NAOP'S EARTHSHAKING YOSEMITE TOUR

The NAOP group touring Yosemite in October barely escaped an earthquake, registering 5.8 on the Richter Scale, which hit the eastern gateway of Yosemite National Park. Those members, who stayed for an extra day of challenging climbing in the high country in Yosemite, left the park less than twelve hours before the earthquake that closed three of the four roads into Yosemite. The tremor, felt as far away as San Francisco and the northern Nevada casinos, caused rock-slides on the Tioga Pass Road as well as on Route 140 near the El Portal entrance.

On Friday, October 19, after a NAOP board meeting in Concord, CA, the tour group boarded a 45-seat bus driven by a new Olmsted convert, Dixie Jacobsen, and spent three days immersed in Olmsted and Yosemite. The first stop was in Mariposa County where Olmsted managed the gold mines of the Mariposa Estate from 1863 to 1865. We followed part of Olmsted’s route to Bear Valley, where Olmsted lived with his family and where we had a hearty buffet supper at the Bon Ton Cafe. After dinner we moved on to the town of Mariposa where the Mariposa County Historical Society sponsored a meeting at which both Vicky Ranney and Charlie Beveridge gave slide lectures. Scott Pinkerton, the energetic leader of the Mariposa County Historical Society, was an enthusiastic guide for the Mariposa section of the tour.

Saturday was a full day of touring Yosemite Valley on foot and partly, by bus. Some of the hardy members of the group climbed the rocky heights of the cliffs opposite El Capitan, while others saw the behind-the-scenes Park Service and the Curry Company operations, thanks to Don Fox, the National Park Landscape Architect for Yosemite. Don energetically guided the group throughout its stay in Yosemite.
On Sunday the tour left the Valley for the Wawona Hotel, the site of Galen Clark's camp and the Olmsted family camp when they escaped the heat of Bear Valley in 1863 and 1864. Then we explored the scenic route Olmsted proposed as the main approach to Yosemite. Although the route was never implemented as Olmsted's report was suppressed, we were able to see its course with the help of tour guide Beveridge and two vans. The vans transported us along a very rough and steep road, so steep that one van lost its brakes coming down—forcing its passengers to hike the rest of the way down. The afternoon found us in the Mariposa Big Trees, the groves of giant sequoias, which Olmsted's Yosemite Commission oversaw. The gargantuan trees matched the majesty of the scenery in the Valley.

The members of the tour who headed for San Francisco on Monday spent Sunday night at the Wawona Hotel, a turn of the century frame hotel, while the hardy mountain climbers went on to the Tioga Pass Resort (at 9,700 ft.). On Monday, while the urban bound were rolling along the interstate to San Francisco, the climbers were making the rigorous climb up Mount Gibbs (12,000 ft.). According to the lucky few who made the ascent, the magnificent wilderness scenery was worth the challenge of the climb. On Tuesday morning the Tioga Pass group hustled out of Yosemite National Park just before the earth started to rumble!

Past cochairman of NAOP, Betsy Shure Gross, is chairing the Conference. An advisory committee of outstanding landscape architects, planners, preservationists, and scholars have been assembled to assist Ms. Gross.

The Conference will start Friday, May 3, with an overview of the history of land use, especially the history of formation of land trusts and reservations. Other speakers will address the contemporary challenges and the vision for the future. The afternoon session will feature speakers and workshops on preservation and the environment.

Tours and technical sessions will take place on Saturday, May 4. Events will be designed to expand upon the workshops of more general interest held on Friday. Tours will extend from Hingham to North Beverly and from public parks to private landscapes, providing an attraction for every taste.

Any questions relating to the Conference should be addressed to:

Historic Massachusetts
Old City Hall
45 School Street
Boston, MA 02108
Tel: 617/723-3383

NEWS FROM THE FEDERAL FRONT

CHANGES AT THE U.S. CAPITOL

One of Frederick Law Olmsted's most important commissions was the design for the landscaped park surrounding the U.S. Capitol. In 1874 Olmsted was asked to prepare a general plan for landscape improvements for the fifty-nine-acre Capitol site. Included as a major part of Olmsted's plan was a marble terrace along the north, west, and south elevations of the Capitol. Olmsted considered the terrace necessary to correct the illusion that the Capitol was about to slip off the edge of the hill. The terrace would replace stepped earthen berms which Olmsted considered too weak, insignificant, and rude to visually uphold the building on the brow of such a steep hill.
Construction of the terrace began in 1884 and finished in 1891. After a century of service, the terrace is now beset by structural problems that will be addressed in forthcoming restoration. Beginning this fall it is intended that the Architect of the Capitol, George M. White, FAIA, will initiate the terrace restoration that will repair the deteriorated structure, bring sagging walls back into alignment, fix leaks in the promenade, and clean, patch or replace portions of the marble and granite stonework. The condition of the marble is a particular concern; some weathered so badly that its decorative carving has been nearly erased. While preserving as much of the original stone as possible, it will be necessary to replicate some of the worn marble elements. Bronze light fixtures, vases, and railings will be conserved and restored.

While the focus of this project will be on the faithful restoration of the Olmsted terrace, it will also include raising the finished level of the sunken courtyards between the terrace and the Capitol. These yards were never improved under Olmsted's direction and currently serve no useful purpose. The courtyard project will extend Olmsted's promenade, granite planters, and bronze lighting fixtures, fully around the west central portion of the Capitol in conformity with the existing terrace design. The public will thus be more amply accommodated on the terrace. The visual aspects will have been enhanced by creative landscaping at the pedestrian level, and some sorely needed additional space will have been created beneath the terrace.

With the approaching centennial of the Olmsted terrace, its restoration is both appropriate and timely. Its second century will begin with its structure, ornament, and usefulness preserved and enhanced for the foreseeable future.

—William C. Allen, Architectural Historian, U.S. Capitol

A POINT OF VIEW

Nellie L. Longworth, President
PRESERVATION ACTION

The Capitol of the United States is once again the subject of preservation concern as plans for the restoration of the Olmsted terraces and infill of the courtyards between the terraces and West Front have now become public. The terraces are long overdue for extensive restoration and the infill project will produce 16,400 square feet of much needed meeting and private office space for the Congress. The project will be funded with $7 million of the $25 million that was obligated, but unused, during the restoration of the West Front a few years ago.

Is this project as benign as the Architect of the Capitol's office would like us to believe? I frankly have concerns. The Architect's office states that the infill project will have no visible impact on the West Front area. The plans, however, call for a skylight, the relocation of the 99-year-old balustrade, and a designed arrangement of planters to buffer the enlarged terrace area.

The plan for infill includes paving over the "tops" of the additions, a sizable enlargement of the paved terrace area. Seven feet of skylight will be constructed adjacent to the base of the center section of the Rotunda and the balustrade will be relocated to protect this, a "U-shaped" configuration. The historic balustrade, however, defined not only the Rotunda but further defined the West Front of the two original Capitol wings. Since the facades (scale, height, fenestration and materials) of the wings echo the portico, the planned reduction of the balustrade negates the symbolic definition of the entire original Capitol, a fact of 99 years lost to future generations.

With the expanded terrace area, Hugh Jacobson's plans call for a formal arrangement of planters to define better a broad expanse of concrete. Again, questions are raised. What type of planters? What kind of plant materials? And, is there any historic basis to justify this treatment? Will this solution enhance the Olmsted Terrace area, or will it seem out of phase with the great master's plan?
The Architect of the Capitol's office is not required to research and justify change based on the history of the building, its architects, or master plans. Therefore, the adherence to historic concerns requires the professional organizations in the field of preservation and design to make their concerns heard loudly and clearly. I have made a case to retain the symbolic placement of the balustrade. The Olmsted community should be heard on areas of the plan that support or affront your professional and historic interests. The project is moving rapidly and any concerns should be brought to the attention of the Architect's office—immediately.

Address:
The Architect of the Capitol
Washington, DC 20515
Tel. 202/225-1200

**UPDATE: NPS HISTORIC LANDSCAPE INITIATIVE**

The National Park Service is developing policies and technical information on historic landscapes. Through its Preservation Assistance Division, standards and guidelines for the treatment of historic landscapes are being prepared now. This is a very important step as there have been no Park Service standards and guidelines specifically for historic landscapes in the past.

**Standards.** The Park Service's "Standards for Historic Preservation Projects," which provide general objectives and principles for all aspects of preservation work, have focused on buildings and archeology. Now, these standards are being revised to reflect all historic properties, including historic landscapes. They should serve as a minimum benchmark for preservation work. The standards for rehabilitation, used primarily for the federal tax credit program, were revamped in the spring of 1990. A current proposal to broaden the language in this rehabilitation standard from "building and its site and environment" to "property and environment" reflects the Park Service's attempt to eliminate the perceived emphasis on buildings. Now other standards are being revised so that they are consistent with the rehabilitation standards and encompass landscapes.

The Park Service has general and specific standards for historic properties. The Park Service term, historic property, includes buildings, structures, landscapes, objects, and archeological sites. The specific standards refer to historic landscapes, but apply to all historic properties. These standards include acquisition, stabilization, protection, preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction.

**Guidelines.** A handbook on the treatment of historic landscapes will be prepared by the Park Service with guidelines similar to those for rehabilitation developed for historic buildings. The handbook will include an introduction covering integrity, significance, and appropriate treatments. There will be sections on the revised standards and guidelines for treatments of landscape features. Guidelines will be organized by landscape feature with examples of all preservation treatments and illustrated with diagrams, photographs, and drawings.

**Timetable.** A draft of these standards was distributed for comment early in the fall. Although the first deadline for review has passed, there is still opportunity to review the standards and, based on any comments or suggestions, the Park Service will continue its revision. In early 1991, the Park Service will host a symposium on historic landscapes to discuss the revised standards and continue the work on landscape guidelines. NAOIP will be invited to this symposium. Proceedings of the symposium will be distributed in late winter.

The revised draft standards will be published in the Federal Register for public comment in winter/spring 1991. Soon thereafter, production of the illustrated landscape guidelines handbook will begin with the hope that it will be printed and distributed in FY 1993.

**TECHNICAL PUBLICATIONS.** The Preservation Assistance Division has recently produced its first major landscape publication, "Preserving Historic Landscapes, An Annotated Bibliography," listing four hundred references and sources of information for historic landscape preservation. The Reading List includes sections on landscape history, inventory, and evaluation; preservation approach and treatment; historic landscape types; historic landscape features; and reference materials.
PAD is also preparing an article entitled "Preservation Principles for Historic Plant Material" which will be published in the CRM Bulletin in November 1990. This ambitious program by the Park Service has been spearheaded by Lauren Meier.

FOR MORE INFORMATION. If you would like more information on the Standards or Landscape Guidelines, or would like a copy of the Reading List, please contact Lauren Meier, Historical Landscape Architect, National Park Service, Preservation Assistance Division (424), P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127 or call: 202/343-9597.

NEW TRUSTEE

In our Summer 1990 NEWSLETTER, we inadvertently omitted from the list of new trustees, Holly Miller. Holly is the Director of the Seattle Parks & Recreation Department and a most welcome addition to our board.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

California: Piedmont Avenue, an Olmsted-designed street in Berkeley, CA, has been designated a state historic landmark. This remnant of Olmsted's designs in the Berkeley area (his plan for the campus was ignored, as was his idea of a parkway connecting Berkeley and Oakland) is now a small source of elegance in Berkeley. "The elegance lasts only a few blocks—the sinuous route of Piedmont Avenue...with its sloping median, sheltering trees, and generous setbacks for houses and other buildings designed by the likes of Julia Morgan and Bernard Maybeck, but its effect is profound nonetheless," says Dennis Drabelle in a September 7, 1990, article in the East Bay Express. Drabelle's article, which may be reproduced in a future Newsletter, space permitting, contains an enthusiastic discussion of Olmsted's life and philosophy along with a recital of the threats and frustrations that have faced, and are now facing, Piedmont Avenue. Designation is a first step in recognizing the role of Olmsted in this important university town.

Georgia: While many of us think of Atlanta's Druid Hills as the neighborhood that has fought off the incursion of an approach road to the Carter Library, it has also received national exposure recently as the site of the film, Driving Miss Daisy. This Olmsted-designed residential neighborhood, known for its park-like setting so close to downtown Atlanta, has had a forceful advocate in Sally Herbaugh, one of the founders of the Olmsted Parks Society of Atlanta and a NAOP board member. Druid Hills now has a strong defender in Atlanta's new mayor, Maynard Jackson, who has resisted the proposed Carter Library approach road that would have slashed through this community.

Maine: Maine seems to be popping with Olmsted and historic landscape projects.

The Maine Olmsted Alliance for Parks and Landscapes has been formed to preserve, protect, and revitalize Maine's historic parks and landscapes; to compile and disseminate educational materials about Maine's parks and landscapes; to promote the legacy and design principles of Frederick Law Olmsted and his successors; to provide historical and practical resources to continue the Olmsted tradition in contemporary landscape planning and design of parks and other public spaces. This Maine Alliance is planning to undertake a statewide survey of historic parks and landscapes, 141 of which are Olmsted projects, including Acadia National Park, downtown Portland's park system, and the Capitol grounds and park complex in Augusta.

NAOP's cochairman, Noni Ames, has been appointed by the Governor to be a member of the State House (Bulfinch designed) and Capitol Park (Olmsted Firm designed) Commission. The Capitol Grounds is also the subject of a restoration project being undertaken by NAOP board member, Marion Pressley, of Cambridge, MA.

New York: The White Plains Psychiatric Unit of New York Hospital was set for its final hearing in Albany for historic preservation designation in early December. However, New York Hospital armed with lawyers in Albany, White Plains, New York, and Washington forced postponement of the hearing until February. The National Park Service has ruled that the property is eligible for designation.
Ohio: Dayton, the home of the National Cash Register Company that hired the Olmsted firm to plan the grounds of the factory workers' housing and the nearby streets and neighborhood, is launching a plan for Hills and Dales. The City of Dayton has contracted with Noel Vernon of Ball State University for a historic landscape plan of the Hills and Dales. Aside from NCR'S Old River, Hills and Dales is the largest Olmsted site in a city of many listings.

BOOK REVIEWS


This pithy book is essential reading for anyone interested in the environment which surrounds us, and certainly for those of us concerned with Olmsted's landscapes and philosophy. Tony Hiss, who is known to us through his New Yorker articles and his impressive talk at last year's Buffalo NAOP conference, has amassed an incredible amount of data from a vast array of sources and incorporated it in an extremely readable book. Not only does he help us see how we are influenced by our surroundings, but he goes on to show us how we can sustain that environment to enrich our lives. "Using the things we know or sense about places but seldom put into words," Hiss states, "we can bring all of our minds to bear on the problems of how our communities, regions, and landscapes should change." This is a tall task, but it is done masterfully.

His wide-ranging research takes us all over the world, but many of his illustrations are close to home. His walk through Grand Central, from his New Yorker article, not only points out things we have not seen or thought about in that glorious building, but what confidence we gain in knowing how to navigate through it. Hiss calls this "simultaneous perception," the broad-band focus, which keeps us linked to our surroundings. Ordinary perception, on the other hand, "let's us shut ourselves off from our surroundings." However, no matter how effective ordinary perception is in "blotting out the sights and sounds and smells around us, simultaneous perception is ever at work and all those sights, sounds, and smells can be retrieved. 'And whenever we summon it, it's richly informative. Simultaneous perception helps us experience our surroundings and our reactions to them, and not just our own thought and desires."

Hiss has translated previously complicated research on perception, like Christopher Alexander's, into plain English and created a way for us to look at buildings, cities, towns, and regions. That is the first step in understanding the thinking and planning of visionaries such as Benton MacKaye, Clarence Stein, and, of course, Frederick Law Olmsted himself.

Simultaneous perception can produce the images, but to be meaningful they need to relate to our own experiences. Hiss calls this "connectedness." He illustrates the importance of connectedness in a walk in Brooklyn from the bustling Grand Army Plaza through the tunnel of the Endale Arch into the vast and tranquil expanse of the Long Meadow in Prospect Park. Hiss reminds us that Olmsted's park exists to be experienced. "That dramatic welcome, relief, and exhilaration of being pulled away from the intensity, noise, and insecurities of the hectic city into the shelter and refuge of the Long Meadow is carefully described by Hiss. Prospect Park gives its users the same feeling of connectedness that the astronauts found when they looked at the earth and realized how they were connected to a small vulnerable planet that needs care and protection. Planners find several types of connectedness: a sense of kinship with all life, a sense of partnership with working landscapes, and a sense of community and companionability found in neighborhoods.

Connectedness provides a critical way of looking at the intangible features of a place which are not discussed or noticed in most planning—yet which makes a place what it is. Hiss' discussions of connectedness and its role in environmental perception and planning are his most important contributions. They make one realize how limited and shortsighted most development is—and how necessary it is for NAOP and Olmsted supporters to be involved in the planning and development of their cities and regions. Olmsted understood the need for connectedness.

This book will not supplant Laura Wood Roper's standard biography of Olmsted, but then it is not meant to. Kalfus takes a psychobiographical stance toward his subject, a position that yields keen insights into the influence of Olmsted's early childhood on the pastoral look he sought in designing his urban parks. Eventually, however, the intricate psychologizing becomes a little wearisome, not least because the ample number of Olmsted's achievements seems to matter so much more than the convoluted pathways of his psyche.

As the title suggests, Kalfus is best at placing Olmsted's work and philosophy of design in the context of his Gilded-Age heyday. As much for his great designs, Kalfus reminds us, we owe Olmsted kudos for his prescient battles to preserve Yosemite Valley and Niagara Falls as public treasures rather than the private fiefdoms of speculators in natural wonders.

Editorial Staff: Ann Satterthwaite, Carolyn F. Hoffman, Phyllis Knowles

The spring issue of the NAOP Newsletter will feature Olmsted-designed communities, subdivisions, and city and regional planning projects. If you have ideas, articles, book reviews, or comments on these topics, please send them to the Editor at NAOP's office.

The mystery park is: Back Bay, Boston, MA.

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Please send me (number) copies of the following publications offered to NAOP members. Postage and handling are included.

The Olmsted Papers
___ Volume 1, The Formative Years $39.95
___ Volume 2, Slavery and the South $39.95
___ Volume 3, Creating Central Park $39.95
___ Volume 4, Defending the Union, The Civil War and the U.S. Sanitary Commission $46.95
___ Volume 5, The California Frontier $39.00
___ The New Urban Landscape, The Redefinition of City Form in Nineteenth-Century America, by David Schuyler, h.b. $28.50, p.b. $12.60
___ Master List of Design Projects of the Olmsted Firm, 1857-1950 $16.50

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