National Association for Olmsted Parks

5010 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.
Suite 308
Washington, D.C. 20016

NAOP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

At the NAOP annual meeting on April 26, 1987, in New Orleans, the following officers and Board were elected to NAOP:

Officers

Co-Chairs
Tupper Thomas, Brooklyn, NY
Dana White, Atlanta, GA

Vice-Chairs
Arleyn Levee, Belmont, MA
Sandy Parisky, Hartford, CT
Barry Tindall, Washington, DC

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Charles Beveridge, Washington, DC

Secretary
Katherine Joy Johnson, Seattle, WA

Assistant Secretary
Clyde Eller, Buffalo, NY

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Eleanor Ames, Cumberland, ME
Donald Harris, Seattle, WA
Eric O'Brien, Chestnut Hill, MA
Loretta Newman, Washington, DC
Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, NYC, NY
S. Christopher Scott, Boston, MA
Jerrold Soesbe, Libertyville, IL

The Executive Committee consists of the Officers and the Past Chairman, Ann Satterthwaite. Three of the founding members of NAOP, Shary Page Berg, Walter Hundley, and Marilyn Tuchow, stepped down. Two new members joined the Board, Eric O'Brien, President and Chief Executive Officer of M. E. O'Brien and Sons, and Jerrold Soesbe, Director, Lake County Forest Preserve District, Illinois.

The Board expressed its gratitude to Ann Satterthwaite for guiding the NAOP skillfully in its move to Washington and for the invaluable time and energy she spent in coordinating NAOP activities of the past two years.

The Board voted to give special recognition to the three founders who also served as Board Chairs over the last seven years: Joan Bozer, Betsy Shure Gross, and Charles McLaughlin.

NAOP OFFICE

The NAOP has a new address for its office in Washington D.C. at 5010 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., Suite 308, Washington, D.C. 20016. The phone number is (202) 362-9511. Please send all mail to this new address.
NAOP ADMINISTRATOR

Piera M. Weiss is the administrator for the NAOP as of September 12, 1987. Piera M. Weiss, a landscape architect with a B.A. in classics from SUNY at Binghamton and a M.L.A from Cornell University, has experience in planning, teaching, and design. In 1986 Piera developed a lecture series on historic landscapes for the Smithsonian Resident Associates Program in Washington, D.C. Three of the lectures featured designs by Olmsted, Sr. Piera has been very active with NAOP for the last few years helping organize the Washington, D.C. and the New Orleans conferences.

NAOP SEVENTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

NAOP's seventh annual conference and annual meeting were held on April 24 and 25 in New Orleans. The conference, co-sponsored by the Audubon Park Commission, was held at Loyola University campus close to Audubon Park.

Charles Beveridge began the conference with an overview of Olmsted's philosophy concerning landscape design, followed by Dana White's presentation of Olmsted in the South and Arleyn Levee's discussion of John Olmsted, the designer of Audubon Park. The conference then moved to the issue of zoos in Olmsted parks. Case studies of New Orleans by Ronald Forman, Executive Director of Audubon Park Zoo, the National Zoo in Washington, D.C. by Faye Harwell, and the Rochester Zoo by Frederick Holman were presented. Joe Logsdon, the Audubon Park Commissioner who had urged the NAOP to hold its conference in New Orleans, led a tour of the Audubon Park. A reception was held early evening at the zoo.

On Saturday, there were three panel discussions. The first led by Ann Satterthwaite focussed on the challenges of extending the Olmsted Park systems with case studies from Seattle by Don Harris, Buffalo Friends' Gretchen Toles, and New Orleans by Steven Bingler, a New Orleans architect working on the controversial proposed aquarium design for the Vieux Carre waterfront. The second panel dealt with fundraising led by Sanford Parisky, NAOP board member from Hartford, with Liz McCarthy of New Orleans and Tupper Thomas, from Prospect Park. The last panel, on planning and managing the park: public and private initiatives, was presented by Tupper Thomas, and featured Susan Mintz on New Orleans' very successful volunteer program for parkways. The day ended with a slow and pleasant boat ride down the Mississippi from the zoo and the Vieux Carre.

The controversy over the aquarium proposed by the Audubon Park Commission for an abandoned area on the waterfront of the tourist-packed and tourist-eroded Vieux Carre arose time and time again during the conference. The project architect presented the proposal and several leading New Orleans residents including architect Ray Boudreaux, who organized the City Park Tour, discussed the concerns of the project's many opponents.

NOVEMBER WORKSHOP: LOUISVILLE

November Workshop and Steering Committee Meeting - November 6 - 8, Louisville

This fall, the Louisville Friends of Olmsted Parks (LFOP) will be hosting the fall meeting of the Board of Directors.

Olmsted designed sixteen parks and five parkways for the city of Louisville from 1888 to 1892. The LFOP, not yet a year old, had its first organizational conference on April 4, 1987. Members of the NAOP, Tupper Thomas, Arleyn Levee, and Charles McLaughlin presented keynote speeches at the conference.

The LFOP has asked the NAOP to present a workshop on mobilizing a local Olmsted organization. The morning session will begin with a presentation on Olmsted's philosophy and design of park systems, followed by a panel discussion on the purposes, functions and goals of a local Olmsted organization. Afternoon panels will discuss internal affairs such as mobilizing volunteers and developing an advocacy group; external affairs such as communicating with the public, politicians, park administrators, and professionals; and fundraising. Panelists will include members of the Baltimore, Seattle, Rochester, Buffalo, and Hartford Olmsted organizations.

Registration is open to local association members, all NAOP members, and any interested individuals.
The Times Picayune ran an article in the April 30 edition, on the Audubon Park Commission approving the designs for the aquarium and riverfront park. Joe Logsdon was reported as saying that during the conference the attendees were disturbed by "how much we have attempted to crowd in a single space." Comments from other Commissioners were, "They're (NAOP members) not from New Orleans" and "Olmsted's been gone for 100 years," that from Ron Forman, Executive Director of the Parks Commission.

Attendees at the Louisville Conference
Audubon Park
Courtesy: Barbara Drew

Sunday morning Jerry Rogers, Associate Director of National Park Service and in charge of historic preservation activities including landscapes, told the NAOP Steering Committee of NPS's new interest in and commitment to historic landscapes. NAOP's Steering Committee enthusiastically greeted this new expression from the Park Service on historic landscapes. Tours of Cajun country and City Park took place Sunday afternoon.

Despite the controversial aspects of the discussions, the conference attendees were busy at all hours attending sessions. New Orleans was alive all hours and attendees could be found listening to jazz, ferreting out good eateries, or just sipping that chicory coffee with a beignet. A good time was certainly had by all.

ACTIVITIES AROUND THE COUNTRY

Baltimore, MD

On September 12, 1987, the Friends of Maryland's Olmsted Parks and Landscapes, the Maryland Chapter of the ASLA, the Baltimore Museum of Art, Johns Hopkins University, and the Union Memorial Hospital co-sponsored a weekend conference, Urban Greenspace: A Conscious Decision, Baltimore's Park System Reconsidered.

The Friends of Maryland's Olmsted Parks and Landscapes was instrumental in organizing the Community Assistance Team project for American Society of Landscape Architects whose annual conference will be in Baltimore Oct. 31 - Nov. 3.

The project focussed on the design and planning problems of 33rd Street, a 1903 Olmsted-firm-designed transverse parkway which begins at Druid Hill Park and passes through Wyman Park near Johns Hopkins University making its way past Union Memorial Hospital and Memorial Stadium, home of the Baltimore Orioles, and finally connects with Clifton Park and Lake Montebello.

Arleyn Levee, NAOP Vice-Chairman, opened the conference with a keynote address on the future of the Olmsted legacy at Johns Hopkins Eisenhower Library. The next day the sessions held at Baltimore Museum of Art began with a presentation of the CAT plan which was critiqued by panels of experts from Cleveland, Seattle, Baltimore, and Boston, including NAOP's Donald Harris and Arleyn Levee. Donald Harris presented a slide show, Olmsted Revisited in Seattle, during the morning session.

The CAT project drawings as well as the original Olmsted site plans were on display at the Baltimore Museum for the conference and will be displayed again during the October ASLA conference.

The first project of FMOP was most impressive. A wide base of constituents, professionals, public officials, and citizens, have been involved in the organizing of the Friends group and this CAT project.

The April 15, 1987, edition of the Baltimore Messenger ran an article on the Olmsted Parks in Baltimore and the work
that the FMOP, led by president, Sandy Sparks, had done preparing for the conference and in organizing public awareness of the Olmsted Legacy in Baltimore. According to Sandy Sparks, this broad involvement in the CAT project had "lit some fires."

Utica, New York

On September 19, the Oneida County Historical Society, the Landscape Society of Greater Utica and the New York State Association for Olmsted Parks presented a seminar on Utica's legacy of Historic Landscapes. Douglas M. Preston, Director of the Oneida Historical Society, gave a lecture on the parks of Utica and Arleyn Levee presented a lecture, "The Olmsted Firm, A Tradition of Excellence."

Riverside Park, New York City

Community leaders from the Upper West Side of Manhattan have created the Riverside Park Fund with the firm intention of restoring, maintaining, and improving the extraordinary riverfront park, Riverside Park, the work of the Olmsted and Vaux team.

The idea originated with Peter Wright, director of the Federation of West Side Block Associations' Beautification and Parks Committee, who also takes an active leadership role in many other community organizations. His efforts impressed the J. M. Kaplan Fund to the extent of a $25,000 start-up contribution, given in November 1986, to be matched by mid-1987. Within weeks, some $16,000 in matching funds had been contributed and the Riverside Park Fund was underway.

A board of directors and working committee have been chosen from an array of community organizations and individuals that include community boards, block associations, playground groups, horticultural enthusiasts, church groups and a variety of other park users.

The Riverside Park Fund is now operating under the sponsorship of the Olmsted Association, which has secured office space and meeting facilities at 475 Riverside Drive. The Fund will be devoted to the restoration of Riverside Park in the fullest possible measure, working closely with both the communities involved and the New York City Parks Department to establish project priorities and oversee successful completion and maintenance.

Atlanta, Georgia

Immediately following the New Orleans Conference, Trustees Ann Satterthwaite and Arleyn Levee joined Dana White in Atlanta for a one-day workshop which was held in the Olmsted Brothers-designed Piedmont Park. Alida Silverman, an officer in the Druid Hills Civic Association and member of the Olmsted Parks Society of Atlanta, described the workshop in her "Druid Hills Letter" of May 7, 1987, a regular column for the Decatur-Dekalb News/Era and from which the following is excerpted.

"The executive director of the National Association of Olmsted Parks based in Washington, D.C. and an historian member of the Massachusetts Society stopped in Atlanta on April 28 on the way back from the NAOP annual conference in New Orleans to give the workshop.

Ann Satterthwaite indicated the larger picture of support for parks, emphasizing that the historic landscape movement is a relatively recent phenomenon. The National Register of Historic Places, for example, in the early 1980's listed 50,000 buildings and 44 landscapes. Buildings received emphasis without even consideration of site or setting. That is changing . . . The National Park Service is now in the process of an Historic Landscapes inventory, specifically parks designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., and his sons who carried on the Olmsted firm. The Olmsted firm was in existence for nearly 100 years. It kept extensive records, documenting design principles, social purposes, engineering concerns, and political support. This documentation is now in the Library of Congress and at "Fairstede" in Brookline, MA. A host of landscape architects, engineers, plantmen, park managers received training in the firm, hence Frederick Law Olmsted's title of 'Father of Landscape Architecture.'"

Arleyn Levee presented a case study of park preservation and restoration in
Massachusetts. The historian for the Olmsted park in Fall River, MA, she provided an overflowing plate of advice, examples, and inspiration. Assuring us that we all face similar problems, she showed how they went from the 2nd annual NAOP conference in Boston in 1981 to the landmark Massachusetts program of restoration of its Olmsted landscapes, public and private, across the state to the tune of $15 million dollars.

Druid Hills residents, Dana White (national and local Olmsted Board member) and Dick Groeppner, OPS-Atlanta president, deserve credit for bringing Atlanta this workshop.

From left to right: Dana White, Ann Satterthwaite, Dick Groeppner, Arleyn Levee

New York City


Major events for the ninth annual conference included a tour and discussion of the ongoing preservation and restoration of Ellis Island and Statue of Liberty National Monument, a visit to Wave Hill including a presentation on the Catalog of Landscape Records in the United States, and guided tours of Olmsted parks with ongoing restoration work.

Harbor, Maine

Maine Citizens for Historic Preservation held a conference on June 20. Eleanor Ames, NAOP trustee, participated in a workshop on Identification, Inventory and Preservation of Historic Parks.

Riverside, Illinois

The Riverside Historical Commission is continuing to pursue the preservation of the planned community at Riverside. This year the Commission sponsored two lectures series and worked hard on the nomination form for the National Historic Landmark status of the only cottage designed by Olmsted, Vaux and Co., that remains in Riverside, as well as the in Midwest. The cottage had been restored without public funds. The Commission is also working to have the entire village declared a national historic landscape district.

The Commission is assisting student and faculty from Virgina, Texas and Washington, D.C. who are working on historic restoration projects.

Seattle, Washington

Gretchen Hull of the Seattle Friends reports that work is continuing to save the three bridges in Colman Park, one in Frink Park, and one in Interlaken Park, all designed by Olmsted, from succumbing to federal safety standards. The Friends are preparing the necessary papers to have the five bridges declared national historic landscape structures and, therefore, exempt from current Federal safety standards. There will be continuing discussion between the Seattle Parks Department and the Engineering Department over how to resolve the problem of safety standards, responsibility, and preservation of an historical legacy. The Friends are also working on establishing a bicycle trial system which had been designed by Olmsted in the original park system plan but never implemented.

On January 18 there will a program featuring William Penn Mott Jr., Director of the National Park Service, on the future legacy of the National Park System.

Rhode Island

Rhode Island reports that a small grant has been received to be used for an inventory project.
The Olmsted Historic Landscapes Preservation Program of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management has completed master plans for 12 municipal parks in 8 cities. Each of the master plans will involve at least $1 million dollars or rehabilitation and restoration. The master plan teams are led by landscape architects and include landscape historians and other technical staff. Technical advisory committees, organized on the model of community advocacy groups established in the Prospect Park and Central Park experiences have been created for the purposes of assisting the master plan team, fundraising, and park programming. The Friends of Buttonwood is one group that has already been launched.

The master plans involve 12 parks ranging in size from 5 acres to 2200 acres. The plans encompass re-acquiring parkland in two cities, improving recreation facilities for a broad spectrum of users and, in the case of Buttonwood Park, implementing the original 1895 Olmsted and Olmsted and Vaux plan.

Kennedy Park, the first of the public parks designed by Olmsted in Massachusetts, has a shoreline section that was never constructed. Plans are underway for regrading the site in preparation for the implementation of the original design.

Implementation of the master plan for the Emerald Necklace, Boston's park system, will involve coordination between three jurisdictions and traffic system study to assess the problems incurred when traffic routes severed the continuity of the original design and the far reaching impacts on recreational use.

Work is underway in Kennedy Park, the first public park designed by Olmsted in Massachusetts. Street trees will be planted around the park perimeter, which was part of the original plan. A shoreline, also part of the original design but never implemented, is under construction.

Governor Dukakis has filed a bill for additional funds which would used for a state wide inventory of Olmsted designs, and restoration and rehabilitation of each of the 12 parks.

For information, call on any aspect of the program, please call (617) 727-3160.

October 8 - 11: National Trust For Historic Preservation, Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C. Sessions include:

October 8: 3:45 P.M. Historic Landscape Panel with Ann Satherwaite, Charles Beveridge, and Ms. St. Clair Wright of Historic Annapolis, Inc.

October 11: 9:30 A.M. All day tour of Meridian Hill restoration, Capitol grounds, the Mall, the National Zoo, and Georgetown, led by Ann Satherwaite.

October 15: 9:30 A.M., Wave Hill: Open meeting of the Advisory Council of the Catalog of Landscape Records in the United States. Day-long meeting and symposium including presentations on the Catalog and issues of interest to all concerned with the identification, management, and preservation of landscape records. Advance registration necessary. $30, to Wave Hill, 675 West 252nd Street, Bronx, NY 10471, (212) 549-3200.

October 29-30: Historic Landscape Preservation Symposium, part of the ALSA Annual Meeting. $80, $40 for students State-of-the-art skills in historical landscape preservation. Contact: Annual Meeting Registration Manager Deborah Morris, (202) 466-7730.


EXHIBITS

Wave Hill: The Bethesda Terrace
102 Palladium Prints of Central Park
675 West 252 Street Bronx, NY 10471
(212) 549-3200
An unnecessary amount of Olmsted-bashing characterizes this account of the large number of professionals and public servants who helped bring Central and Prospect Parks into being over more than a generation, and have since led efforts to continue and preserve them.

Extravagant claims that Olmsted claimed exclusive credit are unsubstantiated here; in fact, one comes away from this account satisfied that large and capable teams were successfully recruited by Olmsted here, as in others of his sixteen great urban landscape parks nationwide, and that in many cases their contributions were recognized. Indeed, the numbers so engaged can usefully be enlarged if we are to have a full appreciation of all those whose efforts have given us the parks we know and cherish today. Many other cities are struggling to create and preserve their great central parks with only a sketchy idea of the complexity and magnitude of this task—perhaps New York City has the most to teach us, as well as the most to learn.

The literature of park history and management can learn further from the brisk writing that characterized Ms. Graff’s presentation. Given her scope, it is apparent that many cameo biographies characterize her work, but these are kept well subordinated to the historical narrative. This is not what is sometimes described as “an all too solid work” as much as a polishing or unifying of what is known in part, perhaps mostly to specialists. Graff demands too much in the way of initial background to make this a good book for beginners, but its fund of anecdote will recommend it to all whose interest in urban parks has been aroused.

The rush to judgement that Graff has allowed to become her imperative is the historian’s foe. Indignation also makes for a tiresome book, especially when reiterated. Her Olmsted-bashing is not only repetitive, but is it also excessive. A more useful orientation for the research presented here on the making of New York City’s two great parks would have related those findings to other urban landscape parks or to the landscape design issues that were emerging at this time. But the author is indifferent to these matters and prefers to focus on horticulture and the materials of park-building.
Little doubt exists in my mind that the contribution of the associates of Olmsted identified here was primarily to design and design detailing. What Olmsted did was to "make it happen." He did this by creating the team of talented individuals Graff has well described in her book, and by providing the priceless practical gift of leadership. His work was conceived on a national canvas, coast to coast, and institutionalized in landscape architectural education and the associated design profession of city planning.

Given his professional borrowings from architecture, it was from this source—represented primarily by Vaux and perhaps Frederick Clarke Withers—that Olmsted drew most heavily, a circumstances that will be illuminated in a few years when the Olmsted Papers have reached that point in its editorial endeavors. Meanwhile, we can look to the already published works by Lewis Mumford, J. B. Jackson, Norman T. Newton, Albert Fein, and other landscape historians who have dealt with these themes in less parochial fashion, and use appropriate caution in dealing with the frequently rash diagnoses offered by the present work.

Frederick Gutheim

There seems to be an Olmsted biography for every taste, age, and inclination. To begin with, Laura Wood Roper's FLO: A Biography of Frederick Law Olmsted (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), which Todd describes as "splendid, monumental... indispensable," has been reissued as a paperback, a full decade after its initial publication—evidence both of the book's staying power and of the park preservation movement's coming of age. Then, there are the first four of twelve projected volumes of The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted (Hopkins, 1977- ), which transcend the limited classification "edited papers" as they expand into a kind of "serial biography." Next, for a brief introduction to the man and the movement, there is Albert Fein's Frederick Law Olmsted and the American Environmental Tradition (George Braziller, 1972), which is comprehensive, readable, and heavily illustrated. And finally, to educate the young, there are "juvenile biographies" by Iris Noble, Frederick Law Olmsted: Park Designer (Julian Messner, 1974) and Johanna Johnston, Frederick Law Olmsted: Partner with Nature (Dodd, Mead & Co., 1975), the latter demonstrating a surer historical grasp and a more engaging stylistic touch. Of biographical types, then, all seem well covered.

John Emerson Todd promises a new direction, but fails to deliver. In his "Preface," FLO's most recent biographer distinguishes his own efforts from those of his predecessors by explaining that "my work turns to what I have tried to make a systematic consideration of his specific achievements," by examining "something of an underlying unity" in "the interrelated threads running throughout his life" (pp. 8-9) Todd's chapter titles suit his plan of work, his text does not.

After an introductory biographical sketch, the chapters are organized according to such topics as "The New York City Parks," "Campus and Institutional Designs," "Conservation: State and National Parks," and "The Heights: Biltmore and the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893." This organization, which was employed previously by Julius Gy Fabos and his associates in their exhibition-based Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.: Founder of Landscape Architecture in America (University of Massachusetts Press, 1968), works best when it provides analytical

Frederick Law Olmsted
John Emerson Todd
Twayne Publishers
1982

"The Last Olmsted Biography"

When the enthusiastic young historian Charles A. Beard asked the crusty Nicholas Murray Butler, "Have you read my last book?" (meaning his controversial Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States) the imperious president of Columbia University answered his muckraking faculty member, legend would have it, "I certainly hope it was your last book!" John Emerson Todd's brief Frederick Law Olmsted (Twayne Publishers, 1982) elicits a similar response and suggests that a moratorium on Olmsted biographies may well be in order.
depth instead of narrative sweep. Unfortunately, Todd attempts to combine the two. Thus, in addition to his introductory biographical survey on "Life and Careers," each topical chapter is also chronological; consequently, the story of Olmsted's life is told twice, both at the book's beginning and in the sequence of chapters that follows. Because of this needless repetition, analysis is sacrificed for "coverage" to create, in the process, laundry lists of projects, people, and events.

There are important lessons to be learned from Todd's venture into biography writing. In the first place, another generalized biography of Frederick Law Olmsted is unnecessary. If the roster of readily available biographical treatments listed earlier in this review fails to convince, Todd's inability to come up with one fresh fact, original insight, or innovative interpretation should.

A second lesson is that a satisfactory generalized biography may be unachievable at this time. As we learn more about Olmsted, we find that we know less. So much has been written about Olmsted since the Sesquicentennial celebration in 1972 that it is difficult just to "keep up" with the literature. At the same time, each new study seems to raise fresh and often troublesome questions about his times, his contemporaries, and his craft(s). Moreover, Olmsted was a force in so many areas of nineteenth century American life other than the obvious ones of landscape architecture, public administration, reform, agriculture, journalism, and publishing, for example—that students of his life and work must read widely just to "keep up" with him. Unfortunately, however, while his chroniclers often give lip service to FLO as "Renaissance Man," they tend just as often to be markedly limited in their own preparation.

Todd's unfamiliarity with the South, my own area of interest, is a case in point. His errors of commission include claims for Olmsted's "recording authentic regional dialects" (p. 51) that no linguist would support, the misdating of the publication of Fanny Kemble's plantation journal as before rather than after Olmsted's journeys in the South (p. 53), the identification of the mostly flat terrain over which FLO traveled during his first trip as mainly "hill country" (p. 54), and the attribution for Olmsted's second set of newspaper accounts to the New York Herald (p. 55) when, in fact, they were published in the New York Daily Tribune. Todd's errors of omission are even more to the point: his failure to recognize the significance of Olmsted's role in the Free Soil movement (pp. 59-62), as documented in the second volume of the Papers; and his kow-towing before the pseudo-mathematical claims against the "Our Slave States" volumes by so-called "climometrietricians" (pp. 68-69), claims that have been answered in my Olmsted South: Old South Critic/New South Planner (Greenwood Press, 1970, pp.19-20). The point is not just that Todd is unfamiliar with one important aspect of Olmsted studies. It is, rather, that there are so many areas with which a prospective Olmsted scholar needs to be knowledgeable, that probably no one authority, at this time, can cover them all.

The final lesson of Todd's book is eminently Olmstedian: once you've drawn up a sound plan, stick to it! The "systematic consideration of his specific achievements," the stated intention of Olmsted's most recent biographer, has much to recommend it. For one thing, it provides for comparability; for another, it offers room for in-depth analysis. When Todd reflects upon the challenges of designing and creating the Central Park (pp. 72-86), the initial promise and subsequent despoliation of Boston's Emerald Necklace of regional parks (pp. 118-26), the intricacies of campus and community planning at Stanford (pp. 137-41), the stages of development in the land use concepts for the Biltmore Estate (pp. 156-65), and the planning lessons at the Chicago Fair (pp. 165-77), his book is at its most engaging. It engages the reader by serving up a comparative framework in which to place individual projects, by stimulating reflection through detailed and sustained analysis, and by relating the past to the present and the future—nineteenth century plans, early twentieth century realities, late twentieth century possibilities. Todd's book works best, then, when it draws the reader closer to Olmsted and his achievements, to the relationship between his time and our own.

While I hope that his will be the last Olmsted biography for a while, I also trust that the effort to reclaim the heritage he left us will continue. In this movement,
we need new approaches to Olmsted the designer, the administrator, the author, the public man. We will always be able to use case studies of his work—such as Cynthia Zaitzavsky’s brilliant Frederick Law Olmsted and the Boston Park System (Harvard, 1982)—as well as comparative analyses of design types—parks suburbs, estates, institutions, etc. We must distinguish carefully between his plans and their evolution during development, as had been done skillfully in the third volume of the Papers, Creating Central Park. And we must be imaginative. Here I think of Broadus Mitchell’s Frederick Law Olmsted: A Critic of the Old South (Hopkins, 1925), which utilized Olmsted’s accounts of the Old South to lobby for changes in the New South, as being something of a model. As biography, it has glaring faults (See Olmsted South, pp. 32-33); as polemic, it lives. It takes risks, so must we. Mitchell’s Olmsted should be ours as well: relevant and usable, a viable Olmsted.

Dana F. White

Other Reference Materials and Readings


A catalog of 3,500 plans, organized under eight columns of information and arranged by 14 categories; for example, 650 public parks and recreation areas, 900 private estates, 270 subdivisions and residential communities, 245 school and college campuses, etc. The 1981 list was thirteen pages long; this edition fills 180 pages. An essential reference source.


Bulletin of American Garden History, P.O. Box 3974A, New York, NY 10024, $7.00 annual subscription. Highly recommended for its interesting articles, thorough calendar, informative "Periodical Potpourri," and, of course, timely news items.


Tony Hiss, Reflections: Experiencing Places," New Yorker, Part 1, June 22, 1987, pp. 45-68; Part 2, June 29, 1987, pp. 73-86. An intriguing synthesis of the theories and technics of "Simultaneous perception" or "the system we use to experience our surroundings." A brilliant description of the sensations engendered by approaching, passing through, and emerging from the Endale Arch in Prospect Park (1:56-60)—on of those "particular places" which "give us a mental lift"—serves as a microcosm of the system in operation.
Ronald Blythe, *Divine Landscapes*, with photographs by Edwin Smith, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986. The author of *Akenfield*, the classic portrait of an English village, and of *Characters and Their Landscapes*, a reflection of literature and locale, conducts a pilgrimage through present day Britain's timeless "visionary landscapes"—that is, those of the poet or saint. What Olmsted was to the ordering and design of landscapes, Blythe is to their depiction and evocation.

Dana F. White

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**LOUISVILLE WORKSHOP**

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