

WICKHAM PARK SENSORY GARDEN

Welcome To

WICKHAM PARK

Wickham Park Celebrates 50 Years
1961-2011

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Garden history

The Oriental Garden and the Italian Shrine were part of the Wickhams' Estate and still retain many of the original features of their 1920's layout.

The Lotus Garden, with a Japanese theme, was started in the early 1980s and had many additions over the years.

In the early 1990s the Cabin Garden was begun. Developed as an American colonial garden, the park's staff has worked for many years to make this a unique garden space.

The Rhododendron Garden was built as a special project in association with the Connecticut Nursery and Landscapers Association in 2005.

Major improvements and garden expansion occurred from 2003 through 2005. While the park's staff constructed the English Garden, the state of Connecticut created the Wetlands Garden. The English Garden covers two acres and was based on several formal gardens in England. Approximately 120 wedding ceremonies are performed in Wickham Park annually with the majority taking place in the Cabin Garden and the English Garden.

Wickham Park let the Department of Transportation use several acres of the park's land to develop the Wetlands Garden to replace wet areas that were lost in the construction of Interstate 291 as it passed through Manchester. Covering more than six acres, it incorporates ponds and more than half-mile of accessible walkways, benches, signage, overlooks, and over 2200 native plants.

The newest garden in the park is the Sensory Garden. Imagine a garden for the senses, touching each and every individual through the use of an exemplary garden design including raised garden beds, fountain structures, assistive technology, and unique art. This is the exciting challenge that Wickham Park embraced: to develop a sensory garden, providing inclusion for all visitors and the best possible natural environment for any individual with physical or mental limitations.

Each area incorporates many of the suggestions garnered from the advice of agencies the park contacted: the Institute of Disability and Community Inclusion at Manchester Community College, the Connecticut Institute for the Blind at Oak Hill, the Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation, the Brain Injury Association, and the Greater Hartford Chapter of the National MS Foundation.

Developed over a two-year time frame this was the first garden that the park looked for outside advice and funding to be built. The usage of this garden has been very rewarding since the people the park was trying to reach have been regular visitors.



TOP: A view of the Wetlands Garden.

LEFT: Roses in the Cabin Garden.

Photos courtesy of Wickham Park

WICKHAM PARK



TOP LEFT: The Cabin Garden.
CENTER LEFT: The Great Lawn in the English Garden.
BOTTOM LEFT: The Italian Shrine.
TOP RIGHT: The Moon Bridge in the Oriental Garden.
ABOVE: The Lotus Garden in spring.

Photos courtesy of Wickham Park

Celebrating 50 years

Wickham Park's administration thought an appropriate event to celebrate the park's 50th anniversary was to host a reunion of the employees who had worked at the park over the last 30-plus years.

We were pleased to host 64 former and current employees with a total of over 154 years of service.

We were honored to have former staff members travel from South Carolina, Florida and as far away as California.

Many of the employees were coming back from the mid-1980s and were amazed by the changes and improvements that they saw from the years that had passed since they were at the Park on a daily basis.

The Wickhams held several events at their cabin, and we hope they would have been happy with our hosting of an event to appreciate the people who have made their former home a unique and popular attraction.

As part of our anniversary we purchased cloth shopping bags with logos celebrating the park's first 50 years. The bags were used to help celebrate the events we host at the park on an annual basis. They were passed out as prizes at two disc golf tournaments and to all the participants in the first Journal Inquirer Summer Race Series.

During July, the month that the Park originally opened, we gave one of the bags to every 50th car that came through the gate, and they will be given out at other times during the rest of 2011.



Photo courtesy of Wickham Park

Cabin event from the 1930s



Photo courtesy of Wickham Park

Employee Reunion 2011

Most generous benefactors Clarence and Edith Wickham gave much to Manchester and East Hartford

The Wickhams not only gave the region a priceless gem in Wickham Park, they also made several other generous gifts.

They donated money to furnish a room in the Manchester Memorial Hospital and funded the Wickham Memorial Library in East Hartford, constructed in honor of Clarence Wickham's parents.

Edith Wickham also donated funds to construct a community building in McGrath Park in her hometown of Muskegon, Mich., and upon her death, money was left to the trust for this park and to the McGrath Memorial Congregational Church, also of Muskegon.

Clarence worked with his father, Horace, in the manufacturing industry. Between them, they held more than 40 patents for the design of new machines. Their machines were so effective that they were able to underbid other companies and actually held the contracts with the federal government for their envelopes and stationery for 33 years from 1874 to 1907.

The Wickhams' estate, called "The Pines," once amounted to more than 500 acres and included all of the land across the street from the park where several apartment complexes are now.

When the Wickhams bequeathed their property it was reduced through prior sales to 130 acres. A most generous gift of 67 acres was made to the park in 1967 by an adjoining neighbor, Mertyl Williams. Over the years, through land exchanges and purchases the park's size has increased to 250 acres.

Two of Wickham Park's eight gardens were part of the original Wickham estate. The Italian Shrine and the Oriental Garden were both started by the Wickhams during the 1920s.

In 1960, after Mrs. Wickham's death, the park's trustees hired Olmstead Associates of Brookline, Mass., to redesign the estate into a park open to the public.

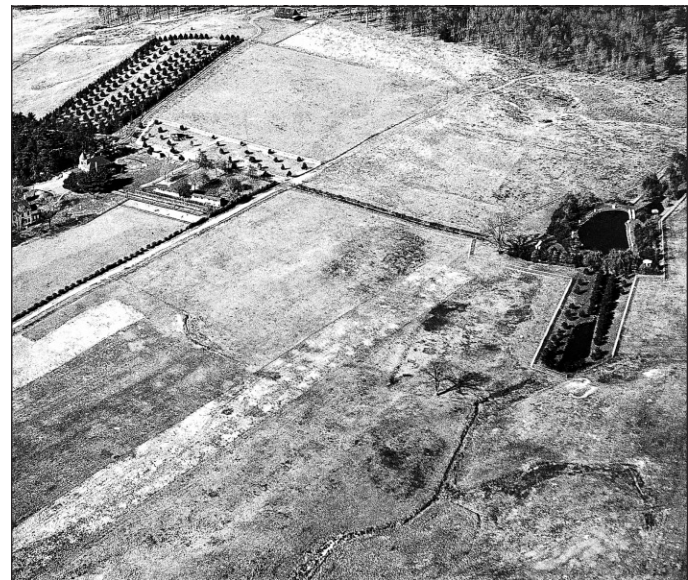
Private driveways and walkways had to be replaced by parking lots and two-way paved roadways.

Substantial drainage improvements, major electrical and water system changes, and public restrooms were needed to accommodate large groups of people.

The first group picnic area with a pavilion was built in 1970 and the park now has seven group areas, five of which have pavilions. Each season these picnic areas are enjoyed by individuals for everything from family reunions to birthday parties and hundreds of company picnics.

The first sports facilities were also created in 1970, when five tennis courts were built. Today the park has two volleyball courts, two softball fields, a fitness course, and a world-class disc golf course.

Wickham Park was set up by Clarence and Edith Wickham as a nonprofit foundation originally with Hartford National Bank and today with Bank of America as trustees.



TOP: An aerial view of the park from 2010.

ABOVE: An aerial view from 1927.

LEFT: Clarence and Edith Wickham.

Volunteers and donators

Volunteers are a very important part of Wickham Park's operation. The largest group of regular volunteers has been supporters of the disc golf course. This 26-hole course has been re viewed as one of the best in the country . These people help with e verything f rom r aising s ponsorship money to b uy supplies and impro ve the course to hosting tournaments. The y also maintain the course during the season and help to set up and take down the signs and baskets that are part of this facility.

Other volunteers

The park has several dedicated garden volunteers who help with the special care that make the gardens look so great. The y help with dead heading and f ine weeding that would be hard to do with all the other duties the staff has to perform.

A new group of park helpers are related to the Sensory Garden. Several people helped to add a G-scale train as a unique feature in the Sight and Sound sections of this new garden. The train currently is run by v olunteers on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.

The park also has tw o dedicated indi viduals, Lee and Da ve, who v oluntarily keep the technology w orking. Computer and web masters for free!

Several organizations and companies ha ve donated thousands of hours to a huge v ariety of projects o ver the last se veral years. The park's association with the United W ay has been of tremendous v alue in f acilitating groups in volunteering at the Park.

The park also has had skilled indi viduals complete v aluable projects with carpentry , painting renovations, and improvements, and assist with care of the aviary.

If you think you can help with these or an y other facilities in the park, call 860-528-0856.

Donors

Clarence and Edith Wickham did a wonderful thing in founding W ickham Park. As the park continues to develop and improve, it finds it more and more helpful to receive gifts from the people who enjoy their creation.

Purchases of memorial bricks in the Sensory Garden, donations at Santa's Workshop, dedicating benches and trees to lo ved ones, or giving general donations just because they like the park and want to help, all are ways that people and organizations have supported the park.

Wickham Park hopes people will consider this foundation funded for perpetuity as a worthwhile designation for their short- and long-term donations.

Please visit the website

www.wickhampark.org

and click the tab for Gi ving to W ickham Park.



Photos courtesy of Wickham Park



ABOVE: A screech owl in the aviary.

LEFT: The G-scale train in the Sensory Garden.

What's happening

During 2011 the park is b uilding its ninth major garden, the Scottish Garden.

It will contain statuary reflecti ve of Scottish history , a dozen archw ays, and appropriate plantings. The project has been started and should be completed before the end of the season in October.

An Irish Garden is included in future plans and will most lik ely be the park's last major garden development.

The following is a list of the e vents still to be held in the Park this fall.

Oct. 8 — **Wickham Invitational:** A Wickham Park-hosted and sponsored high

school cross-country meet. This is a regional meet and consists of runners from Connecticut and other New England areas. It is the park's largest event of the year with approximately 10,000 participants and spectators.

Oct. 29 — **Connecticut Divisionals Cross-Country Race:** A high school race sponsored through the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC), consisting of all of Connecticut's high school runners.

Oct. 30 — **Official End of Season**

Nov. 4 — **State Open Race:** CIAC-spon-

sored cross-country meet of top runners from the Divisional Race.

Nov. 5 — **Junior High Race:** A junior high school cross-country meet consisting of Connecticut 7th and 8th graders.

Dec. 10, 11, 15-23 — **Santa's Workshop:** A free event sponsored by Wickham Park. Children of all ages enjoy visits with Santa and his elves and refreshments with Mrs. Claus. Santa's Workshop provides a chance for children to enjoy a non-commercialized Christmas experience. Hours are 3-6 p.m. weekdays and 1-5 p.m. on weekends. Come and create a new family

WICKHAM PARK

Other attractions

Besides the Gardens of Wickham Park, the park has lots to offer to many other individuals.

Picnic areas for families and large groups or organizations are available for an enjoyable day outdoors. Along with our sports facilities we have three playgrounds and several walking trails.

Our nature center with interactive displays and taxidermy displays of birds and animals of Connecticut is fun and educational for all ages. A section of this building is dedicated to the Wickhams, with historical photos and memorabilia.

One of our most popular facilities is our aviary. Containing many varieties of birds from waterfowl to peacocks to hawks and owls, children and adults are attracted to this unique feature of Wickham Park.



The main entrance to the Aviary

Directors message

Connecticut's best kept secret — and everyone loves a secret

Several years ago I was in the Cabin Garden and was approached by a gentleman who was visiting Wickham Park for the first time.

He told me that he had recently retired and every day for the last 40 years he had driven by on West Middle Turnpike and thought that the park consisted of what he could see from the road, lots of lawn, trees, and the Wickhams' carriage house.

He was amazed by the rest of the grounds and the gardens and said that he "would be back once a week for the rest of his life."

Celebrating its 50th anniversary during 2011, Wickham Park has grown from the original two gardens and the simple green space of the Wickhams' estate to eight gardens and ornamental areas totaling more than 30 acres. It has become one of the premier parks in New England.

While the park contains many diverse facilities, its uniqueness is in its gardens. Wickham Park has the largest single collection of garden space in New England.

This year we were named the Best Picnic and Garden Park in

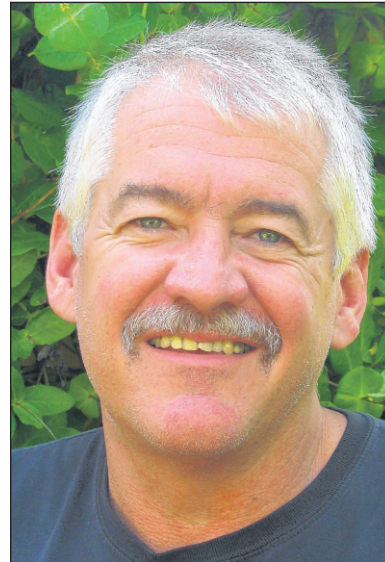
New England by Yankee Magazine. We were also named in a New York Times article as the favorite garden spot in Connecticut.

A new book coming out in August, "Exploring Gardens and Green Spaces from Connecticut to the Delaware Valley," features us as one on the best gardens to visit within travel distance of New York City.

We have had visitors from all 50 states and from dozens of foreign countries, but I still give park tours at which people remark on the beauty of our gardens and their astonishment that they did not know we existed.

I have been honored to have been the park's director for the last 34 years.

Among our other milestones this year we will be hosting our 30th Wickham Park Invitational, the largest high school cross-country meet in New England and our 30th Santa's Workshop. We started Santa's Workshop as a chance for families to experience a Christmas experience without commercialization and my parents portrayed Mr.



JEFF MARON
... Wickham Park Director.

and Mrs. Claus for more than 20 of those years.

We hope more people will discover Wickham Park and experience the unique facility that you have been driving by or "heard of," but never visited.

Come see us soon.

**Celebrate
the 50th
anniversary
of Wickham Park
with a walk
in the gardens**