Named after the photojournalist Jacob Riis, the park was developed in two distinct halves separated by a steep glacial ridge, a remnant of the shoreline of Lake Chicago. To the east stands a Georgian-revival fieldhouse surrounded by athletic fields. Alfred Caldwell, a prominent landscape architect who made significant use of native plants and strived for natural esthetics in his designs, created the plan for the western portion, including the lagoon 1. Caldwell wanted the lagoon to appear as if it were a prairie river meandering through the park, and so the lagoon has two main pools connected by a stream-like channel. Limestone lines a portion of the water’s edge.

A path circles the pool, and leads past a waterfall, a stone sitting area, and a fishing pier with wetland plants scattered amidst the limestone along the water’s edge 2. A wooden bridge crosses this pool and leads visitors toward grand oaks and willows.

There is parking directly off of Fullerton on the west side of the field house. A sign points visitors in the direction of the lagoon from the parking area.