



# VIEW

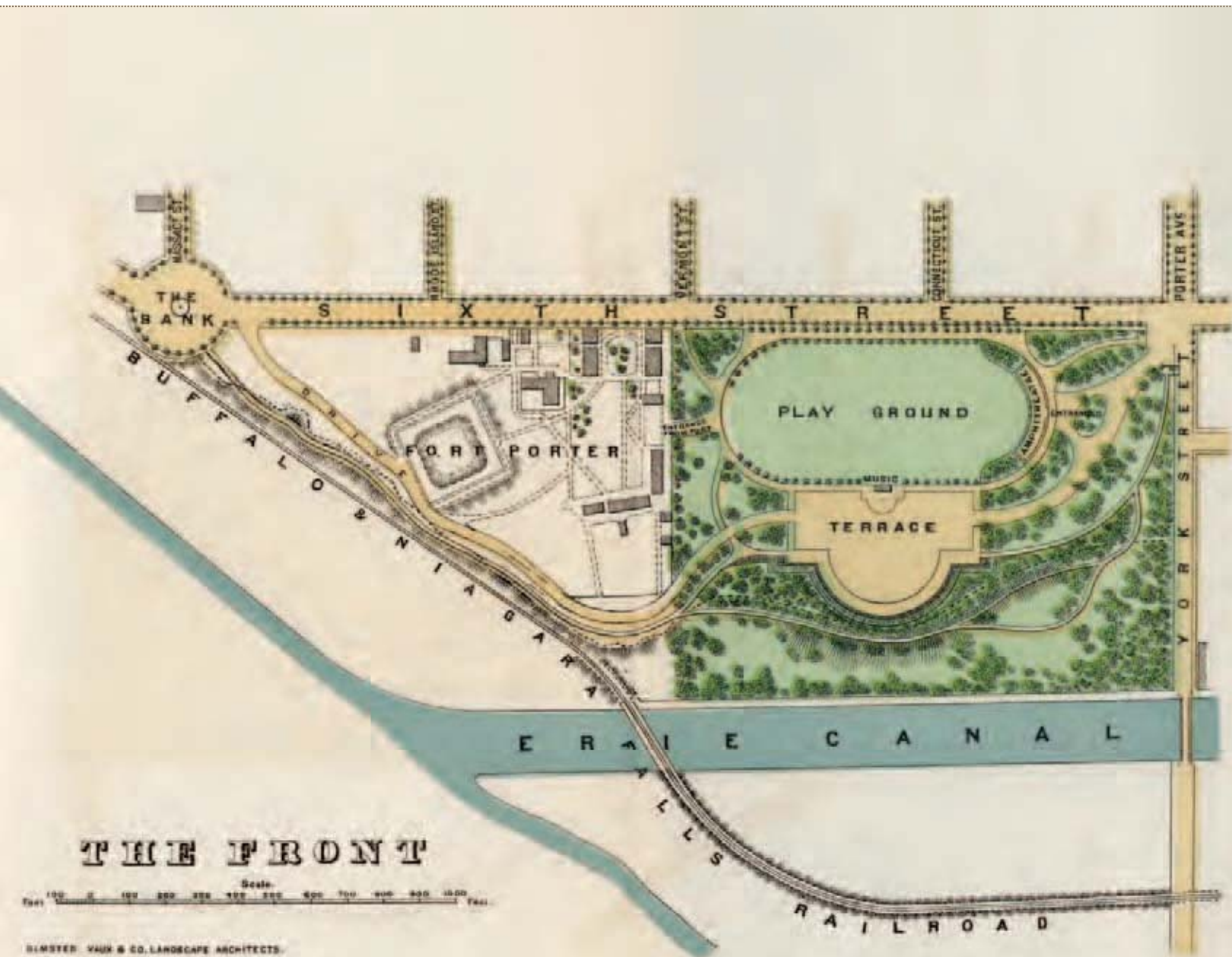
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# VIEW

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## VIEW from the Director's Office

Dear Friends of LALH,

LALH turns twenty this year, and change is in the air. This spring we launched a new website and premiered a new documentary film program, *North America by Design*. In this issue of *VIEW*, we introduce another new initiative, our Designing the American Park series, to be ushered in next spring by Francis Kowsky's book on the Olmsted & Vaux park system in Buffalo, titled *The Best Planned City in the World*. Series editor Ethan Carr, a landscape architect and historian who also serves on the LALH Board of Directors, links the seminal design with a range of other park types—including historical parks such as Colonial Williamsburg, designed by Arthur A. Shurcliff, the subject of a forthcoming book by Elizabeth Hope Cushing, and state parks in the South, the topic of a forthcoming book by William O'Brien.



Orchard Hill, University of Massachusetts. Photo by Carol Betsch.

Michael Van Valkenburgh, one of North America's most acclaimed landscape architects, contributes an article about his experiences creating parks throughout the United States. Historian, author, and preeminent preservationist Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, this year's Henry Hope Reed Award laureate, reflects on changes in urban parks since the 1980s, when she led the movement to restore Central Park.

Our impressive list of guest contributors also includes landscape architect Kelly Comras, writing on Ruth Shellhorn's work at Disneyland; historian Marjorie White, discussing Warren Manning's design for Mountain Brook Estates in Birmingham, Alabama; historical landscape architect James O'Day, reporting on the new Dumbarton Oaks Park Conservancy; and artist and historian Anita Bracalente, who traces the history of the parklike campus of the University of Indiana in Bloomington.

Education director Jane Roy Brown profiles this year's preservation hero: the multitalented Caroline Loughlin, coauthor of the Olmsted Master List of jobs and one of the founding members of the National Association of Olmsted Parks. Brown also contributes articles on the vast and somber Flight 93 Memorial and National Park, in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, and on the exuberant restorations, repairs, and rehabbing going on in the Buffalo parks led by conservancy president Thomas Herrera-Mishler.

Last fall, LALH published three books—*Design in the Little Garden*, *The Native Landscape Reader*, and *Graceland Cemetery: A Design History*. This October *Community by Design: The Olmsted Firm and the Development of Brookline, Massachusetts* will appear. These titles cover a broad range of topics—from the history of environmental design to the prairie spirit in landscape design to modern living through the eyes of Fletcher Steele to the Olmsted firm's neighborhood experiments in the new science of town planning.

Your donations have made it possible for us to cover this wide territory—and to continue to expand our list of books, maintain a touring exhibition program, publish *VIEW*, and create documentary films. The first two films in our new series have been completed: *Designing in the Prairie Spirit* premiered at the Chicago Botanic Garden in June and will also be shown at Storm King Art Center and several other locations; *Naumkeag: A Playground of the Imagination* was launched at Reynolda House Museum of American Art in May. Look for additional venues at our website, [lalh.org](http://lalh.org). We also plan to make these films available for downloading, beginning in the late fall.

LALH recently welcomed three new board members: Cynthia Hewitt of Yorklyn, Delaware, a landscape enthusiast and a managing director at Merrill Lynch; Sarah Turner of Los Angeles, a professor of journalism and the daughter of LALH founding president, Nancy R. Turner; and Daniel J. Nadenicek, Dean of the School of Environmental Design, University of Georgia, and editor of our new *Critical Perspectives in the History of Environmental Design* series. Welcome all!

Once again, the LALH Directors join me in urging your continued support of our program. We are the only nonprofit organization in existence dedicated exclusively to producing scholarship about North American landscape design. We have been devoted to this effort since 1992 and, as we enter our third decade, we continue to gather steam. Please support us in our vital educational mission.

Robin Karson  
Executive Director

# VIEW

THE MAGAZINE OF THE  
LIBRARY OF AMERICAN LANDSCAPE HISTORY

## LALH

The mission of the **Library of American Landscape History** is to foster understanding of the fine art of landscape architecture and appreciation of North America's richly varied landscape heritage through LALH books, exhibitions, and online resources.

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Front cover: Niagara Falls, photograph by George Barker, c. 1886. Photo courtesy Library of Congress.  
Back cover: Plan for The Front, Buffalo, N.Y., Olmsted, Vaux & Co. Photo courtesy Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society.







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**DESIGNING**

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# *The American Park*

AMERICAN LANDSCAPE HISTORY ENCOMPASSES the study of a diverse range of places that are rich in multiple meanings and associations. Powerful cultural expressions as well as significant works of art, perhaps no landscape type is more expressive, in this sense, than the public park. Places called “parks” range from neighborhood playgrounds to large scenic reservations, but at all scales parks share certain social goals and environmental values. Historically, governments have created or acquired parks for “the benefit and enjoyment of the people,” as the 1872 legislation establishing Yellowstone National Park phrased it. Those benefits have included improving public health, fostering democratic community, and preserving scenic and historic landscapes. Park advocates have also promoted other advantages of park making, such as enhanced real estate values and the economic stimulus of tourism. Whether large or small, urban or remote, public park landscapes embody contemporary values and the cultural narratives that gave rise to them.

This year the Library of American Landscape History inaugurates a new series, *Designing the American Park*, to publish outstanding new research on the history of American park landscapes. The series is based on an understanding that park history is primarily design history: planning, design, and development are shared elements that allow for comparison, periodization, and historical analysis. A remote wilderness, a historic site, or a recreation area are all landscapes set aside and developed for some level of public use, usually justified in broad terms of a public interest served. Development may be as limited as possible in order to minimize intrusion on a landscape already valued for its scenic, environmental, or historical significance and integrity. But preserving places by transforming them into parks has always entailed some level of public access and therefore landscape design as an integral part of landscape preservation. The history

of American park design is, to a significant degree, the history of scenic and historic preservation. From Yosemite Valley to Colonial Williamsburg, governments and nonprofit entities not only preserved—but also created—powerful and mutable social constructions of nature and history through the design of public landscapes and experiences.

*Designing the American Park* will explore the history of often understudied municipal parks and park systems, historic sites and commemorative landscapes, playgrounds, and regional, state, and national parks. While these are indeed diverse places, the continuities of purpose and the aspirations behind them can yield significant historical insights not apparent when each is considered separately from the other and in isolation, again, from the history of historic preservation. The practice of landscape design provides the salient common thread

Opposite: Chapin Parkway, Buffalo, N.Y. Photograph by Andy Olenick.

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BY ETHAN CARR

Outstanding moments and eras of American park design have also occurred at times of social, geographic, and ecological disruption. Parks have been a means to preserve, apparently unimpaired, past conditions, whether cultural or ecological. But they have done so during times of great landscape change, and in fact have themselves been the agents of change as components of new landscape patterns and uses. The study of the history of park design, treated as a comprehensive phenomenon, offers significant avenues of inquiry into the larger history of geographical and social modernization.

Park landscapes are among the most significant achievements of American art and society of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Their advocates and designers were some of the preeminent intellectuals, artists, and public figures of their day. The historical events and themes that surrounded their creation—the reform of the city, the roots of environmentalism, the meaning of nature in American art—give park history a broad appeal. But even though parks are often touted as “America’s best idea,” until now there has been no series of scholarly publications devoted specifically to the history of their design. Social histories of public parks are more common—and certainly worthwhile in their own right—but they typically do not emphasize the role of design in realizing the aspirations of park advocates. Without design, public parks would never have assumed a central place in American culture and imagination.

Historically, park design has been among the most significant work that American landscape architects have

undertaken, just as it is today. The public landscapes of our cities and states, and of the nation, have, as works of design, done as much as any category of art to define a national identity and a shared aesthetic sense and purpose. This important new series will attract a generation of contributors who are ready to put forward, together, a mature vision of this unique chapter in American cultural history. The first three volumes will address significant and understudied subjects in park history.

*The Best Planned City in the World: Olmsted, Vaux, and the Buffalo Park System* by Francis R. Kowsky is a comprehensive treatment of the first municipal park system of its type. When asked by the Buffalo park commissioners in 1868 for their advice on the location of a new park, Olmsted and Vaux proposed instead that they create three parks: The Parade, for recreation and large events; The Front, a smaller park commanding views of Lake Erie; and The Park, a large, pastoral landscape at the expanding edge of the city. Broad, tree-lined parkways, inspired by contemporary Parisian boulevards, connected the parks and provided the settings for new residences and institutions as the city grew. By the mid-1870s, as Buffalo experienced a period of great commercial success and expansion, the city could claim to be one of the best planned in the country. The campaign to preserve nearby Niagara Falls involved many of the same Buffalo park advocates as well as Olmsted and Vaux, who produced their design for the Niagara Reservation in 1887. Although the result was a state park (the nation’s first), the preservation of Niagara as



Delaware Park (formerly, The Park), Buffalo, N.Y. Photograph by Ethan Carr.



One of the most difficult and understudied aspects of twentieth-century park history is public park design in the South during the Jim Crow era.

Jones Lake Negro Recreation Area, Elizabethtown, N.C., 1940. Photograph courtesy North Carolina State Archives.

a public park illustrates the continuities between municipal park and scenic preservation advocacy, theory, and, ultimately, landscape design. The Buffalo park system constituted a landmark of park design history.

In the second volume in the series, Elizabeth Hope Cushing examines the life and work of one of the most important and yet little known figures in early twentieth-century municipal park design and historic preservation. Arthur Shurcliff (born Arthur Asahel Shurtleff) trained in Olmsted's Brookline office beginning in 1896 and worked there until he started his own office in Boston in 1904. Shurcliff adapted many Boston public parks, including the Back Bay Fens and Franklin Park, to new purposes in the twentieth century, and he designed new parks as well, including the Charles River Esplanade. He was also a prolific city planner who created a number of the earliest comprehensive city plans in the United States.

Shurcliff also had a lifelong interest in the study and documentation of historic landscapes, such as the New England commons and farmsteads he had known all his life. He made his greatest professional contribution to the field of historic preservation beginning in 1928, when he became the consulting landscape architect for the Williamsburg Restoration in Virginia, the most ambitious and influential preservation project of the era. Over the next thirteen years, Shurcliff created not only an idiom of Colonial Revival garden design, but an entire landscape that became a new kind of park (albeit one created by a private entity) based in part on research and archaeology and intended to convey and interpret the significance of the historical place to the public.

One of the most difficult and understudied aspects of twentieth-century park history is public park design in the South during the Jim Crow era. William E. O'Brien's *Landscapes of Exclusion: State Parks and Jim Crow in the American South*, examines the design of state parks

in the southern states between the 1930s, when New Deal programs funded the creation and expansion of state parks, to the 1960s, when protests, court rulings, and legislation ended the "separate but equal" policies that had motivated the design of parks specifically for African Americans. Although state governments never came close to providing "equal" park facilities, their intentions resulted in the design and development of a series of park landscapes that are vital if mute testimony to this chapter in American social history. The parks themselves are crucial documents that supplement the often insubstantial official records of segregation in the United States. But as the Jim Crow era waned, the history of these places and their design also faded, as the parks came to be used by the general public and were managed as undifferentiated elements within state park systems. O'Brien uncovers this neglected history, documenting and analyzing the legal and social contexts of these landscapes as well as the particular features of their design.

Designing the American Park will present a wide range of research on public park landscapes, some of the most complex and meaningful artistic endeavors ever undertaken in the United States. Its aim is to help readers reconsider what parks are and what the implications of the history of their design might be. With this series, LALH carries on its commitment to publishing books that expand the field by making available new explorations and interpretations in American landscape history.

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Ethan Carr is associate professor of landscape architecture, University of Massachusetts Amherst, and serves on the board of the directors of LALH. He is the author of *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma* and is the editor of the new *Designing the American Park* series.







## FROM MILL RACE *to* BROOKLYN BRIDGE: Two Decades of Waterfront Parks

**M**y first big park commission came in 1989 with Mill Race Park in Columbus, Indiana. Its 86 acres near the confluence and in the floodway of a major river system included a few remnants of prior industrial uses. At the time, it didn't strike me as odd that the site was primarily open landscape and naturally vegetated, but now it does, since during the past ten years almost all my firm's parks have included construction over entirely man-made sites. The tops of parking garages, the roofs of buildings, and piers built out over the water have become the new blank slate on which many new parks are etched.

Waterfront parks in particular, rare thirty years ago, have become the focus of a great deal of work in the last few years. The rise of container shipping, which has rendered many port facilities obsolete, is partly behind this trend, but so is a general decline of industrial uses of the waterfronts of major North American cities. Communities are eager for access to open views and watery edges, and, as industry has retreated, recreational uses have been given an unprecedented opportunity to colonize these often spectacular waterfront landscapes. Several common features of waterfront parks make them unlike the types of parks that preceded them: they are long and narrow, monotonously flat, and large-scale in site infrastructure; they having limited ecological diversity; and they pose the complex challenge of integrating structural and natural systems.

Most urban waterfronts are long and narrow. Major transportation lines, including rail routes and highways, run alongside the waterfront to better serve industries, and many of these systems persist despite the declining need for them. The waterfronts often consist of

connective tissue linking piers and bound by a roadway on one side.

Since many of these sites are tied into recreational greenway networks for bikes and pedestrians, it is vital that they overcome their usual monotony. For Segment 5 of Hudson River Park in New York City, my firm, Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, used several strategies, including constructed topography, intense plantings, and innovative pathway alignment, to establish a strong sense of experiential diversity along the water-edge trail. One strategy (which ultimately proved unfeasible) was to retain some of the industrial architecture in the form of unclad modified steel-frame structures, so that visitors could experience a sense of the enormous scale of the historic waterfront operations, but in a way that was consistent with the character of a park.

Although flatness seems relatively benign, constructed topography can create a rich diversity of public spaces and uses unavailable in flat conditions. Matt Urbanski of MVVA recently referred to our firm's tendency to "unflatten" this type of site: Look, for example, at our design for Pier One of Brooklyn Bridge Park, where we took advantage of an atypical structural condition (the pier is actually a filled-in peninsula) to create a 26-foot-high prospect just south of the bridge. As with anything good in design, the hill serves multiple purposes: it creates diversity along the continuous waterfront trail, allows for tiered seating looking out across the harbor, provides multiple exposures for different types of plants, and creates different microclimatic conditions across the pier (open toward the New York harbor watershed, and intimate in the valley of the hill's north side). This same kind of consolidation of uses takes place in a very concentrated way at the 1.5-acre





**“Like Olmsted then and us now, landscape architects in the future will undoubtedly find themselves working on untested sites.”**





Pier C Park, Hoboken, N.J. Photograph by Elizabeth Felicella.



Pier C Park in Hoboken, New Jersey. And at Hudson River Park, topographic manipulation provides a better lounging surface for the lawns while cutting off the sight and sounds of the nearby state highway.

I have always liked the contrast created when recreational space colonizes formerly industrial sites. This was a strategy famously employed by Rich Haag in his brilliant design of Gasworks Park in Seattle in the mid-1970s, and then by Peter Latz in his magnificent Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord in Germany during the 1990s. In my own work, this became the tremendous opportunity of Pittsburgh's Allegheny Riverfront Park, a narrow city-level park and a narrow river-level park connected by long ramps. The intricate system for joining these elements is woven into three major

**“Anticipating, defining, and integrating changes in vegetation over time is one of the most exhilarating aspects of creating landscapes.”**

bridge systems intersecting the site. The sublime aspects of the park are inseparable from the huge scale of the site infrastructure. Similarly, the view of the glorious stone-clad piers of the Brooklyn Bridge is really the defining image of Brooklyn Bridge Park, something we tried to frame in many ways near the Fulton Street entrance. My personal favorite is the view looking north from south of Pier One, where there is a visual layering of open water, a “field” of piles, the incline to the river access, a salt marsh, a rising hillside, and then the Brooklyn Bridge.

While existing site elements are often exciting to repurpose in waterfront projects, the prior ecology of urban waterfronts tends to be lost or severely compromised. A postindustrial ecology can never be precisely restored, because most often these shorelines have been extended so that the waterfront is far out from the original shoreline. I look at our work on these sites as an attempt to rebalance and reblend the relationship between site use and site ecology, tipping the scales in favor of new site systems that can grow and thrive on a particular site in its current form and with its current uses.

At Brooklyn Bridge Park, this has taken the form of a concentrated attempt to create new types of integration between natural systems and park systems, including a reintroduced salt marsh as well as the use of plants that are acclimatized to urban waterfront conditions and able to thrive in a relatively harsh environment without extensive care or watering. A manufactured water garden that cleanses collected stormwater and stores it for irrigation becomes a park centerpiece with water-loving species that might otherwise be considered too

resource-intensive to be included in a public landscape. Since the living qualities of plants and their growth over time are key features of the landscape medium, aspects of the park design anticipate the changes that will take place as densely planted hedgerows grow and cause the decline of some trees and the increased stature of others until, thirty years later, a much different spatial condition exists. Anticipating, defining, and integrating changes in vegetation over time is one of the most exhilarating aspects of creating landscapes.

Because of my first commission in Indiana, I at first assumed that I would be building landscapes *into* landscapes, connecting into larger site systems—managing surface stormwater that eventually percolates down to the water table, for instance, or balancing cut and fill on site. But the core conditions of the waterfront park, built on man-made platforms and supported by man-made structures, preclude such direct integration of park systems with natural systems. We frequently have to create *new* systems for collecting and storing stormwater on site, so that we can reduce the all-too-common influx of untreated water into the river or into combined sewer systems, conserve potable water, and maintain thriving site ecologies during dry spells. Similarly, we frequently have no existing site soils to work with and are loathe to support stripping topsoil from other sites, so we work



Pier C Park, Hoboken, N.J. Photograph by Alex MacLean.



Pier 1, Brooklyn Bridge Park, Brooklyn, N.Y. Photograph by Elizabeth Felicella.

closely with soil scientists to develop manufactured organic soils that will support the long-term growth and health of site plantings without noxious chemical fertilizers or pesticides.

Of course, designing a landscape on a platform can be very liberating, affording tremendous opportunities to upend conventional expectations. For example, Pier 64 at Hudson River Park, rebuilt as part of park construction, has a gradual 5 percent slope extending along its 1,000-foot length. This slope is not perceptible while you walk it, but cumulatively it produces an *Aha!* moment when you experience the raised prospect at the end of the pier and a distinctive profile as you look at the pier from the side. At Brooklyn Bridge Park, where we reused marine infrastructure instead of rebuilding the piers, we looked for opportunities to reveal the platform construction—such as creating a bridged-over gap between the Pier 3 bulkhead and the pier itself—and new opportunities for visitors to be at the level of the piles (for instance, along the kayak launch). Pier C Park in Hoboken, which had a limited budget that precluded any thoughts of rebuilding the pier in its original footprint, takes this a step further and allows the program of the park to determine the shape of the platform. Rather than having a waterfront side and a city side, the park is completely surrounded by water.

As I reflect on the ways that a waterfront park challenges our understanding of what constitutes a park, I am struck by the landscape medium's tremendous flexibility and the constantly evolving typology of the urban park. It is possible that someone like Frederick Law Olmsted would look at Allegheny Riverfront Park and be querulous about this up-to-date hybrid of recreational use and industrial remnant; he might not recognize it as a park at all. I am not so sure. Late in the nineteenth century in his Muddy River project in Boston, we see him beginning to blend city-making with the more complex challenges of hydraulic engineering as the engine of park making. Like Olmsted then and us now, landscape architects in the future will undoubtedly find themselves working on untested sites. Given how radically my own expectations about parks and their creative potential have been altered in exciting ways over the last thirty years, I look forward to seeing what the next wave of park building will involve and what innovations it will conjure.

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*Michael Van Valkenburgh is the founder and president of Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, based in Cambridge and Brooklyn. Rachel Gleeson, senior associate at the firm, contributed to this article.*





## RUTH SHELLHORN: LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT OF FANTASY

Inspired by weekend outings with his two daughters to the carousel at Griffith Park in Los Angeles, Walt Disney had dreamed for a decade or more of building a setting where families could spend time together. He began construction of Disneyland in 1954, a time when amusement park attendance had generally declined across the country. Disney had reinvented animation in the 1920s, and brought to Americans the idea of wish-fulfillment through fantasy in his best films, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Pinocchio*, *Bambi*, and *Dumbo*. But by the end of World War II, Disney's reputation as an artistic interpreter of childhood joy and innocence was in decline. Intellectuals complained that he infantilized American culture. He was still reeling from the aftereffects of a 1941 cartoonists' strike that had left his studio fragmented. Lacking the intimate, creative camaraderie that had so energized him in the early years, he felt disengaged and restless, and he was looking for a new project.

Ruth Shellhorn and Walt Disney, Disneyland, 1955. Photograph by Harry Keuser. Author's collection.

In 1948, Disney took a trip to the Chicago Railroad Fair and made a stop at Henry Ford's Greenfield Village, in Michigan. He came back home bursting with ideas for a new kind of theme park that would offer a total, all-encompassing experience, a realistic incarnation of an animated world of fantasy and imagination. What Disney envisioned went beyond rides, games, shows, and other diversions—he reconceptualized the amusement park as a fantasy world offering solace and escape from painful memories of depression and war, and respite from busy lives. He wanted his visitors to shed reality for a while, to embark on a psychological vacation. He dreamed of a park that would rise above the scores of other amusement parks developed during the postwar era because of the quality of its implementation and devotion to detail. He wanted a place that would equally delight children and their parents.

He got his chance in 1950, when the financial success of the hit animated feature *Cinderella* allowed

BY KELLY COMRAS

him to move forward. Within two years, Disney formed WED Enterprises and developed Disneyland from original sketches by art director Harper Goff. By March of 1955, Disneyland was almost a year into construction on a 160-acre site, with about 68 acres containing the most concentrated development. A general master plan was in place; individual rides, restaurants, games, and other attractions were in various stages of building. A sequenced entrance, beginning at the Town Square, proceeded into the park along a Main Street of Victorian-era

inspired by the zeitgeist of postwar freedom and individualism, and a salubrious Mediterranean climate. Many of her gardens, public and private, featured her signature “Southern California look,” composed of simplified, elegant planting palettes, bold forms, and colorful flowering trees and shrubs. None of Shellhorn’s projects had come close to the scale of Disneyland, however, and none was as creatively ambitious. But their collaborations had shown Becket that Shellhorn could exert a cool command over chaos, that she was a master at

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Well known in the architectural and landscape architectural fields, Shellhorn’s lush, sun-drenched landscape designs were inspired by the zeitgeist of postwar freedom and individualism, and a salubrious Mediterranean climate.

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shops and buildings and ended at the Plaza Hub, which led to the separate fantasy realms of Adventureland, Fantasyland, Frontierland, and Tomorrowland. Different art directors in charge of each of these areas oversaw scores of architects, engineers, artists, set designers, contractors, and craftsmen, who worked around the clock to finish before the park’s scheduled opening on July 18, 1955.

Despite the rapid progress of construction on various parts of the project, Disney, ever the perfectionist, began to feel that some of the most important components of his vision were still lacking. The many different professionals building each section of the park were working independently of one another. Landscape design and planting plans were incomplete, and no overall pedestrian circulation plan was in place. Disney worried that the project might not “hang together.” He urgently needed someone who could help coordinate disparate elements and realize his grand conception—someone who could design such seemingly mundane details as the location of walkways and oversee the selection of trees and the placement of plants to create an environment that would suspend reality for visitors: a world where it would seem perfectly normal to stroll down the main street of a late nineteenth-century small town, cruise through a tropical jungle, visit the Western frontier, enter a futuristic world of dazzling electronic inventions, and then shake hands with Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck. He turned to a friend, the modernist architect Welton Becket, for advice.

Becket had recently completed several prominent commercial design projects with landscape architect Ruth Patricia Shellhorn (1909–2006). Well known in the architectural and landscape architectural fields, Shellhorn’s lush, sun-drenched landscape designs were

manipulating simple design elements to achieve a proper sense of scale, and that she possessed an impressive vocabulary of plant materials, often experimenting with their use and composition to great effect. Finally, unlike many other practitioners of her generation, she did not bring stylistic preconceptions to her work. She prided herself on being a client-driven landscape architect, detached from the modernism-versus-classicism debate then raging within her profession. Becket recommended Shellhorn, and only Shellhorn, for the job.

Shellhorn was exactly what Walt Disney needed at that moment. She took his distinctive vision of what Disneyland should be and helped guide it to implementation. The subtropical plants that defined her Southern



Prudential Insurance, Western Home Office, Los Angeles, 1961. Photograph by Douglas Simmons. Author’s Collection.



Disneyland is one of the most celebrated public landscape designs in the world, but it is not the only one of Shellhorn's to achieve widespread recognition. By the time she retired in 1990, at the age of 81, she had designed almost four hundred projects, including private gardens and commercial landscapes.



Aerial view of Disneyland, 1956. USC Regional Historical Photo Collection. Wikimedia Commons.

California look, for example, were compatible with Disney's insistence that the planting palette evoke an "Eternal Spring" (the phrase Disney used in a 1956 article in *Landscape Architecture*). But she persuaded him that he could better achieve his vision with the judicious use of a variety of deciduous trees. On this and many other matters he grew to trust her judgment.

Shellhorn understood immediately that the park's various elements had to be knit into a unified experience. She took on the task of organizing pedestrian circulation throughout the park, shaping and refining the size, alignment, and positioning of all the paved and the planted areas. This required a sophisticated understanding of how to move and manage crowds of people by focusing or screening views, narrowing or widening pathways, and highlighting intersections. It occasionally necessitated the relocation of large trees planted earlier throughout the park, which conflicted with her newly defined circulation plans.

Shellhorn then turned her attention to preparing sketches and detailed planting designs for the Town Square entrance and Main Street, where visitors would first experience Disney's idea of "the happiest place on earth," and she assumed responsibility for designing the planting palettes that would enable visitors to transition seamlessly from the Plaza Hub to the major "lands" that made up the rest of the park. These palettes utilized plant material in a masterful way to both differentiate and unify the elements of the park. Pine trees, for

example, made up the forest around Sleeping Beauty's Castle, and Shellhorn used the same trees in planting compositions in other areas to weave a botanical thread throughout the park. It is for this contribution that she is most recognized at Disneyland.

Disneyland is one of the most celebrated public landscape designs in the world, but it is not the only one of Shellhorn's to achieve widespread recognition. By the time she retired in 1990, at the age of 81, she had designed almost four hundred projects, including private gardens and commercial landscapes. Her residential client list included movie stars, publishers, financiers, and business leaders within greater Los Angeles. Her award-winning commercial, civic, and campus projects included Bullock's department stores and Fashion Squares, the Prudential Insurance building in Los Angeles, the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, and the landscape master plan for the University of California at Riverside. She also helped produce the Shoreline Development Study, a groundbreaking analysis and plan for recreational development along eleven miles of Southern California coast. Shellhorn died in 2006 at the age of 97.

Anyone who lived in or visited Southern California during the postwar era was likely to experience one or more of Shellhorn's landscape designs, although few were aware of the landscape architect who created them. She rarely published her work; when she retired only a small number of colleagues and clients knew of her talent and her influence. Recently, her reputation has been experiencing a modest revival. In 2010, a brief biographical entry was included in *Shaping the American Landscape*, an encyclopedia-style reference book about pioneering American landscape designers, and in 2011, Shellhorn's work was included in the Harvard University Graduate School of Design's colloquium "Women in Modernism in Landscape Design." Her collected drawings and papers are now archived and available for study in the Charles E. Young Research Library at UCLA.

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*Kelly Comras is principal of the landscape architectural firm KCLA in Pacific Palisades, California. She is writing a book about Ruth Shellhorn for LALH.*

A PLACE OF REMEMBRANCE:

## *Flight 93 National Memorial and Park*

Somerset County, Pennsylvania, is corn and coal country: white farmhouses, linked by verdant stretches of crops, break the hypnotic roll of the road. Beds of bituminous coal spread out beneath the soil, and a field without crops is probably a former strip mine, filled in and replanted. It was in such a field, near the rural town of Shanksville, that United Flight 93 crashed on September 11, 2001. One of the four airliners hijacked by terrorists that day, the plane was forty-six minutes into the flight from Newark to San Francisco when it hairpinned east toward Washington, D.C. Passengers and flight attendants learned of their likely fate when they phoned out to report the hijacking. After a brief huddle, they rammed the locked cockpit. The terrorists scuttled the plane rather than surrender control.

When it struck the ground—nearly upside-down, carrying 7,000 gallons of fuel, and traveling at more than 550 miles per hour—the impact was so catastrophic that workers combing the scene found few fragments larger than a briefcase, scattered over seventy acres. The crater, now a tranquil meadow, is designated as the

Sacred Ground in a design that is transforming 2,200 acres into a national memorial and park. The collaborative project, involving the National Park Service, two design firms, multiple construction companies, state and local agencies, community members, and the victims' families, has moved forward steadily, if slowly, since 2002. Last September, on the tenth anniversary of the attacks, the memorial opened to the public, its first phase of construction completed.

The team of Paul Murdoch Architects, of Los Angeles, and Nelson Byrd Woltz/Landscape Architects, of Charlottesville and New York City, won the project in a design competition that received more than a thousand entries. "We wanted to see what we, as designers, could do for forty people who died fighting for freedom in this country," says Paul Murdoch, the firm's founder and president. "It is a somewhat devotional type of service, to bring whatever skills we have to help ameliorate the feelings of loss, of raw disbelief."

Murdoch, after winning the first stage of the competition, invited the landscape architects to join the

Sacred Ground, Flight 93 National Memorial and Park. Photograph courtesy Eric Staudenmaier Photography.

BY JANE ROY BROWN





Gateway to Memorial Plaza. Photograph courtesy Eric Staudenmaier Photography.

team for the second stage, which produced the winning design. Warren Byrd, FASLA, principal, represents his firm in the ongoing collaboration. “We’ve honored most of his ideas while making practical adjustments,” Byrd says. “Paul has an understanding and a willingness to see the Flight 93 Memorial as a landscape project, a landscape problem.”

In explaining his approach to the design, Murdoch notes, “We weren’t there to create sanctity—that was latent in the site and in the actions that occurred there. How do you present or make it available in a more potent way for visitors? We started making certain boundaries to help disclose areas in the landscape, some of which would start to become more intense in terms of their sacredness, as part of a sequenced buildup in moving through the landscape.” He acknowledges that a typical architectural monument, however large, would have been “dwarfed” by the sprawling acreage.

The largely open site spans a hillside, which levels out at the bottom. The former crater gouged by the plane—first a crime scene, then a mass grave—was filled

before the project began. The design’s central feature, the Field of Honor, is now under construction. This space, a vast circle roughly 3,000 feet in diameter, will occupy an existing bowl-shaped depression partway down the slope. Murdoch had planned to outline the circle in a single row of red maples and then add layers of buffer trees. To bolster the circle from the winds sweeping across the open hillside, Byrd recommended replacing the single row of trees with a double allée, with forty groves of mixed tree species radiating into the landscape from the outer ring of the allée. In addition, he says, they are reforesting the buffering layer from the ground up, filling in the understory layers below the canopy with herbaceous plants and shrubs.

Two entry points open into the memorial plaza, the most intensively designed part of the landscape. The first portal, a horizontal, flat-roofed gateway standing in a field of wildflowers, enters directly into the plaza, which abuts the Sacred Ground. Beside bench seating, a zigzag walk of black concrete begins, marking the coroner’s fence line around the crash site. A chest-high

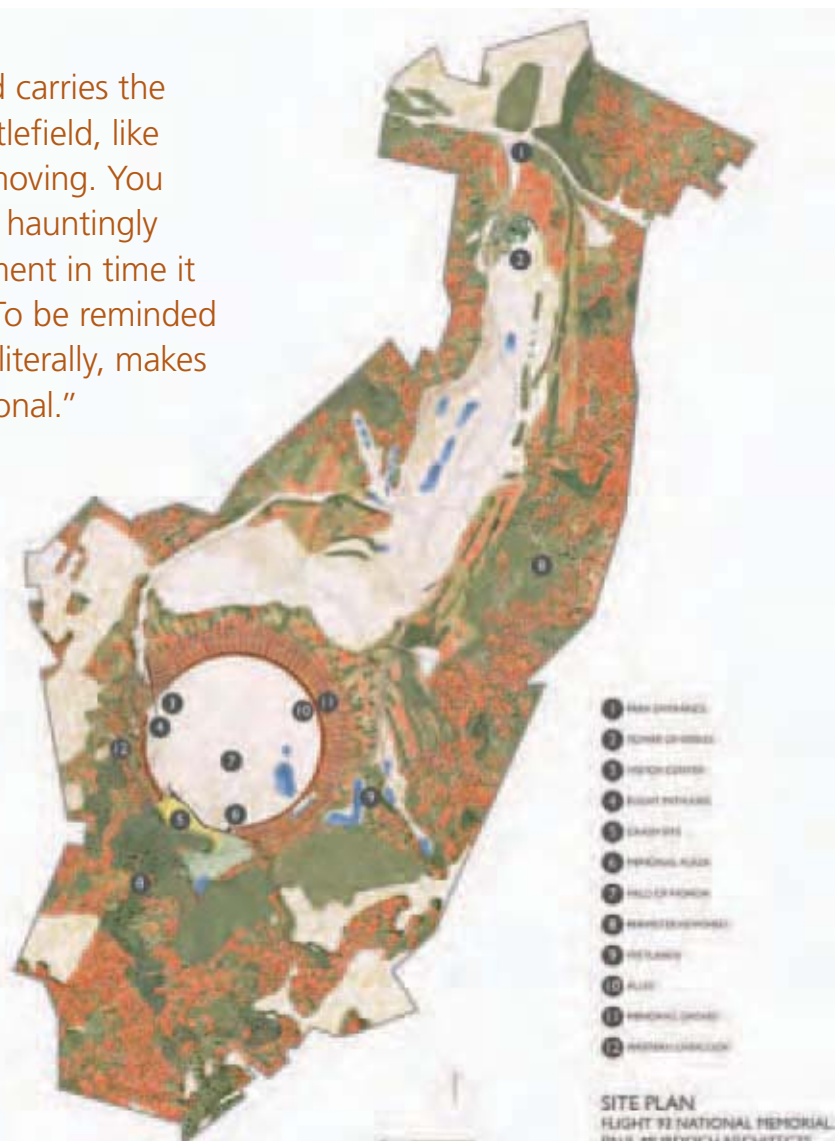
parapet of black concrete lines the walk. Visitors can see into the meadow beyond, but only the victims' relatives can enter it. The second portal, an opening in a wall of gleaming white marble panels symbolically tracing the crash path of the plane, creates a more formal entrance. The panels are inscribed with the names of the forty victims. The opening also frames a gigantic boulder, placed on the spot where the plane struck ground.

Both the physical and conceptual dimensions of the site challenged the designers. For example, Byrd mentions the practical but sensitive issue of how to maintain the Sacred Ground. "We wanted to replant it in native wildflowers to set it apart from the surroundings," he says. "But the families, to a one, wanted the spot left as an open field, raw and unembellished. I explained that for the field to remain open it would need to be managed—we weren't trying to erase the raw emotion." As the 9/11 anniversary approached, the families agreed to let workers mow the field to a height of eighteen inches.

Long-term management remains unresolved. "For me, the Sacred Ground carries the same associations as a battlefield, like Antietam—it's incredibly moving. You see rolling farmland that is hauntingly beautiful, but for one moment in time it was a site of devastation. To be reminded of the events, but not too literally, makes it more poignant and personal."

To that end, Murdoch's team and the park service wrestled with whether the memorial should include a written account of the events. They eventually agreed that the visitors' center could better serve this function, freeing the memorial to speak on "poetic and spiritual levels," Murdoch says. This, he explains, allows it to remain meaningful into the future: "Certain qualities of this site and of what occurred there are embodied in the memorial expression and available to be shared by visitors long after those who remember the actual events are gone."

"For me, the Sacred Ground carries the same associations as a battlefield, like Antietam—it's incredibly moving. You see rolling farmland that is hauntingly beautiful, but for one moment in time it was a site of devastation. To be reminded of the events, but not too literally, makes it more poignant and personal."



Site plan, Flight 93 National Memorial and Park. Graphic courtesy Paul Murdoch Architects.





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## Warren Manning's Design for MOUNTAIN BROOK ESTATES

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Escaped garden hellebores, Jemison Park.

Reverence for place was central in Warren Manning's approach to developing the residential subdivision of Mountain Brook, south of Birmingham. Identified as "Red Mountain Reservation" in Manning's 1916 district plan, this geographically isolated stretch of ridge and valley lands extended southwest from Red Mountain to Shades Valley and Shades Mountain. His final plan for Mountain Brook, completed in 1929, was designed to showcase the distinctive features of the natural environment—its streams, cliffs, bluffs, hog-back ridges, ancient trees, narrow gaps, ridge ponds, springs, rock formations, and views—and to create a subdivision in harmony with these surroundings, a parklike setting for

suburban living. Strategies to protect the natural beauty of the landscape included aligning roads and lots with topographic features, reserving floodplains along creeks for scenic value, recreational use, and stormwater management, and using native plants and materials where possible.

Manning began planning Mountain Brook in September 1926. Over three years, and through many revisions, he worked out the siting and grading of the roads, open space, and house lots by tramping about in the woods. Among those with him on the planning team were his on-site landscape architect Carl Lutender

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BY MARJORIE LONGENECKER WHITE





The Old Mill, inspired by the old Manning Manse.

and Birmingham landscape architect and horticulturalist William Kessler. By March 1929, Manning had completed a plan that included roads and bridges, residential lots, open-space reservations and deed restrictions, and other community facilities and amenities—a village center, school, riding academy and bridle trails, and a country club as a focal point for the subdivision.<sup>1</sup> Manning associate Egbert Hans, although he apparently never visited the site, drew illustrations and wrote articles, including “The Naturalistic Development of Mountain Brook Estates,” published in *American Landscape Architect* in January 1930.

To set the architectural tone for the new residential community, Manning suggested a model country house—a replica of George Washington’s Mount Vernon estate, complete with an “Old Mill,” which was soon opened to the public as a tea room. Manning designed the setting, gardens, and planting plans, while Kessler drew plans for the Old Mill, which followed in the tradition of the Rock Creek Mill in Rock Creek Park, Washington, D.C., and also took cues from Manning’s seventeenth-century family manse near Reading, Massachusetts. Architect Aymar Embry designed the clubhouse at the Mountain Brook Club, and renowned

golf-course architect Donald Ross laid out the eighteen-hole course.<sup>2</sup> Leading local architectural firms drew plans for the subdivision’s Tudor Village, riding academy, and school, as well as for model houses in a variety of architectural styles.<sup>3</sup>

The road layout followed the contours of the site, favoring curves and keeping straightaways to a minimum, in order to reveal the landscape gradually, in a series of striking views. The banks were planted and graded to slope back from the road edge to ensure visibility. Wooden street signs and stone entrance gates and bridges, both using local materials, continued the naturalistic aesthetic. William Kessler designed the bridges and planting plans for the parkway and entrance gates, and he also sited drives to the house lots.

The development, which comprised about 4,000 acres, was twenty times larger than other developments in the area and on its way to becoming a regional showplace when the stock market crashed in 1929. Soon home sales fell off and construction in Mountain Brook halted. Although the infrastructure, amenities, and several houses had been built by then, and the subdivision was incorporated as a city in 1942, construction did not resume until the 1950s.



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Nature trail along Mountain Brook. Overbrook Road, barely visible, at upper left.

On the surrounding ridges and knolls, roads meander throughout the residential community, where the landscape, not the buildings, defines the experience.





Private home. Southwood Road.

Mountain Brook retains a high level of historical integrity, and the National Park Service has included the community in its Historic American Landscapes Survey. The road system Manning designed is still intact. As it approaches the residential areas, Mountain Brook Parkway appears to wind through a sequence of stage sets—from the Tudor Village and Mount Vernon estate to the Old Mill—before reaching the Mountain Brook Club and golf course and ending at Irondale Furnace Park. The route follows a creek, and viewsheds gradually widen along the major floodplain, in which Manning laid out a linear park (since extended and named Jemison Park). On the surrounding ridges and knolls, roads meander throughout the residential community, where the landscape, not the buildings, defines the experience. The original green corridor now enjoys a

wider woodland buffer as an indirect result of the 1929 crash. Deed restrictions had been placed on the adjoining estate-sized lots (thirty-five to sixty acres), which extend from the creek up the face of Shades Mountain. Manning envisioned these as home sites for Jemison’s investors in the Mountain Brook venture, but the market collapsed before anything was built. The original deed restrictions, however, still protect the land around Jemison Park from development, creating a green open space at the community’s core.

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Marjorie Longenecker White is the director of the Birmingham Historical Society and a contributor to the Warren H. Manning Research Project.

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#### NOTES

1. Egbert Hans, “The Naturalistic Development of Mountain Brook Estates,” *American Landscape Architect* 2, no. 5 (January 1930). The final version of Manning’s *General Plan* for Mountain Brook, dated March 11, 1929, is held by the Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Birmingham Public Library, in the Robert Jemison Jr. Papers.

2. Planning team: Warren H. Manning to Robert Jemison Jr., August 6, 1928, Jemison Papers. Names of other professionals who worked on the planning for Mountain Brook appear in letters, financial reports, and other records in the Jemison Papers, including daily reports by Carl Lutender. See also the booklet *Mountain Brook Country Club* and correspondence among the professional consultants during design and construction, in the same collection.

3. The promotional brochure *Mountain Brook Estates* (Jemison Papers) describes how, in the grand tradition of country estates, the style of each house would fit the topography. Accordingly, the Jemison firm designed a distinctive model home for each section of the development: a Mount Vernon replica for the Mountain Brook section; an all-electric home for Canterbury Road; an English baronial home for Dell Road; and a German stone house for the Southwood Road area. See Julius Linn Jr., Katherine Tipton, and Marjorie White, eds., *The Jemison Magazine: Birmingham and Mountain Brook, 1926–1930* (Birmingham, Ala.: Birmingham Historical Society, 2012).





Private homes. Top: Hastings Road. Bottom: Mountain Brook Parkway.



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All photographs of Mountain Brook are by Carol Betsch, commissioned for the forthcoming book on Warren H. Manning and underwritten by a generous grant from the International Music and Art Foundation.



# Letter from Central Park



Photography by Elizabeth Barlow Rogers.

*April 14, 2012*

**THIS MORNING I TOOK** a walk in Central Park. If I had to choose one perfect day of the year, this would be it. Hundreds of trees and shrubs are in bloom throughout the park—crabapple, cherry, mock orange, redbud, Carolina silver bell. The air is fragrant with the scent of cherry laurel. The floor of the Ramble is carpeted with Virginia bluebells, violets, mayapple, and other kinds of native wildflowers. Flag irises, horsetails, and other shoreline plants fringe the Lake. Wisteria racemes dangle over the framework of rustic arbors.

Overhead another annual miracle is occurring. The migratory birds that have been wintering as far away as Central America are now en route to their breeding grounds in Maine and Nova Scotia. No one seems to know exactly why the park is such a prime stopover location along the Atlantic Flyway, but today there

are bird-watchers all over the place, their binoculars cocked skyward. I tagged up with one ornithologically knowledgeable couple in order to benefit from their ability to spot and identify birds more readily than I can. In Strawberry Fields we saw palm warblers amid the dangling catkins of an oak tree, and in the Ramble some yellow rumps darted in a locust canopy, while a bevy of white-throated sparrows and a couple of hermit thrushes hopped about on the ground.

As impressive to me as the park's beauty today was the pleasure written on the faces of just about everybody who was there—and there were literally thousands of us. I could hear many languages being spoken—German, Italian, Russian, Japanese—as groups

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BY ELIZABETH BARLOW ROGERS

of camera-toting tourists followed their guides from site to site. Teams of young boys were playing softball on the Great Lawn, their bright green shirts matching the new grass. Sunbathers were spreading blankets on the ground beside Turtle Pond. By the lake a fisherman was fastening a lure to his line. A woman was doing yoga exercises on top of a nearby rock outcrop. In front of the Ladies Pavilion a wedding party was assembled. The photographer hardly needed to encourage anyone to smile as they grouped themselves on either side of the bride and groom. Along the West Drive a women's half-marathon was in progress. But the place did not seem particularly crowded. An air of tranquility pervaded the whole.

This uplifting picture could not have been imagined back in 1979, the year I became the administrator of Central Park. At that time the park's fortunes were at their lowest ebb. To put the matter into historical perspective, by the end of the nineteenth century the scenic bones of Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux's Greensward Plan were fleshed out, the park was

manicured gardens—we have sixty gardeners in the Tuileries! It is terrible. You can't even walk on the grass. But here everybody can do what they please, and no one is bothered!"

"Oh, dear," I thought to myself. "Can't you see what has happened with no rules and no horticultural care here in Central Park? Didn't you notice the broken benches, eroded lawns, cracked pavement, shattered lights, dead tree branches, and graffiti all around you?" Then I wondered, "Hmmm. Maybe I could send him sixty drug dealers, graffiti artists, muggers, and vandals in exchange for those sixty French gardeners."

Ruminating as I continued my walk today, I recalled the formation of the Central Park Conservancy. A hundred and thirty years before it was founded in 1980, the citizens of New York had spearheaded the legislation to acquire 843 acres that were to become the country's first great municipal park. It was therefore logical—at least to me—to think that, if municipal government could not now respond to the plight of the park, perhaps the citizens of New York would be able to initiate an effort

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Seeing the landscape whole, rather than piecemeal, gave us new respect for the ingenuity of the park's nineteenth-century creators. One of the things that impressed us most was the degree to which Central Park is a great feat of engineering.

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Olmsted and Vaux's Greensward Plan for Central Park. Courtesy Central Park Conservancy.

in its prime, and its alteration by a host of twentieth-century encroachments and the abdication of day-to-day professional care had not yet occurred. But by the end of the swinging sixties and first half of the radical seventies, regulations and even routine management had been virtually suspended and a plethora of performance art happenings, mass concerts, and protest marches had become the order of the day. Park managers and the employees they were meant to supervise had simply given up. The Sheep Meadow was a dustbowl and fifty thousand square feet of graffiti covered rocks, monument bases, walls, bridges, and buildings. Even the beautiful carved stonework of Bethesda Terrace had been vandalized.

I remember a meeting with a visiting French city planner in my office one day. "All this life, life all around you!" he exclaimed. "Our parks, they are too much like

to rebuild it and reinstitute the management principles that would make it clean, safe, and beautiful once more. From this fundamental idea, the Central Park Conservancy was born.

The park is city property, so the founders of the Conservancy had to obtain official permission in order for the organization to come into existence as an entity with the ability to fund and oversee park improvements. This agreement between the public and private sectors could not have happened had there not been two willing partners: the city government during the mayoralty of Edward I. Koch and the Conservancy's board-in-formation under the chairmanship of William S. Beinecke. It was understood up front that the authority to make policy and establish rules and regulations rightly remained with the city, but that the Conservancy, with the city's permission and the approval of established





outside review bodies—community planning boards, the Landmarks Commission, and the Public Design Commission—had the authority to implement restoration projects and educational programs and to perform maintenance tasks within the park.

Mutual good intentions to reverse the degradation of Central Park were not enough, however. To avoid a scattershot approach to restoration, it was necessary to begin with a three-year planning process based on a thorough analysis of the park's historic landscape. No one had examined the site in its entirety as an integrated piece of design since the original Greensward Plan was declared the winning entry in the competition of 1858.

Seeing the landscape whole, rather than piecemeal, gave us new respect for the ingenuity of the park's nineteenth-century creators. One of the things that impressed us most was the degree to which Central Park is a great feat of engineering. Offering the first example of grade separation of traffic in America, its carefully articulated circulation system carries pedestrians over bridle trails via cast-iron bridges and under carriage drives through handsome, carved-stone arches. Busy crosstown traffic moves along sunken transverse roads in such a way that the park visitor is never aware of vehicular rush and noise. Drainage tiles underlie lawns, and an elaborate hydrological system furnishes reservoir water to the park's lakes and ponds. These lakes and ponds were not there before the park was built; where they are now was low-lying, swampy ground. Trees were practically nonexistent. Instead of meadows there was only scanty vegetation grazed by goats.

One wonders how a landscape based on so much engineering and horticultural artifice could appear today simply a part of nature. This form of legerdemain, of course, is the quintessence of Romantic design. Olmsted and Vaux's Central Park is essentially a Romantic symphony composed of varied passages of scenery supported, like any good piece of music, by an integrated compositional framework. Its thematic motifs are turf,

woods, and water, and its structural underpinnings hundreds of thousands of cubic feet of imported topsoil and many miles of sewer lines and water pipes. To my mind, the design's genius resides in the way in which Olmsted and Vaux used preexisting natural elements, notably the glacially scoured outcrops of Manhattan schist, as important accents throughout. These giant forms—a residue of the bedrock that was elsewhere blasted away to create a level grid of streets—constitute a powerful part of the park's essential beauty.

## The recommendations set forth

by our 1985 management and restoration plan constituted an agenda for a series of projects to be accomplished by private fundraising and the allocation of such city capital appropriations as might be available. The plan also outlined the management reforms that were necessary if the spiraling decline of the park was not to occur all over again. But we could not wait until the plan was completed to begin. We felt we had to address the most serious eyesores while proceeding with the tree inventory, user survey, assessment of water and soil quality, and the mapping of the existing vegetation, architectural fabric, circulation routes, and erosion. In 1981, therefore, we undertook the resodding of the Sheep Meadow and the repair of the Bethesda Fountain and Terrace. Determined to institute maintenance procedures that would ensure that these initial efforts would be successful over time, we put together the first turf-care, tree-care, planting, graffiti-removal, and structures-repair crews.

In 1985 we published *Rebuilding Central Park: A Management and Restoration Plan*, the document that became our blueprint for action as well as our fundraising case statement. More than a quarter of a century later it continues to serve as a general framework for ongoing improvements to the park landscape. While guided by Olmsted and Vaux's original Greensward Plan, the contemporary plan takes into account the shift in emphasis during the twentieth century from scenic recreation—such as promenading on foot or by carriage—to active play and sports usage. Thus it contains proposals for the renovation of the playgrounds and rehabilitation of the ball fields that were added to the park in the mid-1930s.

Central Park was not the only park in the city or country to have experienced deterioration in the 1960s and 1970s. For this reason, the public-private

partnership model pioneered by the Conservancy was quick to catch on elsewhere, especially since tradition and tax laws encourage private philanthropy here more than in other countries.

Digressing for a moment into a philosophical vein, I believe the popularity of private-sector support of parks can be attributed to two factors: the democratic ethic and the transcendental ethos in which our nation's values are rooted. The nation's founders subscribed to ideals derived from the Romantic movement—belief in social equality and faith in the beneficence of nature. Republican institutions and citizen-supported charities were the inevitable result of the absence of a monarchical tradition. Unlike the Royal Parks of London or the Tuileries and Luxembourg Gardens in Paris, Central Park was a purpose-built people's park, open to the public from its inception.

In America, the rapid appropriation of unoccupied land for commercial uses sparked demands for public ownership of open spaces, both for their therapeutic value as nature sanctuaries and as recreational preserves for tourists. This aspect of Romanticism helped lead to the creation of the national parks. Similarly, large municipal parks became desirable components of the plans for burgeoning new cities throughout the country. As the nation's first metropolitan park, Central Park served as their model. Now, in much the same way that the Greensward Plan provided a paradigm for the design of other nineteenth-century parks, the methodologies set forth by the Conservancy's twentieth-century plan acted as a guide for park restoration projects being undertaken elsewhere. People in other cities who loved their old, deteriorating parks came to see me to learn about the Conservancy and assess its applicability as a model for the public-private park partnerships they wished to form.

**Walking back to my apartment,** I thought about the different Central Parks that have existed over time and the changing pastimes of the generations of visitors who have come and gone. I thought too about the many faces of the park over time and how design intentions, new technologies, and neglect had inscribed them over the years. That the park's original design was so intelligent and supple enough that it could accommodate such an accumulation of changes and still retain much of its Romantic character seems quite extraordinary. I noticed that almost everyone around me had some kind of digital camera. Serious photographers were shooting scenery with single-lens-reflex models, while others were aiming point-and-shoots and iPhones at friends, fellow tourists, and flowers. I don't believe many of them were thinking that they were taking pictures of a place that is a beautiful simulacrum of nature overlying a nineteenth-century engineering triumph. But they

have frozen in pixels something precious and personal, an image of the park's face on this particular day.

What is ordinary is truly extraordinary when you think how many people have loved Central Park in so many different ways. For each of us place is something personal, and our personal Central Parks are unique. Mine contains Tanner's Spring, a tiny natural pool that wells up at the base of Summit Rock near the West Eighty-first Street entrance, a feature that predates the park and was totally obscured by brambly undergrowth when the Conservancy discovered it as a crew was replanting the area in the 1990s. Today I watched the birds that kept alighting there. Flutter, splash, flutter, splash they went, and the light caught by the water flicked from this natural birdbath sparkled in droplets that fell on their feathers. Transfixed, I mused on how great landscapes like Central Park are marriages of past and present, of nature and art, of people and place. None of these things are static, for nothing remains the same.

I am, of course, grateful when people praise my efforts to reverse the park's fate with the founding of the Conservancy. But that was just a happy bit of biographical circumstance. What matters is now. There are so many factors to consider: money, politics, technology, social behavior. Place is something tenuous. Central Park might not be the way it is today if the current mayor, Michael R. Bloomberg, and his park commissioner, Adrian Benepe, had not sustained and extended the concept of the public-private park partnership. Nor would it be the cynosure of park administration that it is if Douglas Blonsky, my current successor as Central Park administrator and president of the Central Park Conservancy, were not at the helm, overseeing the park's ongoing rebirth and continuing to inspire others with enhancements to the public-private park partnership model he helped create nearly thirty years ago. It is a joy to remember the other men and women who have committed their working years to sustaining the dream of the park reborn—many still working for the Conservancy today.

Today is not a time to think of the transitory nature of golden ages. To foresee whether Central Park will remain in the future the populist arcadia it is in 2012 is impossible. But on such a beautiful day, in the resurgent spring, my heart is full of hope that this beautiful landscape will continue to change in ways that keep faith with the foresight of its creators and we who have tried to be its stewards in our time.

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*Elizabeth Barlow Rogers is the founder and president of the Foundation for Landscape Studies and is the author of many books, including Landscape Design: A Cultural and Architectural History.*



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**ELIZABETH BARLOW ROGERS**, president of the Foundation for Landscape Studies and a member of the LALH Board of Directors, is the recipient of this year's Henry Hope Reed Award, sponsored by Richard H. Driehaus. She generously directed that a share of this prize be given to LALH, and that any announcement of the award should include mention of both the FLS and the Library of American Landscape History—"two worthy not-for-profit organizations." Among Rogers's many accomplishments is the founding of the Central Park Conservancy. She is the author of several books, including the acclaimed survey *Landscape Design: A Cultural and Architectural History*.



**GRADY CLAY**, Honorary ASLA, of Louisville, and his wife, Judith McAndless, have been enthusiastic LALH supporters for several years. During his twenty-five-year stint as editor of *Landscape Architecture Magazine* (1960–1985), Clay was the first in the field to publish Ian McHarg's articles on ecological planning, and he devoted two entire issues (May 1976 and January 1981) to the emerging field of historic landscape preservation. In eleven years of public-radio broadcasts (1991–2002) and several books (1974–2003), he explored often overlooked urban places. At home, he gardened. Although Clay still enjoys his time in the soil, he says he's slowed down a bit. "At ninety-six you don't garden as vigorously as you once did."

*Photos courtesy Elizabeth Barlow Rogers and Grady Clay.*

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