



# TRENTON'S CADWALADER PARK

Edmund C. Hill (1855-1936) was a leading figure in the establishment of Trenton's park system. He sketched the first plans for Cadwalader Park in 1889. Finding his own work lacking, he eventually sought out Olmsted to lay out the park.

## A Masterpiece of Landscape Architecture

Cadwalader Park is an outstanding example of a park designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., known as "the father of American landscape architecture." Olmsted promoted what we think of today as the classic urban park landscape. An Olmsted park is a tranquil place, full of wide grass lawns, thoughtfully placed trees and carefully constructed walks and drives to draw visitors through the park.

## THE FOUNDER

Edmund C. Hill, a businessman and politician, was the founder of Trenton's park system. As a member of Common Council, he pushed for the city to purchase the 82-acre estate property that became Cadwalader Park in 1888. Afterward, he served as chairman of the Parks Committee.

Before bringing on Olmsted to assist with the design of the park, Hill's committee furnished the park with a bandstand, prairie dog farm and a bear pit, as well as benches and picnic tables.

Despite a remarkable life, Hill was never satisfied with his accomplishments. He disliked running his family's bakery and catering business and focused his attention pursuing real estate and civic affairs. He died at the age of 80, confiding that he thought his life had been a failure.

## THE PARK PLAN

The plan, reproduced here, has many elements characteristic of an Olmsted park. Chief among these is a crushed-stone circuit drive (#2). Visitors traveling along the circuit were intended to experience changing views of lawns, groves of trees, meadows, ponds and streams.

At the center of the plan is a more formal landscape around Ellarslie mansion (#5), which predated the park. Olmsted thought visitors would enjoy refreshments at the mansion and listen to music in a nearby concert grove (#4).

Olmsted wanted Cadwalader Park to feel like a natural place, within yet apart from the city. The park was to be enclosed by buffers of densely planted trees. From higher points in the park, visitors might catch glimpses of the Delaware River and distant vistas in Pennsylvania. Along the east and west sides of the park, Olmsted planned wooded ravines with cool streams and pools.



Cadwalader Park Plan by F. Olmsted & Co., September 17, 1891.

## OLMSTED'S PHILOSOPHY

Olmsted believed that parks belonged to all the people and should foster a sense of community. He had very high expectations. He wanted his parks to enrich both the body and the soul.

Cities in the late 1800s were crowded, noisy, smelly places, with little of the planning and zoning that we take for granted today. Olmsted thought that natural scenery could calm the nervousness he associated with urban living. He often began his designs by thinking about the drives and paths that moved people through his parks. Visitors were to be gently directed toward good views or points of natural or historic interest.

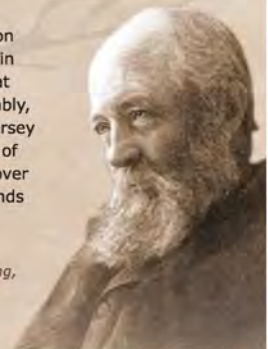
Olmsted included playgrounds and other types of recreational areas, but he did not believe in devoting entire parks to athletics. In fact, he often pushed these activities to a park's edges where they were less likely to intrude on scenery.

## THE ARCHITECT

By the time Olmsted was brought on to design Cadwalader Park in 1890 at age 68, he had been planning parks in American cities for over 30 years. His first major commission and his most famous was New York's Central Park (1858-1878).

In 1884, Olmsted took on his nephew and stepson John Charles Olmsted (1852-1920) as a partner in Olmsted & Company. It was their partnership that drew up the plans for Cadwalader Park. Remarkably, Cadwalader is the oldest Olmsted park in New Jersey and the only one designed with the participation of Olmsted, Sr. He retired in 1895 having planned over 600 projects, among them the U.S. Capitol grounds (1874-1891) in Washington, D.C.

Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. (1822-1903). This engraving, dated October 1893, shows how Olmsted appeared about the time he designed Cadwalader Park.



1

### Western Ravine

Olmsted's plan for the western end of the park called for damming a small stream to create a series of naturalistic pools.



2

### Circuit Drive

Olmsted staked out the route of a stone-paved drive that looped through the park. Trees were spaced unevenly along the drive to close and then open views.



3

### The Boys Playground

Olmsted set apart a field for baseball, cricket and football. Behind a slight rise, the playground was not visible from the center of the park.



4

### Music Stand

Olmsted's design included a concert grove at the park's center. The bandshell was built in 1913.



5

### Ellarslie Mansion

Completed in 1848, the mansion was a central element of the Olmsted plan. Part of the house became a refreshment stand.



6

### Eastern Ravine

A brook and path bordered by dense plantings ran the length of the eastern side of the park. Both passed under the stone arch at the park's main entrance.



7

### Parkside Avenue Entrance Bridge

This rustic stone-arch bridge was designed by the Olmsted firm in 1891. Olmsted wanted Parkside Avenue to be the park's main entrance.



8

### Parkside Avenue Tunnel

Olmsted laid out Parkside Avenue with a beautiful new underpass of the Delaware & Raritan Canal.



9

### The Meadow

Olmsted envisioned a much more open feel to the central section of the park than exists today.



10

### Delaware & Raritan Canal

In Olmsted's original plan, the canal and railroad were to be shielded from the park by a dense planting of trees.





# DEER & MONKEYS & BEARS, OH MY!

## Memories of Cadwalader Park

Cadwalader Park, established in 1888, was from its beginning a popular community park. Its landscape, designed by renowned American landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., provided a perfect backdrop for childhood games or community events. Over time, many attractions came and went from the park, among them a skating pond, an observation tower, a carousel, a playground, pony rides, two lawn-bowling greens and, perhaps most memorably, a zoo.



Feeding time in Cadwalader Park, 1906.

Briar Patch and friend, c. 1980. The park's last bear, Briar Patch, is believed to have lived longer in captivity than any other black bear. She died in 1983 at the age of 31.

Deer paddock and barn, c. 1970.



Picnic Day, c. 1908.

Sailing model boats in the pond, c. 1960.

## GROWING UP WITH CADWALADER PARK

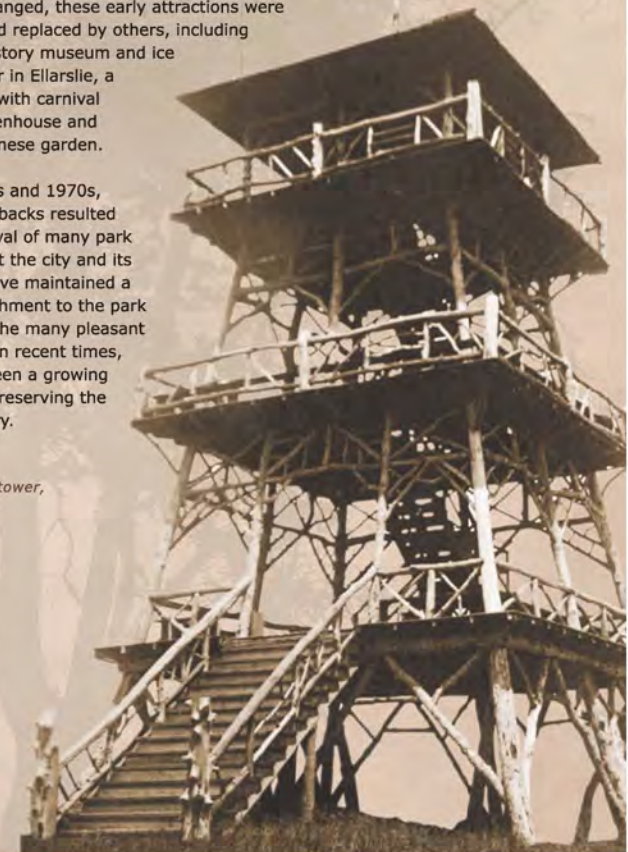
For many years growing up in Trenton has meant visits to Cadwalader Park. The park has long served as an all-purpose space for family picnics, athletics, nature explorations, parades, outdoor events and community celebrations.

Among the first attractions built in the park was a 50-foot-tall timber observatory. It offered fine views of the park and the surrounding countryside. In 1897, an ice-skating pond was dug out to a depth of two feet in the lower park, where the tennis courts are today.

As times changed, these early attractions were removed and replaced by others, including a natural history museum and ice cream parlor in Ellarslie, a playground with carnival rides, a greenhouse and even a Japanese garden.

In the 1960s and 1970s, financial cutbacks resulted in the removal of many park facilities, but the city and its residents have maintained a strong attachment to the park because of the many pleasant memories. In recent times, there has been a growing interest in preserving the park's history.

Observation tower, c. 1892.



Bison and elk, c. 1960



Bear cage, c. 1900. Over the years, Cadwalader Park was home to several black bears. The first black bear, named Kitty Hill, escaped from a barn in the park and was never recaptured.



The ice skating pond, Christmas Day, 1897. The pond was popular in winter but became a breeding ground for mosquitoes during warm weather. It was filled in a few years after it opened.



Monkey house, c. 1940.



Lawn bowling, c. 1970. Lawn bowling was introduced in Cadwalader Park in 1910. Two greens were laid out near the Stuyvesant Avenue entrance.



Playground, c. 1950.

## TAKE ME TO THE ZOO

Shortly after Cadwalader Park opened, citizens began donating small animals and birds for display in the park. The old stables and farm buildings of the Ellarslie estate were converted to house deer, sheep, elk, monkeys and a black bear cub.

Olmsted objected to setting aside land for animals, stating that there were other more important demands for space, especially on holidays when the park filled with picnickers and special events. The animals, however, were very popular and Olmsted's advice was ignored.

By 1913, the city had replaced the old farm buildings with a new deer paddock and barn in the west ravine and a monkey house, bear pit and aviary near Ellarslie mansion. In the 1930s, the Ellarslie mansion itself was converted into a monkey house for a growing collection of primates. At one time or another, the zoo sheltered prairie dogs, burros, alligators, peacocks, foxes, snakes, buffalo and a kangaroo.



Sheep fold, c. 1914.



Mendel Abramowicz, aka "The Balloon Man," sold balloons at the Parkside Avenue entrance for more than 20 years from the 1960s to the 1980s.



# BEFORE THE PARK

## Farm & Country House

Cadwalader Park is best known as an historic urban park, designed by master landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. Underlying the graceful park landscape, however, are features that reflect an even earlier period of time. Prior to becoming a park in 1888, the park was part of a colonial farm, a canal corridor and a great country estate.



Dr. Thomas Cadwalader. Portrait by Charles Willson Peale, 1770.

## CADWALADER FARM

Cadwalader Park takes its name after Dr. Thomas Cadwalader (1707-1779) and his descendants. After studying medicine in Scotland and inheriting land and a small fortune from his father, a prominent Philadelphia merchant, Thomas settled near Trenton in the 1740s, constructing a house, known as Greenwood, and clearing land for a farm.

Cadwalader served as the chief Burgess (or mayor) of Trenton from 1746 to 1750, after which he moved to Philadelphia where he became one of the first doctors at the Pennsylvania Hospital. Greenwood served as a summer house and tenant farm. Cadwalader died in 1779, at age 72, in Trenton.

Over time, the Cadwalader farm was divided and sold off, mostly among family members. In 1841, one parcel now containing most of the park was purchased by Henry McCall, Sr., a Philadelphia banker and industrialist.

This map, dated 1849, shows the location of the Henry McCall country estate (circled), which would become known as Ellarslie. The bridge near the estate refers to a crossing of the Delaware & Raritan Canal Feeder, which was constructed from 1832 to 1834. General Thomas Cadwalader (1779-1841) is identified as owning two properties southwest of the canal along Old River Road, later known as West State Street. The general was the grandson of Dr. Thomas Cadwalader.



## ELEGANT ELLARSLIE

In 1845, Henry McCall, Sr. engaged Philadelphia architect John Notman to design a country estate, which he named Ellarslie. It was the first house known to have been built in what today is the park.

Notman was famous for introducing the Italianate villa to the United States, importing sophisticated design ideas from Europe and translating them into reality for wealthy American clients.

Notman enhanced his estate architecture with landscaped grounds featuring curving drives and natural styles of planting. He also applied these landscaping concepts, known as the picturesque, to park-like cemeteries, a novelty at the time, as well as institutional grounds, including the New Jersey State Lunatic Asylum (now known as the Trenton Psychiatric Hospital). At the asylum and Ellarslie, Notman partnered with Andrew Jackson Downing, a nurseryman and writer who famously popularized the picturesque style.



Ellarslie mansion, c. 1908.



Ellarslie entrance lane, c. 1885. The tree-lined lane became known as Lovers Lane.



Caretaker's house at Ellarslie, c. 1890.



Cadwalader Park entrance, c. 1892. In the background are some of the farm buildings that were part of the Ellarslie estate.



Architect John Notman (1810-1865) designed Ellarslie. Portrait by Samuel Bell Waugh, 1845.

## FROM ESTATE TO PARK

In 1881, Henry McCall, Jr. sold Ellarslie to a New York stockbroker, George W. Farlee. By this time, the estate was known for its beautiful trees, planted a generation previously. Farlee used Ellarslie as a summer home and farm, with pasture and barn to raise prized Jersey cows.

Eventually, Farlee sold off much of the farm for residential development, creating a subdivision known as Hillcrest to the northeast of Stuyvesant Avenue. In 1888, Farlee placed the remainder of Ellarslie up for sale. It just so happened that the City of Trenton was seeking land for a park. The city's purchase consisted of 82 acres plus the main house, a tenant farmhouse, a cottage, a small brick house, barn, carriage and tool house, machine shed and icehouse.



Ellarslie mansion, c. 1920.

## TRENTON CITY MUSEUM

By the early 1970s, Ellarslie mansion was in very poor condition. After becoming part of the city park in 1888, the building had served first as a natural history museum, then as a refreshment stand and an ice cream parlor, only last to be turned into a monkey house for the Cadwalader Park zoo.

Restoration of the Ellarslie mansion began in 1971 and the building opened to the public as the Trenton City Museum in 1978. The museum is owned by the City of Trenton and operated by the Trenton Museum Society.

Ellarslie features diverse exhibits and special events on the history, arts and culture of the greater Trenton area. Please stop in the museum during regular visiting hours. You're invited in!



Main stairs in the Trenton City Museum at Ellarslie, 2014.



# A PARK FOR ALL TIMES AND SEASONS

## Trenton's Cadwalader Park

Cadwalader Park is known for its gently rolling hills, large shade trees and historic monuments. Grounds provide ample space for picnicking, recreation and play. The park's landscape has evolved over time to take advantage of a richness of natural and manmade features. Throughout the year, Cadwalader Park changes from the bright greens of summer, to the reds, oranges and yellows of fall, to the grays and white of winter, to the pinks and pastels of spring. It is truly a park for all times and seasons.



The park drives were designed to be shared by carriages and pedestrians. Promenading in the park was a favorite pastime. Today these same drives are used by automobiles and joggers. This view was taken in 1908.



Summertime in the park featured live music for many years. The original bandstand was located in a concert grove northwest of Ellarslie. The stand was later replaced by a bandshell in 1913, which burned during an "unintentionally spectacular" production of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs in 1967.



A quiet winter scene, looking through the archway of the entrance bridge near Parkside Avenue.

A 14-foot-tall statue of George Washington was brought to Cadwalader Park in 1892. It was carved in Italy from white marble and first exhibited at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876. After standing in the park for over 80 years, it was moved in 1976 to Mill Hill in downtown Trenton to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Battles of Trenton.



The "rock garden" at the Upper Pond was part of a landscaping improvement undertaken in the 1930s. In the background are homes on Cadwalader Drive.



A springtime scene at the Upper Pond, c. 1950. The Upper Pond was created in the mid-1930s as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project.



The park's Stuyvesant Avenue entrance, c. 1920. Trenton's streetcars stopped here.

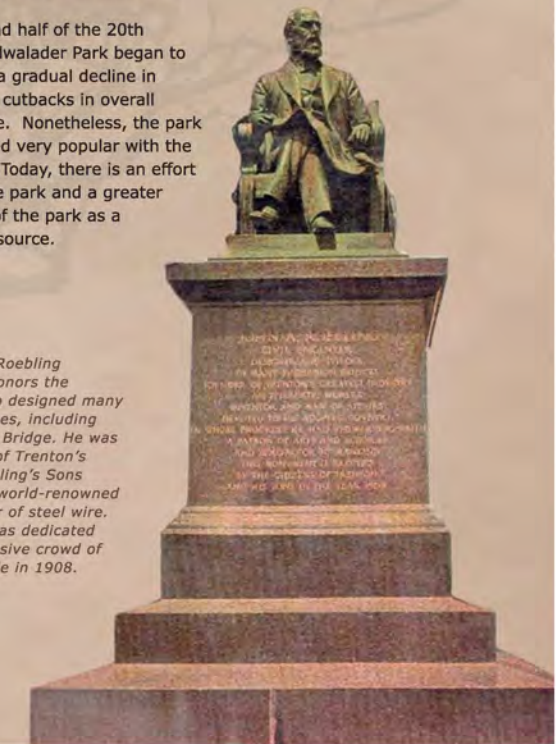


## THE EVOLVING PARK

Cadwalader Park was established in 1888 to be a pleasant retreat from the city. Its designers, led by world-famous landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., planned the park to highlight its outstanding natural features. They planted hundreds of trees, dammed small streams to create ponds, and constructed paths and drives.

Cadwalader quickly became a popular community park with parades, reunions, celebrations and visitors who loved strolling along its paths and exploring its landscape. During the early 20th century, the trees planted by Olmsted began to reach mature heights, forming shade-producing canopies. Natural events, however, took their toll. Chestnut blight and Dutch elm disease killed many beautiful trees, and Hurricane Carol in 1954 damaged many older specimens. Lost trees were not always replaced. Sometimes new trees and species were planted without respect to Olmsted's original plan.

In the second half of the 20th century, Cadwalader Park began to suffer from a gradual decline in funding and cutbacks in overall maintenance. Nonetheless, the park has remained very popular with the community. Today, there is an effort to renew the park and a greater awareness of the park as a historical resource.



The John A. Roebling monument honors the engineer who designed many famous bridges, including the Brooklyn Bridge. He was the founder of Trenton's John A. Roebling's Sons Company, a world-renowned manufacturer of steel wire. The statue was dedicated before a massive crowd of 15,000 people in 1908.

## PLEASE KEEP ON THE GRASS!

Cadwalader Park has nearly 100 acres of green space to explore. There are hundreds of trees, historic monuments, a canal, a museum, meadows, streams and flowers. Many other natural and historical treasures can be found by exploring this urban oasis.



# CANAL AND RAILROAD DAYS

D&R Canal Feeder at Cadwalader Park, c. 1905. This view shows the canal swing bridge and bridge tender's house. At the far right, behind the gentlemen standing on the steps, is the gardener's cottage. Both buildings are now gone.



## D&R CANAL

The Delaware & Raritan Canal opened in 1834, forming a direct passage for boats traveling between the Delaware and Raritan rivers. It was critical to the industrial and commercial development of the region. Boats carried coal, iron and agricultural produce to businesses that in turn shipped their finished products to the expanding cities of Philadelphia and New York.

The D&R Canal is what is known as a contour canal. In other words, it follows the ground avoiding dips and rises to the greatest extent possible. As a result, the canal winds and curves across the landscape.

The 43-mile main line of the D&R Canal is located between Bordentown on the Delaware River and New Brunswick on the Raritan River. A 22-mile spur north of Trenton passing through Cadwalader Park is known as the Feeder. Most of the water in the canal is drawn from the Delaware River at Bulls Island, about 20 miles north of Cadwalader Park, and flows slowly downhill by way of the Feeder all the way to Trenton.

The D&R Canal prospered in its early years, carrying as much as 2.8 million tons of freight in 1866. Eventually, the canal could not compete and traffic declined. The last year of operation was 1933. The State of New Jersey acquired the canal in 1934 and turned it into a source of water for towns in central New Jersey – a purpose it still serves.



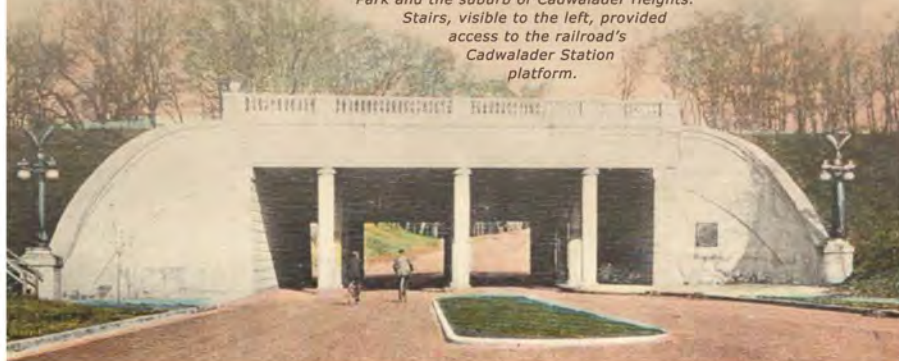
For many years, the canal embankment at Cadwalader Park featured flowerbeds. Mules would have traveled the canal towpath pulling boats.



Cadwalader Park's wood dock made it convenient to take a cool dip in the waters of the Canal Feeder, c. 1920.

The Parkside Avenue Tunnel was completed in 1910. It made for a new formal entrance into Cadwalader Park and the suburb of Cadwalader Heights.

Stairs, visible to the left, provided access to the railroad's Cadwalader Station platform.



A southbound Bel-Del freight train steams past the Lovers Lane crossing, c. 1870. This photograph predates the establishment of Cadwalader Park by 20 years. Lovers Lane served as the main entrance to Henry McCall's country estate, Ellarslie.



A Bel-Del passenger train approaches the Cadwalader Park platform from the south, c. 1905. This view is looking southeast from the Lovers Lane swing bridge. The canal towpath is to the left.



This view is looking northwest from the swing bridge over the D&R Canal Feeder at Cadwalader Park, c. 1905.

## BEL-DEL RAILROAD

The Belvidere Delaware Railroad, known as the Bel-Del, was built from 1850 to 1854 to supplement the service of the D&R Canal Feeder. The railroad and canal were not direct competitors since they were owned by the same corporation. The railroad provided extra freight capacity, particularly for coal from Pennsylvania, and it provided needed passenger service to the small towns on the Delaware River from Trenton north to Phillipsburg.

Trains did not stop at Cadwalader Park until 1903. The railroad built a passenger platform and a small shelter on the west side of the tracks near Parkside Avenue. The station was a "whistle stop" meaning that engineers did not stop unless signaled.

The Bel-Del operated as part of the Pennsylvania Railroad system until the late 1960s. When the railroad went bankrupt, the Bel-Del was abandoned. Subsequent work by the D&R State Park converted the old railroad into a recreational trail.

## ... in Trenton's Cadwalader Park

Just beyond this sign and down the hill is the Delaware & Raritan Canal State Park, one of central New Jersey's most popular recreational corridors for hiking, bicycling, canoeing and fishing. It is possible to leave Cadwalader Park from this point and travel a nearly level path 29 miles north to Frenchtown or two miles south to downtown Trenton and another 34 miles northeast to New Brunswick. Most of the canal system remains intact and is a reminder of the days when mule-drawn boats delivered coal and freight to the towns along its route.

## LOVERS LANE CROSSING

A bridge first crossed the Delaware & Raritan Canal Feeder near this location in Cadwalader Park in the mid-1830s. The crossing was a requirement of Thomas M. Cadwalader when he sold a strip of land to the canal company. He wanted to be sure that the new canal would not interfere with access to his farm. This bridge could be temporarily swung out of the way of passing boats.

In 1841, Henry McCall bought the 148-acre property from Cadwalader and not long thereafter built Ellarslie mansion. A beautiful tree-lined entry lane, which led from River Road, across the canal and up a drive to Ellarslie, eventually became known as Lovers Lane.

After the McCall property was sold to the City of Trenton for Cadwalader Park in 1888, the city planted hundreds of trees to shield the park from the transportation corridor and a "tunnel" was opened under the canal and railroad at Parkside Avenue in 1910. The bridge at Lovers Lane was removed shortly thereafter. During these years, the canal and railroad were thought of as unwelcome reminders of industrial Trenton. The park, after all, was meant for visitors to escape the noises, sounds, smells and scenes of the city.

Despite efforts to separate the park from the transportation corridor, the two were forever linked. After the railroad was torn up in the late 1970s, a pedestrian footbridge was restored to the location of the original bridge. Today, the canal is considered one of the city's most important historical and recreational assets.

Blueprint of the Bel-Del Railroad and the D&R Canal Feeder, 1913. Although dated 1913, this drawing shows the Cadwalader Park property as still in the possession of Henry McCall.

