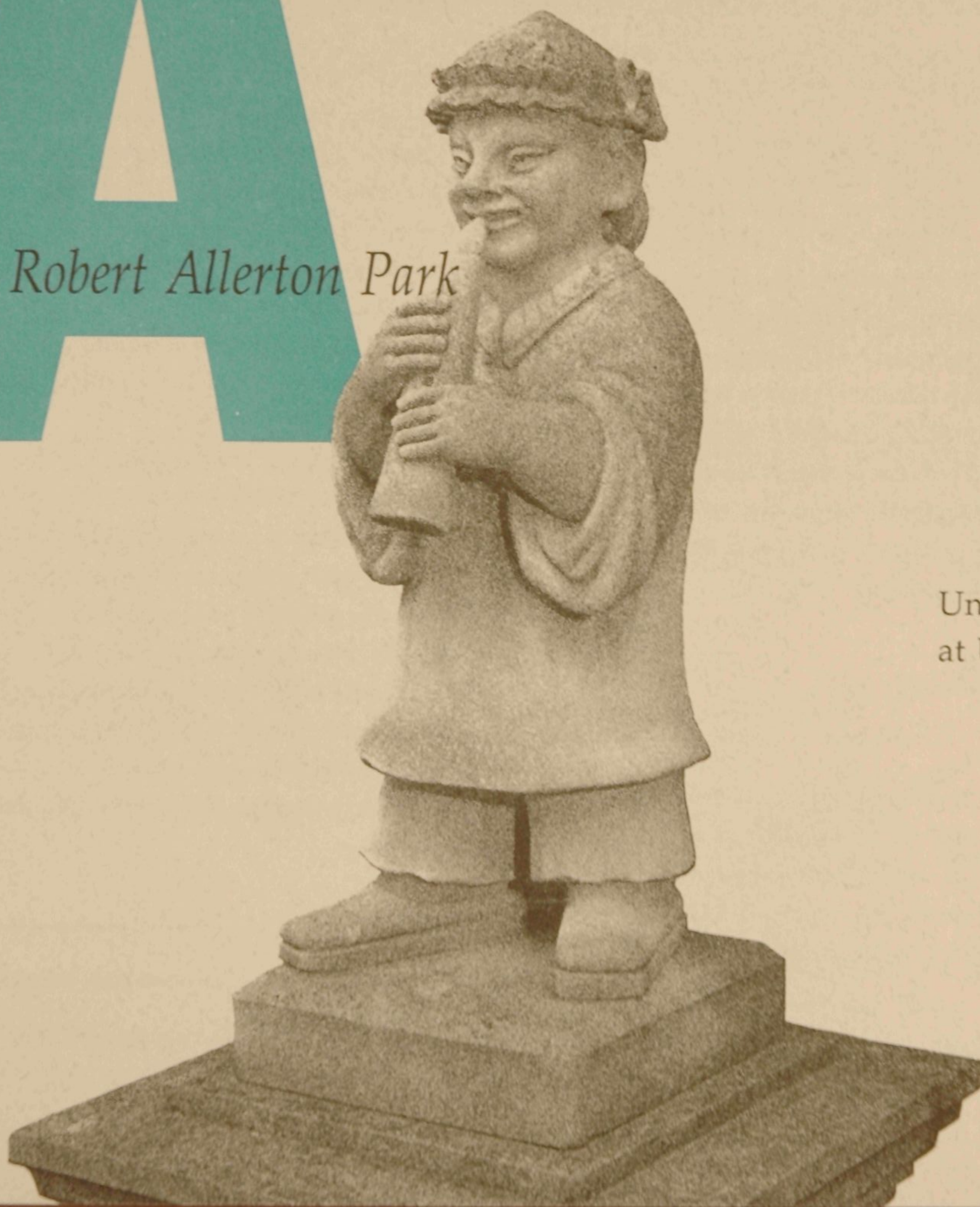


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Robert Allerton Park



University of Illinois
at Urbana-Champaign

ENJOY your visit to Robert Allerton Park, the University of Illinois's 1,500-acre outdoor education and research center, an experience that offers visitors many rewards. Open year-round from 10 a.m. until dusk (except Christmas and New Year's Day), the park offers visitors many pleasures to be experienced: more than seventy sculptures, acres of formal gardens, miles of hiking and skiing trails, native forests, natural areas, and the Visitors' Center.

Located thirty miles southwest of Urbana-Champaign, off Interstate 72 at Exits 61 and 63 near Monticello, Illinois, Robert Allerton Park is situated on land acquired during the 1800s by livestock baron Samuel Allerton (1829-1914), a founder of the Chicago Union Stockyards and the First National Bank of Chicago. His son and heir, Robert (1873-1964), envisioned a gentleman's country estate on what had been primarily pastures used for farming and grazing, plus a large area of forest along the Sangamon River. Searching for appropriate examples on which to model his dream, Robert Allerton traveled extensively through Europe with Philadelphia architect John Borie to view the world's most impressive estates and gardens. Outside of London, on the Thames River, they found Ham House, home of the Earl of Dysart, which became the inspiration for Allerton's estate. Allerton House was built in 1900 from a design by Borie. Robert Allerton began collecting ideas and sculptures from abroad in 1900. After the 1920s, he and his adopted son, John Gregg Allerton (1900-1986), continued this search and further enhanced their house's parklike setting.

In 1946, Robert Allerton donated the estate to the University of Illinois to serve as an educational and research resource; as a forest, plant, and wildlife reserve; as an example of landscape gardening; and as a public park for the University and the state. To support the park, an additional 3,775 acres of farmland also became part of Allerton's gift, along with 250 acres for the Illinois Memorial 4-H Camp.

The European flavor of the park, with its classical overtones, is evident even at the park's entrance, which is marked by two stone columns topped with statues representing the Charioteers of Delphi. The originals of these statues date from 470 B.C. and are located in the Delphi Museum in Greece.

Near the main parking lot is Allerton House, a forty-room Georgian mansion whose main façade overlooks a reflecting pool and meadow. Since the house is now used as a University conference center, it is open only to conference visitors. The English emphasis is again apparent in the size and stature of the house and the surrounding garden. The east side of the house features two Italian caryatids, statues with a woman's head and upper torso carved into a stone column. Carved into the southwestern walls of the house are two heads of the god Pan.

Three main sculptures of particular interest in Allerton Park are carefully situated in the surrounding woodlands. The most valuable of these sculptures is Antoine Bourdelle's imposing *The Death of the Last Centaur*, created to symbolize the death of paganism. It stands in a clearing on a gentle rise approximately two miles west of the main parking area. Visitors may park on the main road near the *Centaur* or walk the mile from the formal gardens along a scenic forest path.

Carl Milles's statue, *The Sun Singer*, has come to symbolize Robert Allerton Park for many park visitors. Weighing more than 1,600 pounds, it rises on its base an imposing thirty feet from the ground in the middle of a large meadow. This monumental bronze, representing the sun god Apollo, is situated so that it faces the rising sun and creates a dramatic silhouette against the setting sun. Visitors may park in the circle drive adjacent to *The Sun Singer* or walk the additional mile from the *Centaur*.

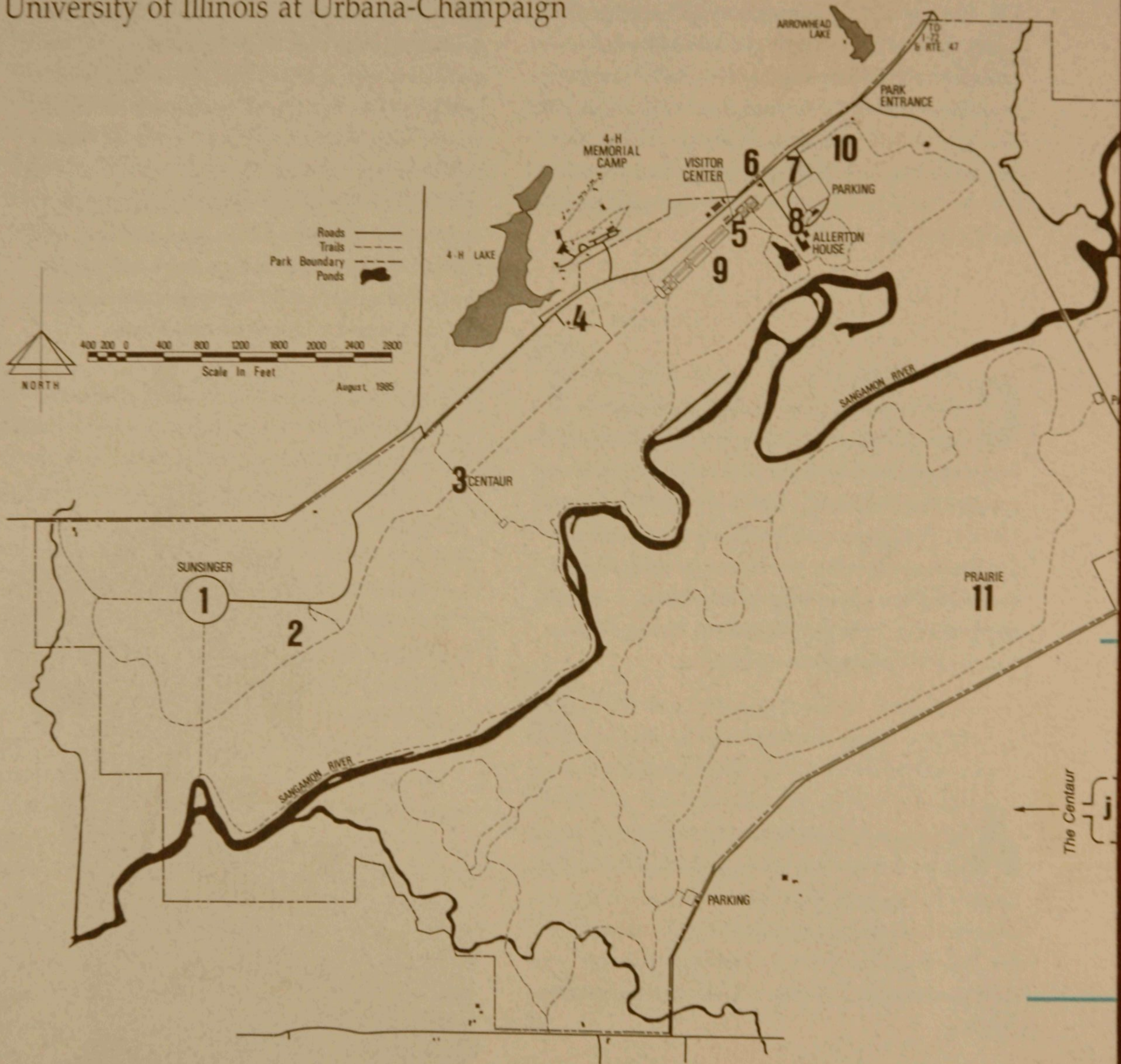
Another popular park feature is the Chinese Fu Dogs, located near the park's main entrance in the Fu Dog Garden. These twenty-two porcelain-blue Chinese dog statues form a double line against a backdrop of large white firs. Historically, the Fu Dogs were used as domestic altarpieces in homes to avert fires, floods, and other natural disasters.

In true European landscape garden tradition, the gardens evolved under Robert Allerton and John Gregg Allerton's stewardship rather than being created all at once. The gardens are open at several locations, allowing visitors to enter and exit at various places, creating their own "tours." In front of the garden closest to the House are *Two Sea Maidens* by Richard Kuöhl. The Brick Walled Garden once served as Robert Allerton's vegetable garden. Today, Lili Auer's statue, *Girl with a Scarf*, is showcased in its center. This garden now consists of grass panels and seasonal flower displays surrounded by espaliers, fruit trees that have been trained to cling to the garden walls.



ROBERT ALLERTON PARK Monticello, Illinois

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign



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ALLERTON HOUSE IN ROBERT ALLERTON PARK : UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS