

CHOICE

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HUMANITIES

Art & Architecture - Architecture

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Amherst, MA 01004

The following review appeared in the October 2008 issue of CHOICE:

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Karson, Robin. **A genius for place: American landscapes of the country place era**, photographs by Carol Betsch.
Massachusetts/Library of American Landscape History, 2008 (c2007). 428p bibl index afp ISBN 9781558496361, \$65.00

This book by Karson (Library of American Landscape History), handsomely illustrated with plans and historic photographs and with photographer Betsch's wonderful work, focuses on eight American landscape architects and seven places they designed in the roughly four decades following the death of Frederick Law Olmsted in 1903. The designers--Warren Manning, Charles Platt, Ellen Shipman, Beatrix Farrand, Marian Coffin, Jens Jensen, Lockwood de Forest Jr., and Fletcher Steele--represent a continuation and evolution of the Olmstedeian tradition to meet the needs of owners of large estates and to accommodate changing 20th-century tastes. Chapters on individuals alternate with others devoted to significant landscapes they designed, which range geographically from the Berkshires to Santa Barbara, California. All are open to the public (largely because of the foresight and generosity of owners). Karson's book is concerned with the subtle change in landscape taste the designers exemplified, and with issues such as the professionalization of landscape architecture, the role of women within the field, and the relationships between designer and client. This book is ultimately about stewardship, a respect for landscape by designers, clients, and, Karson believes, by Americans today who should embrace historic landscapes as part of the collective heritage of the US. **Summing Up:** Recommended. Upper-level undergraduates and above; general readers. -- *D. Schuyler, Franklin & Marshall College*