For more than half a century, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. (1870-1957) was one of America’s preeminent landscape architects who pioneered comprehensive city and regional planning, and played a critical role in forming the nation’s county, state and national parks.

In 2013 and 2014, NAOP will present a two-part symposium, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.: Inspirations for the 21st Century, on October 10-11, 2013, and Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.: A Vision for the American West, on March 27-28, 2014—the most comprehensive presentation to date of the full scope of Olmsted’s work.

Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and the National Park Service
Almost 50 years after his father drafted a charter and plan for the Yosemite Valley, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. furthered his father’s legacy by addressing the need for a new bureau to manage the parks and monuments across the country. His contributions to the philosophical underpinning of the National Park Service were substantial. Olmsted crystallized the national park idea by drafting a mission statement that is the core of the 1916 National Park Service Organic Act, and for thirty years he advised the Park Service on the management and conservation of water and scenic resources.

Olmsted Jr. served on Yosemite’s advisory committee from 1928-1956, advising on issues related to traffic, circulation and landscape preservation. He also worked on projects at Crater Lake National Park in Oregon, Maine’s Acadia National Park, and the Florida Everglades, and devised a master plan to save California’s coastal redwoods.

Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and American City Planning
In 1901, Congress appointed Olmsted to the Senate Park Commission on the District of Columbia, formed by Senator James McMillan to create a comprehensive plan for the nation’s capital. Olmsted not only helped develop the McMillan Plan but guided its execution by serving—between 1910 and 1932—on the two federal oversight bodies for planning Washington: the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Park Planning Commission.

As either adviser or designer, Olmsted worked on many prominent Washington landmarks, including the White House grounds, Federal Triangle, Jefferson Memorial, Roosevelt Island, McMillan Reservoir, Rock Creek Park and Parkway, and the National Cathedral grounds.

Around the country, Olmsted helped pioneer comprehensive city planning, producing, between 1904 and 1915, planning reports for Detroit, Utica, Boulder, Berkeley, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, New Haven, Rochester, and Newport, and helped lay the theoretical foundation for this new discipline as well as for comprehensive suburban planning. He planned the communities of Roland Park in Baltimore, Forest Hills Gardens in New York City, Mountain Lake community in Lake Wales, FL, and Palos Verdes Estates near Los Angeles. “Many of the features of his suburban plans have had enduring influence, including
the concept of neighborhood-centered development, the differentiation of streets by function, the importance of common open and recreational spaces, and the need for continuing maintenance and aesthetic oversight to preserve the quality of the community.” (Susan Klaus)

In the 1920s, Olmsted advised on the preparation of a regional plan for the New York area and was commissioned by John D. Rockefeller to design Manhattan’s Fort Tryon Park, a 67-acre urban park overlooking the Hudson River.

Olmsted and his firm also planned the campuses of many well-known schools and universities including Yale University in New Haven, CT, Wellesley College and Harvard University in Massachusetts, Princeton University and the Lawrenceville School in New Jersey, Duke University in Durham, NC, Columbia University in New York, NY, the University of Chicago, IL, Dartmouth College in Hanover, NH, Gallaudet University and Catholic University in the District of Columbia, and Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, MD, among others.

**Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and the American West**

The Olmsted firm was instrumental in the American West in land and water conservation, land use planning, and protecting the region’s unique environmental resources.

In addition to planning and design for many cities and subdivisions in California and Colorado, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. consulted on the conservation and preservation of state and national parks and remaining wilderness areas across California and the West. One of his greatest accomplishments was the 1928 California state park survey, guiding the acquisition of land for California’s park system and establishing new standards for large-scale park planning that promoted public health and recreation.

The 1930 Olmsted-Hall *Report on Proposed Park Reservations for East Bay Cities* was a compelling statement for the need for parks in the San Francisco Bay region, envisioning a 10,000-acre accessible park system for its residents. And the 1930 *Olmsted-Bartholomew Plan for the Los Angeles Region* recommended a comprehensive network of parks, playgrounds, beaches and forests with 160,000 acres of parkland and 440 miles of connecting parkway, including a parkway along the Los Angeles River and regional “reservations” along the Pacific coastline and across the surrounding foothills, mountains and desert. Although not implemented, the plan showed Olmsted’s extraordinary foresight and grasp of broad social and environmental problems, and now inspires the work of park advocates to improve this park-poor city.

In his later years, Olmsted actively worked for the protection of California's coastal redwoods, devising a master plan to save the magnificent trees. Redwood National Park's Olmsted Grove was dedicated in his honor in 1953.

Further east, Olmsted planned the 40,000-acre mountain park system around metropolitan Denver beginning in 1912, and consulted on the 1940 survey for the Colorado River Basin as a part of a comprehensive plan for the utilization of the water resources of the region.

**Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. – Professional Leader, Educator and Mentor**

For over fifty years Olmsted was a preeminent practitioner and spokesman for landscape architecture and comprehensive planning. He was a founder of the American Society of Landscape Architects and was instrumental in organizing the American City Planning Institute that evolved into the American Planning Association.
Olmsted helped develop the Harvard School of Landscape Architecture, the first such program at an American university, and taught professional landscape architecture at Harvard University from 1900-1914. He mentored a generation of brilliant young professionals and is credited with the establishment of formal training of landscape architects and, through that training, for the standards and strengths of the profession today.

**Symposium Outcomes**
Greater awareness of Olmsted’s legacy widens our understanding of broad-based planning and sustainable development issues in the 20th century and today. The two events will illuminate Olmsted’s work and how his visionary thinking, politically shrewd leadership, and large-scale, collaborative planning and decision-making models can offer insights for solving complex present-day issues.

Following the two events, NAOP plans to post recorded symposium sessions here on our website, as well as publish symposium proceedings.