Motorists would cut across the street-level circle, sometimes crashing into the massive gun tubes. Coon argued that the cannons had no historic significance -- the navy had supposedly condemned the guns without ever putting them into service. Coon had removed the artillery pieces from Colonial Circle the year before for the same reasons. Everything was sold for scrap.



Soldier's Circle circa 1910

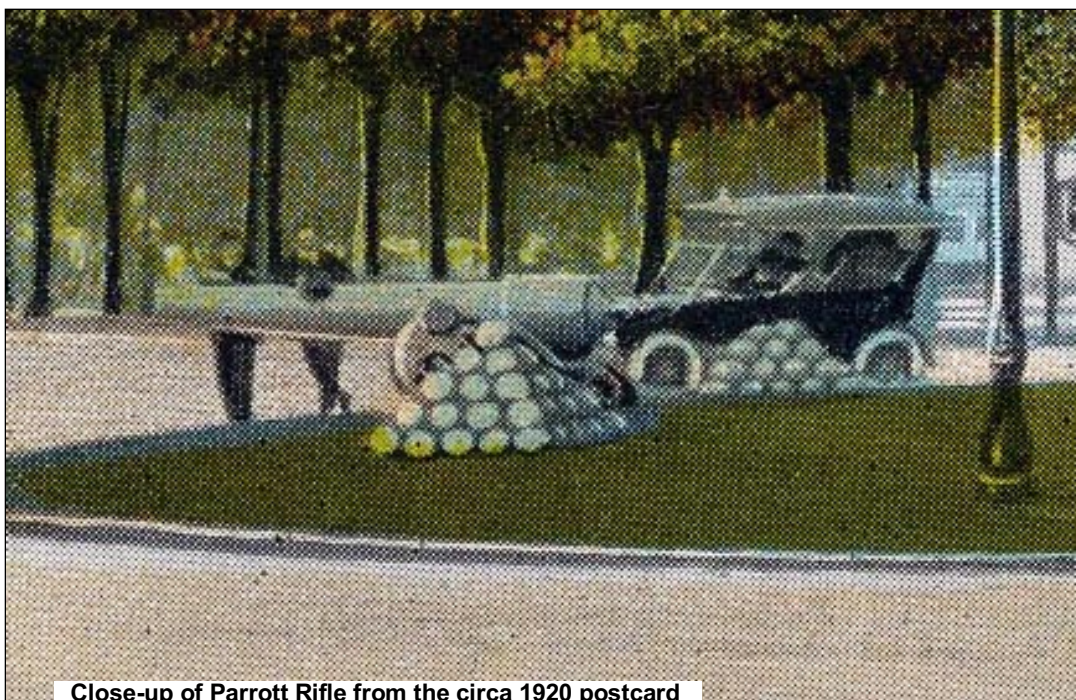
As a gesture to mark his leaving the Buffalo City Council (giving the gavel to Peter J Crotty in 1947) Kneeland B Wilkes used \$10,000 of his own money to beautify Soldier's Place. It had earlier gone to seed due a lack of Parks Department funds. This work was



Soldier's Circle circa 1920

done during 1948 and featured a low stone wall and flagstone walk. The circle was then renovated one more time, getting its current pear trees. In 1998, members of the immediate neighborhood started an effort to revive Soldier's Place yet again.

Parrott Rifle History



Close-up of Parrott Rifle from the circa 1920 postcard

Based on the size of the men standing by the cannon and the automobile in the background it is estimated that the Parrott Rifle is a 6.4-inch, 100-pounder as referenced in the image below. Two examples of this type are on display at Old Fort Niagara.



6.4-inch (100-pounder) Army/Navy Parrott rifle, Model of 1861 Nominal length: 138 inches. Rifling: 9-groove, right-hand twist. Weight: 9,800 pounds. Army and Navy patterns are identical except for the manner of marking. Known survivors: 53 Army, 32 Navy



8-inch (200-pounder Army, 150-pounder Navy) Parrott rifle, Model of 1861 Nominal length: 146 inches. Rifling: 11-groove, right-hand twist. Weight: 16,500 pounds. Army and Navy patterns are identical except for the manner of marking. Known survivors: 8 Army, 0 Navy



A 200-pound Parrott rifle in Fort Gregg on Morris Island, South Carolina, 1865

Many Civil War artillery researchers and collectors for his inventions of the projectile and cannon, which bear his name, know Robert P. Parrott. Born in Lee, New Hampshire, October 5, 1804, Parrott graduated 3rd in his class at West Point Military Academy in 1824. He was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the 3rd U.S. Artillery and was assigned to the southeastern states where he participated in the Creek Indian War. He was later assigned as assistant to the Chief of the Ordnance Bureau and, later, as an inspector of ordnance at the West Point Foundry at Cold Spring, New York. The foundry was a private firm and administered by civilians. Parrott, by this time a captain, resigned his rank and accepted the civilian position of superintendent of the foundry, October 31, 1836.

Parrott served the foundry well during the next 41 years. He became the lessee and operator of the foundry and experimented with the manufacturing of artillery. As a private citizen Parrott was able to experiment with cannons and projectiles without the usual red tape involved in government foundries. His accomplishments during his tenure included the perfection of a rifled cannon and its corresponding projectile (both named after him) patented in 1861, and the Parrott sight and fuse, which were developed during the Civil War years. The fact that his foundry was used to manufacture his weapons is proved by the letters WPF (West Point Foundry) found on the Parrott gun tube, along with his initials RPP. Parrott's cannons were distinguished by a single reinforcing band around the breech of the iron tube. His first rifled cannon design, a 10-pounder (2.9-inch calibre), was turned out in 1860. By the next year he had developed the 20-pounder (3.67-inch calibre) and 30-pounder (4.2-inch calibre) versions, among other models. In 1864 the 3-inch Parrott rifle replaced the 10-pounder (2.9-inch calibre) rifle.

In 1867, Parrott turned the operation of the foundry over to other parties, but he continued to experiment with projectiles and fuses until his death on December 24, 1877.



150-pounder Parrott rifle on the USS Wabash

Current Context



With the devastation of the pear trees on Soldier's Circle from the October 2006 storm there is an opportunity to re-examine the design alternatives to planting trees that were not part of Olmsted's original vision. Most of the Olmsted circles in Buffalo are lightly landscaped with a variety of low ornamental plants and groundcovers. They feature different historical monuments, fountains, hardscape or architectural features. This allows each circle to have its own unique theme and

personality. Currently the meaning of the name Soldier's Circle is lost with no reference to its original design. Bringing back the original turn of the 20th century design would demonstrate Buffalo Olmsted Conservancy's commitment to historic preservation.

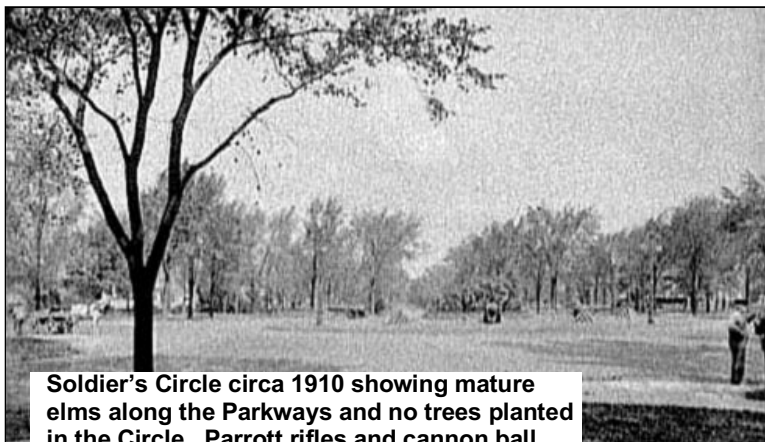
The previous tree plantings, while decorative, especially in spring, posed a visibility problem with vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The current proposal to plant Japanese Lilacs may pose similar problems. This species seem to be a reasonable choice for urban streetscapes but may be a safety concern when planted at the center of such a significant intersection. They also require significant maintenance to keep them from becoming a multi stemmed shrub. In a time when the Conservancy's resources are stretched to the limit low maintenance alternatives should be considered.



The English Elms along the Parkways appear to be recovering well from the October storm. There is no lack of shaded green space along these streets. Currently the Circle is well prepared for this redesign. The existing central planting bed is almost identical to the circa 1920's plan. The groundcover is well established and low maintenance. An irrigation system and electrical service was installed recently. All that is missing are the Parrott rifles and the cannon balls. Opening up an important node and restoring it to its historic period of significance would have a major impact in the neighborhood and the entire historic Olmsted parks system.



Symphony Circle
Above: Circa 1910
Below: Recent Restoration



Soldier's Circle circa 1910 showing mature elms along the Parkways and no trees planted in the Circle. Parrott rifles and cannon ball pyramids are visible

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