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# Books

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A section for the review of books is a regular feature of *Landscape Journal*. The opinions and ideas expressed in the reviews are those of the reviewers and do not necessarily represent the views of the Journal's editors or the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture. Suggestions for books to be reviewed are always welcome, as are comments regarding the reviews published. All correspondence should be sent to the book review editor:

Dan Nadenicek, LJ Book Review Editor  
Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture  
College of Architecture  
121 Lee Hall, Box 340511  
Clemson University  
Clemson, SC 29634-0511  
(864) 656 3926  
dnadeni@clemson.edu

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## HENRY SHAW'S VICTORIAN LANDSCAPES: THE MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN AND TOWER GROVE PARK

by Carol Grove. 2005. Amherst & Boston: University of Massachusetts Press in Association with Library of American Landscape History. xxii + 232 pages, illustrated, \$39.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55849-508-8

Reviewed by J. K. Major

Scholars dream of finding a wealth of primary source material that has survived careless or overly discreet descendents, a catastrophic fire, or a leaky roof. The archives at the Missouri Botanical Garden and Tower Grove Park in St. Louis provided Carol Grove just such a treasure trove of the nineteenth-century wealthy philanthropist Henry Shaw: letters, library inventories, travel journals and hotel receipts, annual park reports, books recording the source and location of plants in his botanical garden, drawings, and photographs. Grove sifted through the archives searching specifically for Shaw's interest in and contribution to the landscape of the native Englishman's adopted home of St. Louis. Other writers have addressed Shaw as benefactor to practically every other aspect of the city's early progress—from education to social services to civic improvement. Grove argues that

the Missouri Botanical Garden and Tower Grove Park are Shaw's most important personal projects and the subject of *landscape*, his greatest passion.

In the foreword, Professor Peter H. Raven, Director of the Missouri Botanical Garden, praises Grove for shedding new light on the influences that affected Shaw in his planning of the botanical garden and the public park. The book's major contribution to the field of American landscape history is a detailed outline of the British aesthetic theories and precedents that contributed to Shaw's landscape projects. Shaw was eighteen when he arrived in St. Louis from England in 1819, and he retained a lifelong affinity for his native country. In the 1840s and '50s, when most Americans were reading A. J. Downing for advice on landscape gardening and architecture, Shaw turned to the work of Scotsman John Claudius Loudon and Englishman Joseph Paxton, looking to Loudon's gardenesque and Paxton's conservatories for ideas to incorporate into his Midwestern gardens. In two grand tours during 1843–46 and 1851, Shaw visited the botanic garden in his hometown of Sheffield, which was planted in the gardenesque method. He stopped at Chatsworth, where he admired Paxton's arboretum and plant houses. He also stayed in London where, in 1851, the highlight was Paxton's Crystal Palace. Enabled by

material in the archives, Grove follows Shaw on these educational trips and describes the impressive collection of gardening and horticultural books and journals in his home library.

Yet, Grove's attempt to explain Shaw's preference of the gardenesque aesthetic over the picturesque for Tower Grove Park is not convincing. She contends that his choice reflected "two important changes in the American public" (124). Grove offers little evidence to support her notion that 1) the middle class citizens of St. Louis were increasingly fluent in aesthetics and 2) the distinction between art and nature in the United States was taking on new importance as the country became more visually literate. Grove equates the picturesque with nature and the gardenesque with art, yet fails to mention that Shaw had another choice of gardening style—the beautiful. Grove cites A. J. Downing's ardent promotion of the picturesque. Downing did indeed prefer the "Picturesque." But after the death of J. C. Loudon in 1843, Downing essentially dismissed the gardenesque, stating in his 1844 *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* that this method was limited to artificial planting only. In later editions of the *Treatise*, Downing's option to the "Picturesque" was the "Beautiful."

Elaborating on the reasons for Shaw's selection of the gardenesque

for Tower Grove Park, Grove puts too much emphasis on the coincidence of the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and the opening of Shaw's park in the same year. Surely, this revolutionary book could not have influenced Shaw's choice for a design begun in 1853. Grove specifically connects the gardenesque "to the science of botany" (125), but contradicts this statement elsewhere in the book. Shaw's decision to found a botanical garden and collection led to collaboration and friendship with St. Louis physician-turned-botanist George Engelmann. Engelmann had close working relationships with the leading North American botanist Asa Gray and with William Hooker, director of the Royal Botanic Garden at Kew. These botanists tried to convince Shaw that scientific concerns should be foremost in the plan for his botanic garden, but as Grove reports, "Shaw had the 'ornamental as much at heart as the scientific'" (69). Engelmann wrote to Gray that with Shaw, scientific botany was secondary or tertiary. It is questionable, therefore, to tie Shaw's selection of the gardenesque to the science of botany. What to make of this aesthetic sensibility of a self-made immigrant come to the midwestern prairie? Shaw noted in a journal entry dated 1869 that he carried out "his own plan and design," believing that he, "had sufficient reasons for doing so" (127). Perhaps the simplest explanation is best: Shaw was partial to the labor-intensive gardenesque style and because he was very rich and in control of both landscape projects, he was able to prevail against the favored national or "natural style."

In general, when chronicling Shaw's development of the Missouri Botanical Garden and Tower Grove Park, Grove does not satisfactorily situate him within American landscape architecture of the second half of the nineteenth century. In a discussion about Shaw's order of exotic specimen plants and trees from a Midwestern nursery in 1850, Grove quotes Wilhelm Miller's thoughts on the use of non-indigenous plants from *The Prairie Spirit in Landscape Gardening*, which was not published until 1915.

The landscape gardener Gottlieb Maximilian Kern moved to St. Louis in 1864, worked on Lafayette Park, and in 1873 became superintendent of all St. Louis parks. Yet Grove relegates Kern to a few footnotes. Adolph Strauch was another contemporary in Cincinnati, Ohio. Strauch was chief landscape gardener in the 1850s of Spring Grove Cemetery, designed to imitate rural nature. In the 1860s, as superintendent, he made Spring Grove an arboretum filled with plants from around the world. Although Grove lists Spring Grove Cemetery as one of the American rural cemeteries that was a predecessor of the nation's public parks, she fails to mention Strauch.

Nevertheless, anyone interested in botanical discovery in the West will be fascinated by Grove's story of Shaw's adviser Dr. George Engelmann, recognized for his scientific judgment by C. S. Sargent, director of Harvard's Arnold Arboretum. Sargent praised Engelmann in an 1894 *Garden and Forest* as the "best-equipped and most experienced man who has made a systematic study of North American Oaks" (1894, 514). *Garden and Forest*, founded by Sargent in 1888, recognized the contributions of both Engelmann and Shaw in its pages. Soon after Shaw's death in August 1889, an editorial appeared in the journal predicting that St. Louis would soon be at the botanical center of the New World with students drawn to the city from every quarter of the globe. The editor reported that Shaw's bequest funded such a well endowed establishment that no other of its kind had ever existed. Part of the plan included six scholarships to train gardeners; young men between the ages of fourteen and twenty would come for six years to Shaw's Garden to do manual work as well as attend the School of Botany of Washington University. Thirty-seven years earlier, in an editorial for the *Horticulturist*, A. J. Downing complained about the lack of American professional gardeners. As Grove reports, Shaw had trouble finding qualified gardeners for Tower Grove Park even in the late 1860s. Through the establishment of these scholarships, Shaw had a great and lasting influ-

ence on horticulture in the United States. Landscape historians can be thankful to Carol Grove for bringing Henry Shaw to their attention.

Judith K. Major is Professor in the Architecture Program at the University of Kansas.

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#### Reference

- C. S. Sargent, "New or Little Known Plants," *Garden and Forest* 7 (December 26, 1894): 514

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#### WERNER HEGEMANN AND THE SEARCH FOR UNIVERSAL URBANISM

by Christiane Crasemann Collins. 2005. New York: W. W. Norton & Company. 417 pages, illustrated, \$50.00 cloth.

ISBN 0-393-73156-1

Reviewed by Frederick Steiner

Depending on when and where we went to school, we might remember the name Werner Hegemann (1881–1936) from our history classes. In the United States, we probably associate him with Elbert Peets, Joseph Hudnut, and John Nolen. In Europe or South America, the associations differ, and might include: Steen Eiler Rasmussen, Raymond Unwin, and Le Corbusier or Carlos María della Paolera and Jorge Kalnay. Acknowledging Hegemann's international reach, (during a time long before the World Wide Web) doesn't even begin to address the profound depth of his influences within Germany, his native land. But as Christiane Crasemann Collins' masterful biography makes clear, Hegemann was present at the birth of city planning and at the infancy of landscape architecture in the United States as well.

Who was this man? According to Collins' richly informative portrait, *Werner Hegemann and the Search for Universal Urbanism*, Hegemann was a writer, an idealist, and a pacifist who believed city planning, good