

yet published of the early career of Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., highlighting his successor role to his eminent father and his rise to leadership in the emergent discipline of city planning. In both respects, Klaus makes noteworthy contributions to the history of American planning and community design.

Forest Hills Gardens was the Progressive Era's 'most notable experiment in planned suburban development'. Touted as 'America's first garden city', it began as a Russell Sage Foundation project. In eight richly illustrated and extensively documented chapters, Klaus traces its origins, design, marketing, early community life and legacy for the nation. Its progenitor, Robert De Forest, who was Olivia Sage's family lawyer, became the foundation's 'guiding force'. An elder civic statesman and patrician figure of many parts — counselor to banks, insurance firms and railroads; housing-reform activist; and long-time patron of the arts — De Forest assembled a top-flight development team: himself, architect Grosvenor Atterbury, 'landscape gardener' Olmsted, real estate marketer William E. Harmon and general manager Edward Bouton, the latter recruited from Baltimore's celebrated Roland Park, where he had perfected the aggressive use of restrictive covenants to stabilise suburban land use and establish community-design standards.

Klaus demolishes — one hopes — the hoary myth that Forest Hills Gardens began as a working-class philanthropy. Its 142-acre site in central Queens was far removed from factory neighbourhoods but very accessible to mid-town Manhattan via the newly electrified main line of the Long Island Railroad. From its outset, De Forest conceived the project as a financial investment and an opportunity to demonstrate the profitability of superior community design. Clerks, salesmen, educators, businessmen and professionals — not labourers — became its target.

Significantly, neither Atterbury nor Olmsted perceived their efforts as 'either revolutionary or epoch making'; in De Forest's words, they sought to 'showcase modern principles of town planning', including those of Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin at Hampstead Garden Suburb, underway since 1906 in northern

London. In this spirit, they crafted a community setting that blended architecture, streetscapes and planting into a complex ensemble, bold in its architectural signature and rich in its landscape and floral texture. New residents, many of them converts to birdwatching, caught the spirit of the place when they asked Atterbury to design even their martin houses as replicas of his tudoresque dwellings.

Klaus explores all major facets of the layout: the architecturally arresting railroad-serviced entry square, with its arcaded shops and iconic nine-story tower; the bridged passageways that gave entry to the residential area; the central 'village green' with its flanking terrace (row) houses; Atterbury's high-pitched, reddish-brown tiled roofs; the two bilaterally splayed greenway streets that became arcing access roads for the entire tract; the irregular matrix of narrow residential streets; and the landscape planting programme so elaborate that it required a maintenance staff of fourteen gardeners. Almost everywhere, street vistas lined with trees imparted a domesticated intimacy to the setting, complementing the architecture. To explain the achievement, Klaus repeatedly invokes Atterbury's Arts-and-Crafts inventiveness and the site-planning sophistication of Olmsted. Indeed, as Klaus suggests, what makes Forest Hills Gardens so distinctive and memorable is the artfully crafted ensemble, not any single feature.

Klaus explores many topics: Atterbury's successes with multihued, vibrantly textured concrete building panels, precast on-site to save construction costs; Olmsted's failed experiments with small, block-interior parks; the changing mix of high-density terrace housing and single-family dwellings throughout the site; the 'extremely liberal' marketing terms but a deliberate policy of not selling to Jews; the quick flowering of community life; the architectural review procedures; the emphasis on restrictive covenants; Clarence Perry's trenchant critique of site-design flaws, such as the weak north and west boundaries; and, finally, the national legacy of planned suburban design from Radburn, New Jersey, to Celebration, Florida. Klaus, while admirably thorough,

A Modern Arcadia: Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and the Plan for Forest Hills Gardens

Susan L. Klaus

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In *A Modern Arcadia*, Susan Klaus offers the first scholarly history of the origins and early development of Forest Hills Gardens, the internationally famous residential enclave begun in 1909 in the Borough of Queens in New York City. Interwoven with this story is the best account

says nothing about water and sewerage arrangements, gas and electric service, or typical building-lot dimensions.

In passing, Klaus suggests the influence of Camillo Sitte, the Viennese architect and planner-advocate of visually cohesive design, using medieval precedents. Station Square may be an example, but a more immediate source of the pervasive aestheticism must have been De Forest himself, an exemplar of Gilded Age art culture. Early in his career he had married into the Metropolitan Museum of Art leadership, becoming a Museum trustee and a president of the American Federation of Arts. Later, he made Atterbury his personal architect. Forest Hills Gardens, from this vantage, represented an exercise in 'taste', for sale to the middle class of the Progressive Era, courtesy of the Russell Sage Foundation. Significantly, De Forest's project failed as a business. The foundation sold its Queens property in 1922 at a loss of US\$360,800, but the design he shepherded had triumphed, gaining fame from its outset, ultimately outliving its own social exclusivity, and, with this illuminating book, achieving still greater luster.

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