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**THE  
LANDSCAPE UNIVERSE:  
HISTORIC DESIGNED LANDSCAPES  
IN CONTEXT**

Expanded and Illustrated Papers  
from a National Symposium  
Armor Hall at Wave Hill, Bronx, New York  
1993

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# THE LANDSCAPE UNIVERSE: HISTORIC DESIGNED LANDSCAPES IN CONTEXT



## *Proceedings*

Expanded and Illustrated papers from  
the National Symposium of 23 April 1993  
Armor Hall at Wave Hill, Bronx, New York

*Designed and Edited by*  
Charles A. Birnbaum

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Courtesy Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site, Hyde Park, New York, no. V-102557.

**The Landscape Universe**  
**Historic Designed Landscapes in Context**  
*Expanded and Illustrated papers from the National Symposium of 23 April 1993*  
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**Welcome and Prospects**

*David Bohardt*

*Catha Grace Rambusch*

*H. Ward Jandl*

i-iii

**Defining the Landscape Universe**

*Charles A. Birnbaum*

1-12

**A Look at the Naturalistic Designs of Jens Jensen  
and the Preservation of Lincoln Memorial Garden, Springfield, Illinois**

*Robert E. Grese*

13-28

**The Olmsted Brothers' Residential Communities:**

**A Preview of a Career Legacy**

*Arleyn A. Levee*

29-48

**Selecting Rehabilitation as a Treatment for the Olmsted Brothers'  
Designed Hills and Dales Park, Dayton, Ohio**

*Noel Dorsey Vernon*

49-56

**Andre Parmentier: A Bridge Between Europe and America**

*Cynthia Zaitzevsky*

55-68

**Cultural Landscape Analysis  
The Vanderbilt Estate at Hyde Park, New York**

*Patricia M. O'Donnell*

69-80

**Gateway to the Past:  
Establishing a Landscapes Context for the National Register**

*Linda Flint McClelland*

81-90

**Understanding the Bigger Picture for Chicago's Historic Parks**

*Julia Sniderman*

91-101

**Landmarks of Landscape Architecture:  
The Historical Context for National Park Service Landscape Architecture**

*Ethan Carr*

102-110

**Epilogue**

*Suzanne Turner*

111

## Welcome

I am pleased to be here today and want to express special thanks to Wave Hill and the Catalog of Landscape Records for providing the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) with an opportunity to cosponsor this symposium. What they have accomplished in so short a time speaks to their dedication and resourcefulness.

I want also to recognize the ASLA Open Committee on Historic Preservation. In recent years, with the leadership of Patricia O'Donnell, Noel Vernon, Charles Birnbaum and so many others, the Society has been able to establish and maintain a national leadership position in the preservation community.

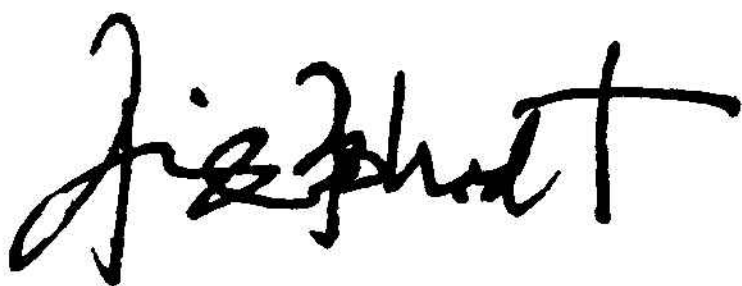
Yesterday, a New York cabbie gave me an information tour of the South Bronx -- or what used to be the South Bronx. While on this rather depressing sojourn, I found it difficult to imagine that the Bronx may have been part of our pre-settlement landscape, just as it is difficult to imagine, even when we witness it, the desolation of urban and rural landscapes in parts of the Bronx and elsewhere in the United States -- what Bill Tishler has referred to as the *"formless and grotesque travesty"* of overdevelopment and abandonment.

Your exploration today of significant designed historic landscapes is important -- not only for what we are able to understand about the design intent of the Olmsted Brothers at Hills and Dales in my hometown of Dayton, Ohio, or Jensen's masterwork at Lincoln Memorial Garden (I can say, however, that if Olmsted's design intent at Hills and Dales was for a young boy and his friends to enjoy seemingly endless summers, he succeeded admirably!)

But in understanding how we can safeguard, restore and enrich our experiences of place in great spaces, practitioners working in spaces less significant -- or in spaces yet undesigned and unbuilt -- can apply your research and applications to current problems and challenges.

As you know, there is already too much evidence that future generations will judge that we have left them with too little worth preserving. In fact, I am convinced that unless we can establish a dynamic link between your research and preservation technology the world of private practice, many new interventions in our landscape will be uninformed and damaging. And, as Tony Hiss has observed, *"a damaged or distorted experience is not only numbing; over time we can begin to mistake it for the original"* -- for the way things ought to be. This is not a pretty prospect to contemplate.

And so your work is and continues to be very important. The American Society of Landscape Architects is pleased to be part of it and I look forward to a very successful symposium.



David Bohardt, Executive Vice President,  
American Society of Landscape Architects



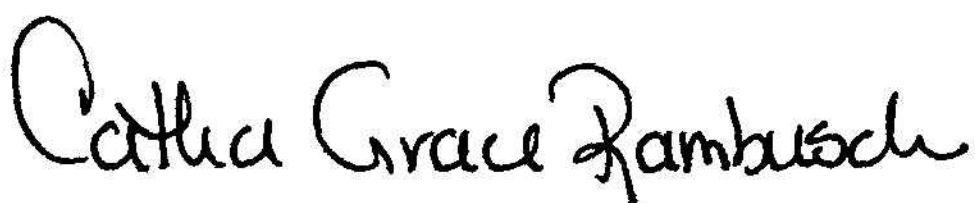
## Welcome

This is an auspicious occasion. It marks the first program under the cooperative agreement between the National Park Service and Wave Hill. We hope the first of many joint projects under this mutually beneficial program of collaborative effort. Also it is the first conference devoted solely to the topic and concept of CONTEXT. From the evidence of the full house (one that was sold out three weeks in advance), it would seem that this is a topic of keen interest.

The placement of a structure or site in context is essential for its proper consideration, for its evaluation as a cultural resource and ultimately for its inclusion in the programs at the National Park Service.

Context has two aspects. I shall call one *life context*. This can be established by familiarizing oneself with, reviewing and analyzing an individual's oeuvre. Reading both the word and the land in order to understand the philosophy, and design credo, enables one to place the project under examination within a life context. Though illuminating this is a limited context. A fuller, richer evaluation, consideration in contrast to or in conjunction with that of one's peers as well as one's predecessors is necessary. Only by placement of the work in the broader cultural history can it be accurately evaluated and appreciated. In a sense establishing the context is placing the polished gem back into the matrix out of which it grew. That is the purpose of this conference. We will examine the immediate life context of several practitioners and their canon of work. We will also consider the larger, national cultural contexts into which these fit. Elucidation and description of existing National Park Service criteria, programs and guidelines will complete the task at hand.

The study of American landscape history is a rapidly emerging field. Perhaps the first scholarly attention to this aspect of our nation's history was the 1950 doctoral thesis of Andrew Jackson Downing by Professor George Tatum. The Catalog of Landscape Records in the United States at Wave Hill was established in 1987. By gathering information about the location and content of collections of documents that tell us about the use of our land, the Catalog provides information upon which context can be constructed and defined. Gradually a critical mass of information is being amassed. The time has come for us to progress beyond this initial and necessarily limited stage to discover, reveal, recognize and establish a broader context. Let us begin! But only after thanking Charles Birnbaum for his idea and the efforts which enabled us to translate the idea into a fact - *The Landscape Universe, A National Symposium*.



Catha Grace Rambusch  
Director, The Catalog of Landscape Records in The United States at Wave Hill



## Welcome

Over the past decade there has been an increasing recognition of the importance of historic landscapes as cultural resources worthy of preservation. A large part of this has been due to the creative and persistent efforts of the Historic Preservation Open Committee of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) and the Catalog of Landscape Records in the United States at Wave Hill. The Landscape Universe symposium could not have happened without the involvement of these two organizations.

This ground-breaking symposium represents a true collaborative effort between the National Park Service, Wave Hill, and ASLA. I am delighted that the Park Service has been able to provide base funding for the symposium as part of its Cultural Resource Training Initiative. From all accounts, the April, 1993, symposium was a tremendous success; indeed, we were in the difficult position of having to turn away prospective attendees due to lack of space.

The publication of the papers from the Landscape Universe symposium is a happy occasion because it makes available to a broad audience important essays by nationally known landscape scholars and practitioners. As an ensemble, the papers are testament to the great strides that have been made in historic landscape preservation in recent years. Charles Birnbaum and Catha Grace Rambusch deserve special credit both for their vision in organizing the symposium and for the arduous job of assembling and editing the papers.



H. Ward Jandl  
Deputy Chief, Preservation Assistance Division  
National Park Service



## Defining the Landscape Universe

Charles A. Birnbaum

*"The Arts of Design are usually named in three: architecture, sculpture and painting. It is the popular belief that a man who practices one of these is an artist, and that other men who work with forms and colors are at the best but artisans. Yet there is a fourth Art of Design which well deserves to rank with them, for it demands quite as much in the way of aesthetic feeling, creative power, and executive skill. This is the art which creates beautiful compositions upon the surface of the ground."*

### *Art Out-Of-Doors*, Mrs Schuyler Van Rensselaer<sup>1</sup>

Since Mrs. Van Rensselaer made this statement a century ago, the profession of landscape architecture has emerged, including the founding of a national organization, the American Society of Landscape Architects (1899). Today, the profession numbers over ten thousand, with -- accredited graduate and undergraduate programs, and -- states requiring licensure to practice under the title of Landscape Architect. Yet, how much do we really know about our own history? How does this compare with other allied design professions?

### Setting the Stage

The April 1993 issue of *Landscape Architecture* contains an illustrated discussion between a group of landscape architects selected to suggest current solutions for the deteriorated McMillan Park, Washington, D.C. -- a park that has been closed to the public since 1941<sup>2</sup>. As indicated by the dialogue that follows, the visiting professionals considered the original 1906 F. L. Olmsted, Jr. design obsolete:

*"This is a remarkable opportunity to satisfy more than what Olmsted did in his parks. The original Olmsted, the elder, believed that you should create sylvan settings that didn't necessarily contain recreation or environmental phenomena. They should not be visually dramatic, because that took away from the restfulness . . . There's this huge academic debate about what was wrong with Olmsted parks . . . Many were unsuccessful and were changed within five years after he completed them. He thought parks were for strolling, gentle activity, respite from the urban environment. This*

*site, of course, already has drama. So it's a venue to talk about how parks are progressing from Olmsted. We can add that recreation layer, and make it a park of the future as well . . . the original Olmsted park wasn't worth preserving, or else it would have been preserved."*

Finally, one of the participants states: "We do a lot of collaborations. (This) is when you come up with something as a group that one of you never would have, and you stretch each other."

In response to this recognized need for interdisciplinary teams, I ask where is the landscape historian and/or historical landscape architect who may understand and interpret the landscape's design/cultural context? Ironically, in 1923, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., *did* state, "In all art, it is not the name of what you do that counts, but how you do it in relation to time, place, and surroundings."<sup>3</sup>

### The Profession's Record

Has this dilemma changed over time? Why do we still know so little even today about many of these pragmatic visionaries, even at a time when "restoration" work is underway at so many significant places? Let's look at the historic record:

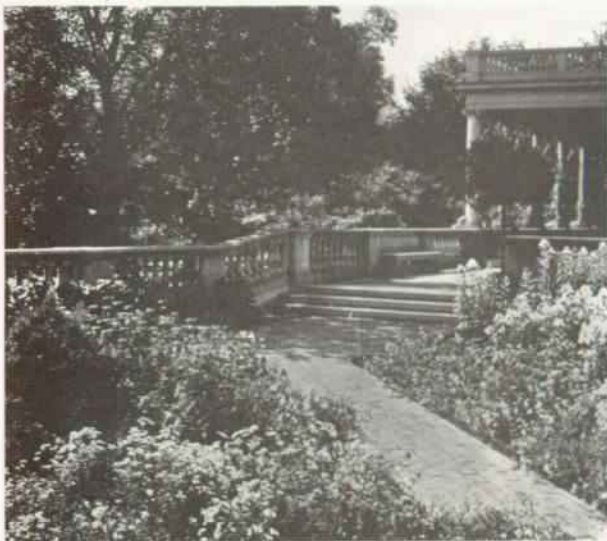
In 1909, the well known garden and nature writer, Neltje Blanchan stated in the introductory passage to *The American Flower Garden*<sup>4</sup>:

*"In the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, are paintings and statuary by artists whose names are household words in the civilized lands. Surrounding the museum is a great pleasure ground of exceeding beauty where millions of people find recreation and delight without even having heard the name of Frederick Law Olmsted. Few indeed suspect that they are indebted to his imagination and trained artistic sense for Central Park. By entering into a working partnership with nature he was enabled to transform a tract of unlovely land, interspersed with swamps, barren rocks and rubbish heaps, the last resort of squatters and goats, into scenes of non-natural but wholly naturalistic beauty; and the belief of the enraptured multitude that nature created them so, should be rightly interpreted as the triumph of Olmsted's creative art. Surely, the man who has wrought out on a vast scale so clear an artistic ideal with living pigments should be as fully entitled to recognition*



*in the ranks of artists as the painter of a landscape on canvas that hangs within the museum walls. There is a small but increasing number of critics who count Olmsted the greatest artist America has yet produced."*

Interestingly enough, the publication is illustrated with 92 full-page photographs, all credited by photographer and not their original designer/landscape architect. Upon review the educated eye may identify the work of the Olmsted Office, Charles Platt, O. C. Simonds and Alling S. DeForest, to name a few.



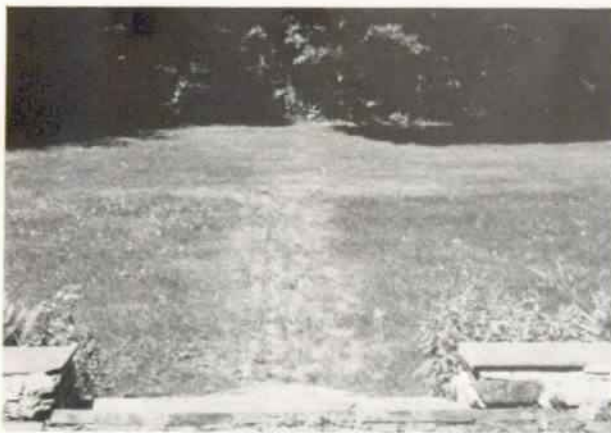
Figures 1, 2: Contributing to this dilemma, uncredited designs and designers have often been the norm in 20th century garden publications. Representative examples include Alling S. DeForest's design for the Eastman House, Rochester, NY from Neltje Blanchan's *The American Flower Garden* (1909) and Jens Jensen's design for a water garden in Glencoe, IL in Edna Mae McCauley's *The Joy of Gardening* (1911).



Figure 3: The ASLA at Stan Hywet Hall, Akron, OH, 1914 (courtesy Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.)

Around the same time of this publication, ASLA was entering its second decade and taking form<sup>5</sup>. In 1914, the Society met in Akron, OH and visited Stan Hywet Hall, the Seiberling estate designed by Warren H. Manning. Identifiable in this group photograph are F.L. Olmsted Jr. and Warren Manning (seated center), William Lyman Phillips, Wilbur Cook, L. D. Cox, W. B. Margins, Ferruccio Vitale, Stephen Child, Harold Caparn, Herbert Kellaway, George Gibbs, Arthur Brinckerhoff, Charles Ramsdell, Bremer Pond, Alfred Geiffert and Sidney Hare. What do we know about these practitioners, their design philosophies and their extant legacies today? How may this information, or lack thereof, affect registration, nomination and treatment decisions at individual properties?

According to historian Robin Karson, "*Manning's long and successful career (1888-1938) included work on over 1700 projects . . . Manning's most important residential projects include examples in St. Louis, MO, Asheville, NC, Lake Minnetonka, MN, Marion, MA, Haverford, PA, Lake Forest, IL and Cleveland and Akron, OH.*"<sup>6</sup> When considering a single Manning-designed landscape (e.g. Stan Hywet Hall) how much do we need to know about similar resource types (e.g. Ohio Country Place estates), or their inherent character-defining features before registering or prescribing a preservation treatment at an individual property? Why are we so lacking with this contextual knowledge? It is only recently that there has been



**Figures 4-9:** How much contextual information is necessary to preserve *Brook Place*, the home of Ellen Biddle Shipman (1870-1950), in Plainfield, NH? Should the absence of most of the historic plantings affect the preservation treatment philosophy? Compare the historic Mattie Edwards Hewitt photograph, top left (courtesy New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, NH) with two contemporary views (middle and bottom left) -- both illustrate a complete absence of Shipman's signature lush plantings (courtesy Karen Krider). Because there are other extant Shipman gardens that are well protected and possess a much higher level of integrity, should this affect the treatment and interpretation at a singular site whose character-defining landscape features are lost? Consider Shipman's extant masterworks at Stan Hywet Hall, Akron, OH (top right); Gwinn, Cleveland, OH (right center); and Longue Vue, New Orleans, LA (bottom right) -- in all cases either through extant fabric or excellent documentation has an honest Shipman legacy been preserved.



a dramatic increase in the number of major works published on historically significant American landscape architects. Current publications cover Fletcher Steele, Florence Yoch, Russell Page, and Jens Jensen, to name a few. There have also been a number of monographs from a variety of organizations. These include the *Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Maine* published by the Maine Historical Preservation Commission, (Beatrix Farrand, Nathaniel Bowditch, and Hans Heisted), the *National Association for Olmsted Parks Workbook Series* (Charles Eliot), *Magnolia Essays* by the Southern Garden History Society (The Olmsted Office in Atlanta) and *Rochester History* (Alling DeForest). Of related interest, the *Journal of the New England Garden History Society*, begun in 1991, is published annually. It seeks to present a dialogue on issues of garden history, landscape preservation, and cross-cultural approaches to gardens and to landscape design, focusing primarily on the New England States. The journal has featured a number of historical figures.

If we assume that we are at the starting gate, let's look at other allied design arts to gain a better perspective. For the sake of this discussion, let's consider the same year, 1914.

#### Marlene Dietrich (d. 1992)

Germany, 1914 -- the outbreak of war. During this time Dietrich spent hours knitting warm garments for German troops or accompanied the school choir to the railroad station singing patriotic anthems. Although she did not make her first film until 1923, *Der Kleine Napoleon (The Little Napoleon)*, Dietrich has been the subject of countless historians and biographers. In her second film, *Der Sprung ins Leben (Leap Into Life)*, 1924, Dietrich plays a lovelorn girl. This film, and her next established her momentum. However, her first great international success came with *The Blue Angel*, 1930. When meeting with director Von Sternberg, Dietrich showed little enthusiasm. She had recently been turned down by Pabst for *Pandora's Box* with the crushing comment that "one sexy look and the picture would have become burlesk." But she prevailed and the rest is history. A career canon between 1931 and 1978 follows documented by thirty five additional films. This includes *Witness for the Prosecution* (1958) and her "last role of distinction," *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961).<sup>7</sup> As a result of her recent death, many of her early

works are undergoing restoration for public broadcasting, art-house festival runs and home-video release. In addition to her work documented on film and publications of the period, today there are countless biographies, filmographies, film logues, photographic essays, documentaries, and articles on the actress.

#### George Bernard Shaw (1856-1951)

In 1914, George Bernard Shaw was at the halfway point of his career. He had already written such masterworks as *Candida*, *Mrs. Warren Profession*, *Arms and the Man*, *Man and Superman*, *Major Barbara*, *Misalliance* and *Pygmalion* to name a few. In 1911, his first illustrated biography had been authorized and published. This publication and the scores that followed include detailed ancestry information, educational and cultural background, individual philosophies, and personal information. A sample passage from an early interview with Shaw reads as follows:

*When I first read Great Expectations, I was not much older than Pip was when the convict turned him upside down in the churchyard. My first acquaintance with the French Revolution was acquired at the same age from A Tale of Two Cities, and I also struggled with Little Dorrit at this time. The books impressed my imagination*

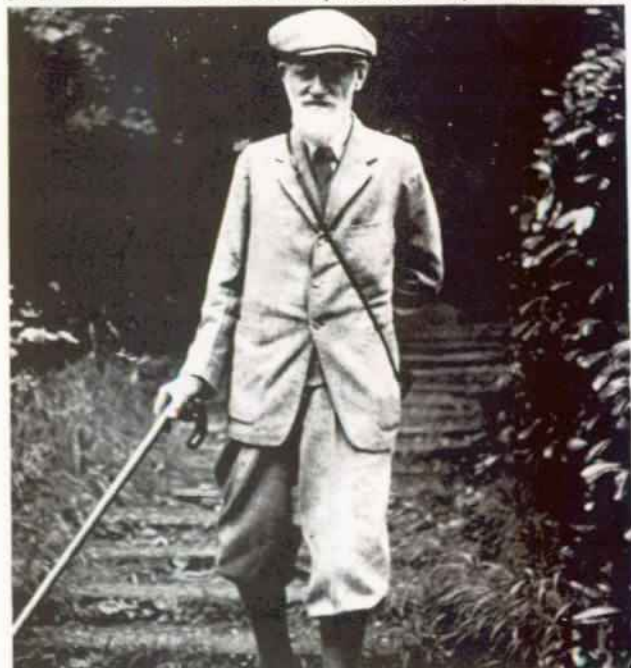


Figure 9: George Bernard Shaw in the grounds at Cliveden. From *Bernard Shaw: A Chronicle*.



most fearfully, so real they were to me. Now it is pretty clear that Dickens, having caught me young when he was working with his deepest intensity of conviction, must have left his mark on me very deeply. It wasn't until several years later that Shaw became a cynical blase person of twelve or thirteen that I read *Pickwick*, *Bleak House* and the rest of Dickens.<sup>8</sup>

There are also many interpretations of Shaw's writings, each richly articulated with personal interviews or journal articles. One sample passage on the "dating" of plays is as follows:

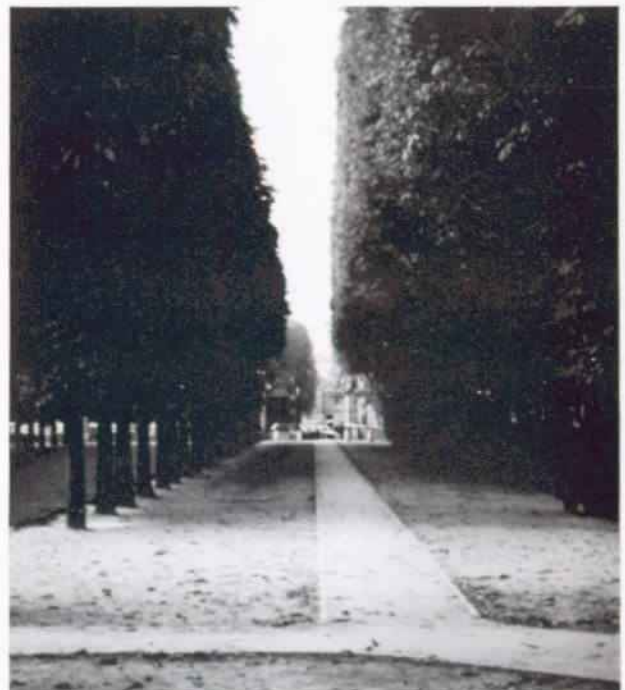
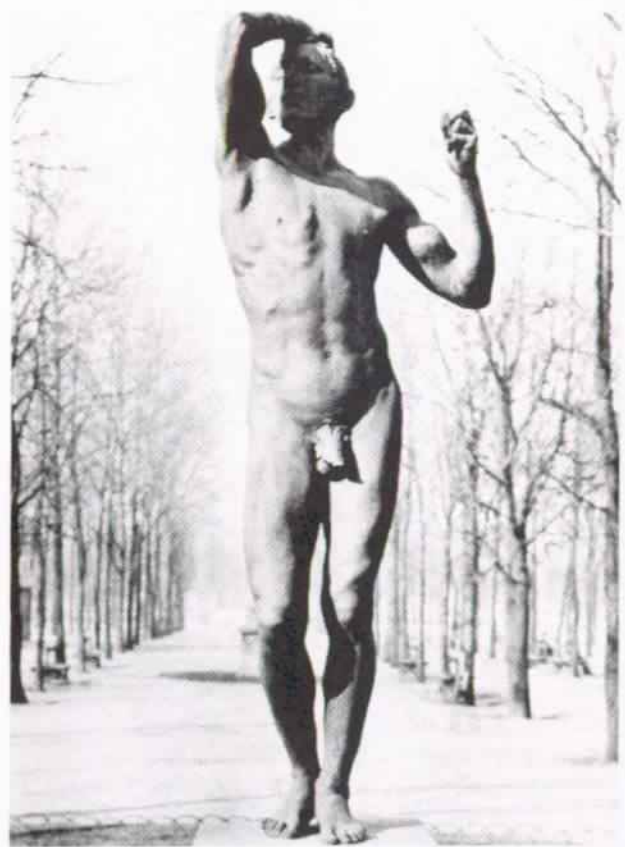
*Fashions change more quickly than manners, manners more quickly than morals, morals more quickly than passions, and, in general, the conscious, reasonable, intellectual life than the instinctive, wilful, affectionate one. The dramatist who deals with the relatively durable sides of life is the one who will last longest. Every 'immortal' play will run the following course. First, its fashions and manners will begin to date. If its matter is deep enough to tide over that danger, it will come into repute again. But after some time it will begin to date again in respect to ethical conception. Yet if it deals so powerfully with the instincts and passions of humanity as to survive this also, it will again regain its place, this time as an antique classic, especially if it is a capital story.*

Today, Shaw's plays are a permanent fixture on the theatrical landscape. The documentation that survives in a variety of forms stands along side of his work. When revisiting these masterworks, it provides an invaluable resource when analyzing, interpreting and mounting his plays.

#### Auguste Rodin (1840-1917)

In 1914, Auguste Rodin was nearing the end of his career. His biographers are many. Their approaches vary, although all agree that the history of modern sculpture began with Rodin. Most approach the subject with an exploration of the artist's achievements, his influence on others, his extant legacy, and the character of an artist that attained universality by remaining human.

Beginning with his first exhibition, he asserted a character opposed to academic tradition. With *The Age of Bronze* (1877), Rodin enjoyed the support



Figures 10,11: *The Age of Bronze* (1875-76). Photographed in Luxembourg Gardens, where it stood from 1884 to 1890 (photo by N.D. Roger-Violett, from *Rodin in Perspective*). The same vista a century after its removal, 1990 (author).



and confidence of a small group of friends. Shy and sensitive to hostile criticism, he left others to defend him. Each new creation stimulated an onslaught of new criticisms. As illustrated on the preceding page, the piece that was sited in Luxembourg Gardens was removed years after its showing because of public criticism<sup>9</sup>.

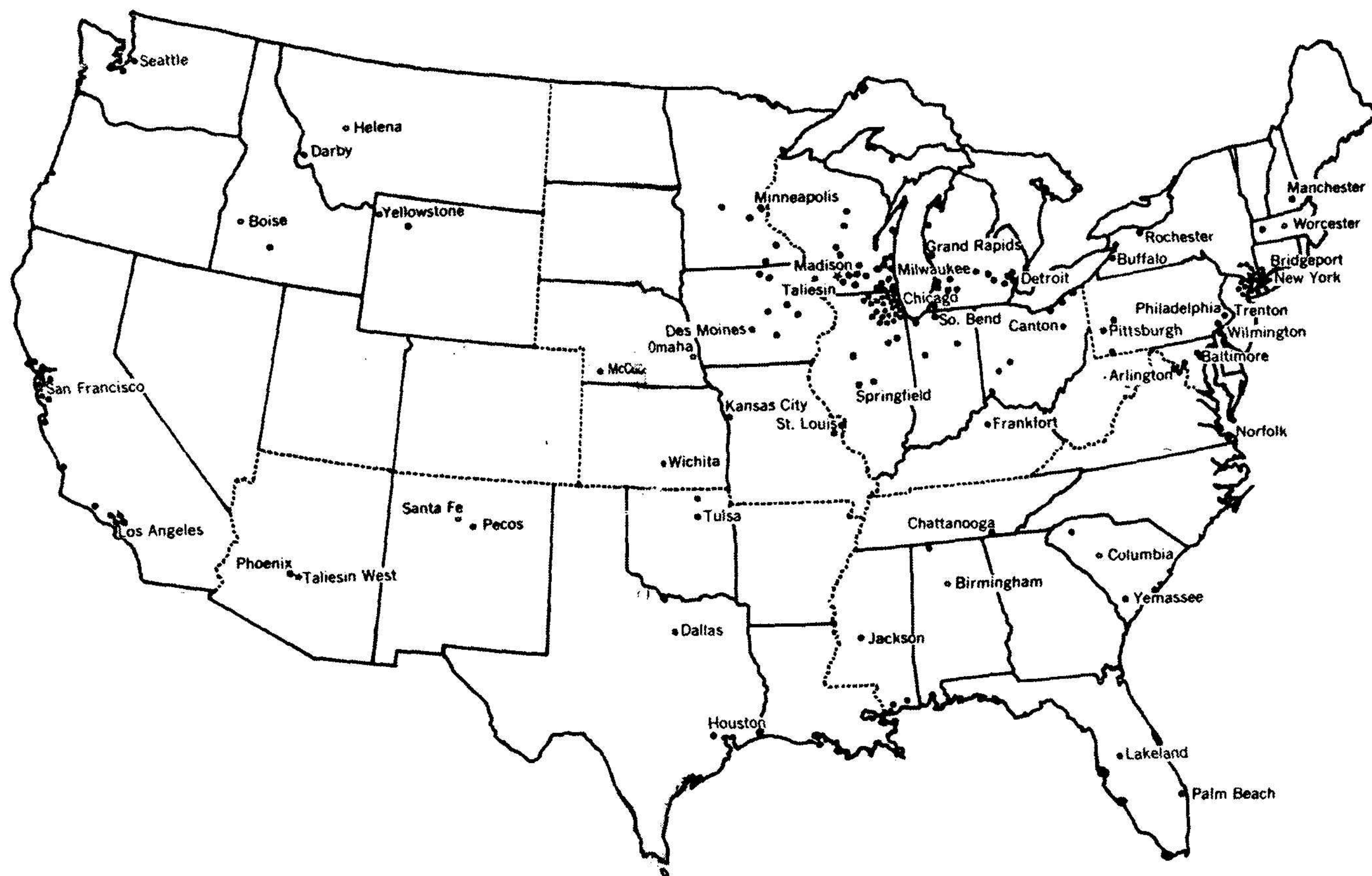
More recent modern art exhibitions and collections throughout the world have demonstrated Rodin's significance, which has increased with the passage of time. As one of his biographers states, "today Rodin's name is a household name"<sup>10</sup> -- could the same be said for those who have been associated with the modern landscape movement?<sup>11</sup>

### Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959)

Unlike Rodin, Frank Lloyd Wright achieved much notoriety during his lifetime, and his executed designs, both lost and extant are easily placed in context. To illustrate this point one need only refer

to the geographic list of standing structures assembled by Bruce F. Raddle (1960).<sup>12</sup> This publication documents the geographic locations of Wright structures, date(s) of construction, client's name and address. In Oak Park Illinois, for example, Wright's House and Studio, twenty additional residences, a stable, church and fountain are all documented.

In 1990, the National Park Service's History Division when considering World Heritage nominations for several United States properties, put forth only Thomas Jefferson's work, and not Frank Lloyd Wright's with its well documented and authenticated legacy. The Jefferson nomination (University of Virginia and Monticello) was submitted and accepted. It includes neither a discussion of Jefferson as a landscape gardener nor a narrative of the landscape designs at these significant properties. This action clearly states the lack of consensus at the History Division. Further



**Figure 12: Map of the General Locations of Frank Lloyd Wright Buildings.** (o) = location of Wright houses; (\*) = Taliesin and Taliesin West; (o) = major cities in the vicinity of Wright houses. This map was developed in association with a list of standing structures in 1960. It was based on exhaustive research, combining several decades of effort by leading Wright scholars.



it highlights the dilemma and need for action to resolve it.

These three diverse vignettes are presented to illustrate the challenge. Now let us attempt to apply the same standards to a single practitioner's work and a single type of landscape resource. For the purposes of this discussion I have selected Albemarle Park, Asheville, NC, the most intact and authenticated extant residential park community designed by Samuel Parsons Jr.<sup>13</sup>

#### A Biographical Sketch of Samuel Parsons, Jr.

Samuel Parsons Jr. (1844-1923) was born in New Bedford, MA, the son of Samuel Bowne Parsons, a nurseryman, and Susan (Howland) Parsons. Preceded by two generations of horticulturists, the two century old nursery prospered until the elder Parsons death (1907).

Parsons, Jr. studied at Haverford College and later graduated from Yale Scientific School with a Bachelor of Philosophy (1862). After college he studied farming, followed by five years in the family nursery, where his attention was turned to laying out and planting country places. This opportunity prepared Parsons for his employment with Calvert Vaux, with whom he joined in partnership (1880). During this association numerous places were laid out throughout the country. Vaux returned to the New York City Parks Department (1883), with Parsons as his Superintendent of Planting. The two worked together on every piece of park design within the city including changes to, and the development of parts of Central Park, and the redesign, design and/or construction of such parks as Grants Tomb, Bowling Green, Union and Abingdon squares, and Jeanette, Canal Street and Christopher parks.

After Vaux's death (1895), Parsons assumed the role of Landscape Architect for the NYC Department of Parks. He oversaw design and planting in Central, Riverside and Morningside parks (all on very steep grades -- perfect training for Albemarle Park), and the creation, design and construction of Nicholas, DeWitt Clinton, Thomas Jefferson, and John Jay parks and the Broadway Mall. He remained a public servant until 1911.

Concurrent with this public service and his involvement in his private practice, Parsons & Co.,

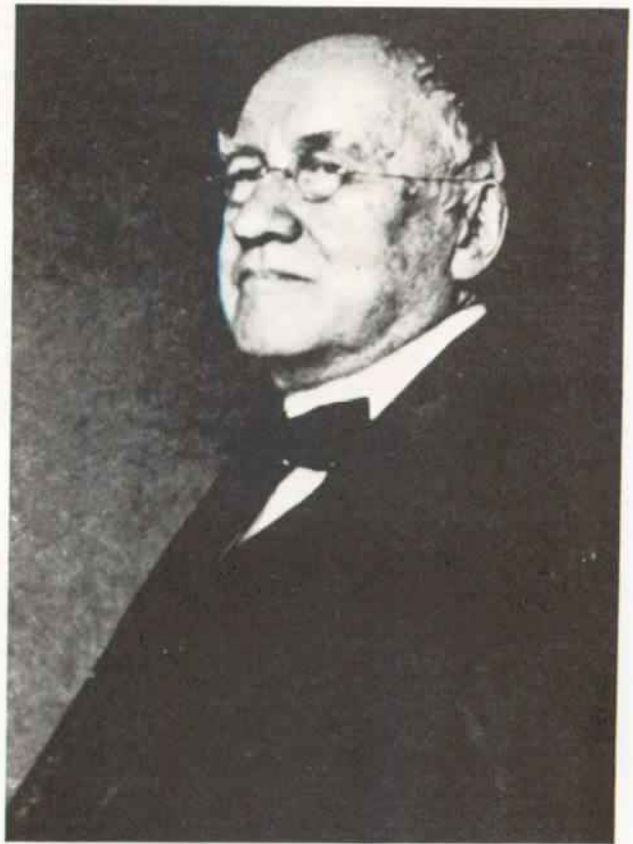


Figure 13: Samuel Parsons, Jr. from the Frontispiece of *Memories of Samuel Parsons*.

Parsons played an instrumental role in the formation of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) which was founded in his New York City office (1899). He was elected ASLA's first Vice President among other responsibilities and he played a role in drafting its first constitution.

Parsons' commissions can be found throughout the U.S. in the form of parks, playgrounds, estates, gardens, cemeteries, planned communities (or homestead parks as he referred to them), public grounds, and campus plans. He was the first professional landscape architect hired by the cities of Birmingham, Alabama (Glen Iris Park) and San Diego, California (Balboa Park). He wrote extensively throughout his career, including scores of articles and seven books.<sup>14</sup> Still, at the time of his death, James Greenleaf, then President of the ASLA stated the following:

*"It is quite possible to some the name and influence of Samuel Parsons may seem remote, so rapidly does the hand of time blur our impressions, but*



*those who knew him do not forget and his name is permanently inscribed with honour upon our records.<sup>15</sup>*

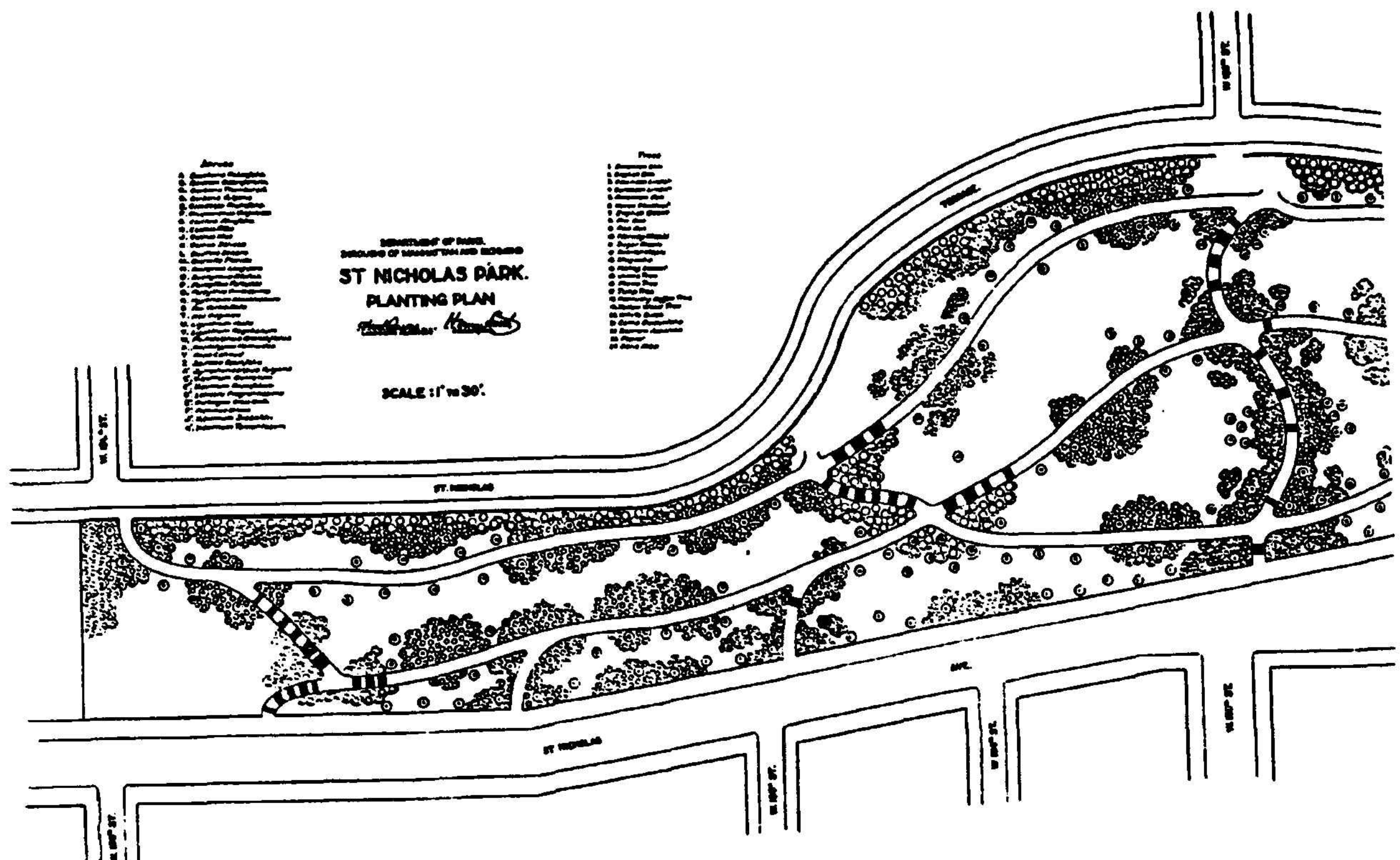
His design philosophies and much of his career canon can be gleaned from his many writings and his significant extant legacy on the American landscape today. These publications combined with site-specific documentation, provide the framework for approaching the Albemarle Park landscape.

### Parsons and Albemarle Park Landscape

*It's treatment need not be surprisingly original, or fanciful, or picturesque, but there should be sane consideration of all aspects practical and aesthetic, of the possibilities of the case, as will secure that sort of perfect relation of all parts which will give it a dignified and sensible beauty that, if it does not surprise at first, will charm after all, and will last.<sup>16</sup>*

In the late 1880s, Parsons was working in partnership with George F. Pentecost, Jr., developing the plan for Albemarle Park. For this 42-acre site, he applied many of the principles perfected over the previous two decades that he had acquired from his experiences in planning public parks, cemeteries, and residential grounds. He approached the site with an enthusiastic sensitivity. Respectful of its natural beauty he worked to ensure that the overall effect was picturesque, and provided each individual lot with a "miniature park." Today, as testified by his own account, Albemarle Park remains an enduring product of Parsons' vision, retaining much of his original intent:

*Our first duty is to frankly preserve, without attempting to imitate the existing beauties of the place -- woodlands, single trees, rocks, knolls, and meadows -- and to only add such arrangements of trees and shrubs as will enhance and perfect the special charms that are native to the place, and at*



**Figure 14:** Parsons had much experience with steeply graded sites in New York City. Often designing and supervising planting, circulation and grading operations in Morningside and Riverside parks, as well as his own design for St. Nicholas Park, illustrated above. From *Landscape Gardening Studies*, 1910.



the same time not interfere with the comfort and convenience of the people who live there.<sup>17</sup>

Features such as walks, drives, greenswards, lawns, plantations, intermediate spaces, and sloping grounds were referred to by Parsons as "landscape-gardening effects". Today, we refer to these elements as character-defining.<sup>18</sup> Parsons sought to develop a comprehensive plan and site-specific vocabulary that would accommodate pre-existing natural conditions as well as an introduced pallet of natural and built features. This comprehensive approach to residential planning had been successfully achieved as early as 1853 in the U.S. by Andrew Jackson Davis and Howard Daniels at Llewellyn Park, West Orange, NJ and Olmsted, Sr., among others<sup>19</sup>. Although a number of other residential communities pre-date Albemarle Park, a very limited number were comprehensively planned by a single landscape architect, architect and engineer on such steep terrain. It was a pioneering achievement in its time due to Parsons' successful manipulation of a site with slopes averaging a twenty-percent gradient.

*The unusual feature of the place is its steepness. The natural contours in many places will hardly allow one to reach its upper portions without the most strenuous effort.*<sup>20</sup>

Albemarle Park is a unified vision of a proprietor and a team of design professionals. Its plan utilized what were, for the time, premier principles in the planning, laying out and engineering of residential parks, combining state-of-the-art construction methods and the use of enduring natural and constructed materials. The design embraced the entire spectrum of the site's natural features: rugged terrain, watersheds, native plant materials, and excellent viewshed opportunities. As testified to by a solid research foundation, today it is virtually intact and true to the original designer's visions<sup>21</sup>.

The greatest threat to the Albemarle Park landscape today is the automobile and its related parking requirements. If parking continues in an uncontrolled fashion, its impact on the character-defining sloping ground could seriously compro-

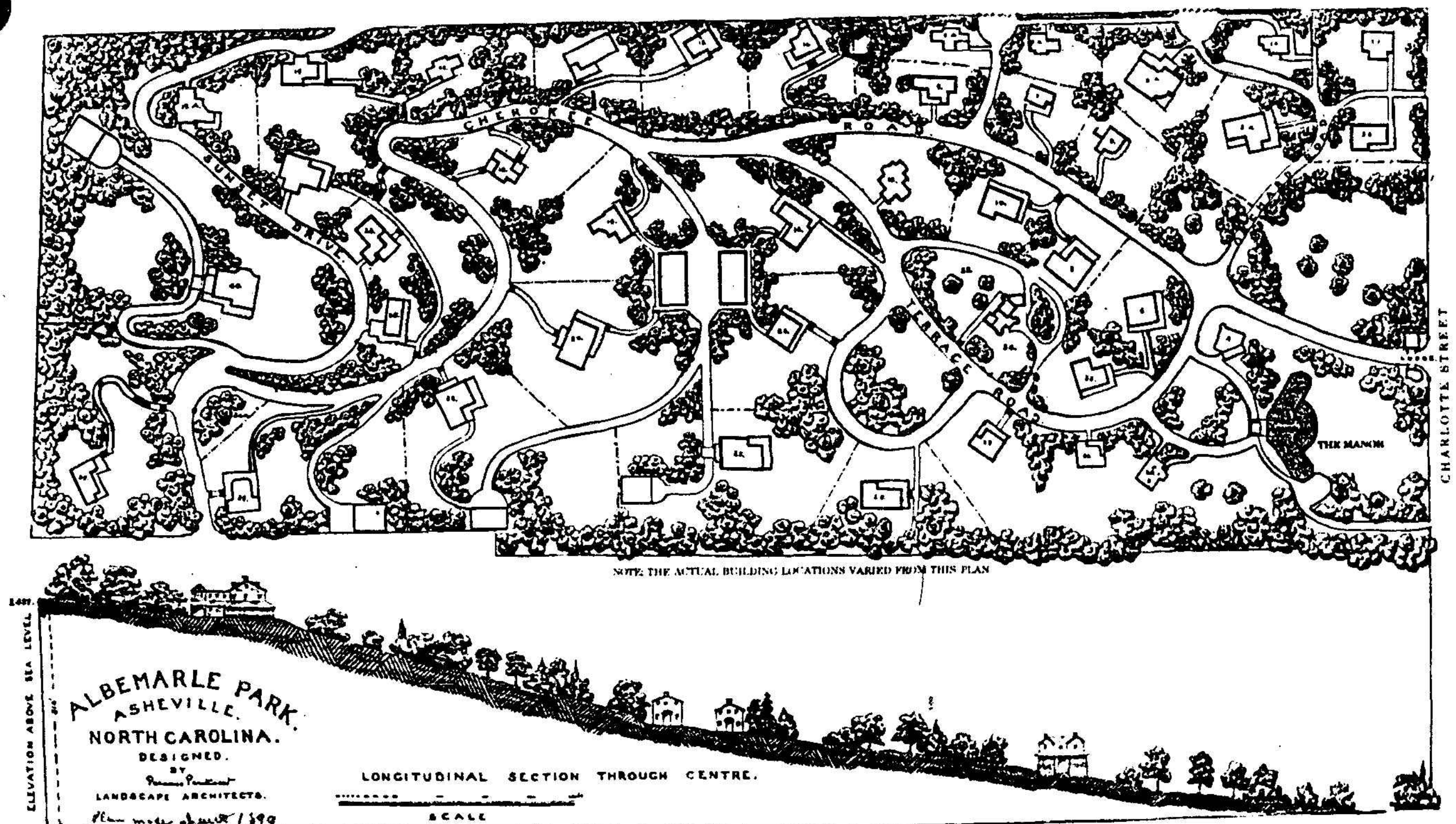


Figure 15: Schematic Design Plan titled *Albemarle Park, Asheville, North Carolina*. Designed by *Parsons & Pentecost Landscape Architects*, ca. 1890s (courtesy Albemarle Park Manor Grounds Association, Inc.)



mise this site's integrity. Without this contextual knowledge of the designer's philosophies and the broader foundation of other planned residential communities, registration and treatment decisions would have been made in a vacuum at this significant, yet complex, landscape.

### **The Challenge**

The prospects are great in the rapidly emerging field of landscape preservation. In fact, there have been a number of recent publications that raise the challenge *"to be honest"* when prescribing treatment for an individual property. Therefore to perform we must look back, not just solely to comprehend, because as Anne Whiston Spirn recently stated, *"an appreciation for past contributions is essential if we aspire to truly innovate, not merely reinvent."*<sup>22</sup>

In concluding, it seems only fitting that this concept too, be placed in a historical context. In 1923, the Committee on Education of the American Institute of Architects produced a book for *"use as a textbook in American colleges,"* and *"for general reading and study by the public, with the purpose of arousing interest in the fine arts and creating a better understanding and appreciation of them."* The publication included broad philosophical essays in architecture (both classical and modern), sculpture, painting, landscape design (F. L. Olmsted, Jr.), City Planning (Edward Bennett), industrial arts, and music. Perhaps the most relevant message was contained in the epilogue by C. Howard Walker:

*"The advantages to be gained from a study of the Arts are unequalled, and preeminent among them is the association with the most complete and finest expression of Man's life and history. The vistas of the past become the byways of the present, and centuries live again in our midst. No longer is our sight limited by the immediate surroundings, no longer are our associations and friends only those of the day and place. The beauty of ages is spread before us, the companionship of the true princes of the earth is ours. Is it a little thing that the doors are open to us to the conclaves of the great, to the aspirations of masters who greet us?"*

*Everywhere the pleasures of sight are enhanced, and the understanding of events enlarged, and the*

*example of the activities of man's hand and mind are inspiring to us in the present. If the past has done so much and so well, shall we with such a heritage do less and fail?*

*Therefore to perform we must comprehend the work of our predecessors, for of what avail is it to attempt to carry on the torch kept alive by our ancestors, if we have no knowledge of what fed its flame?"*<sup>23</sup>

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### **Endnotes**

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3. Olmsted, Jr., Frederick Law. "Landscape Design," *The Significance of the Fine Arts*, Published Under the Direction of the American Institute of Architects, Marshall Jones Company, Boston, 1923, p. 355.
4. Blanchan wrote several books on gardens and birds in the early part of the century including *Nature's Garden*, *The American Flower Garden*, *How to Attract the Birds*, *Birds that Hunt and Are Hunted*, *Birds Every Child Should Know*, and *Bird Neighbors*.
5. The *Transactions of the American Society of Landscape Architects* between 1899 and 1913 lists around 200 members.
6. Robin Karson's biographical entry for Warren H. Manning (1860 - 1938) is contained in the annotated bibliography, *Pioneers of American Landscape Design* from the National Park Service. (GPO # 024-005-01-01127-7)
7. Although there are many references available, much of the narrative is extracted from Walker, Alexander, *Dietrich*, Harper Row Publishers, New York, 1984.
8. R. F. Rattray, M. A. Ph.D. *Bernard Shaw: A Chronicle*, Luton, The Leagrave Press, Ltd., Dennis Dobson Ltd., London, SW1, 1950s (n.d.) p. 16.
9. Butler, Ruth (editor). *Rodin in Perspective*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1980.

10. Goldscheider, C. "Forward", *Rodin*, Arted, Editions d'Art, Paris, 1979, p. 6.

11. It was not until 1991 that a landscape architect had work exhibited in New York City's Museum of Modern Art -- Roberto Burle Marx was the first to achieve this honor.

12. The referenced list was developed from several sources, especially the exhaustive catalog (1887 - 1941) by Henry-Russell Hitchcock published in his *In the Nature of Materials* and the post-war domestic work compiled by Bernard Pyron.

13. Albemarle Park, Asheville, North Carolina, was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1990.

14. Parsons wrote often for *Scribner's Magazine*, *Garden & Field*, *The American Garden*, *The Outlook* and *The American Architect*. His books and monographs include *Concerning Lawn Planting*, with Calvert Vaux (1881), *Homes in City and County*, with Russel Sturgis et al (1893), *Landscape Gardening* (1893), *How to Plan the Home Grounds* (1899), *Landscape Gardening Studies* (1910), *The Art of Landscape Architecture* (1915). He also edited and wrote a new introduction to the ASLA reprint of Prince von Puckler-Muskau's *Hints on Landscape Gardening* (1917).

15. This hand written letter is contained in the Parsons Family Collections at the Queens Historical Society. It was later published in Mabel Parson's *Memories of Samuel Parsons* (1926).

16. Parsons, Jr., Samuel, *How to Plan the Home Grounds*, Doubleday & McClure, New York, 1910, p. 184.

17. Ibid, p. 164.

18. For a discussion on the treatment of character-defining features see the draft *Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Landscapes*, US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Preservation Assistance Division, Washington, DC, 1992, pp. 1-13.

19. See related discussion, "Planned Communities: Placing Albemarle Park in Context," *The Manor and Cottages, Albemarle Park, Asheville, North Carolina, A Historic Planned Residential Community*, Albemarle Park - Manor Grounds Association, 1991, pp. 104-105.

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21. See *The Manor and Cottages* by Jane Gianvito Mathews and Richard A Mathews. Specifically pages 40-63, "The Landscape of Albemarle Park: Samuel Parson's Vision" by Charles A. Birnbaum. The Albemarle Park - Manor Grounds Association, Inc., Asheville, North Carolina, 1991.

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**A Look at the Naturalistic Designs of Jens Jensen  
and the Preservation of Lincoln Memorial Garden,  
Springfield, Illinois**

Robert E. Grese

Naturalistic landscape designs present a unique challenge in terms of historic preservation and management. Modelled after naturally-evolved landscapes, they are not quite *natural* in the way that most people think about wild nature. Neither are they like the typical garden where humans tend to dominate and control nature. Instead, they are deliberately designed to evoke qualities of wilder places, relying on a combination of natural succession and human intervention to achieve that goal. As such, change and evolution are always inevitable and often desired in these designs. In response, preservation efforts must treat historic naturalistic landscape designs not as static works of art, but rather as landscapes that are continuing to evolve within the bounds set by the vision of the designer.

The naturalistic designs of Jens Jensen (1860-1951) present an appropriate case study of this problem. Created to emphasize aesthetic qualities found in natural places, Jensen's gardens were fully intended to evolve and change over time. Jensen's plans were usually loosely drawn and the initial plantings were intended to serve as the starting point for a long process of change and succession. Yet, Jensen did not expect that these landscapes would evolve haphazardly. Instead, he intended that certain design features and qualities of light, space, and form remain constant over time to provide an *idealized* vision of nature. These things became the standards of Jensen's style.<sup>1</sup> Because Jensen rarely recorded design intentions for an individual project, analyses must include an understanding of his broader body of work and style of design. In so doing, the features or qualities that are either consistent or contrasting with his usual style can be easily identified.

Lincoln Memorial Garden in Springfield, Illinois, designed by Jensen from 1934-1936, presents a good case study of this dilemma. Jensen provided only schematic drawings for the original garden and emphasized his intention to create an idealized representation of the the landscapes of Illinois and Indiana that Abraham Lincoln had experienced during his lifetime.<sup>2</sup> Managers of the Garden to-



**Figure 1:** Jens Jensen at the Clearing. (courtesy Grace Richardson)

day wrestle with the question of how to manage this landscape that is neither natural nor a traditional garden. Study of the general history of the Garden and Jensen's involvement can only provide limited direction for preservation treatments. An understanding of Jensen's design style, however, when combined with a knowledge of the specific history of the Garden and ecological conditions, can provide a much richer basis for preservation. This paper will examine the general background of Jensen's work and the history and design of Lincoln Memorial Garden and discuss how these relate to specific management issues at the Garden.

Jens Jensen was born in Dybbol, Denmark in 1860 and came to the United States in 1884. He eventually ended up in Chicago, where he went to



work for the West Park District as a street sweeper. Seeing the landscape of the Midwest through the eyes of an immigrant, Jensen became enamored with the broad open spaces and generally flat or rolling terrain, the diverse flora and its seasonal differences, and the intense sunlight so different from his native Denmark.<sup>3</sup> He also noted a casual detachment from the landscape by Americans that greatly disturbed him; there was little appreciation of the Native American traditions associated with the land and a seeming intent to dominate and control every square inch of American soil. With his desire to develop truly American parks and gardens, Jensen promoted a style that celebrated the beauty of American nature and would foster the development of an outdoor culture closely associated with the land.<sup>4</sup>

Sometime around 1888 or shortly thereafter, Jensen was given a chance to put these rudimentary ideas into practice through the design of a small garden in a corner of Chicago's Union Park. In an effort to counter the separation of city people from the surrounding countryside, Jensen was determined to bring nature back to the city

and filled this garden with native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers. This small but popular garden became merely the beginning of a long career of designing other such "*natural parks and gardens*" as Jensen would later refer to his designs.<sup>5</sup>

At the time of Jensen's work, the idea of naturalistic park design was already firmly entrenched in the various Chicago Park Districts through the work of Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., Calvert Vaux, and H.W.S. Cleveland in the South Park District; Swain Nelson and Olaf Benson in Lincoln Park; and William Le Baron Jenney and Oscar F. Dubuis in the West Park District.<sup>6</sup> Yet Jensen's evolving ideas about park design were markedly different. Instead of picturesque stonework, artificial mounds, carpet bedding, overly *rustic* bridges, and elaborate Victorian gazebos and buildings found in some of the Chicago parks, Jensen sought to minimize the use of structures as focal points in the landscape. Borrowing most heavily from Olmsted and Vaux's sensitive shaping of woods and greensward in places like Washington Park (which he greatly admired)<sup>7</sup>, Jensen relied on a careful shaping of



Figure 2: Prairie River at Humbolt Park, Chicago. (photograph by F. A. Waugh, courtesy Collection of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning, University of Massachusetts, Amherst)



space, a re-creation of diverse vegetative habitat, and the creation of quiet places from which to view the changing landscape as the dominant features of his designs. In Humboldt (Figure 2), Douglas, and Garfield Parks (designed between 1905-1914), Jensen included formal music courts, rose gardens, fountains, and a variety of garden pavilions and other structures, but these were set within a context of a broader naturalistic design. Following tenets set by the *prairie* architects such as Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright, park benches, arbors, and other pavilions did not copy the self-conscious *rustic* styles of previous designers, but instead used modern materials such as concrete in simple, honest ways so as not to call attention to the structure itself. Jensen seemed to feel that the view from a bench or an arbor should be deemed more important than the structure itself.<sup>8</sup>

By the time Jensen designed Columbus Park (from about 1916-1920), he had deleted most geometric features from his palette. Here he concentrated on accentuating the ancient beach topography,

creating wetland habitat that would attract diverse wildlife back to the city, and shaping tree and shrub plantings to provide at least the image of an expansive prairie. A refectory building was included, but its placement and the surrounding masses of vegetation made it less a dominant feature than a platform from which to view the surrounding lagoon and *prairie* expanses. As with his earlier playground design in Franklin Park (1914-1916), the play spaces in Columbus Park were deliberately soft-edged, concentrating more on creating a habitat for wildlife and a child's imagination than in providing physical equipment. A swimming pool of horizontally-layered limestone was meant to provide city children with a swimming environment evocative of a country *swimming hole*. A large circular *council ring* provided a place for storytelling and discussion. At the center of Columbus Park was a large opening for outdoor performances which Jensen aptly called a *Player's Green*. The intent was to provide a place for dramatic performances set against a naturalistic background and to encourage a

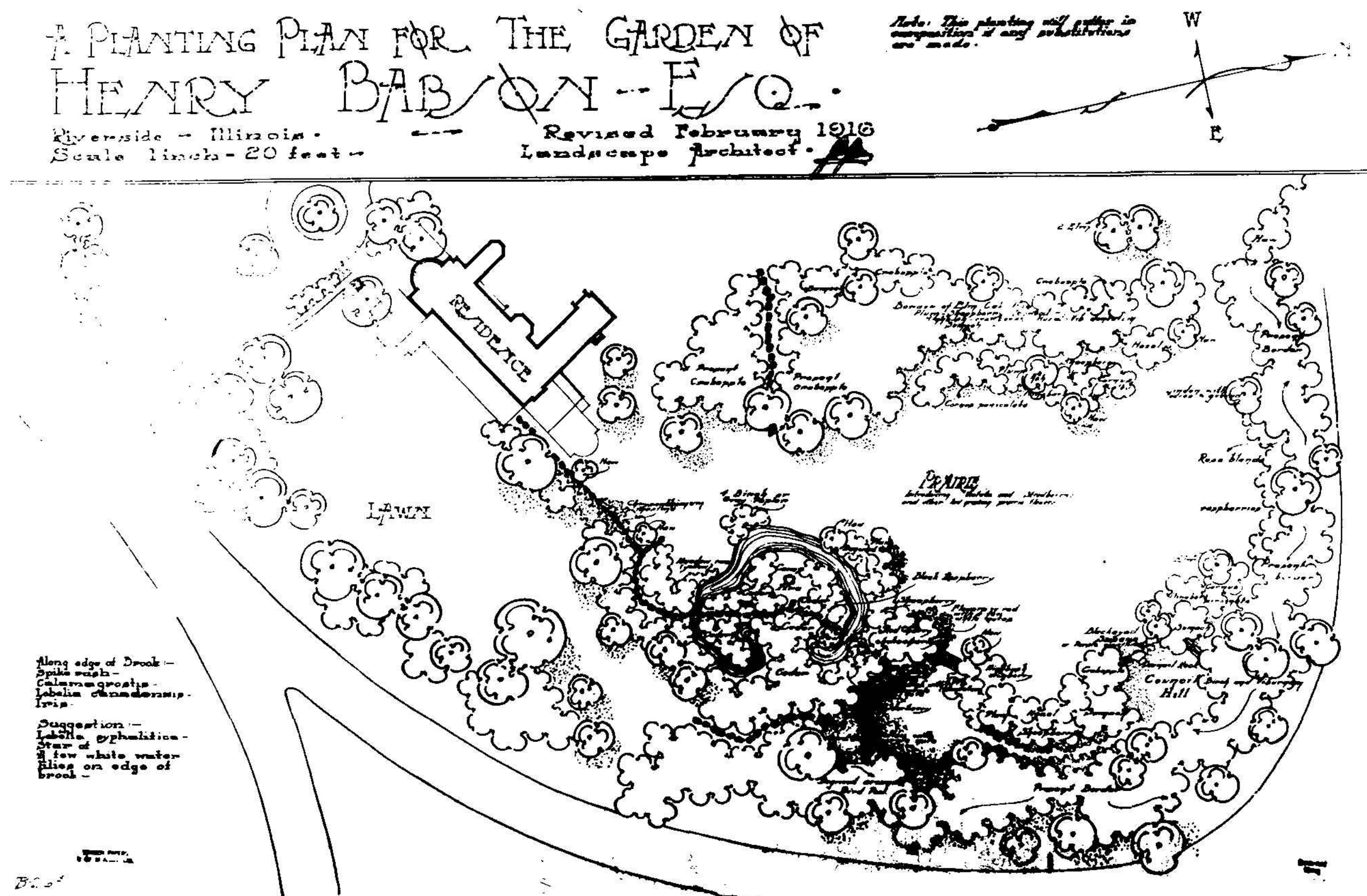


Figure 3: A Planting Plan for the Garden of Henry Babson, Esq., Riverside, Illinois, 1916. (courtesy Jensen Collections, Art and Architecture Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor)



tradition of celebrating in the out-of-doors. This emphasis on outdoor historical pageants was certainly not unique to Jensen's work, but Jensen readily embraced the idea as an effective way of teaching people to see their relationship to the natural world around them.<sup>9</sup>

Likewise, Jensen's estate work also evidenced his desire to create idealized images of nature. He wanted to create quiet, restful homes for his clients that would both respect and celebrate the integrity of the natural landscape of the region (Figure 3). Sometimes this involved doing very little other than carefully protecting and preserving the natural vegetation on a site and healing the scars of construction. On many of his estates designed in Highland Park, Illinois and other towns on the North Shore of Chicago, much of Jensen's effort went into preserving the natural ravines and bluffs and in extending that vegetation to areas around the house. In other places where the landscape had been drastically altered, Jensen sought to return it to an image of an earlier natural state. For example, at Fair Lane, Henry and Clara Ford's home in Dearborn, Michigan, Jensen noted that he wanted to "*put the land back to what it was when the American Indians skied down the banks of the River Rouge.*"<sup>10</sup> With Henry's hydro-electric dam on the river, the landscape was definitely to be different than it had been historically. Yet, Jensen's intent to create an image of wild nature was inherently clear.

Intertwined with his design career, were Jensen's various conservation efforts. Through his natural parks and gardens, Jensen hoped to awaken people to the beauty of nature and inspire them to fight to preserve what little of wild nature yet remained. He helped to found two conservation organizations dedicated to enhancing people's appreciation of nature and to the preservation of wild areas and participated in numerous other conservation organizations. In 1908, Jensen worked with other members of Chicago's Playground Association to arrange a series of *Saturday Afternoon Walking Trips* for local people to take excursions into natural areas around Chicago. As its popularity grew, the group became known at Jens Jensen's suggestion as the Prairie Club. It regularly held day outings or occasional overnight camping trips to places accessible by train, streetcar, or automobile. The group fought for the establishment of the County Forest Preserve system in Illinois and for

the protection of other scenic natural areas such as the Starved Rock area on the Illinois River and the Indiana Dunes at the southern tip of Lake Michigan. In 1913, Jensen invited many of his influential friends to join with him in another group which became known as the Friends of Our Native Landscape. The Friends became even more politically active, and through their lobbying efforts helped to protect many lands as state parks in Illinois. Other chapters were established in Wisconsin and Michigan.<sup>11</sup>

In both of these groups, Jensen clearly relied on outdoor celebration as a way of *bonding* people with nature. As with the council rings and players' greens that Jensen created in his parks and gardens to cultivate a tradition of the arts in *naturalistic* settings, the Prairie Club and the Friends of Our Native Landscape used pageants, masques, poetry readings, song, dance, and other such programs to celebrate the seasons, to teach conservation messages, and to see continuity between nature and the arts.

By the time Jensen began work on Lincoln Memorial Garden in 1934, he had been creating natural parks and gardens for some 46 years and had developed a distinct, mature style. This project was conceived by Harriet Knudson of the Springfield Civic Garden Club and adopted as an official project by the Garden Club of Illinois in 1933. When Knudson approached Jensen with the idea of creating a living memorial to Abraham Lincoln, he was deeply honored and suggested that a garden of *growing things* was perhaps the most fitting memorial to a great American such as Lincoln.<sup>12</sup>

Together with Knudson, Jensen selected a narrow 60 acre strip of land between East Lake Road and the newly created reservoir called Lake Springfield as the site for the Garden. For almost two years, Jensen made occasional visits to the site in different seasons and labored over his plan, noting that "*no good work comes from haste.*"<sup>13</sup> In March of 1936, Jensen completed his plan for the Garden which was to be a mosaic of woodlands, prairies, and wetlands, using plants native to the places of Illinois and Indiana where Abraham Lincoln had spent much of his time. Plantings were to be grouped by associations and planted largely by volunteers from the various chapters of the Garden Clubs of Illinois as what Knudson referred



to as a *friendship garden*.<sup>14</sup> The initial plantings were done in a grand celebration on a windy November afternoon in 1936. Because many of the native plants were unavailable from nurseries, other means of procuring plants had to be devised. School children from 28 states collected acorns of oak trees for planting around what was to be the large Lincoln Council Ring on a small hillock overlooking the lake. The Garden Club of Illinois formed an extensive network of volunteers to rescue native plants from sites being destroyed across the state, and gradually the massings suggested by Jensen's plan began to take shape. This was a garden deliberately planned to take form over time, and, as the young trees grew, understory plants were added.<sup>15</sup>

In describing his design for Lincoln Memorial Garden (Figure 4), Jensen noted that the topography suggested a series of lanes to him.<sup>16</sup> Along the lanes, he planted native species here in large masses "to emphasize their beauty and give a feeling of greatness."<sup>17</sup> In the early days of the Garden, many of these lanes were vibrant in spring with blooming flowering dogwood, redbud,

crabapple, and other small trees. As shade has become more dense in some of these areas, this character has changed dramatically. Jensen also noted that he covered the higher elevations of the gardens with trees and planted the open lowlands with *sun loving flowers*. He suggested that this would create a vivid spectacle when these were in bloom: "Thousands of lilies, phlox, and other friends of the open lowlands will greet you in festive array and speak of the beauty the pioneer beheld when first entering the Illinois land, a real tapestry of living colors reflected in the blue waters of the lake."<sup>18</sup> Jensen also clearly had wildlife habitat in mind when creating his design: "This garden will become the home of our songsters and the wood thrush will sing here at sunset, and the robin begin the day with his well known voice."<sup>19</sup>

Jensen's design included eight council rings (Figure 5) located throughout the garden. As noted by Jensen, these were to serve as the centers for social gatherings and quiet contemplation or discussion: "It [the council ring] is really democratic in its conception. Here one is no more than the other. Its makeup is one of strength and

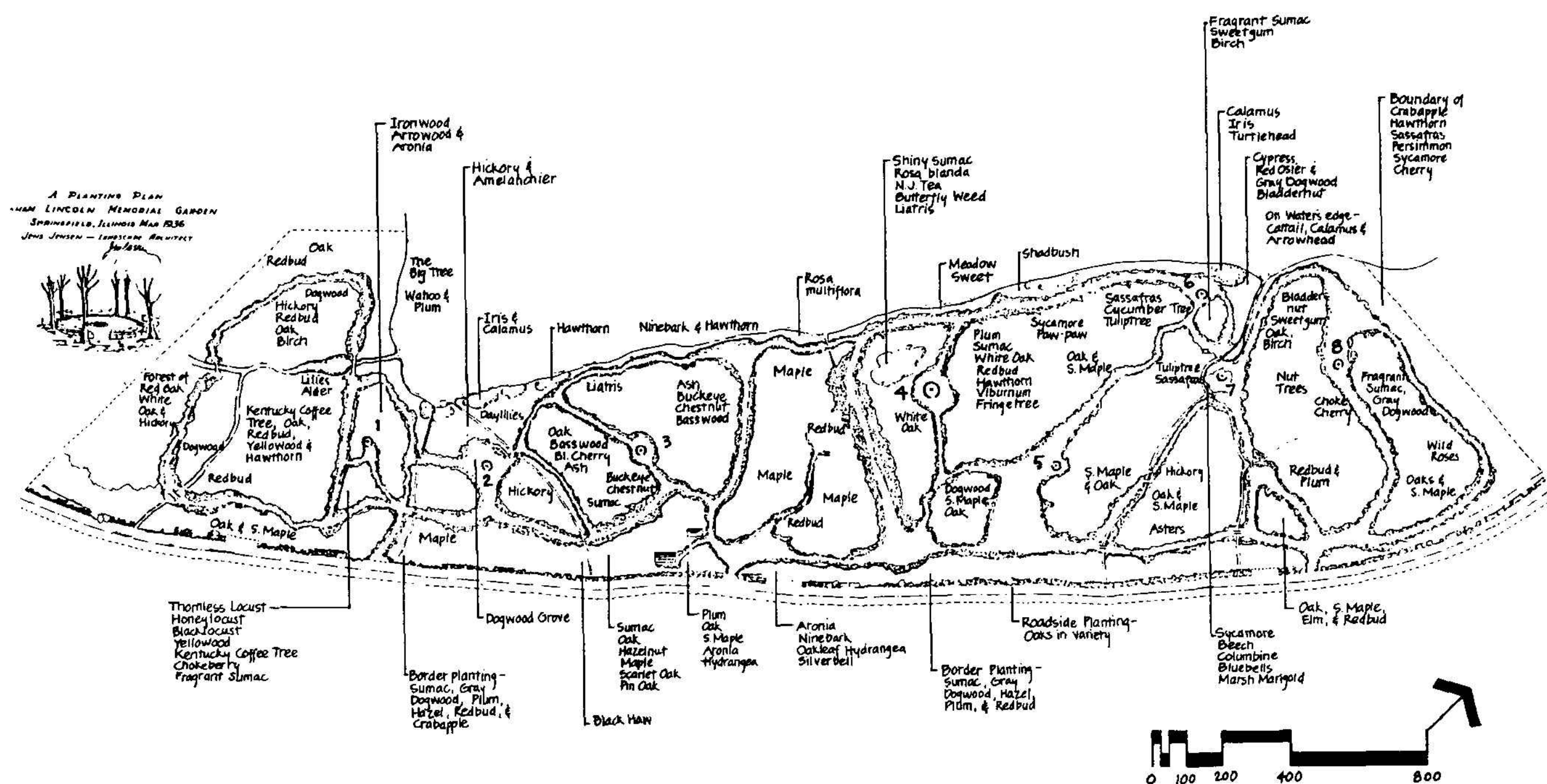


Figure 4: Jensen's design of *A Planting Plan for the Abraham Lincoln Memorial Garden*, Springfield, Illinois, 1936. Labels of plants were added for clarity.



friendship. The friendly fire on the hearth in the center is most inviting. These council fires are in the depth of woods, or at the edge of sun openings, in the light of the poetic moon, or near the lake shore where [their] heaven reaching flames send greetings across the lake to other people."<sup>20</sup>

These rings would provide settings for the outdoor celebrations that Jensen felt were central to the purpose of his gardens.

While Jensen himself staked out some of the earlier plantings, he left many of the details to Harriet Knudson and her volunteers to work out. With an earlier plan in 1935, Jensen included a note to Knudson that he had *"allowed considerable freedom in the execution of the plans, which is essential with a plan of this kind, but this freedom demands a strict adherence to the harmony and principle of the plan."*<sup>21</sup> The same comments would apply to the final plans sent just three months later in March 1936. Just before completing his plans, Jensen retired from active design practice to Door County, Wisconsin. Occasionally he would come down to Springfield

and survey the work that had been done, but mostly he corresponded with Knudson, responding to her queries and offering advice for carrying out the plan: *"Now wherever trees are specific it means a forest. In other words, they are planted close -- all the way from three to four feet apart to ten to fifteen feet apart. Then there is undergrowth and under that again there is woodland flowers."*<sup>22</sup>

Today, Lincoln Memorial Garden is a rich mosaic of woodland and openings, and many who come to walk the trails have little sense that this is in fact a created landscape. Over the past 15-20 years, there have been varying viewpoints as to how to manage the Garden--should it be treated as a *"natural landscape"* with minimal intervention by humans or should it be a garden, carefully maintained according to Jensen's admittedly general plan? It is obvious from Jensen's writing that he did not see this as a static landscape, yet it is also clear that he wanted certain features and views to endure. He wrote about the Lincoln Council Ring: *"It retreats in a grove of white oak --*



Figure 5: View of Council Ring #3 in Lincoln Memorial Garden. (courtesy of the author)



*the most stately and sturdiest tree in Illinois -- oaks that will tell the story of this great garden when all the statuary and monuments have crumbled into dust -- even Gutzon Borglum's great faces on the mountain side will have scattered their dust over the plains. And so this garden will last far into the ages. It is a real and true tribute to the great and lovable Lincoln.*"<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, his writings to Knudson about the garden only provide sketchy notions about the long-term management for the design.<sup>24</sup>

In analyzing the current conditions of Lincoln Memorial Garden, it becomes clear that active interventions are necessary to maintain many of the *natural* qualities of this landscape as well as to maintain some of the design features and qualities intended by Jensen. With only Jensen's rough plan and letters to Knudson as a guide for preserving Lincoln Memorial Garden as a designed landscape, it requires both an understanding of Jensen's style as evidenced by the larger body of work in his career as well as an understanding of the ecosystems which Jensen was using as a model for his design of the Garden.

Like many large parks and other public landscapes, human resources for on-going maintenance and management activities, necessary equipment, and the money to pay for them at Lincoln Memorial Garden has always been limited. In some ways, this has been a mixed blessing the Garden. The lack of money to intervene has probably kept some areas wilder and more in keeping with Jensen's ideals than they might be if readily available funds had always been obtainable; in other areas, neglect and succession has altered the character of the landscape. Recent management activities have targeted the major meadow spaces and other openings which are perhaps most seriously threatened with invading trees and shrubbery without periodic cutting or burning. Other parts of the landscape, however, are also in need of intelligent and sensitive treatment.

In September of 1992, Lincoln Memorial Garden invited experts familiar with Jensen's work and the Garden to a meeting to discuss the future of the Garden and management issues of particular concern to the Garden staff. The meeting was intended to use a collective knowledge and understanding of Jensen's work in general to

address management issues specific to the Garden. The questions posed by the staff of Lincoln Memorial Garden and a discussion of how these can be addressed aptly illustrates how an understanding of designer's general body of work can contribute to the development of management approaches to preserving a particular landscape. What follows are the questions given to the experts<sup>25</sup> and a response of management directions that could be followed.<sup>26</sup>

*a. Areas between Trails.*

*The original plan indicated one or more species to be planted in given areas. Should only those named species now be allowed? If so, how should the area be managed to avoid invasion of other species? If other associated species are to be allowed, what criteria should be used to determine acceptable species and their densities? Whether other species are allowed or not, what should be done when the originally named species begin to die from damage or old age?*

When analyzing Jensen's planting designs, it is important to consider how Jensen actually practiced. He usually planted in large masses and regarded plans only as the working outline of the overall design. Often, only the dominant plants were indicated where Jensen fully intended for a full layers of canopy trees, shrubs, and ground layer species to be planted. These would include plants associated with the named dominant plants in the wild. Columbus Park in Chicago is a good example. Only major plants are drawn in ink on the plans, and a working set contains penciled notes for the hundreds of herbaceous plants to be planted in the understory of woodland areas.<sup>27</sup> For most of his projects, he also relied on trained gardeners or foremen who would interpret the loose plans in the field. Jensen would routinely visit job sites, reviewing the planting and making changes where required. Hence, greater detail was not necessary.

The planting of Lincoln Memorial Garden presented a somewhat different situation in that the garden was to be planted by volunteers and over a long period of time. Still, Jensen seems to have followed his usual practice in providing only a general outline of the plantings for the Garden on his March 1936 plan (Figure 4). In some places on this plan, he provided a more extensive list of



shrubs and canopy trees, for example at the east and west of the central entrance, he calls for *Aronia*, *Ninebark*, *Oakleaf Hydrangea* and *Silverbell* to the east and *Sumac*, *Oak*, *Hazelnut*, *Maple*, *Scarlet Oak*, and *Pin Oak* to the west. In other areas, he calls for a *Forest of Red Oak*, *White Oak*, and *Hickory* or simply labels an area as *Maple*. With the more extensive list, it is certain that he wanted these plants to be featured. Yet it can also be implied from the more limited notations that he wanted to include associated tree, shrub and groundlayer species with the dominants noted on the plan. An earlier plan, drawn in 1935, gave much greater detail of the understory species. As on the 1936 plan, he indicated the border planting along East Lake Drive to consist primarily of *Mixed Oak* and *Sugar Maple*, yet in these same areas he noted an *undergrowth of Jacob's Ladder*, *Spring Beauty*, and *Trillium* and plantings of *Rosa setigera* at the edge of the woods at one of the entrances. Similarly, many other parts of the plan have a much greater detail of the understory plants that he likely intended to be the same on the second plan as well. In a woodland area to be dominated by *Sugar*

*Maple*, he indicated an *undergrowth of Bloodroot*, *Trillium*, *Spring Beauty*, *Wild Geranium*, and *Wild Ginger*. Planting notes by many of the garden clubs involved with the garden, also provide a good record of the understory species that were actually planted.

As for the problem from invasion of other species, it is clear from Jensen's writings and other work that he considered his gardens as a partnership with nature and was content to allow the wind, birds, and other animals do some of his planting for him. Therefore, it is critical that some flexibility be allowed here in allowing succession and change while maintaining the overall integrity of Jensen's plan. Over time, as woodland areas of the garden have matured, some of the early successional species have been shaded out. While this loss of small flowering trees such as dogwood, redbud, and crabapple makes the Garden a different place today than in its early years, this does not mean that it is entirely out of line with Jensen's long-term vision for his design. Along some of the trails named for these flowering trees, it may be



Figure 6: View of light and shade along trails in Lincoln Memorial Garden. (courtesy of the author)



important to insure that they persist, but in other places canopy trees may be allowed to dominate.

It is also important to note that Jensen's understanding of ecology was imperfect and that not all of his specific ideas for plantings were in accordance with what the site's soils and other conditions would support. Management must attempt to reconcile our current knowledge of the dynamics of natural landscapes that Jensen was trying to recreate with his concepts for the Garden. Jensen clearly stated that he was trying here to recreate habitats that Abraham Lincoln experienced in the midwestern states where he lived--Illinois, Indiana, and Kentucky. Some of the plants and habitats included by Jensen were not especially adapted to the specific conditions of the Lincoln Memorial Garden site in Springfield. Where these plants and habitats are critical to Jensen's overall design, they should be retained even though it may take additional effort to do so. In other cases, the plantings may be allowed to follow patterns of natural succession with emphasis given to maintaining the spatial organization and vistas of the original design.

*b. Natural Invasion/Succession of Problem Species Especially within the areas between trails tree seedlings develop. Some species are particularly abundant including black cherry, slippery elm and hackberry. Should species such as these which are often considered undesirable be allowed to develop? At the edges poison ivy, multiflora rose, and wild grape proliferate. Should these species be allowed to develop?*

As with the previous question, Jensen did not leave clear instructions for the kinds of successional changes that he would have allowed in this garden. On a general level, native species such as black cherry, slippery elm and hackberry fit in with Jensen's intentions to include species and plant communities common to places Abraham Lincoln would have experienced. The problem comes in when such species crowd out the other desirable species indicated by Jensen on his plan and in other instructions. Here again, management should likely take a flexible approach, ranking disturbance species according to the threat they pose and also ranking different areas of the Garden in terms of their overall importance and vulnerability.

As for exotic plant species, the choice is more clear. While Jensen included a couple of non-native species on his plan--notably multiflora rose and daylilies--he generally made a point of avoiding non-native species. As his career progressed, Jensen became increasingly purer in his use of native species although he continued to use a few non-native species such as lilacs, daylilies, and hollyhocks near homes. He considered these plants to have had such a long history of being associated with human settlement that they brought strong cultural ties to any landscape design. In most of his later work, they were not used away from buildings in the general landscape. It seems inconsistent that daylilies show up on the Lincoln Memorial Garden plan. As an ardent horticulturist from the early days of his career, Jensen was fascinated by all kinds of plants. Later he lamented planting ones that became problems. A good example is his chiding himself for planting oriental bittersweet at The Clearing.<sup>28</sup> He would likely encourage eradicating any exotics such as Japanese honeysuckle, white mulberry, Norway maple, and others that create problems for native plants in Lincoln Memorial Garden thus diffusing the overall theme of a *native* garden.

His correspondence to Harriet Knudson made it clear that he also wanted to feature only those plant species native to the regions of Illinois, Indiana, and Kentucky known to Lincoln that would fit within the conditions of the Garden. He was adamant about excluding evergreens, most likely because he feared the tendencies during the 1930s and later to plant large plantations of pine throughout the Midwest in the name of conservation. If this meant excluding the native red cedar and common juniper which he used in other gardens, so be it. Here as elsewhere, he wanted to emphasize seasonal changes rather than constancy.<sup>29</sup> When Knudson wrote him asking whether leadplant or some of the native honeysuckles could be included, he wrote back that they would neither fit the soils or character of the Garden, even if these species were beautiful in other sections of Illinois. Of the lead plant, he wrote *"I would not introduce it into the gentle rolling landscape because it does not belong and would be planted only for the sake of something curious and not for its fitness."* Again, with regard to native honeysuckle and his general thinking about the Garden, he wrote *"The idea is not to*



*make an arboretum out of the Garden, nor a museum, but to plant the things that fit and are in harmony with the contours of the Garden and the country surrounding. . . . Each plant has a place where it looks its best and it is that place we must find to give the Garden that outstanding loveliness and fitness that it must have if it is to carry the name of Abraham Lincoln.*"<sup>30</sup> Any species, native or non-native, that is proliferating at the expense of more desirable species should clearly be eliminated or brought under control. Strategies will always be species specific, using cutting, girdling, and herbicides where necessary--always balancing labor costs and the potential for greater impacts on the Garden landscape.

*c. Natural Growth Habits.*

*Plants grow, continually developing their natural growth patterns, and eventually die from disease or old age. Additionally at the Garden, wind and ice storms regularly damage material, causing broken and/or dead limbs or entire trees. To what extent should trees be left in their natural condition? To what extent should trees be trimmed, pruned, or removed for one or more of the following purposes: to remove storm damage, to remove disease, to create vistas, to open the canopy for improved growth of understory?*

People often view such things as disease, insect infestations, fire, windthrow, and ice storm damage as erratic disturbances rather than as an essential natural processes. When one or more of these processes are held in check, this can actually do more harm than good in insuring the long-term survival and flourishing of an ecosystem. In the case of *natural* gardens such as Lincoln Memorial Garden, a careful balance must be struck in allowing or sometimes encouraging these processes to continue while making the landscape accessible for human use and enjoyment. This may mean occasionally leaving dead trees or broken branches or using prescribed fire as a management tool as is already happening at Lincoln Memorial Garden.

Jensen left scant indications of his thoughts on some of these issues. As for dead and dying trees, it should be noted that Jensen recognized the value of these as habitat, urging clients to keep dead trees or branches where they were important for bird species. In one case, he reportedly glued back on a dead branch that a client had sawed off. Jensen knew that the branch had become an

important perching site for bird visitors to the garden.<sup>31</sup> As for fire, it has only been more recently that managers have accepted prescribed fire for both prairie and woodland management. It is clear that Jensen wanted prairie and oak forest conditions to proliferate in this garden and probably oak savanna characteristics as well.<sup>32</sup> Each of these ecosystems are dependent on fire for long-term maintenance and regeneration, and so fire should be one of the tools employed in the care of the Garden.

Two of the major themes of Jensen's work in general were his careful shaping of views (Figure 7) -- over a broad prairie spaces, down a narrow lane, or into the depths of a woods--and his use of sun openings to create an interplay of sunlight and shade along paths and roads. In each of these cases, disease and wind and ice storm damage can have beneficial effects in opening up vistas that have grown closed or in recycling "closed" canopy areas of woodlands by creating new openings. Management should acknowledge the value of such disturbances and may even simulate these disturbances to shape views and preserve openings. The dilemma, of course, is that new openings may actually encourage some of the more problematic exotic plant species in the Garden, and so this should be done with great care.

*d. Dominant Invaders.*

*In several locations the plan specified species are not present. Either they were never planted or have died. In their place other species have invaded. In one location a nearly pure stand of locusts exist where other various other trees are shown on the plan. What should be done?*

In such places where the dominant species indicated on the plans are absent, careful assessment should be made as to why this is so. Were the plants ever planted? If they were planted and never survived, why? If this was due to poor transplanting, to using a genotype from areas less adapted to Springfield's climatic extremes, or to other such reasons, efforts should be made to find a more successful way of getting the indicated species established. In other cases, where maturing canopy has shaded out some of the noted species, decisions must be made about the relevant importance of each species and which could be sacrificed or modified. The case of the black locust noted above could be considered an example of a



plant from more southern regions of the United States that has become a pest when brought north where it tends to crowd out many more desirable species. In such a case, it is probably desirable to remove the locusts and go back to the species originally planted.

Certainly there are other "mistakes" that were made in the planting of the Garden that now have preservation implications. Near Council Ring #3, little leaf linden was planted instead of the native American basswood. Swamp white oak acorns were mixed in with the intended white oak acorns and planted around the Lincoln Council Ring (#4). Both of these cases are interesting as historical accidents. In the case of the little leaf linden, if the species continues to proliferate and invade other nearby areas, perhaps it should be replaced by the native basswood. On the other hand, the swamp white oak is less of a problem, and the existing trees should be preserved. Replacements, however, might be made with the white oak as recommended by Jensen.

*e. Borders of Trails.*

*The original plan shows a particular understory tree species along the edges of some trails after which the trail is named (i.e., Red Bud Lane, Dogwood Lane, etc.). Other trails have neither these trees listed nor trails named. What should be done along these other trails?*

These other trails were likely intended to showcase the plants associated with the adjacent plants noted on Jensen's plan. In many cases, this would be woodland, sometimes with views into the depth of the woods and sometimes with shrubs along the trail. In other places, the trails would be edged with prairie and other open community species.

*f. Meadows.*

*Jens Jensen's plan lists prairie flowers to be planted in meadow areas. No grasses were indicated. The Garden has developed these meadow areas with a mixture of native grasses and forbs to form prairie areas which can be managed by regular burning. Is this practice consistent with the original design concepts?*



Figure 7: View of meadow area in Lincoln Memorial Garden overlooking Lake Springfield. (courtesy of the author)



Although Jensen is known as one of the leaders of a *prairie style* of landscape gardening, he rarely restored large areas of prairie in his designs. More often, he created an idealized prairie emphasizing broad flat areas of lawn with some shorter flowers naturalized in the grass and taller plants along the edge. Yet, whenever *prairie* plantings were included such as in his wetland gardens at the Rubens estate in Glencoe or at Humboldt or Columbus Parks in Chicago, he included many of the native grasses together with the native flowers. In cases where he had opportunities to advocate the preservation of natural prairie areas, such as along the *ideal section* of the Lincoln Highway in northern Indiana or along the proposed *Prairie Drive* in his plan for the Greater West Park System, Jensen clearly advocated saving the entire system. Much as with the forest areas where Jensen called out a couple of tree species but meant that their associated species be included as well, so he also must have wanted the native grasses to be included with the prairie forbs indicated on his plans. Also, although Jensen made no mention of how the openings of the garden were to be

managed, he would likely approve of the use of fire as the most ecologically appropriate tool and one that would maintain a continuity with earlier Native American management of the landscape.

*g. Vistas.*

*Jens Jensen writes about sitting in some of the council rings so the Lake Springfield could be seen from them and that they could be seen from the lake. Additionally, the alignment of the trails in plan suggests that views were intended from various positions within the Garden. Maturing of the Garden has obscured many vistas. How should this be reconciled?*

The management of vistas is probably one of the more critical features of Jensen's design, but here again it is important to both evaluate vistas as noted or implied by Jensen's plan, by his written comments to Harriet Knudson, by the early records and descriptions of the Garden, and by a general understanding of Jensen's treatment of vistas. Each of the council rings found in the Garden have a view either implied by its placement



Figure 8: Council Ring #5, located in maple grove at Lincoln Memorial Garden. (courtesy of the author)



topographically or by its relation to trails and other openings. For the Lincoln Council Ring, Jensen wanted a broad view of the lake over the adjacent prairie plantings as well as a view of the council ring and its fire from the water.<sup>33</sup> Council rings # 1, 2, 3, and 6 are also placed on high points, surrounded by trees like many of Jensen's other council rings and with sunny views through these trees over adjacent prairie meadows to the lake. During the summer months, the views to the lake from some of these, most notably council rings #1 and 2, are more limited by the foliage of trees and shrubs. It is unclear whether Jensen would have wanted these views to be open at all times or would have been happy with seasonal views that changed with alternate seasons. Clearly in other projects he emphasized seasonal change.

Council rings # 5 (Figure 8) and 8 are more focused on interior portions of the Garden. Council ring #5 is located in an open grove of sugar maple with views through the canopy into nearby sun openings on two sides. The lower branches of the trees at the forest edge are important for creating the memorable filtered patterns of green made by light from the sun opening. Council ring #7 is a case where an implied historical view has been blocked. This half-ring is focused on a small lowland area opening on a cypress planting at the lake edge. Dense growth has closed up this important view and obscures the reason for this ring being located here. Thinning this growth to enhance views of the wetland would be in keeping with Jensen's intent.

In one letter to Knudson, Jensen notes that the entrances to the Garden were made to allow views of the lake through the gates.<sup>34</sup> While this may have been true in the early days of the Garden, it is certainly not true today with the growth of the Garden's trees. Current views of the lake are gradually revealed as one takes the trails leading down towards the lake. This sense of mystery that invites one into the landscape is much more in keeping with Jensen's treatment of dramatic views elsewhere.

It should also be noted that Jensen desired a varying pattern of vistas into the woods throughout the garden. He described this in his planting directions to Knudson: *"Along the lanes the trees that are to show and give a distinction to the lane,*

*like crabapples or redbuds or hawthorn are planted in irregular groups, sometimes four or five plants together, sometimes only a couple, so that once in a while one gets a glimpse into the woods in back of them and once in a while they form a thicket. To one who is familiar with landscape planting the plans should be very easily understood."* These short vistas are not apparent from the plans and are likely something that can shift from place to place along the trails as the vegetation changes over time. What is apparent, however, is that solid walls of shrubs at the trail edges is not in keeping with Jensen's vision.

#### *h. Location of Trails.*

*Some existing trails are not located exactly as shown on the plan. Many trails to/from council rings are in directions different from the plan and additional trails have been formed. One additional trail ascends a steep grade which has required the addition of steps. The trails seem to have been formed by usage rather than plan. Should these remain?*

The panel of experts meeting to discuss these questions agreed that the original trail locations were critical. Both the record of trails shown on Jensen's plan and the memory of those volunteers who helped to construct the original garden can provide a fairly accurate pictures of where trails were intended. Other trails that have evolved over the years, particularly those that change the direction for entering or leaving council rings, should be closed. As for the form and width of the trails, there always has seemed to be some confusion. Jensen answered Knudson's inquiry on this topic by stating that *"the form and width of the lanes, if measured from the plan, is correct."*<sup>35</sup> Despite this, confusion persists. On Jensen's plan, one of the trails ends abruptly, and most widen into large nodes around the council rings which seems to contradict the intimate character Jensen usually intended around these rings. As with many of Jensen's other plans, the boundaries of canopied areas, trails, and openings is left in a rather schematic form. What can be borrowed from an understanding of Jensen's other work, is that he generally intended people to walk more or less in single file through the garden, stopping and gathering at council rings. This would argue for narrower trails than shown on the plan. As noted with the responses to earlier questions, Jensen also



wanted trails to be in gentle curves, with vegetation providing a sense of mystery, variations in sunlight and shadow, and occasional views deep into the garden or out over the expanse of the lake.

*i. Structures--Bridges, Shelter, Map Kiosk, Steps. As these structures deteriorate, how should they be restored. Should special effort be made to preserve the original materials, or is replacement with matching materials acceptable?*

As with the trails, preservation and restoration of steps, bridges, and other structures must rely on a thorough documentation of what was actually built. For example, some of the originally constructed steps were made of stone, but wood was used in other areas when funds ran out. There are only a few drawings of bridge and other structures. Jensen seemed to want to direct the construction of bridges in person and did not bother with accurate construction drawings.<sup>36</sup> Jensen noted that his sketch for the Walgreen Bridge was not to scale and what was most important to him was communicating the correct character. Jensen did not use overly rustic structures, but was more interested in representing an honesty of materials, much like his prairie architect friends and mentors. In describing the Walgreen Bridge, he told Knudson not to "use wood that is too crooked as it is hard to make it last and also difficult to tie together in any satisfactory manner. A bridge is a piece of architecture and should have architectural significance, not the usual grotesque thing you see by using wood as crooked as you can get it."<sup>37</sup> Early photographs of most permanent structures in the Garden should be used to guide restoration efforts, using matching materials wherever possible.

*j. Benches.*

*Not part of Jensen's plan, wood benches with engraved quotes from Abraham Lincoln were added to the Garden in the 1940s during a statewide program where each local garden club donated a bench. The benches are being well maintained and from time to time additional benches are contributed. Should new benches be accepted/encouraged? Should benches be eliminated? Their locations are generally in places convenient for resting. Is this their proper location?*

the Garden. As noted by the panel of experts, the benches and their inscriptions are constant reminders of the ties to Abraham Lincoln in the Garden and they celebrate the contributions of the many garden clubs that helped to create the Garden. While there is some conflict between Jensen's desire to have people use the council rings as places to pause and rest and the 33 benches that now serve this purpose, they are sensitively located to highlight vistas that have been important historically in the Garden.

*k. Wetland areas.*

*Attempts to create water areas (lily pond, shoreline, cypress grove) as originally designated were undertaken with little success. Siltation and shoreline erosion were primary inhibitors. Should efforts to recreate these areas be undertaken? How should the lake's riprapped shoreline be treated?*

Of the three wetland areas of the Garden noted, only the cypress grove has some of the character intended by Jensen, although the upper reach of the draw near Council Ring #7 is currently clogged with shrubbery and blocks a view of the grove. The lily pond and shoreline plantings never succeeded, probably because of the siltation and erosion problems noted above. While lush "prairie rivers" were common features in Jensen's work and clearly something he desired here, it is inappropriate to create something that never really worked historically. Instead, it would be more appropriate to follow Jensen's broader ideals for the Garden, using natural habitats as a model and looking to local floodplains for clues on how to manage the creeks/drainage areas. While erosion problems along the shoreline have mandated riprapping its edge, the banks behind it can follow the shrub planting originally indicated by Jensen (ninebark, hawthorn, shadbush, wahoo, plum, roses, etc.) much like done at other shoreline properties such as the River Rouge shoreline at Henry and Clara Ford's Fair Lane in Dearborn, Michigan.

As examined in this paper, decisions about the long-term preservation and management of naturalistic landscape designs such as Jensen's work at Lincoln Memorial Garden are often complicated, requiring an understanding of the dynamics of the landscape as well as knowledge of the Jensen's general style and specific instructions

While not part of Jensen's original plan, these benches are an important part of the evolution of



for the given landscape. At Lincoln Memorial Garden, Jensen's ideals were relatively clear, yet just how to manage the Garden to maintain those ideals raises serious questions. As Jensen noted early in his career those who care for designed landscapes must learn all they can about a designer's work, and in so doing must be sensitive to the art. As Jensen wrote in his discussion "Parks and Politics" in 1902, "The caretaker must be in thorough sympathy with the plans of the designer and to be so he must be an artist himself."<sup>38</sup> It is only through efforts such as these that the beauty of naturalistic designs like Lincoln Memorial Garden can be preserved and it will remain as the "living memorial" that Jensen, Harriet Knudson, and its other founders intended. The idea is not to stop the continued change and succession in these landscapes, but rather to guide its direction so that these naturalistic gardens continue to feature the artistry of the original designers.

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## Endnotes

1. Robert E. Grese. *Jens Jensen: Maker of Natural Parks and Gardens*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1992. See pp. 151-186, for a more in depth discussion of Jensen's design style.
2. Jensen to Harriet Knudson, February 10, 1936.
3. Jens Jensen. *Siftings*, Chicago: Ralph Fletcher Seymour, 1939. See pp. 19-21; Jensen to Camillo Schneider, April 15, 1939; and Grese, p. 7.
4. Jens Jensen. "Urban and Suburban Landscape Gardening," *Park and Cemetery and Landscape Gardening*, 13, 1 (March 1903): 1-3; Jens Jensen, "Novelty vs. Nature," *Landscape Architecture*, 15, 1 (October 1924): pp. 44-45; Jens Jensen, "I Like Our Prairie Landscape," *The Park International*, 1 (July 1920): pp. 60-65.
5. Jens Jensen and Ragna B. Eskil, "Natural Parks and Gardens," *Saturday Evening Post*, 202, 36 (March 8, 1930): pp. 18-19, 169-170 (see page 19).
6. Grese pp. 15-22, 28-35
7. Alfred Caldwell, interview by the author, Bristol, WI, December 17, 1989.
8. Grese, pp. 62-76.
9. Grese, pp. 76-86, 178-179; Jens Jensen, "The Naturalistic Treatment in a Metropolitan Park," *American Landscape Architecture*, 2, 1 (January 1930): pp. 34-38 (see p. 37); William W. Tippens and Julia Sniderman, "The Planning and Design of Chicago's Neighborhood Parks," *A Breath of Fresh Air: Chicago's Neighborhood Parks of the Progressive Reform Era, 1900-1925*. Chicago: Chicago Park District, 1989, pp. 21-28.
10. Alfred Caldwell, interview by the author and Julia Sniderman, Chicago, Illinois, January 31, 1987.
11. Grese, pp. 120-136.
12. Jensen, n.d., "Lincoln Memorial Garden."
13. Jensen to Harriet Knudson, December 9, 1935.
14. Jensen to Harriet Knudson, August 1, 1934.
15. Grese, pp. 112-120; Sandy Henderson, "This Garden is not for Roses," *Illinois Times*, 10, 40 (June 6-12, 1985): pp. 4-10; "The Lincoln Memorial Garden," *Garden Glories*, (September 1938): pp. 4-5; "Many Plantings Join to Make a Perfect Whole," *Garden Glories*, (September 1938): pp. 6-7, 14-16.
16. Jensen 1939, p. 86.
17. Jensen, n.d., "Lincoln Memorial Garden."
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Jensen to Harriet Knudson, December 9, 1935.
22. Ibid.
23. Jensen, n.d., "Lincoln Memorial Garden."
24. The author's masters thesis, "A Process for the Interpretation and Management of a Designed Landscape: the Landscape Art of Jens Jensen at Lincoln Memorial Garden, Springfield, Illinois," was an in-depth analysis of the history of the Garden and management issues (Department of Landscape Architecture, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1984).
25. Experts present at the meeting included: (from the Garden) Paul Biggers, Berta Cochran, Bill Donels, Molly Gray, Sue Laue, Tom Martin, Gary Storm, and Mike Tyner; (from the Garden staff) Geoffrey Burt and Jim Matheis; (invited guests) Marilyn Alaimo, Michelle Bodamer, Bob Grese, Harold Henderson, Michael Luepke, Scott Mehaffey, Darrel Morrison, Jane Sheaffer, Dean Sheaffer, Thomas Skelly, Ann Swallow and Bill Tishler; and (planning consultants) Kent Massie and Sue Massie



26. The workshop was summarized by Harold Henderson in "Garden of Ages: How do you Preserve an Artistic Masterpiece that Grows?" *Illinois Times*, 18, 5 (September 24, 1992); pp. 12-15.

27. Columbus Park plans referred to here are found in the Special Collections, Chicago Park District.

28. Jensen to Camillo Schneider, March 11, 1937.

29. Judith Groves and Melinda Kwedar, "Jeanette Sayre" in "Abraham Lincoln Memorial Gardens: Interview with Berta Cochran, Margaret Gaule, Molly Gray, Homer McClaren, Jeanette Sayre and Milton Thompson." 1975. Springfield, Illinois: Oral History Office, Sangamon State University. (conducted in February-March 1972).

30. Jensen to Harriet Knudson, March 19, 1938.

31. Sybil Shearer, interview by the author, January 25, 1991.

32. Jensen 1939, p. 87; Jensen to Camillo Schneider, April 15, 1939.

33. Jensen to Harriet Knudson, April 2, 1936.

34. Jensen to Harriet Knudson, March 19, 1938.

35. Jensen to Harriet Knudson, April 2, 1936.

36. Jensen to Harriet Knudson, April 2, 1936.

37. Jensen to Harriet Knudson, July 23, 1937.

38. Jensen, James [Jens]. 1902. "Parks and Politics." *Sixth Volume of the American Park and Outdoor Art Association* 6, no. 4: pp. 11-14 (see p. 13).



## The Olmsted Brothers' Residential Communities: A Preview of A Career Legacy

Arleyn A. Levee

Unfolding maps from most cities across the country, one observes a remarkable similarity in the texturing of the urban canvas--a downtown center with its dense concentration of straight lines and right angles, occasionally given some variety by the bends of a river; some stripes of more or less logical conformation radiating out beyond this gridiron core, and that peripheral area--suburban-exurban--nodes in which the straight lines relax into various permutations. Just as we have come to recognize the hand of the mortal artist at work in the paths, the vistas, the meadows and woods of Central Park, we are coming to recognize that behind these curvilinear concentrations, whether a few streets or a widespread area, existed guiding plans and rationales of varied skill. When designed by the Olmsted firm over its long history, the skill was consummate, the rationale, thoughtful and visionary.

From the fifty or so neighborhoods designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., to the as yet uncounted but considerable number planned by Olmsted Brothers, the residential work of the firm wove much of the fabric that comprises the cities in which they worked, especially when considered along with park and parkway plans.

These planned neighborhoods could be as small as a few acre plot, subdivided into lots by a homeowner as a hedge against inflation, or a more substantial holding -- a multi-acre estate, or a farm -- subdivided into a complex of curving streets, possibly connecting to a similar complex of another speculating landowner, perhaps also designed by the Olmsteds. (There was a recognized salability of an Olmsted suburb which made it a competitive factor in land booming.) Or it could be an area of larger scope, such as the 1600-acre Riverside, IL, community planned by Olmsted, Vaux & Co. in 1868, or the even greater complex of several villages and suburbs designed and partially implemented under the firm's supervision to cover the 25 square mile area of the Palos Verdes peninsula in Los Angeles County, CA (Figure 2).

In addition to diversity of scale, the Olmsted firm planned communities of several types. The suburban residential neighborhood -- a bedroom community for a city, such as Fisher Hill in Brookline, MA, (Figure 1), Druid Hills in Atlanta, GA, or Forest Hills in Queens, NY -- spread further and further out from the core as railroad, streetcar and finally automobile transport improved and expanded. Frequently, as in Buffalo NY's Parkside or in Louisville KY's Alta Vista, Bonnycastle or Braevue, these neighborhoods were located by knowledgeable developers in proximity to a park or along a parkway designed by the firm,

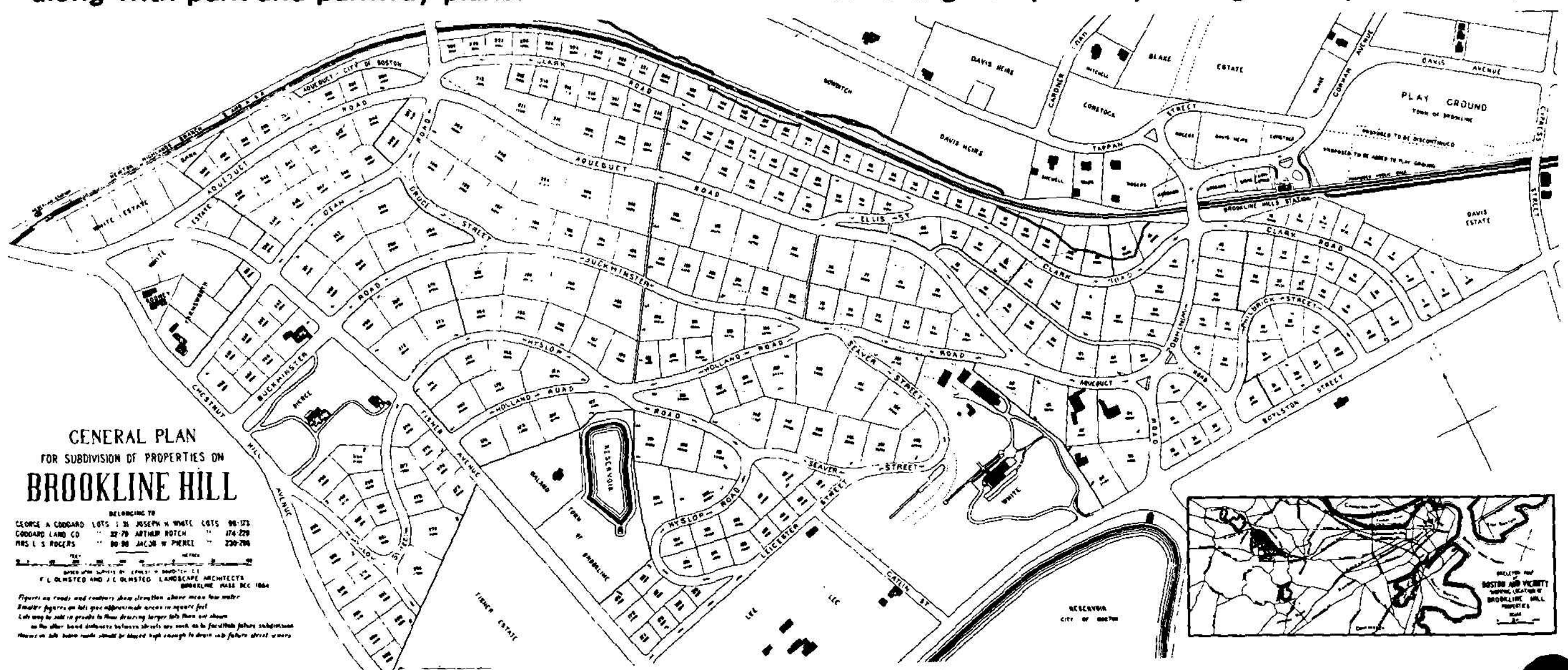


Figure 1: F.L. and J.C. Olmsted, *General Plan for Subdivision of Properties on Brookline Hill*, Brookline, MA, 1884, Job No. 1012. Much was constructed as planned and has retained its value today. (courtesy FLOHNS)



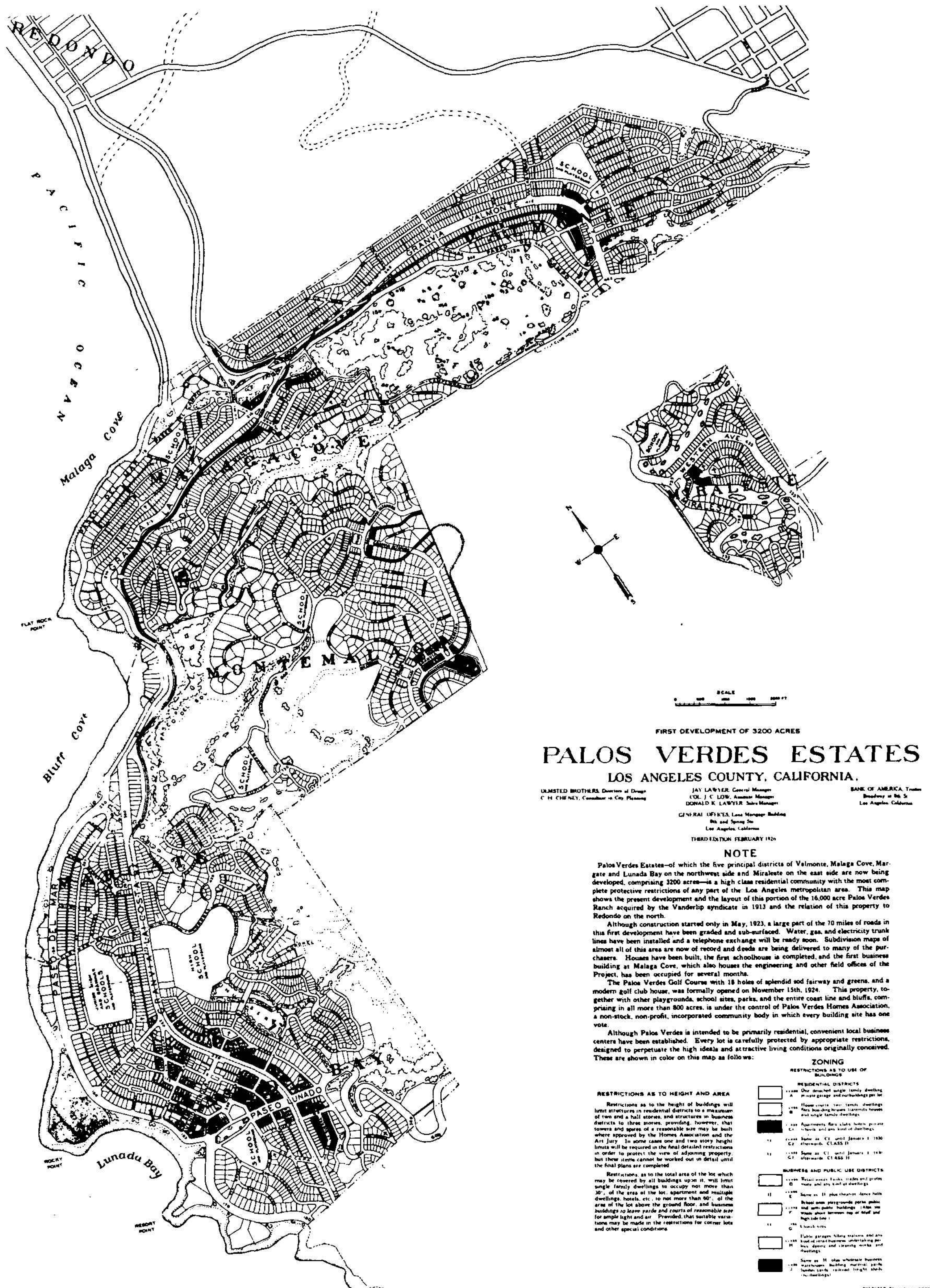


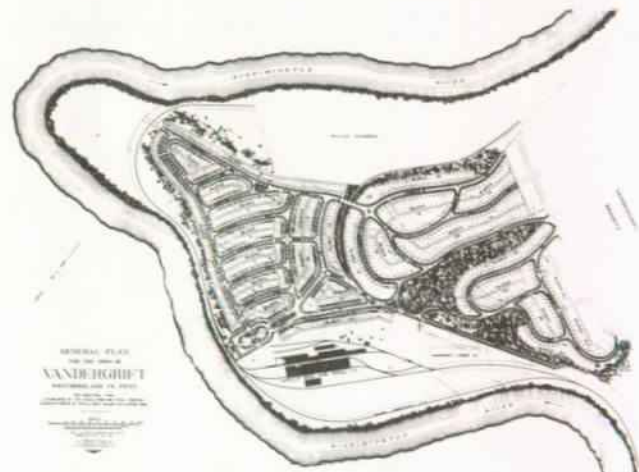
Figure 2: Olmsted Brothers, *Palos Verdes Estates*, Palos Verdes, CA, 1926, Olmsted Job No. 5950. Plan for first development of 3200 acres (the total holding was 25,000 acres) showing the Valmonte, Malaga Cove, Montemalaga, Margate and Lunada Bay communities. (courtesy National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site "FLONHS")



thereby to reap the increased value, both scenic and monetary. What began as country houses in the 1890s became commuter neighborhoods by 1910.

In other examples, country house communities were designed as part of a resort, around a golf and country club, as at Mountain Lake in Polk County, Florida (Figures 3 and 4). In this case, the

park -- The Bok Sanctuary -- followed the development of the community. Or they were designed at the shore, such as Wompananit and Hither Hills in Montauk, Long Island (Figures 14 and 15, page 38) or the Uplands in Victoria, British Columbia. In some cases, the recreational opportunities of these communities were augmented by unique scenic advantages, as in the spectacular views of mountain and water in Seattle from the Highlands subdivision or from another community named the Uplands (Figure 5), or the great boulders of Perry Park, CO.



**Figure 3-6:** Olmsted Brothers, *Preliminary Plan, Mountain Lake, Lake Wales, Florida*, 1916, revised 1952, Job No. 6081. Reflecting the increased demand for resort homes and the development of the Bok Sanctuary and Singing Tower (mid-plan, west of the Lake), many of the block areas originally laid out as groves are subdivided into house lots on this revised plan (top left); View of the Singing Tower in the Bok Sanctuary, Mountain Lake, FL, with the lake, the houses and groves of the Mountain Lake community beyond, 1933, Job No. 7029 (bottom left); View of the administration building of The Uplands subdivision, Seattle, WA, with Mount Rainier in the background, 1930, Job No. 7315 (top right); F.L. and J.C. Olmsted, *General Plan for the Town of Vandergrift, Pennsylvania*, 1897, Job No. 204. This industrial town, planned originally for the Apollo Iron & Steel Co., was built mostly as planned, although today the village green has been essentially lost to parking and a state highway. (all courtesy FLONHS)



Finally, some communities were designed to provide healthful, pleasant surroundings for both residences and businesses in factory complexes. Depew, New York, outside Buffalo, planned for the car shops of the New York Central Railroad, may have been the first such project undertaken by the firm, soon followed in 1895 by the model town of Vandergrift, PA (Figure 6), for the workers of the Apollo Iron and Steel Company. Industrial villages of varying scale were planned also for the numerous interrelated projects of John Henry Patterson, E.A. Deeds and their colleagues in Dayton, Ohio, as well as beautification projects, carried out under the firm's supervision for National Cash Register company workers' homes (Figure 7).

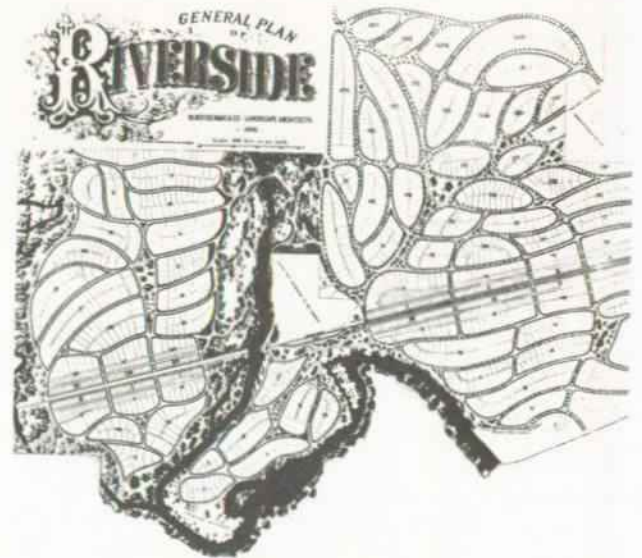
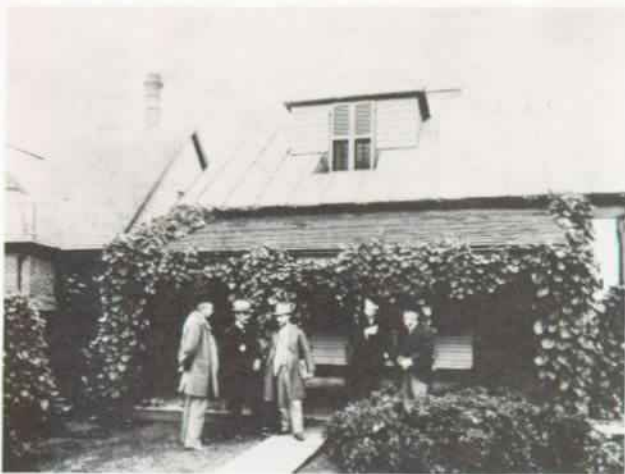
Each of these planned residential communities, large or small, recreational or industrial, was a product of the same essential design principles by which Olmsted, Sr. and his successor firms created our extraordinary legacy of park spaces. Planned as a unified whole composition encompassing integrated but subordinated units, these residential suburbs followed an essential guiding principle as used in park planning--that of separation of different spaces for different uses. In fact, the community itself represented a designed separation in form and proportion from the typical city gridiron.

For Olmsted, Sr., cities were a positive force for civilized advancement, but the industrial congestion

and pressured pace necessitated recuperative places for the "*unbending of the faculties*"--parks and suburbs.<sup>1</sup> The latter, in which "*urban and rural advantages could be agreeably combined,*" should with careful planning be more than the "*rude over-dressed villages or fragmentary half-made towns*" he saw around him in 1868 when beginning his work on Riverside, IL. Instead, a suburb should be "*the most attractive, the most refined and most soundly wholesome form of domestic life, and the best application of the art of civilization which mankind has yet attained.*" Unlike a park with its restorative, idealized greensward where "*the essential qualification...is range...the essential qualification of a suburb is domesticity and the emphasizing of the idea of habitation...the domiciliation of men by families...and the harmonious association and cooperation of men in a community and intimate relationships and constant intercourse and the interdependence between families.*"<sup>2</sup>

Ruminating on the drift of civilization after his frontier experiences at the Mariposa Gold Mine, Olmsted had termed this quality of cooperative interaction to be sought in civilized communities as "*communitiveness.*"<sup>3</sup>

The classic Riverside plan (Figure 8) and the accompanying report translate Olmsted's



Figures 7,8: Officials of the National Cash Register Co., Dayton, OH, with John C. Olmsted at the center on the rear porch of a mechanic's house, inspecting the planting improvements, 1898, Job No. 280. (left); Olmsted, Vaux & Co., *General Plan of Riverside, Illinois*, 1869, Job No. 607. (both courtesy FLONHS)



philosophy into practical application. There is a unity to this design, an integration and balance of harmonious parts stemming from one directing vision. As with a park, Riverside is inward-looking, the curving roads making the community accessible but discouraging shortcuts through it. The train served as Riverside's umbilical cord to the city beyond, especially necessary since Olmsted's intended broad parkway linking the suburb to Chicago was never constructed. Within the community the scale becomes intimate and picturesque, with gracefully curved, tree-lined roads and walks, making no sharp turns, smooth and well drained, *"to imply leisure, contemplativeness and happy tranquility"* (Figure 9). Sylvan nodes of various sizes with a character of informal village greens punctuate street intersections, making for a common ground where *"easy, friendly, unceremonious greetings...of all classes"* could take place--rhetoric very similar to that of the park reports.<sup>4</sup> The banks of the Des Plaines River provided a larger gathering space, transforming and romanticizing the flat prairie

terrain into an umbrageous area for promenade and play.

But Olmsted's words *"of all classes"* should not be overlooked. Riverside, as Sudbrook, MD, as well as many of the other subdivision plans, contained lots of various sizes, and these smaller house sites, whether for shopkeepers or others needed to service the larger residences or for the less affluent suburb seekers, were still to provide all the advantages of this well planned neighborhood. The opportunity for a *"refined domestic life, secluded, but not far removed, from the life of the community"* should be available to families of various means.<sup>5</sup>

The reality of these designed suburbs has not always followed Olmsted's social and aesthetic intentions. The planned, balanced mixture of large and small sites with its supposed economic diversity has become in many cases more monolithic--economically, socially and architecturally. Suburban planning, more than park



Figure 9: View up the Long Common taken from the Water Tower in the center of town, Riverside, IL, 1981. (courtesy Patricia M. O'Donnell)



planning, is subject to the vagaries of economic currents, which, in the absence of strong, guiding covenants or a controlling body, results in compromised principles, a loss of the core understanding of and commitment to a unifying design aesthetic, with subsequent changes in value. When the original deed restrictions expired in Sudbrook, designed in 1886 to be a resort community, and the Sudbrook Land Company went out of business, much of the land, including what was intended to be open space, was further subdivided and filled with dwellings of a different character and scale.

Long before zoning regulations, the original Riverside restrictions controlled lot size, setbacks, building standards, some uses, and suggested *"one or two living trees"* between house and highway. As Olmsted articulated,

*"We cannot judiciously attempt to control the form of the houses which men shall build, we can only at most take care that if they build very ugly and inappropriate houses, they shall not be allowed to force them disagreeably upon our attention..."*<sup>6</sup>

Restrictions were integral components of the Olmsted design canon, increasingly so under the Brothers as the number and complexity of suburban projects grew. These documents, frequently originating in the firm, were their professional prescriptions based on sound business practices by which they hoped to ensure the stability and preservation of their design conceptions and, from a broader perspective, thereby increase the quality and beauty of the respective cities. Covenants codified the aspirations of the architects, the developers and indeed the early purchasers, that the aesthetic and monetary values would be retained as an investment, even in an industrial community such as Vandergrift. In this factory town, the originally planned lot size was further subdivided so that in some cases houses have been built only a few feet apart, their eaves practically touching. When preparing remarks for the 1918 meeting of the American City Planning Institute, John Olmsted observed, *"the lesson to be learned from Vandergrift is the need for iron-clad restrictions in the deeds limiting houses to one house for one family on each lot."*<sup>7</sup>

For the Uplands in Victoria, British Columbia, for example, the deed restrictions written in 1907 to

be in force until 1965 (and based on the restrictions written earlier for Oakwood, OH), covered in 24 articles the form and duties of a governing Board of Trustees; building requirements, setbacks and minimum cost (\$5,000.00); use prohibitions and the process for some modification. But in this case, no mention is made about aesthetic concerns such as building styles, increasingly addressed in great detail in other projects. In Forest Hills Gardens, Queens, NY, for example, buildings were designed primarily by one architect, Grosvenor Atterbury, constructed by the corporation (the Russell Sage Foundation) or, if another architect was used, under precise architectural parameters. In Palos Verdes, Los Angeles, the use of a paid Art Jury, evaluating all plans, ensured that the milieu would contain no jarring elements.

In these latter examples, Forest Hills Gardens and Palos Verdes, control extended to the social environment with stated ethnic restrictions for the community. In other planned suburbs, required entrance to the country club provided *de facto* screening. However, these ethnic limitations do not seem to have come from the Olmsted office. In the case of Forest Hills Gardens, they were raised by Edward H. Bouton in 1911, acting as vice president and general manager of the Sage Foundation Homes Company.<sup>8</sup> Certainly in Bouton's own developments, Roland Park and Guilford, in Baltimore, MD, controls were operative. In Palos Verdes, the protective restrictions written by Charles Cheney, city planning consultant on the project, in conjunction with legal advice, brought forth the Olmsted Brothers' criticism for their *"overelaborateness, inclusiveness and complexity..."* The firm would have preferred *"more elastic provisions...relying upon intelligent and fair minded interpretations of broadly expressed general intentions."*<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, their name appears on the cover. Although this aspect of the restriction issue clearly warrants further analysis, it should not be overlooked that the deed covenants concerned with architectural and landscape controls in many cases preserved the physical character of the Olmsted designed neighborhoods and in aggregate over several neighborhoods determined the larger environment of city areas.<sup>10</sup>

Looking at selected projects of Olmsted Brothers, it is important to remember that in addition to John



Charles and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., credit is due to their partners and associates for significant work on the residential communities. James Frederick Dawson, partner from 1905, was the prime designer in the Pacific Northwest, especially after John Olmsted died in early 1920. Additionally, Dawson directed much of the Palos Verdes work, as well as work in Louisville, KY. Percival Gallagher handled work in the Philadelphia, PA and New Jersey areas, among other places. Edward Clark Whiting worked on Palos Verdes and on many of the estates, while Percy Jones, an associate, supervised projects in Dayton, OH and elsewhere. Though the office discussion may have been collaborative, a project usually stayed with a partner; although in the case of Roland Park, developer Bouton started with John Olmsted and switched to Olmsted, Jr. after the latter's park and university planning projects increased in the Baltimore area. Palos Verdes, closely associated with Olmsted, Jr. (who subsequently retired there), actually began with John, who turned it over to

Dawson. The project was put on hold during World War I and restarted in 1922 after John's death, with Olmsted, Jr. and Dawson at the helm.

In many projects, the firm's design work set them up as negotiators, either among clients or between the public and private realms in a community. In Dayton, in planning for Oakwood with several abutting landowners, John tried to engineer land swaps among them to adjust values for acreage necessary for access roads, as compared with available land for subdivision plots. In Louisville, negotiating between the Park Commission and the abutters, John obtained valuable scenic areas for public space, giving the landowners in return desired road and path access to Cherokee Park.

Louisville subdivisions provide an interesting study of the skilled application of design principles, particularly that of preserving and enhancing the *genius loci*, by the various generations of the Olmsted firm. The transformation of the rolling

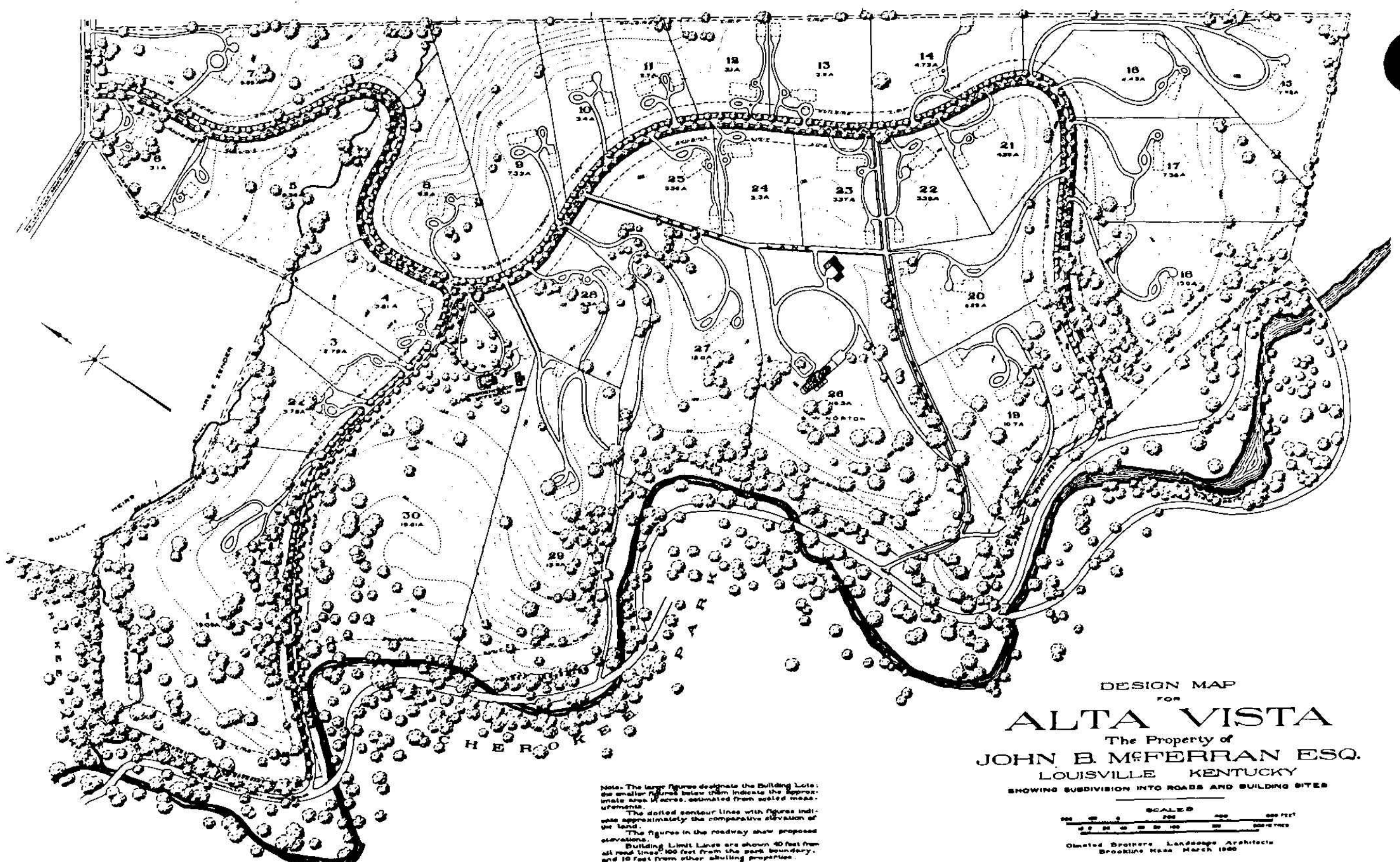


Figure 10: Olmsted Brothers, Design Map for Alta Vista, Louisville, Kentucky, 1900, Job No. 2064. The undulating boundary of Cherokee Park, encompassing both banks of Beargrass Creek, is south of the subdivision. Today, the property of the major purchaser of the Alta Vista lots, George W. Norton, is now the Presbyterian Theological Seminary. (courtesy FLONHS)



bluegrass and wooded hills around a lowland stream into the picturesque 300-acre Cherokee Park began in 1891. Implemented mainly by John, it was one of the last substantial parks designed by Olmsted, Sr. In 1898, with the resultant increase in neighboring land values due to the park, the major abutting owner to the east, John B. McFerran, hired the firm to develop his rolling hillside of Alta Vista into fine residential sites (Figure 10), at first to be country estates, which soon changed to a bedroom community. Since many of McFerran's promontories were visible from the park, John's suburban plan designed lots and house placements with an eye to the park's view, weaving undulating roads around the topographic irregularities to blend effortlessly into Cherokee Park. In return for valued access to the park, John extracted from McFerran donations of land to bring Beargrass Creek into public ownership, also obtaining a 100-foot setback for buildings so that they would not intrude into the public space. Commissioned to design several of the individual estates within Alta Vista, John was able to further preserve and enhance essential landscape features

to mutual benefit and value. Plantings were done on private land to blur the actual boundaries so that public and private spaces could borrow visually from each other (Figure 11).

The skill with which the Olmsted firm protected and developed the extraordinary scenery in Alta Vista, with its design of curving tree-lined streets, ample front lawns and sylvan views, made it an enviable prototype in Louisville. Frank Fehr, the abutter to the northeast, also used the firm to turn his land into a neighborhood, Braeview (Figure 12), which likewise was designed to connect easily by roads and plantings into both the park and into Alta Vista. Like McFerran, Fehr won his access into Cherokee Park at the cost of donated acres to the public space to protect, in this case, a tributary creek. These roads were carefully sited to orchestrate the scenery blending into the park, and to connect to the park's bridges with curves which were manageable by the growing automobile traffic. John, who did not drive, nonetheless did his research on the turning radii of various cars for both public and private clients.



Figure 11: View in Cherokee Park, Louisville, KY, ca. 1903. The colonnaded porch of the George W. Norton house is visible in the background. (From *Artwork of Louisville*, 1903, courtesy The Filson Club Historical Society)



In biblical fashion, project beget project in this Louisville area around Cherokee Park until the firm had put its imprint on extensive acreage for private residential use as well as having designed another park, Seneca, linked to Cherokee. Winding roads weave the various projects together into a seamless pattern of attractive home sites and green spaces, one in which it is very easy to get lost. Although some of the larger properties were further subdivided in somewhat awkward fashion when their restrictions expired, these neighborhoods in general have maintained their economic value as choice places to live. Sadly, in the case of the Braeview subdivision, the careful planning integrating suburb with park was for naught. An interstate highway severed the neighborhood from the park, leaving an overpass as the remaining link.

In Newton, Massachusetts, the *genius loci* reflected in the Olmsted's design of a hilly 46-acre site was a spectacular array of boulder outcroppings, although the motivating force behind the Newton Boulevard Syndicate and Judge Robert Bishop in 1893 was to plan Commonwealth Avenue, a major arterial from Boston, so that it would traverse their land. Once the Avenue's route was secured, the

abutting lands became attractive residential sites (Figure 13). Judge Bishop's land was topographically unusual, and the firm worked to incorporate the puddingstone ledges into house sites rather than blasting them away. In fact, John took special care to preserve and reset the boulders for scenic effect to make sure that there was "an injection of some degree of art into a project so easily susceptible of it."<sup>11</sup> What they achieved was a picturesque neighborhood of intimate scale where houses cling to rocky outcrops, where sinuous, richly planted roads following the contours merge into broader streets with generous frontages. Like the Louisville subdivisions, this area has maintained its value, with new building occurring on the few remaining and almost inaccessible lots.

Working to preserve the natural features of a site was a greater challenge in the three large residential groups that John Olmsted planned on Long Island--Wompananit and Hither Hills in Montauk, designed beginning in 1897 for Brooklyn lawyer Frank Sherman Benson, and Shinnecock Hills, beginning in 1906, near Southampton. The extension of the railroad spurred the development

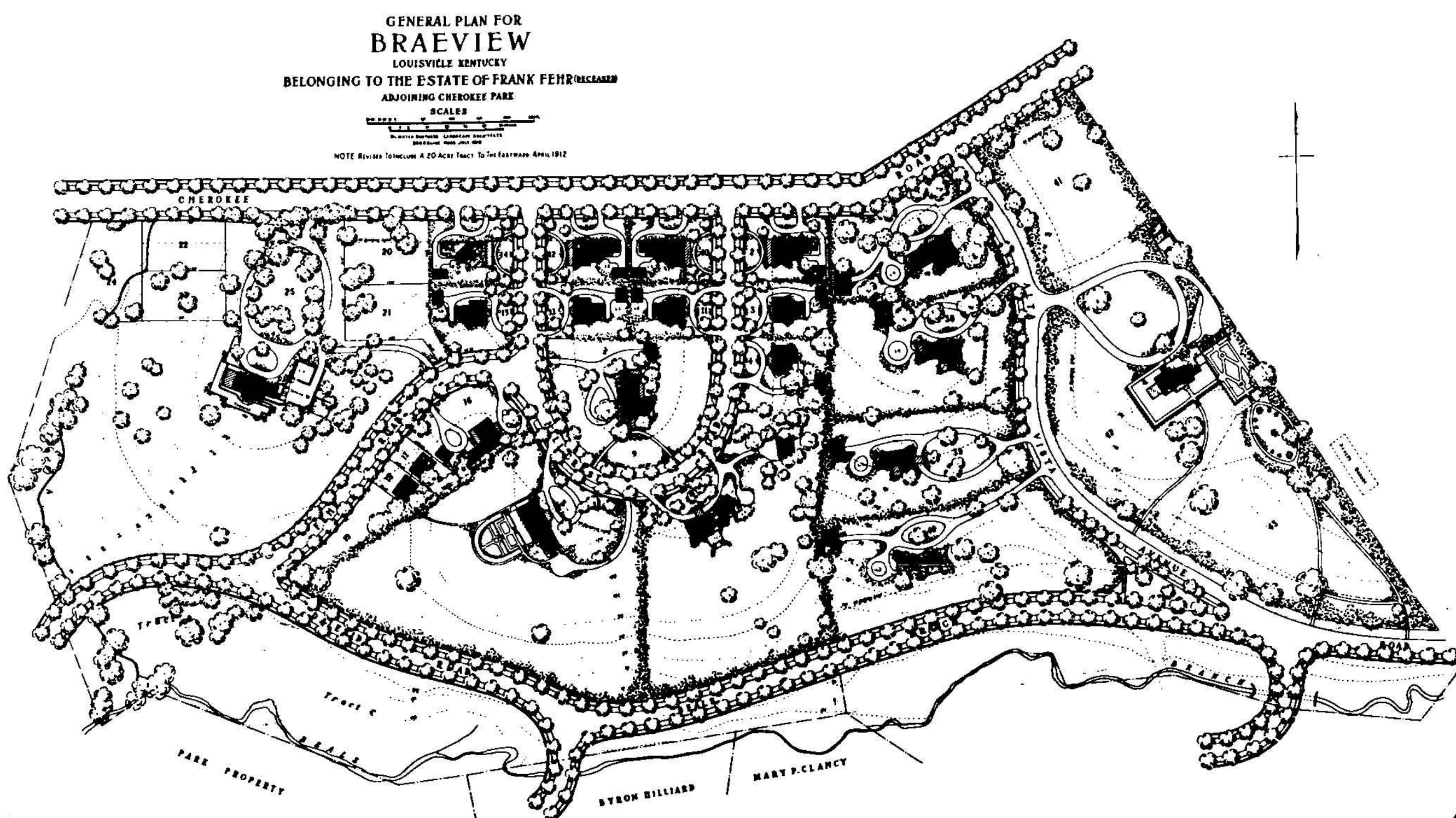


Figure 12: Olmsted Brothers, General Plan for Braeview, Louisville, Kentucky, 1912, Job No. 3811. Cherokee Park, to its south has been separated from this neighborhood by a multi-lane interstate highway which tunnels through the Park. (courtesy FLONHS)



of these resort communities. Unfortunately, most of the documents for the Montauk projects were given away by Olmsted Associates before the records became part of The Library of Congress collection, making it difficult to understand the full course of this work. But the remaining plans clearly articulate the careful siting of roads and houses with beach areas set aside as public reservations, all to transform the scenic qualities of this windswept moor into a residential community (Figures 14, 15) existing roads seem to have followed the Olmsted plans, but development of this prime vacation area has taken a different course from what the Olmsteds had envisioned, although much of the area is retained in state reservation.

Likewise, in Shinnecock Hills, development did not occur according to the Olmsted plan. By 1905, the Shinnecock Hills and Peconic Bay Realty Company had acquired its nearly 2,000 acres, encompassing several existing estates, an artists' colony and the

fashionable Shinnecock Hills Golf Club. The developer intended to create an extensive community of house sites stretching from the bay to the ocean, with nodes of smaller lots clustered around the three railroad stations. Working with Downing Vaux, son of Calvert Vaux, to stake house lots and road lines, John Olmsted tramped these picturesque moors and dunes, so romantically recorded in William Merritt Chase's paintings, staking house lots and road lines. Writing to his wife in 1906, he noted, "I like this landscape very much and I only regret to be planning to spoil it with roads and houses and stables. It would be very fine if one man could buy the whole of it and just keep it as it is." He was appalled at the land booming, noting that one owner with bare unimproved hills and no shore frontage was asking "\$700.00 an acre for his land."<sup>12</sup>

The first decade of the 20th century also saw the firm undertaking major subdivision projects in

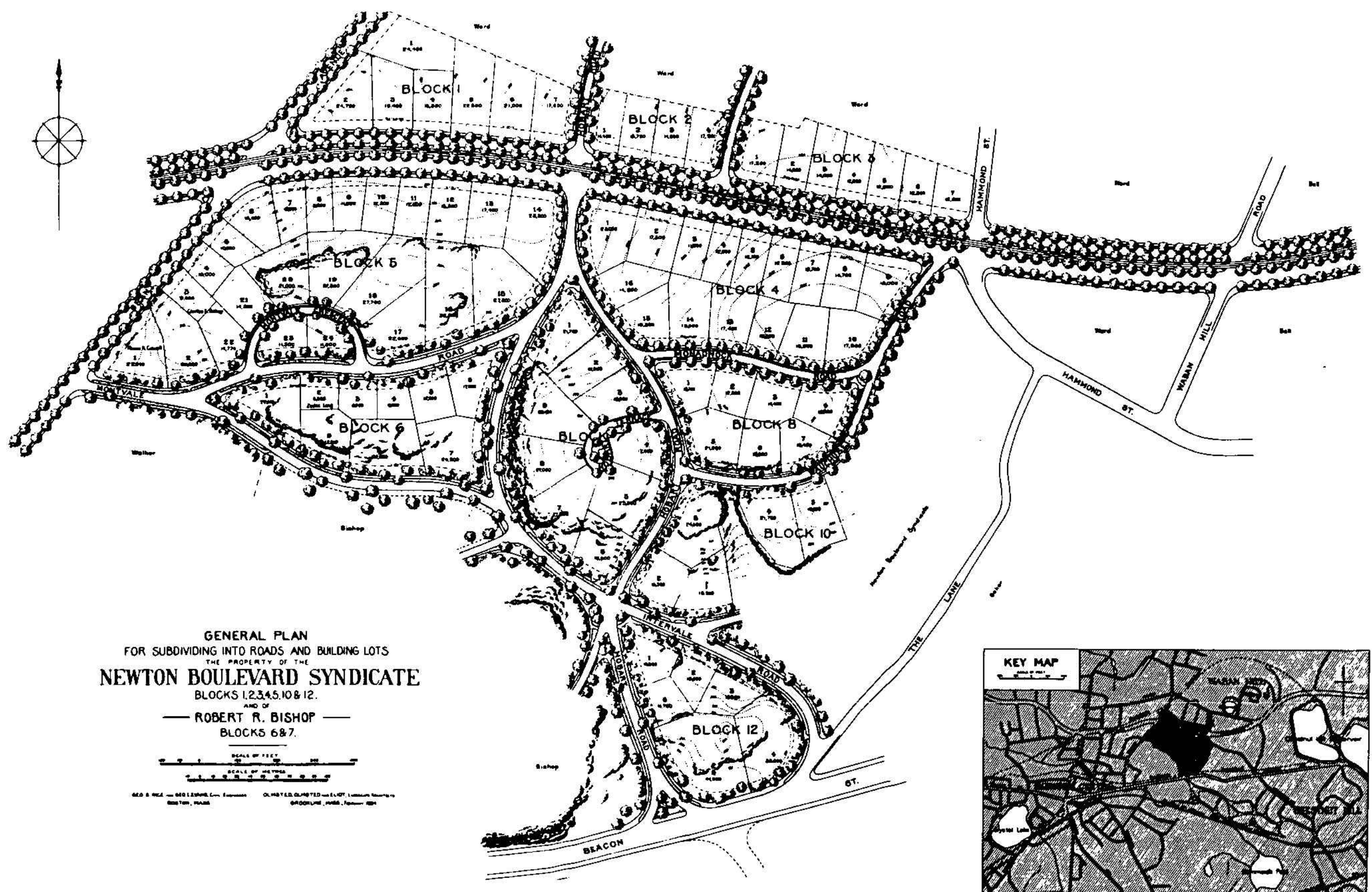
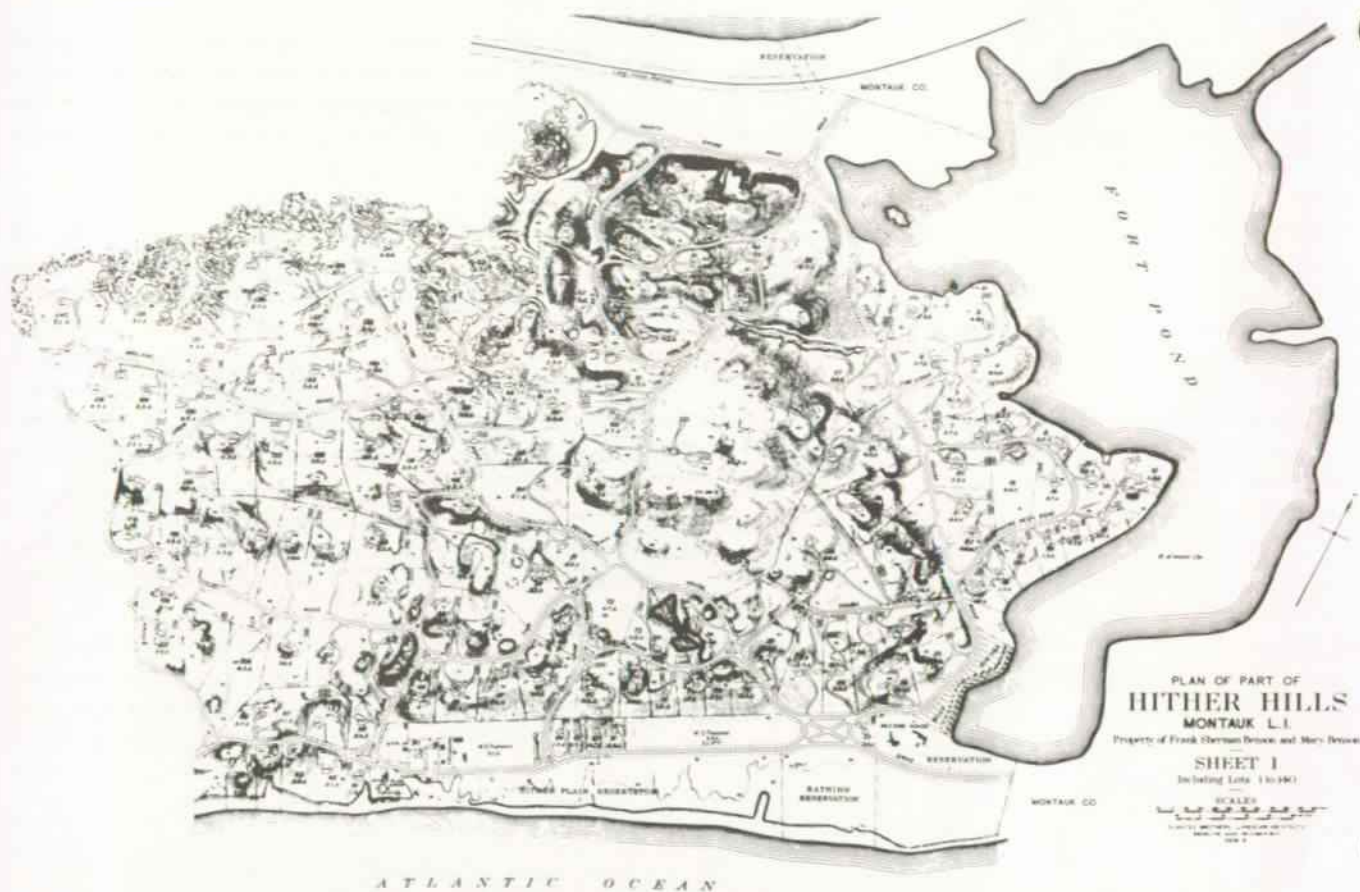


Figure 13: Olmsted, Olmsted and Eliot, *General Plan for the Property of the Newton Boulevard Syndicate and Robert R. Bishop, Newton, Mass., 1894*, Job No. 1365. The design retained the extensive picturesque ledge outcroppings in the various house lots. The Olmsted firm continued to advise the Syndicate on the property east of these lots. (courtesy FLONHS)





Figures 14, 15: Olmsted Brothers, *Plan of Part of Hither Hills, Montauk, L.I.*, (sheet 1), 1904, Job No. 2636. This plan, as well as that for Part II of Hither Hills and for Wompenanit (1895, Job No. 2635) paid careful attention to the rolling topography and the views in siting the house lots, the waterside reservations and the open areas of land at road intersections. These latter were intended to remain as common space (top); View looking east in Hither Hills, Montauk, New York, 1904, Job No. 2636. The windswept shorefront landscape is interrupted only by a few early buildings. (both courtesy FLONHS)



Baltimore, Atlanta, and on the West Coast. Planning for Baltimore's Roland Park (Figure 16), Edward Bouton's 600-acre tract, had been started under George Kessler in 1891 with the Olmsted firm becoming the prime designers for this haven of upper class country living after 1897. Laid out on rolling, wooded land, the roads and lanes were gently curved to follow the contours, occasionally ending in a cul-de-sac, with great care taken to protect the natural beauty (Figure 17). All the physical amenities were protected by restrictions and included a country club to become the social center. Downtown Baltimore was a 30-minute trolley ride away, while University Parkway was planned along pleasant lines to provide vehicular access. Not wishing to exclude the home seeker of modest means, the company erected two-thirds of the dwellings, some of cottage scale. The Olmsteds frequently found themselves evaluating architects' plans for appropriateness. In response to Ellicott and Emmart's proposed formal treatment along Ridgewood Road, an area with rolling terrain and mature high tree canopy, the firm recommended that the architects be given another

area on which to work, "where the ground is in itself comparatively uninteresting and in need of treatment. Then their little formal ideas, their straight approaches, geometrical gardens, level grass plots and terrace slopes would be admirable." The character of the neighborhood should be the determinant of the style.<sup>13</sup> As Henry Hubbard, future partner of the firm, was to later write,

*"The adaptation of residential subdivision to topography is by no means a simple matter, either as a business proposition or as an esthetic problem....Esthetically there are two fundamentally different kinds of design possible: that unified architecturally, in which man's accomplishment is dominant and the ground surface subservient, and that unified naturally, where the features of the landscape are dominant and man's handiwork subservient."*<sup>14</sup>

Success of Roland Park led to further subdivisions in the area--Guilford, Homeland and Northwood. Responding to planner Horace MacFarland's compliments on Roland Park as "combining a

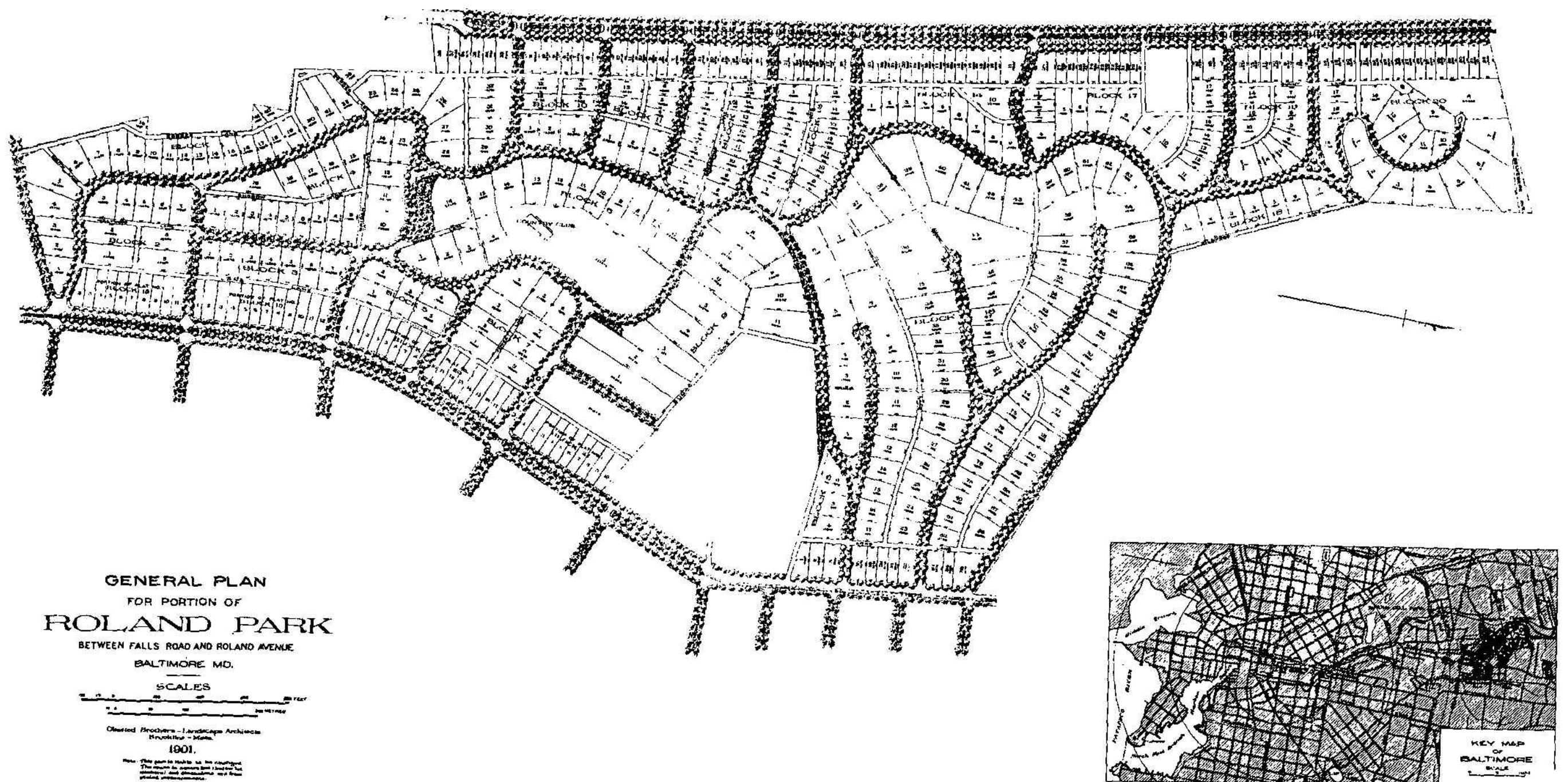


Figure 16: Olmsted Brothers, *General Plan for Portion of Roland Park, Baltimore, Maryland, 1901, Job No. 2210*. The curvilinear roads adapt to the irregular topography, with some ending in cul de sacs. (courtesy FLONHS)



*successful business enterprise with a high grade of civic achievement,"* Olmsted, Jr. credited the hands-on management of developer Edward Bouton, noting that the positive results were *"...mainly due to [his] good taste and unremitting perseverance."*<sup>15</sup>

Likewise, in Atlanta the vision and perseverance of entrepreneur Joel Hurt, guided by the Olmsted firm, first under Olmsted, Sr. and later under John, transformed 1400 acres of wooded hills and dales into the upscale streetcar suburb of Druid Hills (Figure 18). Olmsted, Sr.'s early conception imaginatively molded this undulating landscape into a series of articulated spaces for parks, parkways and residences. Working with the topography, the firm created a community of natural, informal beauty where architecture was subordinated to the richly planted scenery; where small park nodes were intended to provide a variety of recreational experiences; and where vistas opened and closed as one moved along the land from the sunny greensward to the shadowy depths of the dales.

Substantial houses set back from the street lent the visual grace of their rolling front lawns to the public space, yet retained their privacy. Planting was designed from the linear park right up to the doors, endeavoring to give each space a distinct individuality.<sup>16</sup>

Economic problems halted the initial phase of development in the 1890s, and in 1908, unable to support continued construction, Joel Hurt sold his interest to a syndicate headed by Coca Cola magnate Asa Candler, who promised to continue the Olmsted planning. With the addition of the electric streetcar along Ponce de Leon Boulevard in 1913, speculative land sales increased. But changes were already occurring to modify the intended picturesque quality. Without the single-minded aesthetic vision which Hurt and the Olmsteds shared, and without strong controls, decisions were made for profit alone. Deed restrictions were less extensive, with resultant smaller lot sizes, less careful house placement, less dense planting. The lakes and waterways in the



**Figure 17:** Looking along Edgevale Road in Roland Park, Baltimore, Maryland, 1911. (From George B. Simmons, *A Book of Pictures* Roland Park, Baltimore, Maryland, March and June 1911, 1912)



Various parks were never expanded beyond small creeks, and some of the green park space was also subdivided.<sup>17</sup> In recent years, large houses have been adapted for churches, schools, offices or apartments. Nonetheless, the linear green space accompanying Ponce de Leon retains a special quality that sets this area apart as a distinct composition against the overall city patterns.

Whereas the skilled hand of the artist was clearly at work in molding the Druid Hills composition, in Seattle, the grandeur of the natural environment and scenery overwhelms most manipulations. Designing recreational and residential lands for the Seattle Golf and Country Club, later to be known as The Highlands, John Olmsted and later Frederick Dawson wisely sought to let the landscape speak, tailoring the necessary user amenities, roads, house sites, as inobtrusively as possible to the requirements of the landscape. Although this land had already been lumbered well before 1908, the second growth firs were still of a scale unfamiliar to easterners. As John Olmsted had noted on his first visit to the city in 1903,

*"Seattle possesses extraordinary landscape advantages in having a great abundance and variety of water views and views of wooded hills and distant mountains with snow capped peaks. It also possesses within its boundaries...some valuable remains of the original evergreen forests which covered the whole country, and which, aside from the grand size of some of the trees composing them, have a very dense and beautiful undergrowth."*<sup>18</sup>

The 340-acre site for this development on a sloping hillside 450 feet above Puget Sound, was characterized by shelves and ravines. One hundred and fifty acres were to be a golf course at the top of the slope, the rest to be designed as 50 house lots of varying sizes. The general plan (Figure 19), rendered not by the Olmsted firm but by Alexander Macdougall, an engineer who worked on many of the Olmsted projects in the area, records the course of development as it existed in 1925. More than the difference in rendering style, this plan reflects a number of dramatic changes when compared to "classic" Olmsted as in Riverside.

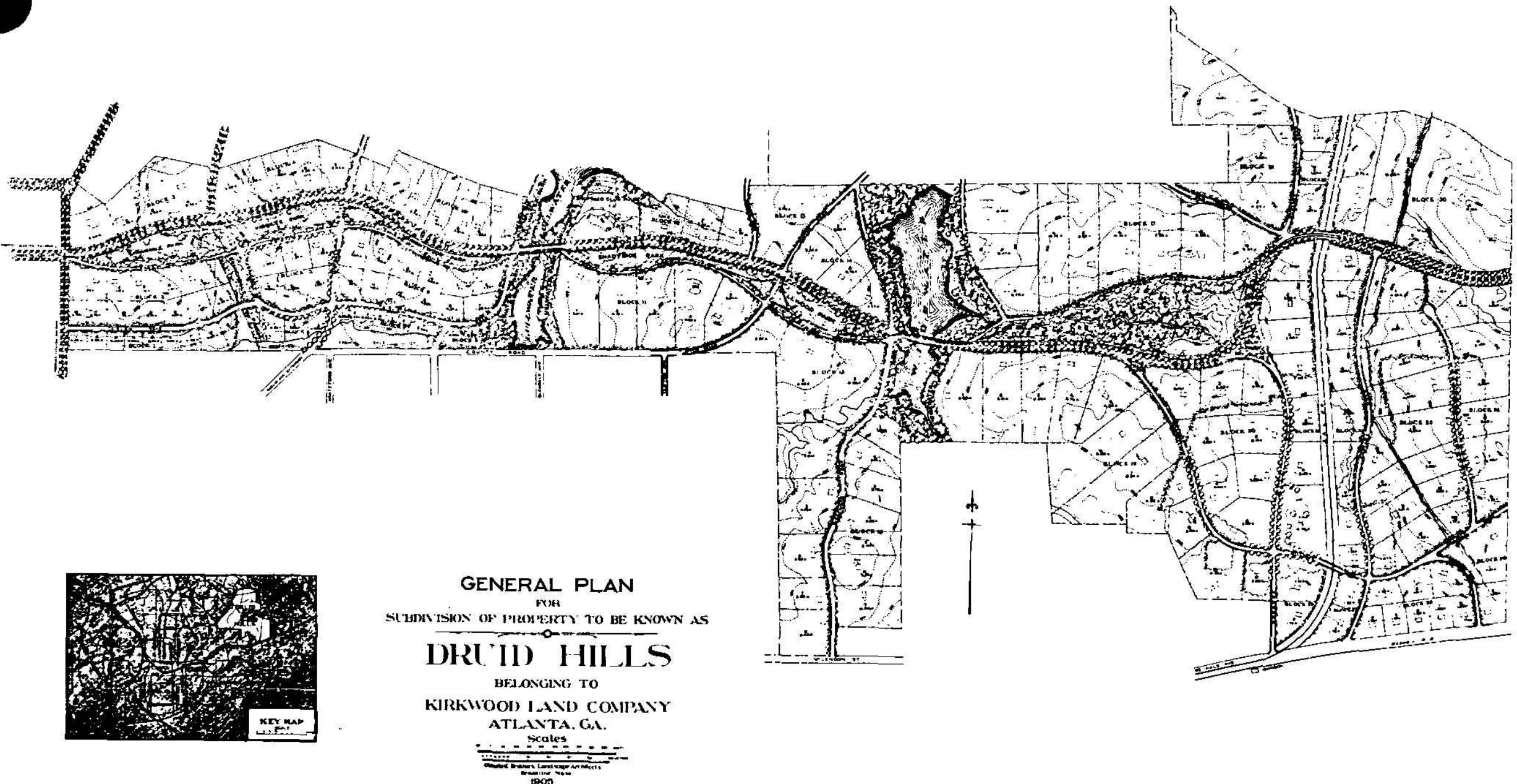


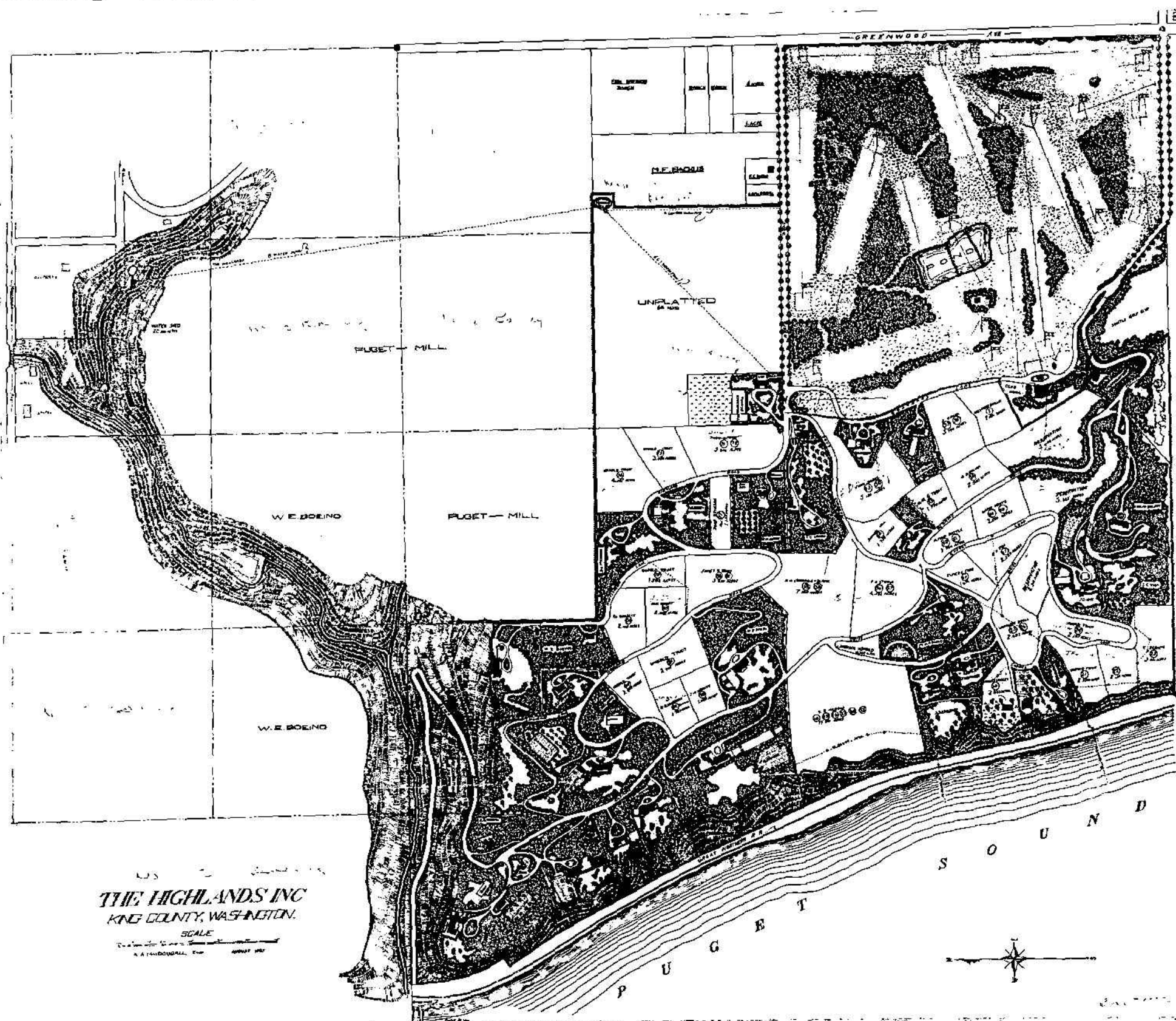
Figure 18: Olmsted Brothers, *General Plan for Subdivision of Property to be Known as Druid Hills*, Atlanta, GA, 1905, Job No. 71. (Courtesy FLONHS)



Certainly responsive to the topography, the switchback roads planned at a five percent grade with automobiles in mind, provided ever-changing passages of extraordinary scenery over the Sound and the Olympic Mountains. The motivating force, therefore, is outward looking, orienting most of the houses toward the spectacular views. Additionally, given the dense native vegetation, each house seems, and is, an island carved out of the wilderness, singular rather than communal. Some open areas were set aside as reservation, primarily because they were unbuildable. Therefore, interactive life was to take place around the country club. Here, as in other subdivisions, the firm designed many of the individual grounds, thereby guiding architectural appropriateness and retaining privacy of vista by careful siting. Long, curving driveways carved through the forest slowly reveal the architecture of the houses beyond. These private landscapes, many designed by Dawson, were often imaginative blendings of formal elements into the woodlands, carefully creating foreground and enframement for the

spectacular water and mountain views with smooth lawns and lofty evergreens (Figure 20).

At the other extreme, the work on the Palos Verdes peninsula required the creation of a vegetative setting into which a series of communities could nestle and look natural. Again, the firm was working with scenically spectacular land--vast, rolling hills rising in a series of benches varied by steep canyons, all overlooking sandy beaches and the mountains of Catalina Island. This project of 16,000 acres was of a scale and complexity unlike the firm's previous work. In many areas, it required pushing the boundaries then existing in planning and landscape architecture. To prepare this peninsula for community habitation, beautiful yet profitable, required, in addition to the Olmsted, the services of climatologists to assess weather and therefore water patterns; of geologists to analyze the lime-shale and rocky crusts for stability; of engineers aplenty to set roadways without destroying the landscape either by intrusion or by run-off; horticulturists to economically plant



**Figure 19: A.A. MacDougall, Plan for the Highlands, Inc., Seattle, WA, 1925, Job No. 8243.** Although drafted by MacDougall, the plan reflects the planning by John Olmsted and James Dawson to adapt the roads and lots to the steep scenic topography. (courtesy FLONHS)





Figure 20,21: View from the Highlands toward Puget Sound with the Olympic Mountains in the background, 1985. (courtesy Arleyn A. Levee); Landscape architects, surveyors, engineers and other members of the Palos Verdes planning team, with Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., center right, ca. 1922, Job No. 5950. (Photograph by Keystone Photo Service, courtesy FLONHS)



a range of vegetation from trees to herbaceous ground covers which could be appropriate to the climate and topography yet require minimum care; and finally it required shrewd businessmen, Frank Vanderlip and his colleagues, to turn this vast investment of money and labor into a profitable residential venture (Figure 21).

This was a project of transformation--the passion of the planner, builder, artist at work. As Olmsted, Jr. noted in 1927,

*"The great distinction of Palos Verdes as a residential community is the consistent emphasis on the two-fold principle: first, that the success of a great whole depends on the harmony of all its parts, that there is no class of physical changes which can be made in disregard of the rest without danger of impairing the whole...and second, that the inventiveness and imagination of many individuals must be given as great scope in dealing with parts, both large and small, as is consistent with a reasonably harmonious conception...so as to avoid a monotonous stereotype quality..."*<sup>19</sup>

With restrictive covenants covering use, building and open space requirements and social character; with the Art Jury to determine the suitability of the architecture and landscape designs; and with the Home Associations in which every lot owner had one vote, the value and the future of the project was hopefully ensured.

The several planned communities within Palos Verdes were intended to be self-supporting, with their own schools and small commercial centers, etc., to include large and small house sites, although a prosperous clientele was anticipated (See Figure 1). A circulation system (Figure 22), designed to give coherence to the land, consisted of a circuit thoroughfare; main thoroughfares connecting to the cities beyond; parkways along the coast and crest, and residential streets, all planned to consider grades, effects on abutting property, water management and scenery. House sites were chosen for special views. The coastline, with its beaches and bluffs, was set aside for park space, as was ample land for several golf courses. In the neighborhoods, other nodes were reserved



Figure 22: Aerial view in Palos Verdes of Malaga Cove and Montemalaga districts, 1927, Job No. 5950. (Spence Airplane Photograph from Frederick Law Olmsted, "Palos Verdes Estates," *Landscape Architecture* 17, July 1927, p. 254)



as open space while the commercial areas, such as Malaga Cove Plaza, were self-consciously designed to be scenic attractions, reflecting a Mediterranean style. Though sidewalks were included in the residential areas, this was definitely an automobile community.

There was a great deal of idealism built into this project along with the science, technology and architectural harmony. In many ways, Palos Verdes and its intentions represents a culmination of Olmsted, Sr.'s principles for residential communities. His mission, which his successor firms pursued, was to create neighborhoods where families could balance privacy with community responsibilities, where leisure, recreation and creative interactions could be pursued in a beautiful environment, in harmony with nature. With such a setting as part of the city fabric, Olmsted, Sr. hoped that society's drift would be even more civilized and productive. In 1922, en route to restart the Palos Verdes project after the hiatus of the first World War, F. L. Olmsted, Jr. ruminated on the shifting population patterns, much as his father had done more than 50 years before. He mused,

*"Everywhere that these great tides flow, East or West, the seekers after their hearts' desire--a perfect place to live and enjoy life--too often meet the same experience. Seeking the places most attractive by nature, piling into them thousands after thousands without constructive forethought beyond the common impulse that moves them all, their very numbers begin to distil (sic) the poison that blights the paradise they seek.*

*Palos Verdes is a bold, inspiring, deliberate attempt to face this problem squarely, and to conquer it. If the best brains and persistent honest effort we possess, with eyes wide open to the dangers and difficulties of the problem, can solve it to the lasting satisfaction of the thousands who are eager for the best solution humanly attainable, then it will be solved at Palos Verdes. A virgin tract of twenty five square miles with every advantage of climate, coast, and lofty intricate hills, planned, guided and controlled from the very start with the sole exclusive object of making it and keeping it as a great cooperative enterprise, the pleasantest place*

*to live that it can possibly be made. If we be no rogues or fools and if adequate financial means come fully forth...the thing can be done as it never has been done in the world before."*<sup>20</sup>

**Arleyn A. Levee** is a landscape designer and Olmsted scholar.

## Endnotes

1. Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, "Preliminary Report to the Commissioners for Laying Out a Park in Brooklyn New York...", reprinted in Albert Fein, *Landscape Into Cityscape* (Ithaca, New York, 1968), p. 100.
  2. Olmsted, Vaux & Co., *Preliminary Report upon the Proposed Suburban Village at Riverside, Near Chicago*, (New York, 1868; reprint ed., Chicago, 1982), pp. 3-7, 26-27 (hereafter cited as *Riverside Report*).
  3. Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., "The Pioneer Condition and the Drift of Civilization in America," in Charles E. Beveridge, ed., *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted*, Vol. V: Victoria Post Ranney, ed., *The California Frontier* (Baltimore, 1990), p. 659. See also pp. 653-658.
  4. *Riverside Report*, pp. 12, 17.
  5. *Riverside Report*, pp. 16.
  6. *Riverside Report*, pp. 24.
  7. John Charles Olmsted, "Community Development of Industrial Towns and Villages," paper presented at meeting of the American City Planning Institute, Philadelphia, February 26, 1918, p. 6 (typewritten). OARLC
  8. [Edward H. Bouton] to Robert DeForest, May 29, 1911, file B-3586, Olmsted Associates Records, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress (hereafter cited as "OARLC"). Bouton's letter to DeForest with its accompanying "statement of View" concerned: *"The question of the policy to be pursued in the treatment of the Hebrew question at Forest Hills Garden . . . I think it cannot be questioned that if the property is sold to Jews, even though they are not persons who, except for their race, could be classified as 'undesirable,' it will mean that such a number of that race will avail of the opportunity that it will seriously militate against -- if not wholly prevent -- the location there of Gentiles of the better sort."*
- Bouton's recommendation was to have the company treat the issue for purely commercial reasons. As expressed in the accompanying statement, ". . . There will be no discrimination whatever against or in favor of any race or religion, except so far as may of necessity be involved in considerations vitally



*affecting the success of the development, the value of the experiment and the interests of the greater number of persons likely to reside there."*

9. Olmsted Brothers, Appendix I (typewritten page attached to printed brochure, "Protective Restrictions: Palos Verdes Estates"), folder NAB-7120, NAB/NAC Files, National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, Brookline, Mass. The printed brochure which includes the articles of incorporation and the by-laws of Palos Verdes Homes Association notes that the counsel and advice of Olmsted Brothers and Planner Charles H. Cheney guided the preparation of restrictions (page 2). Article one of the section entitled "Declaration of Establishment of Basic Protective Restrictions, Conditions, Covenants, Reservations, Liens and Charges known as Palos Verdes Estates -- Parcels A and B," states:

(a) No part of said property shall be sold, conveyed, rented or leased in whole or in part to any persons of African or Asiatic descent or to any person not of the white or Caucasian race.

(b) No part of said property shall be used or occupied or permitted to be used or occupied in whole or in part by any person of African or Asiatic descent or by any person not of the white or Caucasian race, except domestic servants, chauffeurs, or gardeners of other than the white or Caucasian race may live on or occupy the premises where their employer resides or with the written approval of Palos Verdes Home Association. . . " (p. 17)

10. See Patricia Burgess Stach, "Deed Restrictions and Subdivision Development in Columbus, Ohio, 1900-1970," *Journal of Urban History* 15 (November 1988): pp. 42-68.

11. John C. Olmsted to Judge Robert R. Bishop, May 29, 1893, Vol. A27, p. 922, OARLC.

12. John C. Olmsted to "Fidie" [Sophia White Olmsted], April 5, 1906 and May 4, 1906, John Charles Olmsted Papers, Frances Loeb Library, Harvard University Graduate School of Design.

13. Olmsted Brothers to Edward H. Bouton, December 21, 1900; Olmsted Brothers to Edward L. Palmer, January 25, 1911, file B-2210, OARLC.

14. Henry V. Hubbard, "The Influence of Topography on the Layout of Suburban Divisions," *Landscape Architecture* 18 (April 1928): p. 199.

15. Horace McFarland to Olmsted Brothers, October 7, 1910; Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., to Horace McFarland, October 11, 1910, file B-2210, OARLC.

16. John Charles Olmsted, report of visit, May 18-19, 1902, file B-71, OARLC.

17. Elizabeth A. Lyon, "Frederick Law Olmsted and Joel Hurt: Planning for Atlanta," in Dana F. White and Victoria Kramer, eds., *Olmsted South* (Westport, Conn., 1979) pp. 165-190.

18. Board of Park Commissioners of the City of Seattle, *First Annual Report* (Seattle, 1905; reprint ed. by the Friends of Seattle Olmsted Parks, [Seattle, 1984]), p. 44.

19. Frederick Law Olmsted, (Jr.), "Palos Verdes Estates," *Landscape Architecture* 17 (July 1927): pp. 262-264.

20. Frederick Law Olmsted, (Jr.), "Notes on the Palos Verdes Project," 1922, File B-5950, OARLC.



## Selecting Rehabilitation as a Treatment for Olmsted Brothers' "Hills and Dales Park," in Dayton, Ohio

Noel Dorsey Vernon and Malcolm Cairns

For historic designed landscapes, treatment is the bridge between the past and the future. Through appropriate treatment, too, the designer's intent is secured and the site placed within thematic context. Thus preservationists must understand the concepts and nuances of our treatment options and how, in order to identify an appropriate treatment, one considers the site, the scope and quality of its available historic documentation, and its future projected uses -- as well as the site's significance and integrity. And even if *rehabilitation* (the most common and appropriate treatment choice) is indeed determined to be appropriate for a historic landscape, the landscape preservation team is still faced with a wide variety of choices as it develops the Master Plan.

The intent of this paper is to explain how our team selected an appropriate treatment and then proposed three alternate treatment concepts for the rehabilitation of Hills and Dales Park, a 57-acre Olmsted Brothers woodland park in Dayton, Ohio.<sup>1</sup> As the reader will see, the park and its contents determined the treatment options -- and, in fact, the specific treatment ultimately proposed for the park.

In introducing Hills and Dales Park, part of the Olmsted Brothers' *opus*, it is of particular interest that the property has no single *correct* master plan. Instead, from its start as moraine farmland purchased by John H. Patterson (Figure 1), founder and president of the National Cash Register Company (NCR) -- through its use in Patterson's many industrial and civic welfare projects -- to its present state as an under-maintained, much loved public park, this Dayton, Ohio, landscape has borne many cultural overlays and has grown by accretion and erasure: a *palimpsest* if there ever was one. However -- as the Library of Congress, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site (FLONHS), and NCR archives attest -- the park remains highly significant both nationally and locally. And the park retains substantial integrity from several of its multiple *layers of significance*.

In spite of this lack of a single Olmsted Brothers' master plan, and despite the multiple overlays of



Figure 1: John H. Patterson on his horse *Spinner*, n.d. (courtesy NCR)

design and erasure, the preservation plan for Hills and Dales Park followed familiar steps: historic documentation and evaluation of significance and integrity (presented as a site history with preliminary treatment recommendations); site inventory and analysis (referencing prior historic documentation); user inventory and analysis; development of three treatment concepts and their review; and development and review of the master plan, its design guidelines and specific treatment-related recommendations.

An essential feature of our planning process -- and the one that applies to most of the *universe* of historic landscape preservation -- was public contact and feedback: information and comments provided by the local public played a major role in the formulation of the final master plan. This information and feedback *loop* functioned throughout the master planning process. The City surveyed residents about their love of, hopes for and complaints about the park, while the team held numerous public meetings as well as individual sessions with park employees and the officials of adjacent municipalities. The team also interviewed police and others who had information, criticism and suggestions to contribute to the planning process. In addition, the team greatly appreciated the contributions of local organizations such as the Garden Club of Dayton and the Four Seasons



# The Landscape Universe

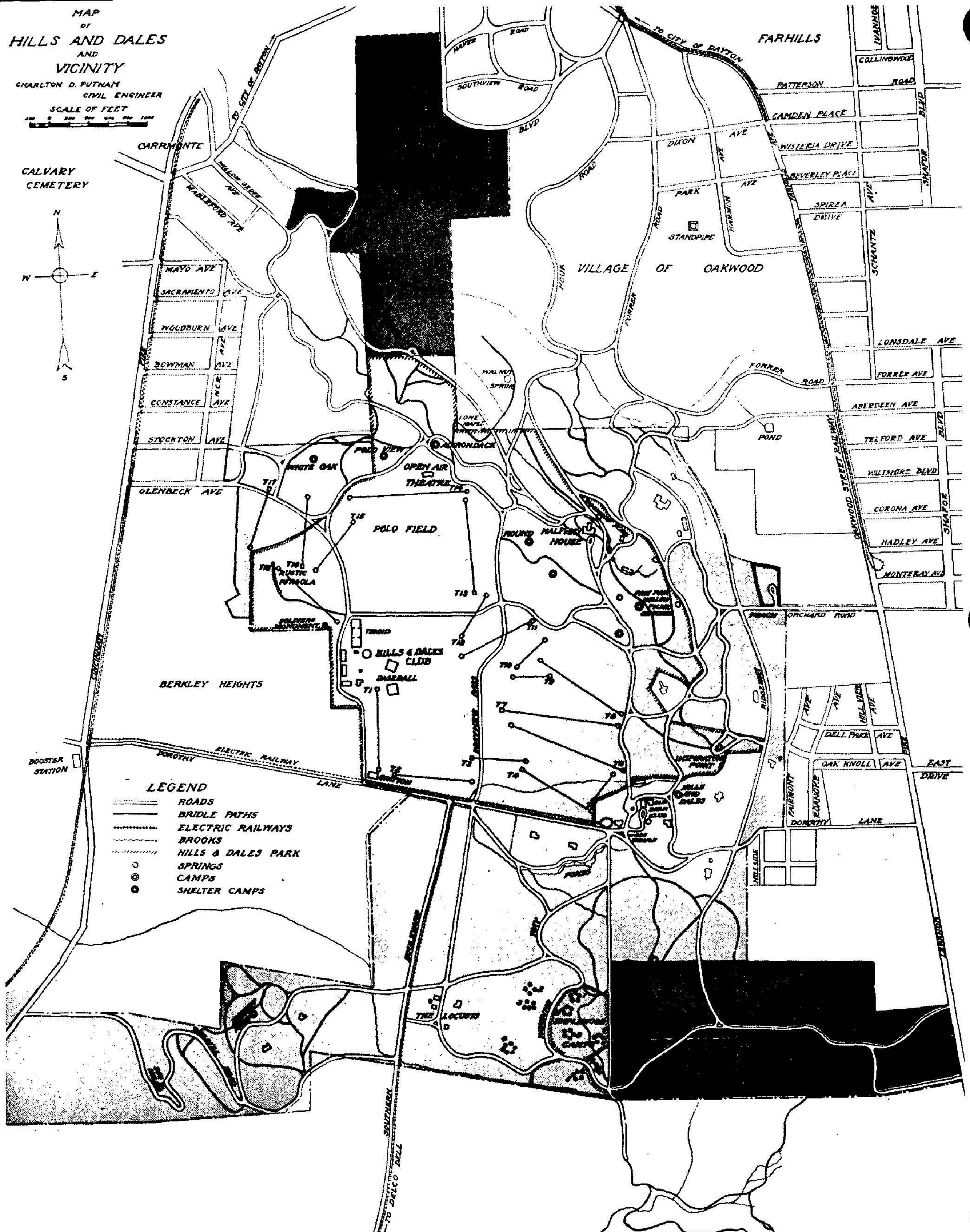


Figure 2: Map of Hills and Dales and Vicinity. Charlton D. Putnam, Civil Engineer, ca. 1915. (courtesy NCR Corporation)



Garden Club, firms such as NCR and Woolpert Associates, as well as the Dayton-Montgomery County Historical Society, and local groups and individuals far too numerous to mention here.

Again, the site history established the framework for the treatment recommendations for Hills and Dales Park. Having completed the history, the team determined that the park had three major claims to national significance: (1) its relationship to John H. Patterson and the Industrial Welfare Movement; (2) its relationship to the Olmsted Brothers firm and its place within the many Olmsted-Patterson plans for Dayton -- as Patterson had a long history of involving the Olmsted Brothers firm in his personal and company venues as well as in his civic and industrial welfare projects; and (3) its Depression-era construction. In fact, while the park's overall era of significance would last from 1901 (when development plans first began) until approximately 1938 (when Depression-era work appears to have ended), many changes within the park occurred during this time, as well as during later years.

Hills and Dales Park was donated by Patterson to the City of Dayton in 1918. Since at least 1902,

the park had been the epicenter of many projects undertaken by Patterson and the Olmsted Brothers firm. As with many park sites, the property was farm and pasture land when Patterson, his friends and colleagues acquired it and the surrounding lands -- parcel by parcel -- during the 1890s and early 1900s, in order to build a tract of elite suburban homes with a small community park. The Oakwood Realty Company Plan of 1903 shows the 100-acre Rubicon Park as the central amenity for this proposed subdivision. Little of this was actually built, yet the park still may be seen in the context of Olmsted Brothers' subdivision designs including or adjacent to *amenity parks*. In fact, Emil Miche of the Olmsted Brothers firm had done site plantings in the area as early as 1902. However, the plan was abandoned before 1906.

Eventually one portion of the property became Hills and Dales park, which in 1907 was opened first to NCR employees, and then to the general public. Over the next 11 years, the park housed many of Patterson's famous and constantly shifting employee (including the NCR lunch-hour employee polo team) and civic welfare projects. The history of these projects is well-documented in the Olmsted Brothers files at the Library of Congress,

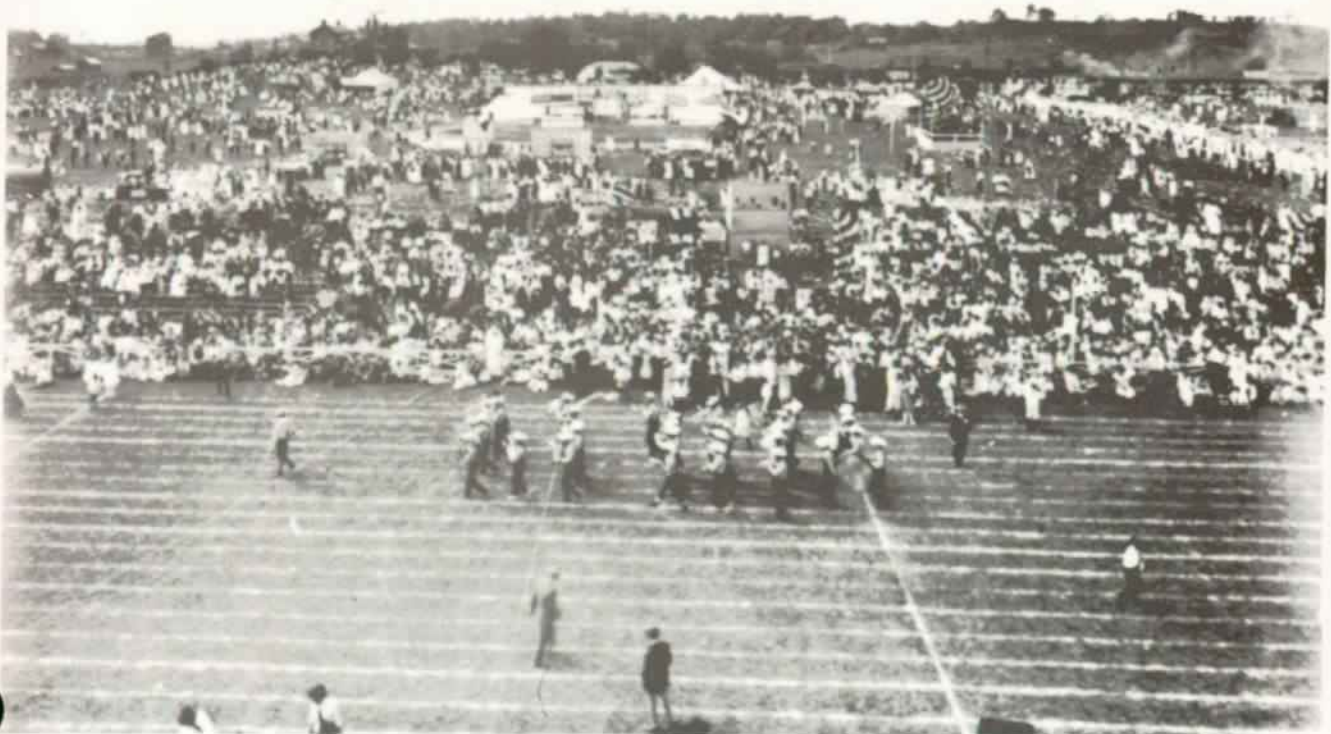


Figure 3: NCR's last 4th of July party at Hills and Dales, 1918. (courtesy NCR)



and in other sources covering Patterson and his era. Patterson donated the park to the City of Dayton in 1918 and died 1922. Additional developments (and erasures) occurred after Patterson's death -- particularly in the 1930s, when the park got substantial WPA attention, and in the 1950s and 1960s when *modern* park improvements were installed. Divided a major traffic artery (Patterson Boulevard), into a woodland park and a golf course and separated administratively, the honeysuckle infested park had deteriorated substantially by 1990.

In 1991, a preservation master plan for the park was commissioned by the City of Dayton. While

much had been altered or lost, historically significant components which retained good levels of historic integrity were found. These included:

1. The strong design relationship between the local Oakwood neighborhood which contained many Olmsted Brothers elements and the park. Hills and Dales in fact can be placed in the broader context of Olmsted Brothers and other firms' plans which included dwellers-in-the-park and dwellers-beside-the-park;

2. The relationship of Hills and Dales Park to the larger Dayton park system, based upon a 1911 Olmsted Brothers report;

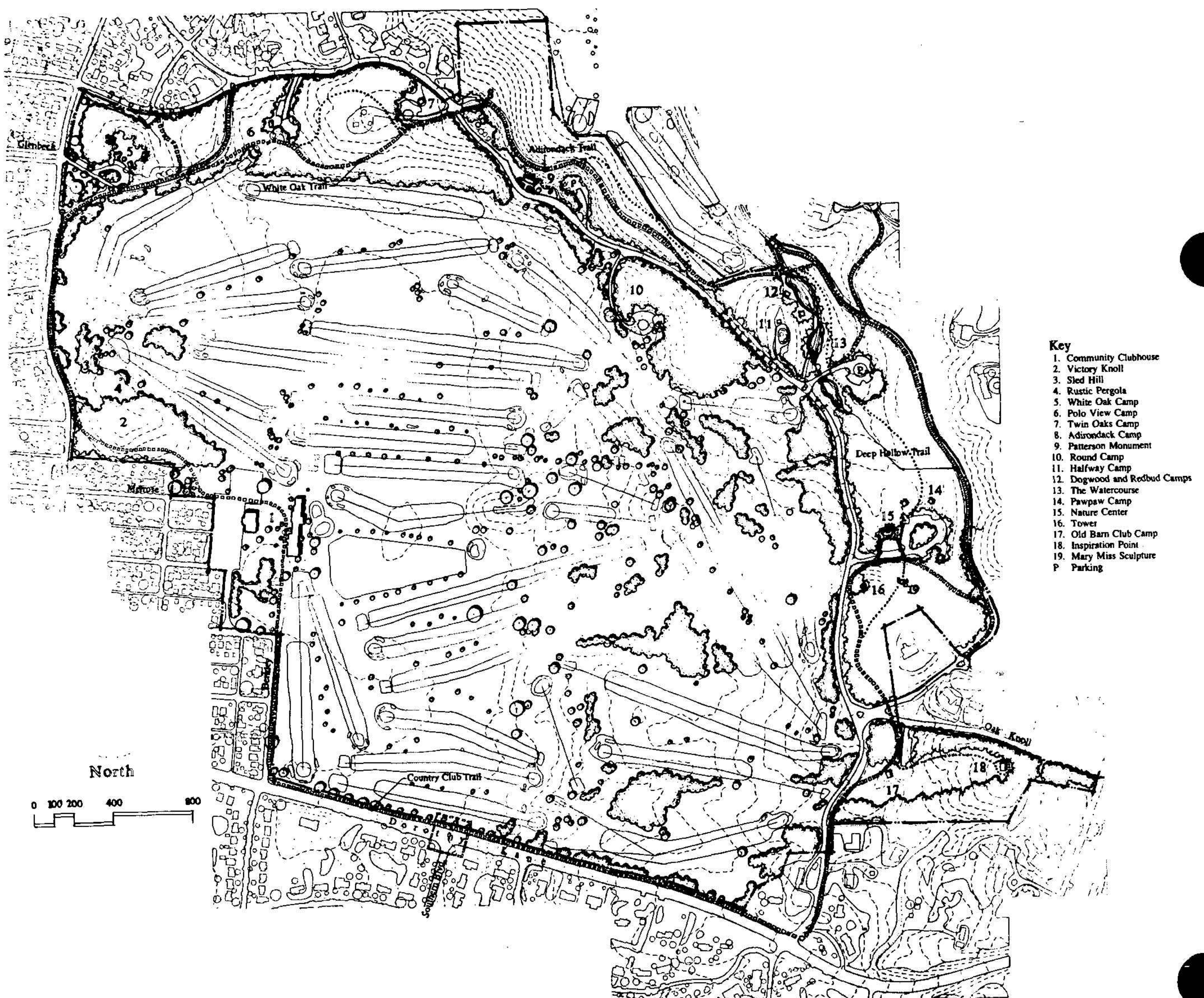


Figure 4: Preservation Master Plan for Hills and Dales Park, City of Dayton, Ohio. Vernon and Cairns.



3. The provision for both active and passive recreation activities within the park -- Patterson's employee *wellness* program was famous nationally;

4. The existence of the Picnic Camps as integral components of the park landscape. The locations of some historic camps had remained intact in many ways. However, the Patterson-era Adirondack camps were gone and the architecture and landscape of the remaining post-Patterson camps had been severely eroded;

5. The strong distinction between the wooded Hills and the meadow landscape of Dales;

6. Traditional patterns of driving, riding, and hiking. Most of the driving-for-pleasure roads remained, although these had suffered by abandonment or from their use as utilitarian auto short-cuts which often resulted in their widening. Fragments of hiking and equestrian trails also remained, although many had become increasingly overgrown with honeysuckle;

7. New Deal landscape details. These, in fact, comprised the primary detailed landscape evident in the park: stone and brick detailing still contributed significantly to the rustic character of the park. However, the park's water features, those of the 1910s and of the 1930s, had been filled in, although fragments of culverts, catch-basins, and the head-wall of impoundment structures remained.

In addition, the relationship of off-site properties to the park remained much the same as it had in early years of the park, with substantial suburban houses fronting the park on the west, larger elite home grounds backing up into the park on the east, and an area of more modest well-cared-for *worker cottages* to the southwest. It was of great pleasure to the team to see members of all three *on-the-park* housing groups joining at public meetings to save their common park heritage.

Given the site history and evaluation as well as current site information and current user needs, presented to us by the City and by Dayton residents, a variety of treatment options were worked through and discarded.

The team's original hope had been to restore the park to its 1920 Olmsted-Patterson appearance.

However, the National Park Service 1992 draft *Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Landscapes* defines restoration as "*depict[ing] an appearance that existed during the landscape's most significant period by removing later additions, and rebuilding or replanting other features.*" (*Guidelines*, p. 7) Given (a) the lack of a single historic era Olmsted Brothers' Master Plan for the park and the lack of other adequate documentation, (b) the pattern of continual on-site revision of the park landscape demanded by Patterson and carried out by NCR and the Olmsted Brothers firm, (c) the absence of much of the 1902-1920s fabric which is known to have existed from the Patterson-Olmsted Brothers' correspondence, and (d) the division of the site into a park and a golf course, we concluded that it was neither appropriate nor feasible to do a strict restoration of the park to the historic Olmsted-Patterson era.

The second restoration option was to restore the park to its 1930s-era appearance. However, the team concluded that neither was it appropriate to restore the site to its 1930-era form, as much of the documentation for this era was missing.

The team eventually concluded that rehabilitation was by far the best and most feasible option for the treatment of Hills and Dales Park so as to keep its remaining historic form and character, while adapting it to the needs of current park users. The NPS draft *Guidelines* defines rehabilitation as "*retain[ing] the landscape as it has evolved historically by maintaining and repairing historic features, while allowing additions and alterations for contemporary use.*" (*Guidelines*, p. 7) Historic fabric would be preserved, historic views and vistas that were known to have existed could be reopened and historic paths rehabilitated. Remnant historic fabric could be respected and repaired. At the same time, current needs for the park which would be strongly in keeping with the Olmsted-Patterson intent for the park, such as a nature center, might be incorporated under this option. Additionally, this option would allow for the major change in one *meadow* portion of the original park (now 40-year woodlands) and for the current division between the woodlands and the meadows occasioned by the growth of the (now historic) golf course. The park's historic, and missing Adirondack campsites, no longer appropriate for today's users, due to fire hazards and maintenance problems, could be replaced by sympathetic



structures. The incompatible 1960s structures would be removed. The vegetation management plan developed by Professor John Harrington of the University of Wisconsin-Madison also would be suitable for a rehabilitation treatment.

The site history had shown us a park in flux, whose *raison d'être* was public recreation and pleasure, not fixity of design. Photographs and written documentation proved that the overall woodland character, the current and proposed woodland uses for the park, notably walking, jogging, and nature study were a match for the project's historic intent. Existing site character, minus invasive vegetation and other non-contributing low-maintenance-budget-related features, as well as the current user inventory could legitimately help guide the rehabilitation treatment recommendations --thus permitting our overall direction to maintain the park's historic intent, character, and fabric while avoiding a false "restoration" of a park whose woodland essence was intact or reparable, but many of whose human-made character-defining features had been long-since altered, removed or replaced. Many of these changes occurred during the park's original Olmsted-Patterson era.

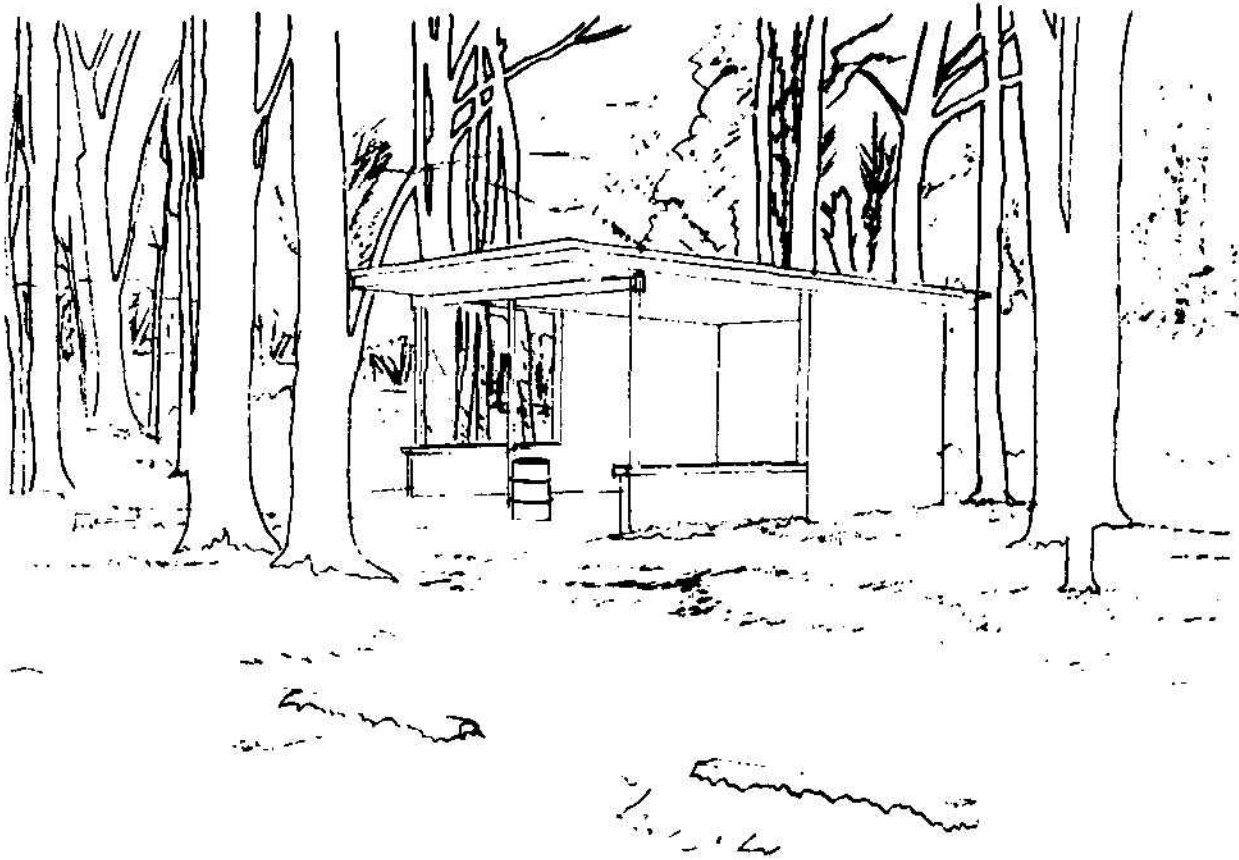
Now came the question, "*what form should the rehabilitation take?*" We considered degrees of rehabilitation ranging from relative *noninterference* to major-yet-differing initiatives in response to information uncovered during the history phase. Each option also needed to relate to the current needs of park users and the options (financial and otherwise) available to the City of Dayton. Thus the team developed three rehabilitation concepts, each with specific rehabilitation guidelines, which it submitted to the City of Dayton and which it presented for citizen review and comment.

*Rehabilitation Concept One* could be characterized by minimal impact and involved the least effort and dollar-outlay of the three options. Historic fabric would be repaired, historic trails cleared, and inappropriate park structures replaced with modern, more historically-sympathetic ones. Historic fabric would be retained and repaired. A limited amount of the historic meadows would be cleared of regrowth and maintained. Parking would be created in spaces where historic views and vistas would not be affected, and traffic would be managed for the safety of all park users. However,



Figures 5-7: Historic Structures and Furnishings in Hills and Dales Park, ca. 1910-1915. (courtesy NCR)





Figures 8-10: Incompatible 1960s campsite structure; proposed campsite with access road. (courtesy Vernon and Cairns)

the overall automobile system would not be changed, nor the issue of missing historic water features addressed under this concept.

*Rehabilitation Concept Two*, recognized that a true restoration of the park was not possible, yet much could be done to repair historic fabric, including the replanting of the Victory Grove and the opening of historic now-forested meadows. In addition, it recognized that the Patterson-era park character (circa 1910-1918) could be evoked through the reinstatement of lost historic park structures, specifically the wooden Adirondack camps and observation pergola in their close-to-historic appearance. Again, Concept Two could not entertain a restoration treatment approach as much of the specific data needed was unavailable. Examples would include the exact sites and appearances of historic camps or the outlines and depths of historic water features. In addition, given the administrative split between the golf course and the woodlands and the evolutionary nature of the Olmsted-Patterson plans, a Master Plan with a singular restoration treatment could be determined nor implemented. Beyond this, the demand for parking and other amenities further made a *period* recreation even more inappropriate.

Additionally, in an effort to maintain an honest appearance of the rustic character-defining features that were rebuilt, the concept stressed additional site interpretation. This would be increased so that site visitors would be sure that the *almost-historic-looking* camps and pergola were not mistaken as actual historic fabric. The team noted the problems inherent in this approach, including issues of historic integrity and of maintenance. In fact, to their credit, citizens reviewing these concepts preferred Concept Three.

*Concept Three* was known as *A Historic Park for the Future*. Its premise was that the context in which the park was envisioned by Patterson and the Olmsted Brothers firm had changed greatly. Horse and pedestrian paths, once widened in Patterson's era for the use of a few cars, were now much wider, faster, and more dangerous automobile lanes which splintered the park into small woodland segments. Concept three proposed road closures and the return to historic pedestrian uses of these rights-of-way. Although nature study was an historic intent of the park, present conditions, invasive species, lack of interpretative



facilities, leave little opportunity for this aspect of the original intent. Thus the proposal suggested that the largest of the 1960s shelters be removed and replaced by a nature Study Center, sympathetic to both the historic intent and character of the park.

Pedestrian needs were no longer being met in the meadow, which was now off-limits to all but golfers. However, other woodlands areas had historically been grassy meadows with panoramas, vistas, and campsites and an historic World War I Victory Grove. These features could be rehabilitated through the vegetation management plan.

Concept Three accepted that the historic campsites and pergola were gone and provided modern, but historically sympathetic ways of regaining these features -- as well as the watercourse that once had flowed and ponded along the east side of the park. Again, historic fabric would be retained and repaired, and new fabric designed to appear sympathetic but non-historic. Overall, the team used this concept plan to suggest ways in which the park could better respond to today's users and site context, while remaining faithful to the Olmsted-Patterson intents for the park -- specifically the intent that the park be a place to experience nature. This plan also promoted the Olmsteds' *homes in the park* concept, while preserving the privacy of those local residents who live on private lots bordering the park, for example by providing parking within the park combined with play space for local children as well as other park visitors. Most importantly, the concept rejoined the severed segments of the park.

In fact, Concept Three gained the most support from those Dayton-area residents who attended the Hills and Dales Master Plan meetings. Given this public support, the City of Dayton asked that the team develop Concept Three to the Master Plan level. That plan now has been accepted by the City of Dayton -- a plan for bringing a vital and well-used Hills and Dales park into the Twenty-first century. The next challenge will be to again apply the *Guidelines* as the project moves to the design development phase.

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## Endnotes

1. The historic preservation master plan for Hills and Dales in Dayton, Ohio, grew out of a broader study: the Dayton-Olmsted Historic Landscape Survey. This survey is covered in depth in *Landscape Architecture Magazine* (Vernon 1987) and the 1987 *Proceedings* of the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture (1988). See Noel Vernon "Documenting the Olmsteds in Ohio," (1987) *Landscape Architecture* vol. 77, no. 5, pp. 94-95; and "Landscape Architecture and Public Service: The Olmsted Brothers in Dayton, Ohio, 1894-1930," in *Proceedings*, 1987 Annual Meeting of the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture [CELA] (Providence: Rhode Island School of Design, 1988).



**André Parmentier:  
A Bridge Between Europe and America**  
Cynthia Zaitzevsky

André Parmentier has long been an intriguing and somewhat enigmatic figure in the history of American landscape architecture. His reputation has been almost entirely based on the extraordinary praise bestowed by A. J. Downing: "...we consider M. Parmentier's labors and examples as having effected...far more for landscape gardening in America than those of any individual whatever."<sup>1</sup>

Downing continued: "In his periodical catalogue, he arranged the hardy trees and shrubs that flourish in this latitude in classes, according to their height, etc., and published a short treatise on the superior claims of the natural, over the formal or geometric style of laying out grounds."<sup>2</sup>

Such praise is all the more remarkable, since Downing, who was only thirteen when Parmentier died, almost certainly knew his predecessor landscape practitioner only by reputation and through his executed designs, especially Hyde Park on the Hudson in New York state, which Parmentier laid out for Dr. David Hosack in 1828.

Parmentier's life and career may be very simply summed up. He was born in Enghien, Belgium, July 3, 1780 into a mercantile and professional family, many of whose members were active in the nursery business. He was educated at the University of Louvain and apparently became a businessman with a horticultural avocation. (No landscape designs by Parmentier in Europe are known.) In 1824, business reverses forced him to leave Belgium for the United States where he pursued horticulture and landscape design as a career. He established a nursery in Brooklyn, NY, which became an immediate success. Soon afterward, he began accepting commissions for landscape design projects. Despite Downing's assertion that Parmentier designed many properties all over the country, only five landscape designs have been identified thus far, three in the United States and two in Canada. Of these, the Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site in Hyde Park, originally laid out by Parmentier, is the only one that survives even in part.<sup>3</sup>

Parmentier's death in 1830 put an end to his burgeoning design career, but not before he had

made an indelible mark on the history of American landscape architecture. Not only did he advance horticultural knowledge, but, both in his projects and his writings, he was an outstanding exponent of the picturesque in landscape design, particularly the French variant of the style.

The remainder of this paper will be divided into two parts: 1) an exploration of Parmentier's life in Belgium and the landscaped estates in Belgium and France that he knew well, in other words, his European context; and 2) his life in the United States, including the establishment of his nursery and his documented landscape designs, with special emphasis on the Hosack estate. By examining these aspects of Parmentier's life and career, it will be seen that this landscape practitioner occupies a unique place in the history of American landscape architecture: he served as a "bridge" between the most advanced design trends of his age in Europe, which he then transported to the United States, leaving an enduring legacy in spite of his mere five to six years of activity.

**Parmentier in Belgium**

Although he apparently was not a landscape professional in Belgium, André Parmentier was from his earliest youth intimately familiar with some of the most sophisticated gardens in Europe. In addition, through his brothers, he was also exposed to the latest techniques and the most recent introductions in horticulture. Parmentier was the second son of André-Joseph, a linen merchant, and Catherine-Clair Noël Parmentier. His grandfather, Jean-Joseph Parmentier, was a prominent lawyer in Enghien. During Parmentier's lifetime, his native town of Enghien became, successively, part of four different countries. When he was born, Enghien belonged to the Austrian Empire. In 1797, it became part of France, in 1815, part of Holland and, finally, in 1830, part of the Kingdom of Belgium. As noted earlier, André attended the University of Louvain, but his course of study is not known. At this time, the University was developing a reputation as a center of botany and horticulture. In addition, Jean Baptiste von Mons, a resident of Louvain, was in the early years of a distinguished career as a hybridizer of fruit, especially pears.<sup>4</sup>

André's older brother, Joseph Parmentier (1775-1852), one of the most eminent horticulturists of



his time, was manager of the estate of Enghien, the ancestral property of the Dukes of Arenberg. Between 1802 and 1830, he held the offices of mayor and burgomaster of the town of Enghien and, between 1836 and 1842, was a communal councilor. He also served as a horticultural advisor to the Empress Josephine.<sup>5</sup> In 1810, Joseph Parmentier was allowed by Napoleon to pass through the Channel blockade to obtain plants, seeds and bulbs from England for the Empress's garden at Malmaison and for his own collection at Enghien. During this stay, he is said to have acquired more than 2000 plants representing 261 species.<sup>6</sup> Joseph's greenhouses and his own nursery grounds in Enghien, which occupied a city block and stretched to the fortifications of the town, were praised by many illustrious visitors.<sup>7</sup>

André Parmentier's younger brother Louis (1782-1847) also had a nursery, located on the edge of Enghien beyond the fortifications, where he specialized in roses. Louis cultivated more than 12,000 plants, comprising some three thousand varieties of roses.<sup>8</sup>

Little is known about André Parmentier's early life in Belgium, and the exact nature of his business has not been ascertained. The extent of his travels outside Belgium cannot be determined either, but it is likely that the wars and revolutions of his youth might have made travel, even into nearby France, difficult. However, since they were widely published, Parmentier need not have personally visited the châteaux and gardens of France to have known them well.

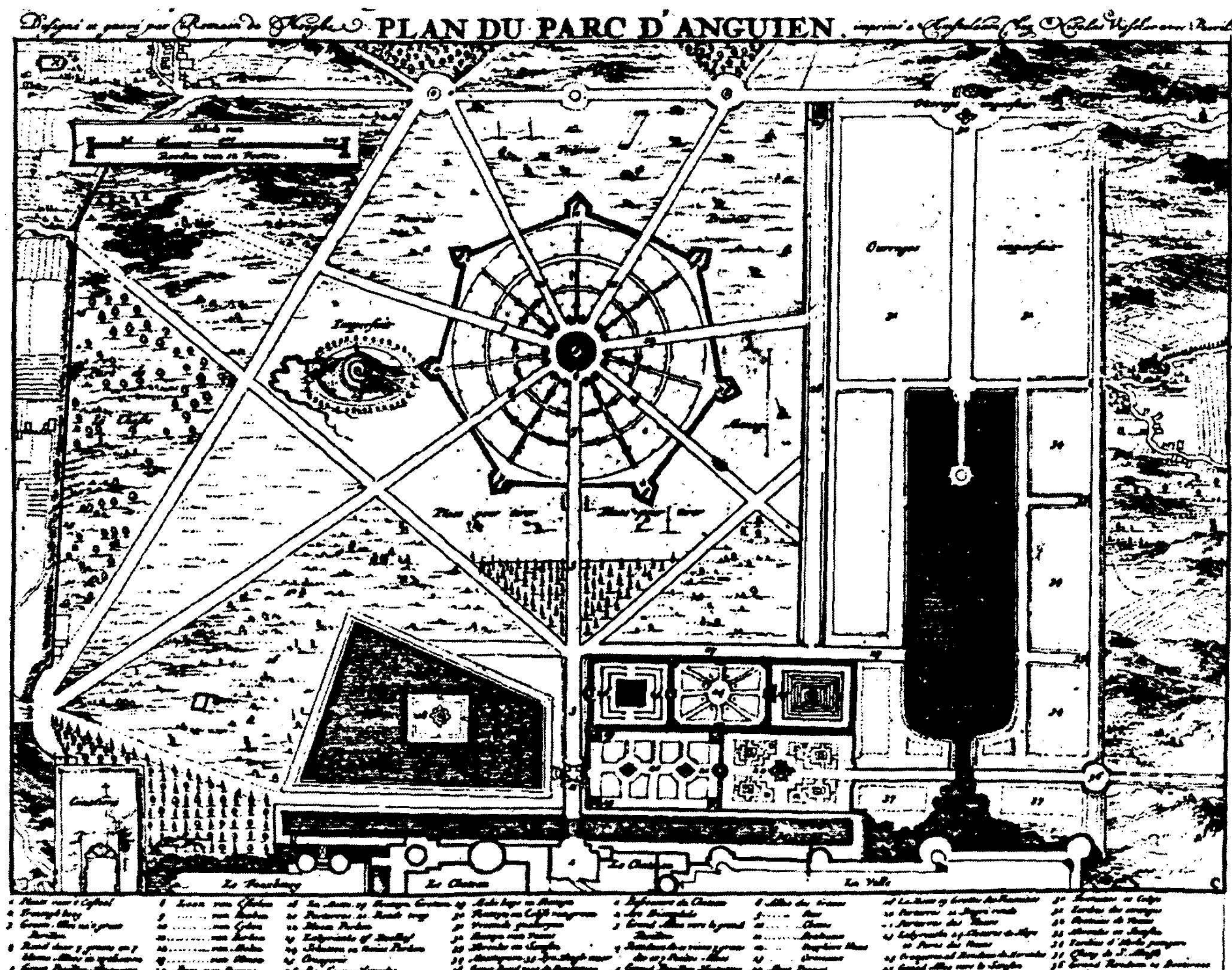


Figure 1: Plan of the Garden of Enghien, Belgium. Engraving by Romain de Hooghe, ca. 1685. From René Pechère, "Les Glorieux Jardins d'Enghien."



Besides the famous gardens of André Le Nôtre, Parmentier would certainly have been familiar with more recent garden design in France. By the 1770s, gardens in the style of Stowe, Stourhead and Shugborough had become a passion in France. In and around Paris, there were a number of such *jardins anglais* -- Ermenonville, Le Désert de Retz, Méréville, the Bagatelle, and Jardin de Monceau -- some designed by architects and landscape gardeners, but most the creations of their wealthy owners. These gardens reflected English models but added an element of fantasy and drama that was peculiarly French. There was more emphasis on artificial as opposed to natural features, and the English use of temples, grottos, hermitages and other garden structures, which often had symbolic significance, was carried to a greater extreme. Although the French Revolution put an abrupt halt to the development of the *jardin anglais*, few gardens were actually destroyed. (Many still exist today, at least in part.) Parmentier may have visited these gardens. He certainly would have known of them.<sup>9</sup>

However, we can turn from these French gardens to gardens in Belgium, dating from the early 17th to the late 18th centuries, that Parmentier must have visited personally. The garden that Parmentier knew most intimately was, of course, Enghien, which his brother Joseph managed. Enghien, although well documented, is little known to American historians. A fascinating landscape, containing game reserves, natural woods, and a garden, it was originally designed between about 1630 and 1665 by Charles d'Arenberg, a Capuchin monk, for his brother Philippe, then the Prince of Arenberg.<sup>10</sup>

The garden at Enghien (Figure 1) was a formal design that included canals, a pond, smaller pools, and flower beds near the château. The dominant landscape features, however, were the seven long avenues each lined with a different kind of tree, some clipped into formal hedges, and all converging on a central moated pavilion, *Le Pavillon des Sept Étoiles*. Like the garden as a whole, the pavilion combined an essentially formal design with fantastic and somewhat eccentric detail. Other features of the landscape included another pavilion in the form of a spiral (*Le Mont Parnasse*), monumental gateways, and a colosseum made of piary. All of these features are exceptionally well documented in a series of copper-plate engravings

by Romain de Hooghe, published about 1685.<sup>11</sup> The initial stage of Enghien's design preceded Le Nôtre's famous gardens, such as Vaux-le-Vicomte and Versailles, by about three decades. Le Nôtre is sometimes said to have been influenced by Enghien, but this cannot be proven. In 1671, Louis XIV visited Enghien accompanied by Mlle. de Montpensier and is said to have been very impressed.<sup>12</sup>

Enghien had a turbulent history in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. During the French Revolution, the château was destroyed, rebuilt, turned into a hospital and, destroyed again, this time for good. Between 1803 and 1807, the park and garden were restored by Joseph Parmentier, possibly assisted by André. Joseph was also responsible for building and stocking a large conservatory.<sup>13</sup> Today, many of Enghien's fantastic structures are no longer present, and the landscape has been softened by the growth of trees. Nevertheless, the outlines of the early 17th-century design as modified by Joseph Parmentier are still visible.

Near Enghien is another extraordinary garden of quite a different character that Parmentier also surely knew. This is Beloeil (Figure 2), the property of the Princes de Ligne, laid out originally about 1700 in the style of Le Nôtre. In the late 18th century, an extensive *jardin anglais* was added to the grounds at Beloeil by Prince Charles-Joseph de Ligne, probably assisted by the French architect Jean-Baptiste Bergé.<sup>14</sup>

In 1824, Parmentier found himself in a desperate financial situation and to avoid bankruptcy and

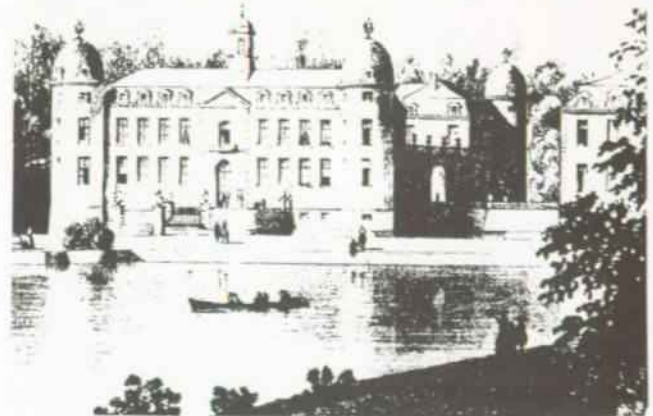


Figure 2: View of the Castle and part of the Garden, Beloeil, Belgium. Lithograph by A. Vasse, 1853. (courtesy the Foundation Ligne, Beloeil, Belgium)



possible imprisonment left Belgium clandestinely. He departed with his wife Sylvie, his two children, and a maid, and apparently did not even inform his two brothers. Although the Parmentiers sailed for New York, their ultimate destination was the West Indies, possibly Martinique. For undocumented reasons, their plans changed and they remained in New York.<sup>15</sup>

#### **Parmentier in the United States**

Parmentier promptly found a horticultural niche in New York. Only a year after emigrating, he established a nursery in Brooklyn, known simply as "Parmentier's Garden," that attracted much attention in horticultural periodicals. Much of André Parmentier's nursery stock, including grapes and pears, was provided by his brother Joseph.<sup>16</sup> Some of Parmentier's American clients were so enthusiastic about his nursery and stock that they made a point of visiting his brother's nursery in Belgium.<sup>17</sup> In the summer of 1825, Parmentier was elected a member of the New York Horticultural Society and served on its council from 1826 to 1830. He also became a member of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society.

Parmentier made frequent short contributions to such horticultural periodicals as the *New-York Farmer and Horticultural Repository* and the *New England Farmer*. The earliest of these were written in French and translated for publication. He also published a "periodical catalogue" listing the fruit and ornamental trees, etc. offered at his nursery.<sup>18</sup>

It might seem extraordinary that a Belgian arriving on these shores with only second-hand horticultural and design credentials and an imperfect command of English could so quickly find friends, professional standing and clients. There are probably two reasons why Parmentier found a place in American horticultural circles in such a short time. The first was the fascination of Americans for new and rare plants, especially fine varieties of pears and grapes, and their respect for European achievements in horticulture. In addition to this, Parmentier had the unique advantage of being able to provide European stock sent by his brother Joseph. A less tangible reason was probably Parmentier's personality, which by all accounts was appealing and gregarious. According to an early source: "Mr. Parmentier . . . was of a buoyant, active

*temperament, eminently kindly and social in his disposition, finding his chiefest pleasures in the home circle and in the prosecution of his floral pursuits. He was, also an excellent musician, and possessed artistic powers of no mean quality...*"<sup>19</sup>

About 1826, Parmentier began receiving commissions as a landscape gardener, which continued until his death four years later. Parmentier's Brooklyn nursery attracted attention not only for the plants that were offered but for its attractive layout, and an engraved plan of the grounds were published with his periodical catalogue and elsewhere (Figure 3). According to Downing, "...in the Horticultural Nurseries which he established at Brooklyn, he gave a specimen of the natural style of laying out grounds, combined with a scientific arrangement of plants, which excited public curiosity, and contributed not a little to the dissemination of a taste for the natural mode of landscape gardening."<sup>20</sup>

Downing also asserted that Parmentier's landscape design practice was quite large: "During M. Parmentier's residence on Long Island, he was almost constantly applied to for plans for laying out the grounds of country seats, by persons in various parts of the Union, as well as in the immediate proximity of New York. In many cases he not only surveyed the demesne to be improved, but furnished the plants and trees necessary to carry out his designs. Several plans were prepared by him for residences of note in the Southern States; and two or three places in Upper Canada, especially near Montreal, were, we believe, laid out by his own hands and stocked from his nursery grounds."<sup>21</sup>

Downing's references were, unfortunately, rather vague. As mentioned earlier, Parmentier's documented design commissions number only four (five if his botanical garden is counted). Clearly, he must have produced more designs than this, but it must be remembered that Parmentier's career as a landscape designer only extended for about five years beginning about 1826. By then, his nursery was established and he was able to leave it in the hands of his wife and daughter. At this point, he pursued design work rather aggressively, taking out advertisements in newspapers in Boston, Montréal and Kingston (Canada) and sometimes travelling to these places to meet with prospective clients.<sup>22</sup>



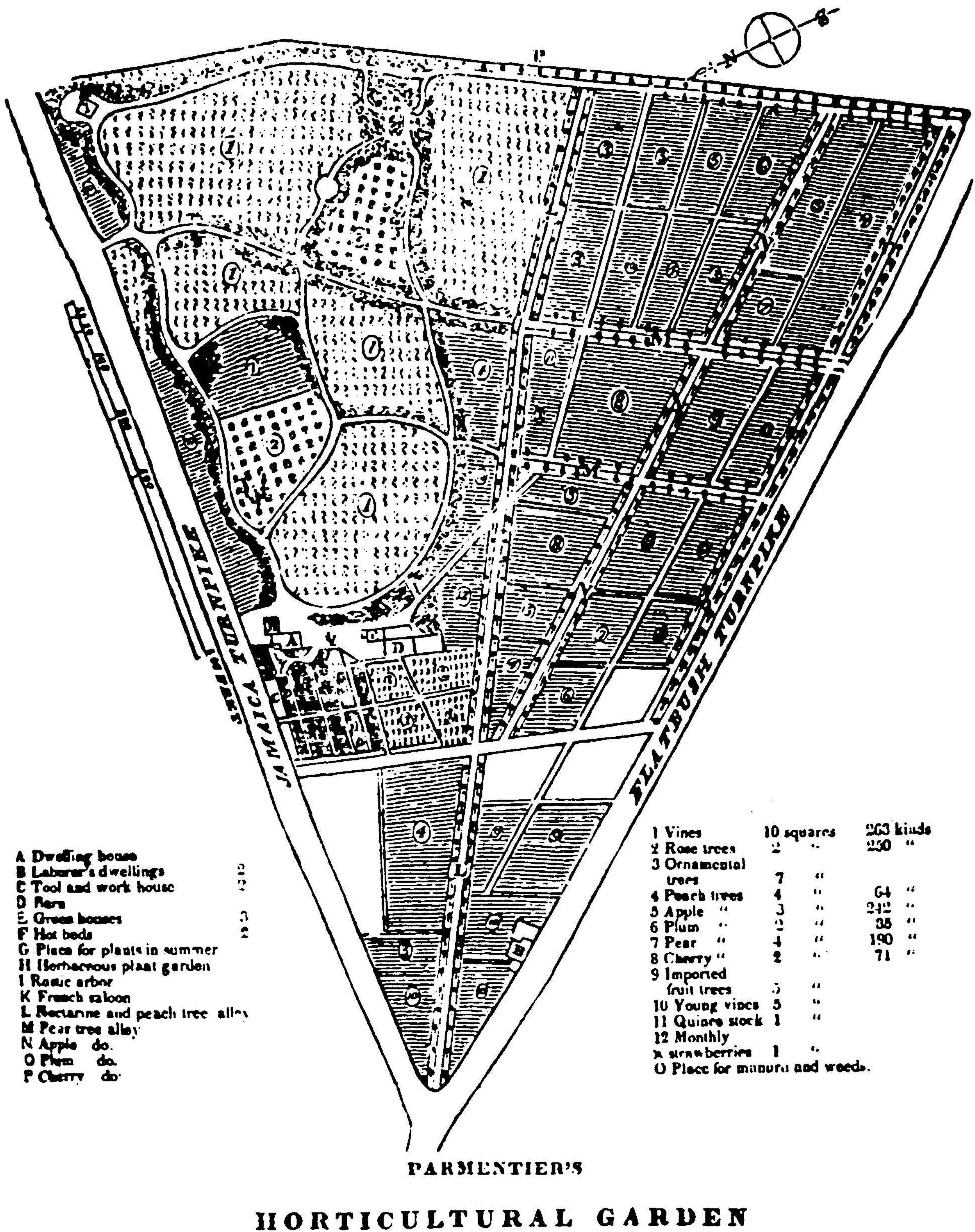


Figure 3: Plan of Parmentier's Horticultural Garden near Brooklyn. From the *New England Farmer*, 1829.



Parmentier's first documented design commission was for the estate of Elisha W. King in Pelham Manor, New York. These grounds received much praise, one writer describing them as the "happiest thing" Parmentier had executed.<sup>23</sup> Another writer said that King's estate *"...is likely to become one of the most ornamental on the East River, and will give an idea of the manner in which the Europeans embellish their country places. Plantations advantageously interspersed with ornamental and fruit trees, unite utility with agreeableness, and greatly augment the value of the ground. Mr. P. has very complaisantly shown us several other plans of gardens, which appear to us highly interesting."*<sup>24</sup>

Presumably, these were Parmentier's own plans, possibly a portfolio of his drawings referred to in an early biographical account that has since disappeared.<sup>25</sup> No illustration of the King estate has been located, and Downing does not describe it, suggesting that it may not have lasted long.

Two designs by Parmentier in Canada have recently been identified, but in Toronto rather than Montréal. These are the grounds of the University of Toronto (originally Kings College), probably begun around 1830, and the William Allan estate, "Moss Park," probably begun in 1829, neither of which is extant.<sup>26</sup> There are some parallels between the designs of Moss Park and Hyde Park, although the former occupied a much smaller site and appeared to have had more formal components in its design. Together with the David Hosack estate, this is the extent of Parmentier's known oeuvre, except for some attributed projects.

Parmentier's unquestioned masterpiece was the Hosack estate, now the Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site, in Hyde Park, NY. Dr. David Hosack was the third owner of this property on the banks of the Hudson, which in 1704 had been granted to Peter Fauconnier and three partners by Sir Edward Hyde, Lord Cornbury, then Governor of New York. In 1764, it passed to Dr. John Bard, who built a house and established a farm on the eastern part of the site. (John Bard's wife, Suzanne Valleau, had been a grand-daughter of Peter Fauconnier.) It was not until the ownership of Dr. Samuel Bard, John's son, that extensive landscape improvements were made to the western half of the property overlooking the Hudson. In

1799, Samuel Bard retired from medicine, leaving his New York City practice in the hands of his partner, Dr. David Hosack. While studying medicine at the University of Edinburgh, Samuel Bard had apparently visited gardens in England and Scotland where the new "natural" mode of landscaping had been employed. In 1764, he attempted to persuade his father to adopt this new style, made popular in England by Capability Brown, at Hyde Park. He was unfortunately unsuccessful.<sup>27</sup>

Samuel Bard had to wait 35 years before he had the opportunity to put any of the landscape principles learned in Scotland into practice, and we have only fragmentary information concerning the development of the estate under his ownership. However, Samuel Bard's decision to situate his new house on the edge of a ridge overlooking the Hudson was in itself evidence of a romantic approach to the landscape. Chosen to command panoramic views of the Hudson and the mountains beyond, the rolling meadows below, and magnificent forest trees overhanging the ridge on either side, Samuel Bard's house site was respected by all three of his successors, even though one substantial remodelling and two entirely new structures were eventually built there. That Bard cherished his Hudson River prospect is vividly illustrated in an 1806 view of the family on the terrace at Hyde Park, with the whole group focussed intently on the river view and Samuel Bard gazing at it through a telescope.<sup>28</sup>

Bard also had a garden and green house, where he raised rare plants. As President of the Dutchess County Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, Bard gave much attention to the study of soils and improved farming implements. Like many of his neighbors, he planted clover grass and raised merino sheep.<sup>29</sup> He also planted new exotic species of trees and may have introduced the huge ginkgo still flourishing on the south lawn of the estate, but he also took full advantage of the magnificent forest trees. A visitor to Hyde Park in 1829 after Hosack's purchase but before Parmentier's designs had been implemented described the views between the mansion house and the Hudson River: *"The natural scenery along the shore line, to the distance of about a quarter of a mile from the verge of the river, is highly picturesque;...On the highest summit of the bank,*



terminating nearly a quarter of a mile from the water's edge, to a height of several hundred feet above its level, is seen the celebrated belt of forest trees that extends along the whole line; between this belt and the river, the ground is broken with many knolls, open glades, and ravines, which are lined down to the water's edge with trees. The more open compartments too, are enlivened by the interspersions of clumps and single trees.<sup>30</sup>

This description might have been written today.

In 1821, Samuel Bard died, and, seven years later, Dr. David Hosack, Bard's long time friend, fellow horticultural enthusiast and former medical partner, purchased the estate from Bard's heirs. Hosack, a distinguished physician and botanist, who like Bard was a graduate of the University of Edinburgh, had established the Elgin Botanic Garden in New York in 1801, the first botanic garden in this country, located on the site of the present Rockefeller Center. Samuel Bard was also involved in this scientifically innovative but financially shaky operation. Hosack's third wife was a widow, Mrs. Magdalena Coster, whose large fortune enabled him first to purchase Hyde Park and then to develop it almost without regard for expense.<sup>31</sup>

Hosack may have intended from the beginning to have an ambitious landscape scheme, but he probably gave his attention first to the enlarging and rebuilding of Samuel Bard's house, for which task he selected Martin Thompson, formerly principal in the firm of Town and Thompson (lthiel Town). (Thompson had designed Elisha W. King's house at Pelham Manor, New York.) Hosack also built new outbuildings and barns.<sup>32</sup>

To redesign the landscape at Hyde Park, Hosack turned to André Parmentier, whom he had certainly known since at least 1825, when the latter became a member of the New York Horticultural Society.<sup>33</sup> In an important sense, the landscape designed by Parmentier for Hyde Park was not "new." There is every reason to believe that Hosack, like Bard, respected and loved the natural scenery at the site, especially its dramatic topography and magnificent trees. Relatively little was done to the wilder areas, especially near the river, and elsewhere, the landscape was designed to blend with existing features. William Wilson, the 1829 visitor cited earlier, was the first to note this, when he wrote:

*"In every direction to the east, north and south of the mansion, the ground spreads out in one wide open highly elevated and extensive plain, which at a considerable distance easterly from the house, gently descends to a gentle hollow, through which a fine mill stream, skirted with trees winds its way gradually around toward the southwesterly points of the estate, where it empties into the North River near the landing. The Doctor intends making a carriage road from the landing in a direction nearly parallel with the course of the stream, to a distance of about a quarter of a mile, where it will turn to the left and pass through part of the Park and lawn toward the mansion, affording in its course a view of the pleasure ground, green house and hot houses, etc., which are to be located to the south of the dwelling."<sup>34</sup>*

Although published and unpublished descriptions of the grounds of Hyde Park during Hosack's ownership abound, the visual record is much skimpier. Numerous drawings and at least three maps are known to have been made, and, obviously, Parmentier must have produced a plan. Dr. Hosack is also known to have been in the process of writing a monograph on the estate in 1832, which was to have been illustrated with large-format engravings from drawings by a young English-born artist, Thomas Kelah Wharton. All of this illustrative material is lost except for one second-generation map, two sketches by Wharton, one generic Currier and Ives print, a view from the estate toward the Hudson in Downing, a little sketch of a pavilion, also in Downing, and two architectural drawings of the house at the Avery Architectural Library, Columbia University.

Nevertheless, a good idea of Parmentier's plan for Hyde Park can be gained from an 1849 map of the estate (Figure 4), in spite of the fact that it dates from the early years of the Langdon ownership. This map, along with the extant contemporary prints, sketches and descriptions of the property, was used by the project team to reconstruct a period plan of the estate during the Hosack ownership. It can easily be seen that Parmentier employed such typically picturesque devices as winding paths and drives, a new curving course for Crum Elbow Creek, as well as numerous garden pavilions and structures of a type he had been familiar with in Belgium and France.



Little is known about the plants used by Parmentier, except that he incorporated many of the existing forest trees into his design. Presumably, he also used exotic plants from his Brooklyn nursery, although, since the nursery had only been established for about three years, it is unlikely that he would have had large ornamental trees available. For Kings College in Toronto he used some plants from the large, long-established Prince nursery on Long Island, and he may have done the same at Hyde Park.<sup>36</sup>

Our best single source for the appearance of Hyde Park during the Hosack era is the sketches and diaries of Thomas Kelah Wharton, the young artist who stayed with Hosack in the summer of 1832.

Wharton completed the large finished drawings from which engravings would have been made to

have illustrated Hosack's monograph, but they have been lost. The artist returned, however, in 1839 and drew the two sketches, both owned by the New York Public Library. Figure 5 shows Wharton's sketch of "Crystal Cove" on the Hudson at the southwestern boundary of the property. In the distance to the right, on the promontory known as Bard's Rock, may be seen one of two domed classical pavilions on the estate. Wharton's accounts in his diary in 1839 and the descriptions that accompany the 1839 sketches are also very helpful: *"...no expense has been spared in embellishing the splendid domain -- which contains 800 acres of richly diversified surface -- every feature of which has been made to contribute to the ornamental effect of the whole -- and to heighten the magnificence of the River scenery which it commands....Pavilions occupy prominent knolls -- the lawns, parterres, walks, and broad*

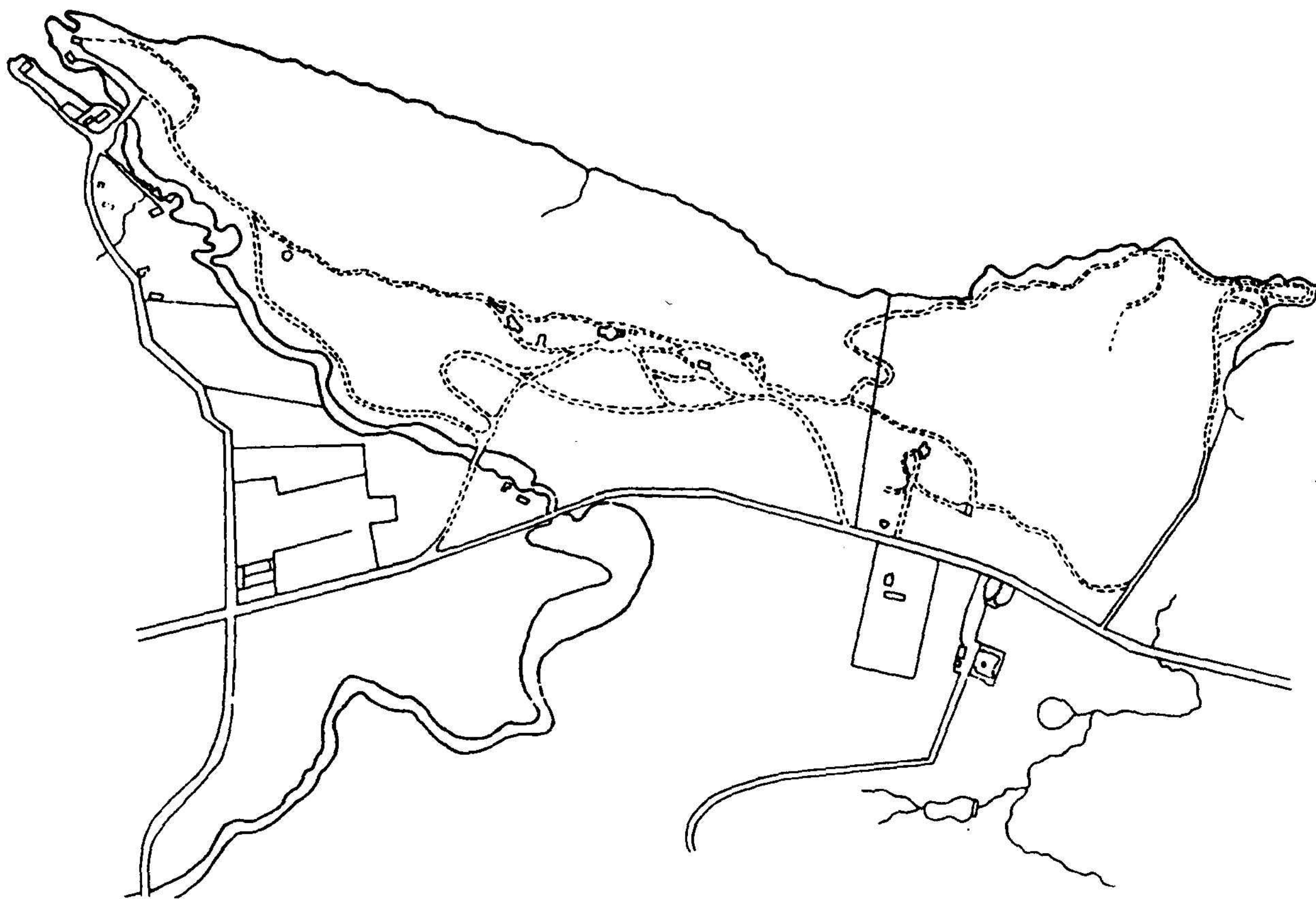


Figure 4: Lay-out of Hyde Park, 1849, showing Parmentier's Plan, with Modification of Northern Entrance Made by Walter Langdon. From a photocopy of H. T. Hackett, "Drawn from Map of Property at Hyde Park belonging to Dr. Hosack (filed October 6, 1849)." Illustrated here as traced by Rieley Associates, April 1988. (courtesy Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site)



winding carriage drives are all kept in the highest order -- and nothing can exceed the beauty of the forest groups and clumps of ornamental trees and shrubs which are disposed with the utmost skill over the whole place...<sup>36</sup>

Wharton described Euterpe Knoll, the subject of his second surviving sketch (Figure 6), as "a tasteful 'vase' of colossal proportions and dedicated to the goddess of 'Lyric Poesy.'<sup>37</sup> Wharton also described landscape features and objects that do not appear in his or anyone else's sketches: "The front lawn occupies the whole level plateau on the top of the ridge, and splendid old trees are left standing at intervals with seats scattered here and there from which you can survey at leisure and in the shade, the exquisite beauty of the river scenery below. A little further on a handsome Grecian Pavilion, roofed with a dome, occupies a raised

spot near the main walk -- and just in advance of the ridge a grassy knoll covered with tall poplars offers a pretty contrast to the heavier foliage -- it is ornamental with a bust on a pedestal, and is called, (in imitation of Rousseau) L'Isle des Peupliers."<sup>38</sup>

We know that Parmentier invited prospective clients to view his "drawings of Gardens, Rustic Bridges, Dutch, Chinese, Turkish Pavilions, Temples, Hermitages, Rotundas, etc." (presumably the lost Portfolio).<sup>39</sup> In his 1828 essay on "Landscapes and Picturesque Gardens," he recommended "the judicious use of hermitages, arbours, cottages and rotundas" to add to the effect of "picturesque gardens and ornamented farms." He continued: "An elegant rotunda should be seen from a distance, and on a hill or eminence. It should make part of the establishment of a wealthy man, as well as pagodas, turrets, and Chinese towers."<sup>40</sup> Parmentier was able to



Figure 5: "Crystal Cove, Hyde Park." Drawing by Thomas K. Wharton, 1839. (courtesy New York Public Library, Manuscripts Division)



convince Hosack to have rotundas, since both pavilions were in that style.

Although Hosack presumably drew the line at Chinese towers and pagodas, we may wonder why, in two other garden structures, he chose to honor the muse of lyric poetry and the philosopher Rousseau. The latter, however, has very clear precedents. After Jean-Jacques Rousseau fortuitously died at the home of his friend the Marquis de Girardin and was buried in his jardin anglais at Ermenonville near Paris on a poplared isle (L'Isle des Peupliers), similar monuments to Rousseau became almost a fad. They were introduced into gardens not only in France but also in Rousseau's native Geneva, Germany, and Sweden. At Beloeil in Belgium as well, there was a memorial and bust to Rousseau. In Europe, there

were many monuments and busts "in leafy, flowery, private parts of the garden to commemorate...the 'Elysée' and 'l'homme de la nature et de la vérité,'" but Hyde Park may well have had the only such monument to Rousseau in America.<sup>41</sup>

Many aspects of the landscape at Hyde Park are prefigured in Parmentier's 1828 essay. For example, he writes that the road leading to a country house should be "gently serpentine. This winding should have a reason -- that is to say -- some groups of trees should be so placed as to appear to be the cause of it." He also wrote of the need to place trees and shrubs of varying tones of green to heighten perspective effects and recommended that rows of trees should never be planted directly in front of a house.<sup>42</sup>

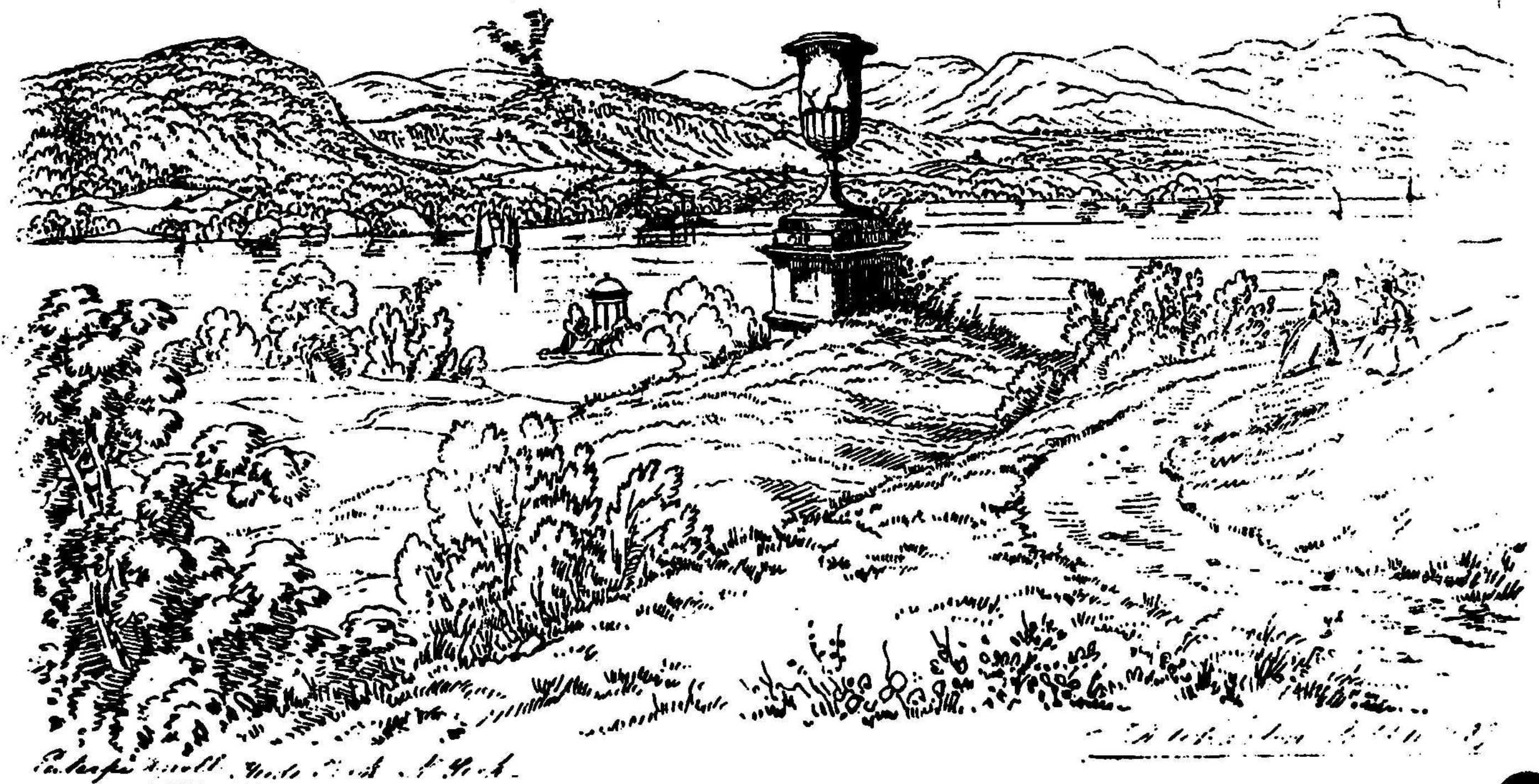


Figure 6: "Euterpe Knoll, Hyde Park." Drawing by Thomas K. Wharton, 1839. (courtesy New York Public Library, Manuscripts Division)



By carefully analyzing Wharton's two sketches and his descriptions, as well as the 1849 map illustrated in Figure 4, it is possible to piece together a fairly clear idea of how the system of pathways, scenic vistas and garden structures at the Hosack estate worked. From the house, there were two choices for perambulating the grounds, each terminating in a pavilion. The route extending south from the house followed the line of the ridge, with rustic seats scattered at intervals. From Wharton's sequence of descriptions, the Isle (Knoll) of Poplars with a bust of Rousseau seems to have been located near the southernmost pavilion close to the edge of the ridge.

Other artists visited Hyde Park during the Hosack ownership but have left no known paintings or drawings. There was also an astonishing stream of visitors to the estate. In addition to many

American visitors, Harriet Martineau and Mrs. Frances Trollope came to Hyde Park and wrote about its beauties and the graciousness of David Hosack.

André Parmentier died in 1830, and, in 1835, David Hosack died suddenly of a stroke. In 1840, John Jacob Astor purchased the main, southern part of the property for his daughter and son-in-law, Walter and Dorothea Langdon (the northern part, known later as the Sexton Tract, was sold earlier), and it stayed in the ownership of this family until 1894. Although the Langdons built a new house and a new garden, they appear to have respected Parmentier's basic layout for the grounds and continued Hosack's practice of planting ornamental trees on the south and east lawns. At least two artists, William Stanley Haseltine and Johann Hermann Carmiencke, visited



Figure 7: "Near Hyde Park, Hudson River." Drawing by William Stanley Haseltine, July 3, 1860. (courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, M. and M. Karolik Collection)



Hyde Park during the Langdon's ownership, as well as the landscape architect Charles Eliot.<sup>43</sup> Haseltine's 1860 drawing is illustrated in Figure 7.

More pronounced changes were made by the next owner, Frederick W. Vanderbilt, who built a new mansion house and gate houses, designed by McKim, Mead and White, as well as new bridges, and, in addition, had three successive landscape architectural firms redesign the walled garden established by the Langdons. Vanderbilt also resurfaced the roads and extended the oval in front of the eastern facade.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, he too respected Parmentier's core plan, as has the National Park Service, owner since 1935. Today, the scenic vistas and general landscape quality planned by Parmentier are still very evident.

#### **Conclusion: Parmentier's Influence in the United States**

André Parmentier's influence on American landscape design of the mid-19th century was extraordinary considering his brief career in this country and the relatively small number of his designs (even taking into consideration that there are certainly others that have not yet been identified). In 1841, in his *Treatise*, Downing wrote of Hyde Park that it "...has been justly celebrated as one of the finest specimens of the modern style of Landscape Gardening in America. Nature has, indeed, done much for this place as the grounds are finely varied, beautifully watered by a lively stream, and the views are inexpressibly striking from the neighborhood of the house itself, including, as they do, the noble Hudson for sixty miles in its course, through rich valleys and bold mountains. But the efforts of art are not unworthy so rare a locality; and while the native woods, and beautifully undulating surface, are preserved in their original state, the pleasure-grounds, roads, walks, drives and new plantations, have been laid out in such a judicious manner as to heighten the charms of nature. Large and costly hot-houses were erected by Dr. Hosack, with also entrance lodges at two points on the estate, a fine bridge over the stream, and numerous pavilions and seats commanding extensive prospects; in short, nothing was spared to render this a complete residence. The park, which at one time contained some fine deer, afforded a delightful drive within itself, as the whole estate numbered about seven hundred acres."<sup>45</sup>

Downing himself became the undisputed arbiter of American landscape taste in the mid-19th century and the leading proponent of the picturesque style (which he sometimes referred to as the "natural" or "modern" style). Even after his death in 1852, his books went through multiple editions. Downing's unreserved praise of Parmentier assured the designer and Hyde Park, his *chef d'oeuvre*, lasting fame.

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#### **Acknowledgements**

The papers of the late Charles Van Ravenswaay, including extensive notes and a draft of a book on Parmentier, have been very helpful in preparing this article. The Van Ravenswaay papers are located at the Western Historical Manuscripts Collection, University of Missouri, Columbia.

I am also most grateful to the following individuals for generous assistance with this project: Pascale Glineur of Baudour, Belgium; Monique Lehner of Hingham, Massachusetts; and Pleasance Crawford and Stephen Otto, both of Toronto, Canada; as well as to my colleagues on the Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site Cultural Landscape Report: Patricia M. O'Donnell, Charles A. Birnbaum and Barbara Wilson.

#### **End Notes**

1. A. J. Downing. *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, Adapted to North America* (New York: A. O. Moore & Co., 1859), p. 25.

The section on Parmentier appears in all editions of Downing's *Treatise*, including the first (1841) edition.

2. Ibid.

3. In addition to Downing, the principal published sources for Parmentier are: Obituary, *New York Evening Post*, Thursday, December 2, 1830, 2; James Gore King, "Andrew Parmentier," *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: 1944), Vol. XXI (Supplement One), pp. 593-594; Thomas F. Meehan, "Andrew Parmentier, Horticulturist, and His Daughter, Madame Bayer," United States Catholic Historical Society, *Historical Records and Studies* (New York: 1903), Vol. III, Part I, pp. 440-454; U. P. Hedrick, *A History of Horticulture in America to 1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp. 225-228; and Sarah P. Stetson, "André Parmentier: Little-Known Pioneer in American Landscape Architecture," *Landscape Architecture*, Vol. XXXIX, no. 4 (July 1949), pp. 184-186.

It is probable that any central Parmentier archive of drawings, personal papers or professional records has been lost. Neither



Dr. Van Ravenswaay nor I was able to locate such papers, despite extensive searches. The two Canadian projects are recent discoveries by Toronto scholars Pleasance Crawford and Stephen Otto. It is still possible that further local research may reveal additional Parmentier projects, perhaps some still extant.

There are interesting parallels between the lives of Parmentier and the French botanist/nurseryman Philippe Stanislaus Noisette (7-1835). Noisette emigrated to Haiti, presumably at the time of the French Revolution, married a Haitian woman, and, in 1793 or 1794, relocated to Charleston, South Carolina. In Charleston, he established a nursery specializing in roses. Noisette, however, is not known to have designed any landscapes. See Liz Druitt, "Legacy of a Botanist," *Magnolia: Bulletin of the Southern Garden History Society*, Vol. IX, no. 1 (Summer/Fall 1992), pp. 5-7, 16.

4. Charles Van Ravenswaay, "André Parmentier: America's First Professional Landscape Gardener," Draft Manuscript dated August 26, 1989 and located in the Charles Van Ravenswaay Collection, Western Historical Manuscripts Collection, University of Missouri, Columbia, Chapter I, "The Parmentiers of Enghien."

Antoine-Augustin Parmentier, who is said to have introduced the use of the potato as a food into France, came from another branch of the family.

5. Yves Delannoy, "Enghien," *Salon de la Rose a Enghien*, July 1989, p. 30.

6. Van Ravenswaay, "André Parmentier," Chapter I.

7. Delannoy, "Enghien," p. 30.

8. Ibid.

9. See Dora Wiebenson, *The Picturesque Garden in France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978) and William Howard Adams, *The French Garden, 1500-1800* (New York: George Braziller, 1979), Chapter V, pp. 103-138.

10. René Pechere, "Les Glorieux Jardins d'Enghien au XVIIIe Siecle," *La Maison d'Hier et d'Aujourd'hui*, nd.

The designer of Enghien, Pere Charles d'Arenberg, was an architect and designed buildings for his Order.

11. Ibid., pp. 5-9.

12. René Pechere, *Parcs et Jardins de Belgique* (Rossel, 1987), p. 90.

As Pechere rightly points out, the general plan of Enghien is somewhat incoherent and doesn't hang together well.

13. Ibid.

14. Prince Charles-Joseph de Ligne, *Coup d'Oeil at Beloeil and a Great Number of European Gardens*, translated and edited by Basil Gut (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1991). This recent translation is based on the 1795 edition of Ligne's book.

15. Delannoy, "Enghien," p. 30. Delannoy inaccurately states that Parmentier was responsible for the Brooklyn Botanical Garden. Van Ravenswaay, "André Parmentier," Chapter I. The cause of Parmentier's desperate financial situation has not been determined. He obviously took money and/or other assets out of Belgium, since he had sufficient capital to buy the land for his nursery and get it well established.

16. André Parmentier, Letter to the Editor and List of Pears (translated from the French), *New England Farmer*, Vol. V, no. 16 (November 10, 1826), pp. 121-122. This letter lists 197 pears of Flanders from Joseph Parmentier's nursery most of which were also available from André Parmentier's nursery in Brooklyn.

André Parmentier, "Vines," (from the *New York Daily Advertiser*), *New England Farmer*, Vol. V, no. 32 (March 2, 1827), p. 254. This brief article is about the hardiness of French grape vines in the climate of the northeastern United States and refers to a printed list of 24 species Parmentier has sold.

17. "The Grape" (from the *New England Enquirer*), *New England Farmer*, Vol. V, no. 16 (November 10, 1826), p. 124; "Parmentier's Garden in Holland," *New-York Farmer and Horticultural Repository*, Vol. II, no. 7 (July 1829), pp. 173-174.

18. (A. Parmentier), *Periodical Catalogue of Fruit and Ornamental Trees and Shrubs, Greenhouse Plants, etc.* published as a supplement to the *New England Farmer*, Vol. VI, no. 52, July 18, 1828.

19. Henry R. Stiles, *A History of the City of Brooklyn* (Brooklyn, New York, 1869), Vol. II, p. 174.

20. Downing, *Landscape Gardening*, pp. 24-25.

21. Ibid.

22. Information on Parmentier's advertisements in the Montréal and Kingston newspapers is courtesy of Pleasance Crawford, Toronto. The advertisements in the Kingston newspapers were for nursery stock only and did not mention Parmentier's design service nor his presence in the city.

23. "Ornamental Grounds," *New England Farmer*, Vol. V, (March 9, 1827).

24. Ed., *New York Farmer* (Samuel Fleet), "Rural Scenery: Landscape and Picturesque Gardens," *New England Farmer*, Vol. 6, no. 24 (January 4, 1828), p. 187.

25. Meehan "Andrew Parmentier," p. 442. Neither Charles Van Ravenswaay nor I were able to find the portfolio, which still existed in 1903 when Meehan wrote.

26. Personal Communications, Pleasance Crawford, Toronto, Canada, March-April, 1993.

27. Patricia M. O'Donnell and Charles A. Birnbaum, *Historic Landscape Architects, LANDSCAPES*, Westport, CT and Cynthia Zaitzevsky, Ph.D., Historian, Cynthia Zaitzevsky Associates, Brookline, MA., *Cultural Landscape Report for the Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site, Volume I: Site History, Existing*



*Conditions and Analysis*, Cultural Landscape Publications Series #1, Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site, Hyde Park, New York, Division of Cultural Resource Management, North Atlantic Regional Office, National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1993), Chapter I, The Bard Ownership (1764-1821), pp. 5-14.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 14-18.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-23.

30. William Wilson, "Notice of the Gardens at Albany and of Dr. Hosack's Estate at Hyde Park," *New-York Farmer and Horticultural Repository*, Vol. 2, no. 6 (June 1829), p. 149.

31. O'Donnell, Birnbaum and Zaitzevsky, *Cultural Landscape Report for the Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site*, Volume I: Chapter III, The Hosack Ownership (1828-1835), p. 29.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 29-33.

33. Some secondary sources state that Hosack offered Parmentier the superintendency of the Elgin Botanical Gardens soon after his arrival in 1824, but there has been no documentation to confirm this. It seems unlikely since the Botanical Gardens were no longer an active concern at this date.

34. William Wilson, "Notice. . . of Dr. Hosack's Estate, Hyde Park," *New-York Farmer and Horticultural Repository*, (June 1829), p. 149. The North River is an early name for the Hudson.

35. The source of the saplings and trees at Moss Park has not been identified. The grounds at Moss Park included a copper or purple beech the source of which is also unknown. (Personal communications, Pleasance Crawford, Toronto, Canada, March-April and October 1993.)

36. Thomas K. Wharton, *Diary*, New York Public Library, Manuscript Division, Entries, July 1832.

For Wharton, see I. N. Phelps Stokes, *American Historical Prints* (New York: New York Public Library, 1933), pp. 142-143; George C. Groce and David H. Wallace, *The New-York Historical Society's Dictionary of Artists in America 1564-1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), pp. 677-678; and National Academy of Design, *Exhibition Record*, Vol. II, p. 195,

37. *Ibid.*, 1839.

38. *Ibid.*, Entries, July 1832.

39. Van Ravenswaay, "André Parmentier," Chapter III. The source of the quotation is not given.

40. André Parmentier, "Landscapes and Picturesque Gardens," In Thomas G. Fessenden, *The New American Gardener* (Boston: J. B. Russell, 1828), pp. 185-187.

41. Christopher Thacker, *The History of Gardens* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1979), p. 224.

The Rousseau monument at Beloeil is illustrated in Ligne, *Coup d'Oeil at Beloeil* (1991 edition), Figure 47, p. 83.

42. Parmentier, "Landscapes and Picturesque Gardens," pp. 185-186.

43. Charles Eliot, "Some Old American Country Seats. VI. -- Hyde Park," *Garden and Forest*, Vol. III, no. 115 (May 7, 1890), p. 222. The article was reprinted in (Charles W. Eliot), *Charles Eliot: Landscape Architect* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1903), pp. 256-260.

44. O'Donnell, Birnbaum and Zaitzevsky, *Cultural Landscape Report for the Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site*, Chapter III, "The Langdon Ownership (1840-1894)," pp. 63-91, and Chapter V, "The Vanderbilt Ownership (1895-1938)," pp. 105-182.

45. Downing, *Treatise* (New York and London: Wiley & Putnam, 1841), p. 22.



## **Cultural Landscape Analysis: The Vanderbilt Estate at Hyde Park**

Patricia M. O'Donnell

The field of cultural landscape preservation is advancing rapidly with a more detailed and quantifiable planning process emerging. This paper focuses on the analysis process for a complex landscape at four different scales: the overall property of 700 acres; the estate grounds of 211 acres; the core area of about 60 acres and the formal garden of about two acres. Analysis, the key to developing appropriate treatments, is not often the subject of such a paper. The approach and level of detail presented here applies recent work in the description of the character-defining features of a cultural landscape<sup>1</sup>. These nine features are used to assess the integrity of the landscape--the authenticity of its historic identity.

The analysis process applied here is relevant not only to landscape preservation, but has parallels in related preservation disciplines. The preservation planning for the Vanderbilt property follows a series of six steps: (1) research of the historical record for the property and broader research to establish an historical context; (2) inventory of the existing conditions; (3) analysis of the character-defining features of the landscape over time and the resulting selection of a period of significance and determination of integrity; (4) exploration of treatment alternatives and selection of treatments; (5) development of management guidance to preserve character-defining features and historic fabric; and (6) interpretative planning.

This paper addresses step three, analysis in detail, with steps one and two providing a framework for understanding the analysis. The project team,<sup>2</sup> worked with the National Park Service (NPS) North Atlantic Region, Cultural Landscape Program, and the Vanderbilt NPS staff. The project approach addressed the long historic record and the varying scales of character-defining elements in the first three planning steps. The documentation of history and existing conditions provided a basis for an analysis of continuity and change and to statements of integrity, significance, and historic context. Thirty drawings and nearly two hundred historic and contemporary illustrations augment the text. A selection illustrates this paper and portions it are drawn from the report.

The Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site (VMNHS) is located on the Hudson River in the town of Hyde Park, New York. Under the stewardship of the NPS since 1941 it is one of a small group of substantially intact early nineteenth century estates in this region.<sup>3</sup> The designed landscape of VMNHS was developed between 1764 and 1938 under a succession of owners. Dr. Samuel Bard, owner from 1799 to 1821, and Dr. David Hosack, owner from 1828 to 1835, were co-founders of the Elgin Botanical Garden in New York City, the first public botanical garden in the United States and were knowledgeable horticulturists. Dr. David Hosack commissioned André Parmentier, Belgian landscape gardener and nurseryman, to develop the landscape at Hyde Park. The character of the landscape established with this design remains intact.

As an orientation to the property, the Existing VMNHS Key Map, shown as Figure 1, portrays the current conditions and acts as a companion to each of the property plans developed for earlier owner periods. It portrays the area of the property now in NPS stewardship which no longer includes the former farm lands on the east side of Route 9. During the Bard, Hosack, Langdon and Vanderbilt periods, the farm lands to the west of the Albany Post Road allowed the property to function as a self-sufficient complex. Other plans included herein show the farm lands as well as the estate.

### **Historical Research**

The first task of the project was to investigate and reveal the historic appearance and content of the property from the initial owner development of the land through the National Park Service stewardship. Historian Cynthia Zaitzevsky led the research effort. The relevant dates and property owners for each period are: 1764-1799, Dr. John Bard and 1799-1821, Dr. Samuel Bard; 1828-1835, Dr. David Hosack with André Parmentier as landscape designer; 1840-1852, Walter S. and Dorothea Langdon, 1852-1895, Walter Langdon, Jr.; 1895-1938, Frederick W. and Louise Vanderbilt; and 1940-to present, National Park Service stewardship.

These consecutive eras of the landscape history were exhaustively documented although for some eras research findings were less revealing than others. Written and graphic primary and secondary sources were consulted during the research in



local, regional and distant archives. For the pre-photographic ownerships, paintings, drawings and prints, and published and unpublished descriptions were sought out. The Bard and Hosack eras use written quotations as well. For example, during the Hosack era a number of visitors to the property wrote about the landscape in detail, offering a substitute for the limited visual record from 1760s to the 1880s. For the important Hosack/Parmentier period, two sketches of areas of the property were found. As well as focusing on the specific property design for this period, the career and influence of Parmentier was investigated to place this work in the context of his career cannon. The sketch entitled "Euterpe Knoll, Hyde Park, N. York, Sept. 11, 1839," by Thomas K. Wharton (page --) led to the rediscovery of stone steps and grading elements of the path shown in this view.<sup>4</sup> In this project, as in previous work, the team found

that proceeding with historic research and field survey work simultaneously was a complimentary process. Preliminary research findings direct field survey efforts to specific areas where elements appear to be lost while the field survey uncovers features or elements that may shed light on obtuse historic research findings.

#### Period of Significance and Historic Context

The period of significance for a cultural landscape is the time when it attained historic importance: by association with persons or events; as a distinctive type, period, method of construction; as the work of a master; for possessing high artistic value; or for the potential to yield information important in prehistory or history.<sup>5</sup> In cultural landscapes that also contain structures the period of significance for the landscape and structures may have different periods. At the Vanderbilt property the structures

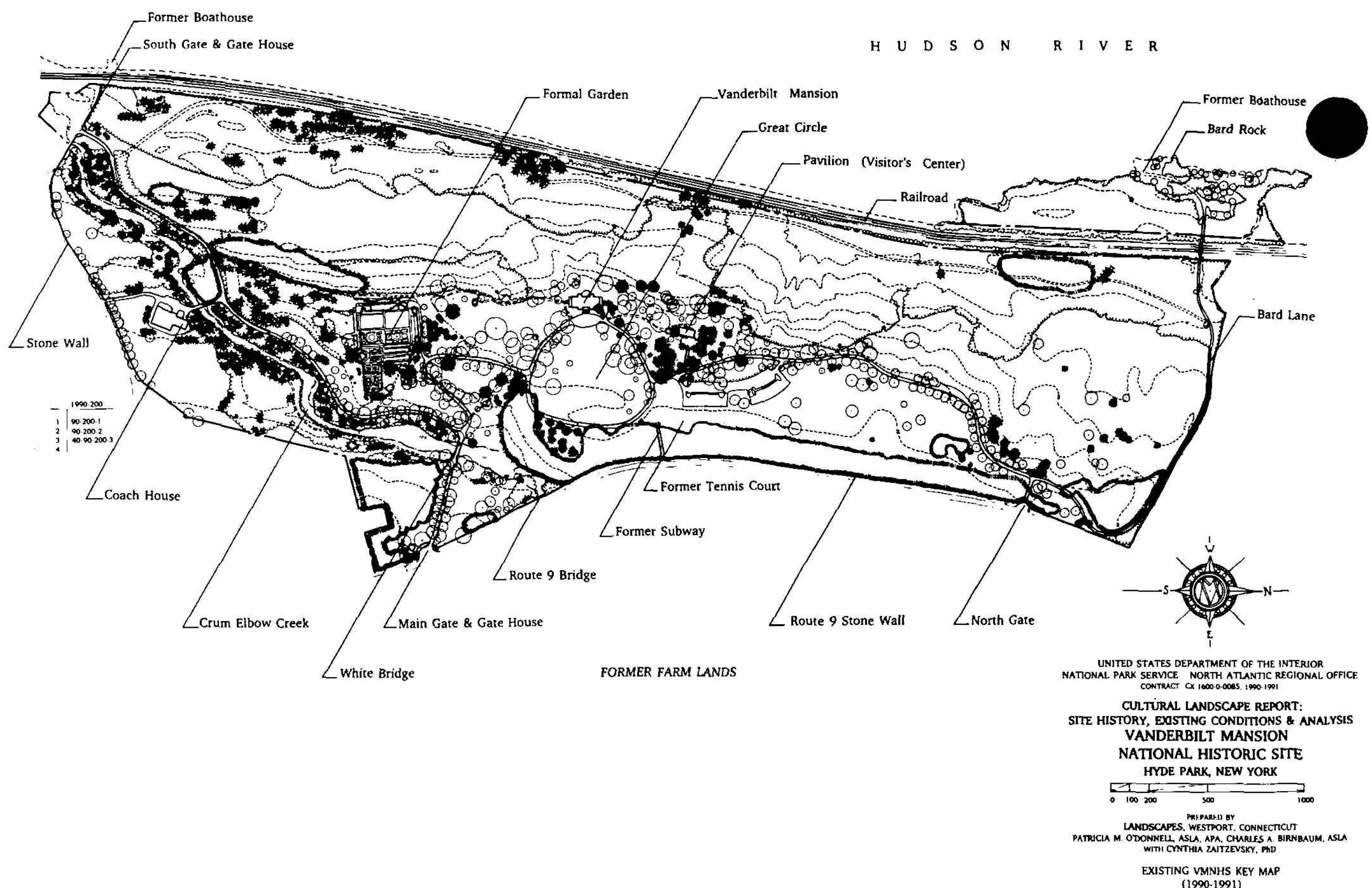


Figure 1: The existing conditions of the designed historic landscape of VMNHS showing the natural and built elements of the landscape in detail with identifying labels. (courtesy LANDSCAPES)



date primarily to the 1895 to 1905 construction under Frederick W. Vanderbilt. However, the historic research findings revealed that the circulation and spatial organization of the landscape was established during the first two ownerships, Bard and Hosack, especially around 1830 with the influence of André Parmentier. While the presentation of the Vanderbilt Mansion targets the peak years around 1917 and the Vanderbilt residency in general from 1895 to 1938, the landscape represents a pattern established in the early nineteenth century that was added to by subsequent owners with a period of significance beginning in 1829 and extending through 1938. Therefore, the periods of significance of the structures and landscape are quite different for this property.

Establishing historic context, which is currently lacking for many historic landscape types, was also a component of the planning process. Prominent estates with notable landscapes, developed along the Hudson River in the first half of the nineteenth century were considered the context for this landscape with its 1830s design imprint from Hosack/Parmentier of the early picturesque style of landscape design drawn from European sources. André Parmentier, a Belgian landscape gardener and nurseryman active from 1824 to 1830 in the United States, was a recognized exponent of this style who was cited in contemporary literature. The Hosack-Parmentier landscape is a leading example of an early picturesque style<sup>6</sup> of landscape design introduced from Europe and was popular in the United States between ca. 1825 and the Civil War, when it was gradually supplanted by Victorian and gardenesque styles of landscape development. A limited number of early picturesque style estate landscapes were developed during this thirty year period. The picturesque style was particularly suited to the naturally romantic scenery of the Hudson River Valley. This region became the part of the nation where picturesquely landscaped estates and cottage grounds were concentrated.

A. J. Downing included Hyde Park as the first of nine estates he described in the "Historical Notices" section of first edition of *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscaping* (1841). Later editions expanded this section to thirty-nine properties, often in the picturesque style. These were reviewed as the primary context for Hyde Park. Today, most of these are entirely lost, partially

remaining or overlaid with later designs or elements, making the essentially intact Hyde Park estate landscape all the more significant as an extant example of the early picturesque.

#### Developing Graphic Documentation

In the report, the property, including the estate and farm lands, is described in a written and graphic record. For each era, detailed text is accompanied by historic graphic documents and newly developed plan graphics. These exhibits synthesize various period sources and were developed at three scales. The overall property was portrayed on Owner Period Property Plans showing the estate and farm lands area,  $\pm$  700 acres. Estate Plans included the 211 property on the west side of the Albany Post Road. Core Area Plans showed the  $\pm$  55 acre area of the landscape sequence from the Main Entry Gate to the Great Circle.

In the creation of these drawings, speculation was avoided and interpretations were made with utmost care. Each exhibit generally portrays the time frame within the owner period for which the greatest level of information was known. Features known to exist from earlier and later years during a single residency were also shown for earlier, less well-documented periods.

Derived from historic surveys, land records and other maps, these drawings show the development of the property from the Bard to the Vanderbilt periods (1764 to 1938), as a sequential graphic record, in which scales and locations of features and elements are consistent to their location. This consistency of overlay requires judgement by the professional as these layers rarely overlay exactly. The professional, however, must derive from historic and field research, when elements are actually in the same location and show them as such. In the converse, when elements have truly shifted an attempt to account for and show that shift must be made.

The exhibits for later periods, from 1895 to 1991, illustrate the extensive detail the historic documentation and the field reconnaissance garnered. Three sets of plans, dating from the 1895 to 1905 Vanderbilt construction period, from 1938 to 1941 transition period from Vanderbilt ownership to NPS stewardship and the existing conditions plans dating 1990 to 1991, portray the 211-acre estate and the 55 acre core area. They



reveal the physical form and composition of the landscape at critical points in time providing a hundred year record of continuity and change. All plans were referenced with sources.

#### **Existing Conditions Inventory**

The field survey process and findings, in text and plans, records the current conditions as a tangible basis for understanding the site and its history. A series of twentieth century maps and aerial photographs contributed to the field work and the subsequent development of exhibits.

The nature of the landscape should influence the manner of recording in any cultural landscape project. As a better comprehension of the landscape is developed through the historic research findings and the field investigation, better ways to explore the resource may arise. For VMNHS the initial project intent was to investigate two detailed areas of the landscape: the area around the Mansion, including foundation plantings and the Great Circle, and the area within the walls of the Formal Garden. Once the field work was engaged the characteristics of the Vanderbilt landscape were better understood. Source drawings for much of this area, with the exception of the Main Entrance Drive, included individual tree names and locations for three times in the 20th Century: 1901, 1940 and 1965. These drawings and the site condition changed the approach altering the scale and content of the detail areas to be studied. The revised approach encompassed a larger area, using a 1" = 80' scale rather than the two smaller areas at 1" = 20'. This larger area was the Core Area--a cohesive and important sequence from the Main Entrance drive, crossing White Bridge, proceeding along the serpentine drive, to the Great Circle and Mansion area, and around to the Pavilion. The South Lawn, facades and lawn areas around the Mansion and the landscape surrounding the Pavilion are all included. The broad open lawns of this landscape with an impressive collection of trees spaced singly, in clusters, and in formal rows, were determined to be a character-defining feature that contributes to the entire property's historic significance also expressing the chronological layering of the property through sequential designers and owners. In this way the project team allowed the cultural landscape to reveal its nature and responded to it altering the project scope as necessary.

Intensive field work was conducted in the fall of 1990, with additions and revisions continuing through the 1991-92. Circulation systems, structures and vegetation were recorded. Individual trees were field-identified, updating the 1940 and 1965 NPS tree surveys. The field survey of the 211 acre estate and, at a finer level of detail for the core area, are recorded on three exhibits with a supporting source list on the fourth. These plans followed the format and symbol key used for earlier eras. Again period maps and current conditions did not precisely match. In Core Area mapping extensive time and effort was directed to analyzing and adjusting the positions of known trees to overlay with precision. This effort was invaluable to the analysis steps that sought to make detailed comparisons of historic and contemporary vegetation.

#### **Cultural Landscape Analysis**

Each preceding step builds a record and forms a basis for the analysis process. Research findings indicate that the design of this estate as an early picturesque landscape focuses on the Hosack-Parmentier period (1828 to 1835), as the most important period of landscape development. The subsequent Langdon and Vanderbilt ownerships retained this early imprint while adding elements that also contribute to the significance of the landscape. The character-defining features<sup>7</sup> of topography, vegetation, natural systems, circulation, landscape structures, site furnishings and objects, water features, spatial relationships, siting of major buildings, and surroundings organize the analysis process to explore the property owner periods. The character-defining features that can be portrayed graphically for this project at the scales used for property mapping are vegetation massing, circulation, landscape structures, spatial relationships and building siting.

#### **1. Property Analysis**

The analysis begins at the overall property scale of some 700 acres. Figure 2, **Property Period Plans Comparison (1764-1991)** simply juxtaposes each period plan for visual comparison to each other. A study of these images will indicate changes over time. A critical one is the Hosack addition of a small triangle of land south of Crum Elbow Creek along the Albany Post road. This addition provided for the Hosack-Parmentier entry drive, that drops down to Crum Elbow Creek and winds up the grade



toward the Mansion through a picturesque landscape. Another notable change is the Garden organization that begins in the Langdon era and expands through the Vanderbilt ownership. The continuity of the Mansion position through every ownership is also an important point. The overall organization of the property can be visually compared for the overall property boundary, circulation, structures and spatial organization in this exhibit.

This simple comparison is augmented in a chronological sequence of four exhibits annotated to show the remaining elements of each previous ownership. The Late Vanderbilt Property (1938-1941) Analysis Remaining Bard/Hosack/Langdon is shown in Figure 3, as an example. This graphic portrayal indicates the continuity of circulation, topography, spatial relationships, building siting,

property boundaries, landscape structures and minor buildings through the private ownership of the property. The overall property scale at which this information is portrayed supports an understanding of the broader organization of the landscape while additional elements a finer grain of detail, must be explored at smaller scales.

## 2. Estate Analysis

The next unit of investigation is the estate scale. This 211 acre parcel was the focus of landscape design efforts over time and remains as a public site today. Figure 4, Estate Composite Analysis 1895-1905/1938-1941/1990-1991 compares the estate acreage in three periods, early Vanderbilt, late Vanderbilt and existing conditions at a more detailed scale. Figure 4 juxtaposes three period plans to compare character-defining features of circulation/topography, vegetation/natural systems,

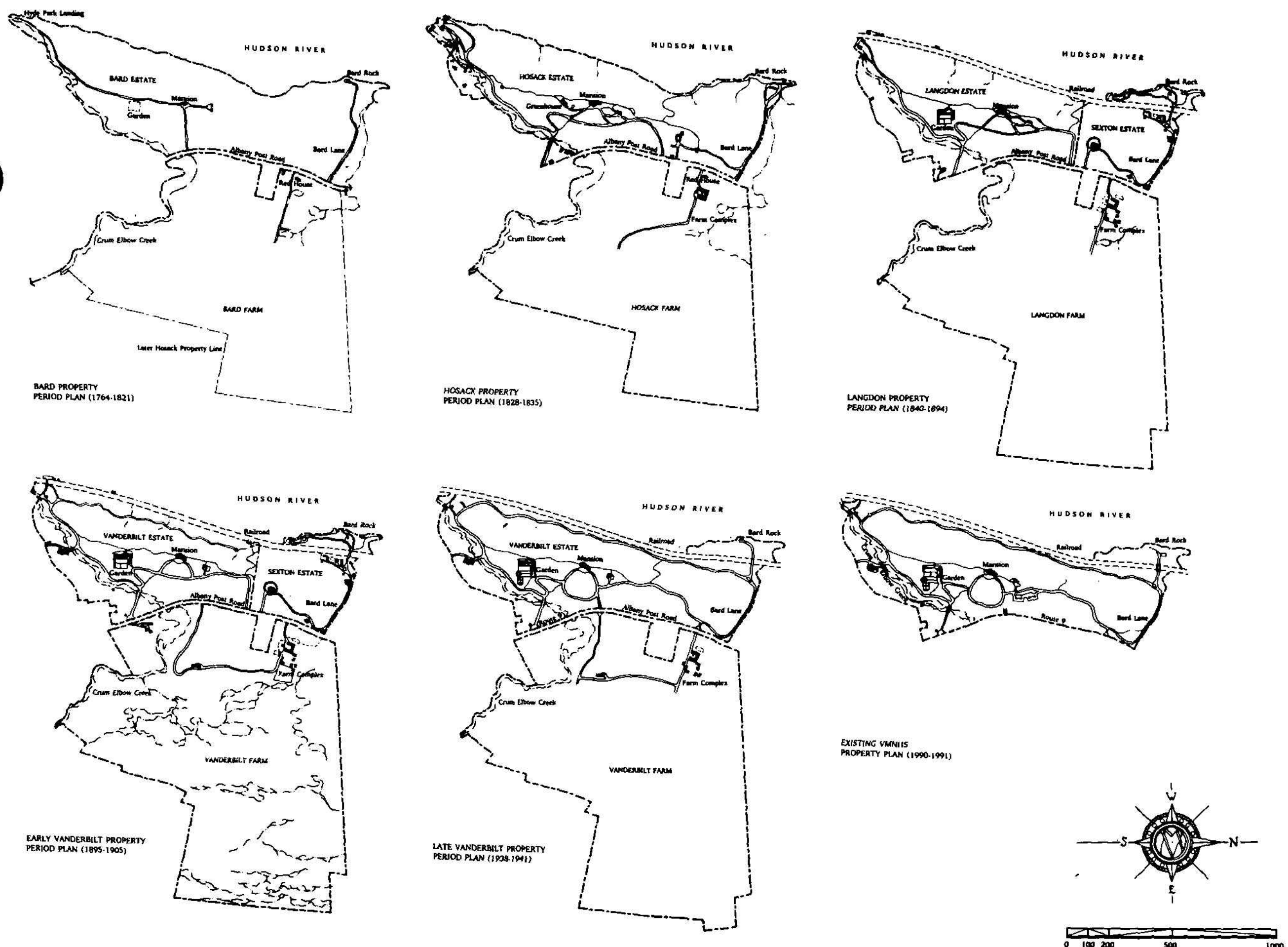


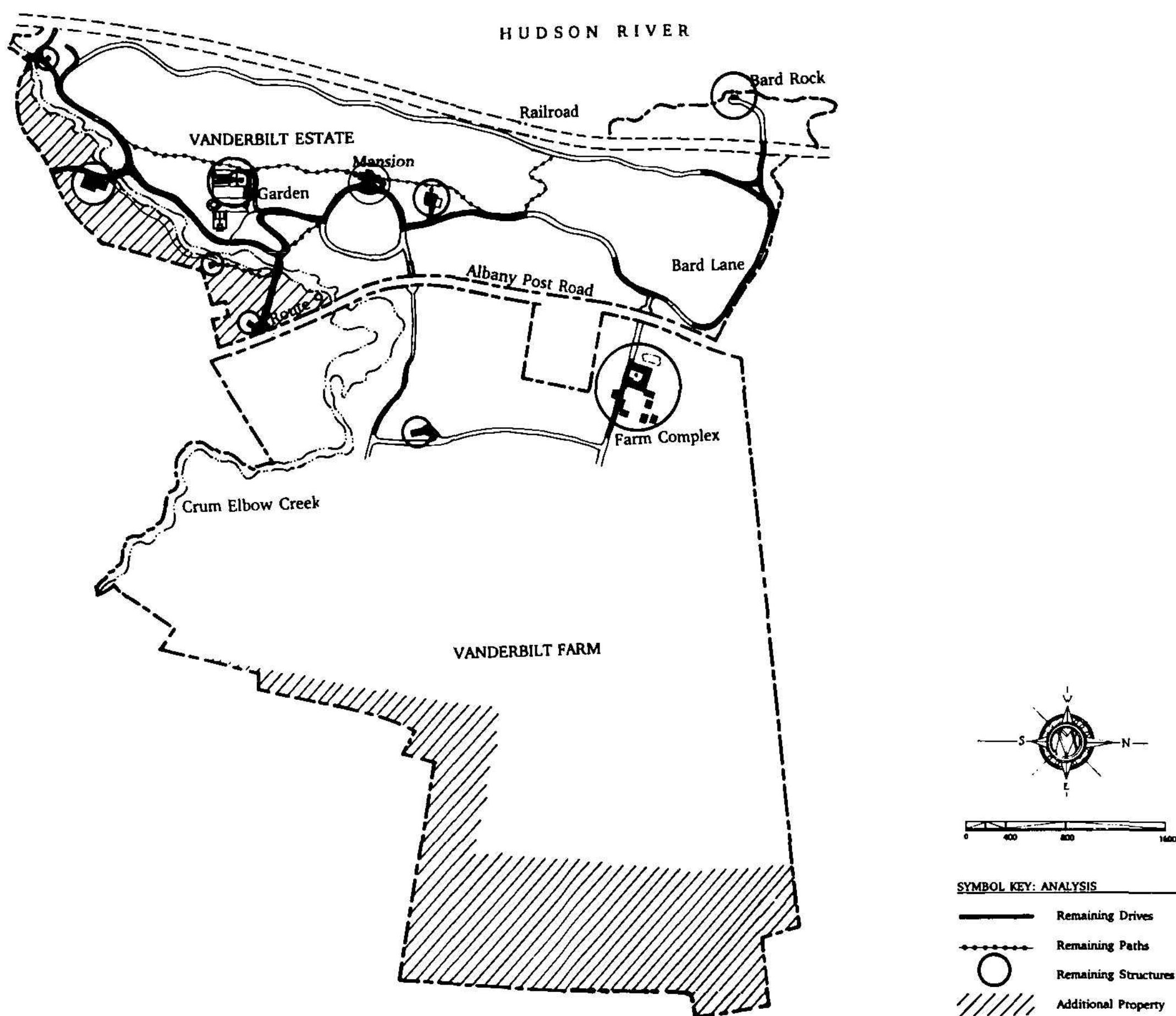
Figure 2: Property Period Plans Comparison (1764-1991) shows the six ownerships and side-by-side as a simple visual comparison of the evolution of the property boundary, circulation, structures and water features from 1764 to 1991. (courtesy LANDSCAPES)



spatial relationships/siting of buildings, and landscape structures/minor buildings/site furnishings. The remaining Hosack drives and paths are shown for each era. Vanderbilt drives, structures, entrances and perimeter wall are highlighted. To gain an understanding of the spatial configuration of the overall site as it relates to dense plantings, the woodlands and conifer groves are highlighted. The few lost Vanderbilt elements--the Tennis Court, Greenhouses and Subway--are boxed on the 1990-1991 plan. On the existing conditions plan the additions made by the National Park Service are distinguished from those of the historic periods. This exhibit, combines three periods of the historic estate landscape, to highlight both the continuity and change at the estate scale and provides a basis for a discussion of the Core Area landscape.

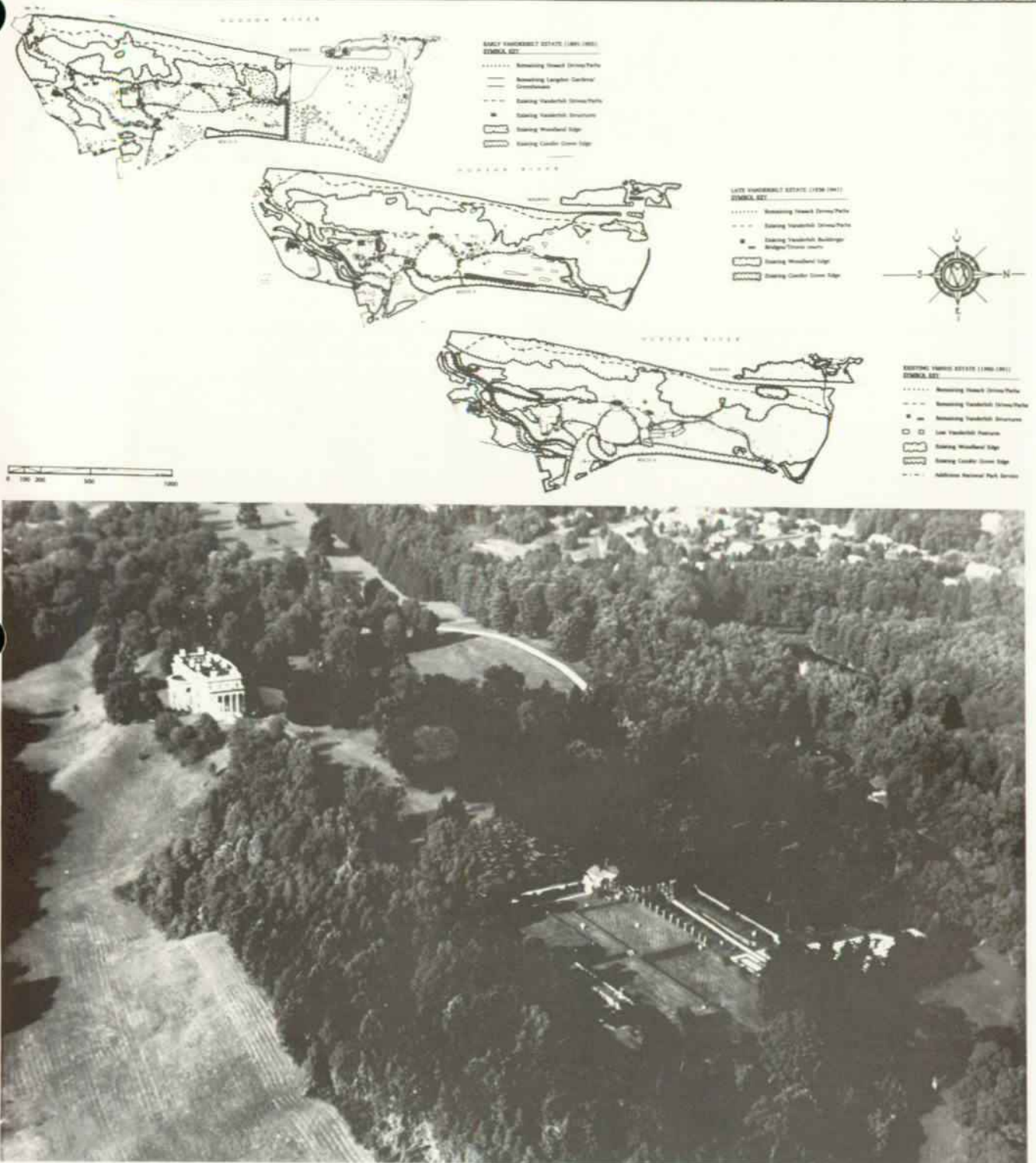
This triple image drawing was coupled with more than a dozen historic and contemporary photographs. These views extend the plan comparison to include images of landscape change. For example the discussion of vegetation addresses the shifting woodland/meadow relationships. The changes in the location of woodlands and conifer groves can be studied in this exhibit. Variations in woodland-meadow relationships alter the spatial organization and visual relationships of the landscape. In general, the areas covered by woodlands and conifer groves increase over time. The edges of these dense plantings shape the visual relationships of the landscape.

Historic photographs from the early NPS era and the 1938 real estate movie indicate a more refined treatment of the Woodland Edge than presently



**Figure 3: Late Vanderbilt Property (1938-1941) Analysis Remaining Bard/Hosack/Langdon, annotated in the analysis process to show the remaining drives, paths and structures and the additions of property from earlier owner periods. (courtesy LANDSCAPES)**





Figures 4 and 5: The 211 acre estate in three periods: 1895-1905, 1938-41 and 1990-91, with specific elements highlighted for comparison: remaining Hosack and Vanderbilt drives and paths; remaining Vanderbilt structures; and existing conifer and woodland edges, with NPS additions and lost Vanderbilt features shown on the 1990-1991. The placement and annotation of these three estate period records allows for detailed evaluations of these character-defining features. (courtesy LANDSCAPES) The delineation of woodland and lawn turf areas is clear in this aerial view, which shows the sinuous edge of the woodland wrapping around individual tree canopies. Today, volunteer trees have grown in the woodland and turf transition zone, and current machine mowing practices flatten and obscure the earlier distinct forms. (courtesy VMNHS)



exists. An oblique aerial view from the late Vanderbilt period reveals the distinct canopies of mature trees against a mown meadow edge (See Figure 5). During the Vanderbilt period these Lower Meadows were maintained by frequent mowing, probably by machine on gentle slopes and by hand on steeper portions. The sinuous Vanderbilt era forms that outlined individual tree canopies, are in direct contrast to the filling in of the edges, from the growth of volunteer trees, that tends to flatten the forms. The changes to the historic open landscape to the north are especially dramatic when compared to the situation today. The exploration of the estate lands builds on the analysis of the property period plans to provide additional detail and understanding.

### 3. Core Area Analysis

Reducing the scale again, the core area of the property is explored. This area embodies several character-defining features of the property. The specimen trees themselves, especially those that are presently extant, are a character-defining feature. Additional features include the topography, pedestrian and vehicular circulation, landscape structures, remaining site furnishings, water features, spatial relationships, scenic views, and siting of main buildings within the area. These aspects have been analyzed, to a great extent, at the property and estate scales. However, in the core area these features are affected by the form, location and scale of the specimen tree collection. Historic accounts from the Bard and Hosack periods indicate that the estate developed an impressive collection of specimen trees even during these early years. For example, Bard may have planted the Ginkgo on the south lawn, now over 80 inches in caliper dimension. Other trees of similar size may also date to the Bard era. The character definition of the tree collection in the Core area are explored. The chronology of plantings in the Core Area from 1897 to 1991 is illustrated in three plans.

Because this tree collection is a character-defining element of the estate, Figure 6: Core Area Composite Analysis, 1895-1905/1938-1941/1990-1991, highlights the extant trees that because of size and age likely date to the Hosack or Bard period. An accurate determination of the precise ages of the large trees can be determined by coring and counting rings or by counting rings when the

trees die and are removed. Coring was not undertaken during this project since there are differing opinions about the tree health risk and a large number of trees would be involved making this an expensive process. Some of the Bard and Hosack trees must have begun to age and die during the Langdon ownership, and replacement and new plantings were likely undertaken during both Langdon ownership and are known to have occurred during the Vanderbilt ownership. One European beech tree, removed during the fall of 1990, showed a count of 135 rings. This important tree was one of a cluster framing the mansion to the south, just outside of the Great Circle. It would have been planted around 1855, during the early years of Walter Langdon Jr.'s ownership. Another European Beech was removed from the parking lot area with counts indicating about 90 rings placing this tree in the early Vanderbilt period when a series of plantings were added. The counting of annual rings on a systematic basis has been recommended for each tree removal so that trees can be accurately attributed to individual ownerships. This exhibit divides the older trees into categories by diameter (DBH), which is a reasonable approach to determining general age range especially within the same area where microclimate, soils and growing conditions are comparable. It demonstrates in detail, the continuity and change within the core area specimen tree collection over a period of approximately 100 years.

Figure 6, Core Area Composite Analysis follows the format of Figure 4 in grouping all three periods together. It portrays the large caliper, mature trees, in an attempt to identify those likely remaining from the Hosack era. The edge of Crum Elbow Creek is also highlighted to reveal the Vanderbilt era enlargement of the water surface on both sides of the White Bridge. The Late Vanderbilt and Existing VMNHS outlines for the water edges match, while the Early Vanderbilt plan shows a smaller creek outline.

Trees shown on period surveys in larger sizes are categorized as potentially remaining from the Hosack period. The main drive trees were included because Hosack developed the entry drive alignment, it is possible that he lined the drive with trees, and they have persisted. A survey of the entry drive from the 1890s shows this tree



collection. Early Vanderbilt Core Area trees are shown on the period surveys with a relative canopy size, but with no indication of actual caliper inches. These turn of the century tree sizes may be inconsistent with the later ones. While small trees are shown in light lines, all the larger trees are highlighted, by edging with a wider line. Trees ranging from 37 inches caliper to 72 inches caliper are highlighted on the 1938-1941 plan to indicate trees of considerable age at this time. Likewise, large trees are highlighted on the existing conditions plan, again from 37 inches to more than 73 inches caliper.

The three periods, when viewed together, reveal a pattern of larger trees in the following areas: along the entry drive [no information for the middle period was available for this era]; clustered around the north edge of the Formal Garden; in open groups and as individuals on the south lawn edged by more dense plantings along the adjacent drive; framing the western half of the Great Circle; densely grouped between the Mansion and Pavilion; and planted openly along the ridge line from the Mansion to the Pavilion. The trees of the 1895-1905 plan that have matured and remain today are blacked in on the 1990-1991 plan to indicate that they likely remain from the Hosack period. While based on size rather than exact age information, this grouping indicates that forty-two trees within this character-defining specimen tree landscape may remain from the Hosack-Parmentier development of the landscape or, in a few cases, possibly from the Bard era. This categorization effectively places the initial development of the specimen tree collection in the Hosack years.

Another interesting observation is that the overall density of the landscape and pattern of tree plantings has remained relatively constant over time. There are more large trees in the landscape today than were present in 1901, but the organization of plantings shows continuity. For example, in each era the south lawn is an open space with specimen trees in lawn while the entry drive edges are more densely planted.

The Vanderbilt Core Area Analysis, Specimen Tree Collection (1895-1941), not included, shows two layers of planting information from the 1898-1905 and the 1938-1941 periods. While Figure 7, Vanderbilt Core Area Analysis, Specimen Tree Collection (1938-1991) also shows two layers of

planting information from the 1938-1941 and 1990-1991 time frames. In the figures where both layers are present, the symbol key shows the continuity or change in tree plantings through the use of six categories; Lost, Extant, Introduced, Replaced, Self-sown, and Partial Remaining Sprout. In the 1895 to 1941 period only the first three categories are used; while the 1938 to 1991 period uses all six. Existing trees, of known and approximate size, are also shown in the key for clarity.

The comparison of the 1938-1941 trees and the 1990-1991 trees is achieved in Figure 7. Three new categories are introduced: Replaced, Self-sown and Partial Lost/Sprout. Since information on the trees along the entrance drive and around Crum Elbow Creek is missing for the 1938-1941 period, these trees appear on the plans but can not be compared or categorized.

The detailed exploration of the specimen tree collection consolidates information from numerous sources to reveal both continuity and change within this character-defining feature. The analysis establishes the value of this impressive collection of extant trees as individual specimens and a unique stand of similar age trees. It also reveals the effectiveness of the Franklin D. Roosevelt replacement strategy directing efforts to additional replacements in the future to continue a policy of ongoing tree collection renewal through replacement-in-kind.

#### **Historic Landscape Integrity**

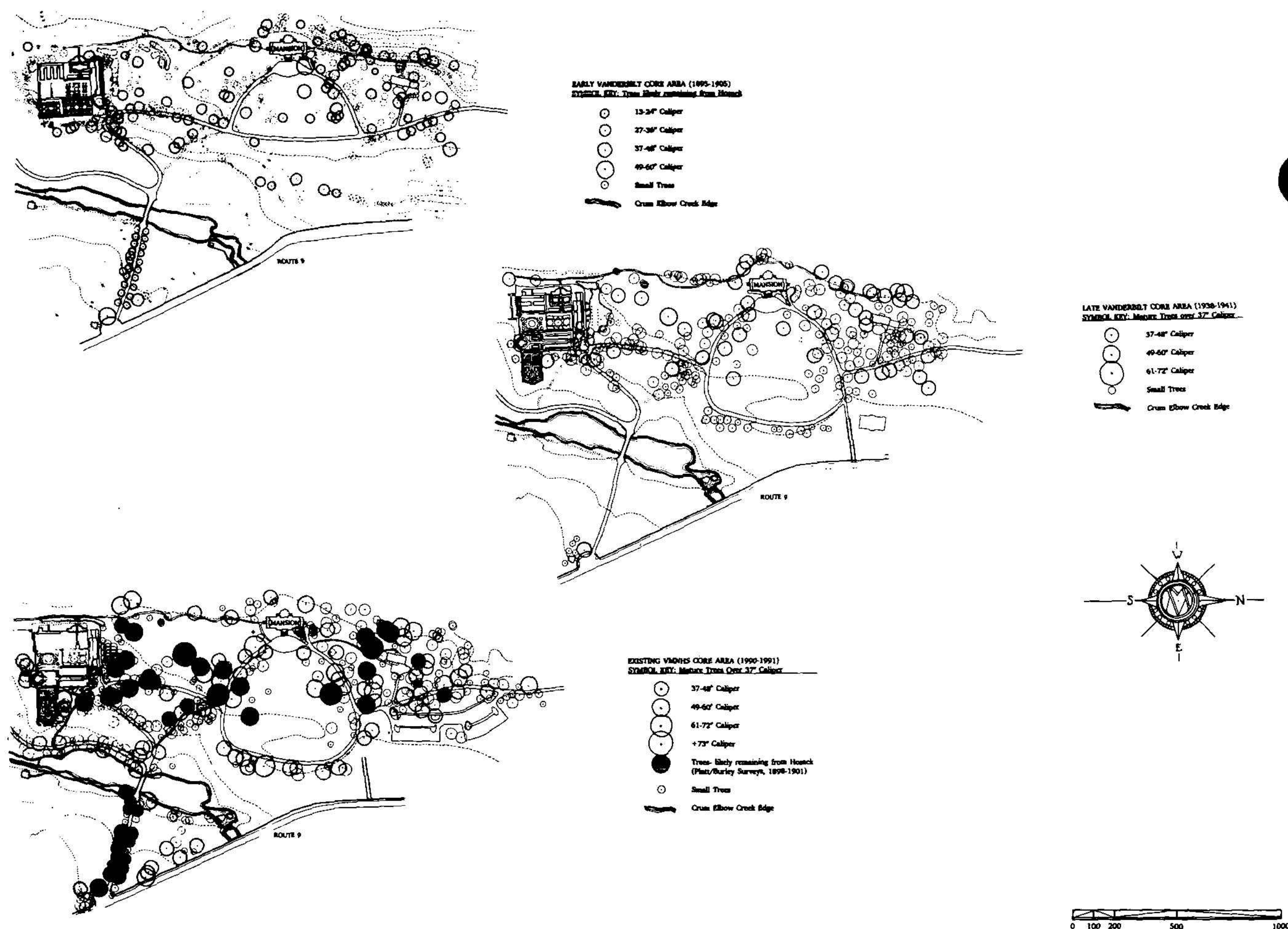
The determination of integrity -- the extent to which the organization and details of the landscape in the historic period is retained -- is a task that can be adequately addressed only after historic research, existing conditions documentation and analysis have been performed. Historic integrity is defined as *"the authenticity of a property's historic identity, evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the property's historic period."*<sup>8</sup> To understand this implies that a series of comparisons are made between the historic period(s) and the present. The preceding analysis process makes these comparisons both in supporting text and graphics.

The seven qualities of integrity; location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association are addressed for both the historic



Hosack-Parmentier period and for the subsequent Langdon and Vanderbilt ownerships that together comprise the historic character of the property. The questions to be answered in discussing the integrity of the VMNHS landscape are drawn from *National Register Bulletin #18*<sup>9</sup>. Stated in specific terms relevant to this landscape, they are: (1) To what degree does the extant landscape convey the character of the property as a country seat of a wealthy gentleman and in the case of Hosack, one who was interested in horticulture, landscape design and scenic beauty?; (2) To what degree has the original fabric of the Hosack-Parmentier design and the fabric added by the Langdons and Vanderbilts remained to the present day?, and (3) Are changes in the landscape irrevocable, or can they be corrected so that the estate retains integrity?

Although the farm lands have been lost, the focus of the design effort was, however, the estate grounds to the west of the Albany Post Road. This acreage remains intact, which gives integrity of location. While increased development over time has changed the visual quality of the Hudson River valley, no major intrusions have occurred with the Hyde Park viewshed. The extant visual relationships to the Hudson River establish integrity of setting. The landscape still retains its historic character as a grand estate in the picturesque style to the contemporary visitor. The feeling of the place as a grand estate and its association with Vanderbilt are readily apparent. The historic use of the property as an estate ground is immediately clear today. The present appearance of the estate, with a few minor exceptions (e.g. parking lots, signs, fire hydrants ) is much as it was in the



**Figure 6: Core Area Composite Analysis, 1895-1905/1938-1941/1990-1991** shows the historic periods of core area landscape together with the specimen tree collection, a character-defining feature of the landscape, annotated by size and implied age indicating the continuity of the collection from the Hosack period to the present. (courtesy LANDSCAPES)



Vanderbilt era. The historic feeling and association of the property are intact and contribute to its integrity.

The strongest basis for an evaluation of integrity is the deciphering of identifiable components of the original design that remain. Numerous analysis exhibits were developed during the project to reveal these including: continuity of topography, vegetation, natural systems, circulation, landscape structures, site furnishings, objects, water features, spatial relationships, siting of major buildings and the scenic vistas to the surroundings. The durability of the Hosack/Parmentier imprint and the valuable contributions made by Langdon and Vanderbilt are the physical manifestations of integrity of design.

### Significance

The period of significance for the VMNHS landscape dates from the Hosack ownership, beginning

in 1828, to the end of the Vanderbilt ownership, 1938. The criteria for historic landscape significance in American culture is the same as those applied to other cultural resources in the National Register process.<sup>10</sup> The VMNHS historic landscape meets Criterion C of the National Register because: (1) it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type and period in American landscape architecture, the early picturesque in the pre-Civil War period; (2) it possesses high artistic value; and (3) it is the work of a recognized master, André Parmentier.

The VMNHS landscape is significant for the plan designed and executed by André Parmentier for Dr. David Hosack between 1829 and 1830. A. J. Downing's high praise of Parmentier as a highly important figure in the development of the field of landscape architecture makes him a recognized master. This attribution has come to light in recent

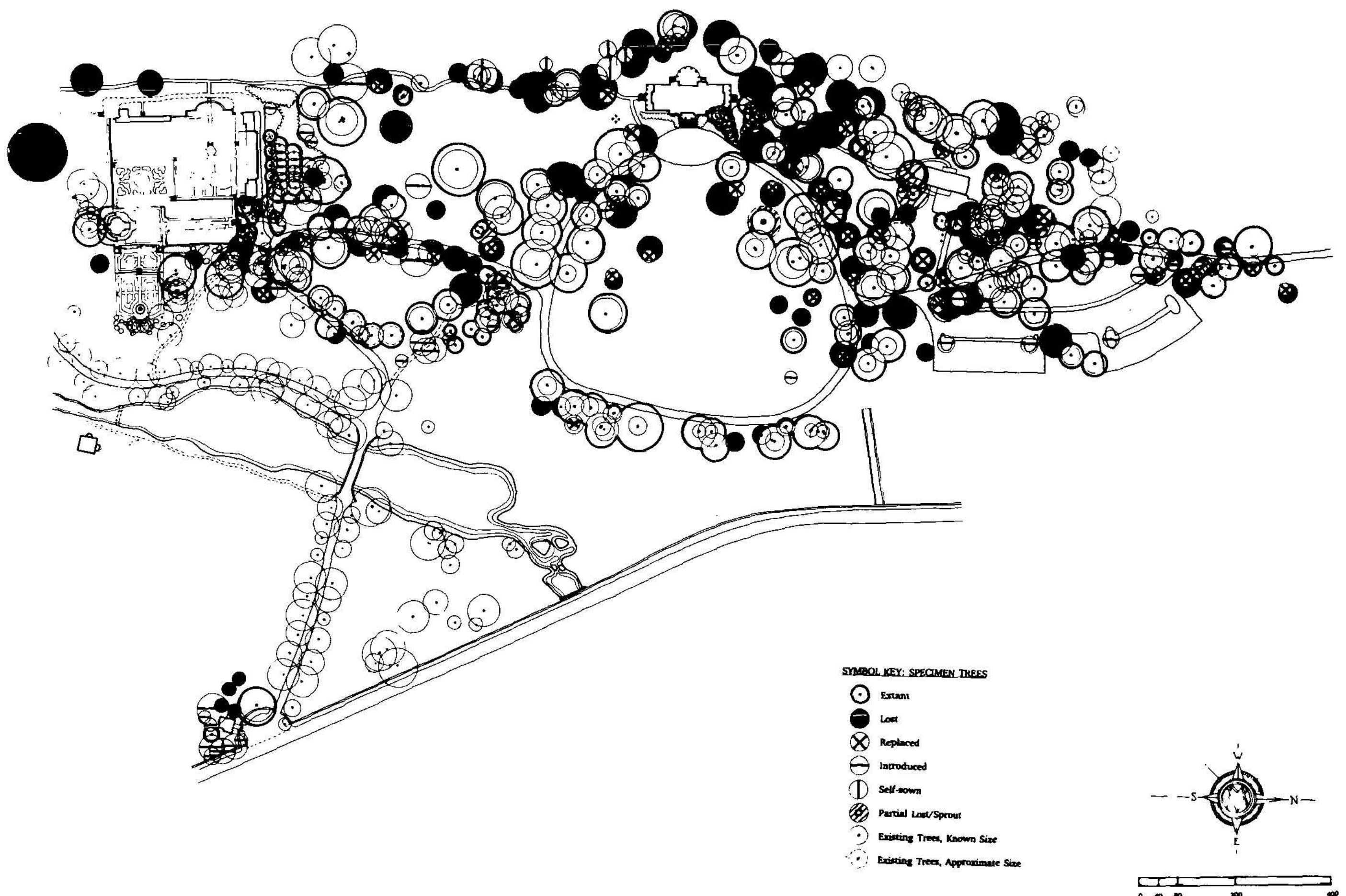


Figure 7: Vanderbilt Core Area Analysis, Specimen Tree Collection (1938-1991) shows the documented trees from two periods, compared and annotated to determined extant, lost, introduced, replaced, self-sown and partial lost/sprout categories of the core area trees. (courtesy LANDSCAPES)



research and adds an important dimension to the early years of landscape gardening in America. As identified in Dr. Zaitzevsky's paper, only a small number of Parmentier's works have been documented and of these only the Hyde Park landscape remains substantially intact. The survival of this landscape into the late twentieth century is of special import when viewed in the context of notable landscapes of the same era, many of which are entirely lost while those remaining have been substantially altered. The landscape of the VMNHS is significant as a nationally important cultural resource in its own right.

### Conclusion

The detailed analysis presented, operating at the scales of the property, estate, core area and formal garden, have aimed to address the complexity of the lineage of ownership and the extant VMNHS landscape at an appropriate level. It forms the basis for understanding historic landscape integrity and determining the period of significance, which together will guide and influence treatment decisions. The process evolved during the course of the project to reflect recent advances in the field. As the preservation planning process continues for the VMNHS landscape the analysis findings clarify the history of the extant landscape character and features contributing definitively to the treatment explorations and decisions. The durability of the Hosack-Parmentier imprint has been quantified and will be valued in the steps ahead.

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### Acknowledgements

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### Endnotes

1. These character-defining features for historic landscapes are discussed in the draft *Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Landscapes*, (Washington, DC, U.S. Department of the Interior,

National Park Service, Preservation Assistance Division, 1992) pp. 9-10.

2. The report authors were Patricia M. O'Donnell and Charles A. Birnbaum, historic landscape architects for LANDSCAPES, Westport, CT and Cynthia Zaitzevsky, Ph.D., Historian, Zaitzevsky and Associates, Brookline, MA. National Park Service project representatives: Nora Mitchell, Manager, Cultural Landscape Program, North Atlantic Region, Boston, and VMNHS staff: David Hayes, project manager. *Cultural Landscape Report for the Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site, Vol. 1: Site History, Existing Conditions, and Analysis*, Boston, MA, 1992.

3. The property was named *Hyde Park* after Hyde Park patent, from Sir Edward Hyde, Lord Cornbury, Governor of New York. The lands were granted after a gross surveying error was discovered on the death of Henry Pawling in 1695, who owned this parcel as one of the Great Nine Partner's water lots. The Park patent was divided from his lands with a western border along the Hudson River and southern and eastern borders running the course of Crum Elbow Creek. John Bard called the property *Hyde Park*, and the name of the town of Hyde Park was taken from the estate name.

4. Interpretive staff members from the Vanderbilt Site investigated the landscape using a draft copy of the report and found stone steps and path remnants leading to *Euterpe Knoll*.

5. This description of criteria is drawn from the National Register criteria explained in *National Register Bulletin 16A: How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*, US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Interagency Resources Division.

6. There is considerable scholarly debate concerning the use of the term *picturesque*. A. J. Downing referred to the Hyde Park estate as a premier example of the *modern style* of landscape gardening. He included the Picturesque, the Beautiful and the Gardenesque as three variations on this modern style. The Picturesque applies to VMNHS because of expansive scenic views the Hudson River valley, the irregular terrain of the property and the qualities of the natural creek and native vegetation which were incorporated into the designed landscape. George Tatum provides a detailed description of the eras landscape gardening and A.J. Downing's ideas on the subject of "Nature's Gardener" in *Prophet with Honor: The Career of Andrew Jackson Downing 1815-1852* (Washington DC, 1988), 99. 43-80.

7. Ibid 1.

8. Ibid 5.

9. National Register Bulletin #18 *How to Evaluate and Nominate Designed Historic Landscapes*. J. Timothy Keller, and Genevieve P. Keller, (Washington DC, US Department of the Interior, Interagency Resources Division, nd.) p.6.

10. Refer to *Bulletins* 16A and B for discussions of the criteria for making a case for the significance and *Bulletins* 18 and 30 for specific discussions of the significance and integrity issue for cultural landscapes, both designed and vernacular.



## Gateway to the Past: Establishing a Landscape's Context for the National Register

Linda Flint McClelland

Important events, designers and clients, and broad historical trends have contributed to a rich and diverse landscape history in the United States. Historic landscapes today enable us to relive this heritage. Organized by theme, place, and time, historic contexts help us to appreciate our rich legacy. By exploring historic contexts, we can identify historic landscapes, understand their significance, and protect them through historical designations. Contexts can, furthermore, guide us in meaningful ways to preserve and interpret these significant places.

The *cornerstone* of the National Register program administered by the National Park Service, historic context is a body of information about historic properties organized by theme, place, and time. Historic context is a *gateway* to the past. It

enables us to connect the milestones and stylistic patterns of American landscape history with actual historic landscapes, ones that can be preserved and used today. Context provides historical perspective enabling us to make connections between past events and properties and among landscapes having common histories or sharing physical characteristics. These landscapes may be separated by date, geography, and association. For example, the context on the Historic Landscape Design of the National Park Service, 1916 to 1942, explains the relationship among Boston's Franklin Park developed by the Olmsted firm in the 1880s, Shenandoah National Park's Skyline Drive, and a Texas state park built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s.

What distinguishes the development of historic contexts from other forms of landscape research is the emphasis on physical and associative characteristics that can be used to identify significant properties and assess their historic



Figure 1: By carefully selecting viewpoints along trails and roads and by designing naturalistic terraces and masonry parapets of native stone, the landscape architects of the National Park Service presented the nation's most spectacular scenery to the American public. (courtesy National Park Service Historic Photography Collection)



integrity. Context relates properties to history through the identification of property types and to the National Register criteria through the analysis of registration requirements. This information can help us weigh the significance and measure the integrity of a particular historic landscape.

Landscape architects may be accustomed to using the term *context* to mean the site and surroundings of a particular place or the evolution of a site over many years. *Historic context* as the federal preservation program uses it has a very different meaning. Although the background history and environmental setting of a place are important factors, placing a property in context for National Register purposes means showing the property's relationship to the broader realm of historic patterns and trends important in the history of the United States. Historic context helps us to understand how these trends evolved in both a physical and an ideological sense.

First, let us consider *historic context* in context. In 1983, the publication of the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation* institutionalized the concept of historic context as the basis for preservation activities from the identification of historic properties to preservation treatments. These guidelines set forth the development of contexts as the primary method for identifying and evaluating historic properties and introduced the concept of property types based on common physical and associative characteristics.<sup>1</sup>

The idea of historic context was not new. It drew from the methodologies of historians and archaeologists. The necessity of a thematic understanding of history for evaluating the significance of properties had been recognized since the beginnings of the federal preservation program in the Historic Sites Act of 1935. What was new, however, was the emphasis on defining the characteristics of historic places and the premise that, given sufficient contextual information, decisions about the importance of a particular property could be made without a knowledge of the entire group of similarly related properties.

In the last decade, the National Park Service has worked with state historic preservation offices and

certified local governments nationwide toward integrating historic contexts into the mainstream of historic preservation. Many preservation-minded individuals and private organizations have also been involved in this collaborative effort. This work has happily coincided with the park service's cultural landscape initiative, which has resulted in the publication of technical guidance helpful in documenting and preserving designed and rural landscapes and the distribution of model landscape nominations such as Llewelyn Park in New Jersey and the Denver Parks and Parkway System. It is fitting that this symposium, cooperatively sponsored by several preservation organizations almost ten years later, is subtitled *Historic Designed Landscapes in Context*.

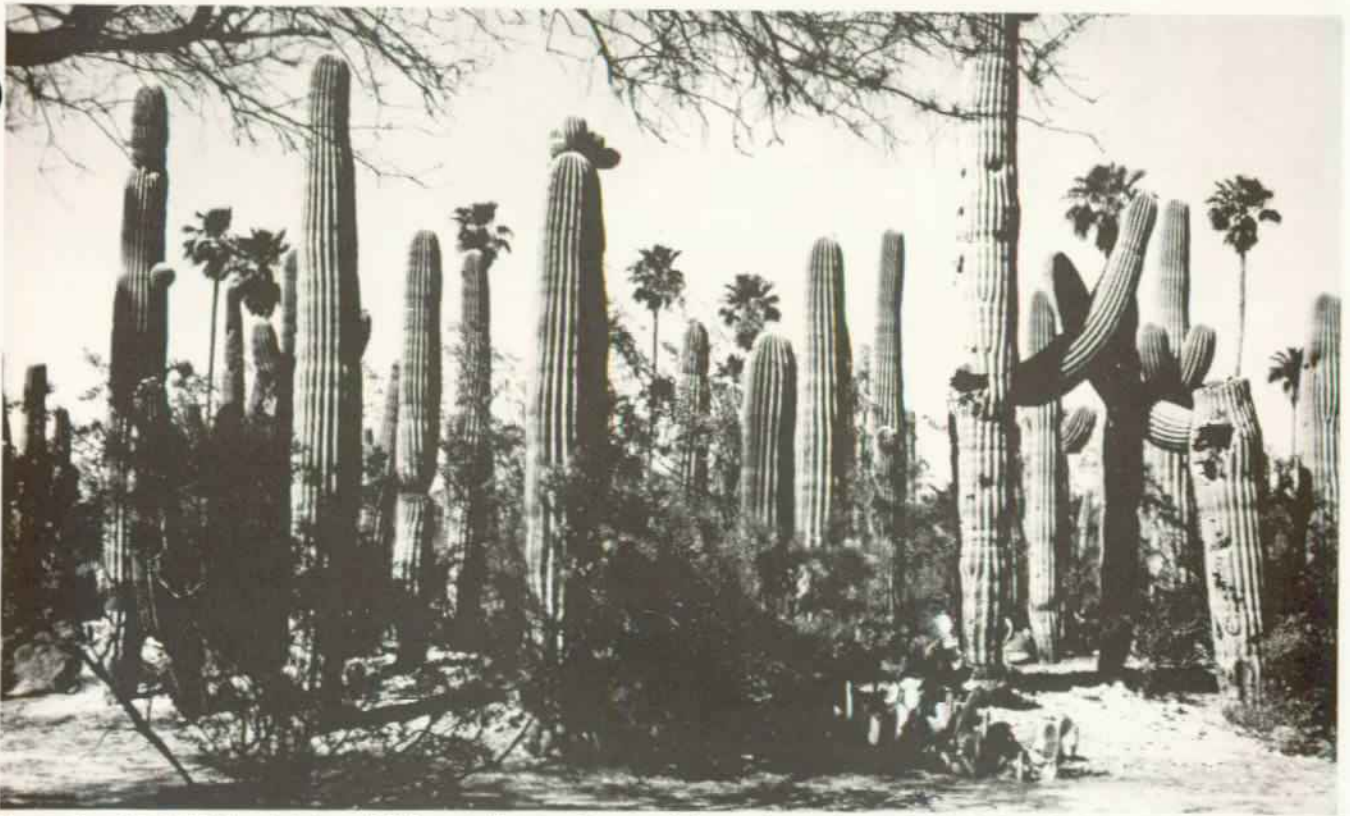
In 1983, scholars were reaching similar conclusions about the nature of landscape research. That year in an article, "*Landscape Research: Keeping Faith with Today and Tomorrow*," in the *Yearbook of Landscape Architecture*, landscape architect and historian Catherine Howett identified three types of research for understanding a historic landscape. First was the cultural context described as:

*...the whole complex of philosophical, economic, political, social, scientific, literary, and aesthetic factors that together shape the zeitgeist of a given age; this is the matrix from which a shared vision of an "ideal" landscape may have emerged, as well as a visual language of forms understood by artist and audience alike.<sup>2</sup>*

Second was the study of the landscape with its surviving physical evidence by professionals trained to read the landscape and direct archeological investigations. The final area of research and the one apt to be the *most rigorous and demanding* in Howett's opinion was the search of historic records to trace the evolution of a particular site over time.

Given the emphasis on historic context, the National Register program set out in 1983 to establish guidelines for using context to evaluate properties and to create a tool for registering properties related to a single context or sharing similar physical characteristics. In September 1986 after conducting pilot projects in six states and federal agencies, the National Register program published draft guidelines for documenting historic context in National Register nominations and





Figures 2 and 3: A 1940 aerial view of El Encanto Estates, Tucson, Arizona, shows the subdivision's formal plan radiating from a central circular plaza. (Top) Fan palms were planted along the radial avenues while date palms were planted along the interconnecting curvilinear roads. (courtesy Arizona Historical Society, Tucson) A circular plaza was the crowning centerpiece of El Encanto Estates (Bottom). The 157 trees planted here in 1930 are now the city's finest collection of native saguaro. (courtesy Arizona State Parks)



introduced a new format called the multiple property submission. One of the pilot projects, examined the context of state parks in Tennessee, which were organized in the 1930s through the impetus of such New Deal programs as the Tennessee Valley Authority, Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), Works Progress Administration, and Resettlement Administration. For the first time, the work of the CCC was examined as it effected the design of an entire park rather than only a cluster of rustic-styled buildings. This pilot resulted in the listing of several Tennessee parks including Standing Stone State Park with its woodlands, trails, and artificial lake.<sup>3</sup>

In 1991, final guidelines for developing and using context to nominate historic properties and groups of related properties, called multiple property groups, were published in *National Register Bulletins 16A and 16B*. Historic contexts organized by theme, place, and time, property types, and registration requirements were set forth as the essential building blocks for evaluating significant historic properties.<sup>4</sup>

Property types are the material forms of historic patterns that shaped the past. They are a combination of physical and associative traits that connect properties with historic patterns, trends, and events. Physical characteristics are tangible qualities such as style, structure, materials, method of construction, design, and workmanship. Such characteristics place estates such as Marjorie Merriweather Post's Mar-A-Lago in Palm Beach, Florida (Figure 5), within the 20th-century country-place era. Associative characteristics on the other hand link a property with particular events or persons of the past and include the date of construction, location, function, ownership, or cultural affiliation. Wave Hill, as the home of New York financier and conservationist George W. Perkins from 1903, is importantly associated with the turn-of-the-century movement for natural conservation and most notably the preservation of the endangered Palisades of New Jersey for public use and enjoyment. From the pergola at Wave Hill, these can still be seen today on the opposite shore of the Hudson.<sup>5</sup>

Registration requirements take the form of a checklist of the qualities or characteristics that make a property eligible for the National Register.

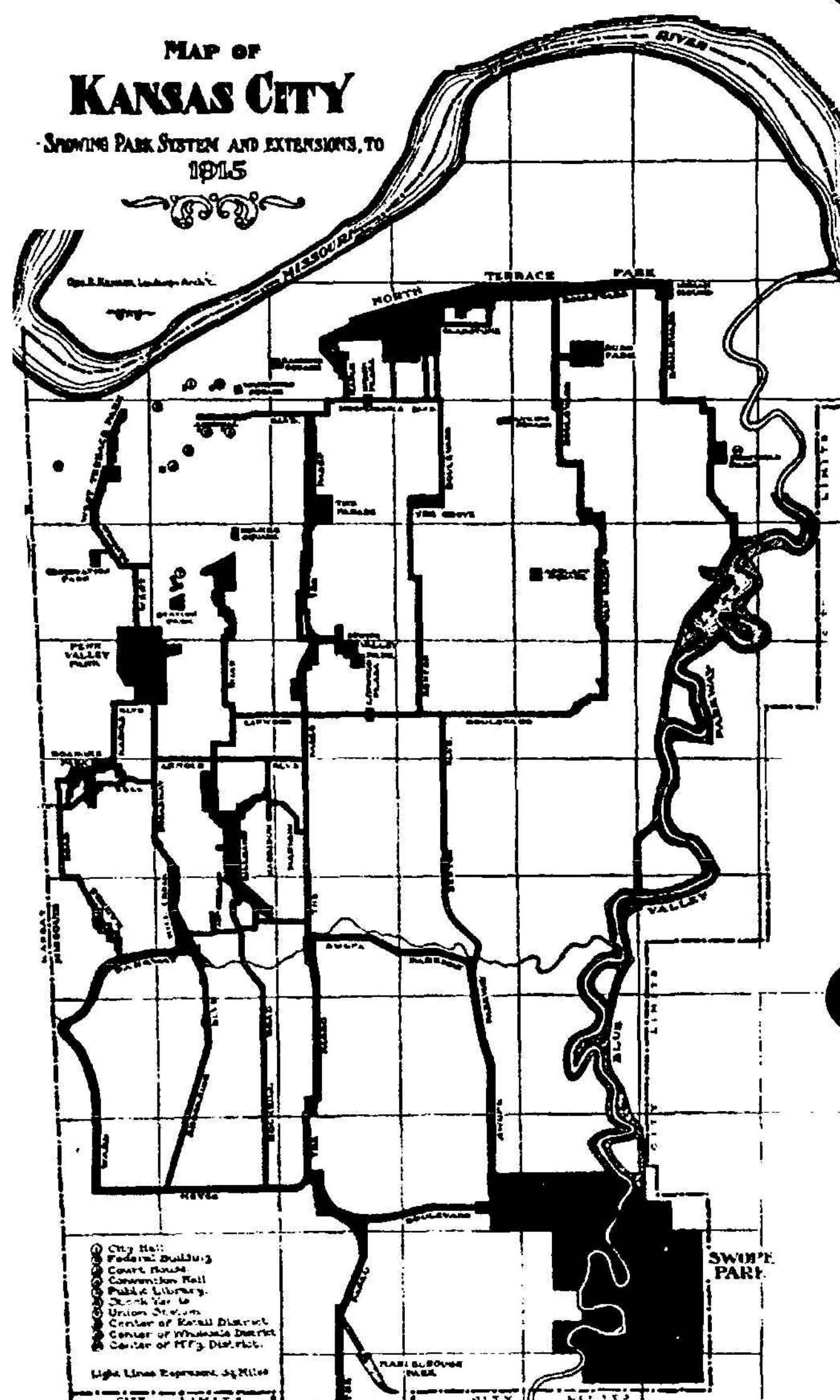


Figure 4: Map of Kansas City Showing Park System and Extensions, 1915, George E. Kessler. (courtesy C. Birnbaum)

Intended to simplify and facilitate evaluation, these requirements explain how properties meet the National Register criteria and what aspects of historic integrity they must have for listing. They specify periods of time when a property may have achieved its importance. A landscape may have several periods of significance. The flower gardens at Mount Vernon represent the years of Washington's residence, whereas the vegetable gardens represent the restoration philosophies of the 1930s. Requirements indicate the characteristics that make a property illustrative of a particular area of significance. They might describe as significant in landscape architecture at



At a local level the features of 19th-century residential grounds that reflect Andrew Jackson Downing's concepts of the picturesque and the beautiful. Institutional grounds such as the campus of the University of Washington, Seattle, may have significance in areas such as education, politics and government, medicine, as well as landscape architecture. A planned residential community such as El Encanto Estates in Tucson, Arizona (Figures 2 and 3), may have significance in community planning for its Beaux-Arts plan and residential use and landscape architecture for its naturalistic plantings of native cactus.

The multiple property submission has become a popular tool for getting groups of related properties listed in the Register. More than one-half of the listings each year come through multiple property submissions, which serve as an umbrella for historic properties related to the development of a particular community or a particular theme.

The National Register program recently compiled a list of the more than 900 multiple property

submissions through which thousands of properties have been listed in the National Register.<sup>8</sup> Multiple property groups for designed landscapes include cemeteries in Puerto Rico and Port Gibson, Mississippi, urban parks in Chicago, mountain parks outside Denver, state parks in Iowa and Minnesota, and the Olmsted parks and parkways in Buffalo, NY. The greatest number of landscape listings have been for parks and parkways administered by state and local governments. We are seeing an increasing number of designed landscapes nominated through community-based submissions such as Highland Park, IL.

Landscape contexts have been incorporated into the planning process of many state and local preservation programs. Georgia, Rhode Island, and Maine are developing state-wide multiple property submissions for designed landscapes, while Denver, CO, Memphis, TN, Kansas City, MO (Figure 4) and Minneapolis, MN have all used this approach to gather the data needed to make preservation decisions affecting their metropolitan parks and parkways.



Figure 5: An allee of palms line the entrance at Mar-A-Lago, the country place estate of Marjorie Merriweather Post in Palm Beach, Florida. (courtesy Walter Smalling, Jr.)



There are two approaches for establishing a landscape's context. The first is placing a particular property in historic context to determine whether it is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or whether it has national significance and should be designated a National Historic Landmark. The second approach is documenting historic context as an umbrella for evaluating the significance of a group of related historic landscapes that can then be listed in the National Register with a minimum of additional research.

When we set out to determine landscape significance -- we need to ask a set of questions about (1) the property's history such as events, activities, functions, and uses that occurred there, and (2) the property's relationship to broader patterns -- events, persons, and trends -- of landscape history. Unlike other forms of historical writing, developing context is unique because it focuses on historic properties -- the places where important events occurred or and the places that embody the characteristics of a past era or the work of a master designer.

Several case studies illustrate how historic context is established by synthesizing information about historic properties from a number of sources, including secondary literature, surviving landscapes, and historic records. In the last decade, we have seen a substantial increase in secondary literature on the subject of American landscapes. These have included monographs on masters of design, profiles of specific sites, and studies on patterns and trends in landscape design. Among recent scholarship is Robert Grese's monograph on Jens Jensen. Here is a comprehensive biography on the life and work of one of the nation's premier landscape architects and park designers. This book contributes substantially to our understanding of the Prairie style of landscape design, which was based on the idealization of the natural character and vegetation of the midwestern landscape. This knowledge, in turn, adds considerably to the public recognition and appreciation of Jensen's work and that of his followers.<sup>7</sup>

In developing context, frequently the researcher needs to look at primary sources to fill gaps in existing scholarship and to study the evolution of

## OUTDOOR THEATERS

FRANK A. WAUGH



**Figure 6:** *Outdoor Theaters* by Frank A. Waugh, 1917. A treatise on the design and use of garden theaters and outdoor auditoriums. Includes a wealth of American and European works, most illustrated with plans, photographs and text. A selected bibliography follows. Such a treatise could assist in providing context for this type of civic landscape feature. (courtesy Birnbaum)

a site over time. Several types of historic documents are particularly valuable in landscape research. Among these are contemporary accounts, treatises (Figure 6) by well-known landscape designers, historic photographs, historic plans and maps, business and family records, public records, and historic plans and drawings. State-developed historic contexts and surveys, which are maintained in state historic preservation offices across the nation, are valuable sources of information about historic themes, property types, and properties.

The case of the Ethan Allen Estate (1915-1923) in North Andover, Massachusetts, illustrates how historical documentation can help place a property in context based on the career of a master landscape architect. Robin Karson's monograph on Fletcher Steele signifies this property as one of the



designer's first independent works after leaving the firm of Warren Manning and the first to incorporate the single-jet fountain inspired by the Generalife in Granada, which would become a leading motif in Steele's work. Historic photographs from the Steele collection at the State University of New York's School of Environmental Science and Forestry and others published in the 1924 portfolio, *American Landscape Architecture*, give us a clear idea of the way the fountain and pool, cascade, and lakeside hemlock grove appeared shortly after construction.<sup>8</sup>

The case of Oak Hill Cemetery (ca. 1850) in Washington, D.C. (Figure 7) illustrates how scholarship on the 19th-century rural cemetery movement and its premier prototype, Mount Auburn Cemetery, help place other similar properties in historic context. In *Silent City on the Hill*, Blanche Linden-Ward documented the founding and evolution of Mount Auburn in Cambridge, MA. This comprehensive study went beyond the

examination of a particular site to document the rural cemetery movement as a whole from the perspective of the English gardening tradition, the French cult for memorials, and the social, intellectual, and aesthetic needs of the new American republic. From the example of Mount Auburn, we can make a list of characteristics for a 19th-century rural cemetery that can then be compared to examples in other places. Oak Hill Cemetery is illustrative of this property type, having curving paths laid out in concentric circles around hilltops, lots and tombs carved into the sloping hillsides, classical pavilions on prominent knolls, specimen trees, cobblestone gutters, a variety of commemorative grave markers and statuary, and rustic details such as an ivy-covered arched stone bridge.<sup>9</sup>

The second approach to establishing context for historic landscapes is to document an entire context as a basis for evaluating a number of related historic properties. This is the approach

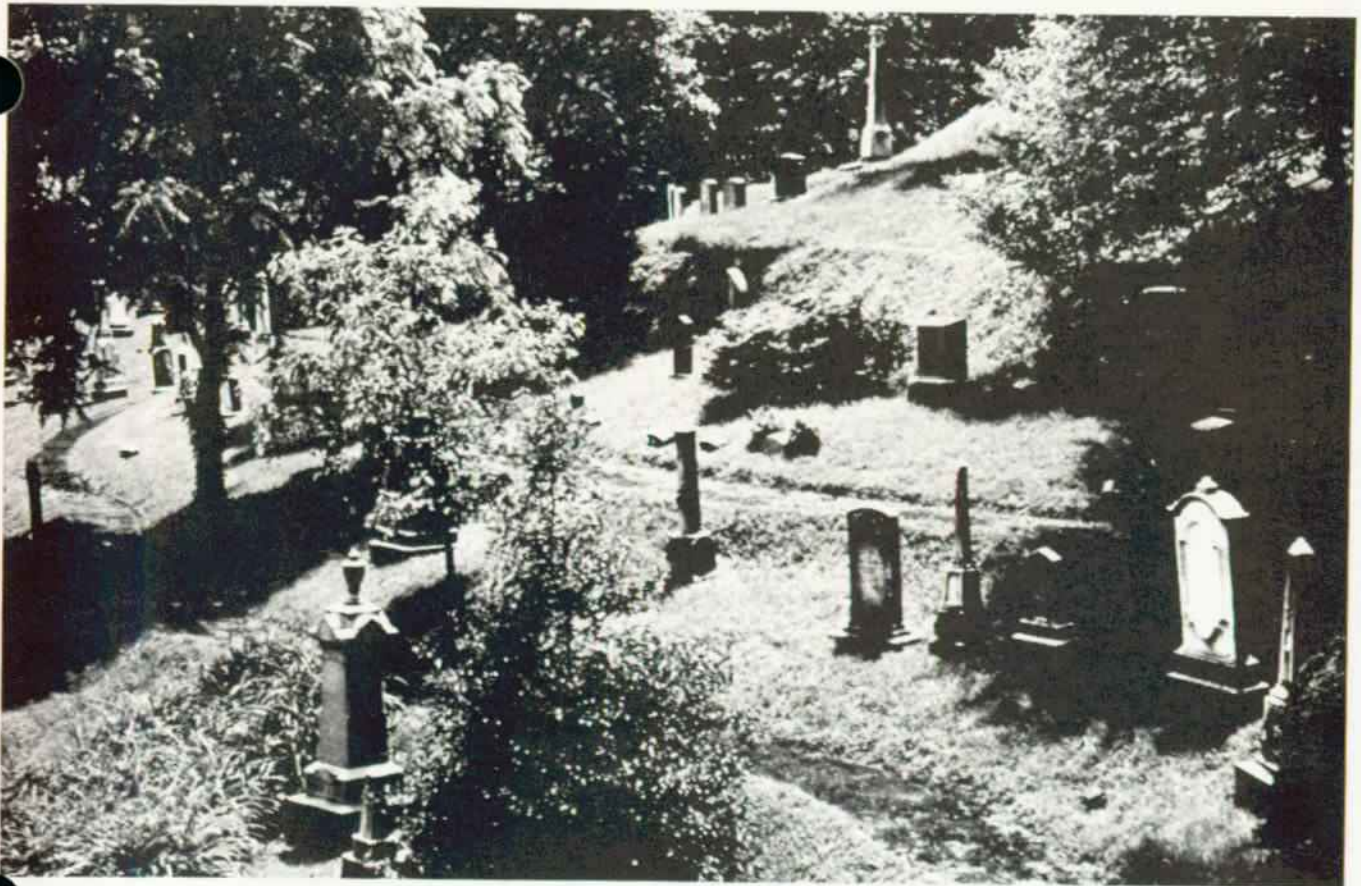


Figure 7: Oak Hill Cemetery, Washington, D.C. founded in 1848. Captain George F. de la Roche, a master engineer, supervised the grading, including the creation of a grand bank along Rock Creek. (courtesy Linda Flint McClelland)

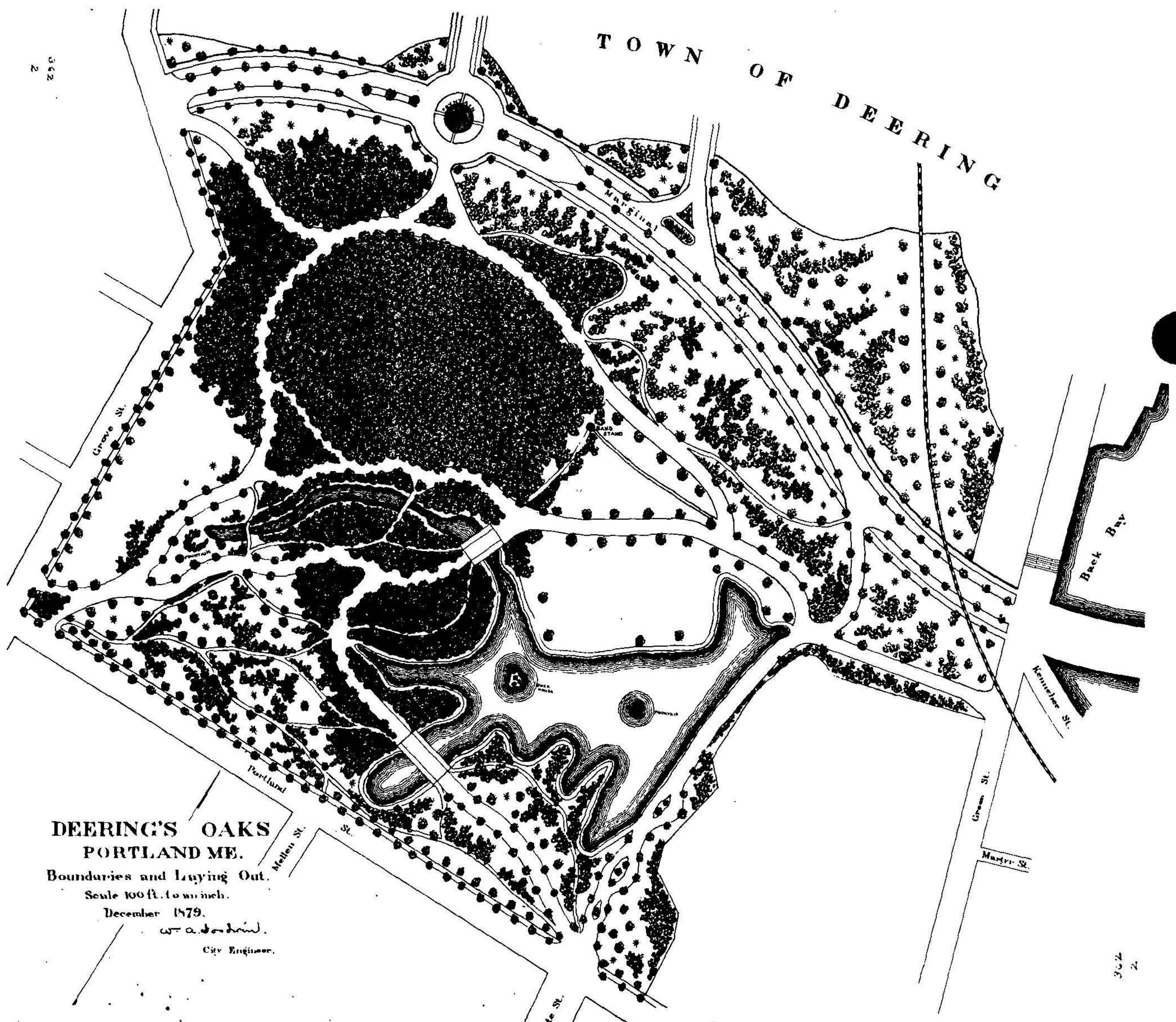


used in most of the park and parkway submissions and has been adopted by the state preservation programs in Rhode Island, Georgia, and Maine (Figure 7) for documenting significant patterns and properties in their state's landscape history.

The National Register program has recently developed such a context to document the developed areas, roads, and trails in national parks and CCC-built state parks nation-wide. The idea for the context came from the growing interest in landscape preservation and the concern, that while

significant park buildings were being recognized the larger landscapes of which they were an integral part were being overlooked. We endeavored to consolidate the information from the increasing number of state and national park nominations into a single nation-wide context that other state preservation programs and the National Park Service could use to nominate significant park landscapes.<sup>10</sup>

Our first step was to synthesize available information on the subject from secondary lit-



**Figure 8:** Deering's Oaks Park in Portland, ME is listed on the National Register. It was designed and laid out by City Engineer William Goodwin in 1879. The Maine Survey includes 19th Century Portland parks and open spaces that were designed by Goodwin. (courtesy Maine Historic Preservation Commission)



erature and from National Register files. Valuable information was gathered from sources such as the nominations for state parks in Tennessee and several other states, studies on rustic park architecture including an NHL theme study, a master's thesis on Texas state parks, Norman Newton's *Design on the Land*, Phoebe Cutler's *Public Landscape of the New Deal*, and a number of legislative and administrative histories, biographies, and commentaries on the history of the National Park Service. Scholarship on urban parks and park designers provided additional insight into the professional ideas and practices that guided national and state park designers. These included several studies on the Olmsted firm including Cynthia Zaitzevsky's work on Franklin Park, which became the prototype for the design of natural areas, and Robert Grese's monograph on Jens Jensen, who was a leading proponent of a naturalistic style based on native character and vegetation.<sup>11</sup>

We then analyzed the gaps in our knowledge and formulated a set of research questions to guide our search of primary sources. Primary sources included National Park Service records in the National Archives, annual reports of park service officials, historic master plans and drawings, historic photographs documenting national and state parks, and historic treatises, textbooks, and journals in landscape architecture.

Our research questions spanned a considerable period of time, extending backward to the roots of the naturalistic or rustic tradition in Andrew Jackson Downing's writings and forward to the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps during the New Deal. Our study became a search for the prototypes, principles, policies, practitioners, and practices that guided park designers of natural areas and led to a cohesive style of park landscape architecture associated with the National Park Service in the 1920s and 1930s.

This context has enabled us to visualize the landscape ideas and practices of the past in actual historic landscapes that can be valued, enjoyed, and preserved today. It has enabled us to connect designed landscapes such as 19th-century country parks such as Franklin Park and CCC-built state parks within a common landscape tradition guided by the genius of practitioners such as Downing, Olmsted, Samuel Parsons, Jr., and Jens Jensen. It

has enabled us to trace the evolution of key design concepts for natural areas from Downing to educators Henry Hubbard, Frank Waugh, and Wilhelm Miller, to the national park designers of the 1920s, and finally to state park designers in the 1930s through the NPS-supervised conservation work of the Civilian Conservation Corps. These concepts include the relationship of viewpoints and scenic vistas, the blending of natural topography and features with design, the use of naturalistic rock-work as a harmonizing element, the emulation of native vegetation, the principles of comprehensive planning, and the preservation of wilderness.

Our findings are enabling preservationists to connect the historic ideas, prototypes, and events of American landscape architecture with historic areas of national and state parks. We plan to release a multiple property documentation form condensing this context so that the information can be used to facilitate nominating park villages, scenic roads and areas, trails, campgrounds, park villages, and entire state parks to the National Register of Historic Places.

There is no question that our knowledge of American landscape history has expanded considerably in the last decade as the result of many public and private efforts. This symposium alone is a testament to progress. A decade ago, the appreciation of historic landscapes and the literature on American landscape history lagged far behind architecture, diplomatic history, or military history. The gap is steadily closing. Some of the most valuable research being done today is in connection with historic preservation projects and through the collaboration of historians, who have the research tools and the broad knowledge of history, and landscape architects who can read the land and interpret its physical evolution.

Finally, historic context is the window on the future. Because it connects properties with their past and emphasizes physical and associative characteristics, it can serve as blueprint for the interpretation, preservation, and management of historic landscapes. In 1983, Catherine Howett wrote of the enduring value of landscape research:

*...the process of researching, describing, and explicating is itself a form of conservation, in which we gather together the fragile records of our past*



and use them to understand it better. Writing, teaching, talking about historic landscapes awakening our communities to their significance as prologue to the unfolding story of our own lives, our own environments, invest these places with a new life, a way of surviving in memory and awareness, if not in fact. What is discovered about the past is already, in some sense, saved--a vital inheritance for today and tomorrow.<sup>12</sup>

**Linda Flint McClelland is a historian with the National Register of Historic Places. She is the author of *Presenting Nature: The Historic Landscape Design of the National Park Service, 1916 to 1942*.**

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## **Understanding the Bigger Picture for Chicago's Historic Parks**

Julia Sniderman

Chicago has one of the most extensive, significant, and diverse collections of urban historic park resources in the nation. While some were originally created by the City government, the majority of the Chicago's historic parks were generated by a system of separate park commissions, first established in 1869. Ultimately, a total of twenty two park districts operated throughout the city. As each chose its own designers and created parks that responded to the needs of its community, a wealth of superb and socially responsive landscapes resulted. In 1934, the Depression necessitated consolidation of the separate commissions into one agency, the Chicago Park District. While the WPA inspired some notable design, it also brought large sums for modernization, short deadlines and many untrained laborers into park service. An era of insensitive treatments commenced. Until recent years, the Park District administrative services did no comprehensive planning. The piecemeal and often short-sighted manner in which parks were treated severely undermined the integrity of the system's historic resources. Fortunately, the 1987 discovery of a cache of original plans, photographs and drawings in a sub-basement vault beneath the Park District's headquarters inspired a new preservation ethic. Today, a Preservation Planning Division is responsible for efforts to protect and enhance more than eighty historic parks. The concept of historic context is the foundation of the management of such a large, broad, and diverse collection.

### **Inception of the New Preservation Ethic**

In 1982, architect John Vinci and landscape architect, Stephen Christy received a grant to develop an inventory and evaluation of Chicago's historic parks. In contrast to architectural surveys, few similar studies had yet been conducted for designed landscapes. At the time, the Chicago Park District Administration was not concerned with its historic resources and was not receptive to negative criticism regarding maintenance and management practices. This system held back a number of well informed, and thoughtful staff members who had creative ideas for restoration and other sensitive treatments. Although Vinci and Christy's evaluation of approximately 300 historic parks did not make an initial impact, administrative

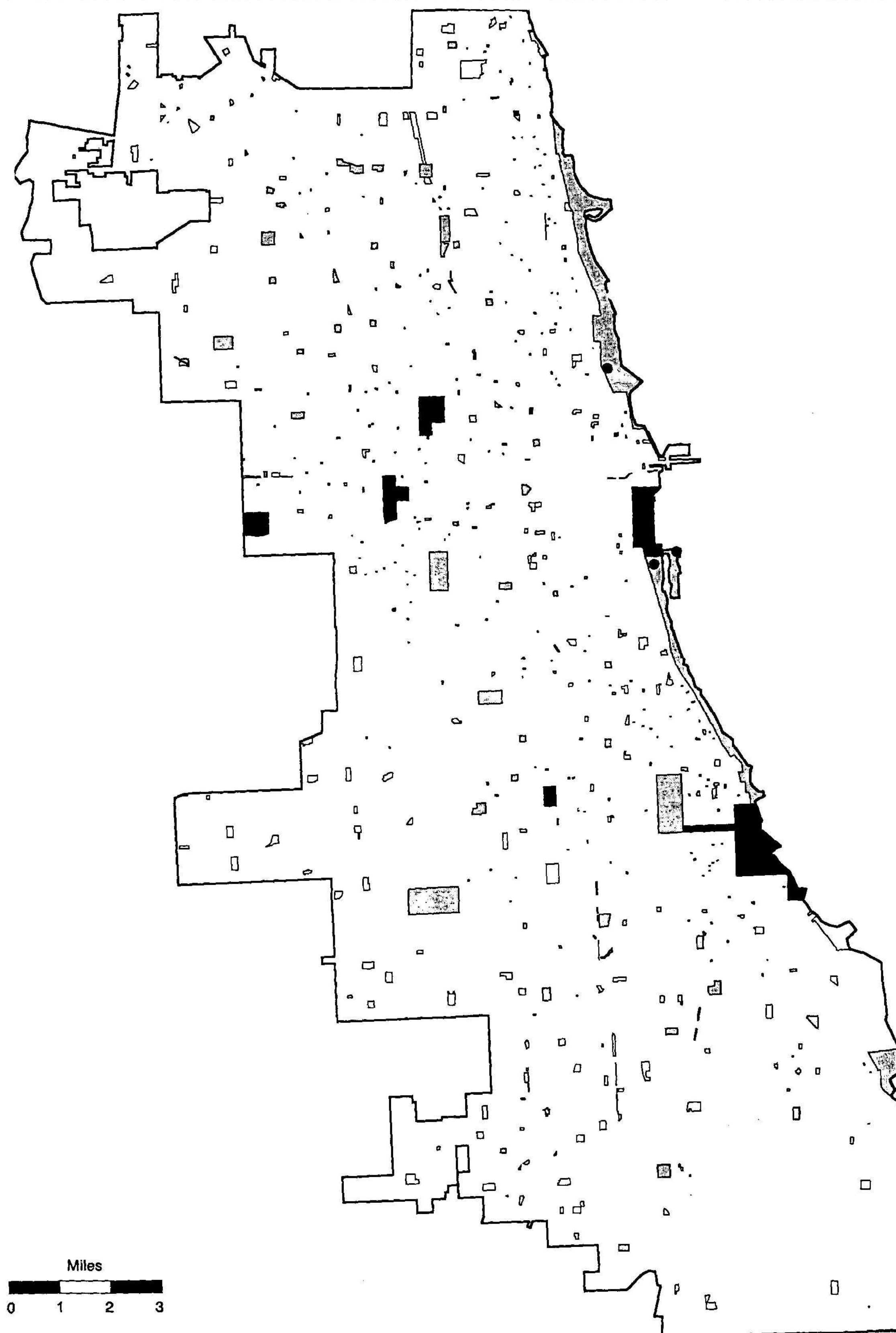
changes at the Chicago Park District and discovery of the archival materials in 1987 made possible a new historic preservation ethic within the Agency. According to Walter Netsch, then president of the Park District's Board of Commissioners, the reorganization "*allowed the talent of the staff to be redirected towards these long needed goals.*" The adoption of an internal landmarks ordinance by the Chicago Park District Board of Commissioners in 1988 signified the first effort towards institutionalizing the administration's new focus on preserving its historic parks. In order to implement this program, two preservation professionals were also recruited.

When the preservationists began creating the new Park District program they were concerned that level of documentation needed for each landscape would be so intensive that the whole collection of properties would suffer while only a few of the parks were analyzed. In addition, while the Park District landmarks ordinance included criteria for evaluating significance, it did not address standards for determining integrity nor did it trigger the review of work within designated parks. Fortunately, a grant from the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency helped create a comprehensive basis for managing the whole system of historic resources. Sponsored by the Chicago Park District in sponsorship with the Commission on Chicago Landmarks *A Model Preservation Plan for Chicago's Historic Parks*, generated a historic context for the whole system of historic resources, as well as a methodology to intensively analyze individual parks. The project, which also developed methods for evaluating integrity, was guided by *National Register Bulletin #18 How to Evaluate and Nominate Designed Historic Landscapes* resulted in a Multiple Property Listing on the National Register of Historic Places for Chicago's Historic Parks.

### **Overview Context for Chicago's Historic Parks: The Bigger Picture**

Developing a broad context for Chicago's historic parks allowed a list of landmarks eligible properties to be created. Primary research utilizing the new Special Collections of archival materials, and secondary information provided by the Vinci and Christy survey provided the basis of the historic context. The National Register Multiple Property format allows for the registration of various property types which are thematically linked.





**Figure 1: Chicago Park District Historic Parks.** Illustrates designated landmarks listed on the National Register of Historic Places (in black), and those eligible to the register (grey). (Chicago Park District)



Though the Vinci and Christy report identified two sub-types, landscape and small parks, it was determined that this was not a reliable typology as the same significant themes in history were often evidenced in both sub-types. Rather, an urban park property type was developed which recognizes that parks reflect a continuum of history, with numerous contributions of designers rendered in a variety of styles. The Multiple Property format includes three major essays: historic context, significance and description. Recognizing that throughout history a variety of social, cultural, economic, and political forces shaped a park's programs, activities, design, appearance, and physical development, the historic context statement focused on social and political history. The significance and description essays then utilized the same outline as the historic context statement. Together, the three essays essentially serve as a guide for placing potentially significant landscapes or elements into context at the broad level.

#### **Context Summary**

Below is an extremely abbreviated version of the broad historic context for Chicago's parks. For a more detailed explanation see *The Historic Resources of the Chicago Park District Multiple Property Documentation Form* listed on the *National Register of Historic Places*. It is possible and likely that a park will have been shaped by more than one of the following themes throughout its history:

*Early Parks 1837-1869* Beginning in the 1830s, real estate developers began creating parks to enhance their own speculative residential ventures. These were usually small squares meant to follow the tradition of Bloomsbury Square (1661) in London and were similar to Gramercy Park (1831) and Stuyvesant Square (1837) in New York. In Chicago, developers who created such squares generally turned them over to the City, either as a donation, or at a modest profit. As it was generally recognized that a park would raise the value of land within a neighborhood, a developer presented the

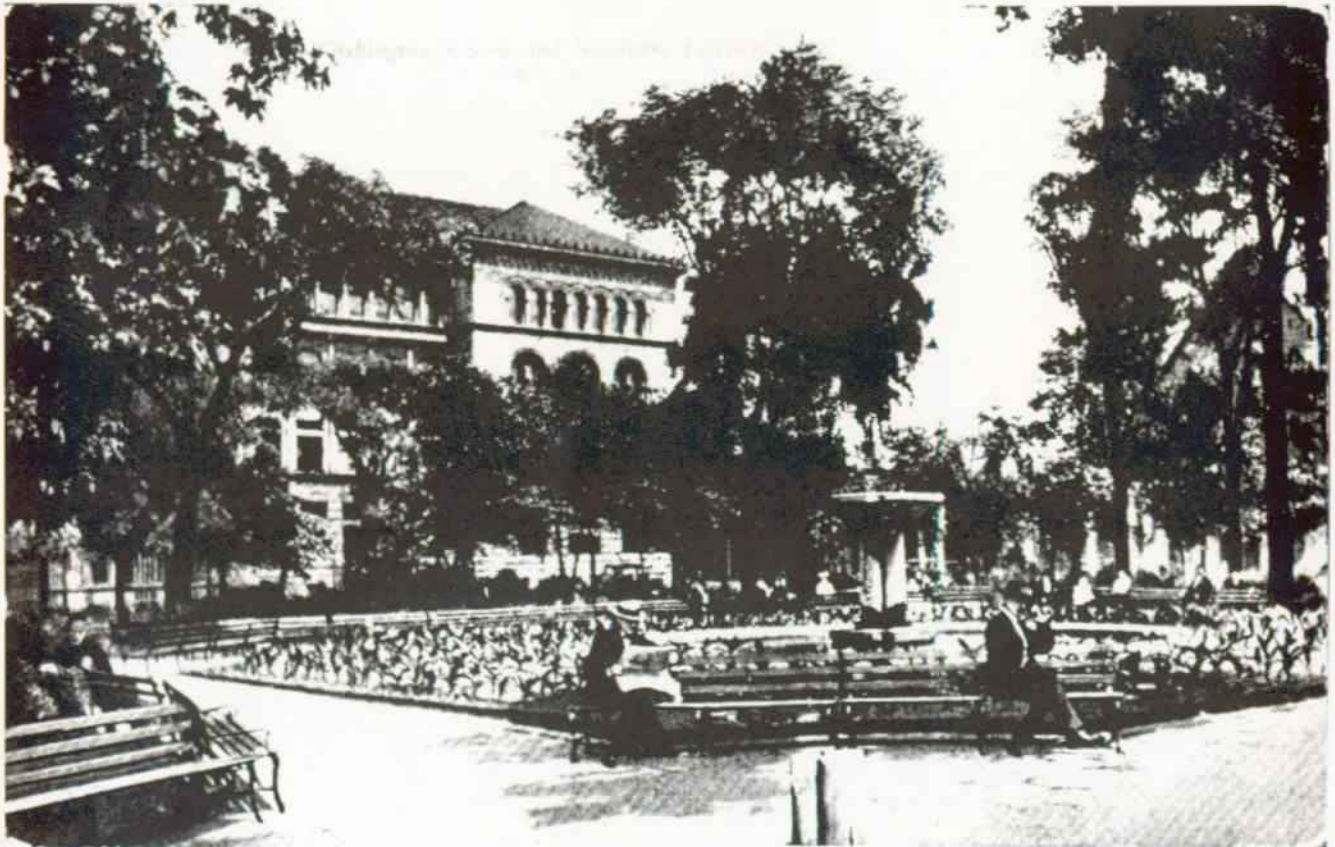


Figure 2: Washington Square Park with Newberry Library (background), c. 1900. Photograph of postcard. (courtesy Chicago Historical Society ICHI-22263)



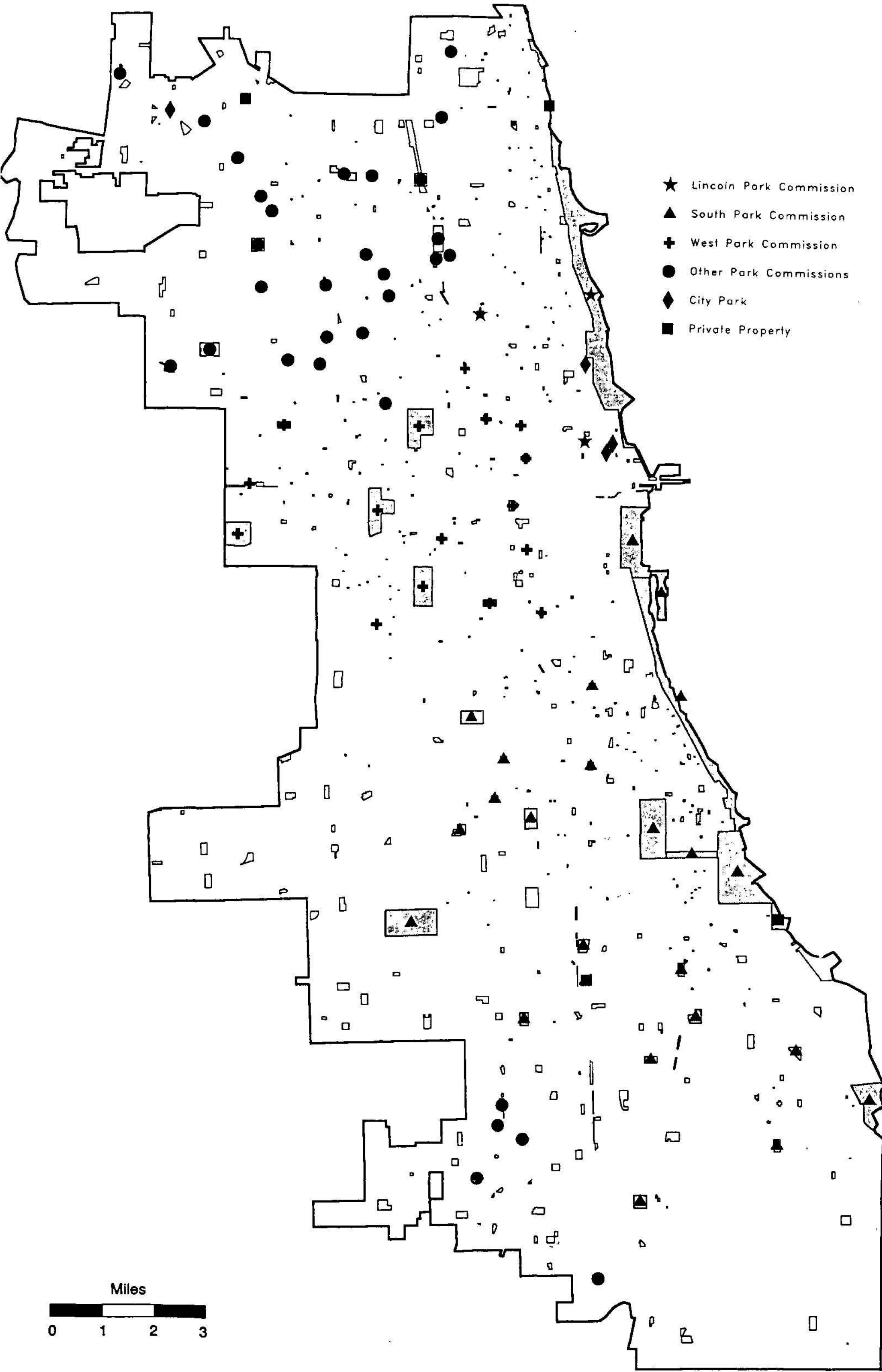


Figure 3: Original Ownership of Chicago Park District Properties. (Chicago Park District)



idea of a boulevard system as early as 1841, but no governmental action was taken. Citizens were persistently trying to make the City cognizant of the need for parks. Public pressure led to a restriction in 1837 for any future development on a small plat of government land, which represented the beginning of Grant Park as well as the city's continuous open lakefront. Similarly, the community convinced the City that a public lakeside cemetery posed a public health threat, and in the 1860s the burial ground was transformed into Lincoln Park.

*Three Original Park Commissions 1869-1934* The public park movement resulted in the creation by State Legislation of three separate commissions in Chicago, which were responsible for each creating a section of a unified network of parks and boulevards. The South Park Commission hired Olmsted and Vaux to create South Park, which later became Jackson and Washington Parks and the Midway Plaisance. The West Park Commission, which was to create an ensemble of three parks, known now as Humboldt, Garfield, and Douglas Parks, hired William Le Baron Jenney for the

original plans. The third park commission was originally only responsible for one park, Lincoln Park, however, it was intended that the landscape would be enlarged and boulevard connections would be made. The Lincoln Park Commission had less political clout and taxing ability. It hired Swain Nelson the local nurseryman who originally laid out the park, to design the new extensions. The original plans of the parks of all three Commissions were never fully implemented. Changes to the landscapes were inspired by numerous events and trends. Among these were the World's Columbian Exposition which took place in Jackson Park, the progressive movement which tested social reform programming in existing parks, and the recreation movement which tended to emphasize active sports and activities. A number of important designers contributed to changes in the properties of the original park commissions including the Olmsted Brothers, Jens Jensen, Ossian C. Simonds, and Alfred Caldwell.

*Additional Parklands of the Three Original Park Commissions 1904-1934* The legislation which established the three park commissions did not

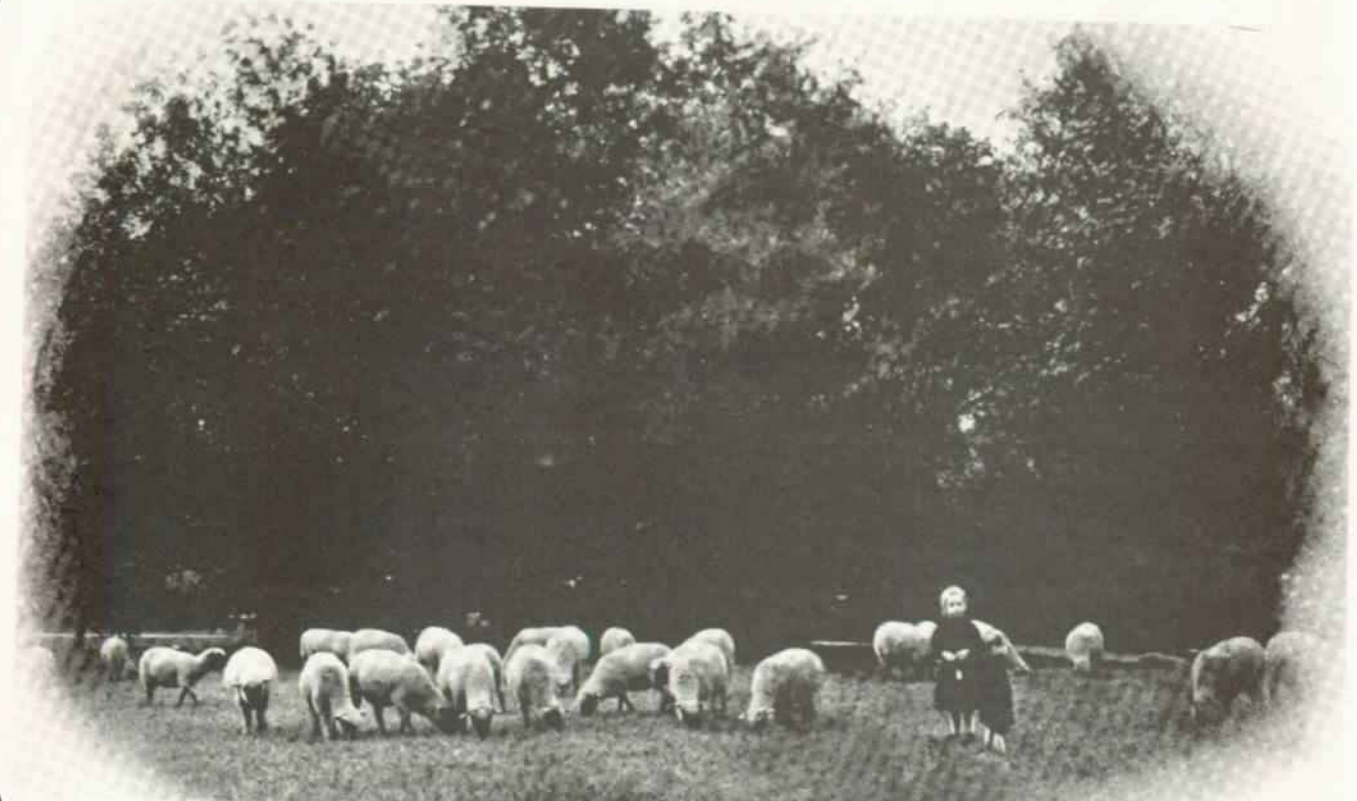


Figure 4: Frederick Law Olmsted Sr.'s Sheep Meadow in Washington Park. From the *South Park Commissioners Annual Report for the Year 1906*. (courtesy Chicago Park District Special Collections)



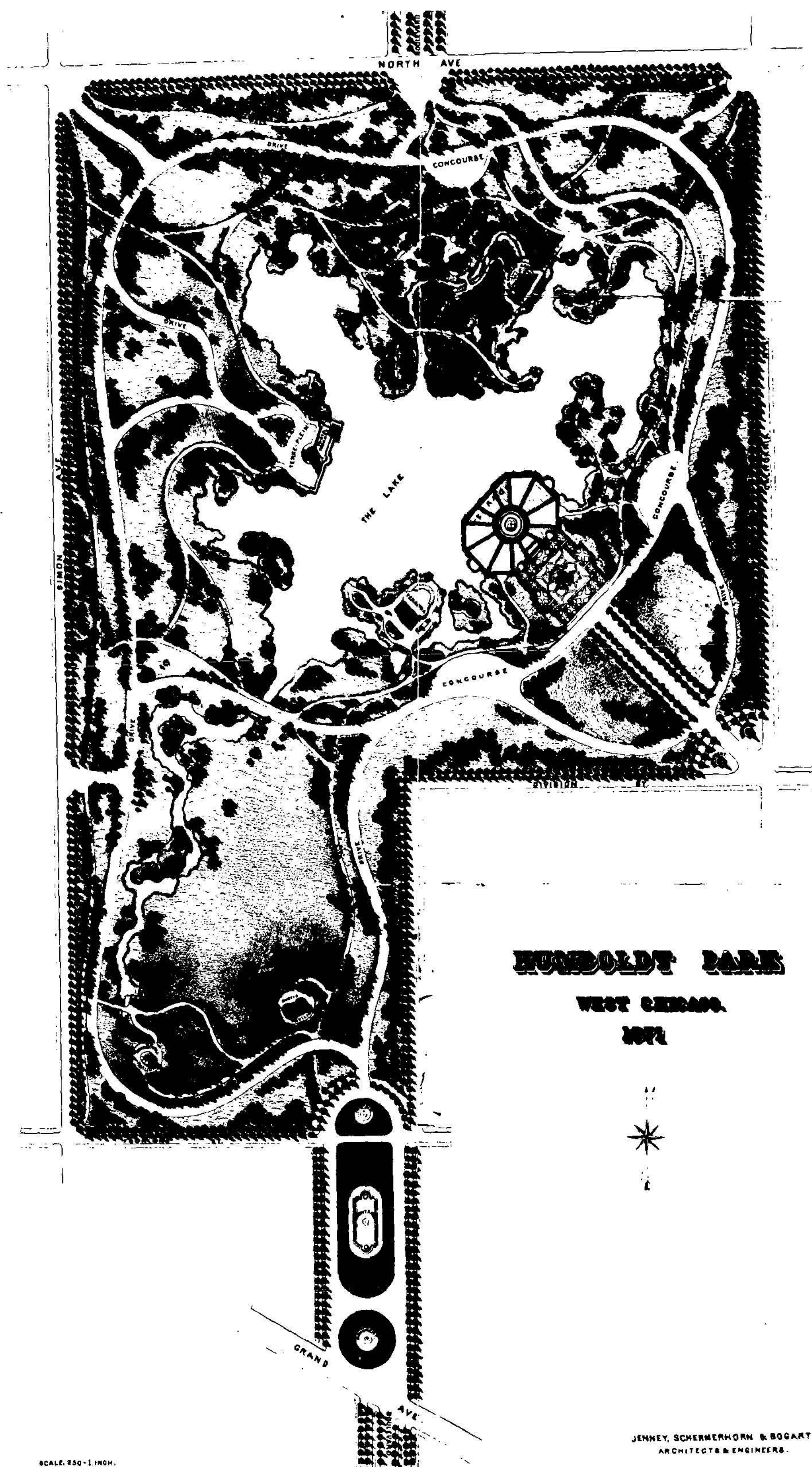


Figure 5: Plan for Humboldt Park by Jenney, Schermerhorn & Bogart, 1871. From *Annual Report for the West Chicago Park Commission for the year 1872*. (courtesy Chicago Park District Special Collections)



allow for the creation of new parks. At the time the boulevard system was at the city's outer perimeter, and the population of its inner section began expanding rapidly with the industrial boom of the turn of the century. The South Park Commission pioneered efforts to create new parks in the congested tenement districts within its jurisdiction. A visionary General Superintendent, J. Frank Foster and collaboration with social reformers allowed the South Park Commission to make a major contribution to the Progressive Movement. In 1904, the Olmsted Brothers and D.H. Burnham and Company began collaborative plans to develop a seminal system of fourteen new parks providing a variety of recreational, educational, health, and social services to the immigrant communities in need. Within the next several years, the West Park and Lincoln Park Commissions followed suit. Jens Jensen and architect William Carbys Zimmerman created new small parks in the congested west side neighborhoods, utilizing many Prairie style elements. An important Prairie School architect, Dwight H. Perkins, contributed to the development

of new neighborhood parks on the north side for the Lincoln Park Commission.

*Parks and Boulevards of the Nineteen Additional Park Districts 1895-1934* Between 1869 and the 1890s Chicago grew considerably due to the annexations of a number of separate townships. Thus, growing portions of the city were not within the jurisdiction of the South, West or Lincoln Park Commissions. In 1895, demands from the residents of these unserved areas led to new legislation allowing voters the opportunity to petition for separate park districts to serve their areas. Ultimately nineteen small park districts were formed to improve streets and boulevards and create and manage parks in these new areas of Chicago. As the neighborhoods served by the small park districts tended to be middle or upper class, most of them did not need the programs offered by the parks of the Progressive Reform Movement. That movement did, however, result in certain service and facility expectations which were increasingly expected by all park constituencies,

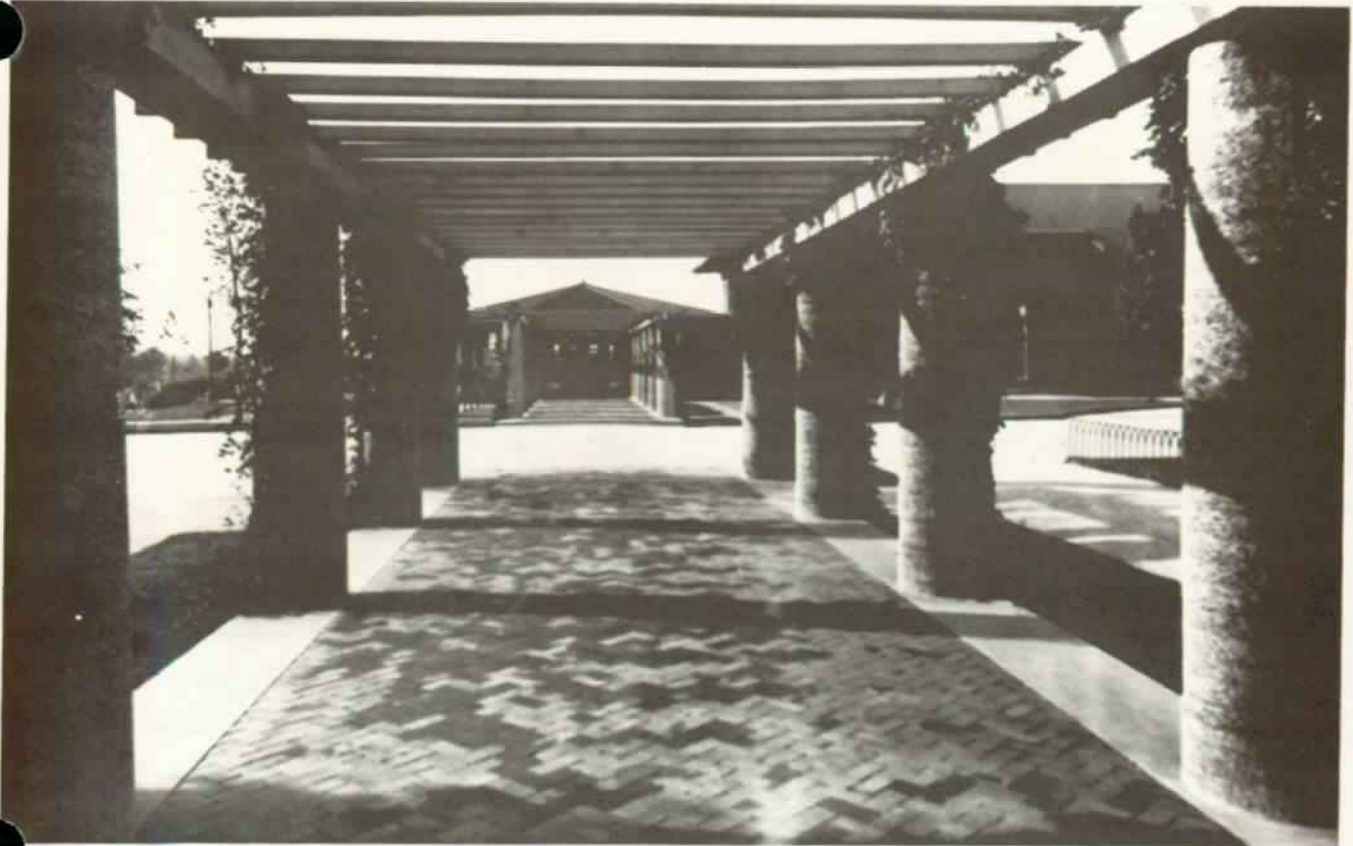


Figure 6: Sherman Park Pergola. From *South Park Commissioners Annual Report for the year 1909*. (courtesy Chicago Park District Special Collections)











in 1906 in Humboldt, Garfield, and Douglas Parks represent an early process of experimentation in which he still relied on formal elements and exotic plants. In contrast, his Columbus Park design of 1918 to 1920 represents the fully evolved expression of his Prairie style. The landscape is extremely naturalistic, and in its design Jensen relied almost exclusively on native plantings. An understanding the evolution of the work of one designer therefore helps guide the appropriate treatments for all four parks.

In some instances, the historic character of a landscape does not merely reflect the intention of an individual designer, but rather a combination of social and political expectations and the visions of several designers shaped the evolution of a park's design. This was the case with Grant Park, a lakefront open space which received a covenant in the 1840s requiring that the parkland remain "free and clear of buildings." Remaining largely unimproved throughout the remainder of the

century, by the 1890s the park began attracting the attention of important designers and civic organizations including Peter B. Wight for the Municipal Improvement League and Daniel H. Burnham as part of his Commercial Club work that led to the *1909 Plan of Chicago*. There were many plans, including work by the Olmsted Brothers, and much disagreement about the appropriateness of buildings in the park. While there were many different schemes, all were inspired by French Renaissance landscapes.

Development of the park was held up by years of litigation focusing on the obstruction of lakefront views. After it was determined that the early restriction would prevent the construction of buildings in Grant Park the park was improved, however, it never received a new singular overall plan. Edward Bennett, co-author of the *1909 Plan of Chicago* was responsible for much of the work, but a number of other designers contributed to the evolution including in-house Chicago Park District

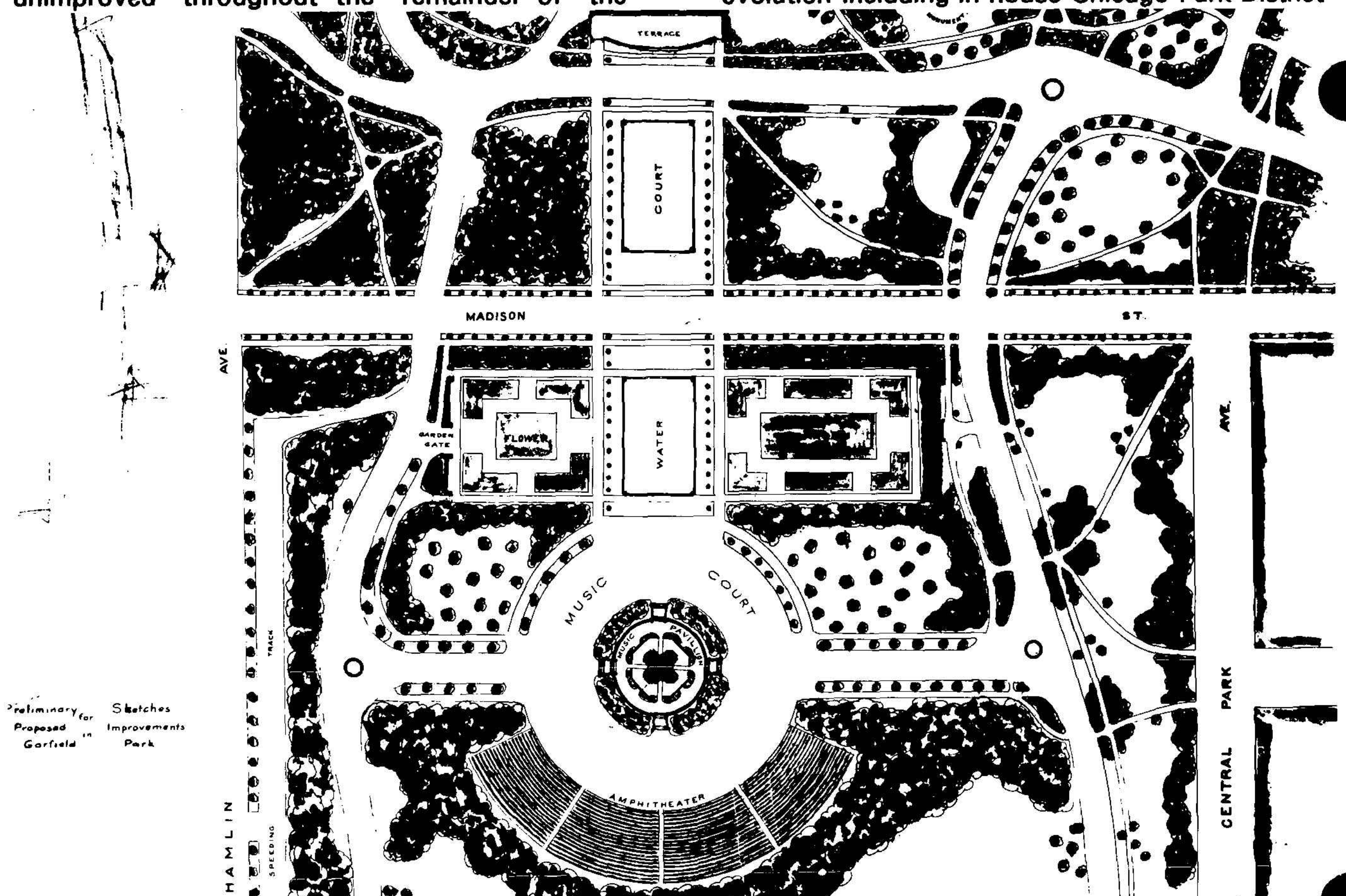


Figure 9: Garfield Park Music Court, Water Courts and Flower Gardens. *Preliminary Sketches for proposed Improvements in Garfield Park*. Photograph of watercolor on trace by Jens Jensen, 1906. (courtesy Chicago Park District Special Collections)



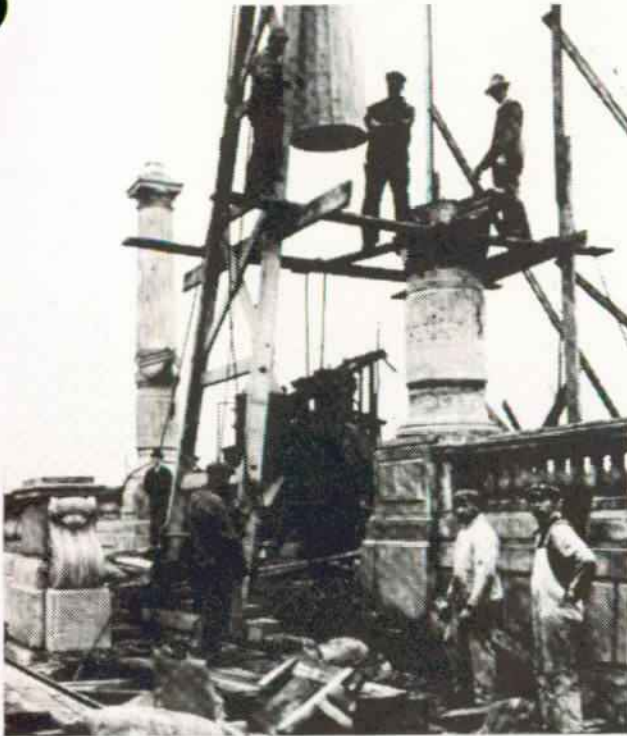


Figure 10: Grant Park. Construction of cast concrete balustrades, rostral columns and other elements of the terraces in Grant Park, designed by Edward Bennett, 1916. (courtesy Art Institute of Chicago)

architects and landscape architects. Improvements designers, most of the contributions respected its long-standing tradition as a formal Beaux Arts landscape.

Grant Park is Chicago's major festival park, and its landscape, which includes formal allees of more than one thousand elm trees, is suffering from severe overuse. Fortunately, the park has recently

were made over a period of many years and some areas remain unfinished to this day. Though the park contains a variety of projects by different become the focus of a city community-driven master planning process. The effort has generated a new set of design guidelines for Grant Park, which focus upon park boundaries, programming, land uses, new structures, accessibility, reforestation. The over-riding design principles set forth by the guidelines recognize the extraordinary historic significance of the park. A preservation framework plan serves as the document's foundation. Creating this framework plan, proved difficult, due to Grant Park's evolutionary character, unfinished areas and features, and loss

of historic fabric. In order to successfully grapple with these issues, a Historic Template concept was developed. The template provides a framework that respects not only the park's existing historic features, but also the various designs associated with the landscape over time. While the device can best be understood as an aggregate historic plan layed over the current park, the template is three dimensional. It recognizes the often subtle spatial qualities of the park, including the definition of room-like spaces, terraced parterres and sunken lawn panels, important views and historic relationships between features.

### Conclusion

Although the "historic template" terminology is generally applied only to Grant Park's formal landscape, its overall concept is applied to each park as it receives an intensive level study. Essentially the approach considers rehabilitation as the appropriate treatment for historic urban parks. The intent is to enhance and protect the park's historic character, without eliminating new design solutions that respond to current problems and new uses. The intensive level of documentation, which is not only undertaken for master planning, but also to generate individual National Register nominations helps to clearly define historic character. So far a total of eight parks have been fully documented and nominated to the National Register. A number of additional buildings have been nominated in parks which have little landscape integrity, or in which the landscapes have not yet been fully documented. It will be many years before all eighty parks can be analyzed and formally nominated to the National Register and a Chicago Park District landmarks, the historic context and existing landmarks eligible list are important tools to insuring the protection of the Park District's multitude of historic park resources.

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## Landmarks of Landscape Architecture: The Historical Context for National Park Service Landscape Architecture

Ethan Carr

In the years between the end of World War I and the American entry into World War II, the newly-created National Park Service modernized and developed the national park system extensively. Park service landscape architects and engineers designed scenic roads, campgrounds, administrative villages, and a myriad of other park facilities in what proved to be the most intensive period of such human alterations in the history of the parks. It was during this era that the "developed areas" in national parks (and in many state and local parks as well) acquired the consistent appearance, character, and level of convenience that most visitors have since come to associate, almost unconsciously, with their experience of park scenery, wildlife, and wilderness.

Park design, or landscape architecture, has figured prominently in the history of national parks since the nineteenth century. This may seem a paradox since many people intuitively reject the importance of human design in an environment valued primarily for its pristine, natural condition. The natural wonders of national parks obviously brook no comparison to any works of landscape art; but the significance of landscape architecture in such a setting lies in how and where these natural features are appreciated, not in the creation of alternative attractions. Designed landscapes guide the experience of many park visitors and enhance their appreciation of the vast wilderness beyond. Roads and trails, for example, lead visitors to certain areas and through a considered sequence of views. Campgrounds, park villages, scenic overlooks, parking areas--all the designed portions of the park--shape the overall pattern of public activities and frame visual encounters with the awesome (and certainly *undesigned*) scenery of the larger park landscape. The importance of landscape archi-

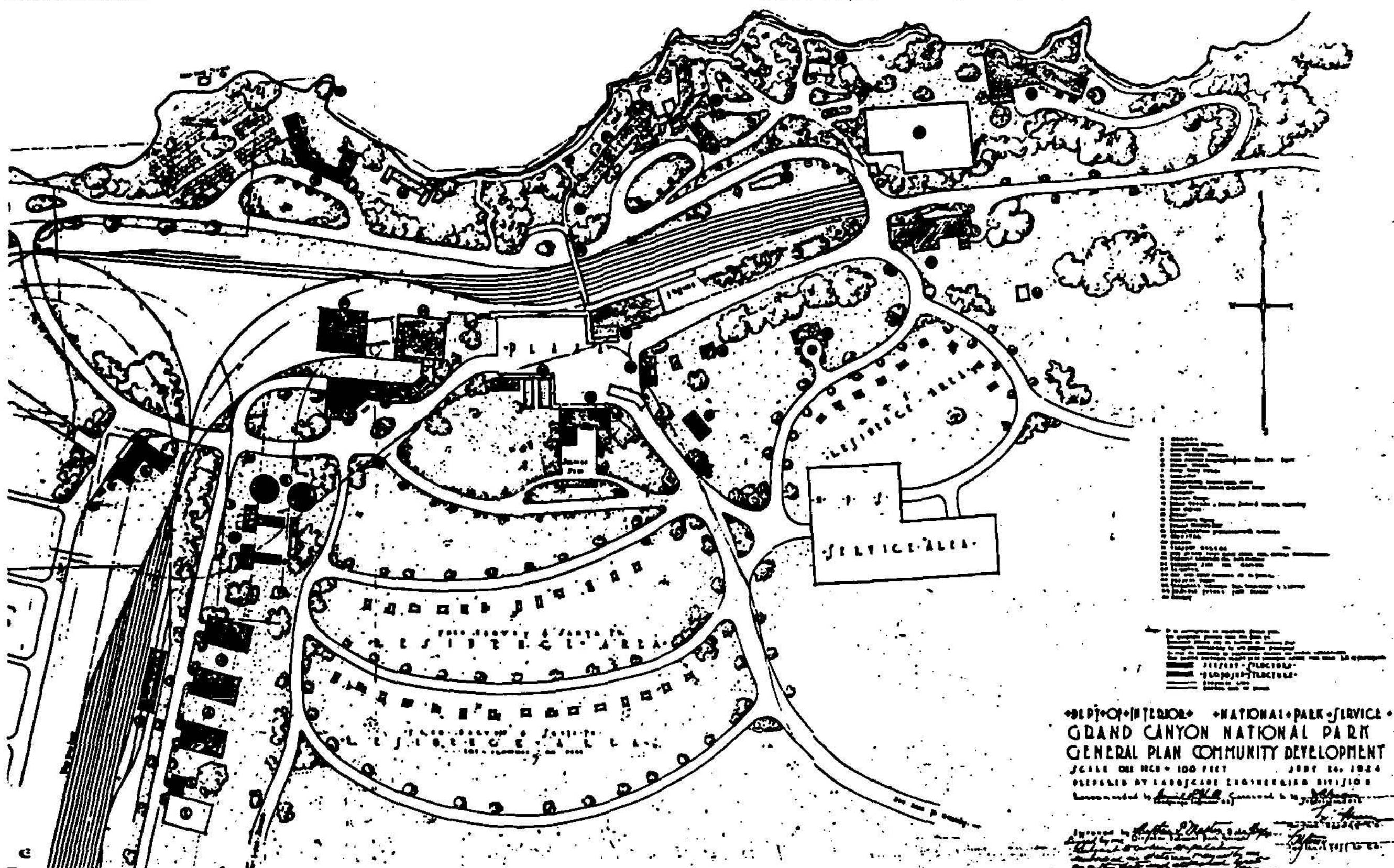
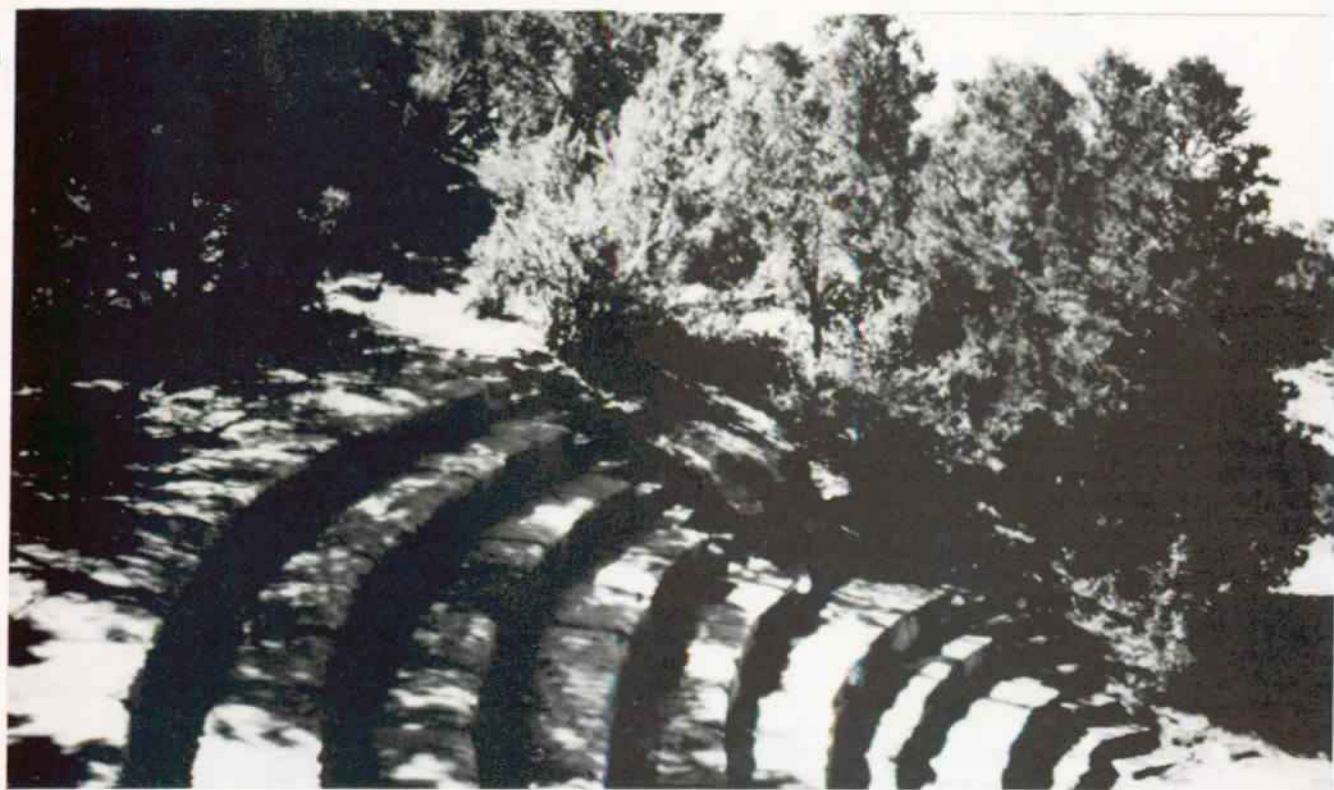
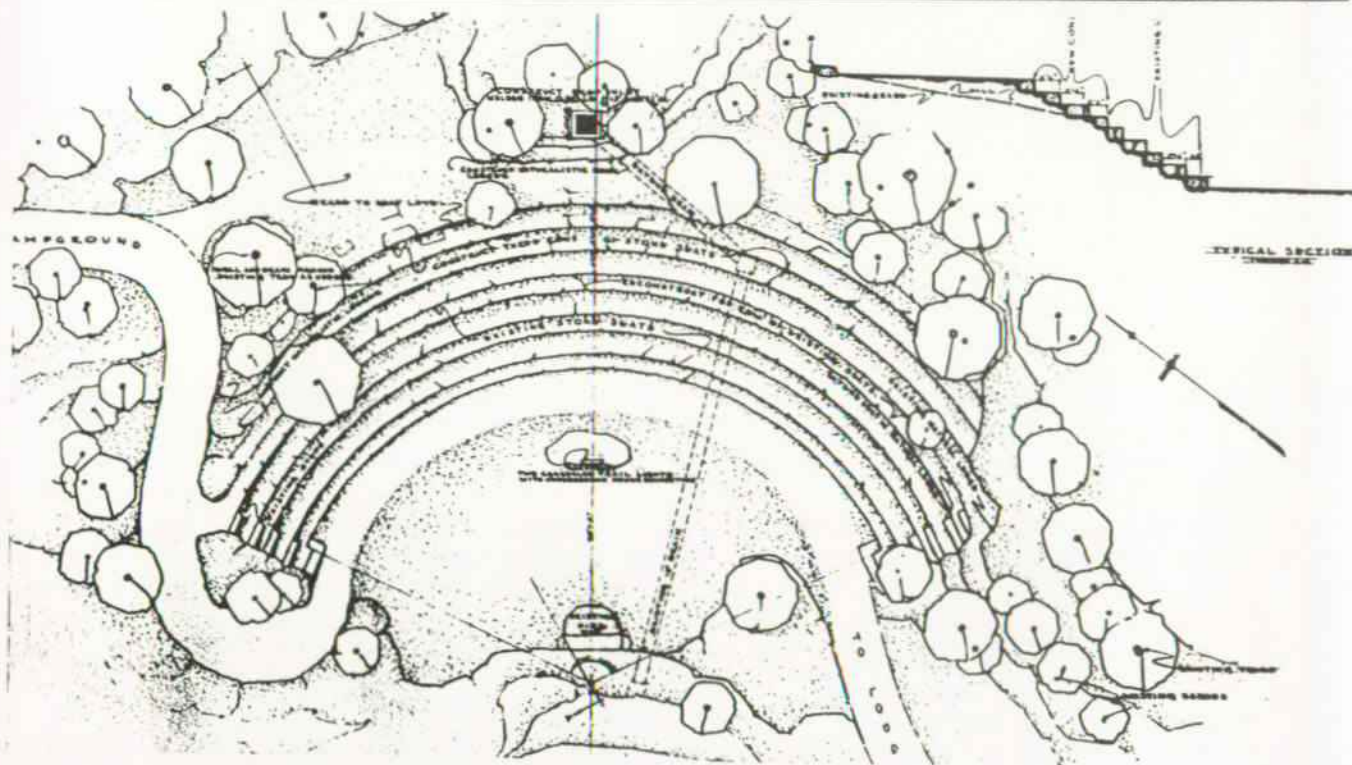


Figure 1: *General Plan Community Development*, Grand Canyon National Park. Signed: Daniel R. Hull, landscape architect, June 1924. This ambitious town plan was the product of a collaboration between Daniel Hull and the architectural consultants working for the Fred Harvey Company, including Mary Elizabeth Jane Colter. The design partially separates pedestrian and automobile traffic, with the front doors of one residential area opening onto pedestrian ways. (courtesy NPS, Technical Information Center, Denver.)





Figures 2 and 3: *Campfire Circle Extension*, Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado. Signed: Charles A. Richey, landscape architect, December, 1939. (courtesy NPS, Technical Information Center, Denver); Campground Campfire Circle, completed ca. 1940, Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado. The Mesa Verde campgrounds, including this remarkable stone amphitheater, are adjacent to the park's Administrative District, which was made a National Historic Landmark District for significance in architecture in 1987. (courtesy E. Carr)



ture to the history of national parks, in other words, relates to the public's use and appreciation of the parks. For most visitors, even today, the emotional enjoyment achieved through the appreciation of landscape beauty is not an inevitable, accidental, or haphazard affair. The designed landscapes within the park choreograph visitors' movements and define the pace and sequence of much of their experience. The designed landscapes mediate between the individual and the vast terrain of the back country and all it contains. Wilderness and designed landscape together generate the aesthetic appreciation of landscapes and the spiritual communion with nature which, at least historically, the word *park* implied.

National Park Service landscape architectural design between the world wars resulted in hundreds of varied, interesting, and in some cases nationally significant park landscapes in national, state, and local parks. These designed landscapes shaped -- and continue to shape -- the experiences of millions of park visitors. In 1992, the Park Historic Architecture Division of the National Park Service (Washington Office) began a National Historic Landmark theme study of landscape architecture designed by the park service during these years. This theme study, *Parks and Preservation: Landmarks of National Park Service Landscape Architecture*, will consider as many examples of this work as possible and will also establish a framework for selecting a group of exceptional park designs that illustrate this aspect of American landscape architectural history. National Historic Landmark nomination forms will be prepared for those examples.<sup>1</sup>

A critical aspect of any National Historic Landmark theme study is the historical context, or essay portion, which provides the basis for comparative analysis of a proposed landmark with other sites that may also be associated with a given *theme* in American history. Such historical background and comparison are necessary prerequisites for establishing the *national historical significance* of the nominated sites. One way of appreciating the historical significance of individual state and national parks designed by the park service in the early twentieth century is by placing them within the broader context of the American park movement overall: the movement, in other words,

that since the mid-nineteenth century has led to the creation of municipal, county, state, and federal parks all over the country.

As a first step in establishing this broad historical context, the role of picturesque aesthetics (or simply, the appreciation of landscape beauty and composition) will be considered as the nexus of these various types of park design and development.<sup>2</sup> The nineteenth-century American fascination with the imagery of landscapes was exemplified in literature, painting, and landscape design all of which responded to or evoked the American landscape as a central influence on the national character. Perhaps the most impressive physical products of this emerging culture were the many parks that were set aside for the health and enjoyment of the general public by municipalities, states, and the federal government. Today, these public parks are more than nature preserves and recreational amenities; few other cultural artifacts more profoundly reflect the aesthetics and ideals of the American republic since the Civil War.

The study's historical context will discuss how the urge to create public parks in the United States derived from a reaction to the rapid growth and development that was experienced in the mid-nineteenth century, both on the peripheries of expanding American cities and on the frontiers of agricultural and extractive enterprises in the West. In either case, the simple rectangular survey dominated as the method of property distribution and development. City blocks and agricultural *sections* were both laid out according to the simple, gridded certainty of rectangular surveys. In the new wards of cities and towns, in the organizing Rocky Mountain territories, and in states such as New York and California, the public park set aside typically for health and recreation, intervened in the otherwise undifferentiated survey grids. The public park -- whether on Manhattan Island or in Wyoming Territory -- became a pervasive response to the excesses of land subdivision and development and emerged as a picturesque counterpoint within the gridded survey.

Such a context for discussing the park in American landscape history will include formal and intellectual precedents for park design and development as well. The American propensity for land subdivision was presaged by the British



enthusiasm for enclosing agricultural lands, and the landscape park, as a formal type, first appeared in eighteenth-century England. The park, as most radically and completely expressed by the English landscape designer Lancelot (*Capability*) Brown, exalted an aesthetic achieved through the appreciation of landscape beauty. Brown replaced the earlier terraced gardens of his patrons' estates with pictures of rolling meadows and serpentine lakes framed by masses of trees. His parks inverted the equation of architecture and site; they did not extend the architectural space of the manor house, rather the buildings themselves became sited elements in a much larger, more encompassing work of design: the landscape park. Manor houses, workers' cottages, even entire villages all were carefully sited in composed landscape pictures arranged, not on canvas, but through the manipulation and augmentation of existing topography, vegetation, and water. Brown and his fellow landscape designers revealed the *genius of the place* -- the existing landscape -- by manipu-

lating landscape features and materials according to a set of compositional rules derived from landscape painting and descriptive poetry rather than architectural paradigms. The aesthetic also eschewed any evidence of the agricultural and industrial revolutions which were transforming Great Britain into the world's first industrial nation. In the landscape park, only rustic, pastoral imagery complemented the desired scenic compositions.<sup>3</sup>

The appreciation of landscape beauty in Great Britain in the eighteenth century extended to tourism, painting, and poetry as well as landscape design; all of these activities profoundly influenced how landscape beauty came to be appreciated in this country in the nineteenth century. The formal characteristics of the landscape park--such as curvilinear circuit drives, clump and belt plantations, serpentine sheets of water, and smooth expanses of meadows--also affected how public park landscapes were subsequently conceived on this side of the Atlantic. American

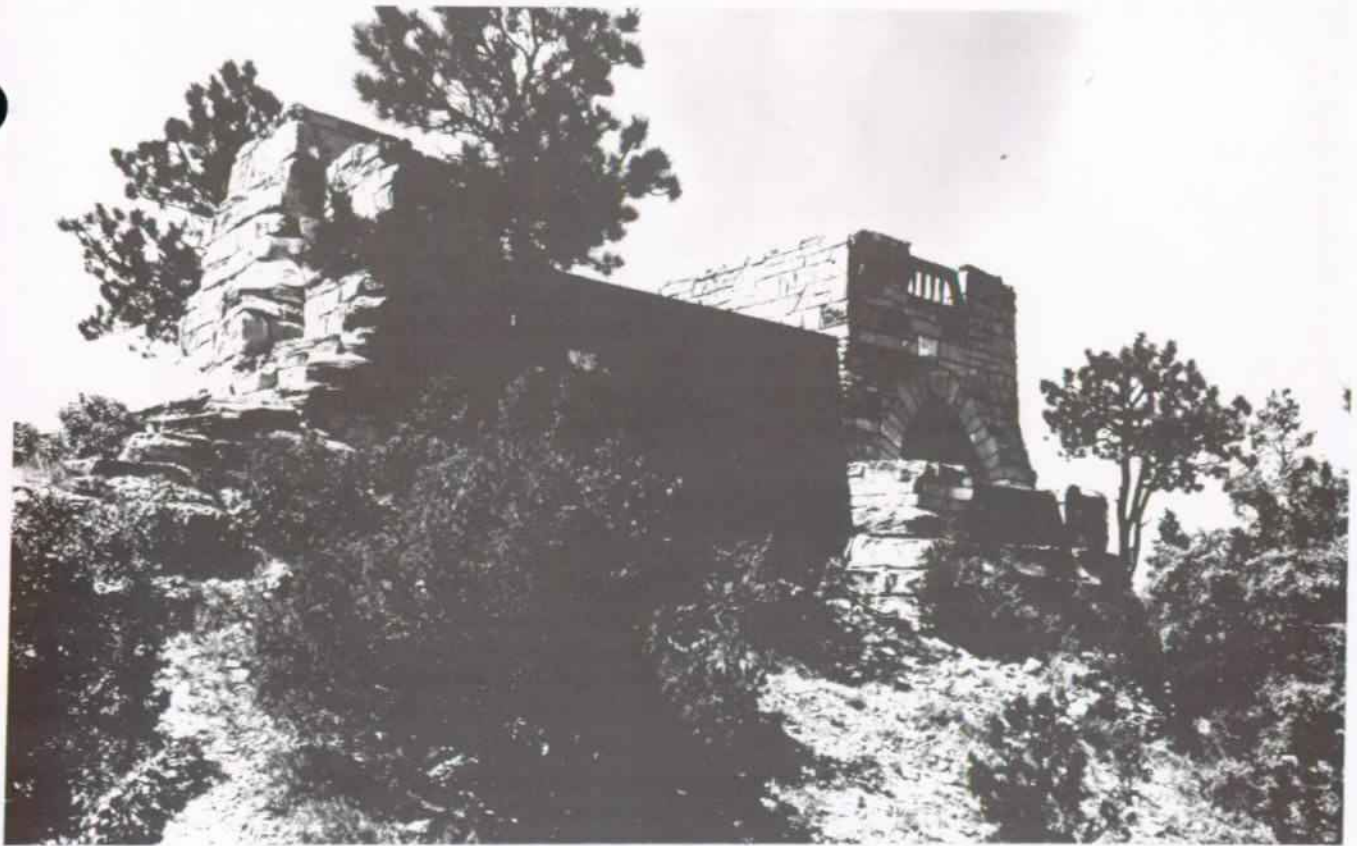


Figure 4: *The Castle*, lookout tower and picnic shelter, Guernsey Lake State Park, Wyoming. Completed in 1936 by CCC recruits. E.S. Mosher, landscape architect. Guernsey Lake was one of hundreds of state parks designed by the National Park Service in the 1930s. The landscape architects worked as a team with architects and engineers to create a unified design (*master plan*) for the development of the entire park, including structures, roads and trails, and other facilities. (courtesy Mark Junge)



landscape architects applied many of the ideas and practices of eighteenth-century park design to the practical purposes of urban design and landscape preservation in places as diverse as Manhattan Island and the Sierra Nevada.<sup>4</sup> It was through designed parks and parkways, for example, that American municipalities first attempted to control the patterns of their expansion in the decades following the Civil War. The idea of landscape-based urbanism expanded in scale as cities did the same. The first metropolitan and county park systems in Massachusetts and New Jersey used metropolitan *reservations* to preserve scenic areas in suburbs by developing them as scenic parks: that is by acquiring the land, providing improved access from population centers, and establishing certain means -- such as parkways and overlooks -- to facilitate the emotional pleasure and attachment derived from the appreciation of regional landscape beauty.<sup>5</sup> In this way park advocates created advocacies and brought together disparate, usually antagonistic groups, such as real estate speculators

and scenic preservationists. Metropolitan parks, as some landscape architects went to great pains to demonstrate, could preserve scenic areas around expanding cities while enhancing property values in adjacent districts; major public health and transportation issues were addressed in park system planning as well.<sup>6</sup> In the last decades of the nineteenth century, an extraordinary number of park and parkway systems were created by municipalities that sought the economic as well as aesthetic and healthful benefits of what would be described later, in the early twentieth century, as city planning.

The metropolitan park and parkway system emerged as the major intervention in the relentless subdivision along the ubiquitous, rectangular survey grids that characterized urban growth in the United States. The national park, remarkably, appeared in a similar formal diagram, under very different (and vastly enlarged) circumstances, at around the same time. In 1872, about 2,500 square miles in

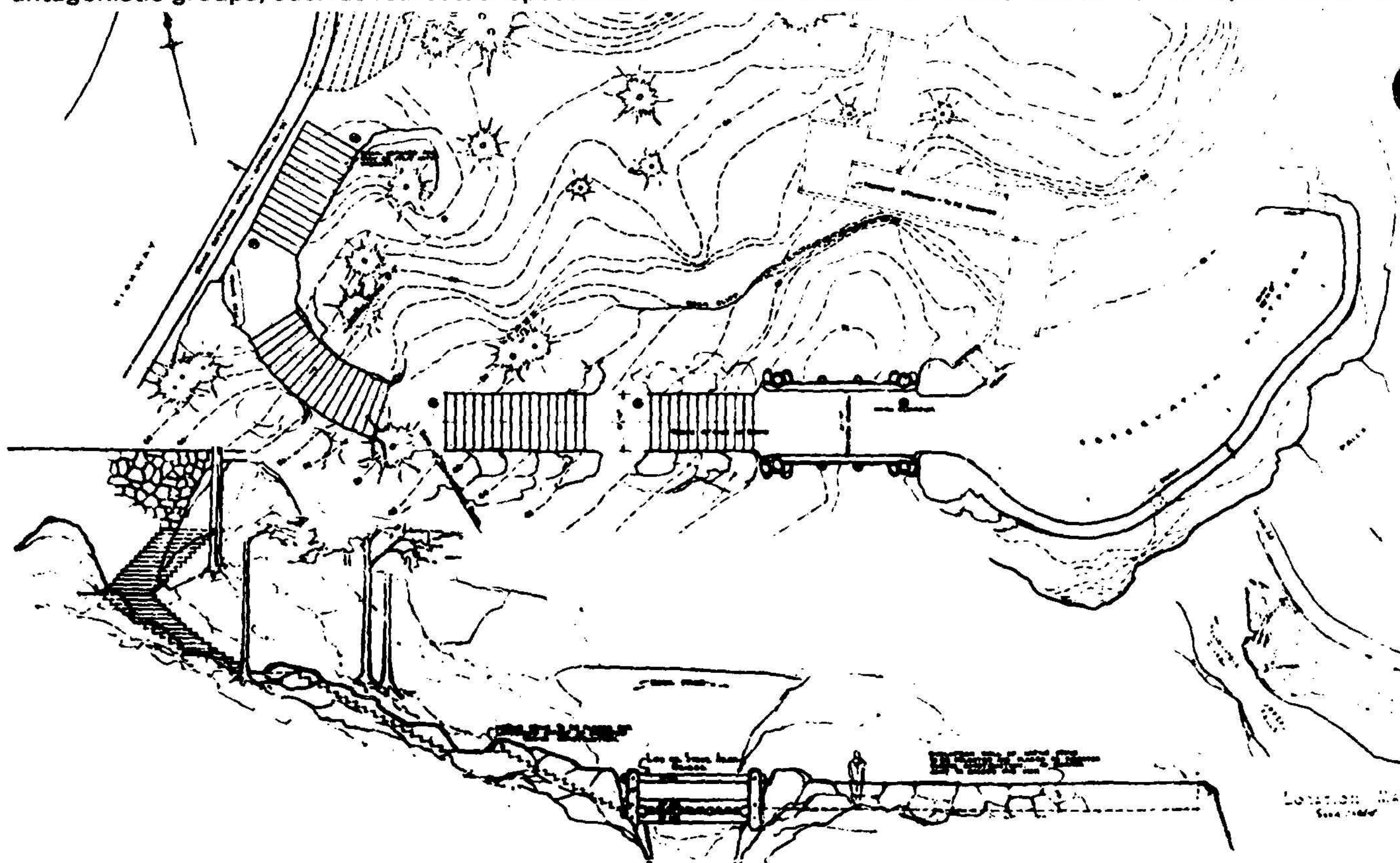


Figure 5: *Upper Falls Platform, Yellowstone National Park.* Signed by Thomas C. Vint, July 1936. Many of the original observation platforms, trails, and stairways from the 20's and 30's still exist at Yellowstone, despite heavy-handed changes to some roadways and larger "developed areas" that occurred after World War II. The wooden stairs replaced by the stone work of this design are shown in dotted lines at the top of the drawing. (courtesy NPS, Technical Information Center, Denver.)



square miles in Montana and Wyoming Territories were withdrawn from public sale for the creation of a public park and pleasure-ground: Yellowstone National Park.<sup>7</sup> Yellowstone was withdrawn out of the Federal ordinance survey (which had been the basis for the division of western lands into a grid of townships and sections since the 1780s) just as, twenty years earlier, Central Park had been carved out of the *Commissioners' Survey* that had determined the grid of streets and avenues in New York City since 1811. Just as real estate investors had quickly perceived the benefits accrued to them by municipal park development, railroad executives had perceived the potential for national parks: as lucrative destination resorts serviced by their lines. The Northern Pacific Railroad lobbied effectively to pass the necessary legislation for Yellowstone, as the Southern Pacific Railroad had for the Yosemite Grant eight years earlier in 1864.<sup>8</sup>

Although the varied interests lobbying for the new western parks probably had only limited ideas for their eventual physical development, certain formal concepts were inherent in the notion of a park. At Yellowstone, for example, a curvilinear carriage drive reaching the principal attractions and scenic views in the park in a great loop was well under way by the 1880s and was completed by 1905.<sup>9</sup> Architectural embellishments at Yellowstone, while luxurious, would retain a rustic inspiration in materials and craftsmanship (as epitomized finally in the Old Faithful Inn, 1903). More importantly, the activities of park visitors would continue to be those of the picturesque tourist: seeking out and appreciating landscape beauty. The views from a carriage moving along a curvilinear drive, whether in Central Park or Yellowstone Park, facilitated the appreciation of landscape compositions in both places. And whether those compositions were contrived, as in the urban park, or simply reserved, as in the national park, the emotional (even spiritual) experience of the appreciation of landscape beauty unified the park concept.

There exist, in other words, certain formal and conceptual unities in the context of American park history that bind together parks of very different scales and in very different settings; and the historical significance of individual park designs are reinforced by such a contextual history. The early twentieth century, to turn to the subject at hand, was a critical period in the history of American park



Figure 6: Thomas Vint (second from left) and National Park Service landscape architects, ca. 1938. (courtesy National Park Service, Historic Photographic Collection)

design and development. The availability of inexpensive automobiles and the decreased number of hours most Americans spent working every year transformed patterns of public recreation in the years preceding the creation of the National Park Service in 1916. After the end of World War I, automobile ownership skyrocketed and driving became an increasingly common adjunct of outdoor recreation. County and metropolitan park systems continued to grow in scenic areas around cities such as New York and Chicago. By the early 1920s state park systems that featured myriad opportunities for outdoor recreation were underway in almost two dozen states.<sup>10</sup> New mountain parks, scenic parkways, public beaches, golf courses, and campgrounds were particularly suited to relatively rural areas that were becoming more accessible to millions of Americans now equipped with automobiles and the free time to use them.

National parks, under the leadership of the first director of the park service, Stephen T. Mather, were no exception to the dramatic changes occurring in the American park. In the nineteenth century, for example, a visitor to Yellowstone typically arrived by train, saw the park from horse-drawn vehicles that rode on carriage drives, and stayed in a centrally located hotel. In contrast, the early twentieth-century visitor increasingly drove to the park, camped out, and controlled his or her own itinerary for seeing the sights. These more numerous (and often more middle-class) tourists needed campgrounds, parking lots, decentralized



conveniences, and paved park drives with frequent scenic overlooks, modernized alignments, and increased lane widths. The public's use and perception of national parks were changing radically in the twentieth century, and new pressures were put on existing park landscapes. As the annual number of national park visitors climbed during the 1920s from hundreds of thousands to millions, landscape architects and engineers were able to draw on traditions of American park and parkway design, while adapting those traditions to twentieth-century technologies. By the mid-1920s, landscape architects Daniel R. Hull, Thomas C. Vint and other park service landscape designers and engineers had initiated a characteristic style of park development that responded to the practical necessity for modernizing park facilities, while remaining consonant with the inspirational scenery. The

landscapes and structures they designed maximized the use of local and native materials and stressed traditional construction techniques. Park developments of this era, which are still to be found from Mount Rainier to Mount Desert Island, helped establish a popular, *rustic* image of national parks that persists today.

If state and local park development had been an influence on this early national park landscape architecture, the park service, in turn, quickly influenced the progress of state and local parks. The broader interests of the park service were never limited to the national parks themselves. Mather helped convene the first National Conference on State Parks in 1921, and he believed that encouraging state and local park development was an important part of achieving a truly national park system.<sup>11</sup> The greatest oppor-



Figure 7: West Rim Trail, Zion National Park, Utah. Completed ca. 1926, Daniel Hull, Thomas Vint, landscape architects. Trails built under extremely difficult conditions required considerable design and engineering. Some trails, such as the West Rim/Angel's Landing Trail and the Gateway to the Narrows Trail in Zion, and the Moro Rock Stairway in Sequoia, are already listed in the National Register of Historic Places and may be eligible for nomination as National Historic Landmarks. (courtesy E. Carr)



tunities in assisting local park development arrived later, however, as a result of the economic disaster of the early 1930s. When Franklin Delano Roosevelt launched his New Deal programs in the Spring of 1933, the park service was in a unique position to provide the technical services and field management that emergency conservation work desperately needed. The range and quantity of park service landscape design services increased rapidly, and scores of formerly unemployed, professional landscape architects came to work in new positions with the park service. Park service landscape architects designed state, county, and metropolitan parks, and of course they continued to plan for the growing national park system, which experienced an increase in the variety and number of landscape designs commissions. The greatest increase resulted from the Executive Order reorganization of 1933, in which Roosevelt shifted responsibility for dozens of historic sites, battlefields, and national monuments from other agencies to the park service. These additions constituted a formidable range of park service properties in the East for the first time and expanded the very idea of a national park.

Many important initiatives of the New Deal involved park service landscape architects and planners. The design and construction activities they supervised in national and state parks embodied a wide mandate of national planning for public recreation. The 1936 Park, Parkway, and Recreational Area Study Act<sup>12</sup> asked the park service to plan a national park and recreation system that would consider the recreational needs of the country as a whole, and that would plan for future recreational uses of public lands generally, not just in parks. New kinds of parks, like the Recreational Demonstration Area, the National Recreation Area, and the National Seashore were planned in the 1930s, often on land that had been acquired in connection with other activities, such as soil conservation or dam construction. And since all of these different types of park and recreation landscapes were to be considered as parts of a connected park system, a national parkway plan was begun. The Blue Ridge and Natchez Trace Parkways are the best known results of what was originally conceived as a system of recreational parkway corridors linking national parks, seashores, and recreation areas with other scenic and historic areas all over the country.

The successful nomination of these individual national and state park landscapes as National Historic Landmarks depends on establishing the larger historical context that lends these places their special significance in American design history. The context of the study will also influence related technical issues, such as the criteria for determining integrity, and the establishment of the boundaries of the proposed historic districts. It is the historical context of American park history that, in the end, must illuminate the importance of individual works of park design, and justify their elevation to National Historic Landmark status.

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#### Endnotes

1. For the criteria and procedures for National Historic Landmark nominations, see: U. S., Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 16A: How to Complete the National Register Form* (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1991), pp. 68-70.
2. The term *picturesque* has many historical meanings but is used here simply to describe a mode of perception and inquiry into the visual qualities of landscape beauty: "The capacity for seeing nature with the painter's eye was picturesque vision." Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (London: Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., 1927), p.64.
3. "Because the landscape garden was contiguous with the enclosed landscape, the antithesis between the instrumental and noninstrumental (aesthetic) use of land was pronounced, finally coming to shape the aesthetics of garden composition itself." Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 11.
4. Specifically, in the case of F.L. Olmsted, in the design for Central Park, New York (1858), and in his (suppressed) "Preliminary Report upon the Yosemite and the Yosemite and Big Tree Grove" (1865). Victoria Post Ranney, ed., *The California Frontier, 1863-1865, The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, 1863-1865, The Papers of Frederick, Volume V* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), pp. 488-516.
5. In the late eighteenth century, the theorist and travel writer William Gilpin provided some of the best descriptions of this emotional experience: "We are most delighted, when some grand scene. . . rising before the eye, strikes us beyond the power of thought — when the *vox faucibus haeret*; and every mental operation is suspended. In this pause of the intellect; this *deliquium* of the soul, an enthusiastic sensation of pleasure overspreads it, previous to any examination by the rules of art . . . We rather *feel*, than *survey* it." William Gilpin, *Three Essays*



on *Picturesque Beauty* (London: 1792), pp. 49-50. Tony Hiss describes a similar sensation, perhaps, as "*simultaneous perception*." Tony Hiss, *The Experience of Place* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990).

6. Charles Eliot's work in the counties around Boston is summarized in his biography: Charles W. Eliot, *Charles Eliot, Landscape Architect* (Boston, 1902). The story of the nation's first county park system is told in: Frederick W. Kelsey, *The First County Park System: A Complete History of the Inception and Development of the Essex County Parks of New Jersey* (New York: J. S. Ogilvie, 1905). Early park commission reports, beginning with the *Reports to the Board of Commissioners of Central Park* (New York, 1857-1870), often used tax revenue statistics to demonstrate the financial benefits to municipal governments achieved through park and parkway development. John Nolen made a special study of this aspect of landscape architectural planning, which was published posthumously: John Nolen and Henry V. Hubbard, *Parkways and Land Values*, Harvard City Planning Series XI (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1937).

7. Aubrey L. Haines, *The Yellowstone Story*, Vol 1. (Yellowstone Library and Museum Association in cooperation with Colorado Associated University Press, 1977), pp. 166-167.

8. Alfred Runte, *Trains of Discovery: Western Railroads and the National Parks*, revised edition (Niwot, Colorado: Roberts Rinehart, Inc. Publishers, 1990), pp. 13-30; pp. 49-61; idem, *Yosemite: The Embattled Wilderness* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), pp. 54-56.

9. Haines, p. 214.

10. Beatrice Ward Nelson, *State Recreation: Parks, Forests and Game Preserves* (Washington, D.C.: National Conference on State Parks, 1928).

11. Mather's involvement in state parks was especially important in his native California, where he helped organize the Save-the-Redwoods League in 1918. John B. Dewitt, *California Redwood Parks and Preserves* (San Francisco: Save-the-Redwoods League, 1985), pp. 9-11.

12. The report requested in this act was published in 1941. U. S., Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *A Study of the Parks and Recreation Problem in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior, 1941).



**Epilogue: In Context**  
Suzanne Turner

What, then, is the context for our deliberations on the state of the art of landscape preservation, and the place of contextual frameworks in that process? What is the canon of work that has preceded us, that has laid the foundation for the practice of landscape preservation? What are some of the benchmarks against which we might compare the work that is being done today by landscape architects and allied professionals?

In reflecting on this intense day of presentations and discussions, and in reading over the texts of the papers to which I had listened at Wave Hill, two things I had read recently kept coming to mind. They were both technical reports produced in the 1930s, both making recommendations about the future treatment of historic designed landscapes, both involving the collaboration of a historian and a landscape architect. One landscape was the White House, one of the most significant historic properties in the country; the other, a former Louisiana plantation landscape being developed as one of the state's first parks through the Civilian Conservation Corps--not a particularly significant site in the broad scheme of American landscape history, but certainly a representative piece from the period being covered in the Park Service's new initiative, the National Historic Landmark Theme Study.

In 1935, the Olmsted Brothers firm submitted a *Report to the President of the United States on Improvements and Policy of Maintenance for the Executive Mansion Grounds*. It is, in essence, a preservation and management plan for the White House Landscape. It is the document that has, to one degree or another, guided changes to this site for the past half-century. In the report's introductory section, the author speaks of the importance of perpetuating "the long established landscape qualities of great dignity and appropriateness;" and he explains that, "In order to understand them clearly and provide a sound basis for continuity of purpose in management, a thorough study of the history of the grounds is necessary."<sup>1</sup> Recognizing the need for an outside researcher to tackle the complex and voluminous history of the national President's residence, the firm enlisted the collaboration of Morley Williams, who had worked on the documentation and

restoration of the Mount Vernon landscape. Williams compiled an extensive *Historical Background of the Design of the White House Grounds* that forms Part Two of the Olmsted Report. Part One is an analysis of the physical site conditions as they relate to the programmatic needs for the President's residence in 1935.

One of the strengths of William's contribution to the document is the compilation of over sixty plans and images of the site throughout its history. Illustrations numbers 16 and 17 are "six sketch plans showing the seven main stages in the development of the President's house," showing in heavy line the main features of the schemes developed at each of the dates indicated. This encapsulated version of the morphology of the landscape from 1801 through 1870 allows us to graphically trace the site's change over time.

In William's closing comments, he explains that the period from 1871 until the date of the report was not included since the changes were relatively minor. He says that,

*We considered it our task rather to discover those ideas, whether or not still embodied in the present layout, which should be in the mind of the present and future designer in endeavoring to determine and maintain a scheme which should meet the changing necessities while maintaining the character fixed by the greater accomplishments of the past.*<sup>2</sup>

In the main body of the Olmsted report, the landscape architect debates possible solutions to the "contemporary" problems -- the need for more office space, more service access and better security -- and proposes unobtrusive new landscape layers that ameliorate these pressing problems, offering solutions like "an alarm system using photo-electric cells and an invisible cordon or fence of infra-red or ultra-violet rays such as have recently been developed for burglar alarms."<sup>3</sup>

The Olmsted recommendations are followed by a closing paragraph:

*If action is taken along the lines of our recommendations, careful study will still be necessary in order to avoid the danger of blurring or even nullifying the major effects. The construction plans and specifications should be*



*'thought through' in every detail in their relations to the character of the whole scheme (underline by Olmsted).*<sup>4</sup>

My overwhelming impression upon first reading of this report was that it sounded remarkably current in its tone, if not in its treatment philosophy. The sensibilities and concerns of both the historian and the landscape architects were right where they should have been -- with the large issue of the site's meaning and integrity, and the design of the appropriate treatment that would accommodate changing pressures while safeguarding the design intent of the several landscape layers embedded in this nationally hallowed ground. I have often complained about the enormous amount of attention and research time given over to the Olmsteds compared with other pioneers of the profession, but the clarity and insight of this report gave me pause to reflect upon the remarkable talents of these men who in so many ways defined the first century of the profession's American existence.

It seems ironic that at a recent meeting sponsored by the National Park Service to brainstorm *Desired Futures* for the White House and the President's Park, the Olmsted report was barely mentioned and was not referenced as a resource in the discussions, nor was the long and rich history of many of the most prominent American landscape designers associated with the White House landscape, including Andrew Jackson Downing, Beatrix Farrand, and Mrs. Paul Mellon. When sensitive issues of the preservation of the site's historic integrity were raised vis a vis the need for the chief executive's family to be able to adapt the landscape to their particular needs and tastes, preservation was considered a far-too-restrictive concept for the discussion of the future of this nationally significant landscape.

The second piece that came to mind was an excerpt from one of my graduate student's thesis research;<sup>5</sup> the thesis covers the influence of the Civilian Conservation Corps on the early history of state parks in Louisiana. The document was an internal memorandum submitted by the acting park service regional historian, Roy Appleman, to the regional director, dated April 14, 1938, and published in its entirety in the *Third Biennial Report: 1938-1939*, produced by the State Parks

Commission of Louisiana and printed in 1940. It was a critique of the plan being developed for Fontainebleau State Park, formerly a sugar cane plantation, pointing up issues that had not been addressed by the State Park Commission or the landscape architect, William Wells. Appleman summarized his concerns:

*The plan, with the exception of one site marked 'historic plantation sugar mill ruins,' does not show historical and cultural remains and ruins in the park. The plan should show them.*

*Among the notable omissions are: the extensive ruins of the old plantation mansion at the west end of the allee of old live oaks in the approximate position indicated by the word 'vista,' the old canal which led from Lake Ponchartrain along the south of the allee of old live oaks to the sugar mill, and the old brick walk as mentioned above.*

*The foundations of the old plantation house are still visible above the ground . . . There are also remains of timbers and plaster at the site, and considerable evidence of extensive gardens and planting . . . These ruins should by all means be preserved and carefully studied . . .*

*The possibility of restoring the plantation mansion for use as a museum building in which to show the cultural conditions of life on an old Louisiana sugar plantation, and especially to portray the economic, labor, agricultural, technical, and financial aspects of operating an old sugar plantation, should be given very careful consideration....*

*I wish to express unbounded admiration for this area as a park. It contains superlative park attributes from many points of view: recreational, wildlife, botanical and floral, historical and cultural. In my opinion the development of this park warrants the best thought that the various technical agencies can give to it.*<sup>6</sup>

Apparently Appleman did not have the last word, for Fontainebleau was not developed as he proposed, but rather as a plan based on "functional planning and the logical relationship of the various units," according to Wells, the park's landscape architect.<sup>7</sup> The state still does not have a museum or a historic site where one can learn about the context of the nineteenth century plantation culture



that literally formed the landscape patterns that still persist in most of rural south Louisiana.

What Appleman was calling for was that the context of the place -- this landscape in decline -- be recognized for the power that it still possessed to speak to people about the past.

In most of the work that I do with historic designed landscapes of the nineteenth century, there is no designer of record whose canon of work I can consult in order to understand the broader palette of this man's or woman's landscape vision. But there is always a context; in fact, sometimes there is actually more context than there is site specific information. And it is that context, -- the frame into which the landscape drama of the designed site fits -- that allows us, as viewers of the landscape picture, access to the rich and layered portrait of place and people moving across time and space.

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#### Endnotes

1. Olmsted Brothers - Landscape Architects, *A Report to the President of the United States on Improvements and Policy of Maintenance for the Executive Mansion Grounds*, Brookline, Massachusetts, October, 1935, p. 1.

2. Ibid., p. 81.

3. Ibid., p. 55.

4. Ibid.

5. I am grateful to Stephen McLaughlin for bringing this report to my attention.

6. State Parks Commission of Louisiana, "Third Biennial Report: 1938--39," New Orleans, Louisiana, 1940, p. 57.

7. Wells, William. W., "Function of the Landscape Architect in State Park Work", in *State Parks Commission of Louisiana, "Second Biennial Report: 1936-37*, New Orleans, 1938, p. 103.