

# CHESTNUT PARK

THE DELTA GROUP, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

**Location**

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

**Owner/Client**

PENJERDEL Regional Foundation

**Architects**

The Delta Group

**Contractors**

Sullivan Inc.

Heyser Landscaping

**Consultant**

Christopher Ray

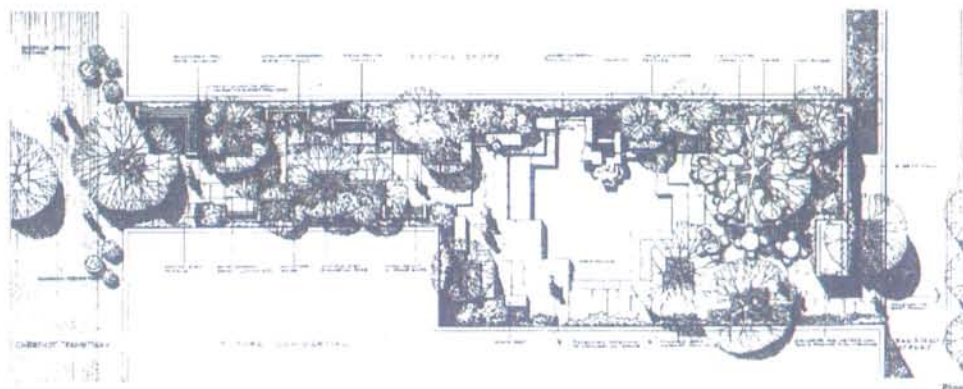
Philadelphia's Penjerdel — a tri-state transportation agency responsible for planning vast highway systems — has shown how to think small in its own neighborhood. Its privately financed and owned Chestnut Park has become one of downtown's most heavily trafficked and pleasant shortcuts.

The park, designed and maintained by The Delta Group, was made pos-

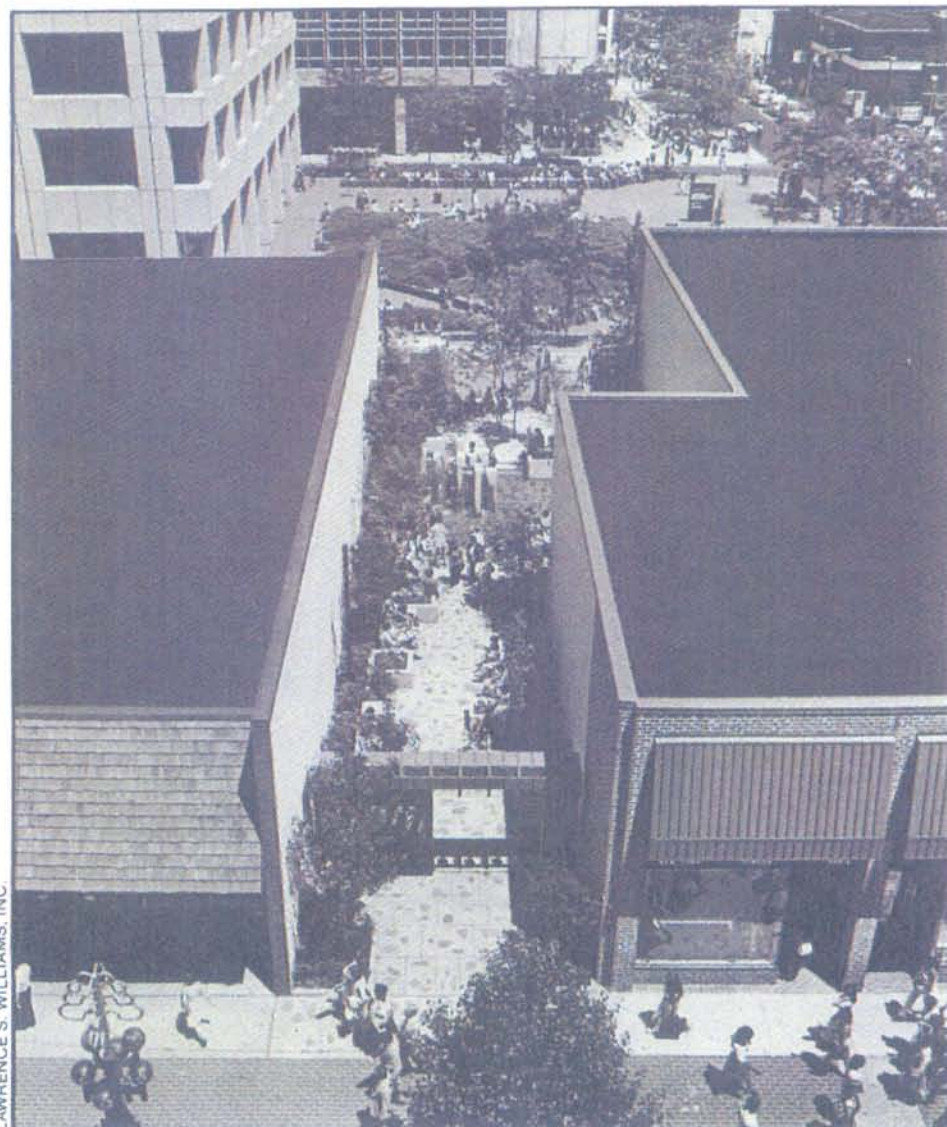
sible by a gift from the William Penn Foundation to Penjerdel. This paid for the original purchase of the site, and the \$180,000 cost of the park itself. Penjerdel, collaborating with the City Planning Commission, picked the site, then bought it, demolishing two old commercial buildings. After the park was completed, a new store was built adjacent.

Thus, the new green space links Chestnut, a busy shopping street, with a service alley (Ranstead Street) in mid-block, then the large open plaza adjacent to the United Engineers Building, and finally the Transitway, or transit mall. The latter is a key downtown circulator, 13 blocks long, restricted to buses after 7 P.M. And since the neighborhood is almost





CHESTNUT STREET PARK COMPETITION



LAWRENCE S. WILLIAMS, INC.

devoid of 24-hour residents, Chestnut Park is closed and locked at 7 P.M.

"Our inspiration was Trevi Fountain in Rome — using similar materials for the sculpture fountain and paving; everything cut from the same cloth. The other inspiration was a trip to Japan. It gave me the courage to think I could do this sort of delicacy in texture in the heart of the city," says John Collins, a partner in the design firm.

The fountain includes bronze gargoyles representing totems of the Unami, Munsee, and Unilachtigo Indians, original inhabitants of Philadelphia. An unusual local palette of indigenous plants went in: witch hazel, shadbush, red oak, red maple, laurel, rhododendron, hemlock, ferns, and wildflower. Sculptured gates of wrought-iron at the north and south entrances express in whimsical form the regional wildlife, landform, and vegetation.

The designers went to great pains to provide root and growing space for heavy planting, including English ivy which now covers the walls of adjacent buildings.

Local plant and building materials were used throughout the park, including a local mica gneiss schist, which is embedded in the paving blocks and adds a glittery punctuation. The pavers, cast in place, have three-quarter-inch open joints every fourth-score line to provide more water and air for plant roots.

With such a public-spirited client, The Delta Group also has a contract for continuing maintenance. "I still maintain the individual plants and fountain," says Collins. "Even though I'm not really supposed to, I do a lot of clean up — once a week — and pruning whenever it's needed." Even when new signs are needed, Delta provides.

**Left:** Slotted into busy downtown Philadelphia, Chestnut Park was financed by a local transportation foundation to link Chestnut Street, at bottom, with a major office plaza to the north. **Opposite:** Greened seclusion around the central fountain is reinforced by English ivy, which has, since 1979, covered the walls of the adjoining buildings.



*"Outstanding in the way that it combines the attractiveness of a great amount of detail with a very straightforward scheme. There is a lot going on, but it is very simply handled. Unique in its whimsical incorporation of local elements which go beyond studio design — sacred stones and animal totems of the original Indian tribes in the Philadelphia region are handled in a deft fashion; plant and wildlife imagery is woven into the ironwork of the gates. This craftsmanship adds a strong sense of place to a very crisp design. There is a special intimacy here, not found in the standard idioms of other vest-pocket parks. The evocative symbology provides a refreshingly private and 'high touch' place in a very public landscape. Highly expressive of the craft of the profession. A real charmer — there can probably never be enough of these." — THE JURY*



Above: Formed of sandblasted concrete, the fountain expresses continuity with its manmade surroundings. The pool bottom goes dry in winter. Right: This bronze turtle is one of the fountain's three totems, representing the Unami, Munsee, and Unilachtigo Indians, Philadelphia's original natives.



## WINNING PROFILE

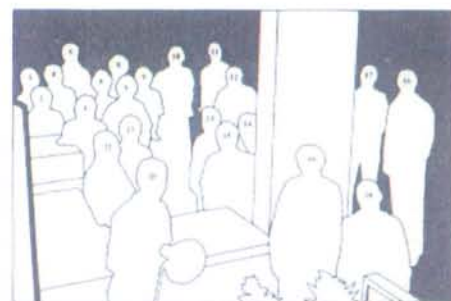


Thirty major design awards have come to John Collins' firm, now The Delta Group of Philadelphia, since he began practice in 1963. The ASLA awards, in Collins' view, is essential, so that professionals can know how their work compares with that of others.

"Such awards also reinforce our belief that landscape architects, architects, and engineers must work as members of a full-time team, and that urban design and planning can only be successful when all the design disciplines are fully involved from analysis to maintenance."

Unusually, in a field that is often rigidly compartmented, The Delta Group — in both the Salem and Chestnut Park projects — was responsible for establishing an ongoing maintenance program. The firm prepared maintenance and operating manuals and conducted hands-on demonstrations and training.

Originally a partner in the Collins, Dutot Partnership, Collins formed The Delta Group in 1971. His major involvement in design has included both the Salem and Chestnut Park projects; the new towns of Reston, Virginia, and Coldspring, Maryland; restoration of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline right-of-way; Schuylkill Park, Philadelphia; Penn Square, Reading, Pennsylvania; the environmental planning program for the South Fork of Long Island; and a master plan for Muhlenberg College, Allentown, Pennsylvania. Collins founded and directs the Philadelphia Landscape and Nursery Training Program at the Philadelphia Prison. A graduate of Pennsylvania State University and Harvard Graduate School of Design, he was a 1962 recipient of the Charles Eliot Traveling Fellowship from Harvard.



**The Delta Group:** 1. John Collins, 2. David DuTot, 3. Walter Green, 4. David Loudermilk, 5. Martin Troutman, 6. Elizabeth Chace, 7. Mario Schack, 8. Corey Singletary, 9. Burt Tanoue, 10. Rob Pulcifer, 11. Bill Collins, 12. Nathan Sullivan, 13. Ed Hollander, 14. Marie Komansky, 15. Jim Pearson, 16. Sam Little, 17. Jack Smyth, 18. Elmore Boles, 19. Ann Butcher, 20. Tom Schraudenbach, 21. Patsy Eubanks, 22. Ken Jenkins. Not present: Neal Belanger, Charles Dorff, Peter Heaven, Walter DeLury.

# DOWNTOWN SALEM — CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT PLAN — HERITAGE PLAZA EAST/WEST

THE DELTA GROUP, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

**Location**

Salem, Massachusetts

**Owner/Client**

City of Salem/Salem Redevelopment

Authority

**Contractor**

DeLulis Bros. Construction

**Consultants**

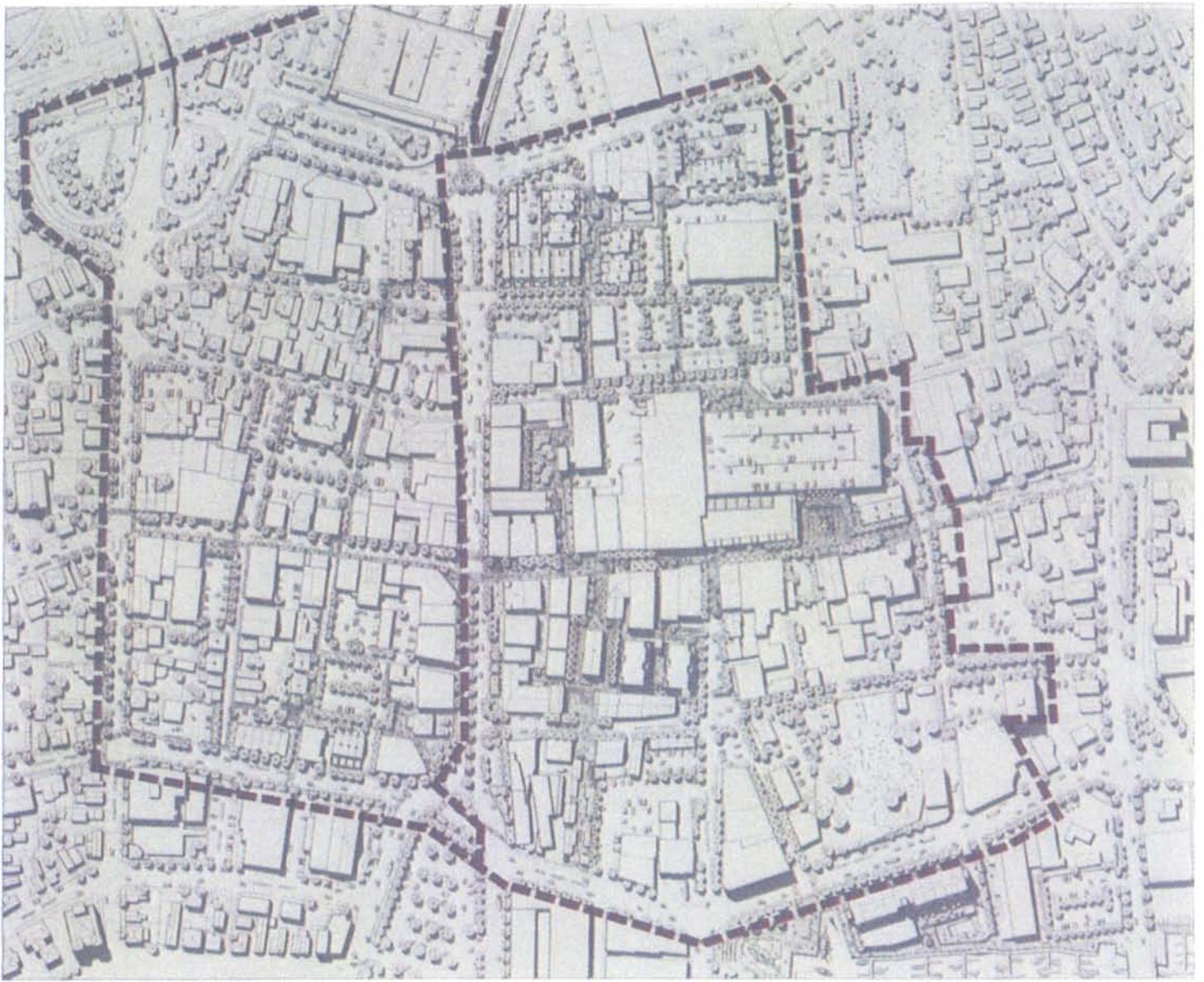
Sherl Joseph Winter

Whitman and Howard, Inc.

Travelers to the historic (1626) whaling port of Salem, Massachusetts, 15 miles north of Boston, inevitably confront a red-brick colonial town, one that is even more re-bricked today as a result of eleven years of consistent design attention.

Over a decade ago, the town fathers turned their backs on earlier,





simplistic renewal efforts and accepted proposals from The Delta Group. Since 1972, this landscape architectural firm has had overall responsibility for the work of landscape architects, civil and traffic engineers, and a consultant sculptor, and has helped coordinate the work of numerous architects with Salem's urban design plan.

The Delta Group's initial analysis, design concept, and urban design master plan formed the basis for a seven-stage implementation program; major components of the plan have now been completed. The firm was also responsible for detailed design and documentation for roadways and parking, pedestrian malls, market sheds, plazas, graphics, fountains, and

lighting, as well as construction inspection and design review.

Inescapable for visitors — in part because of a new, one-way circulation system — the historic core possesses an unusual collection of 17th- and 18th-century structures, many of them enhanced by their own new courts, plazas, or pedestrian malls.

It was the designers' intent to link the two main bodies of water that once floated the ships which brought overseas wealth — pepper, indigo, spices, tea, coffee — to little Salem. But the complete linkage between South River and a proposed, new marina/harbor never came about.

Still, seven contracts later, the Delta Group's intent has remained

**Above:** Following an urban design framework established in 1972, improvements to downtown Salem have linked key buildings to new and old spaces in the central area. Several red-bricked streets are now limited to pedestrians and/or reduced traffic. **Opposite Below:** Essential to downtown's revitalization was the conversion of Essex Street into a pedestrian mall. Its most prominent public space is the forecourt to the historic East India Marine Hall, now the Peabody Museum. **Opposite Above:** In front of the old Town Hall, a parking lot has been converted into a mini plaza-amphitheater where many public events are staged. City and developer jointly provided the space.





*"An 'urban reclamation' project that exhibits a clear pursuit of design excellence beyond that of the most expedient solution. It embodies a self-image revitalization in an area where the industrial age was born, then virtually died. The economy of the area has been revived by tourism and high-tech industry, and the Salem CBD development is both a barometer of, and a magnet for, that development. It is commendable that the design team met the challenge of coordinating the myriad aspects of restoring several city blocks — planning, engineering, political road-blocks — and was able to produce an inviting, built result. The project is a credit to all Salem, and it says a great deal about the civic spirit of the town administration and the people who have impact on it.*

*"The delicate architectural scale of the 18th-century buildings in Salem is acknowledged and reinforced (in most instances) by the choice of indigenous materials for the streetscape. Granite, brick, and the placement of street trees give the area wholeness — an important design feature. The design elements are of excellent quality, but are not particularly unique. It was the outstanding level of effort required to organize and coordinate the various human and institutional elements toward realization which carried the project into this award category. Exemplifies the increasingly important 'design facilitation' role of the landscape architect." — THE JURY*

clear, and the once-dying center has considerable new life. Tourists flock to these historic places, local trade has revived, and the \$19 million in public investments has generated over \$70 million in private developments: this is a town of 40,000 population! Retail sales, property value, and tax return to the city are far beyond what was expected. Majestic Salem Common, northeast of the town's center, has a new and quite different echo in the form of Salem Green, a smaller, village-green-type space provided jointly by the city and a developer of adjacent commercial property.

**Opposite:** Outdoor markets and other public events animate the "new" Salem. **Above:** During tourist season, this placid scene turns busy. Widened sidewalks and new trees make room for outdoor dining in front of Chuck's, just north of old Town Hall.




# GREEN SCENE

THE PENNSYLVANIA HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY • Nov./Dec. 1995 \$2.75



*John Collins, winner of the  
1995 PHS Distinguished Achievement Award.  
See page 8.*

# In John Collins's Liveable Landscapes, Plants are the Medium; Native is the Message

 by Judy Mathe Foley

**W**ant John Collins to build you a park? Give him an idea, a pencil, and a napkin and he'll draw you one. That drawing will be so detailed, says Alice Sjolander, department manager and Collins's assistant at Temple University's Ambler campus where Collins is a professor and chair of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Horticulture, "You can take that napkin and build from it!"

"John thinks with a pencil," Sjolander says. "It's a big joke around here that if you have an idea John will pick up whatever's available — even a napkin — and draw what you're saying. That drawing will be beautiful — and done from several perspectives."

When those drawings of Collins's, the professional landscape designer, come off the paper, they are likely to reside in an urban environment of macadam and concrete. But the true soul of John Collins, artist and plantsman, lies in richer soil, attuned more to nature's creations than to people-made structures of concrete and steel. "John Collins is more than simply a landscape architect. He is strongly bonded to the earth and the plants themselves — and to the people who interact with them," says John Randolph of the Schuylkill River Development Council, Inc., which helped to raise approximately \$5 million to begin construction of the Schuylkill River Park, which John began designing 30 years ago.

Spreading like zucchini over Philadelphia's landscape with quiet productivity, Collins is at Temple's Ambler campus four days a week; at his landscape design firm, The Delta Group, in center city, "in pieces" one day a week; and at either or both places three or four nights a week until about 10 p.m. Saturdays he spends "the whole day, if I can, in my nursery in Conshohocken. It's my therapy. I dig and pot trees."

Hands-on and always helpful, he's a professor who always has time for a student's question. "He's generous with his knowledge, truly interested in helping people. Really a caring guy," says Caroline I. Friede, a Temple staff horticulturist.

Adaptability is the quality mentioned by Dolie Green, a Temple landscape intern. "He knows what has to be done, and knows the parameters that will allow you to accomplish what he wants, as well as what

you perceive should be done. So where someone else might find conflict because they've set something in motion and can't get the job done, with John, there's always room to adapt or adjust. You have to be many things to succeed in public landscaping and he's all of them."

When Collins was developing a naturalized area on 20 acres of a 150-acre Rohm and Haas research facility in Spring House,

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**Maintenance is his mantra. Ask John Collins what he considers the mark of success of a public landscape, and he responds without hesitation: "One that lasts." Market Street East ranks high on his satisfying project list because it has a well-developed maintenance program that became a model to help launch the Center City District idea.**

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Pa., "he would come out on his own time, bring his own truck, and we would dig and plant," says Will Brouwers of Rohm and Haas. "John was extremely generous with his time."

But John Collins would not be receiving the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's 1995 Distinguished Achievement Award if he were just a nice guy with a talent for drawing. The award recognizes 30 years of "dedicated service through education, environmental planning and design, and horticulture." Much of that service has been in public places and with a wide array of people from corporate executives like G. Stockton Strawbridge, the guiding force behind Market Street East's renewal, to prison inmates who mowed the grass and pruned the trees at Schuylkill River Park.

In North Philadelphia, for example, Collins provides steady and gentle direction for ambitious human and economic development programs. Temple Park Builders, a program to train unemployed inner city residents, constructed a Collins-designed teaching garden at the Meade School at 18th and Oxford in a project led by Philadelphia Green. And four trainees are now at work on a park near St. Joseph's Prep in North Philadelphia. Collins works with the community organization, Sea Change, at 15th Street and Cecil B. Moore Avenue to

provide advice on caring for a tree nursery that aims for economic development in that neglected part of the city. Near Lehigh Avenue, Collins has worked with People United Together, "a marvelous crew of ex-inmates helping other released folks find ways to survive in the city with jobs and alcohol and drug-counseling programs."

Variety and innovation are marks of the man. One reason he decided to have Temple students grow the plants used in the hanging baskets on the light poles on Market Street East, Collins says with a slow, sly smile, was "just to prove it could be done."

Delta Group Vice President Tom Schraudenbach says the only thing that riles the usually unflappable Collins is when people won't try new things, take on new challenges. "He's never content with just solving problems. He wants to open people's minds to all the potential." In North Philadelphia, Schraudenbach says, "John looks at revitalization of the environment in an area that desperately needs to capture people's imaginations and make them want to be there."

"John is always looking for something new and different," says David Dutot, founding partner of the Delta Group. "His overriding concern is that anything we design has to be functional. The form the project takes is a fairly individual one."

## **A Superman trick at 17th and Market**

To find the essence of a Collins design, visit tiny Chestnut Park. Take a brown bag lunch to 17th Street and search between the shops on the north side of Chestnut Street for a set of sculpted iron gates. Walk through those gates and the change of scenery is so abrupt as to make you glance back to get your bearings. The Clark Kent-to-Superman transformation occurs in a space only a bit larger than Kent's telephone booth dressing room. Though the park is crowded, you will be able to find one of the 50 seating spaces — and a bit of privacy — on a wall or bench. All the details — the native Wissahickon schist, the cascading water, the cool, vine-covered walls — create an almost instant sense of refreshment. Such is the Collins magic that when you leave, you will be sure you walked the soft forest floor even though Chestnut Park is covered by paving stones.



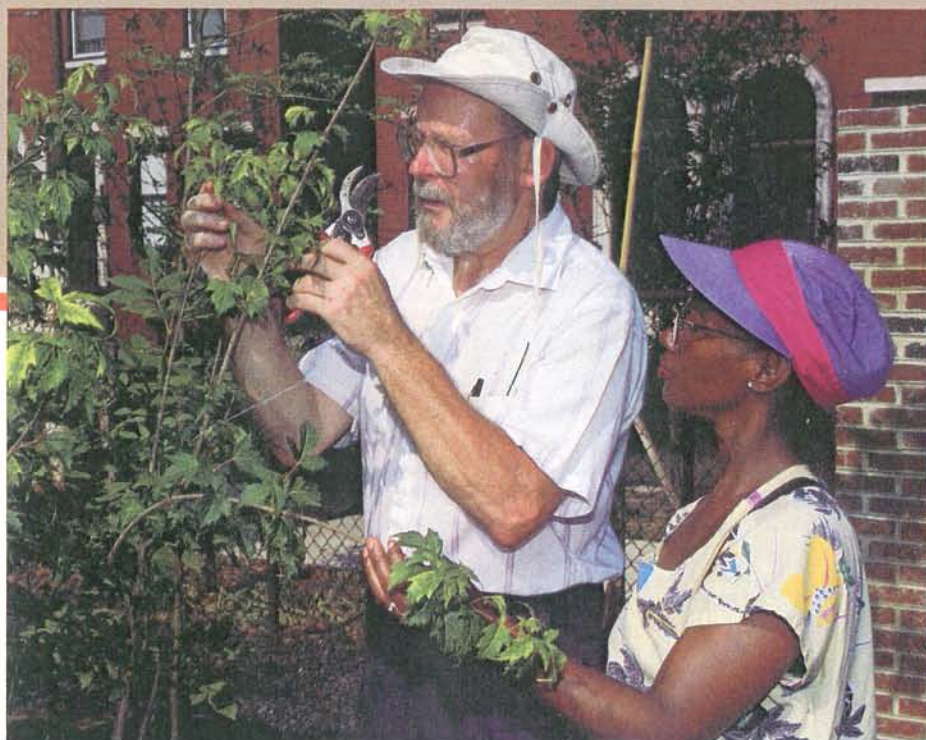
Ask John Collins a question and he immediately starts sketching. His *Livable Landscape Design*, co-authored by Marvin Adleman and published by Cornell Cooperative Extension, shows 61 pages of beautiful, clear sketches designed to assist the homeowner, the landscape designer, the nurseryman and contractor in understanding and applying the basic principles of design to the landscape. Shown with student Kathleen McBride.

A Collins-created green space is not a generic, regurgitated idea, but has a strong sense of place. It reflects and celebrates its surroundings and history, often in pieces of sculpture like Chestnut Park's fountain, which contains totems of the local Leni-Lenape Indians. It is a soft, and passive place where trees provide a cooling canopy that creates, where possible, a woodland floor beneath. It contains native plants — maybe even some he grew himself from seed in his nurseries in Conshohocken or in Ambler. His designs, as serene as the man himself, come complete with plans to sustain people and plant life into the future.

Collins extols pastoral, passive landscapes. "We tend to think of parks as baseball diamonds and basketball courts and playground equipment," Collins says. "We've been slowly phasing the bucolic landscape character out of our parks. In America we really let active sports dominate. But there is an equal need for some



Collins's master plan for Schuylkill River Park included a community garden that required considerable lobbying to convince people that horticulture is as beneficial as baseball or hockey.



Collins discussed pruning details with Shari Stewart, who cares for the Sea Change tree farm in North Central Philadelphia (near Temple University). This tree farm is part of an urban horticulture center that Collins master-planned; it includes an herb garden, a special events garden and a farmer's market.

passive, soft, less urbanized space as well."

When in the first phase of the development of Schuylkill River Park some 10 to 15 years ago, his master plan included a community garden, "it was seen by some people as an intrusion into the park in space that might better be used for more active uses. We lobbied very hard for the gardens.

***It's a big world out there, and John Collins is bringing it to us piece by piece.***

Fairmount Park Commissioner Ernesta Ballard was a big help in trying to convince people that horticulture is an equally valuable recreational activity, just as beneficial as basketball or hockey. And it's been very successful."

Inspired by Fairmount Park, Collins decided early to use his love of drawing and painting in public landscape design. "I think I first realized the importance of public landscapes when I worked as a gardener before I went to Penn State. I was driving on East River Drive with Mrs. Arthur Paul and she described some of the places her husband had designed, like the Glendenning Rock Garden. And I thought, "What a marvelous opportunity to be able to provide the public with neat places they otherwise can't afford, or wouldn't have the opportunity to participate in. It hit me very strongly that public landscapes were important."

He came of professional age at the

height of urban renewal when the popularity of shopping malls was destroying the historic character of older cities. Collins's son, John R. Collins, Jr., an architect who recently joined The Delta Group, says the reality of bad design decisions came right to the front door of his father's hometown of Conshohocken when it became a ghost town after the Plymouth Meeting Mall was built.

### ***A strong sense of identity***

Preservation prevails in his designs. In Salem, Massachusetts, where Collins and Schraudenbach spent 10 years and many all-nighters, he haunted the public library to research local history. As a result, the Collins-designed fountains there reflect Nathaniel Hawthorne's writings and the city's part in the China trade. "John always asks, 'How can we make sure these beautiful things can be preserved? How can we reveal things about their own special place in history?'" Schraudenbach says.

"The best part of the experience in Salem," Collins wrote, "is the proof that an old community with a strong sense of identity, hard work and a good urban design team can successfully compete with, and best, the faceless, wasteful suburban malls."

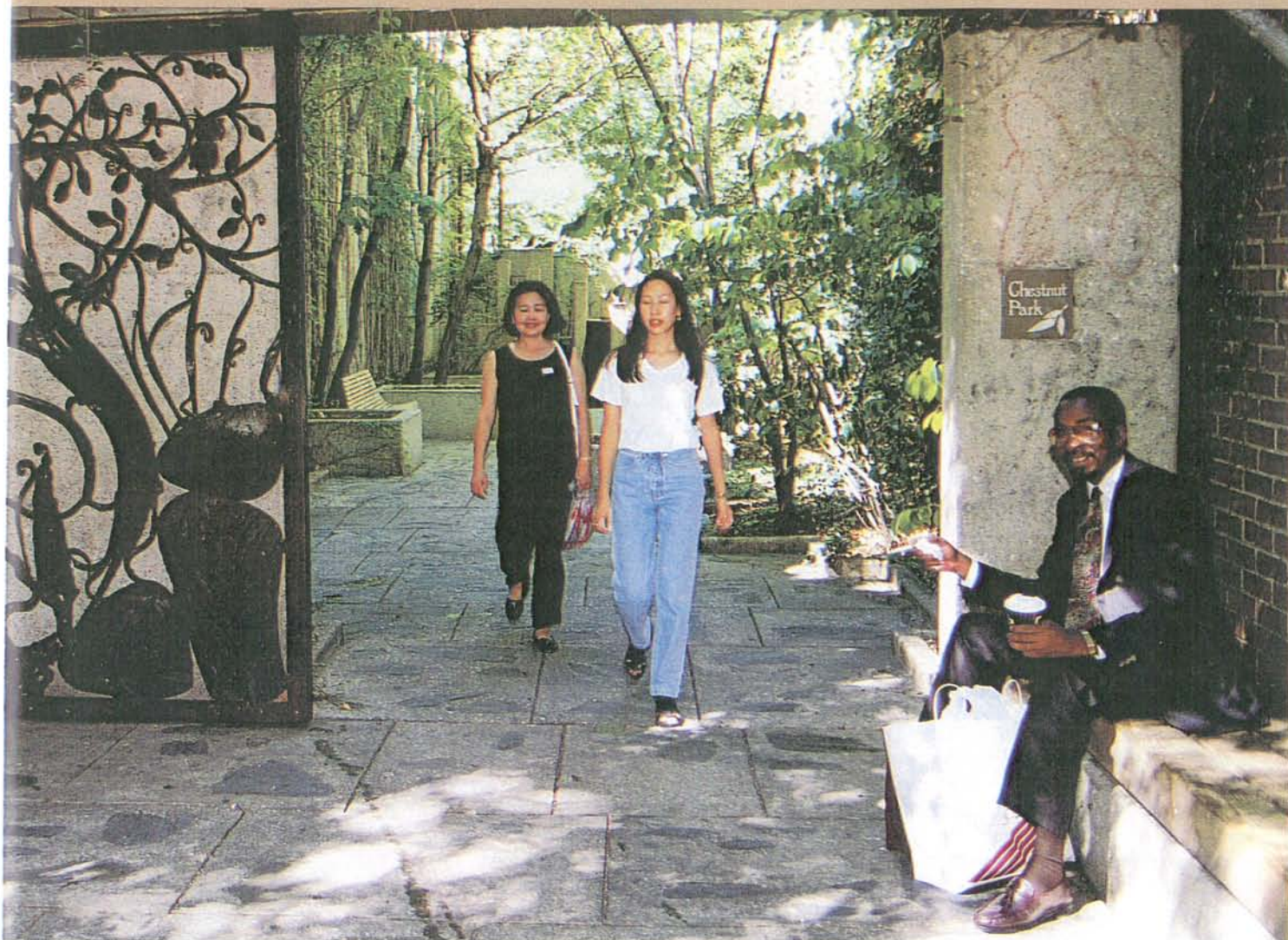
Preservation was at issue, too, at Navan Fort, in Armagh, Northern Ireland, where Collins helped fight expansion of an "evil limestone quarry" which threatened an ancient religious site near where St. Patrick founded his mission. Collins's latest project



is working with a small committee to guide the design of a memorial to the Irish potato famine on the cover park over I-95 near Chestnut Street in Philadelphia.

Collins celebrates local landscapes because "architecture and building technology are the same all over the world, but the landscape is one of the few things that can express the regional character of each particular place. If you pick up a book on architecture and see dense groves of white birch, those trees immediately express the special character of Scandinavia," he says. "We have such a rich natural landscape in our region, one that can withstand a lot of the urban stresses if you make the right selections."

Making the right selections, "knowing not to put the wrong plant in the wrong place," was one of the reasons Ernesta D. Ballard, a member of the committee that called Collins to Temple, felt he was perfect for the job. "He's a plantsman. His design work makes sense. He knows what people want and what makes them com-



Collins designed Chestnut Park, a tiny garden filled with plants native to the Greater Philadelphia area, at 17th and Chestnut Street. So ingeniously designed and planted, this small garden, delightfully unexpected on a busy thoroughfare, enables people to find serenity and privacy at any of the 50 seating spaces.

fortable, what is beautiful, and what works. In his designs he thinks about how the people and the designs will interact in the years to come."

#### ***Maintenance, maintenance, maintenance***

Maintenance is his mantra. Ask John Collins what he considers the mark of success of a public landscape, and he responds without hesitation: "One that lasts." Market Street East ranks high on his satisfying project list because it has a well-developed maintenance program that became a model to help launch the Center City District concept. More and more, he says, community groups are taking responsibility for maintenance of public green spaces, a heartening development.

Intensively involved in Chestnut Park for 15 years, Collins often cared for it himself without compensation when it began to look shabby from over-use and under-care. In 1994 the pocket park found a new patron, the Center City District, and Collins went back and refurbished it. He

did the same with Circus Plaza on the west side of 12th Street between Market and Chestnut. Originally designed by Collins and paid for by PSFS, the park outlived that banking institution, and he refurbished it in late October 1994. "You know you're getting old," Collins told Paul Steinke of the Center City District, "when you've rehabbed your work a second time!" If it needs to be done again, he'll do it again because he's in for the long haul. "He feels a responsibility to the region and to the plants," says Caroline Friede, "because he has a sense that what we do here affects the region, the country, and the planet."

The interdependence of people, plants and wildlife is at the root of the Collins philosophy. As he wrote in the book, *Liveable Landscapes*, "What you do on your land is likely to have a visual and environmental impact well beyond your property lines."

John Collins wants to share his landscapes with others, to bring his well-developed sense of living in harmony with

nature to city dwellers who haven't experienced it. "It's really exciting to see grade school kids at the Meade School making posters about the Piedmont and Coastal Plains natural regions, which most college students don't even know about," he says.

"One of the things missing for urban kids is contact with nature. Without access to distant vacations that suburban kids have, they grow up on pavement without ever understanding how a plant grows or what the characteristics of soil are, without any appreciation for wildlife. They need this contact with the natural world to be healthy human beings."

Alice Sjolander captures her boss's mission and accomplishments well when she says, "It's a big world out there, and John Collins is bringing it to us piece by piece."

Author Judy Mathe Foley, a new Philadelphian, grew up in a part of the state near the 70 acres of woodland where John Collins built what he calls "a wooden tent — without running anything."

# Blackhurst, Collins worked to bring in landscape, horticulture programs

From a small horticultural school for women with just three students and one instructor to home of a strong Landscape Architecture and Horticulture Department offering full four-year degree programs and highly regarded faculty, Temple University Ambler has come a long way.

The emergence of the four-year degree programs in the two disciplines in 1987 is something that James Blackhurst, dean at Ambler from 1984 to 1995, is most proud of. Blackhurst came to Temple after a long, esteemed tenure at the University of New York at Buffalo.

"The Horticulture and Landscape Architecture programs were developed into strong programs that were appropriate for an urban university. They started focusing on urban environmental planning, which was something that hadn't been done before," he said. "One thing that I always liked about Ambler was that an indi-

vidual's job description might be at the center of what they did, but it wasn't a boundary. No one was inclined to say 'that's not my job.' They were people that if something needed to be done, they did it."

In 1988, John Collins came to Temple Ambler to help steer the fledgling four-year programs as a professor and chair of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Horticulture. In practice with his own landscape architecture and environmental planning firm for 25 years, Collins "needed some soldiers," in the battle to preserve the environment, he said.

"I wanted students who would look at nature, not pave over it. The thing that really excited me was the potential of horticulture and landscape architecture," he said. "Nationally they had been growing further and further apart. I can't separate the two. I don't see them as isolated entities."



**James Blackhurst**, right, dean at Ambler from 1984 to 1995, and **John Collins**, who came to Temple as a professor and chair of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Horticulture in 1988.

In the first year that bachelor's degree programs were offered in the two disciplines, the Landscape Architecture and Horticulture programs took home a "Best of Show" award from the Philadelphia Flower Show, an achievement repeated in 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993 and 1997.

In 1989, the Landscape Architecture program received accreditation from the American Society of Landscape Architects, a measure Collins said was critical for the program and its graduates.

"By state law, you must graduate from an accredited program in order to take the licensing test," he said. "It was a lot of fun putting together the curriculum. I approached it as bringing ecological understanding to the design phase; expanding and including an-

environmental approach to land development and construction."

Collins helped along a number of physical changes to the campus, including the idea of a road along the outside of the campus. The central roadways became primarily for pedestrian traffic, removing the "noise and fumes from the main drive which were horrendous."

Blackhurst, who grew up in a small town in Iowa, said he always liked the feel, "the idea," of the Ambler campus.

"I always felt that every campus has its own culture," he said. "With Ambler, you have this big city university and at the same time you have this sense of community and trust that you might find in other parts of America. I think it gives students opportunities to grow and be themselves."

## Walk through the gateway

Take a guided tour of Temple University Ambler's lush campus. Call 1-888-GO-AMBLER or (215) 283-1252 to schedule a tour or receive more information about Ambler and its programs. Our Welcome Center is fully stocked with schedules, undergraduate and graduate catalogues, program booklets, brochures about preparatory workshops, and maps. Be sure to visit our web site at [www.ambler.temple.edu](http://www.ambler.temple.edu) for all of the latest news and information about Temple University Ambler.



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### Retrospective

**John F. Collins, FASLA**

**Thursday, April 26, to  
Friday, June 15**

**Ambler Campus Learning Center,  
580 Meetinghouse Road**

*Marking more than 40 years of  
connecting the city and the suburbs to  
the world of nature*

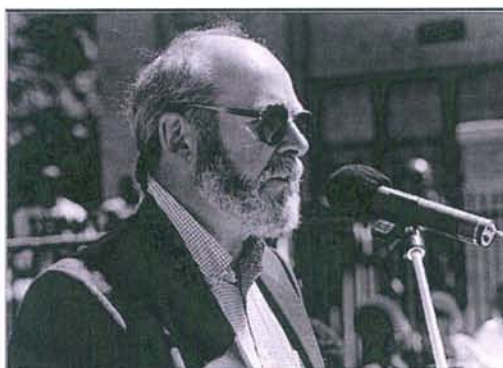
By James Searing and Dr. Mary Myers

Building a Legacy
Changing the Face of Philadelphia One Project at a Time
Mr. Collins Comes to Ambler
Retrospective Sponsors and Supporters



### Building a Legacy

Stroll the broad sidewalks of Market Street from City Hall to Front. Take a walk through Society Hill. Spend a few quiet moments in Chestnut Park near 17th Street. Bike along the river at Schuylkill River Park. Take in the quiet beauty of the Temple University Ambler campus. Wander along the banks of the Wissahickon Creek.



The legacy of John F. Collins, FASLA — his impact on urban and suburban landscapes — is everywhere you look in these places of superb design and natural beauty and many more throughout Philadelphia and its suburbs.

On Thursday, April 26, Temple University Ambler will formally open a retrospective on Collins' remarkable body of award-winning work as a landscape architect, planner, nurseryman and educator — Collins founded Temple's Department of Landscape Architecture and Horticulture. The John F. Collins Retrospective opening will be held from 3 to 6 p.m. in the campus Learning Center, where examples of his impact on the region will be on display. The Retrospective will continue in the Learning Center through June 15, 2007.

Collins began his professional career at a time when the challenges of urban sprawl were radically affecting cities throughout the country. It was a time when planners, developers, and landscape architects moved away from "bigger, grander, more," and began to embrace the idea of human-scale, walkable, and diverse communities.

"My interest in landscape architecture was pretty straightforward. I had a love of art — my mother was an art teacher and I always assumed I'd become an illustrator," Collins said, a resident of Glenside. "I had also cultivated a love of nature from a young age (he

started a commercial nursery in his parents' backyard at the age of 15) and throughout my life. I felt that anything that combined those two elements would be a great deal of fun — and it was."

In 1963, Collins co-founded the firm of Adleman, Collins & DuTot in Philadelphia with colleagues Marvin Adleman and David DuTot. Later, this firm became Collins, DuTot & Associates and in 1971, the firm joined with others to form The Delta Group, a regional landscape architecture, planning, engineering and architecture firm with offices in Philadelphia and Baltimore.

"The idea was to put together all of the major professional disciplines — architecture, landscape architecture, civil engineering, city planning, and graphics. We created designs — particularly public landscapes — with a clear premise; to place them where there people were and place them well," Collins said. "There needed to be better facilities that were better maintained that were closely related to neighborhoods, towns, and each other. I thought,



what a marvelous opportunity to be able to provide the public with places they otherwise can't afford, or wouldn't have the opportunity to participate in. It hit me very strongly that public landscapes were important."

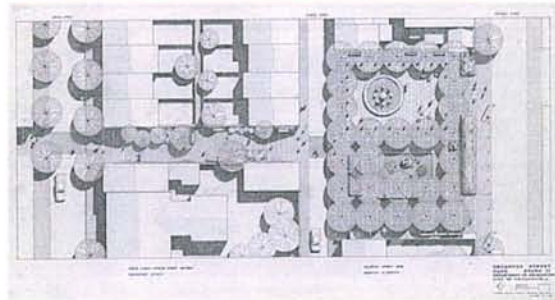
## Changing the Face of Philadelphia One Project at a Time



Collins's designs for Philadelphia's Society Hill, completed early in his professional career with Collins and DuTot, reflected an understanding of human proportion and behavior and how design can respond to this knowledge. Intimately scaled and comfortable, tree-lined brick and cobblestone streets evoke the days when Philadelphia was the nation's capital. A series of interior pedestrian ways, varying in size and character, provide multiple pathways linking the community and its parks to the rich historical sites of Philadelphia.

In 1965, Collins helped develop Delancey Park (now known as Three Bears Park) — a dynamic neighborhood landmark with greenways, fountain, sculpture, and playground facilities. He also created a master plan for the Fairmount Park Commission, centering around a 1.25 mile park along the Schuylkill River east bank from the Art Museum to South Street. For the next 40 years, Collins continued to work, often on a volunteer basis, to realize the vision of Schuylkill River Park, which was dedicated at a lighting ceremony in 2004.

"Schuylkill River Park joins Market Street East, the nationally recognized vest pocket park on Chestnut Street, and dozens of other public and private venues across our city and region as places that have been transformed by your talent," said Philadelphia Mayor John Street in a letter to Collins. "It's no wonder Ed Bacon has said your work deserves the highest accolades. On behalf of the people of Philadelphia, I extend my belated but heart-felt thanks not just for Schuylkill River Park but for your life-long efforts to make Philadelphia a more livable and beautiful city."



Collins efforts to ensure that there would remain an abundance of green amid the city's steel, glass, and stone certainly didn't end there. In the 1970s, the Delta Group designed a Fine Arts Plan for the University of Pennsylvania and received numerous awards and honors for their planning and involvement in environmental projects.

"The human element always should go hand-in-hand with the design element," Collins said. "You need to provide public spaces that are tough enough and big enough to withstand the test of time."

In 1978, Collins designed the award-winning Chestnut Street Park in Philadelphia to celebrate the region's natural landscape and native people.



"The William Penn Foundation has long shared John Collins's life-long belief that high quality green urban places, parks, and civic spaces are essential components of a healthy and vital city. We were fortunate to have had the opportunity to partner with John and to put into practice his beliefs as well as demonstrate his impressive design skills in creating the Chestnut Street Park," said Feather O. Houstoun, President of the William Penn Foundation.

"For nearly three decades this small oasis — comprised of only native plants and materials — has offered a delightful respite to Center City residents, workers, and visitors. And throughout its existence, John has personally cared for and tended the park further demonstrating his commitment to, and stewardship of, the green places that enhance the quality of life of the people of our great city."



In 1982, Collins launched a program to train inmates in urban horticulture skills at the House of Corrections in Philadelphia. The program PLANT — Philadelphia Landscape and Nursery Training — trained inmates to plant and maintain greenery in public spaces. The program continues, on a smaller scale, to this day.

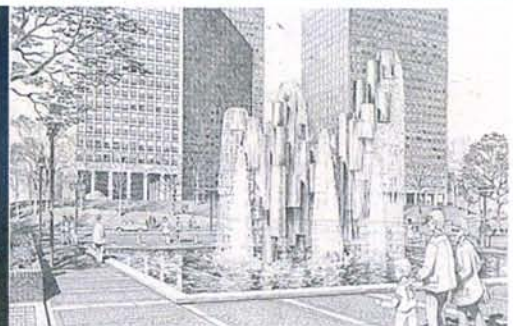
"I worked with John Collins training prisoners to raise and care for plants in the greenhouses at the House of Corrections and then to install those plants in community gardens across the city," said James M. Dickerson, Nursery Superintendent of PLANT from 1982 to 1989. "The prisoners learned how to nurture a plant through its life cycle, how to make a garden, how to start and finish a job. John Collins grew plants, and he grew people too."

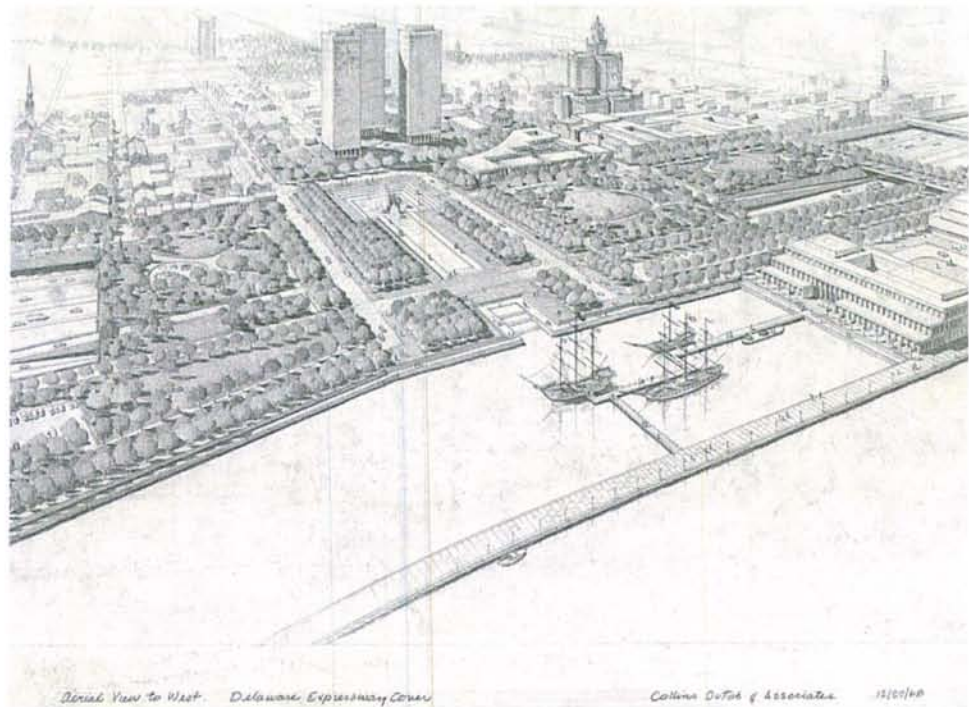
Collins also helped the city retail district grow and flourish. He and his partners played an integral role in the 1980s revitalization of Market Street East — a project supported by

local business under the leadership of G. Stockton Strawbridge, CEO of the Strawbridge & Clothier department stores.

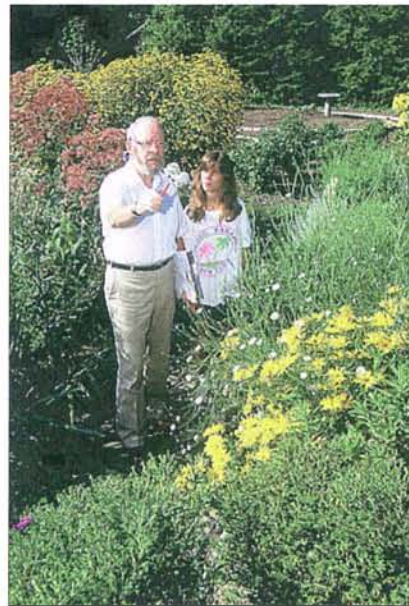
The Delta Group's design eliminated unnecessary and ugly traffic islands and signals, established "lay-by" bus lanes, widened sidewalks, installed new passenger shelters and benches, added lighting fixtures with planters and banners, all while accommodating the street's busy commercial and rush-hour traffic. The project was extended to the eastern portion of Market Street through the historic Old City section. Collins personally went door-to-door and met with retailers to advocate the creation of a Center City business improvement district (BID) to ensure that the street and improvements would be maintained. Between 5th and Front Streets, Collins' design recaptured the feel of 18th Century Philadelphia. The Delta Group was part of the team that constructed the Irish Memorial at Penn's Landing.

"Here is a man who cares deeply about his fellow human beings, their well-being and their relationship to the world around them. (Collins') whole life is a seamless totality of dedicated service through education, environmental planning and design and horticulture," stated the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society Program for Collins's Distinguished Achievement Award in 1995. (Collins has) brought together business executives and inner city youth, prison inmates and community volunteers, revitalized neighborhoods with green spaces and livable landscapes in scale with the people they serve."





#### Mr. Collins Comes to Ambler



Throughout his career, Collins demonstrated a commitment to educating young professionals, serving as a lecturer, professor, and visiting studio critic at major landscape architecture programs at Penn, Penn State, Harvard, Cornell, Drexel, Virginia and Louisiana State. He also taught at the School of Architecture and Planning in New Delhi, India. In addition to developing horticultural therapy programs to help prison inmates, he also established community and teaching gardens in Philadelphia for public school children.

In 1988, Collins became the founding Chair of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Horticulture at Temple University. Under his leadership, the department advanced in academic standards, achieving accreditation for the landscape architecture program; hired new faculty; and reached out to the community with urban design-build programs. From a small horticultural school for women with just three students and one instructor to home of a strong Landscape Architecture and Horticulture Department offering full four-year degree programs and highly regarded faculty, Temple University Ambler — where the new department was established building upon the legacy of the Pennsylvania School of Horticulture for Women — had certainly come a long way.

"The Horticulture and Landscape Architecture programs were developed into strong programs that were appropriate for an urban university," said James Blackhurst, dean at the Ambler campus from 1984 to 1995. "They started focusing on urban environmental planning, which was something that hadn't been done before."

In practice with his own landscape architecture and environmental planning firm for 25 years at that time, Collins said he "needed some soldiers," in the battle to preserve the environment.

"I wanted students that would look at nature, not pave over it. The thing that really excited me was the potential combination of horticulture and landscape architecture," he said. "Nationally they had been growing further and further apart. I can't separate the two. I don't see them as isolated entities. If you are going to be involved with land planning, land development, or civil engineering, you should have appropriate knowledge of the plants you're working with."

In the first year that bachelor's degree programs were offered in the two disciplines, the Landscape Architecture and Horticulture programs took home a "Best of Show" award from the Philadelphia Flower Show, an achievement repeated in 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1997, 2002, 2003, 2005, and 2007.

In 1989, the Landscape Architecture program received accreditation from the American Society of Landscape Architects, a measure Collins said was critical for the program and its graduates.

"By state law, you must graduate from an accredited program in order to take the licensing test," he said. "It was a lot of fun putting together the curriculum. I approached it as bringing ecological understanding to the design phase; expanding and including an environmental approach to land development and construction."

In addition to creating a new master plan for the campus, Collins led an extensive program to directly involve students in design-build projects. Many new projects were completed on campus, including the Cottage Hall courtyard; new pergolas and stonework around the entrance near the Administration building; gardens for native plants, groundcovers and herbs; handicapped ramps and new ramps leading from Dixon Hall to the formal gardens; a ring road to route traffic around the campus; and a sustainable wetland garden. Collins also established a native plant nursery as a teaching, research, and plant production facility.

The central campus roadways became primarily for pedestrian traffic, removing the "noise and fumes from the main drive, which were horrendous," Collins said.

"I think the design-build aspect of the programs at Ambler is critical — you need to develop respect for the landscape. I don't see how you can attempt to design something without the knowledge and training necessary to actually construct it," he



said. "Construction is a continuation of the artistic process — I don't distinguish between hardscape aspects such as pavement, walls, and built elements and the organic aspects of plants and soil. The boundaries between disciplines should be blurred, with design intermingled with construction, landscape architecture, planning, and horticulture."

While at Temple, Collins continued his involvement in neighborhood revitalization. He created a partnership between the University, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's Philadelphia Green program and Sea Change, Inc. to establish an urban tree farm in North Philadelphia's Cecil B. Moore neighborhood. Collins established a campus greenery program and proposed a Center for Sustainable Environment at Temple University Ambler. Today, the Center for Sustainable Communities at the Ambler campus develops and promotes new approaches to protect and preserve quality of life through sustainable development, improving public health and safety, and balancing the relationship between environmental integrity, economic prosperity, public safety and social equity.

Collins has also spent years planning and advocating the restoration of the Wissahickon Creek. In 1999, The Delta Group completed a Wissahickon Creek conservation plan for a 21 mile-long corridor in southeast Pennsylvania.

"If there is one project that I would like to continue working on, Wissahickon Creek conservation and restoration would be it. As a country, historically, we haven't been able to protect these smaller hunks of landscape, but it is critical that we do," Collins said. "I've provided an idea to develop a nursery that all municipalities within the watershed would support jointly. It could be done simply and they could share the cost."



natural world."

One of Collins's most enduring contributions was the early advocacy for designating the Ambler campus as an arboretum to create an environment for learning and promoting ecologically sound planning, design, development, and management. In 2000, the campus was formally registered as an arboretum by the American Public Gardens Association.

"John Collins's legacy is in his built works and in the people whose lives were changed as a result of his advocacy, teaching, and professional example. His enthusiasm, confidence, integrity and devotion to the highest professional ideals have inspired several generations of landscape architects," said James Searing, a student in the Department of Landscape Architecture and Horticulture who has been extensively researching Collins' legacy for the retrospective. "He anticipated the need to reach out across disciplines to solve complex problems, while helping government officials, community leaders and the public see the consequences of their decisions and actions. As a result, he has advanced the region's ability to work cooperatively toward meeting major, social and environmental challenges."

Dr. Mary Myers, Acting Chair of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Horticulture agreed, adding that perhaps most important "is his celebration of creativity, the notion that cities can be civilizing places that promote an enduring human connection with the

For more information on the John F. Collins Retrospective at Temple University Ambler, please contact Kathy Beveridge, Director of Development and Alumni Affairs at 267-468-8440 or [kathy.beveridge@temple.edu](mailto:kathy.beveridge@temple.edu).

James F. Duffy contributed to this report.

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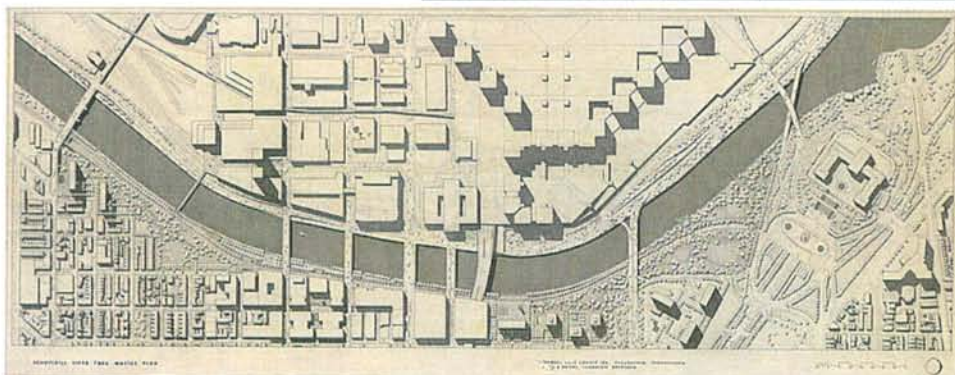
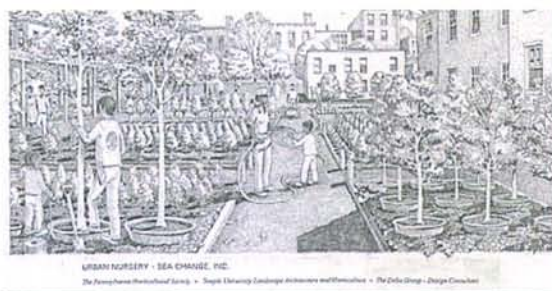
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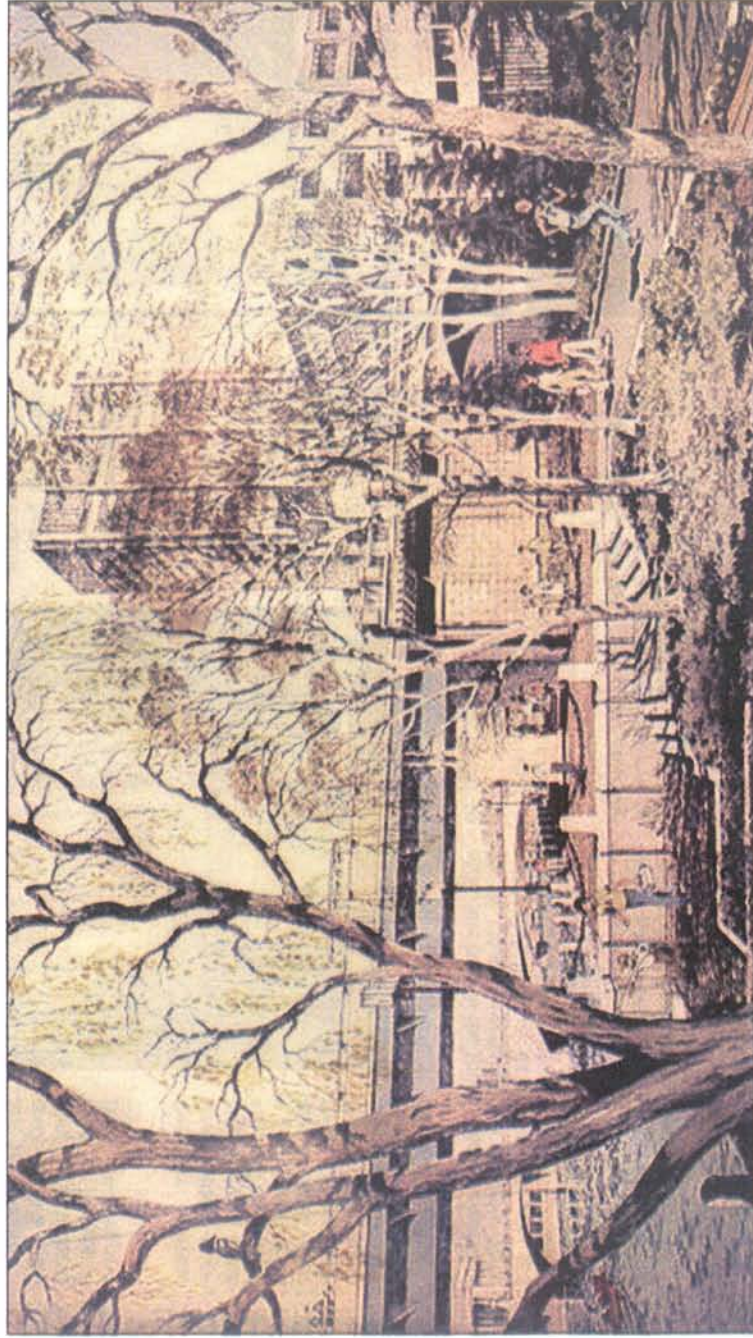
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Text Only Site

Ambler Home

Changing Skyline By Inga Saffron

# With his pocket parks, Philadelphian enriched the city



A colorized image shows Collins' idea for Schuylkill Banks park, with stairs to the water. He conceived it back in 1978.

**T**he name John F. Collins may be unfamiliar, but if you've spent any time wearing down shoe leather in Center City, you've probably passed through his world. A landscape architect, Collins has made a specialty out of slipping pocket parks into the cracks in Philadelphia's street grid.

**John F. Collins' huge imprint can be seen in an exhibit on his career.**

Stumbling upon one of his secret gardens today is like finding a \$10 bill on the sidewalk — better, in fact.

It was Collins, 70, who provided city planner Edmund Bacon with the idea in 1965 for the pedestrian walk that now hopscoches among the townhouses and gardens of Society Hill. Known as St. Peter's Way, it almost does take you to heaven — a shaft of open space that Philadelphians call Three Bears Park.

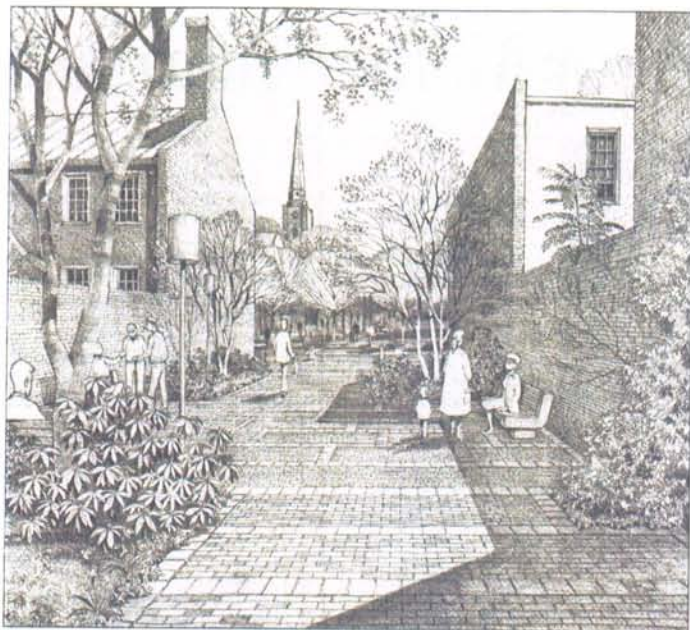
That's another one of the outdoor rooms Collins furnished with nothing more than con-

crete, brick paving stones, and plants.

Though Collins' best parks tend to be small, his imprint on our daily experience of city life has been huge. To appreciate just how much of Center City's park space has his handprints on it, you have to hike over to Ambler, where Temple University's landscape architecture department has put together a retrospective of his career. The show, which runs until June 15, includes gorgeous original pencil renderings from Collins' many Philadelphia projects, as well as selections from such far-flung locales as Alaska and Virginia.

Like all good architecture surveys, this one simultaneously helps put the past in perspective and makes us see the present more critically. As you lose yourself in the

See **SKYLINE** on E11



**John F. Collins' pencil drawing of St. Peter's Way, a pedestrian walk completed during Edmund Bacon's reign as city planner. Drawings of Collins' projects are in a retrospective at Temple's Ambler campus.**

## Landscape architect's vision enriched city's public spaces

**SKYLINE** from E1 rich graphite shadings of Collins' drawings, you can't help but wonder why Philadelphia doesn't build urban oases like Chestnut Street Park or Markward Playground any more. Couldn't at least one of the derelict lots that was cleared under the Street administration's \$250 million blight program have been formally landscaped as a neighborhood park?

Collins, who founded a firm called the Delta Group, designed nearly all his parks between the mid-1960s and the early '80s, when Philadelphia was awash in federal money for urban-renewal projects. Collins would be called in to camouflage the harsh effects of highway and housing projects.

You get a sense of the era's ambition by looking at the landscaped deck he designed in the late '60s to hide the gash of Interstate 95 as it rips through Center City. If only his plan to extend Society Hill's streets gently and seamlessly down to a two-lane Columbus Boulevard had been realized, then Philadelphia wouldn't be having a tortured conversation today about how to reconnect Center City with its Delaware waterfront.

Collins' design for the I-95 deck isn't perfect, by the way. Like so many landscape plans conceived under Bacon's reign, this one includes far too much landscape and not enough real urban stuff — streets, buildings, shops. It's an abstract composition that looks good only from above. But the version that was built can't even claim the easy waterfront connections that Collins envisioned. No wonder it's a dead place.

Collins, who shares some of fellow landscape architect Lawrence Halperin's environmental sensibility, did his best work on a smaller canvas. He could whip up a charming civic nook with a scrap of empty land

**philly.com**

See a preview of the Collins retrospective via <http://go.philly.com/collins>.

### If You Go

The John F. Collins Retrospective, sponsored by Temple University, is on the second floor of the Learning Center at Temple's Ambler Campus, 580 Meetinghouse Rd. The center is open from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily, and the exhibit is free. For more information, call 267-468-8000.

and some spare city funds. Yet the addition of a modest amenity, like the Markward Playground on Pine Street, alongside the Schuylkill, instantly made that neighborhood a more desirable place to live. Collins was the one who conceived the adjacent Schuylkill Banks park — back in 1978. It took 25 years for the city to get around to building a stripped-down version of his design. Yet the skinny river park was so warmly embraced that the public was using it even before the recreation trail was finished.

My favorite Collins design has always been Chestnut Street Park, a slip of a public space just west of 17th Street. The park was a gift to the city from the Haas family, which organized a competition in 1978 to pick an architect. Collins won with a design that inserts a secret outdoor room between a row of retail stores. When you're sitting within its dense umbra, with the water softly plucking at the fountain's concrete pillars, you almost feel you are resting in a mountain grotto. Since the

park is also open to Ransstead Street, you can easily use it as a cut-through, for a fleeting alpine pick-me-up between meetings.

One of Collins' innovations was to insist that his parks and streetscapes be endowed with a maintenance fund. When the money for Chestnut Street Park proved insufficient, Collins and his family would stop by to tidy up.

Compare the civic generosity that shaped Chestnut Street Park with the gated space next door, at the high-rise offices of Duane Morris. Once, the tower's plaza was a place where the public could loiter in the sunshine with a cup of coffee, but the law firm has installed a fence to keep people away from Roy Lichtenstein's *Brushstrokes* sculpture. A tall, awkward metal fence now blocks views into Collins' refuge. Both public spaces have been diminished.

Walking through the Temple retrospective of Collins' career on the second floor of the Ambler Campus' Learning Center, you realize that our city has become a lot more stingy about its public spaces.

The Center City District's Paul Levy, who recently launched a proposal to landscape Dilworth Plaza, believes that "you could never get Three Bears Park built today." The neighborhood probably wouldn't allow it, he said. The city wouldn't want to pay for it. People would argue that it couldn't be maintained.

Yet it's there now, alive with noisy children who clamber around the bronze family of bears. The neighbors recently raised the money to renovate the park. Philadelphia can only be grateful that someone like Collins was around to imagine it.

Contact architecture critic Inga Saffron at 215-854-2213 or [isaffron@phillynews.com](mailto:isaffron@phillynews.com).

#### Summer updates

This is the final issue of 2006-07. Sign up for news, event updates at [www.temple.edu/newsroom](http://www.temple.edu/newsroom).

#### Research in 3-D

Virtual-reality lab helps study of balance disorders. See page 4.



#### Wired

Upgrade will speed up, expand Temple's network. See page 5.



# TEMPLE TIMES

[www.temple.edu/newsroom](http://www.temple.edu/newsroom)

May 24, 2007

Vol. 37, No. 32

## Tulane's Soufas named CLA dean

By Hillel J. Hoffmann  
[hillel.hoffmann@temple.edu](mailto:hillel.hoffmann@temple.edu)

Teresa Scott Soufas, professor of Spanish and former dean of the Faculty of the Liberal Arts and Sciences at Tulane University, has been named dean of Temple University's College of Liberal Arts effective July 1, 2007, concluding a national search.

Soufas served as dean of the 300-member Faculty of the Liberal Arts and Sciences — a complex of colleges through which, before Tulane's reorganization in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Tulane students matriculated into 22 academic departments and 16 interdisciplinary programs in the humanities, social sciences, fine arts and sciences — from 1998 to 2005 (she was acting dean from 1996 through 1997). She administered a budget of \$56 million, was responsible for faculty hiring and led committees responsible for promotion, tenure and curricula.

"Teresa brings an extraordinary record of leadership at one of the nation's finest institutions to Temple's College of Liberal Arts," said Temple President Ann Weaver Hart. "The fact that such an accomplished leader would also have an unwavering com-

*Soufas on page 6*

## Commencement 2007



Photos by Joseph V. Labolito/Temple University

Applause filled the Liacouras Center last Thursday, as family and friends joined in celebrating the graduation of some 7,800 students at Temple University's 120th Commencement ceremony. The universitywide ceremony at the Liacouras Center provided graduates and their families with an opportunity to celebrate with the entire Temple community; individual school and college diploma ceremonies were also held Wednesday through Friday.

For more photos from Commencement 2007, see page 8.



## Ambler hosts retrospective on landscape architect Collins



Photo courtesy Temple University Ambler  
In 1988, John Collins (left) became the founding chair of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Horticulture at Temple University Ambler.

By James Searing and Mary Myers  
For Temple University Ambler

Stroll the broad sidewalks of Market Street from City Hall to Front. Take a walk through Society Hill. Spend a few quiet moments in Chestnut Park near 17th Street. Bike along the river at Schuylkill River Park. Take in the quiet beauty of the Temple University Ambler campus.

The handprint of John F. Collins, the founder of Temple's Department of Landscape Architecture and Horticulture, is everywhere you look in these places and many more throughout Philadelphia and its suburbs.

Temple University Ambler is hosting a retrospective on Collins' remarkable body of award-winning

work as a landscape architect, planner, nurseryman and educator. The retrospective will be on display in the Learning Center through June 15.

Collins began his professional career at a time when the challenges of urban sprawl were radically affecting cities throughout the country. It was a time when planners, developers and landscape architects moved away from "bigger, grander, more," and began to embrace the idea of human-scale, walkable and diverse communities.

"The idea was to put together all of the major professional disciplines — architecture, landscape architecture, civil engineering, city planning and graphics," Collins

said. "There needed to be better facilities that were better maintained that were closely related to neighborhoods, towns and each other."

In 1988, Collins became the founding chair of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Horticulture at Temple University. Under his leadership, the department advanced in academic standards, achieving accreditation for the land-

### John F. Collins Retrospective

The retrospective will continue through June 15 at the Temple University Ambler Learning Center auditorium. For more information, call 267-468-8440 or 267-468-8420.

scape architecture program; hired new faculty; and reached out to the community with urban design-build programs.

"The Horticulture and Landscape Architecture programs were developed into strong programs that were appropriate for an urban university," said James Blackhurst, dean at the Ambler Campus from 1984 to 1995. "They started focusing on urban environmental planning, which was something that hadn't been done before."

Collins established a campus greenery program and proposed a Center for Sustainable Environment at Temple University Ambler. He was also an early advocate for designating the Ambler Campus as

*Collins on page 4*

# Researcher studies balance in 3-D virtual reality lab

By Anna Nguyen  
anna.nguyen@temple.edu

About 6.2 million Americans suffer from chronic dizziness or imbalance, and these numbers are expected to grow as the population ages in the coming years. Sometimes the problem can go without a diagnosis, but usually it involves damage of the inner-ear balance receptors.

A new lab run by Temple researcher Emily Keshner will study these issues by analyzing how people control their balance and their responses to changes in their environment. Her work shows how the central nervous system calculates its movements based on its surroundings.

The lab is the only kind in the country where a patient — wearing 3-D glasses — stands on a platform surrounded by three large screens that create a virtual environment. The platform can shift and move, and a harness is in place to brace patients for a potential fall, Keshner said.

Researchers place retro-reflective markers on the patient's body to record movement during natural visual disturbances in healthy individuals and in patients with neurological disorders.

In the field for nearly 25 years, Keshner began using this type of lab setting in 2000 in Chicago before expanding it at Temple. She wanted to test balance in more natural environments in order to apply results to real-world training and rehabilitation, she said.

"I never realized the power of vision in controlling our movements," said Keshner, adding that the process of vision is slow compared to other senses.

"People with inner-ear problems can grow too dependent on what they see to stay upright. Grocery stores, with their floor-to-ceiling shapes and colors, can cause some people to lose the sense of how to stay upright, [a phenomenon] called 'supermarket syndrome,'" Keshner said.

Keshner has worked with patients to help them find other ways to



A visitor wears markers on key body points to show researchers how she moves in the virtual lab.

maintain balance, such as teaching them to pay attention to sensory cues from their knees and hips instead of visual cues to stay standing.

As her research continues, Keshner plans to develop treatment tools, which will effectively reduce instability and falls in aging and clinical populations, she said.

Keshner's research is currently funded by the National Institute for Aging and the National Institute for Deafness and Communication Disorders at the National Institutes of Health. She plans to start recruiting patients to the lab this summer for studies.

**"People with inner-ear problems can grow too dependent on what they see to stay upright. Grocery stores, with their floor-to-ceiling shapes and colors, can cause some people to lose the sense of how to stay upright, [a phenomenon] called 'supermarket syndrome.'"**

**Emily Keshner**  
Professor, chair of physical therapy

# Renowned scientist Gill named new chair of Biochemistry Dept.

By Renee Cree  
renee.cree@temple.edu



Gill

Donald Gill, an internationally renowned research scientist with expertise in calcium and the molecular mechanisms of cell signaling, has been appointed chair of the Biochemistry Department at the School of Medicine. He comes to Temple from the University of Maryland, where he was a professor of biochemistry and molecular biology.

After earning his bachelor's degree in biochemistry from the University of Sussex, England, Gill studied for his doctorate in biochemistry at the University of London and held a Fogarty International Visiting Fellowship to study signal transduction mechanisms at the National Institutes of Health.

According to John M. Daly, dean of the School of Medicine, "Dr. Gill is an important new faculty leader who will significantly advance the school's missions in education, research and patient care."

Gill's research focuses on the role of calcium as a crucial signaling

agent in muscle cells and immune cells. This work has provided new insights into how cells regulate internal and external processes and communicate with other cells. His work with calcium entry mechanisms in lymphocytes has secured more than \$1.3 million in funding from the NIH.

While at the University of Maryland, Gill was director of the Biochemistry Graduate Program for 12 years and regularly participated in the medical curriculum, as well as in the training of graduate students and postdoctoral fellows as part of his research team.

He has authored more than 80 peer-reviewed papers, including publications in *Nature*, *Science* and *Cell*, and currently is a member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Biological Chemistry*. Gill also has been a regular participant in NIH and National Science Foundation grant review panels.

# State grant to support innovation in life sciences, fuel star faculty recruitment

By Renee Cree and Lisa Z. Meritz  
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\$250,000 KIZ grant.

Gill will recruit four new faculty members and will sponsor a year-long series of seminars and workshops in which Temple faculty will be meeting with investigators from other 611 Corridor KIZ partner institutions to share ideas and research findings. In addition, Temple's Office of Technology Transfer will be sponsoring follow-up workshops to explore possible commercialization of the data presented.

Additionally, The Fox School of Business' Innovation and Entrepreneurship Institute received a grant of \$150,000 to help support entrepreneurship in the life sciences.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has granted a total of \$400,000 to two Temple University departments as part of the state's Keystone Innovation Zone (KIZ) program. Temple is part of the 611 Corridor KIZ, one of 26 zones established to build partnerships between Pennsylvania's colleges and universities, communities and companies to launch new business endeavors.

Biochemistry Chair Donald Gill was recruited to the School of Medicine with the support of a

# Ambler hosting Collins retrospective

Collins from page 1

an arboretum to create an environment for learning and promoting ecologically sound planning, design, development, and management. In 2000, the campus was formally registered as an arboretum by the American Public Gardens Association.

"John Collins' legacy is in his built works and in the people whose lives were changed as a result of his advocacy, teaching, and professional example," said James Searing, a student in the Department of Landscape Architecture and Horticulture who has been extensively researching Collins' legacy for the retrospective.

The John Collins Retrospective was organized by a group of dedicated alumni from Temple University Ambler, friends of John Collins, and the Department of Landscape Architecture and Horticulture. Premier sponsors include: CSX Corp.; Edmund Hollander Landscape Architects; Ann D. Marshall; Peter G. Schlotterer; Robert and Heidi Shusterman; and S.R. Wojdak & Asso-



Collins created a master plan for the Fairmount Park Commission, centering around a 1.25 mile park along the Schuylkill River east bank from the Art Museum to South Street. For the next 40 years, Collins continued to work, often on a volunteer basis, to realize the vision of Schuylkill River Park, which was dedicated at a lighting ceremony in 2004.

ciates L.P. The complete list of sponsors is available at [www.temple.edu/ambler/news/368-collinsfeature.htm](http://www.temple.edu/ambler/news/368-collinsfeature.htm). James F. Duffy contributed to this report.

# 'Gittis Student Center' made official

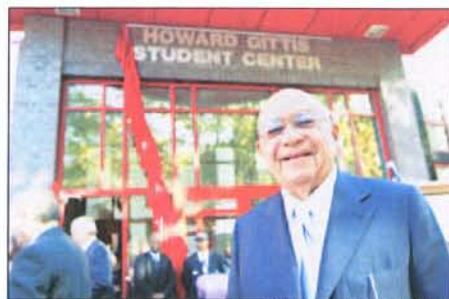


Photo by Joseph V. Labolito/Temple University

Howard Gittis, trustee, benefactor and former chair of the Board of Trustees, stands in front of the building that now bears his name. A formal unveiling ceremony was held May 8, following a meeting of the trustees. During brief remarks, Gittis talked about his admiration for Temple and the opportunities the university creates for young people of promise. Trustees approved the naming in October, to honor "one of Temple's most outstanding leaders in our long history."

— Ray Betzner

The background of the cover is a composite of three architectural drawings. The top section shows a city skyline with several tall skyscrapers and a church with a prominent steeple. The middle section is a large, detailed aerial view of a city park, showing a winding river, numerous trees, and various buildings. The bottom section shows a close-up, angled view of a bridge structure over water, with a small boat visible underneath.

# JOHN F. COLLINS FASLA

# RETROSPECTIVE

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

PLANNER

EDUCATOR

NURSERYMAN



# JOHN F. COLLINS

By James E. Searing and Mary Myers

John Collins began his 40-year career in landscape architecture at a time of great change and upheaval in America. The 1950s and 1960s were a time of unbridled expansion. Distant states were connected via an extensive interstate highway system. Corporate office parks and malls became commonplace, while urban renewal projects swept away vast tracts of cities, replacing older housing with high-rise buildings. Many urbanites migrated to the expanding suburbs. The 1960s were marked by massive social protests against racial segregation and the Vietnam War. Even as America stretched its reach with the space program, placing men on the moon, there was a growing sense of the earth's fragility, symbolized by the first Earth Day in 1970. Concern for the environment spawned an array of laws, such as the Clean Water Act and the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency. The 1980s were characterized by political and economic decentralization, fierce global competition, rapid technological change and the end of the Cold War.

The landscape architecture profession responded to many of these profound changes. Ian McHarg, chairman of the University of Pennsylvania's Landscape Architecture Department, wrote *Design with Nature* in 1969. He challenged planners, architects and landscape architects to view the Earth not as an exploitable resource but as the source of life, and worthy of enlightened planning.

Spurred by the devastating social and environmental challenges of urban sprawl, a growing movement of planners, developers and landscape architects began to coalesce around a new movement based on principles of planning and architecture that worked

together to create human-scale, walkable and diverse communities as promoted by Jane Jacobs in her classic work, *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961). It was a forerunner to the New Urbanism movement of the early 1990s.

John Collins was influenced by these forces of change. He sought to use design as a means for improving economic disparity and environmental degradation, particularly in urban situations. Some of his works, such as the civic projects in Salem, Massachusetts and Reston, Virginia anticipated New Urbanism by embodying many of its principles. Stylistically, his design expression was modern, sculptural and spare, following the language established by Dan Kiley and other modernist landscape architects. Collins's elegant detailing of materials and intimate understanding of plant form added richness to the strong, legible backbone of his designs.

## JOHN F. COLLINS: AN INTRODUCTORY CHRONOLOGY

John Francis Collins was born in Conshohocken, Pennsylvania on July 12, 1936. His father William was a newspaper columnist and his mother Florence was an artist and teacher. He learned to draw early in his childhood and as a teenager became involved with horticulture, working at local nurseries and homes. At age 15, he started a commercial nursery in his parents' backyard, growing trees and potted plants. When he was 19, he entered the landscape architecture program at The Pennsylvania State University and received a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture in 1959. As a senior, he won a national award from Jackson & Perkins for a rose garden design. Collins entered the Harvard Graduate School of Design

"The William Penn Foundation has long shared John Collins's life-long belief that high quality green urban places, parks, and civic spaces are essential components of a healthy and vital city. We were fortunate to have had the opportunity to partner with John and to put into practice his beliefs as well as demonstrate his impressive design skills in creating the award-winning Chestnut Street Park in 1978 in Downtown Philadelphia. For nearly three decades this small oasis - comprised of only native plants and materials - has offered a delightful respite to Center City residents, workers, and visitors. And throughout its existence, John has personally cared for and tended the park, further demonstrating his commitment to, and stewardship of, the green places that enhance the quality of life of the people of our great city."

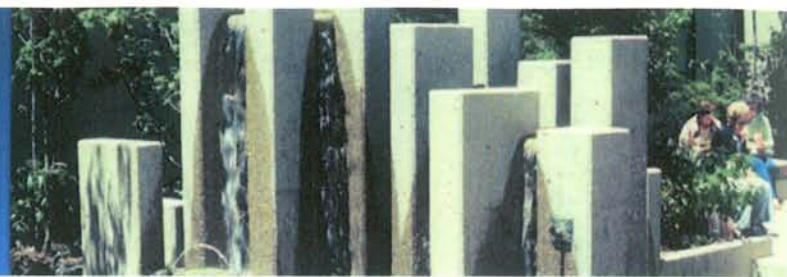
-Feather O. Houston,  
President, William Penn Foundation

"John Collins deserves the highest accolades for bringing greenery and the finest quality of urban design into Philadelphia."

-Edmund N. Bacon as quoted in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

"Here is a man who cares deeply about his fellow human beings, their well-being and their relationship to the world around them. John, your whole life is a seamless totality of dedicated service through education, environmental planning and design and horticulture. You have brought together business executives and inner city youth, prison inmates and community volunteers, revitalized neighborhoods with green spaces and livable landscapes in scale with the people they serve."

-Pennsylvania Horticultural Society Program for John Collins's  
Distinguished Achievement Award in 1995.



and worked with his professor, Hideo Sasaki, as an associate at Sasaki Walker and Associates. Upon achieving his Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA) degree in 1962, he was awarded the Charles Eliot Traveling Fellowship which resulted in an extended tour of Italy with his family. In 1965, he moved to the Mount Airy neighborhood in Philadelphia where he lived with his family for 34 years.

In 1963, Collins co-founded the firm of Adleman, Collins & DuTot in Philadelphia with colleagues Marvin Adleman and David DuTot. Later, this firm became Collins DuTot & Associates and in 1971, this firm joined with others to form The Delta Group, a regional landscape architecture, planning, engineering and architecture firm with offices in Philadelphia, PA and Baltimore, MD.

Collins's designs stress multiple layers of meaning, providing subtle revelations of the cultural and natural histories of a particular place. For example, in Salem, Massachusetts, a project encompassing ten years and stressful political challenges, Collins used fountains and sculptural panels to reference the local geologic and literary histories. These civic places serve as lively visual expressions drawing pedestrians between points of interest and as beautiful objects in and of themselves. Bronze panels are positioned to reflect vivid western sunsets. One fountain invites children to swim among three dimensional strata depicting the natural history of the harbor: "a kind of geology lesson... kids could get in and say 'I am (floating) down the South River....'" Another uses panels depicting the original fresh water spring which supported the first Native American and later European settlement. It was described by local author Nathaniel Hawthorne in his story "A Rill from the Town Pump." Hawthorne is depicted in one of the fountain's panels.

Collins's designs for Philadelphia's Society Hill, completed early in his professional career with Collins and DuTot, reflect an understanding of human proportion and behavior and how design

can respond to this knowledge. Intimately scaled and immanently comfortable, tree-lined brick and cobblestone streets evoke the days when Philadelphia was the nation's capital. A series of interior pedestrian ways, varying in size and character, provide multiple pathways linking the community and its charming parks to the rich historical sites of Philadelphia. These passages provide a milieu for social and recreational interaction missing in many cities. Collins continually strived to understand, reveal and encourage public connection with the unique character of places like Salem and Philadelphia. His designs have a civilizing and uplifting effect upon the urban condition.

Like other landscape architects, Collins has worked on a variety of project scales and types. Major projects include:

Delancey Park, Philadelphia 1965  
Society Hill, Philadelphia 1965  
Rittenhouse Square Master Plan, Philadelphia 1965  
Reston New Town, Virginia Mid-1960s  
Schuylkill River Park Phase I, Philadelphia 1965-1995  
Heritage Plaza East, Downtown Salem, MA 1972-1983  
University of Pennsylvania, Fine Arts Plan 1972  
South Fork of Long Island Environmental Planning 1975  
Trans-Alaska Pipeline Visual Impact Engineering Program 1975  
Philadelphia-Valley Forge Trail 1975  
Interstate 95 Expressway Cover Park, Philadelphia 1976  
East Hampton, NY Village Business District Plan 1976  
Penn Square, Reading 1976  
PSFS Plaza, Philadelphia 1976  
Chestnut Street Park, Philadelphia 1978  
National Aquarium Phase II Competition, Baltimore, MD 1983  
Crotona Park Master Plan, Bronx New York 1985

## JOHN F. COLLINS AWARDS

1959	Jackson-Perkins Residential Design Competition; First Place
1962	Charles Eliot Traveling Fellowship, Harvard Graduate School of Design
1964	Progressive Design Award for 11th and Waverly Street Town Houses in Philadelphia
1965	Progressive Design Citation Award in Residential Design on Pastorius Mews for Betsy Ross Corporation in Philadelphia
	AIA Citation for Excellence in Community Architecture for rehabilitation of Society Hill in Philadelphia
1966	Progressive Design Citation Award in Urban Design on town houses for Washington Street East Unit #2 in Philadelphia
	US Department of Housing and Urban Development Honor Award: Design Excellence for Delancey Park in Philadelphia
1968	ASLA Honor Award: Recreational Planning for Schuylkill River Park in Philadelphia
1972	ASLA, Institutional Planning, Honor Award, Campus Fine Arts Study for the University of Pennsylvania
	Fifth Biennial HUD Award for Design Excellence, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, for Heritage Plaza East in Salem, MA
1974	Boston Society of Architects Preservation Planning Award, Downtown Salem, MA
1976	ASLA, Urban Design Award, Merit Award for Penn Square in Reading, PA
	Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, Awards Program, PSFS Plaza, Philadelphia, PA
1978	Chestnut Street Park Competition, Philadelphia, PA, First Place
1979	Urban Design Newsletter, Urban Design Award for Goldspring/Newtown in Maryland



East Market Street, Philadelphia PA Mid-1980s  
 Armagh, Northern Ireland Conceptual Design/Master Plan 1985  
 Coldspring Newtown/Cylburn Arboretum in Maryland 1986  
 Interstate 476/Blue Route Native Planting  
 Recommendations 1986  
 Temple Ambler Campus Renovation 1988-1998  
 Wissahickon Creek River Conservation Plan 1999

Collins and his colleagues have won numerous awards for their commitment to improving the urban environment through design excellence, including the prestigious Honor Awards from the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA); the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's Distinguished Achievement Award; the Boston Society of Architects' Preservation Planning Award; and the Foundation for Architecture's Urban Design Award. In recognition of his professional excellence and outstanding accomplishments, he was named a Fellow of the ASLA in 1993.

Throughout his career, Collins demonstrated a commitment to educating young professionals, serving as a lecturer, professor, and visiting studio critic at major landscape architecture programs at Penn, Penn State, Harvard, Cornell, Drexel, Virginia and Louisiana State. He also taught at the School of Architecture and Planning in New Delhi, India. He developed horticultural therapy programs to help prison inmates and established community and teaching gardens in Philadelphia for public school children.

In 1988, Collins became Chair of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Horticulture at Temple University. Under his leadership, the department advanced in academic standards, achieving accreditation for the landscape architecture program; hiring new faculty; and reaching out to the community with urban design-build programs. The Ambler Campus, where the Department is

located, benefited from student projects such as the new entry walls, ramp and pergolas at the administration building; new gardens; and a native plants nursery.

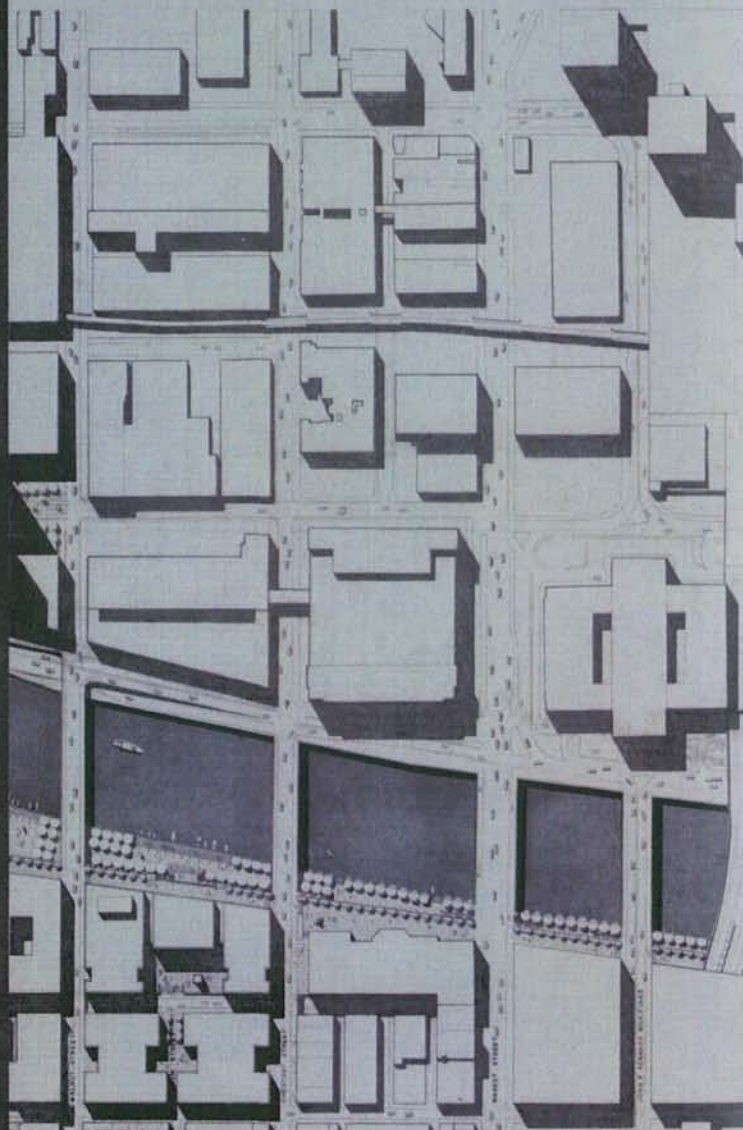
Two of Collins's tenets are expressed in the design-build approach: the value of hard work and the integration of various bodies of knowledge. Collins believes in the benefit of focused, disciplined effort required to conceptualize and build a work of art. He views construction as a continuation of the artistic process, in the tradition of classical sculpture or painting. Hard work is valuable in and of itself because it teaches one the importance and reward of sustained effort. Collins does not distinguish between so-called hardscape aspects (pavement, walls, and built elements) and organic aspects (plants, soil). His work seeks to blur the boundaries between the two. One of his favorite places, Trevi Fountain in Rome, merges a staid plaza with exuberant marble sculpture by allowing the travertine to bleed out into the plaza, unifying the two. Likewise, in his view, the boundaries between disciplines ought to be blurred, with design intermingled with construction, landscape architecture, planning, and horticulture to create holistic design at the regional and local scales.

John Collins's legacy is in his built works and in the people whose lives were changed as a result of his advocacy, teaching and professional example. His enthusiasm, confidence, integrity and devotion to the highest professional ideals have inspired several generations of landscape architects. He anticipated the need to reach out across disciplines to solve complex problems, while helping government officials, community leaders and the public see the consequences of their decisions and actions. As a result, he has advanced the region's ability to work cooperatively toward meeting major, social and environmental challenges. Perhaps most important is his celebration of creativity, the notion that cities can be civilizing places that promote an enduring human connection with the natural world.



"And I thought, what a marvelous opportunity to be able to provide the public with places they otherwise can't afford, or wouldn't have the opportunity to participate in. It hit me very strongly that public landscapes were important."

- John F. Collins



"John Collins is more than simply a landscape architect. He is strongly bonded to the earth and the plants themselves—and to the people who interact with them."

—John Randolph, Chair of the Schuylkill River Development Council

"Schuylkill River Park joins Market Street East, the nationally recognized vest pocket park on Chestnut Street, and dozens of other public and private venues across our city and region as places that have been transformed by your talent. It's no wonder Ed Bacon has said your work deserves the highest accolades. On behalf of the people of Philadelphia, I extend my belated but heart-felt thanks not just for Schuylkill River Park but for your life-long efforts to make Philadelphia a more livable and beautiful city."

—Mayor John F. Street in a letter to John F. Collins

"I worked with John Collins training prisoners to raise and care for plants in the greenhouses at the House of Corrections and then to install those plants in community gardens across the city. The prisoners learned how to nurture a plant through its life cycle, how to make a garden, how to start and finish a job. John Collins grew plants, and he grew people too."

—James M. Dickerson, Nursery Superintendent,  
PLANT (Philadelphia Landscape  
and Nursery Training Program), 1982-89

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

John F. Collins FASLA Retrospective features drawings and memorabilia from The Delta Group and Collins's personal collection. The exhibition was organized by a group of alumni of Temple University Ambler, friends of John Collins, and the Department of Landscape Architecture and Horticulture at Temple University Ambler with the assistance of:

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