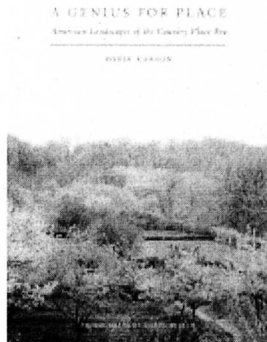




CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN

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Current Books & Book Reviews



Robin S. Karson.

A Genius for Place: American Landscapes of the Country Place Era.

Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007.

cloth, 428 pp., ISBN 978-1-5584-9636-1, \$65.00.

In her critical analysis of American landscape history, Robin Karson brings the reader's attention to the factors and individuals responsible for the development of large estates during the first four decades of the twentieth century. Known as the Country Place era, this period was noted for the development of opulent private residences with extensive landscapes that reflected the wealth and interests of their owners. Karson's focus is on the designers whose artistic skills created seven remarkable properties. After recalling the seminal role of Frederick Law Olmsted in this art form, the text contains discussions of the emerging practice of landscape architecture, the evolving American style of design, and the important landscape architects of the period. The author divides the narrative into three parts, providing a chronological order to the conceptual framework, beginning with the naturalistic wild gardens through to the modernistic landscapes before World War II. Karson is an able raconteur and scholar, providing dimensions to the profiles of the characters involved. Her comments on the relationships between the designers, their peers, and their clients reveal both her depth of knowledge and sensitivity as a biographer. Heavily illustrated with historic and recent photographs, as well as design plans of sites, this authoritative volume is a valuable resource for professionals, historians, and others with interest in the field.

— Marilyn K. Alaimo, garden writer and volunteer, Chicago Botanic Garden.

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One of the green treasures of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County.

