Seattle Hosts NAOP Conference
Fifth Annual Meeting Convenes
September 14 to Honor Centennial
of City’s Park System

1984 is the centennial of Seattle’s park system. To celebrate, the Department of Parks and Recreation, Seattle Design Commission and the Friends of Seattle’s Olmsted Parks will host the Fifth National Association for Olmsted Parks Conference, September 14 - 17, 1984.

The conference, "Olmsted Parks of the West: The Future of a Tradition," takes NAOP away from the east coast to an area of breath-taking beauty unfamiliar to many of us.

Surrounded by water and framed by the Olympic and Cascade Mountains, Seattle is a city of parks. The Olmsted legacy includes thirty-three parks and the parkway system, but Seattle has two extremely innovative non-Olmstedian parks, Gaswork and Freeway Park.

For members of the Board of Trustees and Steering Committee, the conference begins on September 13. Notice of this meeting appears elsewhere in the newsletter.

The official opening of the conference is Friday, September 14. Conference participants will be welcomed by Charles Royer, Mayor of Seattle, who will introduce Cecil B. Andrus, former Secretary of the Interior, as keynote speaker.

A luncheon lecture on Seattle’s history by Roger Sale, of the University of Washington, will be followed by tours of the Seattle park and parkway system, highlighting the work of John Charles Olmsted.

On Friday evening, a reception is

Senate, House
Hearings Held on
“Olmsted Historic Landscapes Act”

One of NAOP’s founding purposes was to develop a national commitment to preserve, protect and maintain our nation's Olmsted parks. National legislation to "identify, commemorate and preserve the legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted, his sons, associates and professional descendents" is one way to ensure that these landscapes are available for the use of future generations.

Those of us committed to Olmsted parks and urban green space came a step closer to realizing our goal as hearings were held by the United States Senate and the House of Representatives on the "Olmsted Historic Landscapes Act." (S. 2082 and H.R. 4356)

The Senate hearing before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on Public Lands and Reserved Water took place on May 22, 1984, chaired by Malcolm Wallop of Wyoming. Marianne Grier appeared on behalf of the Department of the Interior to oppose the legislation. Speaking in support of the legislation were Gu Il Travis Quillet, Chairman of NAOP and Robert Mortensen, President-elect of the American Society of Landscape Architects. Excerpts of the testimony are presented elsewhere in this newsletter.

The Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs Subcommittee on Public Lands and National Parks, chaired by John F. Sieberling, sponsor of the legislation, held hearings on June 15, 1984.

Mount Rainier crowns the Seattle skyline, but is only one element of this ruggedly beautiful Pacific Northwest landscape.
World Conference on Olmsted Parks Convenes in New York

New York City hosted the NAOP fourth annual conference in September 1983. Co-chaired by Arthur Ross, long known for his philanthropic interest in park preservation, and Donald Bruckman, Chairman of the New York Botanical Garden, the conference was sponsored by over 80 organizations and supported by the efforts of many individuals who gave of their time and energy.

There were many highlights of the conference, including the balloon ascension in Prospect Park, made possible through the generosity of Malcolm Forbes. Olmsted specifically mentions balloon ascensions in his report on the Buffalo park system in 1888, and it has long been a dream of Joan Bozer, Vicechair of NAOP, who is from Buffalo, to include a balloon ascension in one of our conferences. This was the one!

Throughout the conference the weather was spectacular. The days were clear and warm, the nights cool. The picnic lunch on the Terrace of the newly restored Belvedere in Central Park will long be remembered. It presented such an engaging picture we even made the front page of the New York Times.

Another important element of this conference was the time spent in the parks. There were mounted and walking tours of Central and Prospect Parks. There were tours of Morningside, Riverside, and Fort Tryon in Manhattan, Flushing Meadow, Highland and Alley Parks in Queens, and the Greenbelt system on Staten Island. Many of us visited the great Olmsted estates on Long Island and the comprehensive county park systems of New Jersey. There were trips up the Hudson to Downing Park in Newburgh and a visit to Olmsted’s house and the Vanderbilt Mausoleum on Staten Island.

There were “Victorian” teas, elegant receptions and good fellowship. But there were also moments when we gathered together to hear the thoughts of one of us shared with all of us. During the next two newsletters we will print excerpts from a number of these speeches. We begin with Arthur Ross, who has meant so much to NAOP. He has offered his support, yes, but he has also acted as wise counsellor and good friend. Grady Clay, the keynote speaker, is former editor of Landscape Architecture. He is beginning a new adventure as writer, lecturer and raconteur. Greeting us with some skepticism when he joined our second annual conference in Boston in 1981, he says his appreciation for us has grown and his speech, entitled Exploring the Next Landscape, reflects that appreciation. Bess Meyerson, Commissioner of Cultural Affairs,

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From Remarks By Arthur Ross

Parks around the world are enjoying a renaissance of interest, as city dwellers, pressured by urban blight, are moved to improve their environment after decades of neglect.

People identify more with their parks than perhaps with any of the other of our great public institutions. For inspiration, recreation, and solace too, parks are free and ready access brings them ever closer to the people of our crowded cities.

In New York City parks are absolute necessities, and we have Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux to thank for many of them. Without question, Frederick Law Olmsted must be included among our nation’s great personages. His name, incidentally, speaks for itself. His family arrived in this country some 300 years ago from England where the name Olmsted stood for “A Stand of Elms.”

Born in 1822, dying in 1903, he witnessed the dramatic impact of the industrial revolution on rural and urban life and the acceleration in the movement of people from the countryside to the cities. He foresaw the changes to come and the need to provide a spiritual sanctuary from the urban scene. He was one of the foremost planners and launched the urban park movement.

In New York, we have a special vision of Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, the two names are always joined; they worked together at Vaux’s home on East 16th Street in the winter of 1857-8 on the Greensward Plan for Central Park.

At that time, the City reached only to 36th Street, over a mile short of the present southern boundary of the Park. Now, of course, Central Park’s 843 acres are surrounded on all four sides by densely populated areas, and the Park has become the City’s crown jewel and focal point.

Olmsted traveled extensively abroad and brought back with him the vision of the Romantic Landscape that he found on the great estates and the royal parks of Europe. In this country, Central Park was the first of the great parks to have been created and developed by the people,

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New Trustees, Chairman Elected

Trustees of the National Association for Olmsted Parks elected Gail Travis Quillet Chairman of the 4-year-old organization, and welcomed four new trustees at the Annual Meeting of the Board of Trustees, on April 29, 1984 at "Fairfield," in Brookline, Massachusetts.

New members elected to the Board of trustees are: Donald Harris, Seattle, WA; Bruce Kelly, New York, NY; Ann Satterthwaite, Washington, DC; and Tupper Thomas, Brooklyn, NY.

The slate of Officers was approved at the Annual Meeting. Joining Ms. Quillet are: Joan K. Bozer, Arlyn A. Levee and Charles Beveridge, Vice-Chairs; Tupper Thomas, Treasurer; Sanford Parisky, Associate Treasurer; Clyde Hafiter Eller, Secretary; and Shary Page Berg, Associate Secretary. These Trustees constitute the Executive Committee.

In addition, the following members were re-elected to the Board of Trustees: Betsy Shure Gross, Sandra Higgins, Walter Hundley, Peter Jacobs, Charles McLaughlin, Eleanor Bingham Miller, Marilyn Tuchow and Dana White. The resignations of William Alex, Cornelia H. McMurtie and Victoria Post Ranney from the Board were accepted.

Members of the Steering Committee affirmed their willingness to continue to serve, and we thank them for their dedication to NAOP. William Alex, NY, Marianne Cramer, NY, Thomas Molloy, CA, Cornelia H. McMurtie, MA, Victoria Post Ranney, IL, and Reuben Rainey, VA were welcomed to the Steering Committee, while the resignations of Barney Barron and Ian Stewart were accepted.

The annual budget and revision of the By-Laws were discussed at the annual meeting, but no action was taken.

These two items of business will be taken up at the next meeting of the Board of Trustees scheduled for September 13, 1984 in Seattle, Washington.

The Board acknowledged with special thanks the contribution of Charles McLaughlin to NAOP as he exchanges his role as National Co-chair for that of Past National Co-chair. Charlie became Co-chair with Joan K. Bozer when NAOP was founded, and continued to loyally serve these past three years with Betsy Shure Gross. Charlie has offered wise counsel on numerous occasions, and has in many other generous ways supported NAOP. The Board is pleased that he is willing to continue to serve on the Board, and is grateful for his untiring efforts and dedication to the goals of this organization.

NAOP
Executive Director Retires

Alexander W. Allport, first Executive Director of NAOP, retired April 30, 1984. Sandy indicated his intention to retire at the end of the fiscal year to the Board of Trustees during the conference in September. The Board and Steering Committee presented a Special Achievement Award to Sandy at the Conference Plenary Session -- an oak tree to be planted in Brooklyn's Prospect Park.

The tree was planted on the 112th anniversary of Arbor Day on April 27, 1984.

The tree, a 7" caliper Sawtooth Oak (Quercus acutissima) is planted at the head of the Nethermead near Terrace Bridge. This magnificent 25-foot specimen replaces the original, Olmsted-Vaux planted oak which was lost a number of years ago.

At the dedication, NAOP Chairman, Gail Quillet expressed NAOP's thanks to Sandy Allport: "His tireless and unceasing efforts have brought our organization from its enthusiastic beginning in Buffalo, New York to this time when four years later we are truly a national organization with representatives in 32 states, the district of Columbia, Canada, Great Britain and Mexico."

On the occasion of his retirement the members of NAOP wish him every success in his new endeavors.
scheduled at the Museum of History and Industry, site of a special exhibit of Olmsted landscape drawings and photographs of Seattle's parks which complements the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission's exhibition "Art of the Olmsted Landscape."

David Streatfield's lecture, "The Olmsted Tradition on the West Coast," will set the stage for the workshops on September 15. Workshop topics will focus on the historic context of the Olmsted work on the West Coast and on contemporary issues, including management of vegetation in historic parks; adaptive use, design and restoration of parks and park structures; the politics and management of parklands; downtown density and parks in the central business district; and contemporary park uses: sports, children and other demands on older parks. Workshop speakers will include academic and professional specialists in a number of Olmsted-related fields from around the country.

In the early days, a "mosquito fleet" of 500 steamers carried passengers and mail around Puget Sound. Only one of these is left, the Virginia V. On Saturday evening, we sail aboard her for a cruise of the Sound with views of Seattle's old waterfront, maritime activities and shoreline parks. As we watch the sunset over the Olympic Mountains, dinner will be served.

Special tours of Seattle attractions will be available on Sunday. Arrangements can be made for longer trips to Mt. Rainier, Victoria, British Columbia, Snoqualmie Falls, and other regional sites.

For those joining the post-conference tour, plans include tours of Golden Gate Park, the Berkeley campus, and an overnight stay at Yosemite.

Throughout the conference there will be time for local sight-seeing, talks with fellow conference, walks within the city and the park system - all of which will enliven the visit to Seattle.

Come to Seattle to learn about its Olmsted legacy, discover a new member of the family - John Charles Olmsted. See how one city created a park on industrial wasteland. Come see what makes "the Emerald City" one of the most livable cities in the country - its parks.

Registration for the conference is now open. A program and schedule of fees can be obtained by writing: Donald Harris, Director, Project Development, Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation, 210 Municipal Building, Seattle, WA, 98104.

The Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks, barely a year old, is now a thriving citizen's group with over 200 members. They have published the 1903 Olmsted Brothers report for Seattle's parks, a document which has been out-of-print for nearly 70 years. The Friends have conducted a successful lecture series by local historians, landscape architects, and horticulturists on various aspects of the work of the Olmsted and Olmsted-era parks and park design. The Friends have led walking tours of the older city parks designed by the Olmsted and are planning an outdoor festival at Seattle's first playground, planned by the Olmsted firm in 1910, and a bicycle tour of the Lake Washington Boulevard System.

The volunteer support for the September 13-16 National Conference, "Olmsted Parks of the West: The Future of a Tradition," has come from the Friends and several local institutions which the Friends have drawn into the Olmsted park preservation movement: the Historic Society, Garden Clubs, Community Councils, library staff, and many design professionals.

Neighborhood volunteers and the community clubs have conducted work parties to restore, clean, and re-claim a historic picnic site at one Olmsted park on Lake Washington. Another group of volunteers is working with the historical museum to mount an exhibition of local park photographs and drawings from the turn of the century to be displayed along with "Art of the Olmsted Landscape" during the fall of 1984.

With monthly tours and lectures, volunteer labor in the parks, conference and exhibit planning, donations of professional services and funds, publication of the 1903 Olmsted plan and a park group map, Seattle has seen a remarkable outpouring of new public interest in the parks and park philosophy of the early 1900's.

Come to Seattle
September 14-17
Contact Don Harris
206-625-5013
Massachusetts Creates Park Program, Names Board

In Massachusetts municipalities have been hard pressed to provide necessary funding for the restoration of historic landscapes. In January, however, the Olmsted Historic Landscape Preservation Program was enacted by the legislature under Governor Michael Dukakis ensuring that these irreplaceable landscapes will continue to serve the open space needs recognized by Frederick Law Olmsted.

Information generated by the Massachusetts Association for Olmsted Parks Pilot Inventory Project, called Olmsted in Massachusetts: The Public Legacy, resulted in the identification of the largest and most significant Olmsted parks in eight cities and towns in the Commonwealth. Twelve parks in these municipalities will receive $13 million in the initial phase of restoration funding. This program is the first in the nation in which state government has assumed the initiative to provide its municipalities with preservation funds specifically earmarked for Olmsted parks. It will undoubtedly become a national model for affecting the revitalization and continued viability of the Olmsted legacy.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is fortunate to have approximately 280 public parks designed by the Olmsted firm. This rich legacy represents almost 1/3 of the firm’s public open space work, and many of these parks continue to serve broad regional constituencies. However, many of these parks are 75 to 100 years old and have entered a critical stage. Deferred maintenance, intrusive elements and physical deterioration are severe problems which must be resolved if this vital resource is to provide enjoyment for the public of the 21st century.

James Otensohn, Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Management has announced a State-wide Advisory Committee, to develop programmatic criteria and implementation guidelines, to aid in the selection of consultants, and to oversee the progress of the program. The members of the Committee are:

Shary Page Berg, National Park Service
William Clendaniel, Trustees of Reservations
Charles W. Eliot, Massachusetts Association for Olmsted Parks
Julius Qy. Fabos, University of Massachusetts
John Furlong, Radcliffe Seminars
Batay Shure Gross, Mass. Executive Office of Economic Affairs
William Hedlund, Massachusetts Recreation and Park Association
Patricia Loheed, Boston Society of Landscape Architects
Charles McLaughlin, National Association for Olmsted Parks
Laurie Olin, Harvard University
Patricia L. Weslowski, Massachusetts Historical Commission

Report by S. Christopher Scott

Seattle conference will be seeing: top left, the Palace of Fine Arts, San Francisco; bottom left, the Olmsted landscape of the Canadian Consulate, Seattle; and right, Yosemite National Park.
Seattle's Olmsted Legacy

Most Seattle citizens take their city's beauty for granted. They are unaware of the important part Frederick Law Olmsted and his successors played in preserving this beauty.

Olmsted was a visionary who understood the role of open space in urban society for both present and future generations. As early as 1860, he pleaded with the federal government for the preservation of wilderness areas. His principles helped lay the foundation for the National Parks Service and the contemporary environmental conscience.

Olmsted's sons, trained in their father's firm, continued his work after his retirement. In 1903, the year Frederick Law Olmsted died, Seattle hired Olmsted Brothers to develop a comprehensive city parks plan.

John Charles Olmsted, nephew and adopted son of the senior Olmsted, after surveying the city, made a recommendation in a 1903 Report to the Seattle Park Commissioners. He marked out an emerald necklace of parkways, set with jewel-like parks along its length. Utilizing the bike-patha laid out in the mid-1900s, he created a scheme to put a park or playground within a mile of every resident in the city.

The report gained approval of the park commissioners and the city council. Subsequent bond issues were passed by the citizens to enable work to go forward. Then began Seattle's 36 year association with the Olmsted firm.

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James Dawson, John Charles and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., figured prominently in the Olmsted design work here. A 1908 Olmsted Brothers Report advocated further location and design of parks, playgrounds and viewpoints.

The Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, scheduled for 1909, provided another opportunity for Olmsted involvement. The firm designed Lake Washington Boulevard as a grand entrance to the exposition, which was on the site of the University of Washington. They also designed the Geyser Basin (Frosh Pond), and the Rainier Vista. The Washinton Park Arboretum took many decades to complete but was finished following Olmsted plans.

The early Grand Plan didn't altogether become a reality. But the major scheme was carried out to give us our Olmsted legacy of boulevards, parks, playgrounds and viewpoints; and a number of private estate gardens.

Olmsted landscape architecture allowed for quiet contemplation and dynamic activities. Need to provide for the latter was well understood and documented in the urban design plans of Olmsted father and sons. Gaswork Parks would have pleased John Charles Olmsted, who recommended just such use of that land in 1903.

Seattle citizens early in this century had pride, ambition, energy, foresight. They are responsible for the start of our Olmsted legacy. Civic groups like the Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club and Seattle Garden Club gave solid support.

Successive Seattleites have cared enough to keep the Olmsted philosophy, and our parks, alive and growing. Today we boast a magnificent park system, considered by many to be the most complete Olmsted park system in the country. There is nothing quite like it in the country.

Nancy Becker, President
Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks

Liverpool Conference Salutes
Green Towns and Cities

A large delegation of NAOP members attended the UK / USA Congress on Green Towns and Cities at Liverpool, England the week of July 8-13, 1984. The Congress -- jointly initiated by NAOP and Dartington Institute -- celebrated the strong historic links between the American and British parks tradition and focused on the policy issues which surround urban parks today. The team of U.S. speakers included NAOP leaders Gail T.

Quillet, Betsy Shure Gross, Charles Beveridge, and Frederick Guthrie.

The week's program included visits to Birkenhead Park, source of inspiration to Frederick Law Olmsted during his 1850 tour of England, and to Britain's first International Garden Festival, taking place in Liverpool this year. An "Historian's Day" explored Olmsted's work and the British tradition of park design from which he and Calvert Vaux drew their ideas.

"Art of the Olmsted Landscape," created by three members of NAOP for the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, traveled overseas to the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool as an adjunct to NAOP's co-sponsorship of the Congress.

The Congress sharpened our thinking on questions concerning the urban green -- what it is and why we need it. In the UK the Congress launched a THINK GREEN campaign to lead a nation-wide movement of practical action to revitalize parks and green cities throughout Great Britain.
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Elected and Governmental Officials
- Joan K. Bozer, Legislator, Erie County, NY, Chairman of the Buffalo Friends of Olmsted Parks and Vice Chair of NAOP
- Betsy Shure Cross, Director of Marketing, Dept. of Commerce, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and Past National Co-chair of NAOP

Historic Landscape Organizations
- Gail Travis Guilley, Historic Preservation Consultant, and Chairman of NAOP
- Robert Mortensen, President-elect of the American Society of Landscape Architects, accompanied by Patricia O’Donnell, Chair of the ASLA Historic Preservation Committee and NAOP Steering Committee Member, and Philip Winslow, ASLA Representative to the NAOP Board and a member of the NAOP Steering Committee

Officials of National Organizations
- Ann Satterthwaite, American Planning Association, and NAOP Board Member
- Barry Tindall, Director of Public Affairs, National Recreation and Park Association
- Dwight Young, Vice President for Services, National Trust for Historic Preservation
- Edward F. Sanderson, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Rhode Island, representing the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers

Scholars Panel
- Charles E. Beveridge, Editor, Frederick Law Olmsted Papers, and Vice Chair of NAOP
- Albert Fein, Professor of History and Chairman of Department of Urban Studies, Long Island University, and NAOP National Advisor
- Frederick Gutheim, Professor, George Washington University, and Park Professionals Panel
- Thomas Mowery, Superintendent of Parks, San Francisco, and NAOP Steering Committee
- Donald Harris, Director, Project Development, Department of Parks, Seattle, WA, and NAOP Board Member, representing the Conference of Mayors on behalf of Mayor Charles Royer
- Alexander Hoskins, Director, Fairmont Park Commission, Philadelphia, PA

Community & State Organizations
- Sally Harbaugh, President, Olmsted Parks Society of Atlanta, and NAOP Steering Committee
- Peter Harnik, Coordinator, People’s Alliance for Rock Creek Park, Washington, DC
- David Riley, President, Rhode Island Association for Olmsted Landscapes (RIALP)

Each of these witnesses made an excellent, forceful presentation in support of the "Olmsted Historic Landscapes Act," and we thank them for their time and dedication.

There was also an impressive number of spectators, including a number of NAOP members who did not testify. Arley A. Levine, Vice Chair of NAOP and Clyde Helfter Eller, Secretary of the Association were present, as was Dana White, Ben Fieiman and Melanie Anson.

Following the hearing, many of us joined Ann Satterthwaite for lunch at the Democratic Club where we had the opportunity to thank Loretta Newman, Legislative Aide to John Sieberling, for all her efforts on behalf of this legislation.
Testimony Presented By NAOP and ASLA on "Olmsted Historic Landscapes Act,"
June 15, 1984

NAOP Testimony

The National Association for Olmsted Parks urges passage of H.R. 4356, the "Olmsted Historic Landscapes Act," to identify, commemorate and preserve the legacy of historic landscapes of Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., his son, John Charles Olmsted and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., his associates, including among others Charles W. Eliot and Warren Manning, and his professional descendants, and in so doing we speak for the millions of Americans, rich and poor, whose lives are enriched by these beautiful green spaces in our nation's concrete cities.

The National Association for Olmsted Parks (NAOP) is an organization with members in 32 states, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Canada and Great Britain, made up of design professionals, planners, preservationists, park administrators, scholars, elected officials and business and community leaders; an organization committed to the preservation of our nation's Olmsted parks. NAOP was founded in 1980 as the result of a suggestion made by Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan during a visit to Buffalo, New York. In May of that year, Joan Bozer, an elected official of the Erie County legislature and one of our first Co-chairs, invited fifty people from eight states to consider if we, as representatives of a network of urban parks designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, could obtain national recognition and federal funds for the maintenance, preservation and protection of his parks.

The Olmsted Historic Landscapes Act is an outgrowth of public and legislative initiative, the result of a public-private partnership for urban in a National Inventory and Assessment of Olmsted Parks, was funded by public money and private foundations under the auspices of the Harvard Graduate School of Design, the Radcliffe Seminars Landscape Design Program, the University of Massachusetts and Boston University. The inventory was published to develop public awareness and interest in the Olmsted legacy in Massachusetts. Legislation was then proposed, resulting in a capital outlay appropriation of $13 million this year to begin restoration of eight municipal Olmsted landscapes of regional significance in Boston, Brookline, Worcester, Springfield, Fall River, New Bedford, Brockton and Lynn.

Massachusetts, the largest beneficiary of Olmsted landscapes, is prepared to assume responsibility for a major component of this nation's cultural heritage, and can provide a national model for the public-private partnership needed to restore the Olmsted legacy to its full significance.

Frederick Law Olmsted is America's premier landscape architect. His impact on the American landscape, through his designs for Central Park in New York, the "Emerald Necklace" in Boston and for countless other major parks in over 175 cities in 36 states across this nation, continues to be felt by millions of people, rich and poor.

Few people, according to Patricia Weslowski, State Historic Preservation Officer for Massachusetts, have contributed to the changing face of our landscape so broadly as to merit individual study, but, in her opinion, Frederick Law Olmsted landscape revitalization. With the formation of the Massachusetts Association for Olmsted Parks in 1981, under the leadership of our past National Co-chair Betsy Shure Gross, the linkage was extended. Community activists, landscape architects, academic institutions, legislative and municipal officials joined to develop a program to inventory and assess a number of significant Olmsted parks in the state. The pilot inventory, step one is such a man. He and his sons were directly involved in the design and construction of hundreds of American parks, parkways, college campuses, cities and planned communities, publicly and privately owned estates, institutions, cemeteries, and recreation facilities, including the 40-Mile Loop in Portland, Oregon; Roger Williams Park in Providence, Rhode Island; the city plan of Santa Fe, New Mexico; Belle isle Park in Detroit, Michigan; the government reservation at Hot Springs, Arkansas; and the Hawaii National Park.

As early as 1892, the Hot Springs of Arkansas had been set aside as a national reservation. However, Olmsted's report on Yosemite was the first systematic exposition of the concept of government's responsibility to set aside, "natural scenes of an impressive character" for all its citizens. He articulated the philosophical basis for national and state parks, which, ultimately, was the catalyst for the establishment of the National Park System and the

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National Park Service.
Frederick Law Olmsted was, with his partner Calvert Vaux, the founder of the profession of landscape architecture. Now he emerges as a major historical figure— a theorist, planner, designer, and administrator, whose ideas are as relevant to the needs of the nation today as they were 100 years ago.

He and his associates, moved by humanitarian and sociological ideals, greatly enhanced the face of urban America in the latter part of the 19th century. Their parks, in Atlanta, Buffalo, Chicago, Louisville, Milwaukee, Seattle, Denver, Dayton, Birmingham and St. Louis, are part of our cultural and artistic patrimony.

Designed in the English Romantic style, these parks were meant to serve a very practical purpose. As the Northeast became increasingly industrialized, men of vision saw that, in time, cities like New York would over-run all their open space. Unless space was reserved for parks, millions of people would suffer a "malaise," to use the Victorian term, brought on by the conditions of the urban environment.

Today we tend to look back with nostalgia on those earlier times, but I assure you that New York was a nasty place to live. There were scores of slaughterhouses without proper sanitary facilities; animals were butchered in the street and their carcasses left to decay in the gutters. Sheep and cattle were regularly herded through the streets. People threw slops into the gutter, where they were devoured by pigs which roamed freely. Dogs ran free, and there were regular fight-to-the-death combats with the pigs. There was also the deafening noise of clattering hooves and iron-clad cart wheels on granite paving blocks—along with the organ grinders and hawkers peddling their wares. It was these conditions that parks were meant to mitigate.

Olmsted believed that green grass, blue sky and sparkling water could soothe and restore. His parks were designed as places to provide feelings of relief and renewal, and a "sense of enlarged freedom which was to all, at all times, the most certain and valuable gratification afforded by a park. The park," he wrote, "will be a valuable substitute for a visit to the country affording the greatest possible healthful change of scene, of air, of irritable associations of city life."

People continue to be served by Olmsted's parks in just this way. Recently, as part of the Central Park Master Plan, a User Survey was conducted. People leaving the park were asked what they had been doing while they were in the park. Over 85% of the respondents said that they had been in the park for a walk, to look at the birds, to people watch, to read, to picnic, to fly a kite. One even said that he had been in the park to look at the scenery. They had been in Central Park for precisely the reasons Olmsted had intended. Come to Prospect Park in Brooklyn on a hot summer Sunday. The place is packed with people—families sitting on the grass, cooking supper on their barbecues, kids playing volleyball, grandmothers sitting in the cool shade watching the world go by. They are renewing themselves, just as Olmsted said they would. Our urban parks, lighted through the years, be, are used and loved and needed by millions of people who cannot get away from the city any other way.

The cultural, historical and aesthetic arguments for parks have been around for a long time. The economic arguments for urban green space are more recent. They are, however, being rapidly developed and widely articulated. Charles Jordan, Commissioner of Public Affairs in Portland, Oregon and a member of NAACP's Steering Committee, speaking before the Urban Forestry Conference in April of this year, said:

"Parks and green space are vital to the health of our urban community. They are a major determinant of the quality of our environment. They cleanse the air, moderate the climate, protect the ear, please the eye and renew the spirit. They provide for public expression as they encourage private reflection. Moreover, parks may well be as good for our pocketbooks as they are for our bodies and souls."

Olmsted could not have said it better. Jordan also says that the first neighborhoods in cities to be renovated and reclaimed are usually those with shady tree lined streets and clean safe parks, and that equality of parks is an increasingly important component in a city's ability to attract new business.

In 1979, the Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress concluded that "the greatest difference between cities perceived to have the most favorable business climate and the least lies in 'quality of life' issues not business-related factors." There is a tendency to see parks as a luxury, as isolated from the economy of the city; but this underestimates the significance of parks to the overall plan for an economic development strategy.

As James Rouse, developer of Harborplace in Baltimore and the South Street Seaport in New York, puts it, "The amenities are the economics of the city." Parks are an important amenity—they give texture to our cities, they give relief, just as Olmsted said, to the confining and restraining conditions of the town. Parks go beyond recreation to impact on environmental quality, economics and community development, culture, the arts and education.

I am not testifying today only on behalf of the National Association for Olmsted Parks; I am here to acknowledge the efforts of all the other organizations working alongside us to increase awareness of the Olmsted legacy, who serve as models to the preservation community, and who we know will write to you supporting this legislation. These include, among many, the National Trust, the State Historic Preservation Officers Association, the National Park Service, the American Society of Landscape Architects, the National Association of State Archaeologists, the National Recreation and Park and Association, the National Park and Conservation Association, and Preservation Action. We are also particularly grateful to those government officials with practical expertise in environmental and economic issues who have been our mentors—Ohio's Congressman John F. Siebeling, who caused the legislation to be drafted, New York's Senator Moynihan, who introduced the legislation in the Senate, Evelyn Murphy, Secretary of Economic Affairs in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, who pointed the way for the Massachusetts model, and Joan Bozer, whom I mentioned earlier in this testimony.

Together, all of us, and millions of other like-minded citizens urge passage of this bill, and pledge continuing vigilance and wide-ranging support of plans to enhance and preserve our nation's green spaces for all citizens— for all time.

Thank you.
Private and public sector efforts have begun the massive inventory required to identify the landscape legacy covered by this act. In 1982, the National Association for Olmsted Parks (NAOP) embarked on an organizational goal to survey Olmsted's public parks. To meet part of that goal, the Massachusetts Association for Olmsted Parks (MAOP) led a volunteer effort that created an inventory format and performed a comprehensive inventory of 30 Olmsted parks. The resulting published report serves as a model for future efforts.

In 1981, the Planning Department of the City of Chicago undertook the Historic Park Features Study of landscape, art, and architecture in 65 city parks. Some of them were Olmsted historic landscapes and others were designed by such notable figures as Daniel Hudson Burnham, William LeBaron Jenney and Jens Jensen. The summary report of this study is nearing publication. As part of restoration planning, comprehensive inventory work is currently being performed on Central Park and Prospect Park, funded by New York City's Department of Parks and Recreation as well as private donors.

As part of the ASLA National Survey of Historic Landscapes, several ASLA chapters are progressing with identification and research efforts while others are initiating inventory work. This survey is a long-range effort to identify cultural and designed historic landscapes as the initial step in landscape preservation. Collaboration with interested groups and individuals is being sought in the ASLA survey effort.

At present, only about 30 Olmsted landscapes are protected through National Register listing. To date, public and private sector inventory attempts have addressed less than five percent of the total Olmsted landscape legacy.

The enormity of the job to be done requires the leadership, guidance, and support of the federal government. This legislation would build upon present private efforts and those of state and municipal governments by providing the resources and expertise of the federal government. We believe the federal government's involvement is critical to establishing a successful inventory program nationwide.

In the past, historic resources have often been inventoried through public/private partnership, relying on the collaboration of public officials, interested groups and individuals. The inventory of Olmsted landscapes, mandated by this act, should be conducted in this collaborative spirit. ASLA is willing to aid in the effort....

STATUS OF THE OLMSTED LEGACY TODAY

The integrity of many Olmsted legacy landscapes is threatened by deferred capital improvements, inadequate maintenance, and inappropriate alterations. The decades of use and abuse have also taken a toll. A comprehensive inventory of urban recreation, published in 1980 by the Department of the Interior, showed that while urban residents set a high priority on nearby recreational facilities, neighborhood parks were often deteriorated. Historic parks, developed when large tracts of land were still available, form a substantial portion of the urban core and are an important part of the public realm. The value of these resources has rarely been recognized. Motives behind the alterations have included humanitarian, political, social, or economic reasons, all of which have had a detrimental effect on the landscape.

Over the decades, Olmsted legacy landscapes have been altered in a number of ways. In some cases, entire landscapes have been lost. In others, original design concepts have been compromised through change. The conscious, comprehensive approach to design and planning carried out in Olmsted's original developments has rarely been followed. Motives behind the alterations have included humanitarian, political, maintenance reduction, real estate development, and changing recreation preferences. Changes have occurred in Olmsted historic landscapes in four basic ways: the addition of urban elements, the alteration of original features, the deterioration of components, and the removal of elements or property.

Today, several Olmsted legacy landscapes are especially threatened. The Cornell Medical Center Westchester Division, formerly the Bloomingdale Asylum designed from 1892-94 by the Olmsted firm, is a 228-acre site of hilly, White Plains countryside. The historically significant asylum buildings are surrounded by a naturalistic urban landscape. Earlier encroachment by a large parking lot and department store is to be further developed into a multi-use commercial and residential complex, destroying the Olmsted landscape. The property is privately owned and will be developed with private funds. It is not protected by National Register status or local preservation designation.

The former New York State epileptic colony and Shaker settlement in

Continued page 12
Sonyea, Livingston County, developed according to a master plan by the Olmsted brothers in 1899, is being converted into a medium security prison by the New York State Department of Corrections. Damaging alteration to the landscape is proposed. The Department of Corrections is operating under an emergency declaration which seeks to exclude proposed alterations from state preservation laws.

The Atlanta suburb of Druid Hills was designed in the 1890s by the Olmsted firm. To serve the proposed Carter Presidential Library, the Georgia Department of Transportation has developed a plan to obliterate much of the Olmsted landscape by constructing a new highway along the Ponce de Leon Parkway and a string of small parks. A fierce battle between the forces for and opposed to the development is currently raging.

And in Dayton, Ohio, the Veterana Administration Center grounds, designed by the Olmsted firm, are threatened with encroachment from the proposed rerouting of U.S. Route 35.

Other examples of threatened Olmsted landscapes are all too evident upon inspection. Jackson Park in Chicago was first designed by Olmsted and Vaux in 1870. It was constructed, under a modified plan, as the setting for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. The construction of a golf driving range, surrounded by a 12-foot chain link fence, has significantly altered the expansive open lawn, a key feature of the original design.

Belle Isle Park in Detroit, designed by the Olmsted firm in 1884, was an engineering as well as a landscape architectural feat. The marshy island became a sinusoidally edged water park. In an attempt to accommodate all types of recreation within this single park, the original picturesque park has become a heavily paved, straight-edged landscape, bearing little resemblance to its Olmstedian form. In Buffalo, Humboldt Parkway was designed by Olmsted and Vaux to link Delaware Park and Humboldt Park (now Martin Luther King Park) with a broad central drive, two smaller carriage roads, and rows of maple trees. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the parkway was replaced by a six-lane depressed expressway, effectively severing a neighborhood and totally destroying the parkway.

Although other Olmsted legacy landscapes have escaped destruction or extensive encroachment, such deteriorating factors as deferred maintenance, lack of continuous reforestation, and failure of drainage and water supply systems have taken a toll. Current conditions are generally far from optimal.

In reviewing the deteriorated condition of known Olmsted historic landscapes, the need for an effective, coordinated program to identify and preserve these sites becomes all too apparent. Without a program in place to safeguard Olmsted landscapes and preserve their historic integrity, many of these sites will be further damaged and destroyed.

Landscape architects still look to the works of Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., his son, associates and professional descendants for inspiration in their quest to create ecologically sound, inviting landscapes. Our country's remaining Olmsted legacy landscapes deserve the recognition that the passage of the Olmsted Historic Landscape Act would provide. Moreover, ASLA believes that without the enactment of this legislation, historic landscape preservation will not receive the federal government priority it deserves, or, in turn, the necessary funding, coordination, or leadership.

We urge speedy approval of this legislation.

NAOP Welcomes New Affiliate: Rhode Island Association For Olmsted Landscapes

Rhode Island has long been acclaimed for its rugged seacoast, great estates, and picturesque villages. This May a committee of landscape, preservation and academic professionals incorporated the Rhode Island Association for Olmsted Landscapes (RIAL), to promote and preserve the state's historic landscapes.

"We want to understand Rhode Island's landscape legacy, to examine its private estates as well as its parks," said David Riley, President of RIAL.

The fledgling organization has received support from a coalition of Rhode Island organizations, including the historic preservation and planning groups. "We're seen as an asset to raising public consciousness across the state from Westerly to Sauganack, particularly about private estate work," said Riley.

Portions of Newport's mansion-lined Ocean Drive were recently removed from the National Register of Historic Places due to inappropriate additions. Many Rhode Island estates with grounds by the Olmsteds and other important landscape firms have been sold or are not being adequately maintained. "We have the history of American landscape gardening here," said Riley.

Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. inspected park land set aside in Providence, RI and made recommendations in 1868, but H.W.S. Cleveland designed Roger Williams Park ten years later. The park is currently in the first phase of the master planning process. In 1900 Olmsted Brothers created an interconnected park system for Providence County, which is now under the jurisdiction of six communities, with various levels of maintenance.

RIAL has hosted two tours of Newport estate landscapes, one for its sister affiliate, the Massachusetts Association for Olmsted Parks. A tour of Providence landscapes is planned for the fall.

The organization has high hopes. "We will build a constituency for our parks and estates, research the Olmsted connections, and develop a statewide inventory," said Riley. The RIAL officers include: Mary Norrell, Vice President; Martha Moore, Secretary; and Karst Hoogeboom, Treasurer.

For more information, contact: David Riley, P.O. Box 775, Narragansett, RI 02882.
News from Around the Country

WASHINGTON, DC: As a result of the hearings on the "Olmsted Historic Landscape Act," a number of us have had the opportunity to correspond with our elected representatives and the members of the House and Senate Subcommittees who are considering the legislation. We thought you might like to do the same.

It is clear from reading Roderick Nash's Wilderness and the American Mind (Yale University Press, 1982) that few pieces of preservation legislation are passed on the basis of sheer merit. They are passed because they are worthy and receive the support of a broad and vocal constituency.

We ask that each of you join us in the educational process that is necessary for the passage of this legislation. Below are listed the House and Senate members responsible for this bill. Please let your voice be heard.

U.S. SENATE, COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES, 301 Hart, (202) 224-4971

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J. Bennett Johnston, LA
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U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON INTERIOR AND INSULAR AFFAIRS, 1324 Longworth House Office Building, (202) 225-2761

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Beverly B. Byron, MD *
Ron de Lugo, VI *
Samuel Gejdenson, CT *
William Patman, TX
Peter H. Kostmayer, PA *
James Moody, WI *
William Patman, TX

The House of Representatives is obviously very enthusiastic about this legislation. The same level of interest must be generated in the Senate. Urge your Senators to co-sponsor this legislation and give it their active support.
New York City

NEW YORK CITY, NY: The children's gazebo, built by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. in Fort Tryon Park (Olmsted Bros., circa 1935) has been completely refurbished, under the supervision of Joseph Brennan, Director of Historic Parks, by the NYC Department of Parks and the Greenacre Foundation. The Friends of Fort Tryon is celebrating the restoration with music and story telling at the gazebo, and, just to make sure it remains in good condition, a clean-up in which all can join. As Fort Tryon approaches its 50th Anniversary in 1989, we know we will be hearing more about the restoration of the park and the public plans being made for its continuing enjoyment. Fort Tryon Park was designated a New York City Landmark on the occasion of the World Conference on Olmsted Parks last September.

Atlanta

ATLANTA: The only public park in the Deep South designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. is the linear park along Ponce de Leon Avenue. The linear park is the centerpiece of Olmsted's 1899 design for Druid Hills garden suburb. Druid Hills was Mr. Olmsted's last opportunity to design a suburban residential area with what he considered adequate open space. Druid Hills, with its magnificent linear park and parkway system consisting of a curvilinear Ponce de Leon Avenue bordered by sweeping park space is regarded by Olmsted scholars as one of his finest works.

The linear park, along with Ponce de Leon Avenue, is still being threatened by the "Presidential Parkway." This is the abandoned Stone Mountain Tollway, which has been brought out again, renamed, and spruced up to accommodate the proposed Carter Library in a widened portion of its median. It is this feature that the Georgia Department of Transportation hopes will sell a discredited highway project. The "Presidential Parkway" will connect the stub of the abandoned tollway to a widened portion of Ponce de Leon Avenue by cutting through the middle of Olmsted's linear park.

The Federal Highway Administration recently approved federal funding for the "Presidential Parkway" project, despite the recommendation of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation that the road, which they concluded was unnecessary and destruc-

tive, not receive federal funds. The Advisory Council held a rare full-Council hearing and on-site inspection in Atlanta on February 27, 1984. Following the administration's approval of the project, the Advisory Council wrote the Council on Environmental Quality requesting that they review the "Presidential Parkway" project.

With Atlanta's Olmsted parkland in danger, the Olmsted Parks Society of Atlanta was incorporated in March of 1983. The society has been working hard to make Atlantans aware of the irreplaceable value of their Olmsted legacy. Time is short.

Sally Harbaugh and Mary Dabbos, Olmsted Parks Society of Atlanta

Buffalo

BUFFALO, NY: The Buffalo Board of Education wants to build a school on "vacant" land; preservationists wish to preserve Martin Luther King Park. The differences between the two groups tells much about the status of historic landscapes in this country.

Martin Luther King Park is part of Buffalo's Olmsted-Vaugh park system, which is listed on the National Register, yet the Board of Education considers it an appropriate location for a school. Not all of Buffalo agrees. Lynn Newman, writing for the Preservation Coalition of Erie County, says: "Our parks are our heritage and are a national treasure. With a school in Martin Luther King Park it would cease to exist as a park; it would be simply another school campus. There are alternatives to putting the school in the park. We must not let naif single-mindned interests come before the needs of all the people of Buffalo to have parks and green space in the city. We must protect our parks!"

Recently concern about Martin Luther King Park is growing within the community. The Coalition to Protect Martin Luther King Park has been formed, and has adopted the slogan "KIDS NEED PARKS TOO." It seems to inform the public of the negative impact that this planned development would have on the park, and to work with the Board of Education to locate an alternative site. Their petition to the Board of Education read in part: "Using our park land may be easier and cheaper for the Board of Education, but we want both a dynamic new science magnet school for our children and our park land."

White Plains

WHITE PLAINS, NY: If the New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center and the Robert Martin Co. of Elmford, NY have their way a $750,000,000 commercial/residential development will annihilate an important Olmsted landscape. But not of the neighbors, citizens and working staff of New York Hospital's Westchester Division are successful in their fight.

New York Hospital is one of the foremost psychiatric institutions in the United States, recognized for excellence in teaching, research and patient care. Its two psychiatric divisions are the Payne Whitney Clinic in New York City and the Bloomingdale Hospital in White Plains, now called the Westchester Division. The hospital is the largest privately owned property in White Plains, and is situated on 218 acres of rolling terrain, with a pond, formal garden, golf course, marshland and two streams.

The land was purchased in 1868 as a farm to supply fresh produce to the New York Faculty. In 1892 the Board of Governors, aware that the once rural Manhattan setting was rapidly becoming urbanized, moved to White Plains, 25 miles north of New York City.

The Board of Governors contacted architects Richard Morris Hunt and James Renwick for plans. After long delays, the building program was undertaken with James Brown Lord as the architect. The landscape firm chosen was Frederick Law Olmsted & Co. The main building and landscaping was completed in 1894, with additional treatment and residential facilities added over the years.

Late last year, plans were unveiled for the development of the Bloomingdale site. Of the 209 acres which comprise the present site, the hospital occupies 50 acres. It is proposed to develop the remaining 159 acres with 2-million square feet of office space located in at least two 12-story buildings; a 325,000 square foot shopping center which includes several restaurants and a movie complex; a 500 room hotel, and 2,300 housing units. Another 50,000 square feet of shopping and a 250 room conference center are also associated. Parking is planned for the entire complex. A road is proposed through the middle of the site to carry the traffic, and a network of vehicular ramps connects the site to I-287, one
Gillespie, Northeast Regional Director for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and other interested persons, including William Alex of the FLO Association. William Alex then visited the Library of Congress to examine the Bloomingdale correspondence. Karin Lucas was given a summary of the letters from 1892 to 1894, which was incorporated into her presentation to the State Board on March 29, 1984.

The hearing was most curious. Lawyers and "experts" for the hospital developers cast doubt on everyone and everything, even to the point of disparaging the original architect. The personnel of the Frederick Law Olmsted Papers were described as incompetent and the FLO Association was accused of manipulating the facts. In spite of this, the State Board recommended nomination. However, the developer's lawyers insisted they needed more time, and the actual nomination of the site was "postponed." A new hearing was scheduled for June 21, which, at the request of both sides, has been postponed until September.

A team of lawyers, urban planners and researchers have been hired to prevent the nomination. It is their contention that the landscape has no historic value unless it was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. The city of White Plains is considering approval of a zoning change that would enable the development to go forward. The site is presently restricted to low-density, single-family housing.

But what of the patients? The Board of Governors of the hospital sees the planned development as a solution to the hospital's long-term financial concerns, but their opinion is not shared by the staff of the hospital, who value the country setting. Dr. Armand Loranger, head of the psychology department for 15 years, noted how former patients credited the sylvan setting as a factor in their recovery. "The beauty of nature," Dr. Loranger said, "can do some things for a broken spirit that no drugs, electric shock therapy or psychotherapy can ever do." The meetings between the staff and the developer have been described as heated and antagonistic. "We are disappointed," said the head of the Westchester Division Faculty Council, that the trustees would encourage a developer to come up with plans that are so destructive." His concern is reflected in a condemnation of the plan by the Faculty Council which was approved unanimously.

Considering the decision of the 1860s Board of Governors to move their charges away from the encroaching city for a scenic, peaceful refuge, one wonders how the present Board justifies jamming the patients into a dense urban setting. One questions if there is a nursery that has bushes and trees large enough to screen out that scene from the patient's view.

William Alex, Frederick Law Olmsted Association

The Olmsted firm's plans are temporarily stored at the Springfield Armory National Historic Site during renovation of the storage vaults at Fairlsted, the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.
From Remarks by Bess Myerson

People who know and love parks are people who know a great secret. And that secret is - a city - like every living thing - must breathe to live. It must have elbow-room. Elbows were designed for more than just digging into the side of your neighbor on the rush-hour express. It must have quiet places in which to relax. City dwellers must be able to fold their tensions and silently steal away to the modern oasis - our parks, be they great or small.

A city must have rest-and-recreation areas where trees and flowers and carpets of grass are honored, and nature - in all its varied splendor - is our gracious host.

Our parks are a string around the urban finger, reminding and instructing us that, in a crowded city, where to park your car is not the ultimate challenge. People who want to find those uncomplicated moments of pleasure that too often can get lost in the rush and roar of a city, also need a place to park. And I DO mean park.

Frederick Law Olmsted knew this. It was the story of his life, the dimension of his purpose, the greatness of his gift to all of us, and, he's still alive - in you. His gift is still ours to receive - from your hands.

Frederick Law Olmsted's extraordinary career carried him across this country, leaving his imprint on Buffalo, Boston, Detroit, Chicago, Seattle and elsewhere. Nor was it by any means confined to parks. Olmsted was responsible for as diverse achievements as his contribution to the design of the World Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago, and the beautiful Stanford University campus in Palo Alto, California.

In New York City, a significant alliance and a broad cooperative program has developed involving government and private philanthropy dedicated to the preservation and restoration of our parks. Government leaders are developing an increased awareness as they appreciate that the parks, as an offset to urban decay, have a broad, and important constituency. It is these efforts that the National Association for Olmsted Parks is fostering, and which we applaud.
Exploring The Next Landscape
By Grady Clay

In convening the first international conference of Olmsted parks, you have taken a courageous and risky step. I am honored to share the sense of adventure and enterprise evident in this gathering. Your title suggests a world, and not a parochial, view; even omniscience, which is surely more to be desired than myopia and chauvinism.

Your program also suggests that the principles advocated by Frederick Law Olmsted, and exhibited by his well-preserved and recorded works, have some application beyond his time and place....

My purpose here is to sketch some of the forces at work on the American landscape, with a few observations from recent travels; to see how those forces differ from the ones of Mr. Olmsted's time; and to look at both the dangers and the opportunities.

Let us begin with the competition for Central Park in 1857. When it was advertised, that word "advertized" was still spelled with a "z." The top prize was $2,000, the lowest $500, exceptional prizes in those days. The idea and practice of a design competition was quite European. It would take more than a hundred years for this foreign practice to "catch on" in the United States....

As this tide of international influence continues -- pouring off America and onto other nations, with large groundswells of influence in return -- we will see more and more of our own cityscapes put together by the competition process....

The looks of the city and the countryside have been transformed since Olmsted's time by the rise of international fashions in architecture. The latest variation in skyscraper will by repeated within a year on the New York-London-Tokyo-San Francisco-Sao Paulo circuit -- and in scores of cities with a million population the most Americans never heard of.

Not only skyscrapers and autos and clothing sweep around the world on tides of fashion, but gardens as well. Fashions from the Pacific have always had to struggle to get across the American Rocky Mountains. But since Olmsted's time the Japanese garden has become a major item of export. From Holland, the Dutch bulbs have swept the world markets, and we should now be preparing for quite large movements of Oriental plants that are going into mass production in the Pacific Rim nations, aimed at North America. These market-conscious shippers are already hot on the trail that has been blazed for them by Hawaiian pineapples, Macadamia nuts, and Kiwi fruit from New Zealand....

It is easy to forget that we have always lived in an internationalized landscape....Tobacco migrated along with Red Indians from the Colonies to Europe; and European weeds were exported in dung and baggage across the Atlantic and the American west....

Returning to the basic process of change, we should note that the Olmsted landscape of 19th century America -- in contrast to our own -- was decidedly wet, boggy, swampy, and muddy; city sidewalks often no more than duckboards to get folks feet up out of the muck and mire, mud and manure. Early highways were built to "get farmers out of the mud."

Sewage systems were plunged underground every city to carry off stormwaters, so that the history of city engineering, and city growth seems to have been dominated by one idea -- get us dry, keep us dry, and carry the water and sewage downstream to the next less-powerful jurisdiction.

Consequent to such practice, American urbanized regions have dried up amazingly since Olmsted's time. To urbanize has come to mean: to desiccate, to dry out -- creeks piped into sewers, living springs buried by bulldozers, and megamade urban droughts guaranteed....

As a result of such practice, water has grown scarce even in the so-called Humid East. Only now is the shortage beginning to promote something new in the suburbs -- retention basins, natural swales instead of concrete gutters, and stormwater ponds to hold the rain and let it soak underground. These are so thick on Long Island and around Chicago that airline pilots joke about logging "over-water time" when they

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isolated bodies of settlement that there can hardly be said to be a frontier line. In the discussion of its extent, its westward movement, etc., it can not, therefore, any longer have a place in the census reports."

If the frontier ended in the 1880's I think it fair to say that the Era of the modern American suburb began in the 1880's....

In Baltimore "the advent of the street car in the middle 1880's enabled the population to spread out more widely from the center of town. Early railroad commuting suburbs were becoming well-established throughout the East and Middle West. Los Angeles had its horse-drawn street cars on rails as early as 1874, and by 1887 there was an Electric Railway Homestead Association. As Raymond Banham has put it, "the definitive age of the development of Los Angeles had begun" -- as our first all suburban city....

And out beyond this familiar zone of confrontation, another so-called frontier is seething with refugees from crowded older cities. This is the inexorable flow of population off the farms -- what's left to migrate -- down off the hills and out of the exhausted industrial towns of the old Northeast, and away into the suppliant and sometimes mendicant small towns and cities of the South and West. And by the hundreds of thousands they have strung themselves out along the blacktop, creating endless Potemkin Villages that conceal what's left of the so-called "real country" out back.

Some commentators on the 1980 Census make it appear as though this were something new. Not so! The citizens of the U.S. are continuing a historic process -- using space as a social lubricant, using what dollars they can spare to live a spread-out way of life, to put more space between themselves and the folks next door. And they're doing it with every stratagem of private ingenuity and public politicking, taking new risks, and using tricks not yet in the book.... Downshifting from eight to six to four cylinders, shopping the world for automobiles, chiseling their houses, making narrow their lots, and extending their commutes and inventing exotic forms of pioneering so as to keep on making the most of the so-called Country Life. And for those who can't afford the real thing, fashion supplies The Country Look.

It is this new DeCentralia, as it might be called, that promises to be the zone of experimentation for modern park-makers. For it is largely in DeCentralia that the next 100 million of population will be forced to live. By the middle 1950's we ran out of vacant lots from the crash of the 1920's; and today the last remnants of usable land in old suburbs that made up large cities are being snapped up and condominized.

It is true that in every city across the country, there are new high-rises, and medium-density town houses ganging up around the shopping centers, clustering around the interchanges. But the great urbanization ahead of us will, I believe, take place on what is now open countryside, or thinly settled suburbs.

Which suggests that an Olmstedian view of the city, grown vast and expanded since his time, would take a much larger look at the environment into which we will be expanding.

This new urbanization will benefit from ecological knowledge not yet born in Olmsted's time. Darwin's great book The Origin of Species was not published until two years after the Central Park Plan of 1857. Modern ecology rests, to an important degree, on three papers published by Henry Chandler Cowles around 1900. And of the great theories of urban growth and form, most of them date from this century. It was only a decade ago that the ecological view of landscape development was put forward brilliantly by Ian McHarg in Design With Nature. His ideas are now imbedded in curricula, fellowships and practice all across the land. His perception -- based on the work of distinguished ecologists and other scientists -- has in some places become the law of the land. As a result, streambeds and watercourses and forests and underground acquirers are now legally described and politically protected.

For it is no secret that the United States -- which was a world pioneer in the national park movement, thanks in part to Mr. Olmsted's Yosemite Park -- has also come to lead the world in the technique of landscape analysis and assessment. In earlier times this would have been called "discovering the genius of the place," and it is true that today there are hustlers of every description -- from traditional architects to johnny-come-lately advertising people -- claiming to specialize in "the genius of the place."
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Mr. Olmsted got there first, and the profession of landscape architecture which he helped create has indeed got hold of something exportable...Not a gimmick, not a style, nor an American building form that can't stand sea travel...but rather a method for getting to the heart of the landscape, for understanding -- through personal inspection, sieve-mapping, and computer-aided analysis. There is emerging a significant new field for determining exactly what, and how measurable, are those qualities that distinguish this place from all others. I think Mr. Olmsted would be leading the game of discovery today....

The new field of landscape analysis and understanding is one of the few forms of professional know-how that does not impose a predictable, predetermined and prescribed result upon another culture. It is an open-ended process that a broken-field-runner like Mr. Olmsted would have been a master of.

Now let me turn in closing to this great wave of research, scholarship, civic energy and affection called the Olmsted Parks Association. It happened that two years ago I was in Boston - Cambridge, and was able to take part in the 1981 sessions and tours. I had watched it -- I must confess -- with some dubiousness from its small beginnings amongst a few disciples, and I was wrongheaded enough to think some years back that this well-meaning little enterprise would flutter into public view, and then disappear among that host of "good causes" that never get anywhere.

How wrong could I be? For -- quite contrary to what I expected -- the movement mushroomed beyond that tiny, scholarly and rather elitist New England crowd -- as I had perceived it -- among whom it exercised its original spell. With mounting enthusiasm and admiration I followed its discourse and traipsed through the marvelous Olmsted parks and fens and playgrounds with which Boston-Cambridge are so well endowed.

It was all quite inspiring. I felt I was present at the moment the whole thing had finally achieved critical mass and soon would become a Movement.

But all great religions require a Code of Conduct, a catechism, a set of commandments about how one must act...not only among one's fellow creatures, but also how one must act in Holy Places. By any such yardstick, the New Olmsted Movement lacks only an official Code of Conduct.

And as I sat through bus tours and followed in the footsteps of Master Designer Olmsted, and listened to cries of alarm about Olmsted scenery in danger from assault by yet another pagan roadbuilder, I found myself filling pages in my journal with a personal version of an Olmsted Code. It might go something like this:

Go ye among the multitudes and preach this, the Way of the Great Designer, so that all may come and share his handiwork forevermore.

Impose not thy foreign will upon this place. Seek ye its Spirit and all else will follow.

Look thou to the earth and the trees for thy sustenance, and bring them no harm.

Know ye that the earth it is good, and that he who treats it well, he shall gain his own reward. And from him who bringeth damage and great harm, all shall be taken away.

Make no undue noises unto the high heavens. Nor shall ye push and shove thy neighbor between a rock and a hard place. Carry thyself gently and there shall be space for all.

Bring not into this place any arms of war. Nor shall ye form your selves into phalanxes or warlike groups. For this is a place of peace and peaceful shall ye remain.

Do this in remembrance of the great place-maker, whose firm hand can make us free to enjoy his places forever.

But if this is all too theological for your taste, how about:

Keep off the Grass
Stay on the Paths
Don't Litter
Talk to Strangers
No Windshield Cleaning
Bike Paths For Bikers Only
Leave the place cleaner than when you came
Enjoy the Views
No artificial noise-makers
Treat this as your home.

Next Issue: Orin Lehman

Frederick Law Olmsted and The Creation of the State Reservation at Niagara
Steering Committee, 
Trustees to Meet

The NAOE Board of Trustees will meet Thursday, September 13, 1984, in Seattle, WA, in a joint session with the Steering Committee.

The role of the Steering Committee and the "Olmsted Historic Landscapes Act" will be discussed. Members will also make reports about activities around the country.

The Board will then hold a brief meeting to vote on the budget for the 1985 fiscal year, and to review the By-Laws revisions.

Following the the meeting, there will be tours of private gardens designed by the Olmsted firm and a reception for members of the Board and Steering Committee hosted by the Friends of Seattle’s Olmsted Parks with dinner to follow.

Vaux Book Prepared

The Frederick Law Olmsted Association is preparing a book on Calvert Vaux, Olmsted's relatively unknown partner. The book will consist of biographical essays, illustrative and important works, selected writings by Vaux, a bibliography, a chronology, and facsimile materials from the Vaux Papers at the New York Public Library. The publication will fill a void in this country’s architectural history as well as present Vaux’s extraordinary contributions to America’s artistic life.

The book will highlight Vaux’s accomplishments, and examine his collaborative efforts with Andrew Jackson Downing, Frederick Clarke Withers, Jacob Wrey Mould, George Radford, Samuel Parsons, Jr., and Frederick Law Olmsted. In New York, his architectural works include the original Metropolitan Museum of Art, the original American Museum of Natural History, the Jefferson Market Courthouse, more than a dozen Children’s Aid Society homes, the National Arts Club in Gramercy Square, originally the home of Samuel Tilden, Frederick Church’s estate "Olna" on the Hudson, private residences and many park structures that embellish his park designs.

His park designs include the Buffalo Park System, the Niagara Reservation, parks in Albany and Newburgh, Central Park, Prospect Park, Morningside, Riverside and Fort Greene Parks, Eastern and Ocean Parkways. Vaux and Olmsted designed the grounds of the University of California, at Berkeley; Gallaudet College in Washington, D.C.; Orono Agricultural College in Maine, the town of Riverside, IL; and Washington and Jackson Parks and the Midway Plaisance in Chicago.

The landscapes Vaux designed in the Hudson Valley, and the extent of his early work there with Andrew Jackson Downing is still to be documented, though hints appear in Vaux’s 1857 book Villas and Cottages.

Readers with information on the location of Vaux drawings, letters or related materials are requested to write the F. L. Olmsted Association, Room 700, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010. Research and writing are scheduled for completion at the end of 1984.

William Alex

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