

Application

Name:

Alfred H. Saulniers

Address: _____

City/State/Zip:

New Bedford, MA 02740

Phone Number: _____

Email: alsaulniers@yahoo.com

Donated in memory of/honor of:

Signage to honor Leo E. Larrivee @ Button-wood Park

Text to display on plaque (optional): Trail/walking path
To be determined

Send a note of acknowledgement to: on NBHS gym

Name: _____

Address: _____

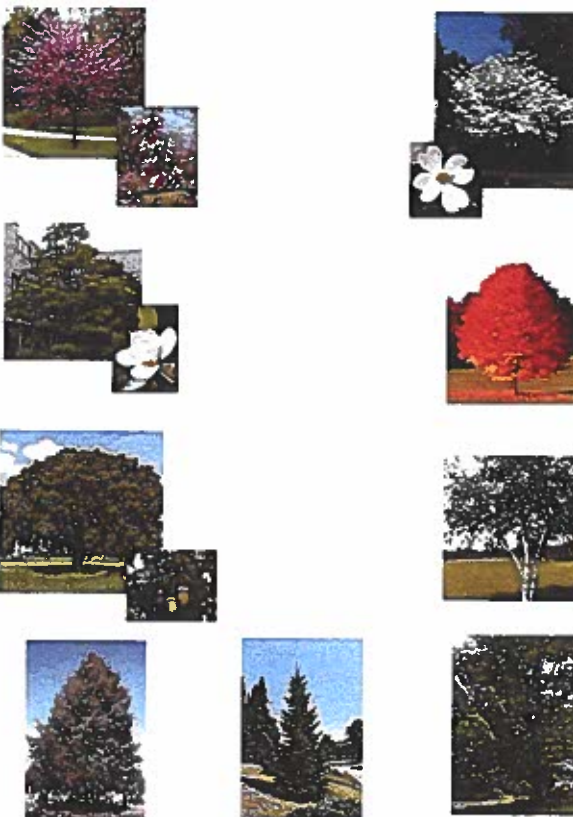
State: _____ Zip: _____

Preferred Location: _____

Please make checks payable to City of
New Bedford

☐ Tree - \$400+

Please know that the cost of your tree depends on the variety and size. Examples:



☐ Bench - \$750+

The style of your bench will be chosen based on the park in which it is to be located, consistent with the parks current standard.

☐ Plaque – (optional)

With approval of the Park Board, applicants will purchase their bench plaque through the authorized vendor. Plaque material, font, and style will conform to the City standard.



In addition to or in lieu of a plaque, your generous donation will be celebrated on the City of New Bedford Parks Recreation & Beaches webpage.

Concerning benches, the life of your memorial is intended to correspond with the useful life of the park bench – about ten (10) years. The Department is not responsible for damaged or missing plaques. Permanency of your memorial cannot be guaranteed and memorials and plaques will not be replaced at the cost of the Department.

The Department is not responsible for the damage of benches or trees, or damaged/missing plaques. The Department reserves the right to relocate a bench if the use of the site changes or to ensure visitor safety. Trees are guaranteed for one (1) year from installation.

Application ID #: _____

Date of Submission: _____

Received By: _____

Bernadette Barreira

From: Mary S. Rapoza
Sent: Monday, September 27, 2021 10:05 AM
To: Bernadette Barreira
Cc: Rachel Mulroy
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] Honoring New Bedford's only Olympic champion Leo Larivee at Buttonwood Park
Attachments: NB Parks Memorials page 2.pdf

Bernadette,

See memorial request attached. Let's discuss the process so you can move this forward.



Mary S Rapoza (she/her)

Director
City of New Bedford | Parks Recreation & Beaches
181 Hillman Street, Bld 3, New Bedford, MA 02740
508.961.3015 | email: Mary.rapoza@newbedford-ma.gov



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Please think of the environment before you print this message and any attachments.

From: Alfred Saulniers <alsaulniers@yahoo.com>
Sent: Sunday, September 26, 2021 8:36 PM
To: artsnewbedford@gmail.com; friends@buttonwoodpark.org; Mary S. Rapoza <Mary.Rapoza@newbedford-ma.gov>
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] Honoring New Bedford's only Olympic champion Leo Larivee at Buttonwood Park

Ms. Rapoza,

I attach the completed second page of the memorial request application.

Alfred H. Saulniers

On Tuesday, September 21, 2021, 02:16:00 PM EDT, Mary S. Rapoza <mary.rapoza@newbedford-ma.gov> wrote:

Hi Mr. Saulniers.

The memorial request application is for any memorial in a park. Most memorial requests are for benches and trees but we have used this form to change the name of a park and dedicate picnic tables.

I have attached the form here. Please reach out if you would like assistance completing the form.

Best wishes,

Mary



Mary S Rapoza (she,her)

Director

City of New Bedford | Parks Recreation & Beaches

181 Hillman Street, Bld 3, New Bedford, MA 02740

508.961.3015 | email: Mary.rapoza@newbedford-ma.gov



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Please think of the environment before you print this message and any attachments.

From: Alfred Saulniers <alsaulniers@yahoo.com>

Sent: Friday, September 17, 2021 1:37 PM

To: artsnewbedford <artsnewbedford@gmail.com>; friends@buttonwoodpark.org; Mary S. Rapoza <Mary.Rapoza@newbedford-ma.gov>

Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] Honoring New Bedford's only Olympic champion Leo Larivee at Buttonwood Park

Ms. Rapoza,

Thank you for your email.

Two issues.

Although Margo Saulnier and I have great-great-grand-parents in common, we do not share the same last name. Somewhere along the way, a final "s" was added to mine. Please correct your address book accordingly.

The Memorial request application enclosed with your email applies to memorial benches and memorial trees. My proposal was for neither of those. I proposed that the city do what it has already done in the South End for my first cousin, once removed, Joseph D. Saulnier.

That proposal calls for erecting signage around Buttonwood Park, an area already used as New Bedford's premier hiking and walking trail, which would designate it the Leo E. Larrivee Memorial Hike-And-Bike Trail. The signage would commemorate the first place he raced in a career that led to his bringing home an Olympic Medal, the only person from New Bedford ever to do so.

Please send the appropriate application form.

Thank you,

Alfred H. Saulniers

On Monday, September 13, 2021, 04:11:01 PM EDT, Mary S. Rapoza <mary.rapoza@newbedford-ma.gov> wrote:

Hi Margo,

Thank you for your interest in Mr. Saulnier's request for a memorial to the Olympic athlete. Mr. Saulnier will need to complete the attached Memorial request application. The memorial request will be reviewed by the City Council and Park Board for approval. We can schedule those reviews once the application is received back in our office. As the proposal is for Buttonwood Park, the Friends of Buttonwood Park would also be asked to make a recommendation to the Park Board on this request.

Thank you all for considering the request. I look forward to seeing the completed application so we can begin the process.

Mary



Mary S Rapoza (she,her)

Director

City of New Bedford | Parks Recreation & Beaches

181 Hillman Street, Bld 3, New Bedford, MA 02740

508.961.3015 | email: Mary.rapoza@newbedford-ma.gov



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Please think of the environment before you print this message and any attachments.

From: New Bedford Creative <artsnewbedford@gmail.com>

Sent: Monday, September 13, 2021 1:52 PM

To: friends@buttonwoodpark.org

Cc: Alfred Saulniers <alsaulniers@yahoo.com>; Mary S. Rapoza <Mary.Rapoza@newbedford-ma.gov>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Honoring New Bedford's only Olympic champion Leo Larivee at Buttonwood Park

Dear Friends of Buttonwood Park,

My name is Margo Saulnier -- I'm the creative strategist for the city of New Bedford operating out of the New Bedford Economic Development Council. I was recently approached by Alfred H. Saulniers, who is proposing a hike-and-bike trail around Buttonwood Park to honor New Bedford's only Olympic athlete (and medalist) Leo Larivee. I'm pasting below his original message. The centennial of his first race ever, at Buttonwood Park, is 2023.

I had a lovely conversation with him today. I advised him that he should first schedule a meeting with you all to learn more about what he is proposing and explore possible next steps. His phone number is [REDACTED]

All best,

Margo

ORIGINAL MESSAGE:

I'd like to propose a hike-and-bike trail around Buttonwood Park to honor New Bedford's greatest unrecognized athlete, Leo Larrivee.

The centennial of his first race ever - in New Bedford at Buttonwood Park - is in 1923.

The centennial of his getting an Olympic medal is in 1924.

Either would provide a telling memorial to his feats.

I enclose below a text box about him that I prepared for my upcoming book on the history of the French communities of New Bedford.

At your convenience, I am happy to share some press clippings about his career and its tragic end.

Alfred H. Saulniers



Text Box Leo Larrivee – The Doctor Who Never Was

Leo Edward Larrivee, New Bedford's first and thus far only Olympic athlete, was also its greatest track hero. But, he never lived long enough to realize his dream of becoming a doctor.

Leo was born in Fall River in 1903 to Quebec-born parents, Joseph Cyrille and Amanda (Larivière) Larrivé. When he was about 4, the family moved to New Bedford. Cyrille became a prominent downtown city barber.

Leo, their only child, went to Sacred Heart Grammar School. He then entered New Bedford High School and graduated there in 1921. High school track never interested him; however, he was a reserve player on the NBHS baseball and basketball teams.

Leo spent two years at Assumption College, but showed little interest in sports. He transferred for his junior year to Holy Cross College.

During the summer of 1923, a friend, New England 5-mile champion runner William Peters, asked Leo's help in training. Although he expected Leo just to stay close and keep pace, Peters ended up trailing him. Peters then urged Leo to compete on his own, but suggested he could do better if he wore proper running shoes.

Leo consulted his parents. They urged him to stick to his studies and to forget running. Nonetheless, Leo bought spiked shoes and entered the City of New Bedford Track Meet at Buttonwood Park. He won the mile event – his first race ever. The next week, he ran the half-mile at the British Field Day meet and took second place.

That fall, Leo joined the Holy Cross track team. The "Whaling City Wonder" attracted national attention by running faster times than the nation's leading middle distance runners. In March 1924, when a Holy Cross relay team member was declared ineligible at the Pennsylvania Games, Leo took his place and with his help the team set a world record in the 2,400 meter relay.

Just ten months after he first put on a spiked shoe, Leo was asked to try out for the 1924 U.S. Olympic team. Sports writers noted that his meteoric career set a world record in sports. They praised his tenacity as showing "a heart of steel and the courage of a lion." In the final Olympic tryouts, he missed a spot for the 1,500 meter team despite finishing second in the preliminary tryouts. He then asked to enter the 3,000 meter tryouts, the first time he would ever run that distance. Even though he never trained for the event, Leo came in third and earned a berth on the Paris-bound team.

In Paris, despite Leo's running with a bandaged leg during the qualifying race, the US team met earned a place on the podium. Leo returned from the 1924 Olympics with New Bedford's first and thus far only Olympic Medal – a Bronze for the third-place finish in the men's 3,000 meter team race.

During his senior year, the Holy Cross track team elected Leo captain. In February, he won the mile at the Knights of Columbus games in Boston. He next won the invitation three-quarter mile race at the American Legion Indoor games in Portland, Maine. In March, he set a new record for the indoor intercollegiate mile at the Manhattan College games.

One week before graduating, Leo returned home to take part in the Kiwanis Club meet at Sargent Field. It was his first New Bedford competition since gaining international prominence. A loud cheer greeted his entrance. He did not disappoint the crowd and handily won the three-quarter mile race.

Leo graduated cum laude from Holy Cross. He was accepted to the medical school at Loyola University of Chicago. Before moving west, he spent the summer of 1925 as a playground instructor in New Bedford.

While in medical school, he kept running, first for the Illinois Athletic Club of Chicago and later for the Chicago Athletic Association. He also served as assistant track coach at Loyola. Whenever he came home on vacation, he worked out almost daily at Sargent Field or at the Fairhaven stadium.

Tragically, the 25-year old medical student met an untimely death in 1928 when a speeding driver crashed into his car. The collision drove the steering column through Leo's abdomen; the collapsing car roof killed his female companion, a nurse. He never finished medical school.

The priests at St. Anthony's Church announced the news of his passing from the pulpit. Word spread rapidly through the city. Leo was waked at his parents' home. Following a funeral mass at Sacred Heart Church, he was buried in the family plot at Notre Dame Cemetery in Fall River.

The Holy Cross Club of Boston later honored him with the Leo Larrivee 2-mile run at the annual Knights of Columbus Games in Boston Garden. The race regularly drew the world's top runners. Paavo Nurmi, the outstanding Finnish runner who set Olympic and world records at the 1924 Olympic Games, won the first year. His run set a New England 2-mile record.

Two local track events commemorated him. In 1930, the Leo Larrivee Track and Field Meet attracted more than 2,000 fans to Sargent Field. In 1931, runners organized the Leo Larrivee Marathon from Fall River to New Bedford.

Today, New Bedford has no monument to honor its first and only Olympic athlete. While articles in the *Standard-Times* in 1957, 2013 and 2016 introduced him to new generations, the city's greatest track hero, Franco American Leo Edward Larrivee, largely remains forgotten.

margosaulnier ([she/her](#)) | creative **strategist** | 617 359 2409 | newbedfordcreative.org