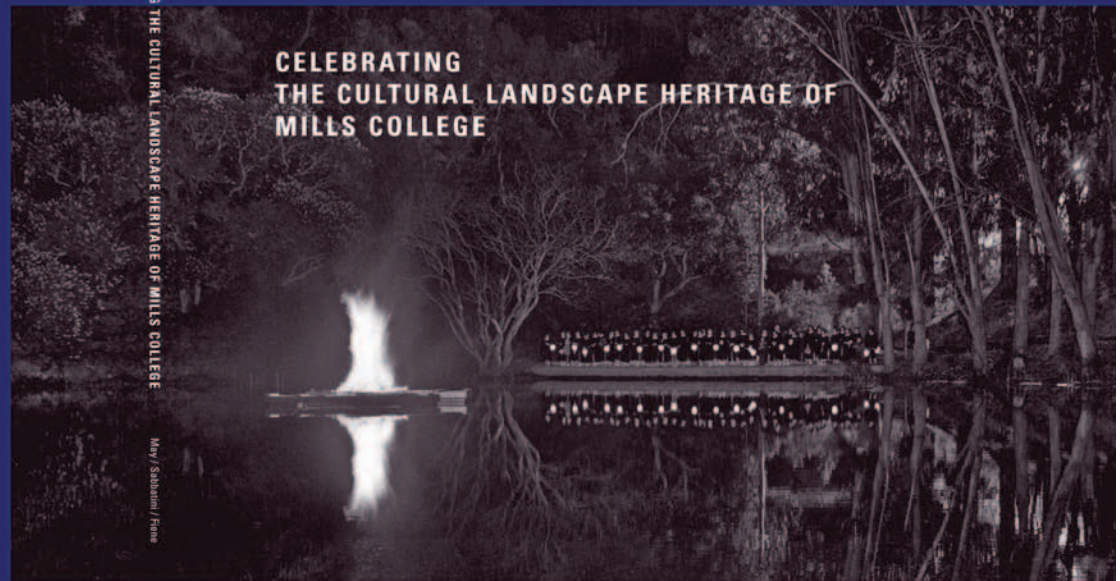




In its bold representations of independence, experimentalism, and harmonious balance between humanity and nature, the Mills College campus embodies the American frontier spirit. Since 1868, the College's founders, Cyrus and Susan Mills, and those who followed, thoughtfully and carefully shaped the campus with exotic and native plantings and with distinguished architecture. They worked in partnership with notable landscape architects, botanists, and architects whose influence extended well beyond the campus. *Celebrating the Cultural Landscape Heritage of Mills College* explores how these great innovators fashioned the campus environment in a way that builds on its exceptional natural resources. This shared vision of 140 years sets forth a mandate for the future of Mills College to preserve, enhance, and build upon this unique campus setting and its many legacies. This landscape heritage study provides a framework to guide future development in balance with historic preservation, furthering the College community's appreciation of and commitment to the campus and its cultural landscape values.



CELEBRATING THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE HERITAGE OF MILLS COLLEGE

May / Sabbatini / Fiene

CENTER FOR THE BOOK, Mills College

**Project Location** Mills College  
5000 MacArthur Boulevard  
Oakland, CA 94613-1301

**Project Type** Campus Cultural Landscape Heritage Plan

**Getty Foundation** [2006 Campus Heritage grant](#)

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<http://www.sabbatini-loyd.com>

**Book Order** [Mills College Center for the Book](#)

**Awards**

- Society for College and University Planners—Merit Award in Excellence in Planning for Restoration/ Preservation, 2009
- American Society of Landscape Architects—Honor Award in Analysis and Planning, 2009
- American Society of Landscape Architects—Northern California Chapter Honor Award in Analysis, Research, Planning, and Communication, 2008

## **Project Statement**

How do campus planners identify which historic resources are valuable for guiding campus improvements and use the resources in sustainable new designs?

Since 1868, Mills College founders, and those who followed, shaped the campus with Picturesque-era exotic and native plantings and distinguished architecture. In 2006, Mills College sought guidance on how to best preserve, enhance, and further develop this unique campus setting. Funded by the Getty Foundation and Mills College, this landscape heritage study distills the values of the college founders and how these were expressed by nationally recognized landscape architects and architects over 140 years.

The project singles out iconic resources and recommends how to balance future development with historic preservation. The project included historical research, analysis, and planning, and it culminated in design solutions for two key campus precincts to address current and future needs. The study demonstrates that the use of historic resources is integral to sustainable planning and design. The public lecture series, integration of the study into college courses, and publication of a book increased awareness and excitement about this study's findings and recommendations. The result is a campus environment that expresses the unique identity of the institution.

## **Project Narrative**

### **SENSE OF PLACE**

- This cultural landscape heritage study defines the essence of the campus identity as manifested in its physical and cultural characteristics.
- Research identified distinctive features of the cultural landscape created by distinguished professionals in architecture, landscape architecture, and botany, including Bernard Maybeck, Julia Morgan, Walter Ratcliff, Jr., Howard Gilkey, and Howard McMinn.
- The study guides development within and beyond the historic core of the campus.

### **SUSTAINABILITY**

- Building on the contributions of past planners and designers is fundamentally sustainable in approach and outcomes. This plan advocates taking cues from and making use of historic campus resources. Often, colleges and universities sweep aside historic resources, wasting the potential physical and cultural contributions they offer.

### RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTS

- This study sets out to resolve conflicts between the demands of a 21st-century education and the cultural historic values of the institution.
- As a case in point, the college recently removed more than 100 blue gum (120 years old, 120 feet high). The double row of *Eucalyptus* was a historic iconic edge to the original campus. Because of the college's depth in horticultural and biological sciences, college faculty advocated the use of native plants to replace the *Eucalyptus*. This clashed with the cultural history of the college. Recommendations of the landscape heritage plan balanced and resolved the issues and convinced the college to replant the *Eucalyptus* but with a different species. Just as the founders did more than 100 years ago, the college is currently growing the trees from seed for planting in Fall 2009.

### RESEARCH, COMMUNITY OUTREACH, AND EDUCATION

- The college conducted a series of four well-attended public lectures. The presenters placed Mills in the national context of the development and evolution of women's college campuses and discussed research on the development of the Mills campus over 140 years.
- The college integrated this study into two undergraduate courses to further appreciation of campus history and its biological setting.
- For the board of trustees, the study offered insight into the power of the campus to instill a sense of place and fueled enthusiasm to pursue improvements identified in the project's design studies.

- Recognizing the wealth of historic research and its usefulness in informing future campus planning and design, the college published and distributed a well-illustrated book (rather than a planning document) to educate the campus community and to support fund raising for capital projects and landscape improvements.
- The book documents the planning and design steps undertaken, providing a process that can be easily transferred to other institutions.

### IMPLEMENTATION

- Mills College is taking its first step in implementing this study, demonstrating that the past can inspire the future. Mills recognized that support for historic resources is often tested when action needs to be taken. Therefore, the college chose a study area that had immediate needs and presented conflicting values. The college used this study to resolve the issues and will replant the double row of *Eucalyptus* trees in Fall 2009.
- The study demonstrates that high-quality campus design can be achieved through restraint. The simple, yet bold, replacement of the double row of *Eucalyptus*, the extension of native plantings to create an aesthetic campus context to the buildings, and the use of finer textured materials in areas of high pedestrian use all contribute to success of the guidelines. Exemplary architectural achievements from campus history inspired the study's simple materials palette, ranging from scored, poured-in-place concrete for pedestrian areas to the shuttle stop's metal work, which is inspired by the shape of the blue gum *Eucalyptus* leaf.





## Mills College

Oakland, California

**Size** - 135 Acres

**Founded** -1852

**Moved to Current Campus** - 1868



**Undergraduate** - Women

**Graduate** - Women and Men

### 2009-2009 Population (Headcount)

Undergraduate - 973

Graduate - 508

Faculty - 199

Staff - 307

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Total - 1,987

### Countries

**Represented** - 58

**Alumnae** - 20,417

Funded by the Getty Foundation and Mills College, this landscape heritage plan addresses the entire 135-acre campus while focusing on two areas to test and develop guidelines for the incorporation of historic resources in current planning and design.





Mills Hall, presumably erected for a women's seminary but with grandeur clearly designed for a college, was also well-regarded for its Rose Porch whose rose vine enveloped the entrance and rose 45 feet.





The landscape became integral to the college's culture evidenced by the students costumed as *Eucalyptus* trees, by the lantern procession and bonfire on Lake Aliso, circa 1916, and by the May Day celebration on The Oval in the late 1940s.





Through the 1920s, The Oval and the buildings around it remained the academic and cultural center of the campus. The founder's plantings—primarily *Eucalyptus globulus*, blue gum—gave the campus its present park-like character. Native plants matured along creek edges.



## The Founders—1868 to 1916

The first period of historic significance.



Researching campus archives of historic photographs, documents, and of landscape architecture, civil engineering, and architecture drawings revealed a wealth of information. The research allowed the team to illustrate two periods of historic significance in campus development.



### The Modern Landscape—1916 to 1949

The second period of historic significance.



During the second period of significance, the architects, Bernard Maybeck, Julia Morgan, and Walter H. Ratcliff, Jr., the campus landscape architect, Howard Gilkey, and the botanist, Howard McMinn, shaped the character of the campus.





#### Extant Historic Architecture

- 1 Mills Hall
- 2 El Campanil
- 3 Kapiolani Cottage
- 4 Sage Hall - Administration Building
- 5 Carnegie Library and Expansion
- 6 President's House
- 7 Lissner Hall
- 8 Ross and Larsen houses
- 9 Ethel Moore Hall
- 10 Mary Morse Hall
- 11 Music Building
- 12 Art Gallery
- 13 Orchard House
- 14 Meadow House
- 15 Warren Olney Hall
- 16 Norman Bridge Health Center
- 17 Alumnae Hall (Student Union)
- 18 Graduate House
- 19 Kimball House
- 20 Faculty Village
- 21 Reinhardt Alumnae House

#### Landscape

- 1 Evergreen forests
- 2 Open field
- 3 Lawn
- 4 Orchards
- 5 Other open spaces
- 6 Sunnyside
- 7 President's Meadow
- 8 Campus hearth
- 9 Lake Aliso
- 10 Creeks

#### Summits

- 1 Pine Top Hill - 310'
- 2 Prospect Hill - 210'
- 3 Sunnyside/Faculty Village Hill - 135'

#### Entries

- 1 Richards Gate
- 2 Wetmore Gate

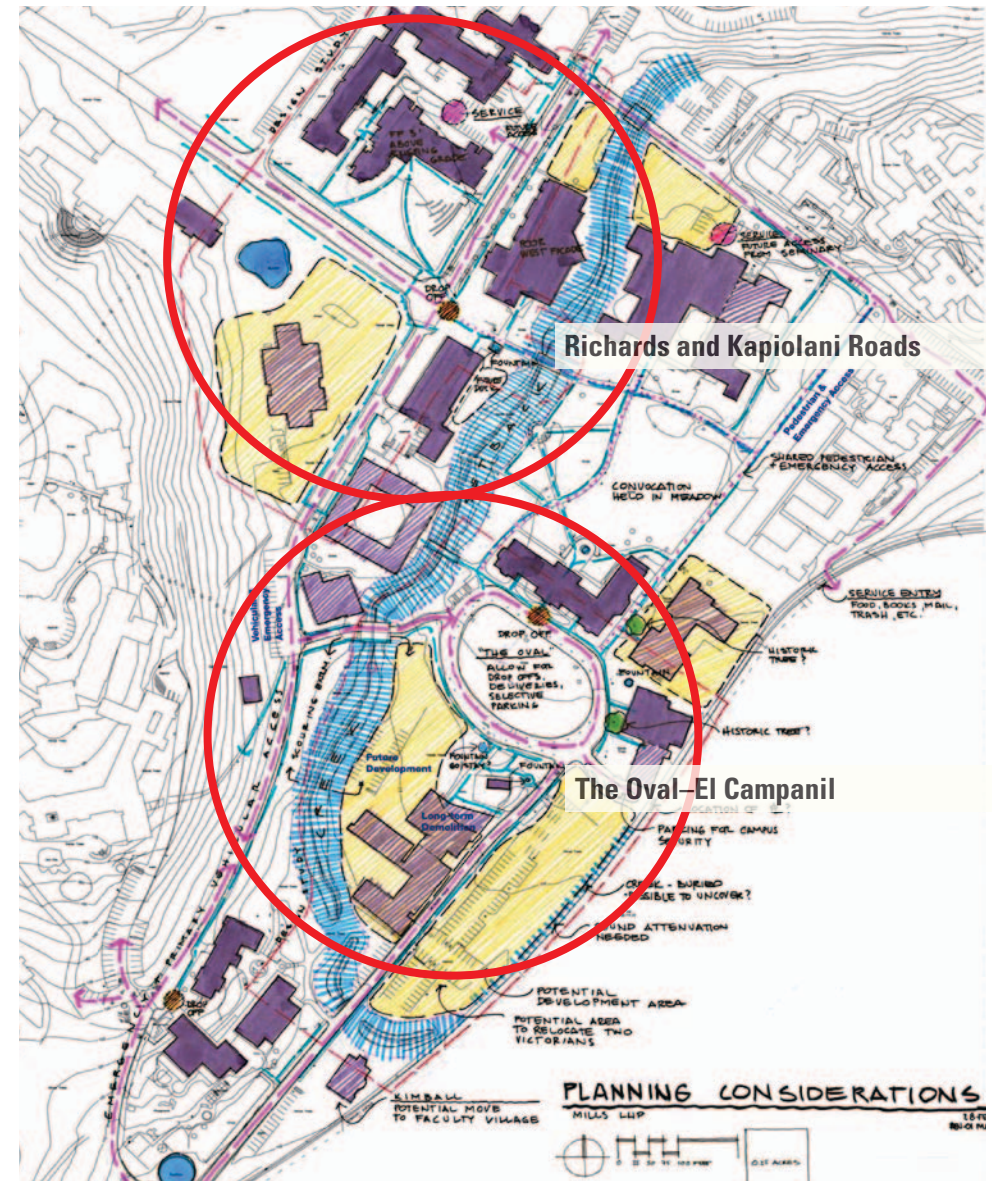
#### Circulation

- 1 The Oval
- 2 Seminary Avenue
- 3 Post Road
- 4 Kapiolani Road
- 5 Richards Road
- 6 Orchard Meadow Road
- 7 Ming Quong Road
- 8 Bridges
- 9 Double lanes of Wetmore Road
- 10 Olney Road in Toyon Meadow
- 11 Road between Mills Hall and Sage Hall
- 12 Underwood Avenue
- 13 Pine Top Summit Road
- 14 Faculty Village Road (cul-de-sac)



Elements of historic interest in place at the end of the campus' second period of historic significance included double rows of London plane trees along Richards Road leading from a new western entrance.





The campuswide landscape assessment revealed seven component landscapes.

The college chose two areas of the campus for design studies because of their range of characteristics, challenges, and importance to the college's image.

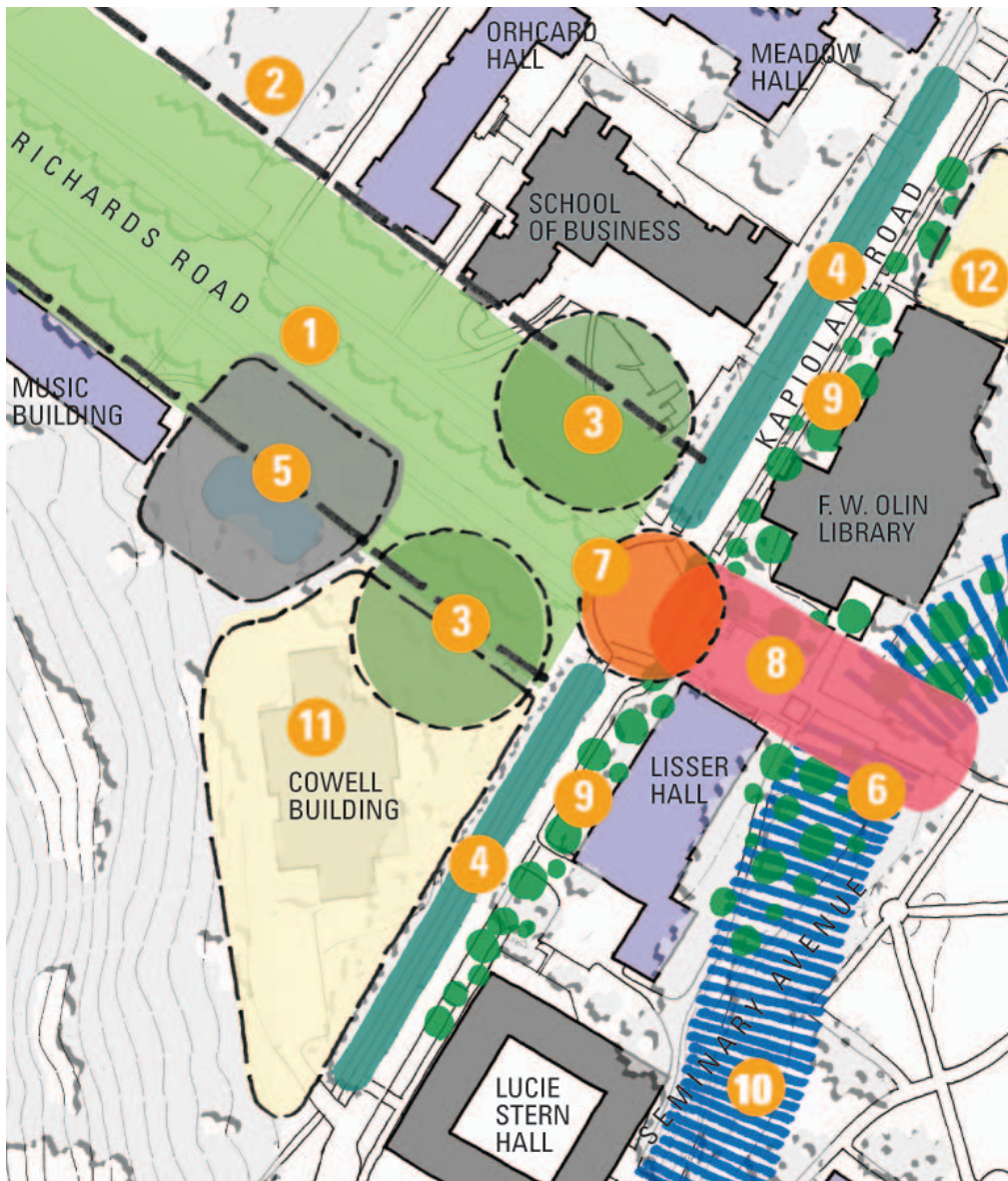




- Character-defining features of the Richards and Kapiolani roads study area:
1. Double row of deciduous trees
  2. Generous setback to building facades
  3. Simple treatment of lawn-meadow in setback
  4. Open lawn-meadow at intersection of Richards and Kapiolani roads
  5. Pond
  6. Double row of evergreen (eucalyptus) trees
  7. Functional and ceremonial node
  8. Views to Leona Creek and beyond
  9. Natural vegetation
  10. Leona Creek

These examples for Richards and Kapiolani Roads illustrate the planning, analysis, and design process. Character-defining features guided the team on how to incorporate the college's unique cultural landscape values into current planning and design.





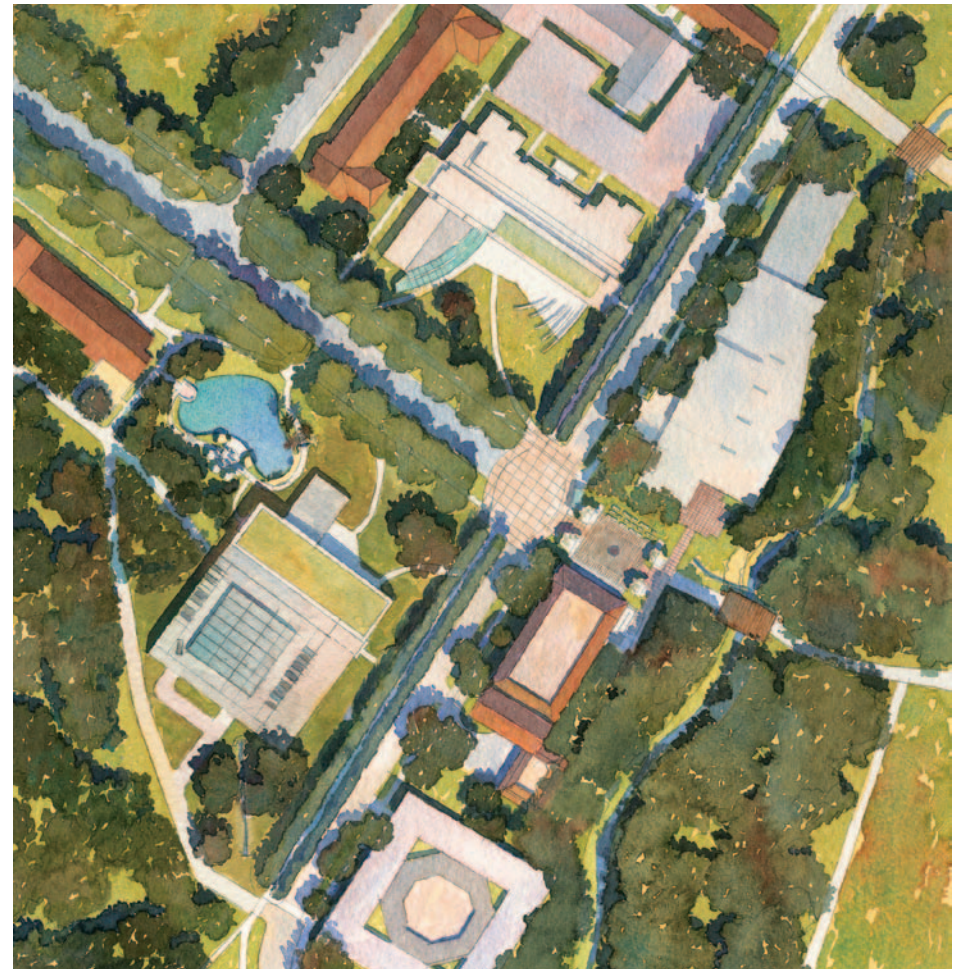
Design objectives for the

Richards and Kapiolani roads study area:

1. Touch lightly.
2. Maintain setback for future buildings.
3. Maintain and enhance open green at corners.
4. Reestablish the double row of evergreen (eucalyptus) trees.
5. Complete the pond design.
6. Replace the bridge per the creek study.
7. Reestablish the ceremonial node.
8. Evaluate the courtyard's circulation and design.
9. Extend natural planting from Leona Creek to southern edge of Kapiolani Road.
10. Restore Leona Creek.
11. Explore new building opportunities.
12. Explore expansion opportunity for F. W. Olin Library.

Analysis of the character-defining features, current and future campus functions, and future opportunities yielded twelve design objectives to be incorporated into the design studies.





The project explored two program alternatives for two study sites to test and illustrate the flexibility of the guidelines. The resulting designs integrates old with new, respecting the historic values of the campus while meeting its needs for education.





The design opens up views into the heart of the campus and expands the use of native plants. Specific characteristics of the campus landscape, such as the curved shape of *Eucalyptus* leaves, inspired the design of the shelter and fencing.





In reference to Howard Gilkey's original design element—the Temple to the Radio—the proposed scheme includes a temple to music adjacent to the pond for gatherings of musicians and artists.



## Mills College

### Landscape Heritage Plan Lecture Series

Please join the Mills College community for a series of lectures highlighting the Mills College Landscape Heritage Plan initiative funded by the **Getty Foundation Campus Heritage Grant Program**. Campus Heritage Grants assist colleges and universities in the United States to manage and preserve the integrity of their significant historic buildings, sites, and landscapes. The College is developing a plan that will document the campus from its 19th century origins to the present, including Mills' cultural landscape, nationally prominent architecture, and continuing commitment to innovative women's education. The following lectures are free and open to the public.



### Lecture Series Calendar

#### *The Design of Mills College: A Campus Rooted in Hope*

**Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz** | Wednesday, October 11, 2006

Reception • 5:00 p.m.

Lecture • 5:30 p.m. with Q & A to follow

Bender Room, Carnegie Hall, Mills College

Professor and renowned author Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz of Smith College will consider Mills within the evolving plan of women's colleges in the United States and its bearing on the campus today.

#### *Mills College and Oakland's Golden Age of Horticulture, 1918-1950*

**Phoebe Cutler** | Wednesday, February 28, 2007

Reception • 5:00 p.m.

Lecture • 5:30 p.m. with Q & A to follow

Bender Room, Carnegie Hall, Mills College

Author Phoebe Cutler, who writes and lectures on garden and landscape history will speak about the work of landscape architect, Howard Gilkey, the first landscape architect at Mills College, and Dr. Howard McMinn noted botanist, and their influence both regionally and nationally.

#### *Reading the Cultural Landscape of Mills College: Findings from the Getty Campus Heritage Grant Project*

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

Reception • 5:00 p.m.

Lecture • 5:30 p.m. with Q & A to follow

Bender Room, Carnegie Hall, Mills College

Cultural Landscape Specialist and prime consultant to the Mills College Landscape Heritage Plan, will present the team's findings on the campus' development by significant architects, landscape architects, botanists, and campus planners whose influence helped shape the cultural landscape of the Mills College campus.

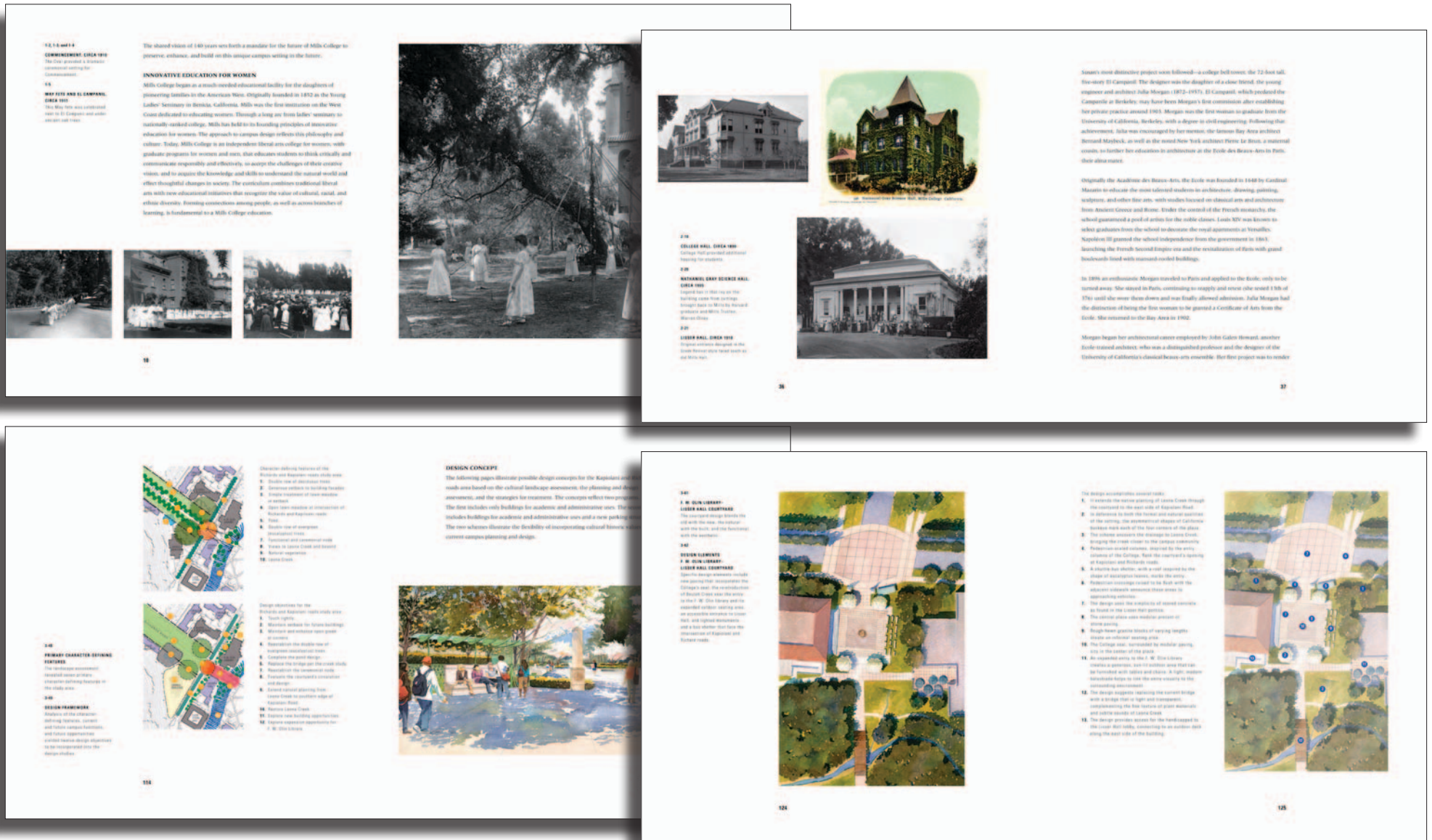
Please RSVP to Carrie Milligan  
at (510) 430-2125 or [cmilliga@mills.edu](mailto:cmilliga@mills.edu)

Mills College is located at 5000 MacArthur Boulevard,  
Oakland, California 94613.



The Landscape Heritage Plan Lecture Series was well attended by alumnae, the college community, and design professionals from throughout the San Francisco Bay Area.





Recognizing the wealth of historical research and its application to campus planning and design, the college published a well-illustrated 160-page book (rather than a planning document) to educate the campus community and to support fund raising for capital projects.





Bryant Path's blue gum *Eucalyptus* became a campus icon in the 1880s. In 2007, the college removed the trees. In Fall 2009, based on this study's recommendations, the college will reestablish the walk with *Eucalyptus* they are growing from seed.



### Photography and Illustration Credits

1 Left (Page)	Art Zendarski	14	Art Zendarski
1 Right	Unknown (Mills College)	15 Upper	Robert Sabbatini AICP ASLA
4	Robert Sabbatini AICP ASLA	15 Lower	Art Zendarski
5 Left	Eadweard Muybridge (Helios)	16 Upper	Robert Sabbatini AICP ASLA
5 Right	Unknown (Mills College)	16 Lower	Art Zendarski
6	Unknown (Mills College)	17 Left	Carrie Milligan
7	Milton Mann Studios	17 Right	Robert Sabbatini AICP ASLA
8	Unknown (Mills College)	18	Robert Sabbatini AICP ASLA (layout)
9 Upper Left	Robert Sabbatini AICP ASLA	19 Upper Left	Unknown (Mills College)
9 Upper Right	Robert Sabbatini AICP ASLA	19 Upper Center	Robert Sabbatini AICP ASLA
9 Lower Right	Eadweard Muybridge (Helios)	19 Lower Left	Vonn Marie May
9 Upper	Robert Sabbatini AICP ASLA	19 Lower Center	Brian Harrington
9 Lower	Unknown (Mills College)	19 Left	Art Zendarski
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