



*Theodora Park*









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2015

In 1967, in the heart of Manhattan - on 53rd Street between Fifth and Madison Avenues - a small ‘pocket park’ opened on the site of the legendary Stork Club. Encompassing only 4,200 square feet, the park was designed to be an elegant oasis - a relaxing, peaceful respite for contemplation or conversation in a setting embraced by water and greenery.



Paley Park

That park - Paley Park - was created by William S. Paley in honor of his father, Samuel Paley. Designed by Zion and Breen, it set a standard for the quality of pocket parks that has rarely been equaled. And it catalyzed the creation of numerous other pocket parks throughout New York and other cities.

I was working in midtown Manhattan at the time, and I found myself frequently drawn to spend time in Paley Park. I’d find an excuse to walk via 53rd Street to a meeting or lunch or the subway, and I would wander into the park, pull up a chair, and tune out the bustling city. It was like taking a very deep breath and letting it all the way out.

I still visit Paley Park whenever possible, as it has been an inspiration for Theodora Park.

Like Paley Park, Theodora Park seeks to be a place of beauty and repose. And it aspires to encourage others to preserve and enhance green spaces in their neighborhoods. Importantly, it honors my mother.



My mother's garden

My mother was a gracious and caring person. She spent much of her adult life helping other people, particularly through her volunteer work at the local hospital in Connecticut. She was modest about that work, as she was modest about all things, including her skills in gardening.

*Seemingly by magic, her garden produced flowers that followed the seasons. Oh, the joy of seeing those first crocuses after the harsh winter months. Then the hyacinths, daffodils, forsythia, tulips, lilies of the valley, wisteria, roses, iris, peonies, dahlias, zinnias...the peas, carrots, lettuce, radishes, beans, tomatoes, gooseberries...I can see, smell and taste them even now.*

She loved it all. She loved its diversity, its surprise, its beauty, and its authenticity. She also loved Charleston and visited here often.

And so a park in her honor feels very appropriate. Especially one with the variety of exquisite plants created here by Sheila Wertimer and her team.





My father and mother on their wedding day

And then there's the art.

My mother loved art. In the years after my father died, she and I took several trips together. When we would leave a museum, my mother often stopped and stood quietly for a few minutes. She would tilt her head down just a bit, still absorbed in the experience. The art spoke to her. She never articulated how, at least not to me. But something happened. She yielded to art's ability to transport us.

*My mother loved water, too. There were three small ponds in her garden. She populated them with goldfish, who somehow usually survived even brutal New England winters. In summer, there were water lilies, spectacularly white against their dark green leaves.*

Paul Heroux's pool provides Theodora Park with art *and* water. How perfect! I know that my mother would respond to the radiant beauty of Paul's tiles, as well as their references to life forms from nature.

Philip Simmons's gate is a work of art too. Designed and forged by Mr. Simmons himself, it is graceful and elegant enough to be the gate to heaven. And it connects Theodora Park with other Philip Simmons ironwork in Ansonborough, including the fence surrounding St. John's Reformed Episcopal Church, diagonally across the street.

So now we have Theodora Park, which may seem to have magically appeared like those early spring crocuses in my mother's garden. Instead, it is the result of the vision, commitment, and collaboration of many people starting with Mayor Riley, Charleston City Council and City staff, the Charleston Parks Conservancy led by Darla Moore and executive director Harry Lesesne, Sheila Wertimer, Nopporn Kichanan and the team at Wertimer & Associates, Paul Heroux, the men and women who actually built the park, and especially the wonderfully generous family members and friends whose financial contributions have made Theodora Park a reality.

I never would have embarked on this project without the wise counsel I received from my friends Joe Riley and John Alschuler. And I never could have completed the journey without my wife Carol's unwavering encouragement and loving support.

*David Rawle*



My sister Judy and me

In February 1957, Historic Charleston Foundation launched an ambitious effort to rehabilitate not just a single building, but an entire neighborhood – Ansonborough. This extraordinary preservation project was the first time a revolving fund had been used for area rehabilitation in the United States, and it became a national showcase.

Over a period of about 15 years, more than 135 colonial and antebellum homes, four churches, and the City’s first public high school were preserved, rehabilitated, and adapted for contemporary use.

In 1964, the City decided to build a municipal auditorium on the southern side of Calhoun Street. Plans for the auditorium called for the extension of George Street from Anson Street to East Bay Street. At the time, George Street dead-ended at what was then #86 Anson Street. (see photo)



George Street dead-ending at Anson Street



82 Anson Street, on the site previously occupied by a small food market (photo on right)



To make way for the extension of George Street, that tall brick residence – originally built in 1799 – was moved half a block south and renumbered #82 Anson Street.

Today, that beautiful home defines the southern edge of Theodora Park. And its handsome garden runs along the northeast corner of Anson Street and Laurens Street, the former site of a small food market. (see photos)

*This section of George Street that didn’t even exist 50 years ago has now become part of one of Charleston’s most significant corridors, which includes the College of Charleston, Spoleto Festival USA, Gaillard Center, and – now – Theodora Park.*







I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,  
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,  
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,  
With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine...

*A Midsummer Night's Dream, II.i.249-252*

*In 1978, cast as Oberon in a school play, I recited these lines to Puck. I pictured my grandmother's garden, cultivated by her careful hand into a reckless riot of color and exuberant green.*

*The garden was sited on a hill above Noroton harbor in Connecticut, on Long Island Sound. The beds laid north-to-south, so that as the sun passed to the west, the flowers received abundant light. Wisteria climbed the arbor at the far end, and iris, hydrangeas, dahlias, peonies, morning glories, and zinnias occupied terraced beds. In the spring, crocuses, hyacinths, and daffodils heralded the coming of warmer weather.*

*Adjacent to her kitchen, my grandmother kept a greenhouse where the mysteries were hatched. We children were forbidden to enter that space unaccompanied, but the garden was another matter. My sisters and I played in the garden, and the stages of our growth were marked in snapshots taken at the small pool that stood in the garden's center.*

*Theodora Crimmins Rawle was a woman of dignified reserve, and her garden was an expression of her passionate engagement with the natural world. Many years later, as a teacher, I would tell my students to pause at the mention of a garden, because in its description would lie clues to the author's idea of beauty, of the interaction between human consciousness and the natural world. My grandmother's garden was a template for me in that understanding of gardens and gardeners, an idea of place dedicated to calm reflection and peace.*

*Jamie Neilson*

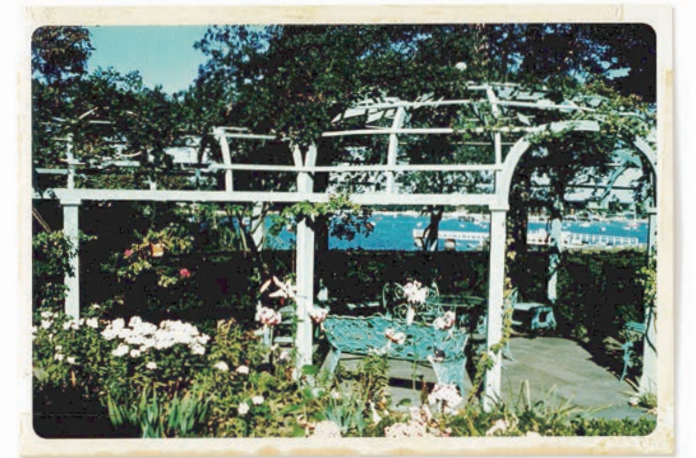






'Aunt Dora'

*My Aunt Dora (who was really my mother's first cousin, not her sister) had the kindest eyes of anyone in our family and the kindest voice. When she sat at the front desk at Stamford Hospital in her volunteer's smock, she must have brought relief from anxiety to visitors and patients alike. She was not conventionally pretty - her features were angular, austere even. Rather, she was beautiful and her beauty was a light from within, quiet and private as her garden.*



*The other gardens I knew as a child were sunlit borders of bright flowers or beds full of vegetables, persistent weeds encroaching between the rows. But Aunt Dora's garden was a shade garden, a long rectangular walk under a turquoise blue arbor. On either side of a flagstone pathway, lush plantings of green foliage.*

*I never saw a weed. Clearly she did not allow them in. At the far end of the walk, a mossy basin dripped dark water. Between the blue posts of the arbor, views of Noroton harbor, pale in noonday heat, busy with the business of boats. Her garden was like her, a place of order and symmetry, of beauty and peace.*

*Christine Andreae*





DONORS

Theodora Park would never have been created without the generous support of the City of Charleston and many private individuals who have shared the vision for this park and committed to its excellence. They have made possible a legacy we hope will be enjoyed for many generations.

*The City of Charleston*

*Family Members*

Carol & David Rawle  
Judy Neilson  
Metsie & Benjie Neilson  
Stephanie & Jamie Neilson  
Theodora & James Clark

Johanna & John Boynton  
Alberta Neilson & Peter Mundy  
Liz & Marshall Neilson  
Christine Andreae  
Sheila Ewing Daley

*Friends*

John Alschuler  
Anson Mews  
Tippy Stern Brickman  
Jill & John Chalsty –  
    in honor of Ben Marino  
Evelyn & Stephen Colbert –  
    in honor of  
    Evelyn & Joseph McGee  
Sandy & Fred Corson  
Bradbury Dyer III  
Esther & Jim Ferguson  
Gail & Parker Gilbert

Brooks Johnson  
Pam & Pat McKinney  
Wenda & Jay Millard  
Gerry & Tom Nicholson  
Susan O’Malley  
Pam & Bobby Paul  
Diana & Mark Permar  
Meredith & Conley Rollins  
Monica & Ken Seeger  
Cleary & George Simpson  
Marva A. Smalls  
Kathleen & Rutledge Young



WERTIMER & ASSOCIATES



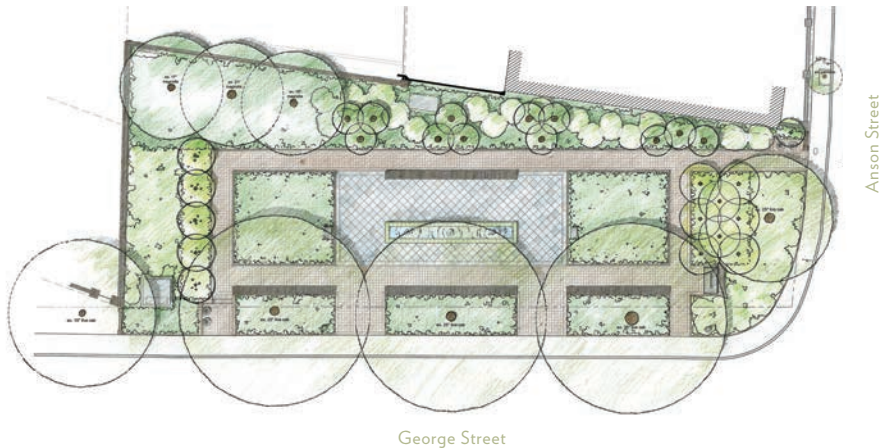
Nopporn Kichanan and Sheila Wertimer

Wertimer & Associates – led by Sheila Wertimer – has worked on public and private projects from the Southeast to New England. Throughout more than 600 projects in the Charleston area, the firm’s work has been characterized by simplicity of design, respect for Charleston’s uniquely rich historic fabric, and harmony between architecture and site. Nopporn Kichanan has worked closely with Sheila Wertimer on the design and implementation of Theodora Park.

*Theodora Park is located on a small but vital corner in Charleston’s Ansonborough neighborhood. It is designed to be a lush and tranquil public garden whose composition (a happy collaboration with the park’s instigator, David Rawle) relies upon the rhythm and shade of the three large Live oaks that border the site. Its layout is clear and unembellished, using traditional bluestone and brick paving, overlaid with a rich palate of flowering plants to lend interest, texture and detail. The whole site focuses on a long, elegant, hand-tiled fountain pool as its centerpiece.*

*Theodora Park is dedicated to the memory of David’s mother, a woman I never met but one of whom I have grown exceedingly fond.*

Sheila Wertimer



PAUL HEROUX



Paul Heroux

Ceramic artist Paul Heroux’s work is in the collections of major museums including the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the Portland Museum of Art. And there have been more than 60 gallery exhibitions of his ceramics. Paul taught ceramics at Bates College for 29 years.



Paul Heroux (left) and Chris Gustin

*There are so many beautiful fountains and pools in Charleston that it’s quite a challenge to design a water feature for a public space in the City.*

*My two inspirations for the piece are the formal boxwood hedges I see around town and the wonderful green glazes used on old Italian tiles, jars and garden ornaments. Those original green glazes were used on earthenware forms. They cannot withstand the wear and freezing temperatures demanded of an outside pool. However, similar rich and complex glazes do exist today, and a few ceramicists like Chris Gustin use them to make tiles for architectural use.*

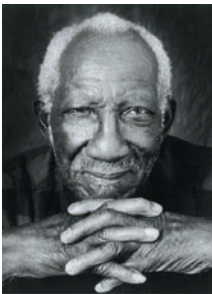
*I propose to create a tiled pool using Gustin’s tiles and glazes. A palette of various boxwood greens will cover the exterior of the piece, along with line work based on a cracked glaze and a veined leaf pattern that will come into view as one approaches the pool. The water-filled interior will have bits of colorful shapes on the bottom surface obscured by the water movement.*

*I envision a green sculptural form in a lush green garden. The top surface will provide a sitting space for relaxation and contemplation and a cool spot to be used by all.*

Paul Heroux



PHILIP SIMMONS



Philip Simmons (1912-2009) was a legendary artisan blacksmith in Charleston. His work is owned by two of the museums of the Smithsonian Institution. In 1982, the National Endowment for the Arts awarded Mr. Simmons the National Heritage Fellowship, the highest honor bestowed upon an artist.

The Ansonborough neighborhood has a rich collection of Mr. Simmons’s work. Diagonally across the street from Theodora Park, he designed the walkway gate and fence for St. John’s Reformed Episcopal Church. He also designed a ‘double heart’ driveway gate for the Heart Garden on Menotti Street.

*You heat and beat, heat and beat, heat and beat. That’s the name of the game. The more you look down, the more you see.*

*I’ve never made anything I didn’t like. I take a long time on the drawing, and when the customer likes it, I already like it first. I’m lucky his choice is mine too.*

*I glad you got something uptown. People think that all my work is in the lower Battery. But I done a lot of work for poor peoples like myself. They enjoys it too.*

*Philip Simmons<sup>1</sup>*

DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION



*Design*

- Wertimer & Associates** – Landscape Design
- Aqua Blue Pools – Fountain Consultant
- J.R. Broadway Co. – Fountain Structural Design
- Forsberg Engineering – Civil Engineer
- Ary Fun – Consulting Arborist
- Moonlighting – Mike Rollins – Lighting Design Consultant
- RMF Engineering – Electrical Engineer
- Simmons Irrigation Supply – Irrigation Design
- Thomas & Denzinger – Jim Thomas and Joel Wenzel – Architects: Gate Base

*Construction*

- Wildwood Contractors, Inc.** – General Contractor, Sitework, and Utilities
- William Kent Masonry – Masonry
- Aqua Blue Pools – Fountain
- Ahern’s Anvil – Iron Work
- Green Acres Services, LLC – Landscape
- H&H Electrical Service, LLC – Electrician







CITY OF CHARLESTON



Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr.

Arguably no elected official in this country has demonstrated a stronger commitment to parks than Mayor Joe Riley. Under his leadership, the City has created 94 new parks and improved 120 existing parks. An astounding 1,736 acres of new parklands have been added to Charleston.

Theodora Park is a City park. By providing leadership, funding, and professional expertise, Mayor Riley, Members of City Council, and City staff have contributed significantly to its creation.

**Joseph P. Riley, Jr.**

*Mayor*

*Members of City Council*

F. Gary White, Jr.

Rodney Williams

James Lewis, Jr.

Robert M. Mitchell

Marvin D. Wagner

William Dudley Gregorie

Perry K. Waring

Michael S. Seekings

Aubry Alexander

Dean C. Riegel

William A. Moody, Jr.

Kathleen G. Wilson

Jerry Ebeling

*Director of Parks*

Dustin Clemens

*Deputy Director, Capital Projects*

Edmund Most

*Senior Construction Project Manager*

CHARLESTON  
PARKS CONSERVANCY



Harry Lesesne and Darla Moore

Charleston Parks Conservancy has been integrally involved throughout the creation of Theodora Park. The Conservancy will be responsible for the maintenance of Theodora Park, working closely with the City and others to make certain this park benefits from the very highest quality of maintenance.

Founded by philanthropist Darla Moore, the Conservancy is ably led by Executive Director Harry Lesesne, who has been a tireless, creative, and collaborative partner throughout this process.

**Darla Moore**

*Founder & Board Chair*

**Harry Lesesne**

*Executive Director*

*Board Members*

Sandra Deering

Jim Fields

Jessica Gibadlo

Mariana Hay

M. Anthony McAlister, Jr.

Charles McLendon

Jenny K. Messner

Thomas J. ‘TJ’ Parsell, Jr.

Scott Parker

Pamela M. Pearce





In partnership with the Charleston Parks Conservancy and the City of Charleston, Theodora Park Stewards will help assure that the park is maintained in accordance with the highest standards.

*Theodora Park Stewards*

John Alschuler – *Chair*

John Boynton

Ginny Deerin

Evelyn McGee

Carol Rawle

David Rawle

Conley Rollins

Sheila Wertimer

Rutledge Young

Additional thanks to Saz & Livio Borghese, Tommy Brooks, Dominique Browning, Rossie Colter, Ginny Deerin, Angela Black Drake, Karen Emmons, Alex Fox, Zero George, Andy Gowder, Barry Gumb, Pam & Nelson Gwinn, Winslow Hastie, Richard Hendry, Rodney Hom, John Paul Huguley, Josephine Humphreys, Matthew Lee, Ted Lee, Barbara & Dick Lione, Heather MacIsaac, Holly McGory, Peter Mullan, Carl Palazzolo, Warrie Price, Kelly & Roger Rogan, Kevin Schmoll, Kitty & Glenn Smith, Mary Ann Sullivan, David Swink, Jim Thomas, Joni Thomas, Bill Thompson, Laurie Thompson, and Trenholm Walker.

<sup>1</sup> Philip Simmons – from *Charleston Blacksmith: The Work of Philip Simmons* by John Michael Vlach  
Photo of Philip Simmons courtesy of Jack Alterman  
Photo of Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr. courtesy of Peter Frank Edwards  
Photos of completed park by Julia Lynn  
Historic photos on pages 8 & 9 courtesy of the Margaretta Childs Archive at Historic Charleston Foundation  
Booklet design by Mark Brinkman, MBA Design



Miro Silva



Bill Kent, Paul Genua, Jerry Crosby, Nopporn Kichanan, and Edmund Most



Ryan Lavorgna and Colby Charpentier



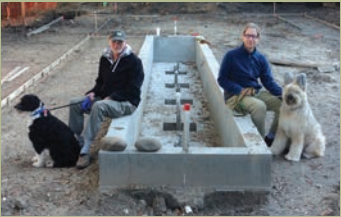
Kendrick Shuler



Dave Lepedo



Julia Lynn



Paul Heroux & David Rawle, with Tavo & Mercy



Shannon King



Reggie Gadson



Adam Murillo









*Theodora Park adds a very special park to a city famous for its beautiful historic buildings and gardens. One of the many wonderful experiences of Charleston is walking along its streets and discovering something unique. With its distinctive integration of nature and art, Theodora Park is just such a place. It will become a favorite place to rest, repose, read a book, watch passersby, and so much more for residents and visitors. For those who attend events at the Gaillard, Theodora Park will be another adornment of this marvelous facility – a beautiful and exquisite ‘outside room’ of the Gaillard.*

*Theodora Park was David Rawle’s vision. Every detail of this lovely space has benefited from his caring and gifted guidance. Theodora Park has been created through the collaboration of outstanding designers and artists, the City of Charleston, Charleston Parks Conservancy, and the truly generous support of many individuals, including the family of Theodora C. Rawle, whom the park so appropriately honors.*

*Joseph P. Riley, Jr.  
Mayor*