

**Report to the Oberholtzer Foundation
Mallard Island Summer Programs
Landscape Architecture Week
July 24-30, 2016**

By David Driapsa and Debbie Dietrich-Smith,
Program Co-Organizers
August 26, 2016

Ten preservation professionals occupied historic Mallard Island from July 24 to 30 for Landscape Architecture Week to study and document the delicate yet impressive imprint of landscape architecture created by Ernest Oberholtzer.

Mallard Island retains the landscape character and feeling much as Ernest Oberholtzer left it. Important to note, is that Ober, as he was known, received an education in landscape architecture in the early years of that program at Harvard University. In the junior year of his undergraduate education he studied landscape architecture under James Sturgis Pray and after receiving an AB degree in 1907 he attended another year in the newly established graduate program in landscape architecture.



Ober carried to Minnesota from Harvard theories of landscape architecture and applied them for a half century in preserving and developing Mallard Island in terms of scenery management, villa design, and hospitality.

Our retreat was conducted as a scholarly colloquium that included five historical landscape architects, three architects, a

historian, and a cultural geographer. With some overlap, two are professors from Midwest Universities, five have worked in the National Park Service, five are working in private sector practices, and one is a classical large format black & white photographer.



We conducted our project through partnerships with David J Driapsa Landscape Architecture, the Alliance for Historic Preservation, the National Park Service's National Center for Preservation Technology and Training, the NPS HABS/HAER/HALS Heritage Documentation Program, and Voyageurs National Park.



We also received generous support from the Oberholtzer Foundation: Beth Waterhouse helped organize our week; Diane Tessari and Mark Granlund were our gracious hosts on the island. Diane and Mark joined in our group discussions and shared their valuable insights into the challenges faced by the Oberholtzer Foundation as the steward of Mallard Island. This helped focus our work to address issues that will benefit the Foundation in preserving the historic landscape and buildings.

Our goal for this brief but focused week-long visit to the island was to experience The Mallard and contribute a scholarly record of its significant cultural landscape. Each of us alone and in groups employed our professional skills and experiences to document the island. We prepared measured and interpretive drawings of buildings and landscape features, made photographs according to established standards for preservation documentation, reviewed and assessed archival maps, drawings, written materials, and Ober's student papers from Harvard, and wrote narratives describing the historic island character and feeling.



Each day, we gathered comfortably in the Drum Room of Ober's remarkable Main House for discussions and planning our work of recording and interpreting cultural landscapes. Dana Lockett taught us about using state-of-art 3-D digital laser technology for recording buildings and landscapes as point clouds. Bill Lutrick demonstrated the classical technology of large format photography, the process which he had learned in part from Ansel Adams, for similar purposes. We had two guest speakers: Lee

Grimm taught us about the geology of Mallard Island, and Bob Hilke shared his wonderful stories about his personal friend Ober.



Our research focused on the Main House/Root Cellar/Lake Terraces and Gardens complex. Melissa Ekman assessed and documented the exterior cedar siding on the Main House making recommendations for restoration treatment. David Driapsa and Debbie Smith measured and sketched interpretative drawings of the landscape surrounding the Main House and Root Cellar. Chirashree Thakkar measured and sketched the upper floor and basement levels of the Main House. Dana Lockett recorded point clouds inside and outside the center level of the Main House and outside the Root Cellar with a 3-D laser digital scanner. Bill Lutrick captured buildings and the landscape in large format black and white photography.

Ober's office in the Main House became our well-equipped office and work center, where reports were read, images scanned, and group

discussions held. Using historic photographs, National Register documentation, and written histories, Arnold Alanen and Lynn Bjorkman began compiling a chronology of construction, modification, and in some cases, removal and replacement of island buildings. Arne and Debbie Smith made a tremendous find in the Map Room on microfilm of architectural plans and specifications of the Main House drawn and described by Ober.



In addition to the Main House, our focus was the overall cultural landscape. Using the HALS map drawn by David Driapsa five years ago, Jean Garbarini assessed and mapped vegetation and used a handheld GPS device to geo-locate trails and building corners, and Heidi Hohmann assessed and mapped views and vistas and the spatial organization of the island. Heidi and Debbie Smith mapped the constructed rock walls and garden enclosures. Chirashree Thakkar conducted a condition and character assessment of all the buildings and with David Driapsa measured and sketched the building footprints. Bill Lutrick captured the buildings and landscape features in large format photographs.

The product of our research and documentation will be the production of scholarly written reports, measured and interpretative drawings, and large format photographs documenting Mallard Island. Our field notes, measurements, sketches and documents will be transmitted to the HALS office in Washington, D.C. and from there entered into the HALS collection at the U.S. Library of Congress as an Addendum to David's existing short form history and site plan. These products also will help the Oberholtzer Foundation in its preservation efforts.



Our long days of work on Mallard Island were blessed with clear skies, dinner meals enjoyed together, swimming, canoeing, channeling Ober and basking in the native spirit of The Mallard. Should it be asked, the value of the experience to our group is priceless.

On behalf of the group, we sincerely thank you for the fabulous week on The Mallard.

#####

Participants: **Arnold Alanen**, Honorary ASLA, Cultural Geographer, Professor Emeritus, Department of Landscape Architecture, University of Wisconsin-Madison, **Lynn Bjorkman**, former National Park Service Planner/Architectural Historian, **David Driapsa**, FASLA, Principal, David J Driapsa Landscape Architecture Project Field Director, **Melissa Ekman**, AIA, Architect, Miller Dunwiddie Architecture, **Jean Garbarini**, ASLA, Senior Associate, Damon Farber Landscape Architects, **Heidi Hohmann**, PLA, ASLA, Associate Professor, Landscape Architecture, Iowa State University, **Dana Lockett**, Project Architect, Historic American Engineering Record, NPS Heritage Documentation Programs, **William "Bill" Lutrick**, ASLA Emeritus, Landscape Architect, Large Format Photographer, **Debbie Smith**, ASLA, Chief, Historic Landscapes, NPS National Center for Preservation Technology and Training and Project Rapporteur, **Chirashree Rahul Thakkar**, Architect, Thakkar Associates and US/ICOMOS Heritage Management Exchange Program Intern at the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training.



Landscape Architecture Week Group Photo: Front Row from Left: Diane Tessari, Chirashree Thakkar and Lynn Bjorkman. From left standing: Bill Lutrick, Heidi Hohmann, Dana Lockett, Jean Garbarini, Debbie Dietrich-Smith, Mark Granlund, Arne Alanen, Dave Driapsa, and Melissa Ekman.