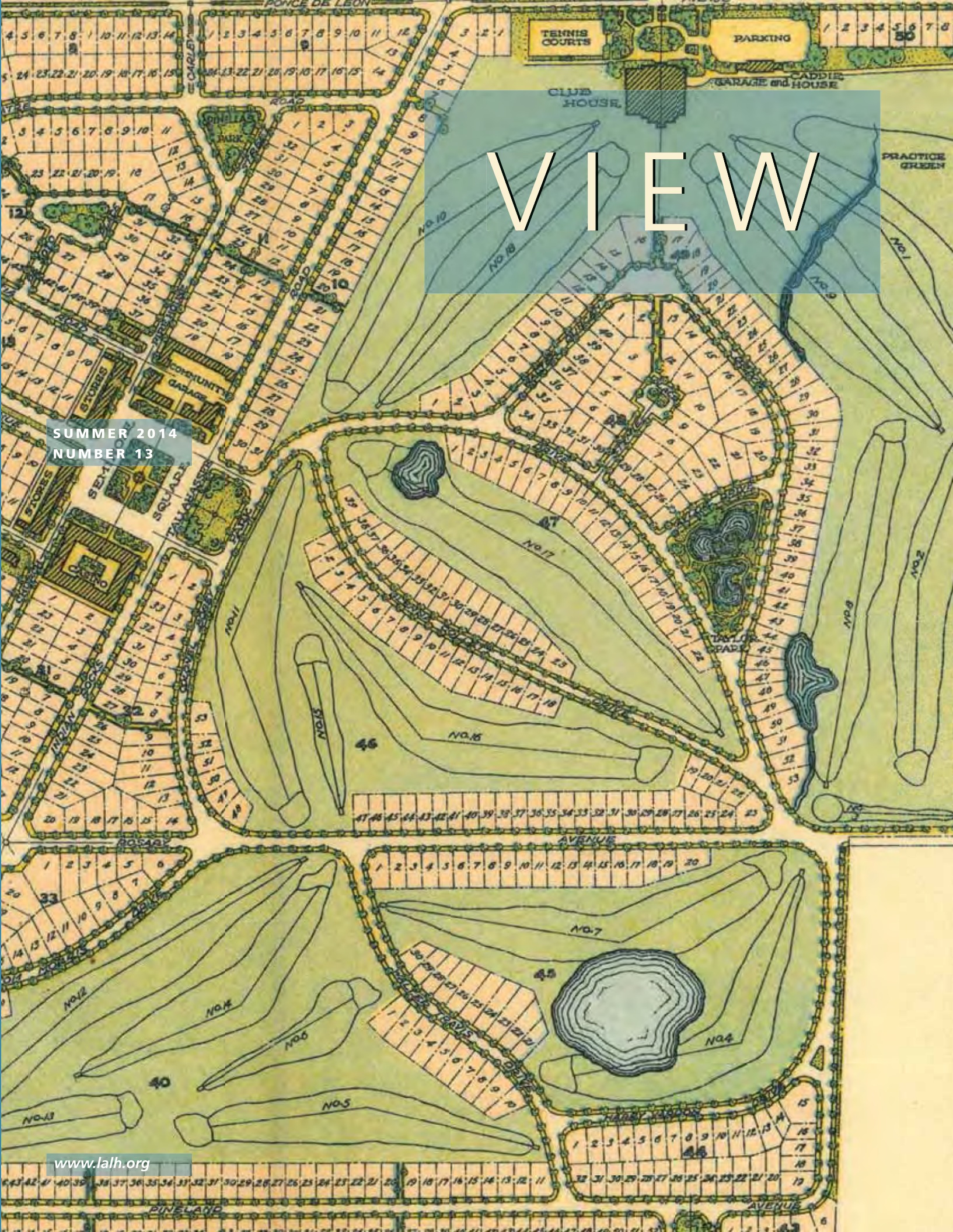


# VIEW

SUMMER 2014
NUMBER 13

www.lalh.org

# VIEW *from the Director's Office*

Dear Friends of LALH,

We are excited about two LALH books of special significance appearing this year, *Arthur A. Shurcliff: Design, Preservation, and the Creation of Colonial Williamsburg* and *John Nolen, Landscape Architect and City Planner.* Both biographies are the product of years of work and fill large gaps in the literature of twentieth-century landscape design and planning. And they have inspired the focus of this year's *VIEW:* the intersection of history and landscape design.

In this issue, Shurcliff biographer Elizabeth Hope Cushing and Nolen author R. Bruce Stephenson share insights about their subjects' lives and work. We also delve into the practice of Stephen Stimson Associates, a landscape architecture firm based in Cambridge and Princeton (Massachusetts), whose designs are enlivened by a deep response to site history—a motivating force for Shurcliff and Nolen as well.

LALH Board of Directors. Wormsloe estate, Savannah, Ga.

Converging principles of design and history also guided our choice of this year's preservation hero, Craig Barrow III, whose family estate, Wormsloe, was settled outside Savannah in 1736 by Noble Jones. Barrow's long-standing commitment to preserving this important historic place is profiled by Jane Roy Brown, who also explores the challenges faced by preservationists at Union Park Gardens, one of John Nolen's early subdivisions, laid out in 1917 near Wilmington, Delaware.

Manning research associate Matthew Medeiros furthers the discussion with a piece on Warren Manning's restoration of his seventeenth-century ancestral homestead, The Manse, in Billerica, Massachusetts, where Manning was inspired by many of the same principles that guided Arthur Shurcliff at Colonial Williamsburg. Additionally, Ethan Carr contributes a thoughtful guest column on the critical role of history in contemporary practice.

Earlier this year LALH welcomed a new president, Daniel J. Nadenicek, dean of the College of Environment and Design, University of Georgia. The baton was passed at an April banquet in Savannah, where we fêted past president Michael Jefcoat and his wife, Evelyn Jefcoat, two of LALH's most passionate supporters. Another landscape luminary joins the expanding board this summer—Boston University's Keith N. Morgan, whose research and writing on Charles A. Platt, Charles Eliot, Frederick Law Olmsted, and other practitioners has helped define the field of North American landscape studies.

In January, Francis R. Kowsky's *The Best Planned City in the World* was awarded the prestigious J. B. Jackson Award from the Foundation for Landscape Studies. Our forthcoming book on the Kansas City firm of Hare & Hare received a David R. Coffin Publication grant, also from the FLS. In April, *Community by Design*, written by Keith N. Morgan, Elizabeth Hope Cushing, and Roger G. Reed, received the Ruth Emery Award from the Victorian Society in America.

We are proud that LALH books are winning awards—and even prouder that they are inspiring enlightened stewardship of the landscape legacy we share as well as new designs that will enrich lives in the future. We depend on donors like you to accomplish our work. Please help us by joining LALH today.

Robin Karson

Robin Karson,
Executive Director

# VIEW

THE MAGAZINE OF THE
LIBRARY OF AMERICAN LANDSCAPE HISTORY



Front /Back cover: Belleair Town Plan, 1924. Courtesy Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

LALH

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FEATURED PUBLICATION

# ARTHUR A. SHURCLIFF
## and Colonial Williamsburg

In spring 1928 the rector of Bruton Parish Church, an iconic place of worship in Williamsburg, Virginia, approached Arthur Shurcliff (1870–1957), enquiring about participation in a restoration project envisioned for the sleepy town. By that time Shurcliff was close to sixty years old with a thriving practice in landscape architecture and city planning. He responded to the Reverend W. A. R. Goodwin with genuine enthusiasm: "I greatly hope you will decide to bring me in as I am much interested."

At the time such a large-scale restoration had never before been conceived in America. It was, of course, a new concept for Shurcliff as well, although by the standards of his upbringing and innate proclivities it was the logical outgrowth of a lifetime of looking at landscape and art, and of his studies of old American places and landscapes combined with his interest in and avid practice of handcraft, painting, and drawing. Such an effort was the perfect venue for his prescient concerns about preservation and conservation of the rapidly reshaping natural environment around him.

Arthur Shurcliff in his father's workshop at West Cedar Street. Private collection.

Opposite: Palace Gardens, Colonial Williamsburg, Va. Photograph by Francis Benjamin Johnston. Courtesy Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

Arthur Asahel Shurtleff was born on Beacon Hill, Boston, to Sarah Ann Keegan and Asahel Milton Shurtleff, a manufacturer of fine surgical instruments. (He changed his surname from Shurtleff to Shurcliff in 1930, he said, in order to conform to the ancient spelling of the family name.) The Shurtleffs raised five children in the narrow, brick row house at 9 West Cedar Street, steeping them in history, art, and literature. Mr. Shurtleff taught woodworking to each child in the fourth-floor workshop, a skill that took especially deep root in his son Arthur, who practiced it in various forms for the rest of his life. Summers were spent in the countryside surrounding Boston, with trips to the White Mountains for the enjoyment of mountain, lake, and forest, hiking and bicycling; and to Nantucket to absorb the atmosphere of old Nantucket towns, and savor the pleasures of ocean-side pastimes.

While he was being educated at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and then (after deciding to become a landscape architect) at Harvard University under the tutelage of the gifted landscape architect Charles Eliot, Shurcliff continued to pursue his avocational interest in the disappearing aspects of American life, including recording what he called "old-fashioned" gardens he found in towns near Boston. Shurcliff was also taught by, and deeply affected by, the influential aesthete Charles Eliot Norton, first professor of fine arts at Harvard, the man essential in bringing the Arts and Crafts movement from England to America. Within the decade of Shurcliff's birth another major movement, the Colonial Revival, was born and assumed the significant

BY ELIZABETH HOPE CUSHING

Shurcliff's 1896 sketch of a Nantucket windmill. Private collection.

*Through charm mingled with artfulness he quietly but inexorably advanced his notions of how the landscape was to be treated, frequently winning battles through dogged determination combined with a touch of legerdemain.*

role in American aesthetic life that persists to this day.

Upon his graduation from Harvard with a second SB in 1896, Shurcliff immediately settled into an apprenticeship with the greatest landscape architect in America at the time, Frederick Law Olmsted, who lived in nearby Brookline. For the next seven years he learned all the practical and aesthetic aspects of landscape architecture with some of the best tutors: Olmsted and Charles Eliot, and subsequently with John Charles and Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. In 1900 he helped Olmsted Jr. organize the first four-year landscape program at Harvard University, where he taught half time for the next six years. By the time he set up his own Boston practice at the end of 1904, he was a well-grounded professional, with a keen interest in the nascent field of city planning.

Shurcliff's lifespan covered the transition from horse and buggy to the automobile, from gas lighting to electricity, not to mention two world wars, and the general modernization of life around him. He watched his relatively small city expand; then, as his professional life developed, he witnessed, and worked to address, the planning issues that arose from the rapid growth of Boston's surrounding cities and towns. Always he sought to address current issues in an effective and innovative manner, dealing with the planning problems that arose from the burgeoning use of the automobile while seeking to maintain the essential fabric of urban and rural open spaces and to attend to issues of preservation in a venue of increasingly conflicting demands.

Restoration and re-creation on the scale envisioned first by the Reverend Goodwin of Bruton Parish Church, and eventually by John D. Rockefeller Jr., was a brand new concept in 1928. According to historian Charles Hosmer, "No major preservation leader in the United States before Goodwin had expressed a desire to save an entire community." Rockefeller, with his business background, sought to establish it in the most professional manner possible, and his deep pockets allowed him to do so in a manner never before achieved. In point of fact, the entire process had to be invented out of whole cloth, and even those embarking upon it could not have envisioned how all-encompassing or far-reaching the effects of Colonial Williamsburg were to be. In this uncharted territory, Hosmer writes, "new professions, new organizational procedures, and a whole new philosophy of restoration would have to be created." In the process the Williamsburg Corporation drew so heavily on northern professionals that the townspeople referred to their successive arrivals as "the second Yankee invasion."

Not the least of the creations for this monumental endeavor was the landscape, and the role that one of those Yankees, Arthur Shurcliff, was to play in the re-creation of that Williamsburg landscape turned out to be far more significant than anyone, even Shurcliff himself, could have known. He not only planned the gardens to be created or established but he was also instrumental in providing the modern planning and organization around an already established town plan. He consistently fought for the preservation of the original fabric, guarding against intrusions and rigorously championing projects he felt were essential to the essence of an eighteenth-century town. Through charm mingled with artfulness he quietly but inexorably advanced his notions of how the landscape was to be treated, frequently winning battles through dogged determination combined with a touch of legerdemain.

Early on it became clear that a satellite landscape office would be necessary, and soon a group of young draftsmen were in place, with Shurcliff traveling frequently to and from his busy practice in Boston—letters, telegraph messages, and giant rolls of plans flying constantly back and forth between visits. Before professionals were called in, the landscape architects did their own archaeology—digging for foundations of outbuildings, searching for traces of pathways, and looking for fence postholes to ascertain the outlines of a "typical" backyard. Dozens of gardens and yard designs were required, and from the beginning Shurcliff sought to find and incorporate "authenticity" in his designs.

Above: Pre-reconstruction aerial photograph taken by Army Air Corps, 1927. Courtesy The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

Right: Newly established Maze, c. 1935. Courtesy The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

*Dozens of gardens and yard designs were required, and from the beginning Shurcliff sought to find and incorporate "authenticity" in his designs. Maps were consulted, as well as eighteenth-century books, including garden books; botanical and horticultural information was sought from old books and from modern horticultural professionals.*

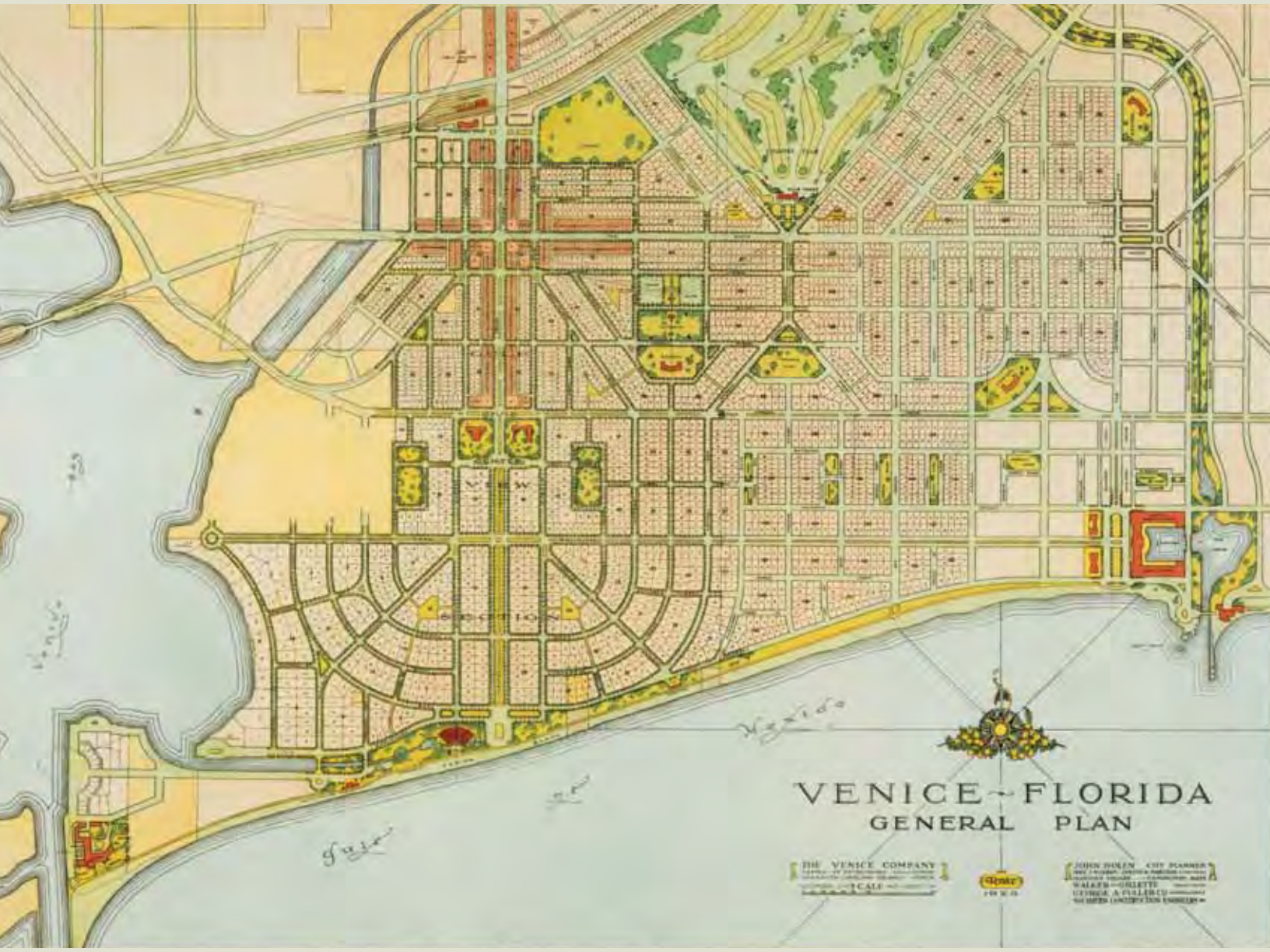
Below: Aerial view of Governor's Palace and gardens. Courtesy The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

Opposite: Pleached arbor flanking the North Garden. Courtesy The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

Maps were consulted, as well as eighteenth-century books, including garden books; botanical and horticultural information was sought from old books and from modern horticultural professionals. Lists were made of trees, shrubs, and plants known to have been grown and used in eighteenth-century America.

As the Williamsburg Corporation extended and augmented the scope of its plans for the restoration and re-creation of the town, Shurcliff worked tirelessly to envision and create appropriate environs. For him and for everyone involved in the process it was a question of inventing the methods of achieving their goals, and so from the beginning he assumed the role of landscape researcher, creator, and re-creator. As the project expanded and grew and the years passed, not only gardens and landscapes had to be prepared for and created but serious planning issues also developed that required innovative solutions. Shurcliff's background and training, combined with a rare imagination and thoughtful planning insights, made him the natural person to assume the role of Chief Landscape Architect, and to carry that mantel throughout the crucial initial stages of Colonial Williamsburg's development. Inevitably, during that process the issue of "authenticity" in landscape reconstruction and innovation arose, questions that continue to inspire conversations to this day.

# JOHN NOLEN'S LEGACY FOR NEW URBANISM




ON FEBRUARY 11, 1937, as John Nolen lay near death at his home in Cambridge, Massachusetts, a letter arrived from Raymond Unwin, the noted English planner who designed Letchworth, the first garden city. Concerned that Nolen worried about the future of the planning profession, Unwin assured his friend that his work was indeed "recognized" and "most highly appreciated in England and in many other lands where [his] leadership in the field is known."[1] Nolen died a week later, not knowing if his work as a landscape architect and city planner would have a legacy in his own country.

A half century later, American urban planners rediscovered Nolen's work, embracing his design principles a a model for the New Urbanism movement. In the early 1980s, Nolen's new towns, especially Venice, Florida, and Mariemont, Ohio, inspired the Miami architects Andrés Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk in their plan for Seaside, Florida, the prototype New Urbanist community. Before Duany and his firm (DPZ) uncovered the value of Nolen's work as an urban planner, Nolen was often considered more of a promoter of city planning than a practitioner. In contrast, Duany saw Nolen as a skilled designer who was the equal of Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., Clarence Stein, and Henry Wright, all of whom were Nolen's more acclaimed contemporaries. Nolen's ability to create walkable towns with a sophisticated mix of parks, housing types, and shops appealed to the New Urbanists, who looked to the tradition of American town planning to combat suburban sprawl. Practicing the art mastered by Unwin and Nolen, they hoped to reduce automobile dependency, restore the vitality of the public realm, and conserve resources. In the late 1980s Duany initiated a crusade to reform American cities by challenging practitioners to revive the art of town planning.

DPZ made Nolen's work relevant to a new generation of urban planners. In 1990 the University of Miami School of Architecture, where Plater-Zyberk was a professor, hosted a Nolen symposium and exhibited his work. DPZ also used Nolen's projects to develop town plans grounded in historical precedent, such as those of West Palm Beach and Amelia Park in Florida and of Middleton Hills, Wisconsin. "Neo-traditional" plans were rare in the mid-1990s, so Duany offered tours of Nolen developments to promote the new designs. After accompanying Duany on an inspection of the San Jose neighborhood in Jacksonville, the developer Joel Embry convinced investors to build the pedestrian-oriented

BY R. BRUCE STEPHENSON

Above: Colonel Ed Fletcher, George Marston, and Nolen (left to right), 1908. Courtesy San Diego Historical Society.

Opposite: Venice, Florida, General Plan, 1926. Courtesy Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

Middleton Hills, Wis. Photograph by Mark Opitz.

**Richard Louv, the author of the 2005 bestseller *Last Child in the Woods*, found Nolen's talent the product of a "set of principles that may be boiled down to a single focus—respect for the natural integrity of place."**

mixed-use community of Amelia Park. In 1995 DPZ opened an office in Myers Park, the Charlotte (North Carolina) suburb that established Nolen as one of the nation's elite planners before World War I. Within a decade, the office had overseen a score of commissions in the region, many of them inspired by Nolen's work.

By the early 1990s, DPZ had allied itself with the West Coast architects Peter Calthorpe, Dan Solomon, Liz Moule, and Stefanos Polyzoides to form a coalition dedicated to building compact walkable neighborhoods based on historical precedent. In 1993 the six architects founded the Congress of the New Urbanism, inspiring intense debate, especially among academicians and architectural critics. Looking to the past for guidance, New Urbanists generally eschewed modernist architecture for a traditional vernacular style. Critics claimed the neo-traditional towns and neighborhoods marked a fine line between meeting market demand and pandering to sentimental visions of a mythic community (a criticism also leveled against Nolen). The debate over style did not deter the movement's central message—the need to build sustainable, pedestrian-oriented communities. New Urbanism quickly moved from novelty to policy, inspiring reforms in public housing, coastal zone planning, environmental protection, transportation policies, and municipal coding. There were few precedents for implementing New Urbanist plans, in part because, as Duany noted, Nolen "could count on the competence of architects to behave in an urbanistically responsible way."[2] Moreover, zoning codes remained, as Nolen averred, "a *negative measure*" that "simply tells what private property owners cannot do with their own property."[3] DPZ developed a new tool to guide plan implementation: the "form-based code." Rather than focusing on zoning codes regulating floor area ratio, the form-based code addressed the design of the built environment, providing the means to create a human-scale environment conducive to urbanism. With a more detailed physical configuration of a property and its buildings, developers could visualize how a project accrued value over time.

The civic-minded development central to Nolen's practice was also crucial to New Urbanist projects. In 1995, the developer D. R. Bryan studied Myers Park and historical neighborhoods in Winston-Salem before drafting a plan for Southern Village, a Chapel Hill (North Carolina) suburb. Over half of the 1,175 housing units, including townhouses on John Nolen Lane, were clustered at ten units per acre and set within an interconnected park system. A school and mixed-use town center were the focal points of the plan. Getting the project built required convincing officials to reconfigure existing codes that facilitated automobile traffic rather than pedestrian movement. Bryan built a home in the community and monitored its evolution; by decade's end he had reshaped North Carolina's real estate market. Southern Village's profitable mix of residences, parks, and retail drew national attention, with features in *Time*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Builder*, and *U.S. News & World Report*. Studies found that residents drove less and walked more. Southern Village also performed significantly better than conventional subdivisions in safeguarding water quality and mitigating the impact of storm water runoff.

The sustainable returns of traditionally planned communities encouraged further study of Nolen's work. According to the historian Witold Rybczynski, Nolen's new towns were "distinguished by the sophistication of their layout and the quality of their architecture."[4] Richard Louv, the author of the 2005 bestseller *Last Child in the Woods*, found Nolen's talent the product of a "set of principles that may be boiled down to a single focus—respect for the natural integrity of place."[5] This

essential quality of Nolen's work is celebrated by the presentation of the John Nolen Award at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum, the nation's longest ongoing ecological restoration project. Nolen and Aldo Leopold spoke at the arboretum's dedication in 1934. The American Planning Association first honored Nolen as a national planning pioneer in 1998, and a decade later it designated Mariemont one of the "Great Places in America." The current city plans for Roanoke, Clearwater, and Sarasota are prefaced by Nolen's plans. Union Park Gardens, a Wilmington (Delaware), neighborhood built for World War I shipbuilders, celebrated John Nolen Day on August 29, 2010, and a 2010 PBS film documented his enduring legacy in Venice.

After the collapse of the real estate market and the onset of the national recession in 2008, Venice became an important test case. The city had weathered Florida's economic maelstrom reasonably well, especially when compared to other sprawling developments in the region. For example, in 2010 Venice had 60 percent fewer foreclosures than nearby Leigh Acres, and its average sale price of $110 per square foot was three times higher. But economics was only one measure of stability. Spencer Briggs, the filmmaker who directed the 2010 documentary on Venice, "Moving Forward by Looking Back," found that the town's compact form made it not only charming but also "democratic because it's walkable." A memorial had been built to honor Nolen in 1976, and today citizens of Venice still discuss his "intentions with the passion of constitutional scholars seeking the thinking of the Founding Fathers."[6]

With the rise of the New Urbanism and smart growth movements, Nolen's concept of planning has taken hold and is still evolving. Infill projects, form-based codes, livability indicators, transit-oriented development, and ecological restoration are now integral to the planning profession. Nolen would undoubtedly recognize the scale and intent of these initiatives because he bequeathed a timeless template. He would also identify with the challenges facing New Urbanist planners. In 1930 he feared that Le Corbusier's agenda to make the city a "machine to live in" would transform "neighborhoods into a soulless urban mass." His solution was to strive for balanced growth and equilibrium between the public good and private rights. "If this could be realized," he wrote, "it would seem to be Utopia enough in this modern commercial world of ours." Nolen's legacy offers guidance as we resume the struggle to envision and build cities that are "Utopia enough."[7]


City of Roanoke Comprehensive Plan, 1907. Courtesy Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

City Place, West Palm Beach, Fla. Courtesy Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company.

NOTES

1. Raymond Unwin, letter to John Nolen, February 2, 1937, box 8, John Nolen Papers (NP), Division of Manuscripts and Special Collections, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.
2. Duany quoted in David Mohney and Keller Easterling, *Seaside: Making a Town in America* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1991), 87.
3. Nolen, letter to Orrin Randolph, January 3, 1923, box 38, NP.
4. Witold Rybczynski, *City Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 190.
5. Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Algonquin Books, 2005), 267–68.
6. R. Bruce Stephenson, "Halting Suburban Sprawl," *Forum* 31 (Fall 2007): 6–10.
7. John Nolen, "Cities Fit to Live In," *The Technology Review* 32 (April 1930): 7.

# YANKEE INGENUITY:
## *Some Thoughts on a New England Practice*

Stephen Stimson Associates Landscape Architects began as a small firm in 1992, after Steve had received his BSLA from University of Massachusetts Amherst, graduated from the Harvard Design School, and worked stints in Cambridge and New York City. In essence, it was a practice founded on an uncomplicated philosophy—a sense of design as part of daily life. A sense about the order of all things manmade inherited from years of working on the family dairy farm, mechanically mowing row after row of hay, then corn, then hay again. His childhood was spent painting the barn, patching the rafters in the chicken coop, mending fence in the back forty, chasing cows up the lane, milking twice a day, and maple sugaring. The instinctive rhythm of chores, in between school, day after day, season after season, took place within a setting that had been built by ten generations of the same family. The cultural footprint of the farm, with its stone walls, outbuildings, and gardens, all carefully sited within a matrix of drumlin hayfields, wet meadows, and pastures, became a canvas for permanent patterns imprinted in a boy's mind, then evolved into a landscape architect's memory and design instinct. *This is the way landscapes were built in New England since the beginning of our time.* The straight line became the human intervention—the stone wall, the lane, or the hedgerow. The curved line always remaining an expression of the natural world—the stream below the orchard, the wild copse in the middle of the hayfield, or the snow drifts at the edge of the pasture. Being born into a family that placed one of the earliest gestures on the New England landscape, by building miles of stone walls, a wooden house, and timber barn, extending back into the early 1700s, led to an understanding of how history is integral to design on the land.

In recent years, we have been slowly building a live+work model at Charbrook, in Princeton,

BY LAUREN STIMSON

"BECAUSE THIS IS ALSO OUR HOME, OUR RURAL STUDIO IS FULLY INTEGRATED WITH THE DAILY ACTIVITIES OF HOMESTEADING: CLEARING LAND, BURNING BRUSH, BUILDING STONE WALLS, RAISING SHEEP, MILKING COWS, STARTING SEEDS, AND PLANTING THE GARDENS. EACH OF THESE ELEMENTS OF THE HOMESTEAD INFLUENCES AND INSPIRES WHAT WE DRAW IN OUR PRACTICE EVERY DAY".

Massachusetts, down the road from the old Stimson Farm. This 18-acre site is at the foothills of Mount Wachusett and the Ware River watershed, and has become our home and an extension of our urban practice in Cambridge. At Charbrook, we are working with the land in a different way than we did on the old farm, but still using the same local ingredients of stone, steel, wood, earth, and plants as our forebears. Technology allows us to confer with our clients and our urban office, and work compatibly as if we were in the same room (unless the wind is blowing hard in a gale off Wachusett and our Internet goes down). Because this is also our home, our rural studio is fully integrated with the daily activities of homesteading: clearing land, burning brush, building stone walls, raising sheep, milking cows, starting seeds, and planting the gardens. Each of these elements of the homestead influences and inspires what we draw in our practice every day.

Ten years ago, we established Charbrook Nursery at the old farm for native tree and shrub cultivation and, more importantly, as a testing ground and a way to integrate in-the-field learning and research into our practice. Low-lying wetlands, wet meadows, successional fields, glacial drumlins, and dense woodland offer a rich template for siting our selected species in response to the native ecosystems around them. As a way to restore the agrarian production, three abandoned and successional fields were identified as the first sites for tree and shrub production. The concept for the nursery is to cultivate native plant communities that are already thriving in the farm landscape. Inventory of existing plants, and the study of soil conditions and microclimates, was undertaken in order to guide plant selections for eight acres of nursery fields. If red maple and birch are growing nearby, the field rows are lined with four cultivars of red maple and three types of birch. Our projects benefit from this unique knowledge of the research we are beginning to develop related to hybrids and cultivars, planted form, growth rates, and habitat value. The nursery is the first step in a long process of bringing a new kind of productivity back to the old farm landscape.

This return to the farm has informed our design expression, our ability to find charm in the old and new intertwined, and has also promoted a sense of regionalism, but that is not to say that the studio works solely in New England. We feel we can work anywhere, with great success and reward, by getting to know each site, carefully and methodically. By spending time in a region and experiencing things as a local does—embedding oneself in the urban grit or the wilderness—one discovers the real gut of a place. There was a time when we seemed to get on a plane every week, but in recent years, we've returned to the source, the center of our universe, and that is the Northeast. We used to get a bit defensive when we discussed regionalism among ourselves, because when a landscape architect stays "local" it seems to inhibit the perception of their body of work—somehow limiting their reputation. Now we feel quite bold about stating plainly that we are regionalists at heart. We have an inherent understanding of this place, from its mill towns to farmlands, and from urban centers and coastal villages to indigenous plant communities. We know this from being born and raised here, adopting colleagues, sharing our favorite places and opening our home to them, and from this firsthand experience comes an involuntary desire to express our regional identity in a legible way through the built environment.

Charbrook landscape concept. Sketch by Lauren Stimson.

Opposite: Studio from garden, Charbrook, Princeton, Mass. Photograph by Lauren Stimson.

Stimson dairy farm, Princeton, Mass. Photograph by Bruce Dean.

The thoughts I am sharing—the origins and bones of the studio—are just one aspect of a collaborative practice with many stories. When individuals join our practice they bring to the drawing table life experiences that give them their own unique set of values as they begin a design exploration. We have a talented crew from around the world, and with this diversity, our studio will continue to evolve as each individual history enriches our design ability as a whole.

### Northeast Harbor Residence, Mount Desert Island, Maine

In 2007, we flew up to Trenton, Maine, one morning for an interview with a potential client. We knew very little about the project, except that it was already under construction and that the client wanted to discuss restoration strategies. When we arrived at the property, we were stunned by the existing conditions. A gaping hole in the earth, almost two acres in width, had been blasted for the foundation of the main house, and the guest house, on the lower part of the site, was already being framed. We hiked precariously around the edges of the newly exposed bedrock, carefully stepping over alpine plants, and taking note of the fragmented climax evergreens that were growing on less than 10 inches of soil. A wetland stream entered the site from the north, running down 80 feet of grade change to the beach below, and its banks were eroding with the loss of canopy cover and loose soil. Overwhelmed by the unexpected conditions, we were even more surprised to hear the client say *I want this place to feel like this construction never happened.* Then the architect told us the estate had once belonged to someone named Charles Eliot.

The five-acre site sits on the southern coast of Mount Desert Island and is bounded by Acadia National Park and the Eastern Way of the Atlantic. We quickly discovered that the property had been part of an original 120-acre estate, purchased in 1879 by Charles W. Eliot, the president of Harvard and father of the famous landscape architect who would soon become a partner of Frederick Law Olmsted and lay the groundwork for Trustees of Public Reservations. It was during this time that Mount Desert was becoming increasingly popular with affluent summer residents looking to relocate from the city into the wilderness of Maine. Although these seasonal visitors focused on experiencing the rugged landscape, the early estates of the island did not reflect their rustic surroundings. Distinctly noncontextual, they were built in the same Shingle-style architecture found throughout the North Shore of Boston. These homes were expansive, exceptionally crafted, and deliberately placed on the land, often at the highest point, or the most untamed, as if to conquer it. Eliot hired his brother-in-law, the architect Robert Swain Peabody of Peabody & Stearns in Boston, to design his summer home, the Ancestral. It was on this property that the Mount Desert architect Fred L. Savage first worked as a boy under the direction of his contractor father and was "discovered" by Eliot and later sent to Peabody & Stearns as an intern. The site's cultural history is directly linked to the Gilded Age settlement of Mount Desert, the origins of Acadia National Park, and the legacy of the New England land preservation movement. This site history was a revelation to us and shaped our decision to try to understand and emulate what originally drew Eliot to this landscape in the 1880s.

The notion of a lost landscape became our primary focus. While studying the site's ecological history, looking for native plant communities that would become the basis of the restoration strategy, we found ourselves delving deeper into the regional history, becoming fascinated by the early photographs of Eliot's estate and paintings of Mount Desert that depicted coastal meadows, salt marshes, and other landscape scenes far

more varied than the evergreen forest that now covered the property. This historical research, coupled with numerous field visits in and around Acadia, inspired a more extensive palette and rationale for site restoration. The opportunity to diversify the plant communities was encouraging, because with little soil and so much bedrock, planting trees was extremely difficult. In turn, the focus became restoring zones across the site according to earlier stages of succession.

Northeast Harbor is an example of a site with few physical traces of past land use, but our interest in understanding this forgotten history inspired our design approach. The clients wanted a family sanctuary that felt as if it had always existed and resonated with the surrounding wilderness. As avid collectors of modern art, they appreciated a contemporary approach to design and requested a minimal program: terraces, a play lawn, a kitchen garden, and woodland trails to connect the main house to the lower guesthouse and beach. However, even this simple program posed complicated technical challenges. The canopy of evergreens that extended from Acadia into and across the property had been severely damaged. The site was left with three acres of compromised evergreens growing precariously on thin pockets of soil exposed to harsh maritime conditions, and piles of talus and raw ledge. The property had once felt like an extension of Acadia, and reconnecting it ecologically became a critical goal of the project.

Understanding that planting large trees was going to be nearly impossible throughout the three disturbed acres, we took advantage of Eliot's early stages of landscape succession and reintroduced low-lying red maple wetlands, birch thickets, witch hazel groves, and an alpine meadow and lawn area. After carefully siting these areas of restoration and identifying the appropriate plant communities, the programmatic elements such as stairs, terraces, and gardens were inserted into this environmental framework in ways that heightened the contrast between the manmade and the natural. Materials were selected for their durability and sensitivity to the excessive slopes and existing landscape. A family of local craftsmen constructed all masonry work in the tradition of their Acadia bridge-building forefathers. Salvaged weathered granite from a nearby quarry was used throughout as steps, benches, and a fire pit, and weathering steel was selected for its visual compatibility with

Ledge stairs, Northeast Harbor Residence, Mount Desert Island, Me. Photograph by Stephen Stimson.

Charles W. Eliot's estate, The Ancestra, Northeast Harbor, Me. Courtesy Mount Desert Island Historical Society.

Below: Path through restored woodland, Northeast Harbor Residence, Mount Desert Island. Photograph by Jonathan Levitt.

the indigenous iron-rich gabbro bedrock. The design interventions are modern, but the materials palette is regional and the plant communities remain familiar and indigenous. The result is an entirely restored, thriving, and diverse landscape created on a previously devastated site, in honor of Eliot's primitive piece of coastal Maine.

### Hardberger Park, San Antonio, Texas

In 2007, Mayor Phil Hardberger and the Parks and Recreation Department of San Antonio, Texas, led an international design competition for a newly acquired parcel of land in the northern reaches of the city. As winners of the competition, paired with D.I.R.T. studio, we were charged with designing a twenty-first-century park for the seventh largest city in the United States. At 311 acres, the site was the largest parcel of undeveloped land in San Antonio and has become the most significant public park project in the city since 1899. Positioned in the heart of a major population center, the park provides greatly needed open space in an urban environment where the acreage of parks per person is below the national average.

Located at the convergence of three ecoregions—the South Texas Plains, the Blackland Prairie, and the Edwards Plateau—the site offers a rich mosaic for landscape restoration, from heritage oak woodland to endangered oak savanna. As a former dairy farm, it also exhibits remnants of the agrarian patterns of grazing and farming unique to the historic settlement of San Antonio's missions. Hardberger Park was the first public park to be master planned in the city of

Urban Ecology Center, with Lake|Flato Architects and Rialto Studio, Phil Hardberger Park, San Antonio, Tex. Photograph by Casey Dunn.

San Antonio and generated intense community interest. From the onset, our design team engaged in a process of community meetings and public work sessions throughout six precincts of the city. This public process continued through subsequent design phases, where we presented park design proposals to the public, the Parks Board, and the Historic District Commission for review and approvals. From the beginning we realized that, as New Englanders down in Texas, we had to get to know the city quickly in order to be taken seriously at these public meetings. We visited every city park, major cultural hotspots, the Riverwalk, the King William district, local college campuses, and most revelatory to us, the missions.

Yankee ingenuity describes a mindset of making-do with whatever materials are on hand. It represents an improvisation, a responsiveness to unexpected situations, and an overall attitude about living with very little. Because of rocky soil and long harsh winters, early New Englanders had to rely on the creative use of indigenous materials for survival. *We like to adopt this attitude in our craft of landscape architecture.* From our rural studio, we teach ourselves and others about plants in the garden, test certain tree and shrub species in the nursery, experiment with detailing in our walls and fences, and gain a greater understanding of habitat and biodiversity. Above all, we learn that there is never one singular approach to a design solution or detail; there is always more than one way to skin a cat.

Left: Tree and trail encounter, Phil Hardberger Park. Photograph by Stephen Stimson.

"HARDBERGER PARK IS AN IMPORTANT MILESTONE IN THE HISTORY OF PARK MAKING IN THE STATE, OFFERS A NEW MODEL FOR EMBRACING SUBURBAN ECOLOGY, AND HAS BECOME A LIVING LABORATORY FOR HEALTHY LIVING AND SUSTAINABILITY IN SOUTH TEXAS".

Salado Creek Overlook, Phil Hardberger Park. Photograph by Lauren Stimson.

Because of the overgrown scrubland and successional woodland across the entire property, we needed to come up with a viable methodology for clearing trees and brush. Working with a team of wildlife biologists and tree surveyors, we took careful inventory of all existing heritage trees, notably live oak mottes, cedar elm, mesquite, and persimmon. Large stands of these species were identified, mapped, and delineated as sacred. Working with the Parks and Recreation Department and the public through a series of charrettes, we came up with a list of program elements: passive recreation fields, playgrounds, dog parks, a greenway, and miles of trails. We then developed the concept of the park as a "cultivated wild," much as the historic missions were markedly carved out of the wild oak savanna. We designated 75 percent of the parkland as a renewed native landscape. This involved the preservation of heritage oaks, the restoration of woodlands and brush, and the reintroduction of the endangered oak savanna, the expansive indigenous grasslands once found throughout south Texas. The remaining 25 percent of parkland became areas for community gatherings and diverse recreation carefully embedded in the natural landscape. The crafting of these places was inspired by the city's history, reinterpreting patterns of historic mission rooms, cultivated fields, and acequias.

The park is bisected by a six-lane vehicular parkway and divided into two parcels. The east side is bordered by the Salado Creek, linked to the regional park system by the Salado Creek Greenway, and has a low-lying cedar elm woodland scattered with oak mottes. The west side is characterized by overwhelming scrubland and invasive

Oak Savanna Trail, Phil Hardberger Park. Photograph by Charles Mayer.

species, a high knoll of live oak woodland, and exposed limestone. We designed the Salado Creek classroom and trailhead as a 2,400-square-foot park facility with restrooms, offices, and an outdoor classroom and interpretive space powered by solar panels. The building serves as the park's headquarters and a gateway for the Salado Creek Greenway. Farther north along the greenway corridor, the Salado Creek overlook is a 60-foot-long weathering steel and aluminum structure that hovers 40 feet above the creek bed. For years, the city turned its back on these ephemeral waterways by burying and channeling them. This re-naturalized reach of the creek has unique karst features along the bluff edge, made visible from the overlook where interpretive signage depicts the park's geologic history.

Four miles of trails, constructed primarily of native decomposed granite, weave carefully throughout the woodlands and connect the new program spaces on both parcels. Boardwalks were created where trails cross watercourses, and the trail system respects existing large stands of heritage trees and understory, preserving these ecological communities in "trail and tree encounters." Materials common to the region, such as Lueders limestone, sandblasted concrete, raw steel, salvaged drill stem pipes, and cedar staves, are featured. The project exhibits a commitment to native landscape and habitat restoration, green infrastructure, connectivity to regional open space, and human fitness. Hardberger Park is an important milestone in the history of park making in the state, offers a new model for embracing suburban ecology, and has become a living laboratory for healthy living and sustainability in south Texas.

# THE MANNING MANSE: *Refuge and Shrine*

Manning Manse, North Billerica, Mass. Photograph by Carol Betsch.

IN THE LATE 1890s, Warren H. Manning began to stabilize and restore his family's ancestral homestead in North Billerica, Massachusetts, a project that would become a passion over the next four decades. Built in the late seventeenth century, the Manse represented qualities Americans were celebrating two hundred years later—national pride, patriotism, and ethics—embodied by the Colonial Revival then sweeping the nation. In his efforts to assure the preservation of the homestead, Manning established the "Manning Association of America," published its newsletter, "The Manning Manse Messenger," and organized yearly reunions at the ancestral property. As he explained to readers of the "Messenger", the Association was working "in cooperation with the national government in the development of higher standard[s] of life, ideas and patriotic accomplishment for the American people."[1] The Manse, and its collection of thousands of colonial artifacts, documents, and relics, would become a shrine both to the Manning family and to the American ideals it represented.

Manning's ancestors built the original portion of the

BY MATT MEDEIROS

Warren H. Manning as a young man. Warren H. Manning Collection, University of Massachusetts Lowell.

Manse, a traditional two-and-a-half-story saltbox structure, about a half mile west of the Concord River in 1696.[2] The colonial house was located on approximately twenty-five acres of farmland along the south side of Chelmsford Road near Black Brook. American elms were positioned at the corners of the building. Over time, the farm expanded to include a barn and another forty-seven acres of land.[3] In 1752, when William Manning opened "Manning Tavern" at the homestead, the building took on a prominent role in the region. Local Minutemen visited the tavern frequently during the Revolutionary War, and a small factory operating in a structure west of the house made saltpeter, an ingredient in gunpowder.[4] Business at the tavern continued to grow, especially once a stagecoach route between Boston and Amherst, New Hampshire, began passing along Chelmsford Road in 1795.[5]

The last Manning descendent to reside in the homestead died in 1880, leaving the house and surrounding eighty acres to a group of trustees.[6] In the early 1890s, members of the family became interested in saving the decaying homestead, but little was accomplished until the fall of 1898, when Warren Manning organized a preservation effort. That winter, a group of descendants assessed the property and determined a course of action during successive meetings in Billerica and Boston. By May 31, Manning had become so involved in the homestead's preservation that he leased the property himself.[7] Over the next few months, he supervised a team of hired workers and family members, including his brother, J. Woodward Manning, and wife, Henrietta Hamblin Pratt Manning, in restoring the clapboards and roof and repairing the floor, walls, and ceiling.[8] Work on the landscape included grading to drain water away from the structure and planting new garden areas with plants appropriate for a colonial farm. By 1900 a kitchen garden was established in the field west of the house and a line of white pines separated the vegetables from the meadow beyond. In the yard near the house, Manning added mature "lilac bushes and clumps of old-fashioned flowers" that he found in cellar holes and nearby gardens of other historic homes.[9]

With the structures stabilized and gardens progressing, Manning shifted his attention to developing a preservation plan for the homestead, which he had named the Manning Manse.[10] In June 1900, at an unveiling of the restoration, a group of descendants formed the Manning Association in order to buy and maintain the Manse. The association formally incorporated at a second Manning reunion that June and immediately began fundraising to buy the property.[11] After securing this group commitment, Manning began purchasing additional land near the Manse, adding new structures to the homestead and his own property, and clearing vegetation to achieve views of the house. By 1902 Manning had purchased a parcel of adjacent land, where he constructed a building using experimental techniques, including a roof "with the shingles set far enough apart to save about one-quarter of the shingles."[12] During this period, Manning spent vacation time at the property and appears to have considered the Manse his summer home.[13] Around 1907 he built a one-and-a-half-story house, Juniper Cottage, on land across Chelmsford Road from the main house. The front yard of the cottage included tufts of juniper and two birch trees in the lawn.[14] By 1908 Manning had removed birch trees at the edge of the woods southeast of the house and from a pine grove along a meadow west of the house to create additional views.[15] He later wrote that the yard near the house, though cluttered with undergrowth, still contained a mixture of elm and locust trees and the former gardens included "stumps of lilacs" and "a few struggling plants of bouncing Bet, tansy, and flowering spurge."[16] The cluster of structures comprising the homestead was surrounded by six acres of open fields, with woods covering the remainder of the property.[17]

Although the Manning Association served as caretaker of the Manse, Manning was contributing large amounts of time and money to its maintenance and

Manning Manse. *House Beautiful*, 1921. Photograph by Arthur G. Eldredge. Warren H. Manning Collection, University of Massachusetts Lowell.

by June 1915 had come up with a plan to operate a "Tea Tavern" on the property to help defray expenses.[18] At this time Manning also decided to move much of his professional practice from the Tremont Building in Boston to a site near the Manse.[19] In December 1917, after the construction of "a large octagonal office building," Manning completely relocated the firm to

Interior of Manning Manse. *House Beautiful*, 1921. Photograph by Arthur G. Eldredge. LALH Archive.

Opposite: Warren H. Manning State Forest, North Billerica, Mass. Photograph by Carol Betsch.

North Billerica, where it remained until a final move to Cambridge in September 1923.[20]

At the Billerica office, Manning demanded that his employees spend an hour each day learning about landscape design through work around the Manse and in the surrounding woods.[21] By 1921 the firm had added masses of rhododendron along the entry drive and among the elms bordering Chelmsford Road, as well as large lilac bushes along the south façade of the house. A bog was enlarged south of the Manse by damming Black Brook.[22] Manning continued to experiment with structures in the landscape, creating a small amphitheater of concrete benches and in 1930, building an addition west of the Manse to accommodate new kitchen and toilet facilities for the Tea Room.[23]

Manning held the Manse dear to his heart, writing to his wife that it was "where, as you know, I can enjoy myself better than anywhere else."[24] By the end of his life, he had secured the future of the homestead and sold the 150 acres of surrounding woods to the state for part of what would become the Warren H. Manning State Forest.[25] After Manning's death in February 1938, his son Harold inherited the remaining property near the Manse.

The Manning Association continued enlarging the restaurant adjacent to the Manse, adding a new entry vestibule in 1952 and an expansion in 1960.[26] After a 1994 fire that destroyed the restaurant and damaged the historic house, the family rebuilt the restaurant and painstakingly restored the Manse. Today, formerly open areas, including the kitchen garden and surrounding meadows, are dense woods. The bog survives, and massive evergreens in the woods west of the house mark an earlier division between the original vegetable garden and meadow.[27] Juniper Cottage is still across the street, and a stone marker nearby notes the location of Manning's former office. Although preservation of the Manse was a deeply personal project, Manning made a significant contribution to conserving land in Billerica by contributing to the state forest. He also left his country a shrine to Colonial America that reverberates on many levels—as an artifact of its time, an example of the national nostalgia for the past during the Colonial Revival period, and America's continued reverence for its history.

NOTES

1. Warren H. Manning, "The Manning Manse Messenger" (Cambridge: The Manning Association of America), 3.
2. William Henry Manning, *The Genealogical and Biographical History of the Manning Families of New England and Descendants* (Salem, Mass.: Salem Press Co. 1902), 31, 121; Henry Allen Hazen, *History of Billerica*, Massachusetts (Boston: A. Williams & Co., 1882), 27.
3. Hazen, *History of Billerica*, Massachusetts, 213.
4. Manning, *Genealogical and Biographical History*, 64.
5. Hazen, *History of Billerica*, Massachusetts, 275.
6. Lucinda Manning's will directed that the trustees rent the property and use the payments toward religious education in the area. Manning, *Genealogical and Biographical History*, 65.
7. Ibid., 71.
8. Ibid., 71–72; Wendy Frontiero with Richard D. Manning, National Register of Historic Places, Manning Manse, Billerica, Middlesex County, Massachusetts,1982.
9. The kitchen garden and the evergreens are visible in Manning's photos of the Manse from April 1900 in the Warren H. Manning Collection, University of Massachusetts Lowell; Warren H. Manning with pictures by Herbert E. Angell, "The Framing of Home Pictures," *Country Life in America* (May 1908): 52–53.
10. Myra Manning Koenig, *The Story of Manning Manse*, Manning Collection; William Henry Manning also was using the name Manning Manse by 1902, when he published his history of the family.
11. Manning, *Genealogical and Biographical History*, 76–77.
12. Warren H. Manning, *Autobiography*, 54, Manning Collection.
13. Manning and his wife Henrietta had an apartment at 29 Colburne Crescent in Brookline.
14. Warren H. Manning, *Manning Manse, North Billerica Mass, Juniper Cottage*, Warren H. Manning Papers, Iowa State University, January 1, 1907. These plantings are visible circa 1907 in Manning's photos of the Manse in the Manning Collection.
15. Manning, "The Framing of Home Pictures," 52–53.
16. Ibid.
17. Manning, *Genealogical and Biographical History*, 66.
18. Warren H. Manning to Henrietta Pratt Manning, April 7, 1914, Manning Collection.
19. Warren H. Manning to Henrietta Pratt Manning, June 30, 1915, Manning Collection.
20. Warren H. Manning Offices, Inc., Corporate Income and Profits Tax Return for Calendar Year 1918, June 11, 1919, Manning Collection; Manning, *Autobiography*, 2.
21. Manning, *Autobiography*, 48.
22. *House Beautiful*, Manning Papers, Iowa State University, 1921.
23. Wendy Frontiero with Richard D. Manning, "National Register of Historic Places, Manning Manse," 1982; Photos show the addition in process in the Manning Collection, June 1930.
24. Warren H. Manning to Henrietta Pratt Manning, June 20, 1920, Manning Collection.
25. Manning, Autobiography, 56.
26. Wendy Frontiero with Richard D. Manning, "National Register of Historic Places, Manning Manse"; George Manning interview.
27. Remaining Manning-era trees, including several white pine over two feet in diameter, were located and photographed by the author during a visit to the Manse on June 16, 2013. Manning wrote an article about the unusual horticultural opportunities found in this bog and a swamp elsewhere on the property. See "The Two Kinds of Bog Gardens," *Country Life in America*, August 1908, 379–80

EXHIBITION

# 100 YEARS OF DESIGN ON THE LAND

December 15, 2014–March 6, 2015
1285 Gallery, 1285 Avenue of the Americas, NYC
An exhibition of forty-five photographs
from LALH books

In the early nineteenth century, American landscape gardeners looked to the native landscape for design inspiration—a reflection, in some of measure, of the importance of the American landscape as a source of cultural identity. Eager to express the aspirations of an ambitious young nation, landscape designers also began to seek inspiration from examples in England and Europe. Together, these principles shaped burial grounds, gardens, parks, campuses, and towns and suburbs well into the twentieth century.

Contemporary photographs commissioned for LALH books reflect not only the origins of important American places but also the changes that have occurred since they were designed. And that, of course, is part of the story, too.

Reynolda Estate, Winston-Salem, N.C. Photograph by Carol Betsch. From *A World of Her Own Making: Katharine Smith Reynolds and the Landscape of Reynolda.*

"SEEING, FEELING, AND REPRESENTING A PLACE AS A LANDSCAPE, IN THIS SENSE, HAS BEEN THE PRIMAL AND INITIATING ACT OF LANDSCAPE DESIGN SINCE THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, WHEN THE PRACTICE WAS FIRST UNDERSTOOD AS AN INDEPENDENT FINE ART POSSESSING ITS OWN THEORY AND TECHNIQUES. TO DESIGN A LANDSCAPE, FIRST A PLACE MUST BECOME ONE."

# LANDSCAPE AND HISTORY

Contemporary design professionals sometimes confuse the study of history with the use or advocacy of historicism, a misperception that can impoverish any design process and eviscerate its meaning and utility. While the formulaic reuse of stylistic components rarely produces great art, no effective architect or landscape architect fails to acknowledge formal precedents and types, or neglects to research the cultural associations and natural processes of a given site. In other words, they know their work is undertaken in the context of a landscape. And landscape, in the phrase of J. B. Jackson, is history made visible.

The study and conception of a site as part of the design process demands historical sensibilities and methods. If this is true in general, it is a defining dimension of landscape architecture. No other design discipline is so rooted in responses to the essential qualities of a place. The initial requirement of landscape design is to understand and represent those qualities in a creative process of natural and cultural historical research, aesthetic visual composition, and more poetic consultations of the ephemeral phenomena of individual experience. Seeing, feeling, and representing a place as a landscape, in this sense, has been the primal and initiating act of landscape design since the eighteenth century, when the practice was first understood as an independent fine art possessing its own theory and techniques. To design a landscape, first a place must become one. And the process of *becoming*, while obviously complex and idiosyncratic, involves a historical understanding of the human activities, the physiographic and biologic processes, and the cultural associations that have shaped terrain, ecosystems, and perceptions over time.

Landscape is an ultimate record of natural and cultural history. Anyone engaged in landscape architecture is already a historian, and relegating historical inquiry and analysis to a limited, separate category of research betrays an inauspicious approach. Landscape architecture is a historical design discipline, at least if we understand landscapes as products of processes that occur over time and continue into the present. If historians imagine the past in order to make use of it for the purposes of the present, this is analogous to the practice of improving and transforming a landscape to enhance and adapt it to the programs and uses of a public or private client. For more than 150 years, acting as consultants for governments and individuals, American landscape architects have shaped constructions of history, and nature, through landscape design.

The history of the profession of landscape architecture itself should also be of greater interest to professionals today. The continued investigation and creative writing of professional history is needed now more than

BY ETHAN CARR

Opposite: Longwood Avenue bridge between Boston and Brookline. Courtesy Wild Newton Blog.

Boston Public Garden. Detroit Publishing Co. Courtesy Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

"THE HISTORY OF THE PROFESSION OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE ITSELF SHOULD ALSO BE OF GREATER INTEREST TO PROFESSIONALS TODAY. THE CONTINUED INVESTIGATION AND CREATIVE WRITING OF PROFESSIONAL HISTORY IS NEEDED NOW MORE THAN EVER AS DESIGNERS ARE ASKED TO EXPAND AND CHANGE THEIR PRACTICES TO ADDRESS CURRENT VITAL CONCERNS."

Opposite: Boylston Street, Richardson Bridge, Back Bay Fens. Detroit Publishing Co. Courtesy Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

Above: The Fenway. Detroit Publishing Co. Courtesy Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.


Olmsted's first plan for the Muddy River Improvement, 1880. Courtesy National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

ever as designers are asked to expand and change their practices to address current vital concerns. The issues we all face—climate change, global urbanization, economic inequality—may be unprecedented, but previous generations encountered their own exceptional circumstances. The novelty and severity of new challenges hardly negates the need for creative investigations of the profession's past. Landscape architects today should be critically and creatively engaged in this historical project. The study and interpretation of past practices of landscape architecture is not a call for historicist imitation but a vital and necessary dimension of continued and innovative success.

In academia and as well as in much current practice, though, interest in the professional history of landscape architecture has declined. For many scholars and practitioners in the field, the reinvention of the profession as landscape urbanism, or as an enhanced form of environmental engineering, or as the means of mitigating environmental and social injustice, has meant that the profession's past seems less relevant to their promising agendas. The recent past (the work of mid- and late-twentieth-century landscape architects) has garnered important attention. But much of this published work amounts to retrospectives of the careers of people who are still living or recently deceased. The resulting narratives can be less than true history (and ironically encourage the imitation of historical "styles") if they lack critical analysis and a creative reconsideration of the significance of those careers to present-day practice. Making use of the past requires a critical interpretation of it.

Another source of disinterest in design history can be traced to the popular revival of midcentury modernism. Modernists, of course, objected vociferously to historicism and the eclecticism of the previous generation. But this rejection did not make them any less historians. Great designers of the era, such as Mies van der Rohe, Louis Kahn, and Dan Kiley, were deeply imbued with classical design principles, presumably acquired through their own education and research. Theorists, including Siegfried Gideon and Christopher Tunnard, went to pains not to forsake professional design history, but to rewrite it. If the results were not always convincing, their efforts point to the need for practitioners of every generation to construe and make use of the past in order to make sense of their own responses to new contexts and crises, even while rejecting the revival of stylistic elements.

The career of Frederick Law Olmsted, whose life and work has been reinterpreted for various purposes for many decades, offers an example of how the design theory and methods of the profession's past continue to offer opportunities for further reinvention that have great potential for practice today. Such efforts are greatly aided by the publication of Olmsted's personal papers, professional writings, and historic plans, a project now nearing completion. Sponsored by the Olmsted Papers Project and the National Association for Olmsted Parks, volume 8 of his papers, *The Early Boston Years: 1882–1890*, appeared in 2013. Volume 9 (the final textual volume) will be published in 2014, and two supplemental volumes of plans and views are scheduled for publication by 2016. This project, overseen by series editor Charles E. Beveridge since the 1970s, is a unique resource in design history—an intellectual reservoir of many of the most profound theories and concepts of American landscape design, with extensive primary documentation of scores of foundational landscape projects.

How can we make use of this now well-documented past to help envision new iterations of landscape practice? Even a cursory analysis of Olmsted's work in the 1880s offers a cogent example. Following his first metropolitan Boston park commission in 1878 (and soon, his relocation to Brookline, Massachusetts), Olmsted had a rich period of design collaboration with his friend and neighbor, the architect H. H. Richardson.

At the same time, he established his office at his home, Fairsted, and with his stepson, J. C. Olmsted, devised the first landscape design office of its type, with partners, staff, clients, and business practices that are recognizable today. Following Richardson's death in 1886, Olmsted began a rich correspondence with Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, a prominent architectural critic who was writing a monograph on Richardson's life and work. This led to an intellectual association that resulted in a series of articles by Van Rensselaer published first in *Garden and Forest* magazine (another important creation of this period) and later in her book *Art Out-of-Doors*, which became an influential theory text as landscape architecture matured into a profession.

Olmsted, Richardson, and Van Rensselaer together elaborated a distinctly modern theory and practice of landscape architecture, one that fully integrated landscape and architectural design in a site-based design process. In 1880, Olmsted asked Richardson to design two of the bridges required for the Back Bay Fens. The Boylston Street Bridge, in particular, became a major feature of this landmark in American landscape architecture. The undulating, unornamented mass of the bridge suggested a geological, organic form consistent with Olmsted's landscape design. Both built form and landscape rejected the stylistic, historical references that characterized contemporary gardenesque public park designs, for example at the nearby Boston Public Garden. Through extensive grading, land filling, soil amendments, and planting, the Fens landscape evoked the estuarine wetland that the site had once been. Perhaps more significant than this naturalism, however, was the absence of any reference to historical garden styles—horticultural displays, statues, ornaments—which defied contemporary expectations for municipal parks. Olmsted rejected contemporary Victorian design, and Richardson produced architecture consistent with the new design inspiration: the material and form of the landscape itself. Olmsted and Richardson combined landscape and architecture in an original expression that drew on the natural processes and forms—geology, hydrology, and vegetation—of the site as Olmsted construed it: an archetypal tidal estuary. This was a rejection of historicism (and architectural "styles") but not of history; a new, natural history served as the design's inspiration even as that history was being constructed.

Olmsted's practice in the 1880s may have more relevance to contemporary practice than is often realized. But there have been many Olmsteds, in a sense, created over time through historical inquiries of varying degrees of merit. The professional history of landscape architecture has not been particularly well cultivated in recent years. This is apparent when contemporary landscape architects object to the mere "imitation of nature" in Olmsted's landscapes, without realizing the degree to which that nature was the product of new creative vision, not a passive assemblage of stylistic elements. The rejection of historicism was in fact at the heart of his landscapes in Boston and elsewhere. The practice he and his collaborators pioneered in the 1880s was, in Nikolaus Pevsner's sense, modern design: a rejection of eclectic revivalism, the use of new technologies (in this case, relating to hydrological engineering, earth moving, soil remediation, and other techniques), and the embrace of modern programs and functions for public landscapes, analogous to those embraced today in the name of "landscape urbanism."

The richness and potential of the history of American landscape architecture does not begin and end with Olmsted. Numerous scholars have advanced our understanding, in particular, of the country place era, and the work of less known but significant individuals, including Beatrix Farrand, Arthur Shurcliff, and Warren Manning. Excellent work, such as the *Pioneers of American Landscape Design* volumes, should not be discounted. The Cultural Landscape Foundation, as well as the National Park Service and state preservation offices across the country, have actively identified and helped protect significant works of historical landscape design. But the question remains—for academics as well as practitioners in the field—of how and whether use of historical methods and sensibilities are considered an integral part of practice, or an academic sideline of less than direct value. Rigorous and creative consideration of the history of the profession, similarly, has become too rare, and too often replaced by ruminations on landscape theory based on partial or otherwise inadequate research and analysis.

The Library of American Landscape History (LALH) is the one national organization dedicated to the support and publication of historical landscape design research that meets the highest academic standards. Over the last twenty-five years, the staff of LALH has pursued its mandate of education in the professional history of landscape architecture through a remarkable series of books representing original scholarly work, and through the republication of key historical treatises. LALH has organized conferences, exhibitions, and recently has initiated a series of short documentaries that can be viewed through its valuable website. This magazine, *VIEW*, is a unique service to the profession, covering and popularizing landscape design history for professional, academic, and general readers alike. The LALH board of directors have committed time, expertise, and money to "foster understanding of the fine art of landscape architecture and appreciation of North America's richly varied landscape heritage" with remarkable dedication. For many reasons, the continued practice of landscape history—and the work of LALH—deserve our support.

**FOR PROFESSIONAL AND GENERAL READERS:** LALH members receive a 30 percent discount on LALH books ordered by phone from University of Massachusetts Press (800) 537-5487.

## NEW

### *Arthur A. Shurcliff: Design, Preservation, and the Creation of Colonial Williamsburg*

Elizabeth Hope Cushing
UMass Press/cloth, $39.95 (Summer 2014)

In 1928, Arthur A. Shurcliff (1870–1957) began what became one of the most important examples of the American Colonial Revival landscape—Colonial Williamsburg—a project that stretched into the 1940s and included town and highway planning as well as residential and institutional gardens.

Shurcliff graduated from MIT with a degree in engineering in 1894 but was drawn to landscape architecture. Because no formal programs existed at the time, he went on to piece together courses at Harvard College, the Lawrence Scientific School, and the Bussey Institute, earning a second B.S. two years later. He then spent eight years working in the Olmsted office, acquiring a broad and sophisticated knowledge of the profession. Opening his own practice in 1904, Shurcliff emphasized his expertise in town planning. He also designed recreational spaces in and around Boston, including significant aspects of the Franklin Park Zoo and the Charles River Esplanade.

In Cushing's richly illustrated biography, we see how Shurcliff's early years in Boston, his training, his early design and planning work, and his experience creating an Arts–and–Crafts-style summer compound in Ipswich led to Colonial Williamsburg, his largest and most significant contribution to American landscape architecture.

ELIZABETH HOPE CUSHING is a landscape historian and coauthor of *Community by Design: The Olmsted Firm and the Development of Brookline, Massachusetts* (LALH/UMASS PRESS).

### *John Nolen, Landscape Architect and City Planner*

R. Bruce Stephenson
UMass Press/cloth, $39.95 (Fall 2014)

John Nolen (1869–1937) studied economics, philosophy, and public administration at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, where his keen intelligence and remarkable administrative abilities were immediately recognized. In 1903, at the age of thirty-four, Nolen enrolled in the new Harvard University program in landscape architecture, studying under Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and Arthur Shurcliff. Two years later, Nolen opened his office in Harvard Square.

Over the course of his career, Nolen and his firm completed more than 400 projects, including comprehensive plans for twenty-nine cities and twenty-seven new towns, all of them in the United States. Like other progressive reformers of his era, Nolen looked to Europe for models to structure the rapid urbanization defining modern life into more efficient and livable form. Nolen's mutually influential relationship with Raymond Unwin, England's preeminent garden city planner, typified the "Atlantic Crossings" that produced a host of intensely interesting planning experiments in England, Europe, and United States during the first few decades of the twentieth century.

Bruce Stephenson analyses the details of Nolen's experiments, illuminating the planning principles he used in laying out communities from Mariemont, Ohio, to Venice, Florida. Stephenson's conclusion discusses the potential of Nolen's work as a model of a sustainable vision relevant to American civic culture today.

R. BRUCE STEPHENSON is the director of the Planning in Civic Urbanism masters program at Rollins College and author of *Visions of Eden: Environmentalism and Urban Planning in St. Petersburg, Florida.*

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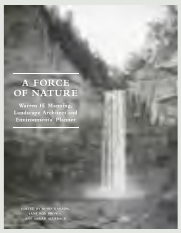
## FORTHCOMING

### *A Force of Nature: Warren H. Manning, Landscape Architect and Environmental Planner*

Edited by Robin Karson, Jane Roy Brown, and Sarah Allaback
Featuring new photographs by Carol Betsch




Warren H. Manning's (1860–1938) national practice comprised more than 1,600 landscape design and planning projects in forty-five states, from small home grounds to estates, cemeteries, college campuses, parks and park systems, and new industrial towns. Manning approached his design and planning projects from a regional, and in some instances national, perspective, a method that contrasted sharply with those of his stylistically oriented colleagues. In this regard, as in many others, Manning had been influenced by his years with the Olmsted firm, where the foundations of his resource-based approach to design were forged. Manning's overlay map methods, later adopted by the renowned landscape architect Ian McHarg, provided the basis for computer mapping software in widespread use today.

One of the eleven founders of the American Society of Landscape Architects, Manning also ran one of the nation's largest offices, where he trained several influential designers, including Fletcher Steele, A. D. Taylor, Charles Gillette, and Dan Kiley. After Manning's death, his reputation slipped into obscurity. Contributors to the Warren H. Manning Research Project have labored more than a decade to assess current conditions of his built projects and to compile a richly illustrated compendium of site essays that illuminate the range, scope, and significance of Manning's notable career.

ROBIN KARSON, LALH executive director, is the author of several books about American landscape history; Jane Roy Brown, LALH director of educational outreach, is the coauthor of *One Writer's Garden: Eudora Welty's Home Place*; Sarah Allaback, LALH managing editor, is the author of *The First American Women Architects*.

### *Landscapes of Exclusion: State Parks and Jim Crow in the American South*

William E. O'Brien
UMass Press/cloth, $39.95

An outgrowth of earlier park movements, the state park movement in the twentieth century sought to expand public access to scenic places. But under severe Jim Crow restrictions in the South, access for African Americans was routinely and officially denied. The New Deal brought a massive wave of state park expansion, and advocacy groups pressured the National Park Service to design and construct segregated facilities for African Americans. These parks were typically substandard in relation to "white only" areas.

After World War II, the NAACP filed federal lawsuits that demanded park integration, and southern park agencies reacted with attempts to expand access to additional segregated facilities, hoping they could demonstrate that their parks achieved the "separate but equal" standard. But the courts consistently ruled in favor of integration, leading to the end of state park segregation by the mid–1960s. Even though it has largely faded from public awareness, the imprint of segregated state park design remains visible throughout the South. William E. O'Brien illuminates this untold facet of Jim Crow history in the first-ever study of state park segregation. Emphasizing the historical trajectory of events leading to integration, his book underscores the profound inequality that persisted for decades in the number, size, and quality of state park spaces provided for black visitors across the Jim Crow South.

WILLIAM E. O'BRIEN is associate professor of environmental studies at the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College of Florida Atlantic University.

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A collection of little-known articles about native plants, nature-based gardens, landscape aesthetics, and conservation by several late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century landscape architects, horticulturists, botanists, and conservationists.


### *Community by Design: The Olmsted Firm and the Development of Brookline, Massachusetts*

Keith N. Morgan,
Elizabeth Hope Cushing,
and Roger G. Reed

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This beautifully illustrated book provides important new perspective on the history of planning in the United States and illuminates an aspect of the Olmsted office that has not been well understood.


### *Design in the Little Garden*

Fletcher Steele
Introduction by Robin Karson

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This engaging, amusing, and insightful book, first published in 1924, strikes a contemporary note, prophesying many of the functional concerns that would guide landscape design for much of the twentieth century.


### *A Genius for Place: American Landscapes of the Country Place Era*

Robin Karson, with
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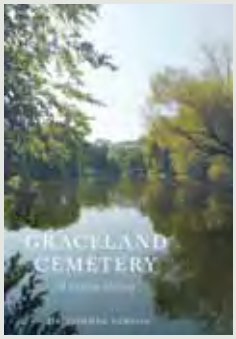


### *Graceland Cemetery A Design History*

Christopher Vernon

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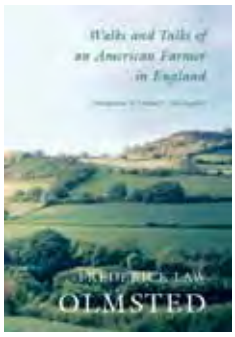


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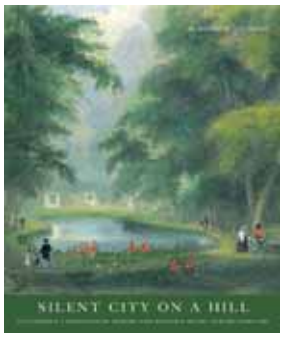
—Barbara B. Millhouse, founding president, Reynolda House Museum of American Art

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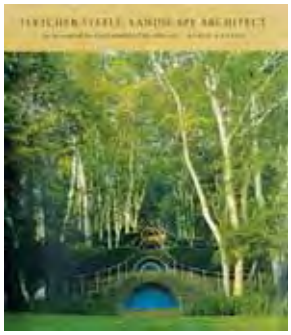

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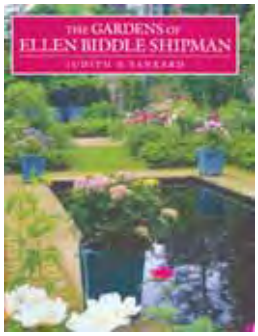


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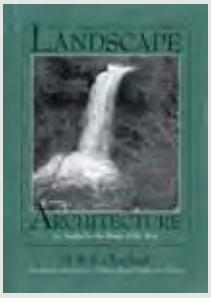


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**DONOR PROFILE: MARYBETH SOLLINS**

Marybeth Sollins is a freelance editor, editorial consultant, and writer who has specialized in contemporary art, art history, and natural history, among other subjects, for more than thirty years. In addition to her work in academic publishing, she provides pro bono editorial support to nonprofit organizations in the fields of contemporary art, music, historic preservation, and environmental conservation. Having grown up in a nineteenth-century house surrounded by idyllic gardens and an old orchard overlooking a salt marsh and tidal pond, Sollins has had a lifelong romance with gardens and the natural world. "The sense of place—a focus on landscape and the environment—is intrinsic to my very existence and world view," she says. "And as an editor and environmentalist, gardener and book-lover, it was a given that I would be captivated by LALH's mission, as well as its impeccably researched and beautifully designed books."

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