Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. (1870–1957)
Selected Accomplishments

1890–1895: Before joining his father’s firm, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. (Olmsted) studies at Harvard University, apprentices with Daniel Burnham in Chicago on the World’s Columbian Exposition, and works with his father on Biltmore Estate in Asheville, NC

1897: As his father’s health deteriorates and following the death of Charles Eliot, Olmsted and his half-brother, John Charles Olmsted (1852–1920), assume co-leadership of the Olmsted firm

1899: Olmsted co-founds the American Society of Landscape Architects

1900–1914: Olmsted establishes the first professional training program in landscape architecture at Harvard University and teaches there

1901: Congress appoints Olmsted to the Senate Park Commission which, in 1902, presents the McMillan Plan for the District of Columbia, the first comprehensive plan for an American city

1903: Death of Frederick Law Olmsted (1822–1903)

1904: The Report Upon the Development of Public Grounds for Greater Baltimore guides the development of the Baltimore region, followed by the 1926 Report and Recommendations on Park Extension for Baltimore

1906: The Army Corps of Engineers commissions Olmsted to design McMillan Park in Washington, D.C.

1907: Olmsted develops a master plan for the 59-acre site of the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C.

1909: The First National Conference on City Planning defines the birth of professional city planning in the U.S. and establishes Olmsted as a leader of the new profession

1909: Olmsted designs Forest Hills Gardens, a pioneering 142-acre commuter suburb in Queens, NY

1910: Comprehensive plan for The Improvement of Boulder, Colorado

1910–1918: Olmsted serves on the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts

1912: Plan for a 40,000-acre “mountain park” system for metropolitan Denver

1913: Olmsted begins work on the city of Palos Verdes Estates, CA, one of the firm’s most complex projects

1916: Olmsted writes the key language that establishes the mandate of the National Park Service to preserve park resources “…unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations”

1917: Olmsted helps establish the American City Planning Institute, forerunner of the American Planning Association, and becomes its first president

1918–1939: Key planning for Acadia National Park in Maine

1920: The death of John Charles leaves Olmsted as sole head of the world’s then-largest landscape architecture firm

1920: John D. Rockefeller commissions Olmsted to design Manhattan’s 67-acre Fort Tryon Park

1921: Olmsted serves on the Advisory Committee on City Planning and Zoning, which develops comprehensive planning and zoning statutes for state governments

1922–1931: Olmsted advises on the preparation of the New York Regional Plan

1925: The Birmingham Park and Recreation Board publishes A Park System for Birmingham

1926–1931: Olmsted serves on the National Capital Park and Planning Commission

1928: Olmsted’s report for land selection and acquisition results in the California State Park system and becomes a model for other states

1928–1956: Olmsted serves on Yosemite National Park’s advisory board

1930: The Olmsted-Bartholomew Plan for the Los Angeles Region recommends a 160,000-acre network of parkland and 440 miles of parkways

1930: The Olmsted-Hall Report on Proposed Park Reservations for East Bay Cities addresses the need for parks in the San Francisco Bay region

1940: Survey for the Colorado River Basin to help plan for the utilization of the region’s water resources

1944: Olmsted proposes a master plan for saving the California Redwoods

1949: Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. retires from active practice but remains a partner and continues to bring in business until his death in 1957
To live-tweet the event, please include the #FLOJr hashtag

MC: David C. Sloane, PhD, professor, Price School of Public Policy, University of Southern California

7:30–8:30 am  Registration and Networking

8:30–8:45 am  Welcoming and Opening Remarks
• Christopher Bayley, chair, National Association for Olmsted Parks
• Whayne Quin, chair, National Building Museum
• Robert Doyle, general manager, East Bay Regional Park District; trustee, National Association for Olmsted Parks

8:45–9:15 am  Opening Keynote—Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.: A Vision for the American West
• William Deverell, director, Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West

9:15–10:45 am  Defining the Purpose of Parks: Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and the National Park System—Panel Session
• Moderated by Ethan Carr, PhD, FASLA, associate professor of landscape architecture, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
• Milton Chen, senior fellow and executive director emeritus, George Lucas Educational Foundation
• Shaun Eyring, chief, Resource Planning and Compliance, Northeast Region, National Park Service
• Lucas St. Clair, president of the board, Elliotsville Plantation, Inc.

Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. had a long and profound influence on the National Park Service. He drafted the core of the agency’s 1916 founding legislation. His influence on the theory and management of the NPS continued for decades and provided an important link to earlier chapters in American park history in which his father had been so prominent. What is the significance of Olmsted’s legacy in the national park system? What bearing does that legacy have for thinking about how the national park system will adapt to the environmental and demographic changes of the 21st century? This panel will address the meanings and purposes of parks as described by Olmsted and consider their relevance, adaptability, and usefulness for the changing uses, meanings, and publics of the parks today and in the future.

10:45–11:00 am  Break
11:00 am–12:30 pm  The California State Parks System—Panel Session
• Moderated by Elizabeth Goldstein, president, California State Parks Foundation
• Sam Hodder, president and CEO, Save the Redwoods League
• Major General Anthony L. Jackson, USMC (Ret), director, California State Parks
• Tjiska Van Wyk, executive director, Jack London State Historic Park
Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. consulted on the conservation of parks and wilderness areas across the American West. One of his greatest accomplishments was the 1928 California state park survey, guiding the acquisition of land and establishing a new standard for planning a diverse park and recreation system over a large and geographically varied area. The session will address today's state parks crisis; views and value of state parks in contemporary society; new models for state parks funding and administration; and solutions within Olmsted's work that can help address issues today.

12:30–1:30 pm  Lunch

1:30–2:00 pm  Keynote—Parks and Nature in the Metropolitan West
• Jon Christensen, adjunct assistant professor, journalist in residence, and senior researcher, Institute of the Environment and Sustainability and Department of History, UCLA
Parks, open spaces, and other forms of nature are very unevenly distributed in the metropolitan West. The quantity, quality, and accessibility of parks and open spaces vary tremendously from city to city and from neighborhood to neighborhood. What explains this variation? Can the history of Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and the Olmsted firm help us understand the state of nature in our cities today and shape parks and open spaces for the future? The City Nature research project at Stanford and UCLA uses data visualization, mapping, and text mining to explore the past, present, and future of parks and nature in cities.

2:00–2:20 pm  Regionalism in California: Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.'s Planning and Design in Palos Verdes Estates
• Christine Edstrom O'Hara, assistant professor of landscape architecture, California Polytechnic State University
Located in South Los Angeles County, Palos Verdes Estates was a large new town designed in the 1920s. Conceived as a totally planned community, it became the most extensive suburban community commission the Olmsted Brothers firm ever undertook, with an initial design of 16,000 acres. In a regional approach to design, Palos Verdes was the largest un-irrigated development in the country at the time, fulfilling a firm principal of water-reducing design as an appropriate response to the Southern California climate. Palos Verdes Estates was also an unusually personal design for principals Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and Fred Dawson, since they resided there while developing the design.

2:20–3:50 pm  Metropolitan Planning in the American West—Panel Session
• Moderated by Frederick Steiner, dean, School of Architecture, University of Texas at Austin
• William Deverell, director, Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West
• Robert Doyle, general manager, East Bay Regional Park District
• Greg Hise, historian, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. was a pivotal figure in creating the American planning profession. His practice in the West represents a significant expansion from landscape architecture to
metropolitan, regional, and environmental planning. After noting Olmsted's important work in Colorado, the session will focus on the Los Angeles Regional Plan and East Bay Regional Park System in California, with specific attention to how plans are or are not implemented and the value of environmental conservation to human health and welfare. Much can be learned from Olmsted's metropolitan-scale work in the American West that is relevant to contemporary planning practice.

3:50–4:05 pm  Break

4:05–5:20 pm  Closing Panel
• Moderated by Christopher Hawthorne, architecture critic, The Los Angeles Times
• Carolyn Finney, assistant professor, UC Berkeley College of Natural Resources, National Park Service Advisory Board
• William Rogers, president and CEO, The Trust for Public Land
• Mary Scoonover, executive vice president, Resources Law Group
Leading voices from the field reflect on the day’s conversations and engage the audience in a discussion of future directions for policy and practice. As we trace the threads of Olmsted’s foundational work in park design in the west, how would Olmsted address issues today such as climate change, demographic change, public safety and population pressures? Whose perspectives and needs are being considered in parks and other outdoor spaces? Has citizen participation changed the process of park planning, acquisition and management? How effective are outreach efforts in involving all potential park user groups? What aspects of Olmsted’s legacy are relevant given the current re-emphasis on walking and bicycling? Is the creative tension between parks as places to commune with nature vs. recreational use any different today?

5:20–5:30 pm  Closing Remarks
• Sarah Earley, vice chair, National Association for Olmsted Parks

Speaker bios and additional information on Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and the Olmsted firm are available at www.olmsted.org.

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Symposium Planning Committee: Iris Gestram, National Association for Olmsted Parks, Committee Chair; Jon Christensen, UCLA Institute of the Environment & Sustainability; William Deverell, Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West; Maureen Joseph, National Park Service; Paul Killmer, National Building Museum; Arleyn Levee; Thomas Luebke, U.S. Commission of Fine Arts; Timothy Mennel, University of Chicago Press; Christy O’Hara, California Polytechnic State University, NAOP Trustee; Ryan Scherzinger, American Planning Association.

Advisors: Charles Beveridge, The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. Project; Charles Birnbaum, The Cultural Landscape Foundation; Ethan Carr, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, NAOP Trustee; Dena Kennett; Scott Kratz; Richard Lukas, The Trust for Public Land.
About the National Association for Olmsted Parks (NAOP)
NAOP advances Olmsted principles and the legacy of irreplaceable parks and landscapes that revitalize communities and enrich people’s lives. This mission is grounded in the history of the Olmsted firm, and realized through contemporary application of the Olmsted philosophy, principles, and practice to park, landscape, and urban design.

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