

The Best Planned City in the World by Francis R. Kowsky (\$29.95, University of Massachusetts Press) offers a view of history we tend to overlook. It is hard to imagine any of the world's major cities without their public parks. Examples include Central Park in New York, London's Hyde Park, and the Tuileries Garden in Paris, but as the author notes, until the 1850s the concept of a "pastoral environment in the heart of the city available to all classes of society" simply did not exist. The movement for open spaces for the enjoyment of nature required visionary men. In 1868 two of them, Fredrick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux set their sights on Buffalo, New York and, in doing so, set in motion the concept of park systems. Published in association with the Library of American Landscape History, this book examines that careful planning that went into parks. The Buffalo park system was to be the first of its kind, a revolutionary urban experiment in what was then one of the busiest ports. Olmsted and Vaux had already made their name with New York's Central and Prospect Parks, but Buffalo was to have three parks, distinct from one another and linked throughout the city by majestic, tree-canopies boulevards. Extensively illustrated, it is an excellent book on urban history.