



VIEW

SUMMER 2011
NUMBER 11



VIEW from the Director's Office

Dear Friends of LALH,

It is summer again, and I am pleased to be writing to you. By year's end, LALH will have three new books in print. The first of these, *The Native Landscape Reader*, edited by University of Michigan professor Bob Grese, provides the theme for this issue of *VIEW*. The anthology will be followed by a new edition of Fletcher Steele's 1924 classic, *Design in the Little Garden*, and Christopher Vernon's *Graceland Cemetery: A Design History*, a study of the interconnected design layers of the famed Chicago landmark.



Apple Valley Overlook, Bear Swamp Reservation, Ashfield, Mass.
The Trustees of Reservations. Photograph by Carol Betsch.

Thank you for helping us make such great strides this past year. In recent months, we began work on several new books, including a biography of Arthur Shurcliff (landscape architect and planner of Colonial Williamsburg), a study of the impact of the Olmsted office on suburban development in Brookline, Massachusetts, and a sweeping new analysis of Olmsted & Vaux's Buffalo Parks system—the first volume in our *Designing the American Park* series.

In other news, LALH is working on a new website that will launch in 2012, our twentieth anniversary year. The new site will feature excerpts from LALH books and scholarship in other media, including a series of videos produced in association with Hott Productions of Florentine Films. This is exciting territory for us, a new means of reaching ever wider audiences.

VIEW, our annual newsmagazine, also continues to expand. This issue features articles about the new anthology and about the native plant garden Grese's former teacher Darrel Morrison designed for the University of Wisconsin Arboretum. On a related note, the renowned landscape architect Cornelia Hahn Oberlander writes about her elemental design for the Legislative Assembly Building at Yellowknife, the capital of Canada's Northwest Territories—a subtle and highly sophisticated “reweaving” that utilizes native plants exclusively. Environmental historian Terre Ryan, author of *This Ecstatic Nation*, contributes an incisive essay on the iconography of the sublime, illuminating the uses and abuses of Manifest Destiny imagery over two centuries.

Articles by LALH education director Jane Roy Brown focus on two sites laid out with native landscape principles in mind, the Lincoln Memorial Garden (Springfield, Ill.) and the Edsel and Eleanor Ford House (Grosse Pointe Shores, Mich.), both designed by Jens Jensen. Brown goes on to describe how Storm King, a sculpture park in upstate New York, has been transforming acres of lawn into billowing meadows of native grasses. And she profiles this year's preservation hero: Tupper Thomas, the former president of the Prospect Park Alliance. Archivist and historian Arthur Miller writes about Warren Manning's plan for Lake Forest College, designed in response to the beautiful ravines north of Chicago.

Like *VIEW*, support for LALH continues to expand, and the board of trustees has also increased in size. We are particularly happy to welcome a new member this spring—Mary Carter McConnell, of Rapidan, Virginia, an anthropologist, book collector, and gardener who breeds field trial setters and with her husband, James H. T. McConnell, has a conservation breeding program for Native American horses.

The trustees join me in asking for your support. LALH is the only nonprofit organization in existence dedicated to publishing scholarship about the history of North American landscape design. We have been devoted to this effort since our founding in 1992, and we continue to develop books, exhibitions, and online media to educate wide audiences about the meaning of North America's landscape heritage. LALH cannot do this important work without you. Please join us in our vital educational mission. Make a donation today.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robin Karson".

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 and back cover: Curtis Prairie, University of Wisconsin Arboretum.
Photographs by Darrel Morrison.





CELEBRATING *The Native Landscape*

A NEW ANTHOLOGY FROM LALH, *The Native Landscape Reader*, presents a thoughtful and highly personal selection of essays, collected by landscape architect Robert E. Grese. The writings span roughly a century and cover topics ranging from our spiritual relationship with nature to the evolution of ecology and ideas about natural systems. Undeniably subjective, Grese’s choices reflect a lifetime of experience as one of our leading teachers, conservationists, and proponents of environmental design. The commentary he provides illuminates these writings in contemporary as well as historical context.

As Grese observes, between 1830 and 1930 “the native landscape was the subject of intense interest, as a focus for scientific study, as a model for design, and as the focus of preservation (or restoration) efforts. . . . Aesthetically, philosophically, practically, and politically, the native landscape served as inspiration and guide, as a source of plants and as instructor on how to plant, and as something to treat with wonder and awe.” Imaginatively, the articles are grouped into five sections, within which they are ordered chronologically.

Part I, “Appreciation of Nature,” opens with Thomas Cole’s “Essay on American Scenery” (1835), a frequently cited work that sparked a new role for scenic wilderness in the American imagination as a signifier of national identity. In it Cole implores his readers to cultivate a taste for American scenery—of which the newly formed nation had an abundant and varied supply, from the luxuriant Connecticut River valley to the falls of Niagara to the peak of Mount Rainier. No need for Americans to feel inferior to the advanced cultures of Europe, Cole argues. “Nature has spread for us a rich and delightful banquet. Shall we turn from it? We are still in Eden; the wall that shuts us out of the garden is our own ignorance and folly.”

Writing fifty-six years later in the influential magazine *Garden & Forest*, Charles Sprague Sargent and William Augustus Stiles commend the appreciable rise in love of scenery that had occurred since Cole penned his

treatise—owing in no small measure to the popularity of Cole’s own landscape paintings. But they go further, to encourage a still more elemental impulse: love of nature. Evoking the epiphany that Frederick Law Olmsted experienced during his 1850 walking tour of England, Sargent and Stiles describe a similarly transformative moment: “He cannot measure or describe it, but when alone in the dense forest or in some sunny glade a mysterious sense of kinship with the silent forces working all about him, . . . comes to him unbidden and ravishes his soul, . . . and after such hours of communion with nature he can return to the noisy world refreshed in spirit and strengthened for the inevitable conflicts of life.” Such moments, Sargent and Stiles believe, should be cultivated particularly in children, so that they might carry these sentiments into their adult lives and thereby improve the nation, whose rawness was still woefully evident. In 1898, O. C. Simonds expressed the same idea, albeit more bluntly: “If people could realize and enjoy the beauty around them, they would be happier and better, and the earth would gradually improve in appearance.”

Andrew Jackson Downing opens Part II, “Our Native Flora,” with his 1851 article “The Neglected American Plants,” in which he chastises his gardening readers for their overreliance on exotics. “Our parterres are gay with the verbenas and fuchsias of South America, . . . while the rarest spectacle in an American

Opposite: Upper Buttermilk Falls State Park. Ithaca, N.Y. Planned by Warren H. Manning. Photograph by Carol Betsch.

BY ROBIN KARSON



Niagara Falls, c. 1830, by Thomas Cole. Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, Woodstock, Vt.

country place is to see above three or four native trees, rarer still to find any but foreign shrubs, and rarest of all to find any of our native wild flowers.”

“Aesthetically, philosophically, practically, and politically, the native landscape served as inspiration and guide, as a source of plants and as instructor on how to plant, and as something to treat with wonder and awe.”—Grese

Forty-six years later, interest in American plants was still flagging in many regions, and Sargent and Stiles write (again in *Garden & Forest*) to express their dismay over the lingering preference for exotic trees: “Looking at the matter broadly, comparatively little . . . has been accomplished toward beautifying the earth’s surface by transferring trees from one region to another, although a great deal of time, energy and money has

been expended during the last two hundred years in the attempt to do it.”

In Part III, “The Native Landscape as Source of Inspiration,” Grese features a second piece by Downing, in which the landscape gardener offers advice to the planting public: to study “stiff and graceless” gardens less and “ever free and flowing” nature more. Downing’s article is followed by essays by Frank Waugh, Jens Jensen, Harold Caparn, and O. C. Simonds, all of whom address the importance of nature and the native landscape as models in design.

By the early 1930s, the destruction of wilderness and native plant habitat had become a matter of deep and widespread concern. The implications for landscape design and theory were significant. In “An Ecological Approach” (1933), Elsa Rehmann (coauthor with Edith Roberts of *American Plants for American Places*, 1929), offers a hopeful scenario: “There are still suburbs and rural communities where houses are sufficiently isolated. In such places it would still be possible to build roads that would adapt themselves to the natural contours of the land, to select appropriate house sites, to keep hedgerows and surrounding woodlands intact, and to outline a program for the preservation of vegetation

and for the re-creation of such scenes as may have been unavoidably destroyed.” But, Rehmann acknowledges, these exciting possibilities “are dependent upon a well-nigh unprecedented cooperation of neighbors based upon a far-sighted policy of subdivider and engineer”—a sadly prescient observation.

In Part IV, “Natural Parks and Gardens,” Grese turns to parks and gardens designed in a naturalistic style. He opens with an 1899 article by J. Horace McFarland extolling the beauty of a “real American garden” by Warren H. Manning outside Philadelphia, where the landscape architect used the scar of an abandoned quarry as a setting for a wild garden of great size and variety. Other contributors to the section include Manning himself (promoting the virtues of bog gardens and insectivorous plants), and the designers Arthur G. Eldredge, Wilhelm Miller, and Jens Jensen (interviewed by Ragna Eskil) discussing various aspects of creating nature-based gardens and parks. The naturalist May Theilgaard Watts concludes the section.

Watts, whom Grese credits with influencing his decision to become a landscape architect, is represented by two pieces, “A Story for Ravinians” and “On Improving the Property,” both of which encourage homeowners and builders to go carefully in creating new residential landscapes, lest they destroy the charms that drew them to the location in the first place. Her “Story for Ravinians” is a fable of failed suburbia:

Abundant rich forest still lay all around the subdued lot, and birds sang. It was a beautiful place to live.

Others thought so too. They came, and each one firmly corseted and manicured his own lot, before settling down to enjoy the gypsy-like charm of his surroundings.

The dying forest trees were gradually replaced, mostly with cottonwoods. Presently there was no undisciplined charm left to distract the inhabitants from a comparative contemplation of each other’s lawns and privet hedges. So they settled down to planting red geraniums on these rectangular graves where they had buried beauty.

The final section is titled “Restoration and Management of the Native Landscape.” These were already pressing issues in the nineteenth century; H. W. S. Cleveland opens the section with his 1878 “Culture and Management of Our Native Forests,” and essays by Olmsted Sr. and Charles Eliot continue the discussion of forest management. Pieces by Jens Jensen, Henry Cowles, and Lars Peter Jensen document their early conservation efforts to save native plants and landscapes and add historical perspective to the challenges looming before us today.

An essay by Aldo Leopold moves us further into ecology and theories of natural systems, which were



Maples at meadow edge, site of one of the first scientific forests in the United States. Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, Woodstock, Vt. Photograph by Carol Betsch.

made tangible at the University of Wisconsin Arboretum, where Leopold and his colleagues created an ecological garden, described by Paul Riis in the 1937 article that concludes the section. (The landscape architect Darrel Morrison, a former professor at Wisconsin, writes about the native plants garden he has recently created at the site on page 9 in this issue.)

In his epilogue, Grese connects these seminal writings with present-day dilemmas, suggesting that the historical essays can offer both practical and philosophical solutions. His conclusion brings the commentary back to his own personal perspective, as teacher, conservationist, and citizen. Grese is among those who believe that the battle to save remnants of the native landscape can be waged daily—literally, in our own backyards.

The Native Landscape Reader is the inaugural volume in the Critical Perspectives on the History of Environmental Design series, edited by Daniel J. Nadenicek. For the purposes of the series, LALH embraces a definition of environmental design that includes an intention to benefit people and place through design and preservation of the landscape. Implicit in this definition is a sense that a connection to the physical world, especially the



Field study. Photograph by Frank A. Waugh. Glass lantern slide. Courtesy Frank A. Waugh Collection, Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst.

landscape, provides physical, mental, and spiritual benefits, and that landscape design offers a means of orchestrating a “just relation” (in Emerson’s phrase) between humans and the world.

Environmental design is necessarily multidisciplinary, spanning landscape architecture, architecture, urban planning, forestry, regional planning, engineering, ecology, horticulture, historic preservation, geography, and literature. While the focus of the books in the series will be the United States, international linkages and the evolution and transference of ideas among nations will

also be explored, as they are important to the American story. Our goal is to foster a cross-disciplinary dialogue about the relationship of humans to nature, influencing the decisions we make and the places we design today.

Grese is among those who believe that the battle to save remnants of the native landscape can be waged daily—literally, in our own backyards.



Yellow lady's slippers. Skegemog Marsh, Torch Lake, Antrim County, Mich. Photograph by Bob Grese.

This series and another new LALH series, *Designing the American Park*, edited by Ethan Carr, are being developed with the intention of fostering scholarship that is foundational to the emerging field of landscape studies and that also provides practical benefits to the stewards of public places and to the constituents who support these places as vital components of civic life. As financial resources shrink and threats to the environment—and therefore our historic landscape heritage—continue to mount, we feel an obligation to focus our resources on publishing scholarship that will be of the greatest possible use to the greatest number of people.

Designing in the Prairie Spirit

Native Plants Garden by Darrel Morrison. University of Wisconsin Arboretum, Madison. All photographs by Darrel Morrison.

Many of us can look back and recognize a watershed moment, a juncture, which caused reverberations for years to come. For me, it was my arrival in Madison in summer 1967, as a graduate student in landscape architecture at the University of Wisconsin. From the perspective of more than four decades later, I see how that move and the following sixteen years at Wisconsin, as a graduate student and then as a faculty member, were key in my professional evolution.

I had grown up on a 160-acre mixed crop and livestock farm in Iowa and earned a B.S. in landscape architecture from Iowa State. After being drafted and serving two years in the army, I began my professional career as a fledgling landscape architect at a government agency and in a private firm in the Washington, D.C., area. The design work I did over those five years was pretty mundane. My planting plans incorporated a limited number of frequently used and readily available species: thornless honeylocusts, flowering dogwoods, and Japanese maples; Chinese hollies, Japanese azaleas, and burning bush; and groundcovers such as English ivy, pachysandra, and periwinkle. By the thousands.

After a time, I grew restless with the generic landscapes I was designing. Contributing to my discontent was a little book I'd discovered, bound in maroon cloth, titled *American Plants for American Gardens*. Published in

1929, it was a collection of articles by Edith Roberts, a plant ecologist, and Elsa Rehmann, a landscape architect, written while both were on the faculty at Vassar. (The articles had originally appeared in *House Beautiful* as the Plant Ecology series in 1927–1928.) Each featured a different northeastern plant community, such as “The Juniper Hillside,” “The Gray Birches,” “The Oak Woods,” “The Hemlock Ravine,” and included poetic descriptions as well as the authors’ suggestions for incorporating those plants into designs where they were ecologically appropriate. Roberts and Rehmann also provided extensive lists for each of the communities, covering the whole spectrum of species characteristic of the community: trees, shrubs, vines, grasses, ferns, wildflowers. The approach they advocated—incorporating native species in community-like compositions in the designed and managed landscape—struck me as eminently sensible. The book inspired me to want to learn more.

In a way, Roberts and Rehmann led me to Wisconsin. Although it was the landscape architecture program I enrolled in, I knew that the Wisconsin botany department was renowned for its plant ecology program, and I was encouraged to take advantage of it by my graduate adviser, William Tishler. The first course I registered for that summer was Botany 450, Plant Ecology. It was also

BY DARREL MORRISON



Above and right: Native Plants Garden, University of Wisconsin Arboretum.

Bill Tishler who introduced me to Aldo Leopold's classic, *A Sand County Almanac*. Leopold had died in 1948, but his philosophy toward the land, land ethics, and landscape aesthetics lived on in the book. Reading it, I was struck by how aware this eminent scholar and teacher in wildlife management was of the aesthetic component of the landscape, and how poetically he expressed it.

Leopold's influence was (and is) still present at the University of Wisconsin Arboretum. He was a primary force in its establishment in 1934, envisioning "something new and different"—not simply a collection of trees, but, as his biographer, Curt Meine, expresses it, "a collection of landscapes, a re-creation of the land as it once existed." The arboretum's twelve hundred acres "would be replanted not simply with individual species, but with entire plant communities." Today, Curtis Prairie and Greene Prairie, each about forty acres, are considered important pioneering projects in ecosystem restoration.

Within the various plant communities, I tried to create directional drifts of different species, merging softly with each other, a phenomenon I had observed repeatedly in the native landscape.

Which brings us back to the summer of 1967 and Botany 450. Several of the course's field labs took place in the restored arboretum prairies. I still remember looking southward across Curtis Prairie in July and August

and seeing waves of big bluestem and Indiangrass as they billowed in the breeze and captured the late afternoon sunlight. The more I immersed myself in that prairie, the more I came to love it. In the Iowa of my childhood, the once vast native tallgrass prairie was all but extinct, long since converted to fields of corn and soybeans. The only prairie species I ever encountered were the survivors on the verge of Highway 25 in front of the family farmstead and along the CB&Q railroad right-of-way a mile to the east.

So, to see Curtis Prairie was in a sense a revelation—a heartening one. It showed me that it is possible to begin to restore biotic diversity, ecological function, and beauty to landscapes that have been diminished or made dysfunctional by human activity. That this work of scientists was so beautiful suggested to me that we landscape designers could be inspired and profitably informed by science in our art, with the result being a potentially happy marriage of ecology with design.

During the Wisconsin years, another important strand was interwoven with my interest in linking ecology with landscape design as I began learning about Jens Jensen. I was first introduced to Jensen's work through Leonard Eaton's 1964 biography, *Landscape Artist in America*, and then, later, made trips to The Clearing and other Jensen-designed landscapes in Illinois and Wisconsin. I also read Jensen's own book, *Siftings*, published in 1939. Through these experiences I came to appreciate Jensen's masterful handling of spatial design, his use of light and shadow in the landscape, and his incorporation of native plants and plant communities in his work.

Increasingly through his long and productive career, which continued until he was ninety years old, Jensen



Above: Curtis Prairie, University of Wisconsin Arboretum.

proselytized for the use of native plants in the designed landscape. His understanding of plant communities was greatly facilitated by his association with Henry C. Cowles, a renowned ecologist at the University of Chicago (and, coincidentally, Edith Roberts's professor—she earned her Ph.D. there in 1915). The two men botanized together extensively in the Indiana Dunes and in wild lands in Illinois. Like Roberts and Rehmann, Jensen advocated field study as essential in the education of landscape architects. His colleagues O. C. Simonds and Frank Waugh also wrote about the importance of studying naturally evolving landscapes as a basis for designed and managed sites.

In 1973, I was inspired, perhaps subconsciously, to initiate a three-week field course, "Native Plant Communities of Wisconsin," in which I was joined by Evelyn Howell, a plant ecologist on the landscape architecture faculty. We combined quantitative methods (for example, vegetation sampling along lines, or transects, and in plots, or quadrats) with mapping of plant distribution patterns, sketching, descriptive writing, and interpreting the "essence" of plant communities in watercolors. I was learning alongside our students every day in the field. Evelyn taught me a great deal about plant communities and their dynamics, just as Cowles had taught Jensen during their field trips. The experience was transformative for me as a designer.

In 1997, I was given an opportunity to apply the information and inspiration I had drawn from that fieldwork when I was invited to return to Wisconsin to design a four-acre native plants garden at the arboretum, on a site overlooking Curtis Prairie. I had come full circle. The new native plants garden, which was to surround a major expansion of the arboretum's visitor

center and auditorium, was to incorporate representations of eleven different native plant communities of southern Wisconsin.

Arboretum scientists provided me with extensive lists of species characteristic of each community. Although these plantings would introduce visitors to the arboretum's various restorations, they would not themselves be restorations but rather "distillations" designed to capture the essence of natural communities. This concept accords with Jensen's philosophy of natural gardens: "In trying to make a garden natural, we should not make the mistake of copying Nature. . . . Art idealizes; it is creative. . . . The landscape must have a dominant thought or feeling in it, just as a painting must have a dominant thought in it."

As I analyze my design now, retrospectively, I see strong Jensen influences. The form of the central lawn space flows like a broad river through the garden, with peninsulas of tall grasses, shrubs, and trees partially blocking the long view, creating an element of mystery. A circular terrace outside the auditorium is defined by a half-circle stone wall (a reference to Jensen, who designed one of his characteristic council rings for the arboretum, constructed in another section). A hawthorn acts as a pivot point in the design. Within the various plant communities, I tried to create directional drifts of different species, merging softly with each other, a phenomenon I had observed repeatedly in the native landscape.

Trees and shrubs were planted in 2002, followed by herbaceous species in the prairie, savanna, forest, and wetland representations, planted by volunteers and student interns under the guidance of Susan Carpenter, curator of the native plants garden. With the help of



Stone Mill, planting design by Darrel Morrison. New York Botanical Garden, Bronx, N.Y. Photograph by Todd Haiman.

Joe Lazorchak, a former University of Georgia graduate student, I drew very detailed plans, with each herbaceous plant represented by a color-coded dot. Susan interpreted and adapted these plans as necessary, and, increasingly, the essence of each plant community, such as the limestone prairie, the moist prairie swale, the oak-hickory forest, and the maple-basswood forest, is emerging. Whenever I visit the arboretum, I try to include some time sitting on one of the curving walls overlooking Curtis Prairie, the landscape that was and remains my inspiration. Early in the morning, when fog floats over it, memories flood over me.

Teaching and learning have continued to interweave through the years since Wisconsin; former students are now teachers and colleagues. During twenty years at the University of Georgia, I initiated field courses in “Plant Communities of the Southeast,” again learning alongside my students, often with the assistance of Nancy Aten, a graduate student who is now practicing ecologically based design near Milwaukee. Bob Grese, another former student who now teaches at University of Michigan, is also director of the Nichols Arboretum in Ann Arbor, designed by O. C. Simonds. On my drawing board now is a plan for a two-acre extension to the Native Flora Garden at Brooklyn Botanic Garden, which will include “distillations” of an eastern meadow and pine barrens. On this project I have the pleasure of collaborating with Annette Wilkus, a landscape architect based in New York City who was one of my students at Wisconsin in the 1970s.

During the summer of 2010, with the assistance of apprentice Marc Wolf, I oversaw the planting of my design for a hillside next to the restored Old Stone Mill at the New York Botanical Garden, sloping down to the Bronx River. Native plant communities of New York provided the inspiration for this half-acre garden. I specified fifty-one gray birches in two diagonal drifts down the slope, with a sunlit “river” of little bluestem and sun-loving wildflowers flowing between them. (In the end, we used ‘Whitespire’, a cultivar, because

of its greater ability to resist the bronze birch borer and because it was available in the sizes and quantity we needed.) Other early successional species flow through the design—plants that might volunteer in an open field early in its evolution toward a forest: sassafras, gray dogwood, dwarf serviceberry. In the shade of two ancient sycamores near the base of the slope, various ferns along with wild geranium, woods phlox, columbine, and Pennsylvania sedge move across the landscape. In all, more than ten thousand plants of forty-plus species were planted.

It is the birches, though, and the bluestem, that provide the theme—“the dominant thought,” in Jensen’s words. I enjoyed watching the Whitespire in their new home, from midsummer through the fall and into the snow-covered winter. They bring to life Edith Roberts and Elsa Rehmann’s description in *American Plants for American Gardens*:

Wherever there are gray birches, Nature is in one of her lightest moods. These gray-white trees of slender form gather together in fairy-like groves. Their slim grace is accentuated by the way they often spring up in fives and sixes from a single root. When young they are gray-brown but later on they are phantom-white with black twigs and black notches. The effect is full of that mystery that etchings and delicate pencil drawings have. The gossamer quality is ever present; in the spring when their filmy foliage is light-filled, in summer when their green is soft, in autumn when it is all sun-lit yellow, and even in the winter when the trees take on again their keynote colors from the snow and dark earth.

Darrel Morrison, *professor and dean emeritus, College of Environment and Design at the University of Georgia, currently lives in Manhattan. He continues to design landscapes for both public and private clients, and teaches as an adjunct faculty member at Columbia University and Rutgers University.*

Invisible Mending: NESTLING NATIVE PLANTS INTO A BOREAL SITE

Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly Building on Frame Lake. Photograph by Etta Gerdes ©.

Yellowknife, the site of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly Building, is situated at 62 degrees latitude north. The building was designed and built in the early 1990s, nearly one hundred years after other government buildings in Canada, in a harsh, remote land near the Arctic Circle. In response to the unique challenges of designing a new capital building, the site was carefully chosen to reflect the beauty of the flat, scrub landscape and to emphasize the architecture, which has a harmonious relationship to rock outcroppings, the peat bog foreground, and the lakeside location.

Architect Gino Pin chose the indigenous building form of the north for the new building, reminiscent of the sculpted round form of the igloo, resulting in the circular Caucus Room. As the largest of the interior spaces, it reflects the consensus-style government of the diverse peoples of the Territories. In collaboration, the architects, landscape architect, and engineers nestled the building into the mounded rocky landscape at the edge of an old

white spruce forest so that the winds from the lake could brush over its curved surface without resistance. Materials from the region were used throughout. The zinc cladding of the building was made from zinc mined in the Territories and manufactured in Germany. (Today we would not encourage this process because of the high carbon footprint of shipping to and from Europe.) Plants used on this project came exclusively from local sources.

The concept for the building and its relationship to its surroundings was based on the approach of “least intervention” and limiting footprints. To maintain vital ecological processes, conserve biological diversity, and utilize ecosystems of plants and animals at sustainable levels, key factors of conservation and development were handled in a systematic and holistic way. Guidelines for the restoration of the landscape were

BY CORNELIA HAHN OBERLANDER, OC, FCSLA,
FASLA, BCCLA
AND ELISABETH WHITELAW, CSLA, BCCLA



Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly Building in Yellowknife, Canada. Photograph by Etta Gerdes ©.

developed to preserve its inherent beauty, celebrating life in the north with the long daylight hours of summer and stark darkness of winter, telling us about the seasons, introducing us to the plants of the region which have endured in this fragile natural environment.

A sensitive attitude toward the land is well described by Barry Lopez in his book *Arctic Dreams*: “What does one do when visiting a new place? he asked a man. His reply was simple. I listen that’s all. I listen to what the land is saying. I walk around in it and strain my senses in appreciation of it for a long time before I, myself, ever speak a word. Entered in this manner the land will open up.”

Since no nurseries were available in the far north, new methods had to be developed to supply the native plants necessary to perform the “invisible mending.” Seeds from indigenous plants, such as Northern Rose (*Rosa acicularis*) and Kinnikinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva ursi*), were gathered by a professional nurseryman within a five-mile radius of the building for propagation in Vancouver. Tissue culture was also utilized. For example, one shoebox was filled with ten saxifrage plants, which generated 2,800 new plants for the roof of the mechanical wing. In a third method, cuttings taken from woody plants such as Mountain Cranberry (*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*), Cranberry (*Viburnum edule*), and Red Osier Dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera*) were propagated. Two years after collection, the plant material was mature enough to be returned to

the site, just as construction on the building was nearing completion. Because these plants were genetically true to the north, none died in subsequent winters.

We realized that we could save much of the vegetation by scooping up vegetated mats from the bog with a front-end loader and placing them in situ to repair disturbed sections.

Restoration of the peat bog involved more dramatic technology. The access road created during construction infringed on the edges of the bog, and, as this work progressed, constant supervision of the construction crew was necessary. We realized that we could save much of the vegetation by scooping up vegetated mats from the bog with a front-end loader and placing them in situ to repair disturbed sections. For many years the sensitive bog had been damaged, and these mats with Cloudberry (*Rubus chamaemorus*) and sedges helped to mend the scars invisibly. Finally, careful selection of young trees from designated sites within a five-mile radius were planted where needed to augment the existing trees on the site.



Topsoil was not available in Yellowknife. In order to develop a growing medium, the stockpiled clay from the building excavation was mixed with sand from a location near the airport to make a six-inch layer for the green roof portion of the building, as well as for planting pockets around the site.

Unlike the plantings surrounding most of the public buildings in Yellowknife, the plantings around the Legislative Assembly Building thrive without winter dieback and meld seamlessly into the surrounding native landscape. Paradoxically, they are flourishing as a result of the global warming that has affected Yellowknife as dramatically as any place on earth. Trees that did not grow more than an inch per year now put on eight to twelve inches annually, changing the views to the building and lake considerably. Now, nearly twenty years after the completion of the project, a landscape management study should be undertaken to address the unforeseen growth of the trees and shrubs due to milder winters and hotter summers.

The blue and white panels on the flag of the Northwest Territories symbolize the sapphire-toned lakes, the ice, and the almost ever-present snow. The Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly Building and its landscape show our respect for the beauty and systems of nature with new planting introduced through invisible mending, a method strongly recommended for working in the arctic.

WHEN SAMUEL HEARNE, an English adventurer and amateur anthropologist, naturalist, artist, and writer, arrived on the banks of Great Slave Lake in 1771, he could not have foreseen that this pristine wilderness, with its subarctic climate and high altitude, would ever become civilized to the extent that it has. Yet each wave of prospecting, especially for gold and diamonds, has brought intrusive development to its shore. More than two hundred years after Hearne, Cornelia Hahn Oberlander and her collaborative team were challenged by the harsh growing conditions (a bog in plant hardiness zone 0, situated 250 miles south of the Arctic Circle) in which they would situate a majestic Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly Building for the new capital city of Yellowknife. How could a landscape architect overcome one of the continent's most hostile environments to create a tranquil landscape uniting building and site?

Rather than designing a formal landscape in the grand manner of Canada's older capital sites, Oberlander practiced habitat restoration, ethnobotany, and social justice to synthesize ostensibly discrete living systems and ecological processes, limit plant materials to native species, and confine her creative endeavors to "invisible mending." By interweaving native plants into the existing landscape, Oberlander has restored this landscape to a state of ecological balance.

The building seems to rise from Oberlander's bog, nestling amid the trees along the northern banks of Frame Lake, and is a fitting tribute to the First Nations leaders who practice democracy within, speaking as many as eleven languages yet practicing a single political system under one roof. Here Oberlander proves the sky is the only limit.

—Nina Antonetti

ARCHITECT

Pin Mathews, Yellowknife: Gino Pin
Matsuzaki/Wright Architects,
Vancouver: Jim Wright

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

Cornelia Hahn Oberlander, Vancouver:
Cornelia Oberlander, Elisabeth
Whitelaw
Yellowknife: Karen LeGresley

PLANT COLLECTOR

Pacific Plants, Vancouver:
Bruce McTavish

LANDSCAPE CONTRACTOR

North by Northwest Ventures Inc.:
Tim Ferguson

CLIENT

Department of Public Works,
Northwest Territories

PLANT LIST

BOTANICAL/ COMMON NAME	METHOD OF PROPAGATION
Trees	
<i>Pinus banksiana</i> Jack Pine	Collected
<i>Betula papyrifera</i> Paper White Birch	Collected
<i>Picea glauca</i> White Spruce	Collected
Shrubs	
<i>Shepherdia canadensis</i> Soap berry	Cuttings
<i>Ribes hudsonianum</i> Black Current	Cuttings
<i>Rosa acicularis</i> Northern Rose	Seed
<i>Vaccinium vitis-idaea</i> Mountain Cranberry	Cuttings
<i>Viburnum edule</i> Highbush Cranberry	Cuttings
<i>Cornus stolonifera</i> Red Osier Dogwood	Cuttings
Groundcovers	
<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i> Bearberry	Seed
<i>Saxifraga tricuspidata</i> Prickly Saxifrage	Tissue Culture
<i>Geocaulon lividum</i> Bastard Toadflax	Cuttings



Meadow grasses, Yellowknife. Photograph by Etta Gerdes ©.

Cornelia Oberlander, based in Vancouver, B.C., is one of the world's leading landscape architects. Committed to promoting the harmonious fusion of building and site, she has created works throughout the world that reflect her sense of social conscience and environmental responsibility.

Elisabeth Whitelaw is a landscape architect with an interest in environmentally responsible urban design, including the design of extensive and intensive green roofs. Whitelaw has worked in the office of Cornelia Hahn Oberlander for twenty years on a wide variety of projects, all of which begin with research and end with supervised implementation.

Nina Antonetti, assistant professor in landscape studies at Smith College, is writing a book about Cornelia Oberlander for LALH.



Moon rising over meadows with *Foci* by Chakaia Booker, 2010, and *Mon Père, Mon Père* by Mark di Suvero, 1973–1975, Storm King. All photographs by Neil Brigham.

MONUMENTAL MEADOWS

Storm King Art Center displays monumental sculptures by postwar masters—David Smith, Louise Nevelson, Mark di Suvero, Alexander Calder, and others—on five hundred pastoral acres in the Hudson River valley. Art critics have praised the sculpture park, now in its fifty-first year, as a marriage of art and nature, often observing that the works draw power from their landscape setting. Viewed from the museum building atop a low hill, the landscape sweeps west down a gradual slope of meadows and trees, hops the New York State Thruway to a green field beyond, and rises to the puddingstone ridge of Schunemunk Mountain a few miles away. These “natural” surroundings, however, are as much a work of art as the sculpture within them.

When it opened to the public in 1960, the art center consisted of a twenty-three-acre former private estate surrounded by farm fields pocked with gravel pits. “In

the 1950s, the New York State Thruway was built along what is now our western boundary, and several abutting property owners mined gravel to build the roadbed,” explains David Collens, the center’s director and curator. “Much of the land was devastated.” In the following decades, the center acquired several of these properties. “As we’ve added land, we have reshaped the landscape to create circulation, place the sculpture, screen the highway, and open up views,” Collens says. For this he credits landscape architect William Rutherford, who devoted his career to this project, from the center’s founding, in 1960, until 2005, the year of Rutherford’s death. He also worked with artists, including Richard Serra and Isamu Noguchi, to design landscape settings for site-specific commissions at Storm King. “Bill was a visionary who

BY JANE ROY BROWN

understood how to move people through the landscape, and he worked very well with the artists,” says Collens, who, with the center’s cofounder and president, H. Peter Stern, also collaborated on landscape decisions. In the 1990s, Rutherford began converting some of the fields and lawns into meadows with broad walking paths. In other spots he encircled sculptures with irregular “moats” of meadow. But he was frustrated in his attempts to create specific aesthetic effects with the grasses.

“But to me the best benefit is aesthetic—the big sweeping views, the large sculpture, the space flowing around islands of tall grass.”—Morrison

Enter landscape architect Darrel Morrison, whom Collens met in 1995 at the opening of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, where Morrison had designed the gardens. The following year Morrison began working with Rutherford at Storm King, sowing “nurse crops” of alfalfa and buckwheat to suppress unwanted species until native grasses were established. With the help of a skillful local farmer, Bruce McCord, they destroyed weeds by frequent mowing, applying environmentally safe herbicides, and annual burning, followed by reseeding the desired grasses: switchgrass (*Panicum vergatum*), Canada wild rye (*Elymus canadensis*), Indian grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), and little bluestem

(*Schizachyrium scoparium*). Collens has enjoyed watching the grasses mature to create the shimmering movement Rutherford envisioned. “The switchgrass grows three feet high,” he says. “It blows around and turns a beautiful gold in fall.”

One recent artwork incorporates the color and movement of grasses: Maya Lin’s earthwork *Storm King Wave Field* is a series of rippling grassy berms on four and a half acres. Begun in 2007, the piece covers a filled-in gravel pit. Morrison consulted on vegetation. “It was challenging because there were so many habitats on those ridges and swales—hot and cool, wet and dry, north and south exposures,” he says. “I put together a mix of five species of grasses and a nurse crop.” The grasses were not all natives, he says, because they would not have created the intended effects in the extreme conditions. In the dry summer of 2010, for instance, when Lin decided she favored a softer, wilder look, a drought-tolerant prairie species, sideoats grama grass (*Bouteloua curtipendula*) covered the wave crests with a lush mane. “In the fall, when it did rain, other areas got greener just as the sideoats put out their seeds, which created a tan fringe on the ridges that deepened into green down the slope,” Morrison says.

For him, as for Rutherford—and, perhaps, the artists as well—the most exciting thing about this landscape as a whole is the chance to work on a large-scale canvas. “Certainly, the meadows have made this place more sustainable because we are not watering, fertilizing or mowing every few weeks,” Morrison says. “But to me the best benefit is aesthetic—the big sweeping views, the large sculpture, the space flowing around islands of tall grass.”



Above: *Storm King Wave Field* by Maya Lin, 2009.

Left: View across meadow to *The Arch* by Alexander Calder, 1975.



Shooting Star Savannah, north ravine edge of Middle Campus, Lake Forest University. Photograph by Carol Betsch.

WARREN MANNING'S PICTURESQUE VISION FOR LAKE FOREST COLLEGE

Warren Manning's redesign of the Lake Forest University campus, on the shore of Lake Michigan about thirty miles north of Chicago, played a central role in the institution's redefinition of itself, both physically and programmatically. Between 1897 and 1908 Manning spatially reorganized the haphazard layout of this graduate institution to reflect its conversion into a liberal arts college with preparatory-school affiliates. His campus plan of 1897, which likely served as the basis for a subsequent plan in 1906, focused on the network of dramatic ravines that shaped the central spaces, melding the college so seamlessly with these natural features that they came to define the institution's identity. The roadways and natural areas that Manning created and preserved continue to delineate the North and Middle campuses of what is now Lake Forest College.

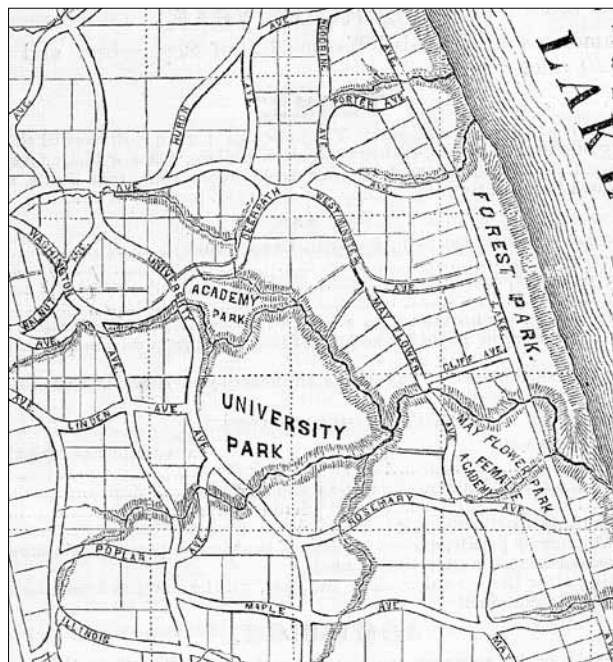
The university's campus dates from the innovative, curvilinear street plan for the surrounding community that was laid out in 1857 by Almerin Hotchkiss for the founders, a group of affluent Chicago Presbyterians.¹ The parcel comprised thirteen hundred acres of forested glacial moraines, carved into tablelands by streams flowing east, to the lake, through ravines fifty to

BY ARTHUR H. MILLER

eighty feet deep. The forest was originally dominated by oak, maple, and beech, with patches of conifers. These species gradually gave way to black locust and honeysuckle as settlement progressed. As construction created openings in the canopy, understory plants that had grown on the steep, shady banks of the ravines were replaced by more light-tolerant species, including buckthorn.

Most of the streets on the Hotchkiss plan wound sinuously through this landscape in English Picturesque fashion, traversing the gaping chasms between tablelands and offering views of the ravines. In the center, Hotchkiss designated a university campus, or “park,” with two smaller satellite campuses for the preparatory schools. Each institution sat on a separate plateau bounded on three sides by ravines and on the fourth side by a road. The thirty-acre university campus (today known as Middle Campus) faced west to University Avenue (later Sheridan Road), a major thoroughfare that meanders north–south.² Lake Forest Academy for boys occupied ten adjacent acres to the north. The girls’ preparatory school, Ferry Hall, lay east of the university campus, near the lake. In 1879 the academy burned; it was rebuilt in 1880, on the university campus one block south. The university folded in the original academy site (now called North Campus).

From 1892 to 1893, the eloquent and cosmopolitan pastor of the community’s Presbyterian church, Reverend James G. K. McClure, served as interim university president. During McClure’s tenure, the well-known landscape architect O. C. Simonds was commissioned to create an informal plan for five structures on the new Lake Forest Academy site (now called South Campus). The Simonds



Almerin Hotchkiss plan for Lake Forest, Ill, detail, 1857. Courtesy Archives and Special Collections, Lake Forest College Library.

plan was carried out, with four of the five projected buildings, including three by the Chicago firm of Pond & Pond, constructed by 1894. They were set within a landscape of young trees (predominantly ash and pine), shrubs, and vines. The plan also suggested locations for future university buildings and bridged the ravine separating the north and central campuses.

Manning called attention to the unique ravines: *“They are of vital importance, they are the key to the whole situation so far as the plan of the grounds is concerned, and they are the one feature that will set these grounds apart from other like institutions.”*

During this same period, the University of Chicago opened, on Chicago’s south side, and invited Lake Forest to join it, essentially as a feeder campus. The new urban university, however, had Baptist ties; Lake Forest declined, as it did when approached again in 1896. The second overture prompted Lake Forest’s trustees to scale down the institution to a non-competing, four-year liberal-arts college and to play up the its distinctive bucolic character. McClure again served as president during the transition and began planning a major building program for the two original campuses.³

Before construction started, trustee Cyrus H. McCormick II, a son and the business successor of the late “Reaper King,” intervened. Warren Manning had designed McCormick’s Lake Forest country estate, Walden. In 1897, when Manning returned to Walden for an annual visit, McCormick engaged him to develop a new campus plan for the scaled-down college. Although this plan has not been located, the accompanying report to the university leaders has survived. In it, Manning called attention to the unique ravines: *“They are of vital importance, they are the key to the whole situation so far as the plan of the grounds is concerned, and they are the one feature that will set these grounds apart from other like institutions.”*⁴

Manning’s report proposed four significant changes to emphasize these dramatic features: 1) eliminating a straight, east–west road that bisected the main campus and adding a footbridge across the dramatic ravine on the southern edge; 2) replacing that road with a looping carriage drive that traced the edges of the central campus plateau, providing dramatic views into the ravines; 3) converting the large, undeveloped southeastern portion of the main campus into a botanical garden of native prairie plants; and 4) planting foundation shrubs

and vines to blend buildings into the scenic landscape, as he had done at Walden.

Although the four buildings were constructed on the university campus between 1897 and 1900, it is unclear which of Manning's proposed changes were carried out at that time. This is partly because in 1906 the college commissioned a classically trained New York architect, Benjamin Wistar Morris, to create a plan for four more new buildings.⁵ Morris's plan, which credits Manning as "consulting landscape architect," incorporated most of the elements described in Manning's 1897 report. (Manning's office did not record the 1906 project, and it is likely that the college sent Manning's 1897 plan to Morris, who incorporated it into his scheme.)

The Morris–Manning plan aimed to strengthen axial ties among the three institutions—the girls' preparatory school, the college, and the boys' academy—across the great chasmlike ravines, while also locating the additional new buildings. The 1906 plan did, however, preserve Manning's original call for a carriage drive skirting the ravines and circumnavigating the institutional complex, offering views into and across the central campus ravines on three sides. Within this picturesque loop, a Beaux-Arts layout connected the

three campuses by means of axial routes and sightlines. The plan located the four new college buildings on the north and south sides of a proposed axial allée through the college campus, with a striking Tudor-revival gateway—one of the plan's few elements to be built, and still extant—facing southwest to the ravine and the boys' academy site. The tree species on the plan remain unknown; although then, as now, slow-growing white oaks were dominant on the campus. Elms, employed elsewhere in town for similar functions, would have been another likely choice.

Photographs of the campus, including aerial views taken during the early twentieth century, document that the proposed buildings and a few landscape elements on the 1906 plan were built. A glass lantern slide from 1911 shows a rustic "Gym Pond Bridge" leading to a tree-skirted meadow, described in a caption as the botanical garden. This was lost to campus development as early as 1916. Only a short section of Morris's principal axial allée was planted, and it was near the academy campus, not on the college grounds. It vanished in the late 1940s. The nearly straight road bisecting the campus, which Manning had proposed eliminating in 1897, stayed in place until the early 1940s and did not become

Curvilinear campus roads trace the ravine edges. Photograph by Carol Betsch.



MANNING PROJECT ENTERS WRITING PHASE; DISCOVERIES CONTINUE

"I LOVE TO TALK ABOUT MY MANNING PROJECTS," admits Gloria Schreiber, a volunteer research associate for the LALH Warren H. Manning Research Project, who lives near Akron, Ohio. Schreiber has earned her bragging rights, having completed historic landscape surveys on several local properties designed by landscape architect and planner Warren H. Manning (1860–1938). Now she is writing about these places for Volume II of a two-volume LALH book on Manning's life and work. (Writing for Volume I, comprising thematic essays, will begin next year.)

Volunteer research associates across the country completed surveys of one hundred thirty-plus properties, providing the basis for the writing phase, now in progress. And new finds keep turning up: At an auction in Maine, LALH recently acquired photographs of Manning landscapes from the 1920s. Bill Manning, grandson of Warren Manning's younger brother A. Chandler Manning—who was also a landscape architect—invited LALH to examine his family records in Vermont. All this flows from the work of the LALH staff and Manning volunteers. The latter were overseen, successively, by Manning Project Coordinators Reid Bertone-Johnson and Mackenzie Greer. Jane Roy Brown has resumed the role and welcomes queries and news at jroybrown@lalh.org.



Stanley Field estate, designed by Warren H. Manning. Lake Bluff, Ill. Photograph by Arthur G. Eldredge.

the allée path shown in the 1906 plan. By midcentury, parking lots were scattered along the ravine-edge loop drive on the Middle Campus. As Manning had originally recommended, the new buildings were screened with shrubs and ivy; the ivy survived into the mid-1970s, when it was removed in the interests of building preservation.

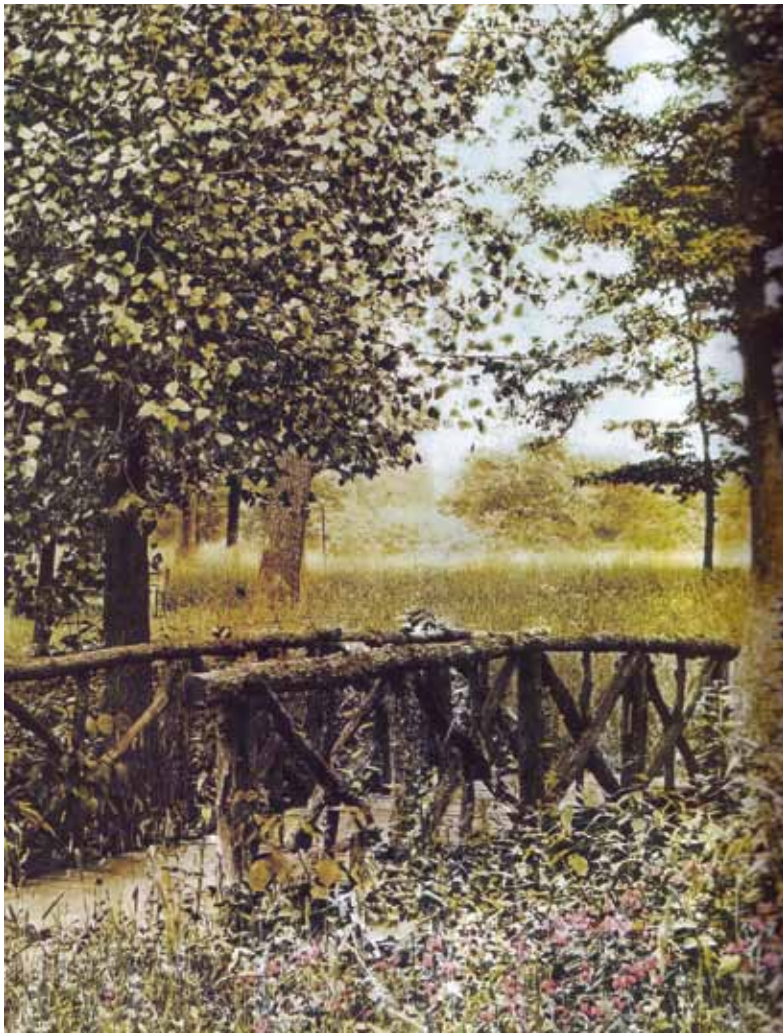


Blackstone Hall, c. 1915. Courtesy Archives and Special Collections, Lake Forest College Library.

In 1948 the boys' academy, which had been independent since 1925, moved to the former J. Ogden Armour estate, Melody Farms, west of Lake Forest, and the college absorbed the academy campus. As the institution expanded after World War II, it reused the former academy buildings and required little new construction, allowing the two campuses to remain quite open until the early 1960s. In 1974 the girls' school at Ferry Hall, which had occupied the same campus near the lake since 1869, merged with Lake Forest Academy at Melody Farms. The Ferry Hall campus became a residential development.

The botanical garden was re-created on the north ravine edge of Middle Campus in the late twentieth century. Still thriving with native prairie plants, this 2.5-acre parcel is known as Shooting Star Savannah. After controlled burns began in 1994, native plants characteristic of an Illinois tallgrass prairie were replanted from commercial stock, including what now is a large stand of yellow pimpernel (*Taenidia integerrima*). Other plants include five varieties of aster, three species of sunflowers, and uncommon specimens that thrive locally. Also, after a decade, several rare natives have reemerged: Michigan lily (*Lilium michiganensis*), smooth yellow false foxglove (*Aureolaria flava*, first seen in 2004), and woodland dog violet (*Viola conspersa*), an endangered species in Illinois. It is likely these would have been found in the similar conditions of the Manning-era botanical garden.⁶

Throughout the twentieth century, the classical formality of the prior architects' plans for the college campus gradually yielded to Manning's naturalistic



Botanical garden of native prairie plants, Lake Forest University, 1911. Glass lantern slide. Courtesy Archives and Special Collections, Lake Forest College Library.

vision based on the unique features of the site. Perhaps Manning sensed that the powerful topography would foil any concepts to beautify or circumvent the ravines. Up until now the ravines have prevailed. A mid-1990s plan executed in the early twenty-first century strengthened an informal pathway extending from North Campus across Middle Campus to South Campus, via two filled-in ravine pathways. It affirmed the original informal, Picturesque approach championed by Manning in 1897.

Arthur H. Miller is Archivist and Librarian for Special Collections, Lake Forest College. A participant in the Manning project, he has coauthored books, contributed articles to collections, and led tours on topics related to Chicago suburban landscape and garden history.

Notes

1. See Michael H. Ebner, *Creating Chicago's North Shore: A Suburban History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 243–46, and the entry on Almerin Hotchkiss by Arthur H. Miller in *Shaping the American Landscape: New Profiles from the Pioneers of American Landscape Design Project*, ed. Charles A. Birnbaum and Stephanie S. Foell (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 144–46.
2. Franz Schulze, Rosemary Cowler, and Arthur H. Miller, *30 Miles North: A History of Lake Forest College, Its Town, and Its City of Chicago* (Lake Forest: The College, 2000), 16–17; Kim Coventry, Daniel Meyer, and Arthur H. Miller, *Classic Country Estates of Lake Forest: Architecture and Landscape Design, 1856–1940* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), 36–43; and Arthur H. Miller, “Overviews: The Campus Planned,” in *Lake Forest College: A Guide to the Campus*, ed. Christopher Reed and Arthur H. Miller (Lake Forest: The College, 2007), 13–14.
3. Schulze, Cowler, and Miller, *30 Miles North*, 53–61.
4. Warren Manning, “Lake Forest University, Lake Forest, Ill.: Report on the Plan of Grounds and on the Location of Buildings, accompanying a Study dated June 1, 1897” (transcription from carbon copy typescript original), 2, Manning folder, Lake Forest Designers reference file, Special Collections, Donnelley and Lee Library, Lake Forest College.
5. College trustee Charles Dyer Norton, who chaired the 1909 *Plan of Chicago*, may have guided the choice of architects. Norton’s wife, Katherine McKim, was a niece of the influential Beaux-Arts architect Charles McKim, of the renowned New York City firm McKim, Mead & White. Benjamin Wistar Morris (1870–1944), trained at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, was the first to envision a plan for a development around a performance space on a Rockefeller midtown property, the site that later became Rockefeller Center. See Daniel Okrent, *Great Fortune: The Epic of Rockefeller Center* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2003), 24.
6. Benjamin Goluboff, “The Campus as a Natural Site,” in Reed and Miller, *Lake Forest College: A Guide to the Campus*, 68–74.

The View Beyond the Frame

IN 1976 A *NEW YORKER* MAGAZINE COVER featured the illustrator Saul Steinberg's *View of the World from 9th Avenue*, which condensed the world into six countries positioned on a six-inch rectangle. Part picture, part map, the view extends from a rooftop or skyscraper window on Manhattan's West Side across a few city blocks and stretches over the Hudson River to the Pacific Ocean, where Japan, China, and Russia figure as hummocks on the horizon. The West Side neighborhood, thick with buildings and dotted with tiny pedestrians and their outsized cars, dominates the scene. Critics call Steinberg's map a facetious commentary on some Manhattanites' center-of-the-world view of their city, but equally telling is its portrayal of a New Yorker's perspective on the American landscape.



© The Saul Steinberg Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



American Progress, 1872, by John Gast. Chromolithograph published by George A. Crofutt. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

The artist collapses the United States into a cartographer's rectangle separated from Canada and Mexico by dotted lines. West of the Hudson, a brown band representing New Jersey (the cliffs of the Palisades? the smog of the New Jersey Turnpike?) stretches from the nation's northern to its southern border. Steinberg's United States is otherwise almost entirely open space, territory unmapped except for a few place names and geographic marvels. Just north of the Mexican border, Washington, D.C., lines up with Texas and Los Angeles. Utah and Las Vegas mark the Southwest, Nebraska and Kansas City fall in the middle, and Chicago is an outpost just south of Canada. Except for the Hudson, the nation is a riverless, wheat-colored plain interrupted by the sublime contours of a few buttes, a couple of phallic rock forms hard by Nebraska and east of Los Angeles, and an incongruous burst of green near Las Vegas.

The real subject of Steinberg's playful *View of the World* is the unseen, godlike viewer, whose westward gaze represents the eastern city as the origin of taste and the sublime as the land form, outside the city, that matters most. To the New Yorker whose gaze we follow, the rest of the country is either the mythic, open space recorded in decades of movies and television programming, or it is *flyover*, a euphemism for *wasteland*.

Although Steinberg's take on American perceptions of the landscape is humorous, it has much in common with nineteenth-century American landscape art, which

frequently depicted the West as the sublime backdrop of empire or as a sublime garden (an oxymoron, but operative in many representations of the West) awaiting the cultivation of empire. The East often figured as the source of progress and enlightenment. The art historians Angela Miller and Barbara Novak have written extensively about the influence of American landscape imagery on the development of American national identity during the nineteenth century. In his 1835 "Essay on American Scenery," Thomas Cole, the first important landscape painter working in the United States, reminded the public that they lived in a beautiful country that still contained spectacular wilderness. For a young nation oriented toward Europe, this was no small concern. Americans who felt culturally inferior beside Europe's literary and visual arts and long-recorded history could take pride in their nation's sublime wilderness and other landscape features, and images on canvas and in print media would remind them of this throughout the nineteenth century.

Cole's 1836 *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, After a Thunderstorm (The Oxbow)*, an important early painting, depicts verdant agricultural fields rolling from right to left (or east to west, if the canvas were a map) as development sprawls westward. The advance of empire generates its own wind, blowing a

BY TERRE RYAN



Mountain of the Holy Cross, 1875, by Thomas Moran. Courtesy The Autry National Center.

thunderstorm to the west, out of the picture. The viewer understands that the forest to the west of the fields will soon make way for the plow, a fate that Cole, who watched tracts of northeastern forests disappear beneath the ax, deeply regretted. Light, laden with metaphor, pours from the east, presumably from Europe by way of Boston and New York.

Also from Europe came the landscape aesthetics that the earliest explorers and settlers had imported along with their weapons, religions, and diseases. Ever-evolving, the pastoral, the picturesque, the beautiful, and the sublime became Americanized symbols evocative, eventually, of both an agrarian republic and an empire. Nineteenth-century Americans with access to museums, galleries, magazines, books, or newspapers learned to look at their landscape through a lens shaped by the pastoral, the picturesque, the beautiful, and the sublime. With the press of westward expansion, that lens was increasingly shaded by Manifest Destiny visions of conquering the continent, building an empire, and

romanticizing the landscape in pictures.

Just over one hundred years before Steinberg's *View of the World* would compress the nation into a tight prospect featuring a few sublime landmarks, John Gast's 1872 *American Progress* condensed the nation into a single canvas. A Goddess of Liberty floats across Gast's continent, trailing telegraph wires from east to west. As in Cole's *Oxbow*, light beams from the east, but rather than flowing over farmlands, the light in *American Progress* emanates from crowded port cities. Although no promised rain follows him, a farmer in the right foreground plows a field. Miners shoulder their axes and head west. A westbound covered wagon, stagecoach, and train trundle across the plains. The mountains in the west are craggy, veiled in dark storm clouds. Native Americans and bison run beneath the clouds, literally out of the picture. The historian Martha Sandweiss remarks that *American Progress* was widely reproduced. It recounted—and reinforced—a teleological story of American empire-building.

Some Americans who felt uneasy with Gast's depiction of progress may have taken com-

fort in Thomas Moran's 1875 *Mountain of the Holy Cross*, which depicted a snowy cross on the face of a Colorado mountain. The art historians W. H. Goetzmann and W. N. Goetzmann write that this natural phenomenon, with its reassuring convergence of symbols of the sublime, was taken as a token of divine approval of American empire-building. Moran's painting was wildly popular, and versions of the image were reproduced into the twentieth century.

To the New Yorker whose gaze we follow, the rest of the country is either the mythic, open space recorded in decades of movies and television programming, or it is *flyover*, a euphemism for *wasteland*.

Miller observes that expansionist-era landscape paintings were frequently displayed in ornate frames, providing a vision of nature that was “contained.” This mastery of the landscape signified domestication of a wild continent that could be plumbed for divinely provided natural resources. Such images reflected what we might call Manifest Destiny aesthetics, which depicted spectacular terrain that either had been or would be conquered, romanticized the landscape, and left the costs of development—genocide of Native Americans, enslavement of Africans and their descendants, and environmental degradation—outside the frame.

It would be easy to classify Gast’s *American Progress* and Moran’s *Mountain of the Holy Cross* and much of what Novak calls the “march of empire” paintings as artifacts of an imperialist era. But during the nineteenth century, the nation’s landscape—including its mountains, canyons, waterfalls, enormous western trees, farms, prairies, and green terrain—and the control of that landscape assumed mythic resonance that has never ceased to reverberate. Versions of these images, laden with Manifest Destiny aesthetics, show up everywhere in contemporary culture, often featuring what critics call “the technological sublime,” which locates awesome power in technology rather than in wild nature. These images echo Manifest Destiny mythology, often reinforcing an outdated perspective on landscape as a cache of resources to be plumbed or as a view to be admired.

For example, advertising for sport utility vehicles frequently positions the SUVs in sublime western landscapes. These images are descendants of landscape paintings such as Moran’s *Mountain of the Holy Cross*, with the SUV assuming the place and power previously afforded to the cross. Chrysler launched the Jeep Patriot in 2007 with the tagline “Conquering New Territory.” Ads for the 2011 Grand Cherokee (named for the tribe that lost more than four thousand on the Trail of Tears as they were forced from their eastern homelands) featured the SUV parked among giant western trees. Jeep promotes its 2011 Liberty with the phrase “Dominate the Terrain.” These ads link drivers to the nation’s pioneer heritage, deify technology, and elevate consumerism to mythic space, where the costs of building and driving the vehicles are obscured by the technological sublime’s dazzle and the glow of landscape mythology. An ad for GM’s 2011 Chevy Equinox takes up the practice of picturesque tourism established during the eighteenth century, when people with time and money toured the countryside in search of picturesque views. Rather than look at the landscape, however, picturesque tourists often regarded it in a Claude glass, a tinted mirror that enabled them to frame an idealized scene on which they had actually turned their backs. Like Steinberg’s *View of the World from 9th Avenue*, which stresses the city rather than the landscape beyond it, the introductory ad for the Chevy Equinox emphasizes the vehicle’s high-tech interior even though the windshield is filled with rolling

green hills and clusters of trees. The ad even features its own version of the Claude glass in the passenger-side rearview mirror, which frames a vista of hills and trees. Hybrid vehicles, liberated from overdependence on petroleum, can seem almost pure in ads. Not depicted are the coal and uranium mining required to charge their batteries.

This aesthetic framework, which idealizes the technological sublime, perpetuates Manifest Destiny-era ideas of the environment as commodity, scenery, and trashlands, and it romanticizes or conceals acts of environmental violence. Why care about what’s going on in a flyover zone? If the American desert is wasteland, then it must be the ideal place for testing nuclear weapons, as we did from 1950 through the early 1990s, and surely it is the best place to store radioactive waste from nuclear power plants, as many would like to do. If the desert is wasteland, then make it bloom with that burst of green near Las Vegas on Steinberg’s *View of the World* by damming the Colorado River. If the sublime is the landscape most worthy of attention, then why care about the places where we live and work? If resources are meant to be developed, then why not blow up Appalachian mountains for the coal they harbor?

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Steinberg’s *View of the World from 9th Avenue* is a caricature of American attitudes about landscape which places the city at the forefront of all that matters. To Steinberg, however, technology is not sublime; a couple of the cars in the foreground of *View of the World* have their hoods up. Not to worry. By the end of the twentieth century, the descendants of those vehicles would be charging over the sublime landscape of the mythical West, “conquering new territory” and “dominating the terrain.”

Terre Ryan, assistant professor, Writing Department, Loyola University Maryland, is the author of *This Ecstatic Nation: The American Landscape and the Aesthetics of Patriotism* (University of Massachusetts Press).

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