

Proposal for a tour of Llewellyn Park  
Part of the New Jersey History Conference, June 8 & 9, 2016  
Wednesday, June 8, 2016 1:30 pm – 4:30 pm

Llewellyn Park, the first planned residential suburban development in the United States, was laid out in 1857. New York businessman Llewellyn Haskell envisioned a community of country houses, convenient enough to the city for commuting, but characterized by large lots with naturalized landscaping. It was laid out on 350 acres on the side of the first ridge of the Watchung Mountains in the Picturesque Style by architect Alexander Jackson Davis. The community is private, with controlled access. Houses continue to be built and remodeled within the Park, which is listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

Since 1858, the Park has been governed by a Committee of Managers, who oversee the administration of the Park, including the roads, the communal open space, and a complex water-management infrastructure system. In 2001, they commissioned a Landscape Master Plan, to identify critical components of the designed landscape and plan the work needed to preserve it.

Since then, the Committee of Managers, in concert with the Llewellyn Park Preservation Foundation and the Ladies Association of Llewellyn Park, have been carrying out projects to maintain and restore landscape elements that are a signature of this historic community. The Davis-designed Gatehouse and “The Ramble”, a wooded hillside natural area, are original features of the Park and focal points to the Landscape Plan. The tour will visit both these sites and allow visitors to hear about the work to date, which includes important upgrades to the drainage system, tree plantings, and path restoration within the community’s signature common space, “The Ramble”.

Within Llewellyn Park is Thomas Edison’s home, Glenmont. The 1880 mansion sits on a 15-acre estate which includes gardens, landscape features, and outbuildings. Glenmont is owned by the National Park Service. Maintenance of the site is guided by a 2010 Cultural Landscape Report which will also be discussed.

Tour participants will park at the Thomas Edison National Historic Park in West Orange, and will board a shuttle bus to Llewellyn Park. Participants may NOT arrive individually to Llewellyn Park. Tours will include seated lectures, vigorous walking, and more leisurely strolling, so participants should be prepared for an afternoon “in the field”. Bring insect repellent, your own water bottle, and an umbrella or raingear as warranted.

Join us to learn about landscape documentation, preservation, and restoration, in this significant – and beautiful – setting.