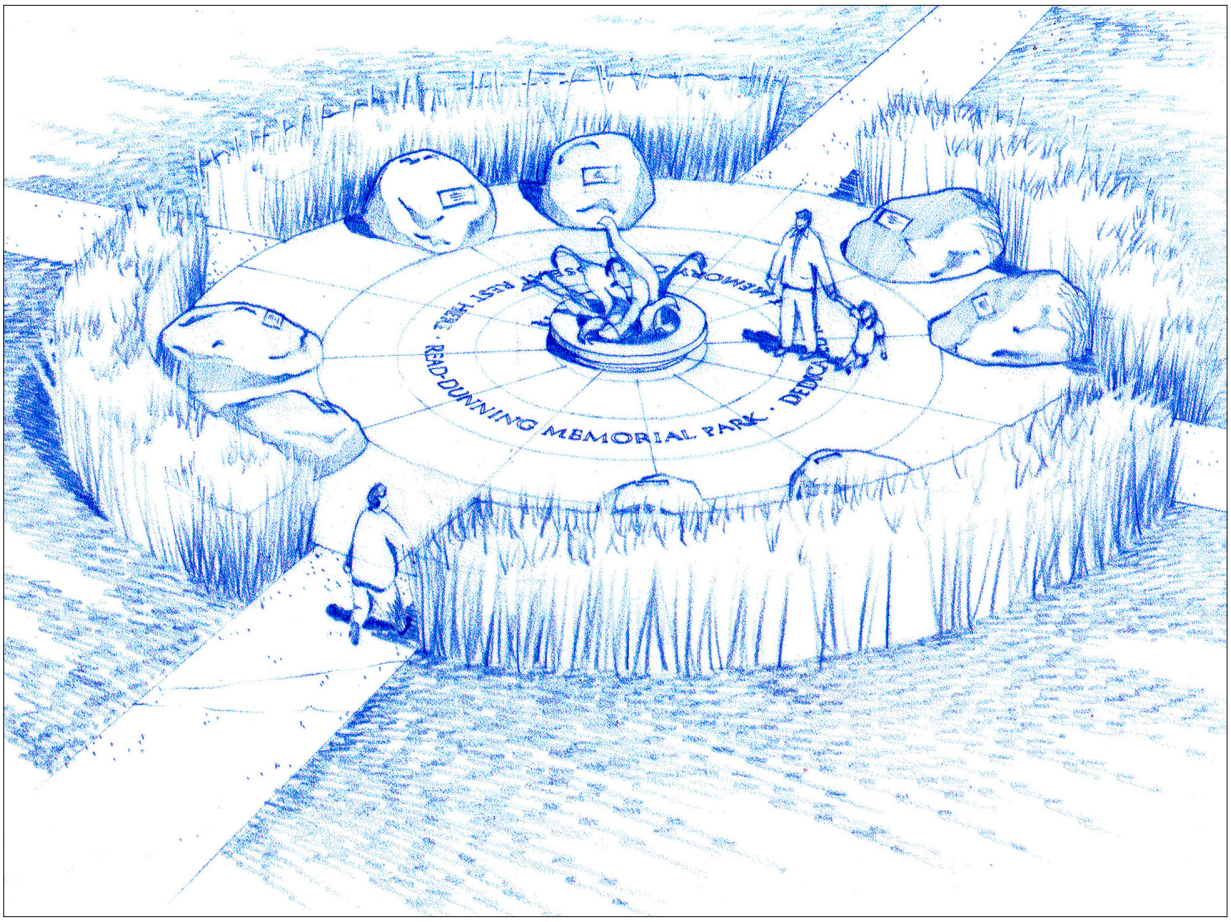


Read Dunning Memorial Park

Chicago, Illinois
State of Illinois Capital Development Board

Commemorating the lives of those who lived and died before us is a noble sentiment common to all civilizations. Unfortunately, every society has some members who, due to the circumstances of their lives, do not have the resources or familial support to receive a proper burial. Such was the case for thousands of Chicagoans during the mid-1800s through the early 1900s. Orphans, poor house residents, victims of the Chicago fire, asylum patients, Civil War veterans, indigents, and unidentified or unknown people who died during those years were buried in a large potter's field on the city's north side. The plots were unmarked and, over the ensuing years, largely forgotten. As nearby neighborhoods and institutions expanded, the graves were often disturbed and the remains had to be re-interred. Then, in the late 1990s, several area ministers and concerned citizens joined forces to address the problem. Through the Illinois Capital Development Board, Wolff Landscape Architecture, Inc. was hired to develop a schematic plan and prepare construction documents and estimates for a memorial park. The design consisted of an entry plaza ringed with large stones, each with a plaque signifying one of the major groups of those interred. A memorial bronze sculpture of an eternal flame and bowl was designed for the center of the plaza. Seven individual memorial circles were located throughout the site to commemorate each of the seven major groups of those buried on the site. The memorial circles each had two seating stones, and were connected into a walking circuit by a gravel path. Due to the uncertain location of the remains, the site was covered with a thin layer of topsoil on which the construction would occur. A field of ornamental grasses was designed to flow over the site and drift around the existing shade trees, plaza, memorial rings, and paths. The park was constructed in 2002.