



THE OLMSTEDS AND THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



HISTORIC RESOURCE STUDY

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AND THE
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ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN HISTORIANS
FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED
NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
2020

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AND THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM
Historic Resource Study

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Cover Image: Carleton E. Watkins, *Stream and Trees with Half Dome in the Background*,
Yosemite Valley, Calif., ca. 1865. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors wish to thank Lee Farrow Cook and Alan Banks of the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site for their inspiration, encouragement and careful guidance of this project. The authors also appreciate the consistent interest and support of National Historic Site Superintendent Myra Harrison and her successor Jason Newman.

A number of individuals from the Organization of American Historians (OAH) helped in variety of ways: the late Aiden Smith, Derek Duquette and Paul Zwirecki provided project oversight and coordination, MaryAnne Gobble delivered editorial first aide, and Deborah Perdue designed the final report. The authors are especially grateful to our National Park Service (NPS) colleagues, former NPS Deputy Director John Reynolds and former NPS Chief Historian Dwight Pitcaithley for reviewing the draft report manuscript and offering invaluable suggestions.

Special thanks are extended to the Friends of Fairsted, the National Association of Olmsted Parks and the American Society of Landscape Architects for inviting the authors to participate in public presentations and panel discussions that introduced many of the report's early findings to audiences in Boston and Washington DC. Lucy Lawless was instrumental in pulling these gatherings together and her efforts are sincerely appreciated.

This study would not be possible without the depth of scholarship provided by Dr. Charles Beveridge and the Frederick Law Olmsted Papers Project. We are deeply grateful for Dr. Beveridge's lifelong commitment to advancing understanding and appreciation of the Olmsted legacy and for the work of all the talented and committed scholars he assembled in producing the twelve volumes of the *Olmsted Papers*. The usefulness of this body of work cannot be overstated.

Many archives and repositories contributed primary source material used in this report. Most importantly, the archives of Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site contain the visual material for the Olmsted design jobs in the Plans and Drawings, Lithographs, and Photo Albums Collections, as well as the Olmsted firm's California and Western Office Correspondence Collections that are particularly relevant to the early history of the National Park Service. We thank Jill Trebbe, Michele Clark, Anthony Reed, and the archives staff for their assistance with research in Brookline and obtaining visual material used for both research and illustrations. Both the Olmsted Research Guide Online and the Olmsted Archives Flickr collection were also used extensively in the preparation of part 4. The Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress also holds the letters, reports, and other records of the Olmsted firms, including the Frederick Law Olmsted Papers and the Olmsted Associates Records. These collections provide essential primary source material regarding the ideas and intentions behind the Olmsted firms' work. Shannon Ricchetti spent countless hours identifying and analyzing key documents in this collection that provided a foundation for this report. The Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division also supplied numerous historical photographs related to the historic context.

Several national parks also contributed material for the report including Acadia National Park, Grand Canyon National Park, Marsh-Billings Rockefeller National Historical Park, Yellowstone National Park and Yosemite National Park. Reports and material from the National Capital Region also informed the discussion of the firms' work in Washington, D.C. Finally, the History Collection at the NPS at Harper's Ferry Center provided key images that illustrate the early history of the National Park Service.

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FOREWORD

There is a robust body of research on the design and planning work of Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr, his sons John Charles Olmsted and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., their many associates and the Olmsted office. Surprisingly, what has been long absent is a comprehensive study of the Olmsteds' national park work, specifically their contributions to foundational thinking about national parks, the establishment of a national park service, and the early development of scores of individual parks throughout the system. *The Olmsteds and the National Park Service* finally fills the void.

The imprint of the Olmsteds on our national parks, which began with Olmsted, Sr.'s landmark 1865 Yosemite Report, cannot be overstated. The breadth of their work spanned nearly a century and shaped much of the national park system as we know it today. Taking a closer look at Yosemite Report, it has become evident how much New York's Central Park and the larger urban parks movement, of which Olmsted Sr. was a leading theorist and practitioner, influenced early thinking about national parks. But it was the Civil War and its resulting political upheaval and realignment that created an environment favorable to the 1864 Yosemite Grant and the creation of national parks in the years that followed. Parts 1-3 of the historic resource study are a narrative history and contextual analysis of the role of Olmsted Sr. in shaping the concept of national parks leading up to and including the passage of the 1916 National Park Service Act, important parts of which were written by his son, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. Part 4 of the study is a carefully annotated inventory of national park related projects undertaken by the Olmsted firms until Olmsted, Jr.'s retirement in 1953. Beyond the project work itself, for almost four decades, he was a key advisor and mentor to the top leadership of the National Park Service.

Olmsted National Historic Site would like to thank the study's principle authors, Rolf Diamant, historian at the University of Vermont and former superintendent; Ethan Carr, landscape historian at the University of Massachusetts and editor of Volume 8 of the Olmsted Papers; and Lauren Meier, historic preservationist, landscape architect and editor of the Olmsted Papers Supplemental Series. We would also like acknowledge and thank our partners at Organization of American Historians and the many individuals and institutions who opened up their files and research repositories for this undertaking.

Last, but certainly, not least, I wish to thank the staff of Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site for their support, in particular, Lee Farrow Cook and Alan Banks who shepherded this study to its conclusion—yet another accomplishment in their long and productive careers at Olmsted National Historic Site.

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INTRODUCTION

NATIONAL PARKS AND THE OLMSTED LEGACY

Frederick Law Olmsted and his associates are mainly remembered as landscape architects: the designers of public parks and park systems, academic campuses, institutional grounds, planned communities, and residences. Olmsted himself (1822–1903) was directly involved in some 500 commissions, beginning with Central Park (designed with Calvert Vaux) in 1858 and ending with his retirement from active practice in 1895. His stepson, John Charles Olmsted, and son, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., continued and expanded this legacy, working out of Fairsted, the home and office at 99 Warren Street in Brookline, Massachusetts. In total, the firm initiated or completed more than 6,000 commissions, the records of which are conserved at the Library of Congress and at Fairsted, which in 1979 became the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.



Fig. 0.1. Frederick Law Olmsted, ca. 1895. Photograph by Bartlett F. Henney. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.



Figs. 0.2 and 0.3. (left) John Charles Olmsted, 1907. Photograph by J. E. Purdy & Co. Olmsted Family Photographs, National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site. (right) Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., date unknown. Olmsted Family Photographs. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

The legacy of landscapes designed or influenced by the Olmsted firm is a living one, still experienced by millions every day. Olmsted's influence as a landscape designer and as the trainer of the first generation of American landscape architects was far reaching. The extended group of professionals working at Fairsted (or apprenticed there) built and enhanced the parks and park systems that transformed urban America in the decades following the Civil War. Their influence on the American suburb, through the design of iconic communities such as Riverside, Illinois, and Druid Hills in Atlanta, was just as profound. The firm established principles of campus planning and set a standard for exposition grounds with the design of the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

Other dimensions and contexts of the Fairsted legacy, however, are less immediately understood. Olmsted and his successors, for example, did as much to advance the scenic preservation of large, undeveloped natural areas as they did to develop park systems and institutional grounds. It is difficult today to appreciate how preservation, which implies changing a place as little as possible, and park design, which implies a transformation of a landscape, were part of one discipline as Olmsted defined it: landscape architecture.

It also is sometimes forgotten that our legacy of public landscapes—from local playgrounds to vast national reservations—was created in response to the political forces and social contexts of the time. The American Republic underwent its greatest and most



Fig. 0.4. Fairsted, undated view of the south façade. Job #673, F.L. Olmsted Estate, Brookline, MA. Historic Photo Album Collection. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

violent upheaval in the mid-nineteenth century, a trauma that called into question the nation's most fundamental precepts and ideals. At the same time, American cities were growing into diverse, industrialized metropolises with profound environmental and social problems that challenged the very viability of the urban future that northern states, in particular, had embraced. The public park landscapes that Olmsted and his successors so eloquently advocated and so beautifully designed responded to these challenges and embodied contemporary ideologies associated with the values of national unity, public health, and environmental reform.

This study presents scholarship on the Olmsteds and their work in scenic preservation—the larger parks the firm had a hand in managing—from Yosemite Valley to Metropolitan Park Commission reservations around Boston to California state parks, and many other examples. That work is contextualized in the complex and dramatic social and political setting of the Civil War and the decades following it.

Frederick Law Olmsted Sr.'s Yosemite Report of 1865 is the most important single document in American park history. It is a hopeful and prescient vision of public parks as a keystone institution of a renewed and reinvigorated American republic. Written during the

closing days of the Civil War, the report is both a plan for the management of the Yosemite landscape and an eloquent manifesto for a post-war society Olmsted hoped would be governed by republican principles of “equity and benevolence.”¹ Olmsted’s plan for Yosemite Valley remains very much a living document; many of his salient points are still relevant to the future of parks and other vital public institutions in twenty-first-century America, where a steady decline in the public sector is accompanied by a renewed debate over states’ rights, federalism, and the roles and responsibilities of government. This is all happening at a time when there is a growing need to reinvest in our commonwealth—public health, transportation, water, school, library, and park systems. Many of the themes, issues, and conflicts Olmsted identifies—such as guaranteed park access for all Americans, the need for stable and adequate public funding, the potential for damage from intensive use, the fragility of native ecosystems, and appropriate forms of use and enjoyment of the landscape—continue to preoccupy and perplex park planners to the present day. It is not surprising that we look to Olmsted’s report for a better understanding of the origin of these issues: what was at stake then and what still is at stake today.

The national parks have been characterized as “America’s best idea,”² a bromide that has served to obscure as much as acknowledge their significance as both symbols of republican ideals and agents of modernization during a period in which many of the nation’s fundamental institutions were formed. The public park, in all of its manifestations, was one of these institutions. Complex, beautiful, deeply symbolic, and profoundly appreciated by millions of people since their creation, American parks are perhaps our most characteristic and significant national art form. Parks also encompass many of the country’s most cherished, unspoiled, and undesigned landscapes. This seeming contradiction is the greatest source of the meaning, purposes, and ideological power of public parks. A closer examination at the closely interconnected relationship between the

¹ Frederick Law Olmsted, *Preliminary Report upon the Yosemite and Big Tree Grove*, 1865. The report prepared by the Commissioners and written by Olmsted is known variously as the “Report on Management of Yosemite,” “Yosemite and the Mariposa Grove: A Preliminary Report,” and the “Preliminary Report upon the Yosemite and Big Tree Grove.” For simplicity and consistency, we will refer to this document as the “Yosemite Report” or “Olmsted’s Report.” Olmsted’s original handwritten manuscript was transcribed by his California secretary, Harry Perkins; the Perkins document is in the Frederick Law Olmsted Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. The first fifteen pages of the 52-page document were published by the *New York Evening Post* in June 1868. The lasting influence of the report can be seen in Olmsted’s subsequent work, most notably at Niagara Falls, and in the involvement of his son, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., in the Hetch Hetchy controversy and in the drafting of the 1916 National Park Service organic legislation.

First published in the twentieth century in 1952 by *Landscape Architecture* magazine, the Yosemite report has been widely reproduced since. The report has been published by the Olmsted Papers Project in volume 5, *The California Frontier, 1863–1865* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), edited by Victoria Post Ranney, 488–511; in *Frederick Law Olmsted: Writings on Landscape, Culture and Society* (New York: Library of America, 2015), edited by Charles E. Beveridge, 300–318; and in *America’s National Park System: Critical Documents* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1994), edited by Lary M. Dilsaver, 5–20, and by the Yosemite Association, *Yosemite National Park*, 1–29. Full citations for these books are in the bibliography. In this Historic Resource Study, the authors interpret the Yosemite report in considerable detail, quoting multiple lines of text. This footnote directs the reader to these publications rather than repeatedly citing individual pages for each line quoted.

history of Fairsted and the history of the National Park Service provides an opportunity to reconsider and explore the unique institution and cultural expression that are the nation's greatest scenic reservations.

²The pronouncement that “national parks are the best idea we ever had,” widely attributed to Wallace Stegner, was abbreviated into the title of Ken Burns’ epic television series *America’s Best Idea* (Duncan, Dayton, writer, *The National Parks: America’s Best Idea*, directed by Ken Burns, 2009).

PART 1

FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED, THE EARLY AMERICAN PARK MOVEMENT, AND YOSEMITE VALLEY

CHAPTER ONE

CENTRAL PARK AND YOSEMITE VALLEY: ICONS OF AMERICAN LANDSCAPE CULTURE

Over the course of the nineteenth century, a broad coalition of interests in the United States successfully advocated for the acquisition and development of thousands of public parks in American cities, suburbs, and wilderness regions. From neighborhood playgrounds to vast scenic reservations, the American park, as a public institution, encompassed a diverse range of places unified by the values invested in them and the purposes behind their creation.

Governments were generally the agents of public park creation. In New York City, for instance, the Common Council began acquiring the land for Central Park in 1853, and dozens of municipalities soon followed suit, creating urban parks, large and small, to mitigate the trying environmental and social conditions of industrial cities. The federal government created its first park in 1864, when Congress granted Yosemite Valley to the state of California “for public use, resort, and recreation . . . inalienable for all time.” Congress acted again to create a park in 1872, setting aside two million acres of Wyoming Territory to establish Yellowstone National Park, a “public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.”³

Central Park, in the middle of the nation’s largest city, and Yosemite Valley, in the still little known (to European Americans, at least) High Sierra of California, represented two extremes, two new frontiers that challenged the American Republic at a critical and violent moment when its very existence was threatened by the expansion of slavery, insurrection, and ultimately civil war. In the East, the growth of cities had created conditions that threatened to undermine the industrial future of the country, and therefore the very viability of society. If cities could not be made more healthful, and if their increasingly diverse populations could not be integrated, the urbanization of the nation threatened to be its undoing. In the West, after native populations were conquered and driven off their ancestral lands, the vast resources of the entire continent offered the glittering promise of a manifest destiny for the Republic, a future in which the nation reached from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

But the management of those resources—including the awesome scenery then being represented and described by artists and scientists—was uncontrolled and destructive. In the decades before and after the Civil War, the social foundations and public institutions of modern American society were in their most formative period. In this context, the public park took shape as a functional means to address these challenges and as an embodiment of the republican ideals that would bind the nation together through its social and political crises. Public parks were thus an expression of national unity, progress,

³For the text of laws relating to the national park system, see Hillory A. Tolson, *Laws Relating to the National Park Service and the National Parks and Monuments* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1933). For Yellowstone and Yosemite, see 26, 64.

faith in the benevolence of democratic government, and, in the words of Andrew Jackson Downing, “the refinement of a republic.”⁴

Central Park and the state park at Yosemite Valley were contemporaries. The great urban park opened in 1858, and construction continued through the dark days of the Civil War. The legislation that granted Yosemite Valley to the state of California was signed by Lincoln as that conflict approached its bloody resolution. The two landscapes, so different in context and character, also shared a creative genius in the person of Frederick Law Olmsted. The codesigner and superintendent of the New York park also wrote the 1865 Yosemite Report, which described the purposes, justifications, and best management practices for the Yosemite Valley and, by extension, all future state and national landscape reservations. That report remains a foundational document of the American park movement and a unique record of the meanings and purposes of public parks—places as different as Central Park and Yosemite Valley—in the mid-nineteenth century.



Fig. 1.1. *Lake and Bridge, Central Park, New York* by Detroit Publishing Company, ca. 1903. Detroit Publishing Company Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

Today, it is harder to understand what our prototypical urban park has in common with our first great scenic reservation. We think of Central Park as “designed,” and indeed, the landscape was “improved” through extensive grading and planting. Yosemite Valley is of course perceived as a “natural” landscape; the gorge is one of the great wonders of the continent. But this bifurcation of landscapes into categories of *cultural* and *natural* had less relevance to how these places were understood, managed, and invested with meaning in

⁴ Andrew Jackson Downing, “A Park for New York,” *The Horticulturalist*, August 1851, 349.

the nineteenth century. For Olmsted, in particular, both places expressed the social value of scenic landscape beauty, whether extensively “improved,” as was necessary for the Central Park site, or left in an unaltered state to the greatest degree possible, which was his advice for Yosemite Valley. The different prescriptions were made to achieve the same goal.

Olmsted defined the primary purpose of both urban parks and larger scenic reservations in similar terms: to make landscape beauty—whether the pastoral beauty of the urban park or the sublime experience of the wilderness—accessible to all. For Olmsted, such experiences were necessary to human health and well-being; if government did not act to enhance and preserve such places and make them available to a visiting public, it would fail in its duty to assure that all people had the opportunity to lead fulfilled lives. The belief in the beneficial effects—in fact the vital requirement—of the experience of diverse and powerfully affecting landscapes was the unifying ideology of the American park movement.



Fig. 1.2 View of the Long Meadow, *Prospect Park, Brooklyn, N.Y.*, by Detroit Publishing Company, ca. 1900. Detroit Publishing Company Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED AND SCENIC PRESERVATION

Today, we tend to see landscapes in terms other than their aesthetic, emotional impact on our physical and mental health. “Natural” landscapes are characterized by the lack of any anthropogenic influence or traces of human history—undisturbed or pristine ecosystems

that show little sign of any human presence or disturbance. “Designed” landscapes are the very opposite, products of human interventions to create calculated compositions and effects. Landscape preservation would seem to entail doing nothing; park design, in contrast, would mean the creation of a work of public art.

For Olmsted, landscape preservation and landscape design were not opposites; they were aspects of a single professional practice and approach to large-scale landscape management for public benefit. His professional practice—which he and his partner, Calvert Vaux, described as *landscape architecture*—comprehended both preservation and design, not as separate or antagonistic efforts but as parts of a single body of theory and practice. For Olmsted, the division between what was natural and what was cultural in a landscape was less important than how the experience of places affected people’s lives. Public parks of all types—from municipal pleasure grounds to state and national reservations—made it possible for the general public, not just a wealthy few, to benefit from a wide range of landscape experiences. If Central Park provided beautiful and picturesque scenes for New



Fig. 1.3. *Niagara Falls, from the American Side*, by Frederic Edwin Church, 1867. National Galleries of Scotland. Presented by John S. Kennedy, 1887.

Yorkers, Niagara Falls and Yosemite Valley allowed visitors access to sublime landscapes. In the first case, extensive grading, planting, and other improvements were required to transform the park site into a dramatic sequence of landscape “effects.” At Yosemite and Niagara, the challenge for the landscape architect was to protect existing, awesome features from the damage that visitors could do and choreograph the sequence and pace of visits in the design of roads, paths, and other facilities. Landscape architecture as a design practice encompassed this full range of activity, from doing more to doing less. In both cases, the result facilitated the central purpose of a large park: providing a dramatic sequence of powerful landscape experiences for the public at large.

It is worth considering, therefore, the degree to which Central Park was a preservation project, and the extent to which the transformation of Yosemite Valley into a public park (at least the way Olmsted would have liked to have seen it done) required design. In Central Park, Olmsted and Vaux transformed the site to create perhaps the most significant work of American art in the nineteenth century. Covering 840 acres of unpropitious urban terrain at what was then the northern edge of New York, it employed the engineering technology and formal devices of British landscape gardening. The carriage drive, for example, formed a scenic, winding loop around the perimeter of the park, and a heavy belt plantation concealed the boundaries of the park and diverted attention to the composed views of the park’s interior. Smooth, rolling meadows (created at great expense) figured prominently in a plan Olmsted and Vaux named “Greensward.” The park’s lakes were the result of impounding water in serpentine sheets through low-lying areas, a practice seen in British landscape parks. But this was a site-based design process: the terrain, vegetation, and existing character of the site determined the layout of paths and drives and the overall composition and sequence of pastoral, picturesque, and more formal settings. The result was not a new, or man-made landscape, but an “improved” iteration of the site. Land was transformed into landscape, an unpromising site into a series of landscape scenes.

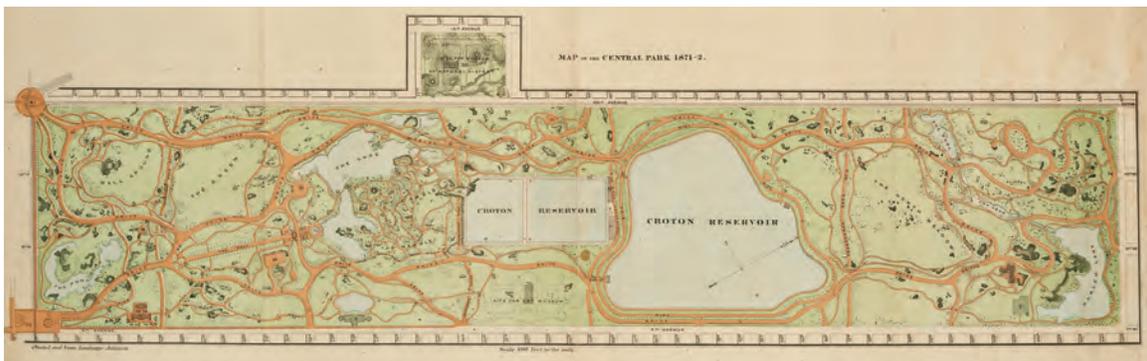


Fig. 1.4. *Map of Central Park*, Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, 1872. Plan no. 502-8. Job #502 Central Park, NY. Plans and Drawings Collection. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

Even as that transformation took place, in the midst of significant and expensive alterations to the site, characteristics of the pre-industrial geography of Manhattan Island were preserved. “There will come a time,” the park’s designers observed in the written report

accompanying their plan, “when New York will be built up . . . and when the picturesquely-varied, rocky formations of the Island will have been converted into formations for rows of monotonous, straight streets, and piles of erect buildings. There will be no suggestion left of its present varied surface, with the single exception of the few acres contained in the Park.” In the north end of the site, which was more remote and less disturbed, they wrote that it was “desirable to interfere with its easy, undulating outlines, and picturesque, rocky scenery as little as possible, and, on the other hand, to endeavor . . . to increase and judiciously develop these . . . characteristic sources of landscape effects.”⁵ The south end of the Central Park site, in other words, required an engineered transformation to serve its purpose. The north end required far less such improvement, and in fact should be “interfered with” as little as possible, except for the addition of drives and paths that would make the experience of that already “picturesque” landscape available to large numbers in a controlled (and therefore less damaging) way. Thus, in the very first major work of American landscape architecture, design and preservation were not antagonistic or opposed. They were parts of the same overall project: the creation of a public landscape park.

As the urban park movement grew, landscape architects not only enhanced the scenery in areas designated as parks; they also preserved existing features and exploited the potential of those features for park purposes. Landscape architects designing park systems in Midwestern cities, for example, often were in a position to preserve major landscape features that had not yet been altered. While American cities formed park commissions and developed park systems, the federal government also created parks. In the years following the Civil War, these larger reservations came to define a vision of republican nationhood, much as municipal parks embodied civic ideals. And just as municipal park development became an integral part of the process of subdividing and developing land on the edges of cities, setting aside large scenic reservations also became part of the process of subdividing and distributing larger tracts of land in western states and territories.

Many historians of national parks have suggested separate origins and inventors for an American “national park idea,” but scenic preservation on the state or national scale was not entirely independent from the influence of the landscape park as it was being advocated in the contemporary municipal park movement. In Buffalo, for example, the interest in scenic preservation among Municipal Park advocates naturally extended to Niagara Falls. In California, a number of public figures from the East, including Horace Greeley and Thomas Starr King, became aware of the spectacular scenic qualities of Yosemite Valley through their own activities as tourists. Artists such as the photographer Carleton Watkins and the painter Albert Bierstadt visited the valley in the early 1860s, and the images they produced enjoyed wide popularity and commercial success in a national art market hungry for composed images of American landscapes. Olmsted’s appreciation of landscape beauty remained consistent whether it was applied to the “landscape effects” he sought to enhance in Central Park or to the awesome magnificence of Yosemite Valley.

⁵ Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and Theodora Kimball, eds., *Forty Years of Landscape Architecture: Frederick Law Olmsted, Landscape Architect* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1928), 46; see also Charles E. Beveridge and David Schuyler, eds., *Creating Central Park, 1857–1861, The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted*, vol. 3 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press), 119.



Fig. 1.5. *Valley of the Yosemite* by Albert Bierstadt, 1864. Museum of Fine Arts, Gift of Martha C. Karolik for the M. and M. Karolik Collection of American Paintings, 1815–1865. Photograph © 2019 Museum of Fine Arts.

CHAPTER TWO

YOSEMITE VALLEY: A TESTAMENT TO REPUBLICAN GOVERNMENT

Frederick Law Olmsted's *Preliminary Report upon the Yosemite and Big Tree Grove* was remarkable for what Roger G. Kennedy identified as its "breadth of comprehension."⁶ "In a single speech," wrote Kennedy, "Olmsted could unite discussion of the statue of Liberty atop the Capitol dome, the emancipation of the slaves, the destruction of the earth of the South by the plantation system, the prospect of equally disastrous destruction of the Yosemite Valley and the giant sequoias, public education through the Morrill Act, and homestead legislation."⁷ Indeed, the Yosemite Report provides a unique and comprehensive window into the political and social context of the United States in the spring of 1865, as four years of bloody civil war were drawing to a close.

For Olmsted, his appointment to the Yosemite Commission, and the report the commission was chartered to produce, represented an unprecedented opportunity to align his personal vision for public parks and scenic preservation with the broader programmatic objectives of a victorious national government upholding republican principles of "equity and benevolence." Yosemite was both an expression of these principles and a symbol of national union. Borrowing a phrase from Andrew Jackson Downing, Olmsted argued that Yosemite, like Central Park before it, represented a pivotal step forward toward "the refinement of a republic"—which he hoped marked the dawn of a new era of democracy and the rise of a recast American Republic that would guarantee "protection for all its citizens in the pursuit of happiness."⁸

To fully understand the Yosemite Report's significance, it is useful to understand the context of the Yosemite Grant for which it was written. To understand the grant, it is necessary to examine the mid-century history of land grants as instruments of public policy and the overarching impact of the American Civil War in creating the revolutionary political environment that enabled the grant's enactment.

THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF THE LAND GRANT

At Gettysburg in 1863, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed "a new birth of freedom" that dramatically reinterpreted and expanded the concept of American democracy. Lincoln's reborn freedom would eventually lead to the emancipation of four million enslaved people, the adoption of the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, and the creation of

⁶ Roger G. Kennedy, *Wildfire and Americans: How to Save Lives, Property, and Your Tax Dollars* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 133.

⁷ Kennedy, *Wildfire and Americans*, 133.

⁸ Downing, "A Park for New York," 349.

new responsibilities for government, including, for the first time, the protection of special places like Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Giant Sequoia Grove for the benefit of all citizens.

Native Americans were not included among the beneficiaries of this new birth of freedom. “The wilderness preserved in national parks, monuments, and forests is a wilderness dispossessed—,” wrote historian Mark Spence, “dispossessed of the people who shaped and were shaped by their interaction with it over the course of centuries.”⁹ In Yosemite Valley and across the United States, native tribes were called upon to give up ancestral lands, which were then repurposed to expedite the republican reforms the Lincoln administration championed. The Yosemite Indians, a part of the Southern Sierra Miwok tribe also known as the Ahwahneechee, were driven from Yosemite Valley by miners and militiamen in the early 1850s. Their lands in and around Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa, forcibly vacated, became part of the growing federal estate; in the summer of 1864, some of this land became part of the Yosemite Grant to the state of California.

Throughout this period, right up to the time of the transfer, groups of Yosemite Indians seasonally migrated back to the Valley to hunt and harvest, despite occasional confrontations. After the park was established, Indians adapted to the growing influx of tourists, working as laborers and basket makers. A small community of Indians remained living and working in the Valley through the early twentieth century, when federal park authorities began taking steps to force them out.

Though Indian peoples had no place in the “equitable and benevolent republic” whose rise Olmsted optimistically anticipated in the Yosemite Report, Olmsted himself was not unmoved by the desperate plight of native tribes. In unpublished writings from his time in California, Olmsted acknowledges the violence inflicted on Indians. “There are always bodies of Indians along the frontier,” he wrote, “who have been recently forced to abandon hunting and camping grounds which have been used by their fathers, for generations . . . the parents, brothers, women and children of those who have been killed by the pioneers.”¹⁰ Despite this expression of humanitarian concern, for Olmsted, as for many of his nineteenth-century contemporaries, Native Americans were largely invisible, living beyond the rim of the civilized world and out of sight of a nation in the process of being traumatized and transformed by civil war.

THE YOSEMITE GRANT: “A TRUST FROM THE WHOLE NATION”¹¹

In April 1860, transplanted New England intellectual and Unitarian minister Thomas Starr King arrived in San Francisco and was almost immediately drawn into the small circle of acquaintances around the magnetic Jesse Benton Fremont. Fremont opened her Black Point home (located on land that is now Fort Mason in Golden Gate National Recreation Area) as a salon for her anti-slavery, reform-minded friends and protégés. Many of them were familiar

⁹ Mark Spence, “Dispossessing the Wilderness: Yosemite Indians and the National Park Ideal, 1864–1930,” *Pacific Historical Review* 65, no. 1 (February 1996), 58.

¹⁰ Victoria Post Ranney, ed., *The California Frontier, 1863–1865*, The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted vol. 5 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press), 686.

¹¹ Olmsted refers to the Yosemite Grant as “a trust from the whole nation” in the Yosemite Report.

with Yosemite Valley, including lawyer Frederick Billings and Carleton Watkins, a young photographer who would make a national name for himself with a portfolio of mammoth views of Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of giant sequoias.¹² King had written a book about New Hampshire's scenic White Mountains;¹³ in his new home in California, he became enthralled with Yosemite Valley and the Sierras. Within months of his arrival in San Francisco, he was on his way to see Yosemite for himself, a journey that produced a series of eight articles for the *Boston Evening Transcript*, entitled "A Vacation among the Sierras: Yosemite in 1860."¹⁴ King was so taken with the monumental landscape that he would equate it with Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, referring to the symphony as the "Yosemite of music."¹⁵

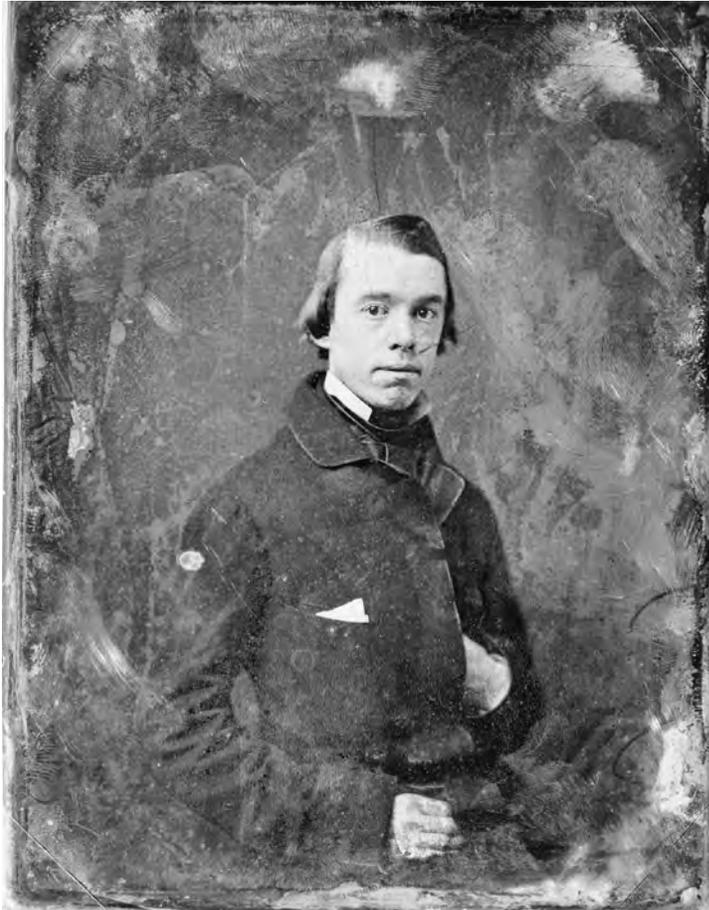


Fig. 2.1. *Thomas Starr King*, between 1844 and 1860 by Matthew B. Brady. Daguerreotypes Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

¹² Billings was a business partner of Jesse Benton Fremont's husband, John C. Fremont, former Republican candidate for president. Both Billings and Fremont were former investors in the Mariposa Estates that Olmsted was hired to manage in 1863.

¹³ Thomas Starr King, *The White Hills; Their Legends, Landscape, and Poetry* (Boston, MA: Estes and Lauriat, 1859).

¹⁴ Thomas Starr King, *A Vacation among the Sierras: Yosemite in 1860* (San Francisco, CA: The Book Club of California, 1962).

¹⁵ Arliss Ungar, *Nature Writings: Words of the Rev. Thomas Starr King*, Starr King School for the Ministry. <https://www.sksm.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/nature.pdf>



Fig. 2.2. A view of the intersection of Montgomery, Post, and Market Streets; Thomas Starr King spoke later in the day at a nearby theater. *Washington's Birthday Event and Pro-Union Rally, San Francisco* by Carleton E. Watkins, 1861. MSS Photo 0179. Stanford University Special Collections.

A remarkably gifted and popular orator, King was an outspoken opponent of slavery and an unwavering unionist. When civil war broke out, he was recruited by Jessie Fremont to campaign to secure California's loyalty to the United States. King turned his prodigious talents to fund-raising for Union causes. His work on behalf of the Pacific Branch of the U.S. Sanitary Commission helped to raise over a million dollars for wounded Union soldiers (almost one-fifth of the total contributions from all the northern states to the U.S. Sanitary Commission). These efforts won King friends and admirers on both sides of the continent. The west coast correspondent of the *New York Times* wrote of him, "He has brought every element that his popularity gives him to bear in all our cities in favor of liberty and human rights."¹⁶ Historian Adam Goodheart wrote in *Civil War Awakening*, "Did Mr. King and Mrs. Frémont's rhetorical campaign—in which she was the chief strategist, he the field marshal—actually save California for the Union? She would never stop believing that it had. Many others thought likewise; Ralph Waldo Emerson would write King the following year to say that 'the salvation and future of California are mainly in your hands.'"¹⁷

¹⁶ Adam Goodheart, 1861: *The Civil War Awakening* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 248.

¹⁷ Goodheart, 1861, 249.

King's efforts helped to integrate California into the Union and set the stage for the state's role in the United States. As Glenna Matthews explains in *The Golden State in the Civil War*, "During the brief span of King's life in California, he and his fellow Republicans mounted a powerful drive to solidify the state's loyalty to the Union, a drive that continued even after his death and that was answered by public policy changes sponsored by the federal government. In consequence, at the end of the war, California was both physically and spiritually more fully integrated into the nation than ever before."¹⁸ Despite his substantial investment of time and energy on behalf of the Union, King's ardor for Yosemite never flagged. His zeal for the land permeated his ministry; his sermon "Lessons from the Sierra Nevada" urged his parishioners to create "majestic landscapes for the heart," and "Yosemites in the soul."¹⁹

Frederick Law Olmsted met with King during Olmsted's first visit to San Francisco, in October 1863. Olmsted and King discussed Sanitary Commission business at this meeting, as they did on other occasions. Considering their mutual interests, however, it would not be surprising if the conversation also touched on King's enthusiasm for the wonders of the Sierras. In any case, five weeks after King and Olmsted first dined, Olmsted was exploring Mariposa Grove.

Less than a year later, King was dead. He died in March 1864, of the combined effects of diphtheria and pneumonia, likely brought on by overwork; he was 39. His sudden passing was met by a massive public outpouring of grief—minute guns were fired from the coastal forts ringing San Francisco Bay by order of President Lincoln. But perhaps the most fitting tribute came only a few weeks before King's death, in February, when California's Republican senator, John Conness, began work on the legislation that would grant Yosemite Valley and the nearby Mariposa Grove of giant sequoias to the state of California to be made a public park. Israel Ward Raymond, a representative of the Central American Steamship Transit Company of New York, had written Conness recommending that 38,000 acres be permanently withdrawn from all settlement claims and a park be created to protecting these lands from private exploitation in perpetuity.²⁰ The timing of the letter in relation to King's death is suggestive, although there is no documentation of a direct linkage between the two events. Raymond's letter to Conness advocated the creation of a Yosemite Commission to prepare a management plan for the new park and suggested a number of prominent Californians to serve on that commission. Olmsted's name was at the top of the list. Senator Conness promptly forwarded Raymond's proposal to the General Land Office, which drafted legislation that Conness would introduce in Congress.

Park legislation—for urban parks as well as the first national and state parks—usually resulted from a convergence of interests. On the one hand, urban reformers and conservationists promoted the beneficial functions and effects of parks, while on the other hand, real estate speculators and the tourist industry valued parks for their potential

¹⁸ Glenna Matthews, *The Golden State in the Civil War: Thomas Starr King, the Republican Party, and the Birth of Modern California* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 6.

¹⁹ Kevin Starr, *California, A History* (New York: Modern Library, 2005), 250.

²⁰ For the text of Ward's letter and the details of the legislation, see Hans Huth, "Yosemite: The Story of an Idea," *The Sierra Club Bulletin* 33, no. 3 (March 1948), 47–78, w.yosemite.ca.us/library/yosemite_story_of_an_idea.html.

to enhance land values and increase tourist traffic. In the case of Yosemite, Raymond, a representative of the Central American Steamship Transit Company of New York, clearly represented the commercial interest.

In any case, the Yosemite legislation was advanced at a time when the Lincoln administration was deeply beholden to King and other influential friends of Yosemite, including Olmsted, for their steadfast allegiance to the Union, support of emancipation, and financial contributions to the war effort. This accumulated political capital created a favorable political environment for the Yosemite proposal in Washington.²¹

Another reason for Lincoln's support of the proposal was the difficult reelection campaign he faced in the fall of 1864, for which he needed to unite California's Republican Party behind his campaign. Lincoln had filled a Supreme Court vacancy with Californian Stephen J. Field, a friend of Thomas Starr King's, in 1862, perhaps reflecting the crucial status of California in the larger political calculus. (Years later, Field would play a key role in the Supreme Court decision against preemption of the federal government mandate to protect Yosemite Valley.)

A CLOSER LOOK AT LAND GRANTS

The Yosemite Land Grant to California was not a completely new idea; the United States government had a long history of making grants of federal lands, mostly to states. Before comprehensive national taxation was instituted during the Civil War, government revenues were largely derived from tariffs and, to a smaller extent, excise taxes on goods brought into American ports. The federal government's largest asset was land, especially its vast holdings in the west. Land grants were, therefore, an important mechanism for enacting national policy and programs without spending limited funds. Many of the critical reforms advanced by the Republican Party in the years leading up to Civil War were supported by or built on grants of land, including grants for homesteading, grants for building the transcontinental railroad, and grants for establishing a national system of colleges.

All of these proposals were mired in the politics of slavery. Southern Democrats believed grants for homesteading would encourage free-soil settlement and inevitably lead to free-soil statehood, blocking the westward expansion of slavery. More free states, they feared, would tip the balance of power in Washington against slavery, an outcome they could never abide. Land grants for public "improvements" were seen as primarily benefiting small farmers and mechanics, a non-slave-owning political class that was increasingly aligned with Democrats' archenemy, the new Republican party. The proposed land-grant college legislation would enable all states to build and endow public colleges and universities that would be accessible to people of modest means.²² To the slaveholding oligarchy, which had ready access to private schools, land-grant colleges were an unwanted burden on the treasury.

²¹ Richard A. Grusin, *Culture, Technology and the Creation of America's National Parks* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

²² Kathryn Lindsay Anderson Wade, *The Intent and Fulfillment of the Morrill Act Of 1862: Review of the History of Auburn University and the University of Georgia* (Auburn University, 2005).

If their lands became “worn-out” there was always more land available in the west. Despite this opposition, a coalition of Republicans and some northern Democrats managed, by the narrowest of margins, to pass the homestead and Land-Grant College bills, only to have the legislation vetoed by President James Buchanan.

Southern Democrats’ arguments in opposition to the Land-Grant College Bill are instructive in understanding the impact the Civil War had on the future of Yosemite, Yellowstone, and subsequent park proposals. When it was debated in Congress in 1859, the legislation was ferociously assailed by Senator Clement Clay of Alabama, who denounced it as “one of the most monstrous, iniquitous and dangerous measures which have ever been submitted to Congress.” “If the people demand the patronage of the federal government for agriculture and education,” Clay declared, “it is because they have been debauched and led astray.”²³ In the House of Representatives, Alabama Congressman Williamson Cobb warned that a dangerous precedent was being set and predicted that if the bill became law, the national government would soon be “feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked and one day building . . . schools and supporting those schools.” Senator Jefferson Davis of Mississippi argued that the government would be “warped so far from the path it had previously followed.”²⁴ When President James Buchanan vetoed the Land-Grant College Bill, he asserted that “the establishment of these colleges has prevailed over the pressing wants of the common Treasury.” He added, “Congress does not possess the power to appropriate money in the Treasury, raised by taxes on the people of the United States, for the purpose of educating the people of the respective States Should Congress exercise such a power, this would be to break down the barriers which have been so carefully constructed in the Constitution to separate Federal from state authority.”²⁵

Arguments about states’ rights, fiscal policy, and constitutional powers aside, the heart of southern Democrats’ opposition to the bill was the desire to protect slavery from free-soil competition and quash any reform, including public education, that might present a challenge to the South’s “peculiar character.” Virginia Senator James Mason made this fear explicit during the debate: “Would it not be in the power of a majority in Congress to fasten upon the southern States that peculiar system of free schools in the New England States, which I believe would tend . . . to destroy that peculiar character which I am happy to believe belongs to the great mass of the southern people.”

The issue of slavery also derailed the Homestead Grant legislation, which was vetoed a year after the Land-Grant College bill. The homestead legislation proposed that any citizen or immigrant could gain title to public land that he or she personally cultivated for five years; the idea was soundly rejected by southern lawmakers, who sought the westward

²³ Congress, Senate, Agricultural Colleges, 35th Congress, 2nd session, *Congressional Globe*, February 7, 1859, 851.

²⁴ 35th Congress, 2nd session, February 7, 1859, 857.

²⁵ James Buchanan: “Veto Message,” February 24, 1859. Miller Center, University of Virginia. <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/february-24-1859-veto-message-regarding-land-grant-colleges>

expansion of slavery through the purchase of large tracts of federal property. Attacking the Homestead bill in language that echoed denunciations of the Land-Grant College Bill, the *Georgia Weekly Telegraph* editorialized, “We look upon the bill as one of the worst and most fatal achievements of abolitionism . . . it will amount in the end to supporting Northern pauperism out of the National Treasury.” The *Telegraph* was quite transparent about what was at stake from the point of view of slave-owners and southern culture: northern life, the editors said, was “all . . . strife and antagonism” while in the South “all is harmony—servants never so valuable—never so well cared for—never more contented and happy; masters never so prosperous.”²⁶

In this context, there is little doubt that a land grant proposal for Yosemite park or a more radical proposal of establishing a federally run Yellowstone National Park, introduced in the political environment of an antebellum Congress, would have been met with a similar level of hostility from southern democrats and ultimately met the same fate as the Land-Grant College and Homestead Bills. The idea articulated by Frederick Law Olmsted as “great public grounds for the free enjoyment of the people”²⁷ was anathema to the elite slave-owning class and the legislators and president who protected their interests.

By spring of 1862, however, political power in Washington had been turned on its head. Former U.S. senator Clement Clay was sitting in a Confederate Congress, convening in Richmond, Virginia. Former U.S. senator James Mason was pleading the South’s cause in England. Former U.S. senator Jefferson Davis was President of the Confederacy, and James Buchanan was sitting out the war on his country estate in Pennsylvania, his veto pen set aside forever, as his successor, Republican Abraham Lincoln, was preparing to lead the United States in a profoundly different direction.

YOSEMITE AND A “SECOND AMERICAN REPUBLIC”

Historians David Blight and James McPherson have described the Civil War as “our second revolution.”²⁸ The war represented, according to Blight, “the destruction and death of that first American Republic and the invention and beginning of the second Republic.” Blight asserts that “big government was born in the American Civil War and it was created by the original Republican Party under Abraham Lincoln . . . in order to win an all-out war.” The eleven southern states that left the union no longer stood in the way of a Republican party that believed, according to Blight, “in energetic, interventionist government” and was prepared to become “an agent of change . . . of the economy and . . . the maximization of human equality.”²⁹

²⁶ Adam Wesley Dean, *An Agrarian Republic: Farming, Anti-Slavery Politics, Nature Parks in the Civil War Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 96.

²⁷ Olmsted, Yosemite Report.

²⁸ James McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), and David Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018), xv.

²⁹ David Blight, “The Civil War in American Memories at 150: Legacies in Our Own Time,” keynote address at the Vermont Humanities Council 2014 Annual Conference, November 14–15, 2014.

This second revolution began to take shape in the spring of 1862. After a year of escalating civil war, President Abraham Lincoln and Congress were reaching a point of no return. Hope for a quick Union victory or a negotiated settlement with the rebellious states had been largely extinguished. Every battle, each one costlier than the one before, solidified a sobering realization that there would be no going back to the pre-war status quo. In his Annual Message to Congress in December 1861, Lincoln declared that he was “anxious and careful” that the war “not degenerate into a violent and remorseless revolutionary struggle.”³⁰ However, in the same speech, he acknowledged that the war now demanded profound changes. “The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present,” he warned, “and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.”³¹

Facts on the ground were inexorably creating space for the new reality Lincoln’s speech called for. Since the passage of the First Confiscation Act in August 1861, a steady stream of escaped slaves had sought sanctuary with the Union Army and Navy. The numbers of refugees steadily increased as Union forces occupied coastal areas in North and South Carolina, with their sea-island cotton plantations.³² Those numbers would only continue to increase as the war progressed. In April 1862, Union forces seized New Orleans, the South’s largest commercial port, and began moving through the Mississippi River Delta. Federal soldiers and sailors, operating far from the main battlefields, advanced into regions with some of the highest concentrations of slaves in the country. “The successful federal occupation of the lower Mississippi Valley,” writes historian James Oakes, “brought more than 150,000 slaves into Union lines. These numbers alone put a great deal of pressure on Union emancipation policy.”³³ At the same time, it was becoming increasingly clear to Lincoln and his generals that every action that weakened slavery would diminish the Confederacy’s capacity to fight. A war that was begun on the premise of “saving the union” was evolving into the very “violent and remorseless revolutionary struggle” that Lincoln had worried about. The war would be waged not just to create a “more perfect union” but to break the back of American slavery and inspire republican movements around the world.

As President Lincoln made amply clear in the Gettysburg Address, the war was very much a test of universal republican values. “Now we are engaged in a great civil war,” he said, “testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure.” The war’s outcome, in fact, largely hinged on the often overlooked, but critically important diplomatic battlefront in Europe. Recognition of the Confederacy and intervention to break the Union blockade by England or France might well have led to direct military hostilities.

³⁰ Abraham Lincoln, First Annual Message, December 3, 1861, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/december-3-1861-first-annual-message>.

³¹ Lincoln, First Annual Message.

³² Frederick Law Olmsted at one point sought an administrative role in an early attempt at Reconstruction on the Carolina sea islands, popularly referred to as the “Port Royal Experiment.” Jane Turner Censor, ed., *Defending The Union, 1861–1863*, The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted Papers, vol. 4 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 23. Laura Wood Roper, “Frederick Law Olmsted and the Port Royal Experiment,” *The Journal of Southern History* 31, no. 3 (August 1965), 272–284.

³³ James Oakes, *Freedom National: Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861–1863* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2012), 219.

It is difficult to assess the consequences of such a turn of events, but it is likely that much of Lincoln's republican agenda would have been stillborn, including any immediate future for a Yosemite grant or establishment of national parks after the war.

Old World reactionary regimes looked forward to the demise of popular government in America and welcomed the Confederate victory and the defeat of the republican principles espoused by Lincoln. Southern agents and sympathizers in Europe claimed that the Union was "subverted by this spirit of extreme democracy, imported from France," and that "the South's aristocratic Anglo Saxon landed gentry" were locked in battle "with the democratic mobs of the North polluted by the 'scum' of Europe."³⁴ In an editorial rebuttal of these views, the *New York Times* skewered "dynastic and aristocratic Europe" for offering sympathy and covert support to the Confederacy. Placing the war in America in an international context, the *Times* editorial described the conflict as a "war in favor of a privileged class; a war upon the working classes; a war against popular majorities; a war to establish in the New World the very principles which underlie every throne of Europe." The goal of Old World enemies of the United States, the editorial concluded, was to demonstrate "the democratic experiment a failure" by means of a Confederate victory.³⁵

The United States went to great lengths to win hearts and minds abroad and assert the righteousness of its cause. U.S. agents abroad denounced the Confederacy for "waging war against a free, popular government, with the intention, unblushingly proclaimed, of forming a new confederation, whose chief cornerstone shall be the execrable system of human bondage."³⁶ As one Union soldier wrote after the war, what was at stake was nothing less than the defeat of a "fierce and cruel aristocracy" attempting to subjugate "the equal rights of the people" and the "freest, and most liberal government on earth."³⁷ Fortunately for Lincoln, popular opinion in Europe rallied to the cause of union and emancipation. As the war progressed and the Lincoln administration embraced emancipation, support for the Union grew stronger; republican-minded people across the European continent identified with Lincoln's "new birth of freedom."³⁸ The passage of the Homestead Act in 1862 accelerated migration to the United States; many thousands of new immigrants joining the ranks of the Union Army. This groundswell of popular support for the Union broke any momentum that had been building among European rulers to recognize the Confederacy. Long before the fighting ended at Appomattox, the war on the diplomatic battlefield had been won and a global challenge to popular government in the United States had been turned back.

By the spring of 1862, even as the war for hearts and minds abroad continued, Lincoln and a war-hardened Congress began to advance a sweeping republican legislative

³⁴ Don Harrison Doyle, *The Cause of All Nations: An International History of the American Civil War* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 100, 187.

³⁵ Doyle, *The Cause of All Nations*, 238.

³⁶ Doyle, *The Cause of All Nations*, 246.

³⁷ Lorian Foote, *Yankee Plague: Escaped Union Prisoners and the Collapse of the Confederacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 141.

³⁸ Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address, November 19, 1863, <http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/gettysburg.htm>.

agenda, their second American Revolution, on hold since Lincoln took office. Historian James McPherson described the revolution as an “astonishing blitz of laws, most of them passed within the span of less than one year, did more to reshape the relation of the government to the economy than any comparable effort except perhaps the first hundred days of the New Deal.”³⁹ This agenda heralded a fundamental shift in the function and breadth of American government, which now was preparing to intervene, on a transcontinental scale, on behalf of emancipation and free labor, agrarian opportunity, national improvements, and public education. As Steven Hahn points out in *A Nation Without Borders*, this agenda represented for republicans “the consummation of initiatives they had been calling for since the party’s founding, now made possible by the departure of so many hostile southern Democrats.”⁴⁰

Over a period of just four months, April–August 1862, a remarkable legislative agenda passed Congress and was signed into law by President Lincoln. On April 16, Lincoln signed a bill abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia. On May 15, he signed legislation establishing the Department of Agriculture. On May 20, he signed the Homestead Act. On June 19, he signed legislation abolishing slavery in all U.S. territories. On July 1, he signed the Pacific Railroad Act, authorizing the construction of a rail link to California, and on the following day, he signed Morrill’s Land-Grant College Act. On July 17, he signed the Second Confiscation Act, freeing all slaves in areas occupied by Union army, and the Militia Act, which authorized the future use of African Americans as regular soldiers. Finally, on July 22, the president shared his first draft of the Emancipation Proclamation with his cabinet.

Reflecting on this period of the most intense political reform, hitherto unprecedented in the history of the United States, David Blight described the resurrection and passage of the Homestead and the Morrill Land-Grant Acts as particularly significant national accomplishments. “They created the Homestead Act, that dream, that the small farmer could just go west, and enact John Locke’s theory of improvement of a piece of soil and make it your own,” Blight said. “The Homestead Act was the American Dream for a lot of people, it’s easy to forget that, and the Morrill Act named for Justin Morrill of Vermont—colleges to educate common farmers and clerks at public expense, that’s a revolutionary idea—they did it.”⁴¹ Historian Richard White echoed Blight’s assessment, also describing the Republican legislative agenda as “revolutionary” in its goal to “create basic infrastructure over roughly two-thirds of the nation’s territory.”⁴²

As the war progressed, a modern nation-state took shape, one capable of winning an all-out war. The United States nationalized its currency, established a banking system, and introduced an income tax. It created new governmental bureaus to implement its new

³⁹ McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution*, 40.

⁴⁰ Steven Hahn, *A Nation Without Borders: The United States and Its World in an Age of Civil Wars, 1830–1910* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 320–321.

⁴¹ Blight, “The Civil War in American Memories.”

⁴² Richard White, *The Republic for Which It Stands: The United States During Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, 1865–1896* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 117.



Fig. 2.3. *Freedom to the Slave*. Supervisory Committee for Recruiting Colored Regiments, 1863. U.S. Army Recruiting Poster, Philadelphia, . Lithograph. The Library Company of Philadelphia

initiatives.⁴³ The ending of American slavery was the keystone for all the other republican reforms that followed, including the Yosemite Grant. German-born journalist Otilie Assing described emancipation as “a revolution whose seeds were present at the founding of the republic and whose eventual outcome will determine the fate of the country and the nation.”⁴⁴ The Emancipation Proclamation and the arming of black troops provided a powerful lever to morally, militarily, and economically hollow out the Confederacy and open the floodgates of republican reform.

Taken as a whole, this national agenda represented the promise of a reinvigorated concept of American freedom that whites, and ultimately blacks, would fight for. Prior to the war, the slave-owning aristocracy and their representatives in the government had successfully stymied nearly every component of the republican agenda. The Civil War opened the door to that agenda. Describing the Civil War as “a revolutionary moment in American history,” historian Mark Fiege describes how Lincoln nonetheless took advantage of the shift in power to forward that agenda. “While the battles unfolded,” writes Fiege, “Lincoln

⁴³ The Quartermasters Corps is one example of the dramatic growth of the U.S. government during the Civil War. The Corps, which kept Federal armies supplied, employed more than 100,000 people by the end of the war. By comparison, in 1861, the entire national government employed fewer than 6,000 people.

⁴⁴ Doyle, *The Cause of All Nations*, 157.

supported measures that improved and perpetuated the Union. . . . An event so horrible and so destructive of human life might yet achieve a progressive outcome.”⁴⁵ In his biography of Ulysses S. Grant, Ron Chernow enumerates the victories for reform:

Four million slaves had been emancipated and would shortly receive the right to vote, send their children to public schools, and enjoy the benefits of citizenship—progress that would be savagely resisted. For Grant, the war had validated the basic soundness of American institutions. Before, he noted, “monarchical Europe generally believed that our republic was a rope of sand that would part the moment the slightest strain was brought upon it. Now it has shown itself capable of dealing with one of the greatest wars that was ever made. . . . We are better off now than we would have been without it and have made more rapid progress than we otherwise should have made.”⁴⁶

Fiege agrees, pointing out that Lincoln “did all he could to turn the conflict to a higher end.”⁴⁷

Thus, in May 1864, when Senator Conness introduced his land-grant bill for Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Grove, Congress was prepared to advance the legislation with relatively little debate. Like the Land-Grant College Bill before it, the Yosemite bill achieved public improvement through the granting of federal land. Frederick Law Olmsted viewed the Yosemite Grant not simply as a legislative accommodation of an application by “various gentlemen in California, as Conness once described it,⁴⁸ but rather as “a trust from the whole nation.” As historian Alfred Runte points out, Congress, in fact, clearly intended that the grant be treated as a conditional trust awarded to California: “California had been given the honor of managing Yosemite, the American people remained its owners . . . ‘inalienable for all time.’ . . . The stipulation for ‘public use,’” Runte emphasized, “meant the *American* public.” Less than two months after the bill was introduced, it was passed by Congress, and on June 30, 1864, the Yosemite Grant Act was signed into law by President Lincoln.⁴⁹

It has been suggested that the Yosemite Act was somehow an anomaly—a measure inexplicably passed by an inattentive Congress distracted by the multiplying crises of the ongoing war. “The country’s leaders were much too involved in the problems and strategies of the Civil War to ponder the philosophical implications of what they were doing for the nation at large,” wrote NPS historian Linda Greene in her 1987 Historic Resource Study *Yosemite: The Park And Its Resources*. “President Lincoln himself probably had little inkling of the impact of his signature on the bill setting aside Yosemite Valley as a park. Other matters were occupying his thoughts.” Greene cites California

⁴⁵ Mark Fiege, *The Republic of Nature: An Environmental History of the United States* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012), 184.

⁴⁶ Ron Chernow, *Grant* (New York: Penguin Press, 2017), 518.

⁴⁷ Fiege, *The Republic of Nature*, 182.

⁴⁸ Dayton Duncan, *The National Parks: America’s Best Idea, an Illustrated History* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2009), 8.

⁴⁹ For the text of Ward’s letter and the details of the legislation, see Huth, “Yosemite: The Story of an Idea.”



Fig. 2.4. *Soldiers' Graves Near the General Hospital, City Point, VA* by Matthew Brady, 1861–1865. Stereograph no. 2522 in *War Views*, part of the series *The War for the Union, Photographic History*. Civil War Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

environmentalist and writer Harold Gilliam's claim that the Yosemite Act "was lost in the tides of war."⁵⁰

To the contrary, the Civil War played a central role in the creation of a Yosemite park; the war created an extraordinary alignment of purpose and political will to act. Olmsted addressed this point directly in the third paragraph of the Yosemite Report, explaining the national context for the grant and the war's influence on the events leading to the park's establishment: "It was during one of the darkest hours before Sherman had begun the march upon Atlanta or Grant his terrible movement through the Wilderness, . . ." he wrote, "that consideration was first given to the danger that such scenes might become private property."

The late spring and early summer of 1864 were an especially perilous time for the United States government, as it entered the fourth and most crucial year of war. Major military offensives in Virginia and Georgia were stalled, having incurred staggering battlefield losses. Lincoln's confidence in his own chances in the coming fall elections was badly shaken. Moving the Yosemite legislation through Congress in these difficult weeks can be seen as a willful affirmation of the government's capacity to function, entertain new ideas and initiatives even under the greatest duress, and project an optimistic vision for the future of the American state. For the Lincoln administration, acting on Yosemite was perhaps as much an acknowledgement of the debt owed to California loyalists, most notably admirers of the recently deceased Thomas Starr King, as it was a reflection of a steadfast belief in Union victory.

From another perspective, the Yosemite Grant can be viewed as one more component of the government's public lands policy in the American west—part of a continuum of

⁵⁰Linda W. Greene, *Yosemite: the Park and its Resources* (Yosemite National Park: National Park Service 1987), 64.

actions that included the Homestead and Pacific Railroad Acts. According to Steven Hahn, “most Republicans had long favored a developmental vision that involved federal support for infrastructure and manufacturing that would bring the sprawling territories of the United States under the authority of a new nation-state.”⁵¹ In this context, the government’s preservation of spectacularly scenic public lands for “public use, resort and recreation” was yet another manifestation of Lincoln’s program of national improvements. “Improvement in its various forms” writes Fiege, “became the means by which he prosecuted the war and preserved the Union.”⁵²

But there was even more at stake. “The Northern victory required the birth of a modern, centralized nation-state,” writes Glenna Matthews, “and thus the war was also a battle for the hearts and minds of citizens in the loyal states.”⁵³ Much like the Morrill Acts, the legislation to protect Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove for the public use, inalienable for all time, was consistent with broader policies of the Lincoln administration and its overall effort to redefine and expand the rewards of American citizenship. The granting of the Yosemite trust was aligned with the administration’s broader use of federal institutions and war powers, deployed, according to Hahn, “to protect the lives and rights of those loyal to the party and the national state.”⁵⁴

It was also a reminder to the American people of what they were fighting so brutally to preserve, as Paul Cimbala and Randall Miller argue:

Influenced by Frederick Law Olmsted’s views on the benefits of public parks, politicians set aside the land in part as a reaction to the butchery of the war, it was a symbol of the American form of government for which men were now dying: parks for the people instead of the privileged classes revealed the widespread benefits of a republican form of government . . . The preservation of Yosemite was one more indication of how the federal government, with powers invigorated by the War continued to plan for the future.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Hahn, *A Nation Without Borders*, 320–321

⁵² Fiege, *The Republic of Nature*, 88.

⁵³ Matthews, *The Golden State in the Civil War*, 1.

⁵⁴ Hahn, *A Nation Without Borders*, 367.

⁵⁵ Paul A. Cimbala and Randall M. Miller, *The Northern Home Front During the Civil War* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, ABC-CLIO, 2017), 102.

CHAPTER THREE

OLMSTED AND YOSEMITE

In 1863, having left his wartime position as executive director of the U.S. Sanitary Commission, Frederick Law Olmsted arrived in California to take the position of manager of the Mariposa mining estate, which was located not far from Yosemite Valley. He camped in the valley with his family for several weeks the next year. He was overwhelmed by the natural beauty he found there, noting that the valley combined the “beautiful” scenery of open parkland on the valley floor, with the “sublime” effects of the surrounding granite precipices.

Historians have debated the extent of Olmsted’s direct involvement in advancing the park legislation for Yosemite. Despite the absence of any confirming documentation, Olmsted biographer Laura Wood Roper thought it was very likely Olmsted was engaged, as his “interests would have drawn him into such a movement.”⁵⁶ California historians Kevin Starr and Hans Huth have suggested that the spirit if not the hand of Olmsted was clearly behind the legislation.⁵⁷ As Huth said, “The men who were recommended as the first commissioners of the Yosemite grant are most likely those who helped to prepare the act.”⁵⁸ Law professor and national park scholar Joseph Sax observed that Frederick Law Olmsted stood out in the “small but influential group of “those who devoted their lives to persuading the American public of the efficacy and importance of parks.”⁵⁹

Whether Olmsted actually had his fingerprints on any bill is of relatively little consequence. Circumstances placed Olmsted in California just at the moment that the protection of Yosemite was being seriously considered. He was the right person, at the right place, and at precisely the right time to address the new park’s larger meaning and context in relation to the outcome of the Civil War and the country’s future. In September 1864, California Governor Frederick F. Low named Olmsted chairman of the commission created to manage the park and to make recommendations for its future development. Olmsted was a respected figure in unionist circles, known for his journalism and his leadership with the U.S. Sanitary Commission, but it was his reputation for designing and supervising the development of Central Park that made

⁵⁶ Laura Wood Roper, *FLO: A Biography of Frederick Law Olmsted* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1973), 282–283. Roper also points out that “the demand for rural parks in cities and the interest in natural scenery were both growing stronger. . . . It was not remarkable that the two trends should combine to precipitate the idea that regions of unusual beauty should be set aside as public parks” (285). Olmsted himself, she notes, “attributed the concept [of setting aside Yosemite] . . . to ‘the workings of the national genius’” (287).

⁵⁷ Kevin Starr, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850–1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 182; Huth, “Yosemite: The Story of an Idea.”

⁵⁸ Huth, “Yosemite: The Story of an Idea.”

⁵⁹ Joseph Sax, “America’s National Parks: Their Principles, Purposes and Prospects,” *Natural History* (October 1976), www.naturalhistorymag.com/htmlsite/editors_pick/1976_10_pick.html.

him an obvious choice, for appointment to the commission and for the commission's selection of him as its chair. Olmsted seized this opportunity, creating much more than a plan for the new park. As a journalist, philosopher and social reformer, he articulated a bold and optimistic vision for postwar America at a pivotal moment in the nation's history.

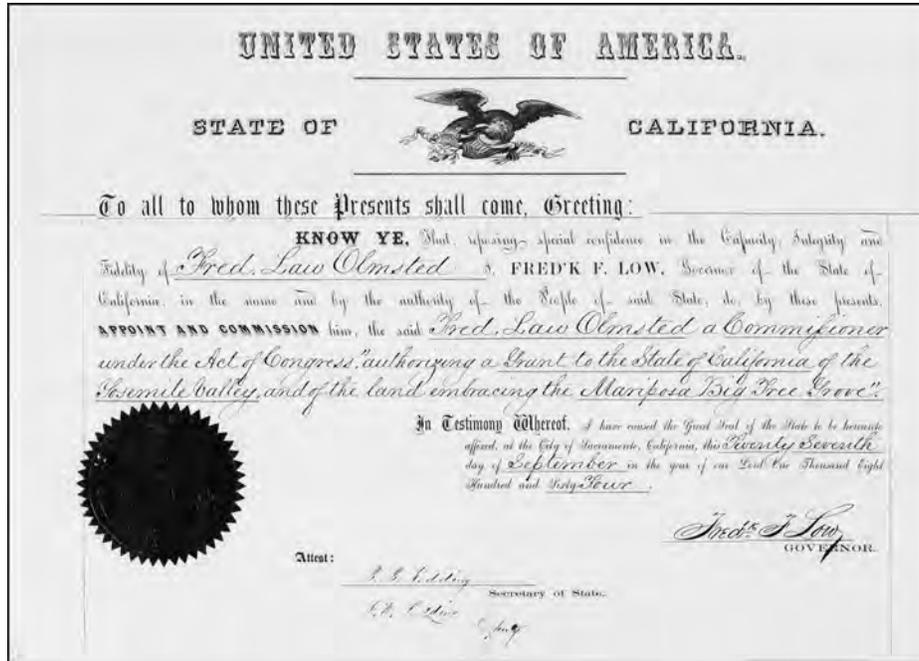


Fig. 3.1. Frederick Law Olmsted's Appointment to the Yosemite Commission, 1864. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Frederick Law Olmsted Papers.

Between September 1864 and August 1865, as chair of the Yosemite Commission, Olmsted wrote the entire commission report himself. He used most of the 7,500-word document to explain how the Civil War catalyzed the decision to preserve Yosemite, clarify what was at stake during the war, and describe the broad public benefits that might be provided by a triumphant republican government committed to the advancement and happiness of all its citizens. Olmsted believed that public parks would have a beneficial impact on the general health and well-being of the American people and would bind them ever more closely to republican ideology and a government operating on the principles of equity and benevolence. Olmsted the pioneering landscape architect emerges only in the last third of the report, where he offers specific planning recommendations for Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove.

ART AND THE REFINEMENT OF A REPUBLIC

Olmsted begins the Yosemite report by describing how the influence and power of art has been elevated and enhanced by the circumstances of war. This was a time, in the words of Roger Kennedy, historian and a former director of the National Park Service, "when art worked" and works of art became powerful symbols of the durability of constitutional

democracy and republican values.⁶⁰ “It is a fact of much significance with reference to the temper and spirit which ruled the loyal people of the United States during the war of the great rebellion,” Olmsted recounts in the report, “that a livelier susceptibility to the influence of art was apparent, and greater progress in the manifestations of artistic talent was made, than in any similar period before in the history of the country.”

Olmsted compared the federal grant of the Yosemite to two other great works of civic art that had also continued through the dark war years: Central Park in New York and the Capitol dome in Washington, both statements of the future prospects for a reunified nation. For Olmsted, the continued construction of Central Park through the war years provided a symbol of a more healthful, democratic future for the nation’s industrial cities. The public park, which “translate[d] democratic ideas into trees and dirt,”⁶¹ was also the setting for the integration of classes and ethnic groups in an increasingly diverse and urban society. It was, as Olmsted’s Central Park collaborator, Calvert Vaux, described it in 1865, “the great art work of the Republic.”⁶²

The completion of the new Capitol dome begun in 1855 was also highly symbolic. The Republic would need the enlarged Capitol building once the Union prevailed and the nation was whole again. Olmsted points to the continuing work on the dome during the war as a national symbol of cultural renewal—one that took place within view of rebel soldiers positioned across the Potomac River. “The great dome of the Capitol was wholly constructed during the war,” Olmsted wrote in the Yosemite Report, “and the forces of the insurgents watched it rounding upward to completion for nearly a year before they were forced from their entrenchments on the opposite bank.” Crawford’s great statue of Liberty was positioned upon its summit in the year President Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln certainly understood the unifying symbolism; he declared in 1863, “If the people see the capitol going on, it is a sign we intend the Union shall go on.”⁶³ Roger Kennedy, writing almost a century later, concurred with Lincoln’s assessment and broadened its context in the spirit of Olmsted’s report: “Rescuing the Yosemite for the nation and installing the statue of Freedom [on the capitol dome] were symbolic acts, honoring an inheritance in places and in ideas to be shared for the nourishment of the spirit of the nation.”⁶⁴

Olmsted specifically credited the influence of pioneering photographer Carleton Watkins and the great Hudson river School painter Albert Bierstadt, both well known to Thomas Starr King and Olmsted, for nurturing the nation’s “susceptibility to the influence of art” and stoking its appetite for the protection of Yosemite. Watkins first photographed Yosemite in 1861; portfolios of his stunning large-format plates and stereo views of Yosemite

⁶⁰ Roger Kennedy, *When Art Worked: The New Deal, Art, and Democracy* (New York: Rizzoli, 2009).⁶¹ Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 136.

⁶² Rosenzweig and Blackmar, *The Park and the People*, 136.

⁶³ James H. Billington, *Respectfully Quoted: A Dictionary of Quotations* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1993), 35.

⁶⁴ Kennedy, *When Art Worked*, 319.

were sent east to key people and institutions, including the well-known Goupil Gallery in New York City, where the images were exhibited in 1862. The distribution of the Yosemite portfolios, thirty 22 x 18 inch mammoth plates and 100 stereo views, required a considerable investment of time and money. Thomas Starr King, who knew Watkins through Jesse Benton Fremont's Black Point circle, sent portfolios to Oliver Wendell Holmes and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Frederick Billings, another member of the circle and a business associate of Jesse's husband, John C. Fremont, sent a portfolio to Louis Agassiz and kept a set for himself, as did Billings's law partner Trenor Park. William Brewer, on behalf of Josiah Dwight Whitney, sent photographs to scientists Asa Gray and Benjamin Silliman Jr. Israel Ward Raymond may have included some Watkins photographs with his letter to Senator Conness.

Albert Bierstadt, who saw the Goupil exhibition, painted Yosemite Valley on an 1863 trip west sponsored by the Union Pacific Railroad and sanctioned by the War Department. Before traveling to Yosemite, Bierstadt dined at the San Francisco home of Thomas Starr King and made a sketch of King's daughter as a gift.⁶⁵ During the trip, Bierstadt corresponded with his friend John Hay, Lincoln's private secretary. Arriving in Yosemite Valley, Bierstadt wrote Hay, "We are now here in the garden of Eden I call it. The most magnificent place I was ever in."⁶⁶ Bierstadt would create numerous canvases of Yosemite Valley in his New York City studio based on sketches he made during his trip West. These paintings, which were highly lucrative for Bierstadt, helped catapult Yosemite into the public view. Bierstadt's *Valley of the Yosemite*, one of 360 paintings displayed at New York's Metropolitan Sanitary Fair in April 1864, commanded the highest price for any piece of art sold at this elaborate eighteen-day public event, which raised more than \$1 million for the work of the U.S. Sanitary Commission.⁶⁷

The visual power of Bierstadt's and Watkins's Yosemite work was undeniable. "The paintings of Bierstadt and the photographs of Watkins, both productions of the war time," wrote Olmsted, "had given to the people on the Atlantic some idea of the sublimity of the Yosemite, and of the stateliness of the neighboring Sequoia grove, that consideration was first given to the danger that such scenes might become private property." In response to the threat that the public might lose access to the "sublimity of the Yosemite," Olmsted reported that Congress had acted, passing "an act providing that the premises should be segregated from the general domain of the public lands, and devoted forever to popular resort and recreation."

⁶⁵ Thomas Starr King Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

⁶⁶ Eleanor Jones Harvey, *The Civil War and American Art* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 62.

⁶⁷ John F. Trow, *Catalogue of the Art Exhibition at the Metropolitan Fair in Aid of the U.S. Sanitary Commission* (New York, 1864).



Fig. 3.2. *Cathedral Rock, Yosemite Valley, Calif.* by Carleton E. Watkins, ca. 1865. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

Olmsted highlighted the revolutionary nature of Congress’s action, reminding his readers that little more than a decade earlier such a national awakening seemed far off. He quoted an extended passage from Andrew Jackson Downing’s 1851 essay on Central Park, “A Park for New York,” which lamented that “social civilization and social culture attributable to parks, art galleries, libraries and other public institutions have been raised to a higher level in Europe than in republican America.” This popular refinement, argued Downing, belongs “more rightly here, than elsewhere,” because the United States is “republican in its very idea and tendency.”⁶⁸ Downing urged readers, “Plant spacious parks in your cities, and unloose their gates as wide as the gates of morning to the whole people.” For Downing, as for Olmsted, education and culture were “the true sunshine of the soul.” In making a case for building Central Park, Downing repudiated the cynicism of people who have “no faith in the refinement of a republic.” Olmsted quotes this part of the essay, acknowledging that Downing pessimistically anticipated it might take decades, perhaps not until the next century, for the “ignorant” opponents of republican refinement to finally be rejected in the United States.

Downing, who died in an accident a year after he wrote his Central Park essay, could not have imagined that by 1865, the Confederacy defeated and the enemies of popular government in retreat, Olmsted would be able to assert that such a refinement of the republic was now taking place, elevating the influence of education and culture in the country’s affairs to an unprecedented level. As Laura Wood Roper observed, this cultural movement would have a growing impact on landscapes far beyond Yosemite:

⁶⁸ Downing, “A Park for New York,” 349.



Fig. 3.3. *Cathedral Rock, Yosemite* by Albert Bierstadt,, 1870. Courtesy National Park Service, Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, MABI 4162.

The demand for rural parks in cities and the interest in natural scenery were both growing stronger just when the knowledge of the extraordinary scenic qualities of the Sierras and especially of the Yosemite Valley was becoming diffused through the works of painters, photographers, travelers, and writers. It was not remarkable that the two trends should combine to precipitate the idea that regions of unusual beauty should be set aside as public parks.⁶⁹

Hans Huth put it another way, contrasting attitudes earlier and later in the nineteenth century. According to Huth, “early in the nineteenth century Congress almost unanimously would have resented such threats to taxpayers’ money.” However, after the war, cultural trends had shifted and “it was no longer unheard of for Congress to pay attention to art,

⁶⁹ Roper, *FLO*, 285–286.

education, or similar, not quite tangible “values.” In this new context, Huth asserted, “The establishment of a federal park,” such as Yellowstone, “was not exactly a stupendous deviation from undertakings directed by the Zeitgeist of that era.”⁷⁰

“THE LAST BEST HOPE OF EARTH”⁷¹

Although Olmsted’s discussion of art was primarily focused on America, he was keen to point out the global implications of what was transpiring in the United States. For Olmsted, as historian Adam Wesley Dean writes, “Preserving Yosemite as a public park would demonstrate the value of republican government in a time when the world seemed shrouded in tyranny.”⁷² Olmsted was acutely aware that the global ideological struggle between popular, republican government and aristocratic, oligarchical rule was central to the future of his emerging park ideology, and he demonstrated that awareness in the Yosemite Report with a series of pointed comparisons between the Old World and the New World.

Olmsted repeatedly referenced examples from the Old World of the way in which aristocratic privilege monopolized natural resources and the recreational opportunities they offered. “Men who are rich enough and who are sufficiently free from anxiety with regard to their wealth,” he wrote, “can and do provide places of this needed recreation for themselves. They have done so from the earliest periods known in the history of the world, for the great men of the Babylonians, the Persians and the Hebrews, had their rural retreats, as large and as luxurious as those of the aristocracy of Europe at present.” Further, he pointed out, “There are in the islands of Great Britain and Ireland, more than one thousand private parks and notable grounds devoted to luxury and recreation.” As a result, access to those resources was limited to the aristocratic and the wealthy: “The enjoyment of the choicest natural scenes in the country and the means of recreation connected with them is thus a monopoly of a very few, very rich people. The great mass of society, including those to whom it would be of the greatest benefit, is excluded from it,” as they “spend their lives in almost constant labor.”

Abraham Lincoln and the Republican party presented an alternative vision of American society where the government would help level the playing field and guarantee everyone access to resources and education. Lincoln described the Civil War as “a struggle for maintaining in the world that form and substance of government whose leading object is to elevate the condition of men; to lift artificial weights from all shoulders; to clear the paths of laudable pursuit for all; to afford all an unfettered start and a fair chance in the race of life.”⁷³ Echoing Lincoln’s reference to the Declaration of Independence in the Gettysburg Address, Olmsted also turned to the Declaration to frame his argument that the preservation

⁷⁰ Huth, “Yosemite: The Story of an Idea.”

⁷¹ Abraham Lincoln’s Second Annual Message to Congress, December 1, 1862.

⁷² Dean, *An Agrarian Republic*, 117. Recent scholarship has provided new insight into the global context of the American Civil War. See Doyle, *The Cause of All Nations*; Amanda Foreman, *A World on Fire: Britain’s Crucial Role in the American Civil War* (New York: Random House, 2011); and Kevin Peraino, *Lincoln in the World: The Making of a Statesman and the Dawn of American Power* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2013).

⁷³ Abraham Lincoln, First Message to Congress, at the Special Session, July 4, 1861, <https://civilwarbookofdays.org/2011/07/01/july-4-lincoln-calls-the-civil-war-a-peoples-contest/>.

of parks was a part of the republican effort to guarantee the “pursuit of happiness against all the obstacles” for all its people. Having made the case for public parks and cultural refinement as part of the resurgence of the united nation and shown how the future of both hinged on the successful outcome of the Civil War, Olmsted was finally ready to directly address the Yosemite Report’s penultimate issue —the duty of government.

THE DUTY OF GOVERNMENT

Without intervention, Olmsted demonstrated with his Old World examples, the natural desire of the affluent to monopolize such places as Yosemite would mean that these places would eventually all be closed off from the public, reserved to the individuals wealthy enough to acquire them. It is a responsibility of the government, Olmsted argued, “to withhold . . . from the grasp of individuals, all places favorable in scenery to the recreation of the mind and body.” Republican government was responsible for ensuring that the “enjoyment of the choicest natural scenes in the country and the means of recreation associated with them” be “laid open to the use of the body of the people.”

Comparing Yosemite’s value to the country with traditional national defense, he argued that “like certain defensive points upon our coast, [the Yosemite Valley] shall be held solely for public purposes.” That end was accomplished with the Yosemite Grant, which, Olmsted declared, reflected “the will of the nation as embodied in the act of Congress that this scenery shall never be private property,” nor its “value to posterity be injured” by either “caprice or the requirements of some industrial speculation.”

This responsibility was rooted in the republic’s duty to provide for the well-being of its people. Indeed, for Olmsted, “the main duty of government, if it is not the sole duty of government, is to provide means of protection for all its citizens in the pursuit of happiness.” Olmsted stated that it was “a scientific fact that the occasional contemplation of natural scenes of an impressive character” was “favorable to the health and vigor of men . . . beyond any other conditions that can be offered them.” Given the importance of accessibility to places such as Yosemite in fostering and supporting “public happiness,” it was clear, in Olmsted’s opinion, that “the establishment by government of great public grounds for the free enjoyment of the people” was “justified and enforced as a political duty.” Olmsted further suggested that the United States could set an example in this regard for other nations of the world; “seldom if ever before,” he noted, “has proper respect been paid by any government in the world” to this civic responsibility. The new American republic could show the world how a true benevolent republic fulfills its duties to its people.

For Olmsted, universal access to parks and opportunities for public recreation were nested in republican values of “equity and benevolence.” In protecting Yosemite, Congress performed its political duty to assure that all Americans would have the opportunity to lead healthy and fulfilled lives. In this context, 1865 was an inflection point that decisively altered the nation’s trajectory. The Republic, struggling for its survival during the Civil War, had acted in a manner that indicated its continued existence was worthwhile and necessary. This terrible war had enabled a new birth of freedom that was a repudiation

of the old, hobbled freedom—a discredited freedom that had accommodated the enslavement of four million people and limited opportunity for free-soil citizens. Lincoln advanced an interpretation of freedom as supported by a nation committed to slavery’s end and to a government “of the people, by the people, and for the people.” Olmsted echoed this sentiment, advancing a proposition based on the assumption that government was powerful enough and righteous enough to guarantee “protection for all its citizens in the pursuit of happiness” and to overcome “obstacles, otherwise insurmountable, which the selfishness of individuals or combinations of individuals is liable to interpose to that pursuit.” In the Yosemite Grant, he saw that newly empowered government, infused with this new idea of freedom, exercising its will to fulfill its political duties.

Olmsted, it should be noted, was not the only person who recognized the opportunities presented by Lincoln’s “new birth of freedom” and the subsequent Union victory to press for environmental reform and the recognition of new government responsibilities. The writer and diplomat George Perkins Marsh, Lincoln’s ambassador to Italy, wrote his landmark book *Man and Nature* in 1864.⁷⁴ Marsh’s views were just as radical as Olmsted’s. Marsh distrusted the concentration of knowledge in the hands of experts and elites and believed all men could be “co-workers with nature” to improve their landscapes and livelihoods. His vision for public land stewardship, like Olmsted’s vision for great public grounds, was built on republican principles. Similar to Olmsted, Marsh argued for the designation of large reservations of land to be set aside for public education and recreation. “It is desirable that some large and easily accessible region of American soil should remain as far as possible in its primitive condition,” wrote Marsh, “at once a museum for the instruction of the students, a garden for the recreation of the lovers of nature, and an asylum where indigenous trees . . . plants . . . beasts may dwell and perpetuate their kind.”⁷⁵ Both Olmsted and Marsh had worked tirelessly for the eventual Union victory, and with the end of the war, both believed they had the wind at their backs and were eager to share their ideas with a larger audience.⁷⁶ For Olmsted, that meant connecting his political ideals with his aesthetic calling, landscape architecture, to offer a plan for the Yosemite Grant that reflected its larger context and meaning.

⁷⁴ Though Olmsted and Marsh apparently never met, they certainly knew of each other’s work and briefly corresponded. In 1857, Olmsted wrote Marsh to enlist his support for free-soil settlement in northwest Texas as a way to block further western expansion of slavery. Olmsted was reaching out to a network of sympathetic people on the publication of his book *A Journey Through Texas, or A Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier* (New York: Dix, Edwards & Co., 1857).. Correspondence between Alan Bank, Chief of Interpretation, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, and the author.

⁷⁵ George Perkins Marsh, *Man and Nature* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 235.

⁷⁶ See Part 2, Chapter 6 of this study, “Parks and Reservations.”



Fig. 3.4. George Perkins Marsh by Matthew Brady, ca. 1850. Daguerreotypes Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

THE PLAN FOR YOSEMITE VALLEY

In the final section of the Yosemite Report, Olmsted addresses his primary charge: creating a plan for the development of Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove as a public park. The creation of the park was intended to provide beneficial experiences of the natural world to all Americans and mitigate or prevent the degradation of those places. To accomplish these twin aims, Olmsted drew on eighteenth-century British landscape theory. Expressing himself in those terms, he described the goal as the “union of the deepest sublimity with the deepest beauty of nature,” a union that “constitutes the Yosemite the greatest glory of nature.”⁷⁷

The framework of landscape aesthetics based in eighteenth-century landscape theory allowed Olmsted to conceive of Yosemite Valley as a landscape park developed to facilitate public access and allow the public to receive the benefit of experiencing the unique landscape. The challenge for the landscape architect—whether in the midst of Manhattan or in the remote reaches of the Sierra Nevada—was to protect existing, awesome features

⁷⁷ Ranney, *The California Frontier*, 500. The open meadows and clumps of trees in the valley made it easily understood within the formal vocabulary of the landscape park. This appearance was probably the result of periodic burning by the Ahwahneechees, who managed the oak woodlands for acorn mast and other products. Alfred Runte, *Yosemite: The Embattled Wilderness* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 9.

from the damage that visitors could do and to choreograph the sequence and pace of visitors' experience in the design of roads, paths, and other facilities. Olmsted honored both goals as he developed his plans; he commissioned a Valley survey to gather input and consulted artists who had done work in the Valley, seeking their opinions on how to correct "conditions affecting the scenery of the Yo Semite unfavorably" as well as their advice regarding what could be done to "enhance the enjoyment now afforded by the scenery."⁷⁸

Landscape architecture as a design practice encompassed the full range of activity, from doing more to doing less. Whatever the level of intervention, the result facilitated the central purpose of the park: providing a dramatic sequence of powerful landscape experiences, whether designed or natural, for the public at large. Thus, for Olmsted, landscape preservation and landscape design were not opposites; rather, they were aspects of a single approach to large-scale landscape management for public benefit and integral parts of his professional practice.

In Yosemite, the focus was on doing less. Olmsted established priorities for managing Yosemite as a landscape park, what he called "the noblest park or pleasure ground in the world." Pointing out that the reason Yosemite was "treated differently from other parts of the public domain . . . consists wholly in its natural scenery," he asserted the "first point to be kept in mind" was "the preservation and maintenance as exactly as is possible of the natural scenery." Preservation required "the restriction . . . within the narrowest limits consistent with the necessary accommodation of visitors, of all artificial constructions and the prevention of all constructions markedly inharmonious with the scenery." This proscription of "inharmonious" building that might "detract from the dignity of the scenery" could have been taken directly from Olmsted's entries in the Central Park *Annual Reports* of the late 1850s.⁷⁹

The physical development Olmsted proposed for Yosemite reflected his understanding that "if proper facilities are offered . . . in a century the whole number of visitors [to the valley] will be counted by millions." He did not find this outcome objectionable in itself; in fact, the lion's share of his proposed budget was to be used to complete a road from the valley to the steamboat docks at Stockton, greatly reducing the cost of visiting Yosemite and opening the experience to greater numbers of people. But Olmsted was concerned that "an injury to the scenery so slight that it may be unheeded by any visitor now, will be one of deplorable magnitude" when multiplied by millions. To prevent such a catastrophe, Olmsted identified and articulated the tremendous potential of the landscape park concept—and of the formal elements of its physical articulation—for preserving areas of natural scenic beauty.

First, he suggested the construction of a one-way carriage loop (up one side of the valley and down the other) "which shall enable visitors to make a complete circuit . . . reaching all the finer points of view." In other words, he proposed a classic park carriage drive, "with suitable resting spots and turnouts . . . at frequent intervals." Such a drive would reduce the "necessity for artificial construction within the narrowest possible

⁷⁸ For the text of the letters sent to Thomas Hill, Carleton Watkins, and Virgil Williams, see Huth, "Yosemite: The Story of an Idea," 70.

⁷⁹ See Olmsted and Kimball, *Forty Years of Landscape Architecture*, 45–46.



Fig. 3.5. *The Colfax Party at Yosemite Valley* by Carleton E. Watkins, 1865. Frederick Law Olmsted is seated second from left. National Park Service, Yosemite National Park.

limits.” It would minimize visitors’ impact by concentrating their activities through the thoughtful development of the valley with features (such as a carriage drive) drawn from landscape park design.

Other features of Olmsted’s Yosemite plan indicated how the landscape park model could further be adapted to provide the amenities of a regional park in a wilderness setting. The circuit drive would be complemented by a system of pedestrian paths leading to “points of view accessible only by foot.” Five cabins near “convenient camping places” would be occupied by tenants charged with maintaining “one comfortable room as a free resting place for visitors, and the proper private accommodations for women,” as well as supplying “simple necessities for camping parties.” This formula for the careful, minimal development of Yosemite Valley was based on the formal and theoretical precedents of the landscape park, a genre Olmsted had already successfully exploited to accommodate large numbers of tourists seeking picturesque scenery in a public setting.

FINAL PRESENTATION

Before leaving Yosemite Valley and California to resume his east coast partnership with Calvert Vaux, Olmsted arranged a presentation of the report to his fellow commissioners and a party of mostly eastern dignitaries touring Yosemite Valley, led by the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Schuyler Colfax. The Colfax group included two influential journalists—Albert D. Richardson, a war correspondent of the *New York Tribune*, and Samuel Bowles, editor and publisher of the *Springfield Republican*. Olmsted wanted to make sure the report’s big ideas were picked up and widely publicized.

The two journalists were clearly affected by their visit to Yosemite and by Olmsted's presentation. In his 1867 book *Beyond the Mississippi*, Albert Richardson noted with approval that a mountain in Yosemite had been named to commemorate Thomas Starr King and suggested that El Capitan be renamed for Abraham Lincoln. Richardson then described how the new park came into being, in terms that echoed Olmsted's: "An act of Congress has segregated Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa groves of big trees, from the general domain, setting them apart as pleasure grounds for the people of the United States and their heirs and assigns forever." Praising the wisdom of Congress, Richardson asserted Yosemite's value as a national asset, writing, "This wise legislation secures to the proper national uses, incomparably the largest and grandest park, and the sublimest natural scenery in the whole world." Evidently influenced by Olmsted's recommendations for Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Grove, Richardson appealed to his readers to forever preserve these places, "to keep them free from mutilation, and see no vandal hand of art attempts to improve upon the simplicity and grandeur of Nature."⁸⁰

Samuel Bowles published an account of his travels immediately after his return east. His discussion goes right to the heart of Olmsted's political vision, beginning with the premise that "the establishment by government of great public grounds for the free enjoyment of the people under certain circumstances is thus justified and enforced as a political duty." Bowles suggested that the "wise cession and dedication [of the Yosemite Valley] by Congress, and proposed improvement by California . . . furnishes an admirable example for other objects of natural curiosity and popular interest all over the Union." He then presciently recommends, "New York should preserve for popular use both Niagara Falls and its neighborhood and a generous section of her famous Adirondacks, and Maine one of her lakes and its surrounding woods."⁸¹

PLACING OLMSTED'S YOSEMITE REPORT IN PERSPECTIVE

Olmsted's assessment of post-war America in the 1865 Yosemite Report is both prescient, and in some respects, off the mark. He correctly forecasted that park-making could be incorporated into the larger, ambitious republican project of restructuring the country, much of it tied to emancipation, southern reconstruction, national improvements, and westward expansion. Olmsted also understood the essential incompatibility of developing great public parks in the national interest—for the people, all the people—with the fractious pre-war political environment dominated by the parochial interests of slaveowners. As he succinctly stated, "Slavery and republican liberty cannot exist together."

The changes brought about by the war and the destruction of slavery would have far-reaching consequences. "Foundations—social, economic, and political—wrote Leonard

⁸⁰ Albert D. Richardson, *Beyond the Mississippi: From The Great River To The Great Ocean* (Philadelphia, PA: American Publishing Company, 1867), 435.

⁸¹ Samuel Bowles, *Across the Continent* (Springfield, MA: Samuel Bowles & Co., 1865; reprinted 1869), 231.

Curry, “had been laid for the construction of a new America.”⁸² In the wake of its terrible toll in life and property, the Civil War created hitherto unimagined possibilities for revolutionary change and reform. The war provided Olmsted, like many of his peers, an exhilarating sense of larger purpose as they were swept up in the vortex of its energy and idealism. When the chance to chair the Yosemite Commission literally fell into his lap, Olmsted was prepared to make the most of it. He used the Yosemite Report as an opportunity to synthesize his past writing, insights from his extensive travel, his advocacy for union and freedom, and in particular, his experience with the creation of Central Park in the context of the profound transformation the country was witnessing after four years of civil war; he deployed that powerful synthesis to explain the meaning of Yosemite to America’s future.

Many different currents had carried Olmsted to this moment. In the summer of 1865, he was certainly not at the pinnacle of his professional life. He had abandoned farming; the literary career that he had hoped for had never really materialized; perceived enemies had hobbled him in New York City limiting his influence with Central Park; turf battles and wounded pride had driven him from the ranks of the Sanitary Commission; his foray into western mine management had ended in abject failure and his resignation. And yet, with each professional setback, his public stature seemed to grow. His journalism, while unable to provide a consistent livelihood, had introduced him to other writers and intellectuals and given him the national and international reputation he desperately sought. His work with Calvert Vaux on Central Park quickly became, by any measure, a huge popular success recognized around the world—and held out the promise that his partnership with Vaux could be revived. The leadership and organizational skills he honed working with the Sanitary Commission helped cement his image as an honest, competent, self-sacrificing administrator. Even his disastrous foray into mining had brought him, improbably, to the West and to Yosemite Valley, presenting him with this unexpected opportunity to assume the leadership of the Yosemite Commission as a respected national figure with a transcontinental perspective.

Though he was rarely eloquent, Olmsted was able to put his ideas into words—a powerful advantage in nineteenth-century affairs. Like Lincoln’s 1863 Gettysburg Address, the 1865 Yosemite report was not an instant success; it was not even noticed outside of a small, albeit influential circle. Of course, Lincoln’s and Olmsted’s styles could not have been more different. Lincoln’s language was eloquent and wonderfully economical. Olmsted was long-winded, his syntax often weighed down by his stream of consciousness approach. Nevertheless, both documents shared a *weltanschauung*, giving new meaning to contemporary events by reordering them in a refreshed context. And the stature and value of each document would grow with time—Lincoln’s relatively quickly, Olmsted’s more gradually. Olmsted believed the war had stimulated the sensitivity and cultural refinement necessary to marshal the political will and support an enlightened republican government, exemplified by a new age of public park-making.

⁸² Leonard Curry, *Blueprint for Modern America: Nonmilitary Legislation of the First Civil War Congress* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968), 244.

CHAPTER FOUR

FROM YOSEMITE TO YELLOWSTONE

Despite its propitious beginning as a state park, Yosemite suffered in its first years. After Olmsted returned to New York in 1865, his recommendations, which he estimated would cost the state of California \$30,000, were not acted on. The valley floor was logged (John Muir was employed there as a mill hand in 1868) and the lumber was used to build precisely the types of hotels Olmsted wished to avoid. Because the road to Stockton was not completed, supplies could not be brought in economically; delicate meadows full of wildflowers were plowed, cultivated, and fenced to provide food and fodder for guests and their stock. Yosemite was on its way to becoming a resort development within a state park—precisely the thing Olmsted most feared.

The administration of President Andrew Johnson, following Lincoln's assassination, was another bitter disappointment for Olmsted. By 1868, only three years after the writing of the Yosemite Report, the ideal of a new era of republican government based on equity and benevolence seemed once again to be moving out of reach. Olmsted lamented, "We have no sooner passed the point of emancipation and gained the appearance of new national unity than we [are] suddenly appalled by hundreds of vortices of official meanness and corruption which betray a fearful weakness in our political system." Referring to President Johnson's "essential barbarism of character," he expressed his disdain for the president's opposition to southern reconstruction. "We cannot safely hand over the negroes," he wrote in a letter to Charles Elliot Norton, "nor can we risk the national welfare by giving the degree of responsibility to the whole body of whites of the South which Mr. Johnson proposes to do."⁸³

However far out of reach the ideal of the new American republic seemed, Yosemite was one, relatively small outcome of a civil war that determined the nature of American freedom and the fundamental contours of constitutional government. Even after that war was won at tremendous cost, its gains—including promises of freedom made to American citizens, both black and white—were subject to repeated setbacks. Yosemite was no exception; a battle with Yosemite homesteaders in the late 1860s went all the way to the Supreme Court. The Court found that the Valley homestead claims were in violation of the 1864 Yosemite Act and a "perversion of the trust solemnly accepted by the State."⁸⁴ The earliest beneficiaries of the parks were those who possessed the means to travel some distance to enjoy them; the parks were initially marketed to a mobile, literate middle class. However, slowly but surely, the scaffolding was being assembled for a nationwide park system that would ultimately serve a broader cross section of Americans.

⁸³ Ranney, *The California Frontier*, 762

⁸⁴ *Hutchings v. Low*, 82 U.S. 77, 94 (1872).

Several historians have assumed that since Olmsted's Yosemite recommendations were deferred, the rest of the report was suppressed as well and, consequently, a great "blueprint for national parks" was lost to history. Nothing could be further from the truth. Olmsted did not disappear into obscurity when he left California. Quite the contrary: he returned east to a prolific career as the country's foremost landscape architect and park maker. And despite his disappointment with events in Washington after the war, the park philosophy he laid out in the Yosemite Report slowly gained a foothold in the places that mattered, eventually having a singular impact on the development of national parks and America's national park system. His legacy was carried forward and substantially extended by his son, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., and other associates and successors; it can be clearly seen in the language of the 1916 act creating the National Park Service. Despite its problems, however slowly the wheels of government might turn, Yosemite stood as a model for other reservations around the United States, just as Samuel Bowles had predicted.

YOSEMITE'S LEGACY AND YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

New York Tribune editor Horace Greeley had traveled to Yosemite and written about the Valley as far back as 1859, so it is perhaps not surprising that his paper closely followed events in Yosemite during the troubled early years of the new park. In an 1868 editorial, the *Tribune* reminded its readers that the creation of the park was the "largest and noblest" act "at any time in the world's history" for the "health and enjoyment of its people; and the fact that the General Government gave the land for such a purpose . . . showed a high state of civilization." The *Tribune* emphasized that the future of the park "concerns not only the state of California but the whole of the United States; and we may well say, the whole civilized world."⁸⁵

Indeed, as Linda Greene explains in her 1987 study, Yosemite "significantly influenced the later development of both the National Park System, the California State Park System, and state park systems nationwide, which all benefitted from the experience and knowledge of park principles and management gained in those early Yosemite years. Olmsted's penetrating analyses of park problems and opportunities were strongly influenced by his Yosemite experience, and his reports are the origin of much of the best of today's park principles." According to Greene, citing former Yosemite superintendent and historian Carl P. Russell:

The original proponents of the Yosemite act—the scientists, educators, and journalists who visited and described Yosemite and the congressmen and senators who envisioned the initial concept and formulated the legislation—thought of the Yosemite Grant as more than the first state park. They also perceived it as the first official embodiment of the concept that there are places of beauty and of scientific interest that should not be appropriated by individuals or private interests. This *was* the birth of the National Park idea.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ "The Yo-Semite Valley," *New York Daily Tribune*, June 24, 1868. Available via Library of Congress online, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1868-06-24/ed-1/seq-4/>.

⁸⁶ Greene, *Yosemite: The Park and its Resources*, 64–65.

In fact, the Congressional framers of the Yellowstone National Park legislation in 1872 looked to Yosemite as their template. “Yosemite was Yellowstone’s model,” writes historian Alfred Runte. “Similar to Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Redwood Grove, Yellowstone was ‘dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.’”⁸⁷ Even the legislative language was similar. As Aubrey Haines explains in *The Yellowstone Story*, “the bill that was drawn for the consideration of the Forty-second Congress at its second session was similar in so many respects to the earlier Yosemite Grant legislation that there can be no doubt it was drawn from that model; the parallelism of the two acts is readily apparent.”⁸⁸

As with Yosemite, the Civil War played a role in the establishment of Yellowstone. Historians often cite the dominant influences of cultural nationalism and railroad profiteering on the decision to establish Yellowstone National Park,⁸⁹ but the critical legacy of the Civil War in Yellowstone’s founding has been largely overlooked. There has been scant recognition of how forces that the war put in motion reshaped the nation and empowered its government to attempt things never thought possible before—including parks, first at Yosemite and later at Yellowstone. As Gregory Downs and Kate Masur point out in *The World the Civil War Made*, the Civil War ushered in a period of “significant rethinking of American governance, the proper role of centralized power, the meaning of citizenship, and the status of individuals within the nation”:

Such ferment is clear not just in the postwar constitutional amendments and the federal legislation that accompanied them but also in the creation of entirely new agencies, some fleeting—like the Freedmen’s Bureau and the Department of Education—and others lasting, including the Justice Department.⁹⁰

The dramatic growth in the scope and function of government triggered by the war enabled the founding, first of Yosemite and then of Yellowstone.

After the war, Congress employed the instruments at its disposal, such as the army and the Freedmen’s Bureau, to carry out its policies in the south and in the west. In fact, federal war powers were not lifted until 1871. In the years between the 1864 Yosemite Act and the 1872 Yellowstone Act, Congress continued to expand the responsibilities of the national government, creating the nation’s first social welfare systems with the establishment of the Freedmen’s Bureau and Pension Office and, in 1867, after the impeachment of President Johnson, passing a series of military reconstruction acts. These acts divided the south

⁸⁷ Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 39.

⁸⁸ Aubrey L. Haines, *The Yellowstone Story: A History of Our First National Park*, vol.1. Louisville: University Press of Colorado, 1977), 166.

⁸⁹ The Northern Pacific Railroad, for example, played a pivotal role in advancing the Yellowstone legislation, promoting the inspiring imagery of Thomas Moran’s paintings and William Henry Jackson’s photographs (echoing the earlier contributions of Bierstadt and Watkins to the Yosemite campaign).

⁹⁰ Gregory P. Downs and Kate Masur, *The World the Civil War Made* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 7.

into five military districts; district commanders oversaw elections, ensuring racially mixed state governments. In 1868 and 1870, the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution were ratified, expanding federal jurisdiction to include civil rights and voting rights. Historian Adam Wesley Dean, in *The Agrarian Republic: Farming, Antislavery Politics, and Nature Parks in the Civil War Era*, places Yellowstone in this much larger context of a political status quo upended by the Civil War:

After the war, many Republicans felt that the federal government could solve problems when state governments failed. During Reconstruction, Republicans continued to use central state power. In 1866 the Civil Rights Act nullified black codes passed by southern state governments. The Fourteenth Amendment mandated that each state provide “equal protection of laws” for its citizens. The Reconstruction Acts of 1867 divided the ten unreconstructed states into military districts, subjecting them to the authority of Congress. The Fifteenth Amendment, ratified on February 3, 1870, prohibited states from denying the right to vote based on “race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” The Ku Klux Klan Act of April 1871, passed less than a year before the Yellowstone Park Act, brought civil rights crimes committed by individuals under the purview of the federal government. All of these measures would have been unthinkable in antebellum America.⁹¹

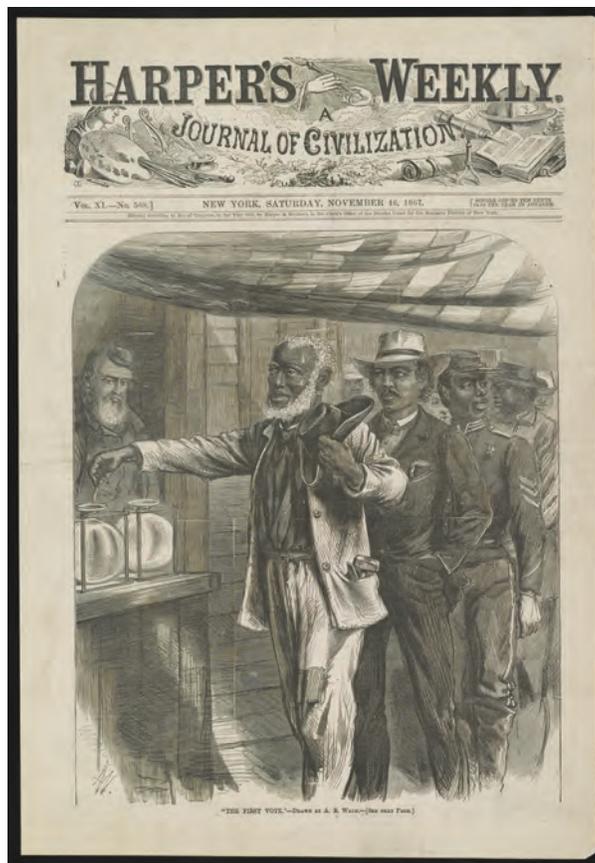


Fig. 4.1. “The First Vote,” drawn by Alfred R. Waud. *Harper’s Weekly*, November 16, 1867. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

⁹¹ Dean, *An Agrarian Republic*, 129.



Fig. 4.2. *The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone* by Thomas Moran, 1893–1901. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of George D. Pratt, 1928.7.1

Taken together, the major constitutional reforms asserting federal authority over domestic policy, the expanding size and scope of the national government, and the example of the Yosemite Act—all directly associated with the outcome of the war—created a favorable environment for the first steps toward a national park movement and the Yellowstone proposal. It is not coincidental that key Republican sponsors of the legislation to establish Yellowstone National Park, including Illinois Senator Lyman Trumbull, Kansas Senator Samuel Pomeroy, and Massachusetts Representative Henry Dawes, were deeply involved in advancing the larger Republican agenda. The Yellowstone Act’s principal senate sponsor, Lyman Trumbull, had authored the Thirteenth Amendment, the first Freedmen’s Bureau Bill, and the Civil Rights Act, and his son Walter, a journalist, was a member of the 1870 Washburn Yellowstone expedition.

Although the authority of Congress would be challenged and ultimately constrained—especially in the failure of its most ambitious undertaking, southern reconstruction—in 1872, it was prepared to exercise political power. Congress—still controlled by a sizable Republican majority—and the Republican president, Ulysses Grant, were prepared to embrace the idea of establishing Yellowstone as a national park and managing it, as Olmsted had argued for Yosemite, as a “duty of government.” The *New York Times* declared that if Yellowstone became a national park, “it will remain a place which we can proudly show to the benighted European as a proof of what nature under a republican form of government can accomplish in the great West.”⁹²

There was, however, no provision in the legislation for managing the vast new national park—neither staff nor funding were provided. Like much of the federal land in the west, Yellowstone would remain by default under the jurisdiction of the Interior Department, less respectfully known as the “Department of Everything Else.” Eventually, Congress would

⁹² Heather Cox Richardson, *West from Appomattox: The Reconstruction of America After the Civil War* (Hartford, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 145.

meet the challenge of running Yellowstone the same way it tackled the enormous challenge of southern reconstruction—by turning to the only institution of government that was reasonably staffed, organized, and disciplined, the U.S. Army. “The army, as blunt a tool as it was,” explained Richard White, “remained the most effective instrument for achieving the government’s ends.” It was “a tool of last resort,” but, as White points out:

For all its failings, the army was comparatively honest and efficient. It was an armed bureaucracy, which is why the government employed it or delegated its officers at various times to administer Indian reservations, staff the Freedmen’s Bureau, police new national parks, conduct geological surveys, and enforce land laws. At the end of the Civil War the government lacked alternative reliable bureaucratic institutions.⁹³

In an interesting footnote to this story, just as active-duty Civil War officers were recruited to staff Freedmen’s Bureau offices in the post-war south, when the National Park Service was established in the early twentieth century, provision was made for those who had previously patrolled Yellowstone as soldiers to be appointed as civilian park rangers.

Olmsted did not foresee in the 1865 Yosemite Report how the government would eventually have to reorganize itself to manage and protect a growing portfolio of parks, but he intuitively understood that Yosemite represented not only a revolutionary idea about the efficacy and design of large parks, but also government functioning as it had never functioned before.

As Lisa Brady put it in *War upon the Land*,

“The war did not upend American’s relationships with or ideas about nature, but instead provided the rationale for broadening and expanding them to include nature protection at the national level. The war that established federal authority over states’ rights to determine citizenship and other civil rights also established increased federal power to decide what elements in the natural treasury would become permanent fixtures of the national landscape.”⁹⁴

However tentative and imperfect its start, a fledgling national parks movement had been launched. The development of the U.S. national park system has often been mistakenly characterized as a progressive narrative in which the country inevitably gained conservation wisdom and insight as one new national park after another was created. That air of inevitability pervades many accounts of early national park history. This simply was not the case. Even after that war was won, its gains—including promises made to American citizens, both black and white—were subject to continuous undermining and reversals. Following the establishment of Yellowstone National Park, in the face of competing priorities, legislative indifference, and bureaucratic weaknesses, Congress moved very

⁹³ White, *The Republic for Which It Stands*, 115–116.

⁹⁴ Lisa M. Brady, *War Upon the Land: Military Strategy and the Transformation of Southern Landscapes During the American Civil War* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 5.

slowly on new park proposals.⁹⁵ But however steep the hill was to climb, backers of each successive park proposal had the advantage of a Congressional precedent already in place, in the Yosemite Grant, subsequently reinforced by the example of Yellowstone.

⁹⁵ Steven Hahn refers to a “bumpy and nonlinear course of change.” Steven Hahn, “What Sort of World Did the Civil War Make?,” in *The World the Civil War Made*, 340.

PART 2

THE OLMSTEDS AND THE INTELLECTUAL FOUNDATION FOR SCENIC RESERVATIONS AND NATIONAL PARKS

CHAPTER FIVE

NIAGARA FALLS AND THE GOVERNMENTAL PRESERVATION OF NATURAL SCENERY

Olmsted returned east in 1865, and although his Yosemite report did not become the basis for state management of Yosemite Valley, he was soon involved in another landmark scenic preservation project—the drive to make Niagara Falls a state park. Olmsted advocated for the preservation of Niagara Falls over two decades, beginning in the late 1860s, when he was designing the municipal park system of nearby Buffalo. Hotels and tourist attractions had grown up around Niagara in the preceding decades, forcing tourists to pay for access to overlooks and creating what many considered an inappropriate setting for the awesome spectacle.

Eventually, in response to the efforts of Olmsted and others, the New York legislature in 1879 appointed Olmsted and the Director of the New York State Survey, James T. Gardner, to prepare a special report on conditions at the Falls. The resulting report emphasized the need to preserve the surrounding landscape, especially Goat Island, which separated the American and Canadian falls, and the shoreline along the rapids above the falls, which was lined with buildings.⁹⁶ He included in the report a petition, which he and a friend, the Harvard art historian Charles Eliot Norton, had circulated. Signed by leading cultural and political figures in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain, the petition urged the state to acquire the private property around the falls and provide for public access.

The petition was one element of a campaign to influence public opinion, orchestrated by Olmsted and a number of colleagues, especially Norton. The campaign was a first of its type in the cause of scenic preservation in the United States. In another element of the campaign, the two men hired journalists Henry Norman and Jonathan B. Harrison to write articles on conditions at Niagara and on the legislation proposed to remedy them. Those efforts received a boost with the 1882 election of a supporter, Buffalo Mayor Grover Cleveland, as governor of New York State. Encouraged by this development, Olmsted and Norton helped found the Niagara Falls Association early in 1883; the association worked to intensify pressure on the state legislature to act. Indeed, the effort proved successful. Later that year, the legislature approved a bill to establish the Niagara Reservation, and Cleveland signed it. In 1885, the same body finally appropriated funds to establish the reservation, and it became the first park of its type to be created by a state government.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Frederick Law Olmsted, “Notes by Mr. Olmsted,” *Special Report of New York State Survey on the Preservation of the Scenery of Niagara Falls for the Year 1879* [c. March 22, 1880], in Charles E. Beveridge, ed., *Parks, Politics, and Patronage, 1874–1882*, The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, vol. 7 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 474–481.

⁹⁷ See Charles E. Beveridge and Carolyn R. Hoffman, *Writings on Public Parks, Parkways, and Park Systems*, The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, Supplementary Series v. 1 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 46–53.

In 1886, Olmsted finally had the opportunity to design the state reservation around Niagara Falls, working in collaboration with his old partner, the architect Calvert Vaux. Olmsted had been far more involved than Vaux in planning and advocacy for Niagara, but he acknowledged that Vaux had an important role in their design work for that park, which they completed in early 1887. The Niagara report had demonstrated how landscape architecture could be used to preserve and restore the scenic landscape through the acquisition of private property, the removal of previous development, and the facilitation of public access through the construction of park drives, paths, overlooks, and limited visitor amenities.⁹⁸ Olmsted's work on the reservation followed this plan. Ultimately, the development of the area as a park foreclosed more destructive forms of resort development, providing the public opportunities for more meaningful experiences of a place that otherwise might have been dominated by commercial enterprises.



Fig. 5.1. *General Plan for the Improvement of the State Reservation at Niagara to Accompany Report by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, Landscape Architects, 1887.* Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library. New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed September 12, 2017.

Olmsted saw his plans for Niagara come to fruition, but the management of Yosemite Valley had taken a different direction, one that contrasted markedly to the success at Niagara. It appeared that Olmsted had moved on as well. He returned to California several times in the 1880s, after he received the important commission to design the Stanford University campus. He did not return to Yosemite Valley during any of these trips. He did travel to the nearby Mariposa Grove and visit with Galen Clark, who had been a fellow member of the first Yosemite Commission, during his first return trip, in 1886.

During that visit, Clark and Olmsted probably discussed conditions in the nearby valley, where much of the development and damage Olmsted had warned against in his report had been allowed to occur. Without the road to Stockton he recommended, supplies of all types were

⁹⁸ Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, "General Plan for the Improvement of the Niagara Reservation," 1887, in Beveridge and Hoffman, *Writings on Public Parks*, 535–575.



Fig. 5.2. *The American Falls, Niagara Falls* by Detroit Publishing Company, ca. 1905. No. 018292. Detroit Publishing Company Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.



Fig. 5.3. *Rapids above American Falls, Niagara Falls* by Detroit Publishing Company, ca. 1909. No. 071271. Detroit Publishing Company Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

expensive to bring into the valley. As a result, many of the valley's delicate meadows were now cultivated or used for pasture, and trees were harvested and milled into lumber. Large hotels were built, rather than the simple camping stations Olmsted had advised, and numerous other businesses were established through permits issued by the state commissioners.

The valley was changing in other ways, as well. By the 1880s, some visitors complained that new tree growth was cutting off views and changing the character of the landscape. Although it was not well understood at the time, Native Americans had for centuries used fire to control the growth of vegetation in the valley, a practice that ended with the expulsion of the Indians after 1864. By the 1880s, vegetation was rapidly encroaching into the valley's meadows. Park concessioners and managers reacted by removing and pruning trees, a practice that soon incited a negative reaction among preservationists who felt such tree cutting was inimical to the park's purpose.⁹⁹ Olmsted was under pressure to work on the Stanford commission and complete other business in California during his 1886 trip and the trips that followed. But he may have had other reasons for choosing not to visit the valley he had described in the Yosemite report as "the greatest glory of nature."

Others tried to draw Olmsted into commenting on conditions at Yosemite, nonetheless. In 1889, Robert Underwood Johnson, then associate editor of *Century* magazine, spent two weeks camping in and around Yosemite Valley with John Muir, the writer and wilderness preservation advocate. Muir enlisted Underwood in the cause of creating a larger Yosemite National Park around Yosemite Valley itself (which was still a state park at the time). Muir and Underwood also sought to reform the state's management of Yosemite Valley and criticized many aspects of the Yosemite commission's policies.



Fig. 5.4. Yosemite Valley, California: Le Conte Circle, Camp Curry by Detroit Publishing Company, between 1898 and 1914. No. 73132. Detroit Publishing Company Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

⁹⁹ Alfred Runte, *Yosemite, the Embattled Wilderness* (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1990), 38–39, 49–54.

Johnson wrote Olmsted, describing what he considered the destructive removal of trees and other vegetation and the generally poor condition of the valley landscape.¹⁰⁰ He asked Olmsted to consider taking a consulting position with the state park commission, and he offered to intercede with Governor Leland Stanford to make the appointment possible. At the very least, Johnson wrote, he wanted Olmsted to write on the subject for *Century*.¹⁰¹ Olmsted, who had just completed his definitive statement on the “use of the axe” in landscape management—a long and thoroughly documented defense of tree thinning—replied to Johnson only after considerable reflection.¹⁰² He declined to write an article or to become more actively involved in the criticism of the Yosemite commissioners. While he sympathized with his friend’s position and knew the management of the valley needed improvement, he was unwilling to condemn the commissioners without better knowledge of what exactly had been done and why. He wrote to Johnson:

All I could say, is that, having at an early day spent several months in the valley under peculiarly favorable circumstances for contemplating it, I know that the question is one of far greater importance and of far greater difficulty than can be generally realized; that it is most foolish to take it up in an occasional and desultory way as a question of details, or as a question the answer to which will be chiefly important to the people of the present century. It is preeminently a question of our duty to the future.¹⁰³

Olmsted might have continued to remain silent on the subject of Yosemite Valley, but in the spring of 1890, the governor of California, Robert W. Waterman, made a ludicrous claim that Johnson was disparaging the Yosemite commission solely for the purpose of obtaining a professional appointment for his “uncle,” Frederick Law Olmsted. Olmsted felt compelled to address the situation, which he did with a pamphlet published at his own expense, *Governmental Preservation of Natural Scenery*.¹⁰⁴

In that publication, he gave an account of his involvement with Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove since 1864 and declined once again to criticize the state commissioners, because he had not made a thorough study of their policies and actions. He refused to condemn tree removal in the valley, but he did clarify that tree removal that was done incorrectly (as Johnson and others claimed it was) would have disastrous effects. The Yosemite commissioners, who had other areas of expertise, should not be expected to know the difference, Olmsted said; landscape architects, who were specifically trained to make such judgments, should.

¹⁰⁰ See Frederick Law Olmsted to Richard W. Gilder, July 10, 1889 (Papers of FLO, Library of Congress).

¹⁰¹ Robert U. Johnson to Frederick Law Olmsted, June 23, 1889 (Papers of FLO, Library of Congress).

¹⁰² Frederick Law Olmsted and Jonathan B. Harrison, *Observations on the Treatment of Public Plantations, More Especially Relating to the Use of the Axe*, [1889] reprinted in *Landscape Architecture* 3, no. 4 (July 1913): 145–152.

¹⁰³ Frederick Law Olmsted to Robert U. Johnson, October 9, 1889 (Papers of FLO, Library of Congress).

¹⁰⁴ Frederick Law Olmsted, *Governmental Preservation of Natural Scenery*, March 8, 1890 (Papers of FLO, Library of Congress).

While Olmsted declined to give any further advice on the management of the valley landscape specifically, he did offer a long quotation from the 1887 Niagara report, authored by him and Vaux, that he felt should serve as a general guide for Yosemite policy: “Nothing of an artificial character should be allowed a place on the property, no matter how valuable it might be under other circumstances, and no matter at how little cost it may be had, the presence of which can be avoided consistently with the provision of necessary conditions for making the enjoyment of the natural scenery available.”¹⁰⁵ By including this quotation in the Yosemite pamphlet, Olmsted made it clear how closely these two great experiments in landscape preservation were linked.



Fig. 5.5. *Bridal Veil Fall, Yosemite Valley, California* by Carleton E. Watkins, ca. 1865. This view shows the meadow and framed views in the valley at the time Olmsted first visited Yosemite. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

Today, we tend to think of landscape design as, on the one hand, changing and adapting landscapes to new or altered purposes and, on the other hand, preserving a landscape, preventing change and maintaining existing uses and character. Olmsted’s approach to landscape design integrated both practices; preservation and design were both integral to the theory and techniques of landscape design he developed. The preservation of Niagara, for example, required extensive new design; the plan for Yosemite deployed design to maximize both preservation and the public’s ability to enjoy the preserved landscape. Public parks of all types—both designed and preserved—shared a basic purpose for Olmsted:

¹⁰⁵ See “General Plan for the Improvement of the Niagara Reservation,” 1887, in Beveridge and Hoffman, *Writings on Public Parks*, 535–575.

making varied and profound experiences of landscape beauty, from the pastoral expanses of his city parks to the most dramatic landscape features of the continent, accessible to everyone. The common thread in both preservation and design was the benefit to individuals and society that could only be achieved through the creation of accessible parks and reservations, assuring a more healthful and functional civilization.

CHAPTER SIX

PARKS AND RESERVATIONS

Through his work for Yosemite Valley and Niagara Falls, Olmsted established the rhetoric and the political and social justifications for what would become a scenic preservation movement in the United States. However, his influence on the movement was extended and amplified through his personal contact with several of the most important landscape architects and planners of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Chief among these was Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., his son, whose education and training were of particular concern to his father, and Charles Eliot, who joined the Fairsted office as an apprentice in 1883 and went on to shape Boston's public park system.

Boston provided Olmsted with his next opportunity, after Niagara, to put into practice the principles he had developed in his previous work. Indeed, the public parks movement in Boston, which attracted Olmsted to relocate to the area in 1881, gained momentum as the city grew and annexed neighboring municipalities in the 1870s. In 1878, the Boston Park Commission asked Olmsted to design what became the Back-Bay Fens, a connected series of parks in Boston and Brookline whose design occupied Olmsted in the 1880s and 1890s. This municipal park system, which would later become known as the "Emerald Necklace," became the most significant and comprehensive example of Olmsted's landscape-based urbanism: the design of multifunctional parks and park corridors that responded to regional landscapes and landscape systems.



Fig. 6.1. *Muddy River, Boston, view upstream from Longwood Bridge, 28 years after construction, 1920. Photo album 00930-02-p30, Job #930, Riverway, Boston, MA. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.*

Olmsted was also involved in the preservation of larger landscapes in the suburbs around Boston. In 1879, he visited Lynn Woods with Philip A. Chase and others who advocated maintaining the area as public park. That year, the journalist Sylvester Baxter published an article in which he described (and named) Middlesex Fells, another scenic, wooded area in suburban Boston, and argued for its preservation. Olmsted advised both Chase and Baxter on how regional scenic reservations differed from municipal parks, urging (as he had at Yosemite) the protection of these scenic landscapes to the greatest degree possible while making them accessible to the public.¹⁰⁶

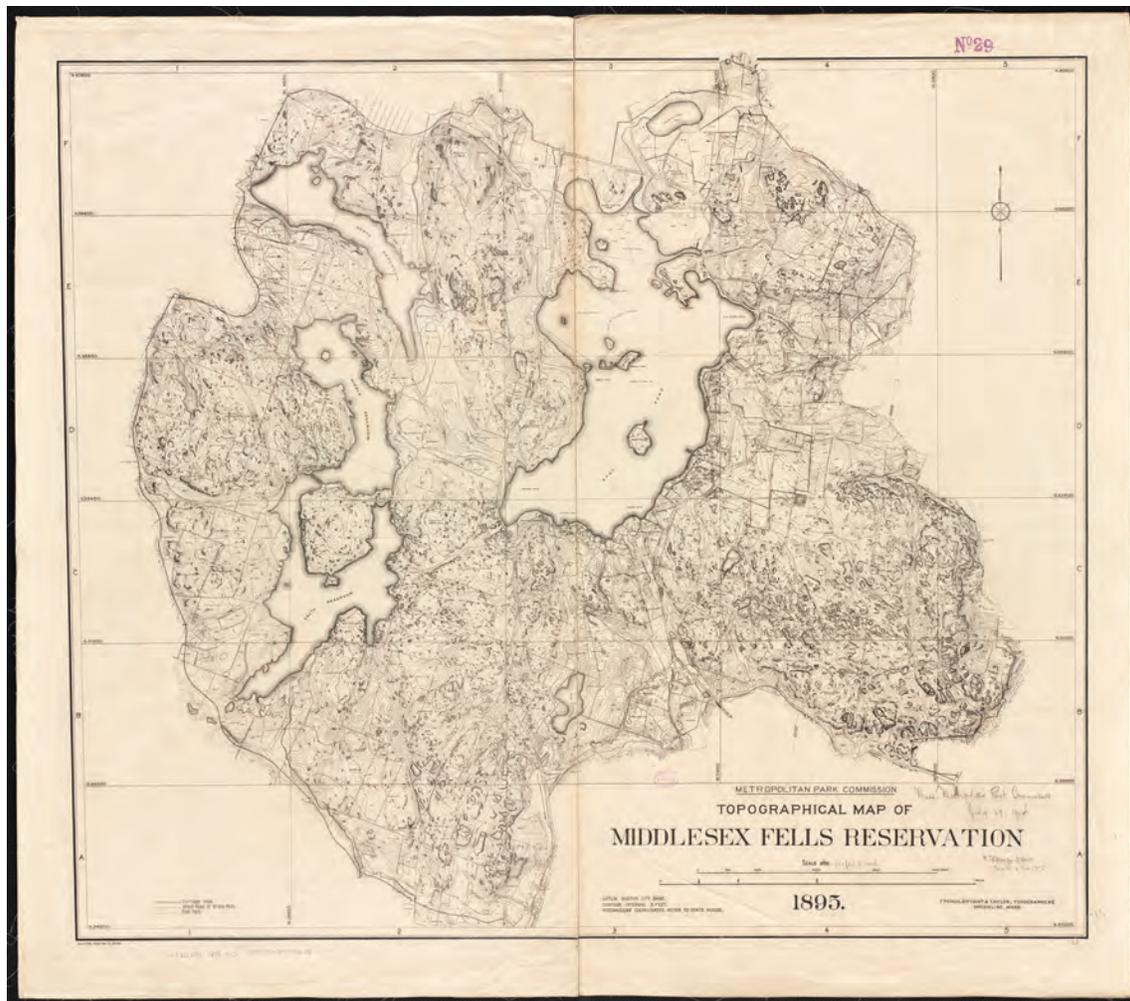


Fig. 6.2. *Topographical Map of Middlesex Fells Reservation*, Metropolitan Park Commission, 1895. Helotype Printing Company. Boston Public Library, Norman B. Leventhal Map Center Collection. Digital Commonwealth accessed September 26, 2017.

¹⁰⁶ Ethan Carr, Amanda Gagel, and Michael Shapiro, eds., *The Early Boston Years, 1882–1890*, The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, vol. 8 (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 13–16.

Olmsted's greatest influence on scenic preservation in Massachusetts was through the training and advice he gave his protégé, Charles Eliot. After his apprenticeship at Fairsted, Eliot traveled in Europe and, upon his return to Boston in 1887, began his own practice.¹⁰⁷ In 1890, he organized a distinguished committee of "persons interested in the preservation of scenery and historical sites in Massachusetts" to form the Trustees of Public Reservations, the first private land trust in the world dedicated to this purpose. Established through an act of the state legislature in 1891, the Trustees accepted gifts of land to be held (tax free) and kept open to the public.¹⁰⁸

Eliot's concept of a regional system of scenic reservations for the suburbs around Boston proceeded directly out of his participation, with Olmsted, in the design of that city's municipal park system in the 1880s. In the biography he wrote after his son's early death in 1897, Eliot's father, Harvard University president Charles W. Eliot, described his son's apprenticeship and subsequent career, including the principles of scenic preservation the younger Eliot absorbed from his teacher. Olmsted, according to the elder Eliot, "regarded park-land in its actual condition as a fine piece of rural scenery, to be religiously preserved so far as the use and enjoyment of the place by the public would permit, as a scene of quiet character, graceful and picturesque by turns, in which only such changes and additions should be permitted as would bring out still further the prevailing character of the place . . . in furtherance of nature."¹⁰⁹ In a letter to his young apprentice, Olmsted reminded Eliot that he had "a professional duty" to "write for the public," to promote this view of the value of scenic landscapes, since Eliot was able to serve "the cause," in this regard, better than any of his contemporaries.¹¹⁰



Fig. 6.3. *View from the North Reservoir Looking East* by A. A. Shurtleff, 1898. Job No. 1513, Middlesex Fells. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

¹⁰⁷ See Charles W. Eliot, *Charles Eliot: Landscape Architect*, 1902 (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press with the Library of American Landscape History, 1999).

¹⁰⁸ See *First Annual Report of the Trustees of Reservations, 1891* (Boston, MA: George H. Ellis, 1892).

¹⁰⁹ Eliot, *Charles Eliot*, 37, 39–40.

¹¹⁰ "A Letter Relating to Professional Practice from F.L. Olmsted, Sr. to Charles Eliot (1886)," *Landscape Architecture* 11, no. 4 (July 1921), 189–190.

Eliot found a ready publisher in Charles Sprague Sargent, the founder (with Olmsted's participation) of *Garden and Forest*, a magazine that between 1888 and 1897 demonstrated an interest in landscape architecture, horticulture, scenic preservation, and scientific forestry. Eliot wrote a letter to the editor on the subject of the Waverley Oaks, a picturesque grove of ancient trees near Boston that was endangered by expanding residential development. In the letter, Eliot remarked that "the railroads and new electric street railways . . . carry many thousands every pleasant Sunday through the suburbs to the real country . . . for the sake of the refreshment . . . the country brings to them," but the areas around Boston possessing "uncommon beauty and more than usual refreshing power" were largely in private hands and "in daily danger of utter destruction." He suggested that "the finest bits of natural scenery near Boston" might be saved "to delight many future generations" if an incorporated association made up citizens of the towns around Boston were empowered by the state legislature to hold various parcels of land, free of taxes, for the use of the public.¹¹¹

In the wake of *Garden and Forest's* publication of his letter, Eliot worked with Sargent, as well as George C. Mann, the president of the Appalachian Mountain Club, and Sylvester Baxter to organize an effective public relations campaign reminiscent of the effort to create the state reservation at Niagara. In this case, the campaign sought to preserve not a single outstanding natural feature but a system of scenic places representing the characteristic landscapes of the region. In 1891, the campaign succeeded: the legislature passed a bill to create the Trustees of Public Reservations. The Trustees, who appointed Eliot as secretary, initially depended on gifts and bequests to create parks, but they also began assembling the surveys and recommendations that would result in the legislature's creation, one year later, of a Metropolitan Park Commission, charged to suggest a system of scenic reservations for the suburbs around Boston.¹¹²

In 1893, this unique park commission, with Eliot as landscape architect and Baxter as secretary, was given the powers to condemn land and to "acquire, maintain, and make available . . . open spaces for exercise and recreation" in thirty-seven separate Massachusetts municipalities.¹¹³ Over the next several years, Eliot oversaw the acquisition of more than 9,000 acres of large, scenic parks and connecting parkways in the suburbs within a ten-mile radius of Boston, including the shores and islands of the inner Massachusetts Bay. The commission acquired beaches, estuaries, forests, and characteristic geological formations of scenic interest.

Eliot's call for scenic preservation around Boston echoed Olmsted's rhetoric. The ideal had not changed, but the geographic setting of the landscape park had moved to where such park development had always made the most sense: the periphery of the growing city. The ultimate justification for such parks remained the same as well: Eliot emphasized the healthful benefits available to the individual and to society as a whole through free, public opportunities for the aesthetic appreciation of landscape beauty.

¹¹¹ Eliot, *Charles Eliot*, 318–319.

¹¹² Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Metropolitan Park Commission, *A History and Description of the Boston Metropolitan Parks* (Boston: Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1900), 31.

¹¹³ Metropolitan Park Commission, *Boston Metropolitan Parks*, 26.



Fig. 6.4. *Beaver Brook* by John Charles Olmsted, likely ca. 1902, showing remaining Waverly Oaks. Photo album 01502-03-ph03-back, Job No. 1502 Beaver Brook Reservation, Belmont, Massachusetts. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

Eliot recognized, as Olmsted had, that larger scenic reservations demanded a new balance of landscape development, forest management, and preservation. The nineteenth-century municipal park had required extensive landscape engineering to produce desired picturesque effects; the twentieth-century scenic reservation often eliminated the need for heavy manipulation of topography and hydrology, since the reservation (to a greater degree than the municipal park) could be selected according to its existing scenic qualities. But the formal features and engineering developed in earlier municipal landscape park designs were adapted as needed to the more limited development of scenic reservations.

Eliot's description of his management priorities for the Boston metropolitan reservations in an 1897 report to the Metropolitan Park Commissioners reflected his understanding of these requirements. It was "quite unlikely," he wrote, "that there will ever be any need of artificially modifying . . . [the reservations] to any considerable degree. Such paths or roads as will be needed to make the scenery accessible will be mere slender threads of graded surface winding over and among the huge natural forms of the ground." Although "the waters of the reservations . . . may be artificially ponded here and there," major hydrological engineering would be unnecessary, since the natural flow of seasonal streams was preferable and would not affect "more than the local scenery of the hollows or ravines in which they flow."¹¹⁴

In contrast to this hands-off approach, Eliot advocated selected cutting of forests based on the aesthetic desirability of the resulting views. Having determined that "vegetation

¹¹⁴The report was published posthumously. Charles Eliot, *Vegetation and Scenery in the Metropolitan Reservations of Boston* (Boston, MA: Lamson, Wolfe & Co., 1898), 7–8.

in the reservations is an exceedingly important component part of the scenery,” he concluded that the character of that vegetation resulted from “continuous interference with natural processes by men, fire, and browsing animals.” It followed that “the notion that it would be wrong and even sacrilegious to suggest that this vegetation ought to be controlled and modified must be mistaken.” Eliot believed:

“to *preserve* existing beauty, grass-lands must continue to be mowed or pastured annually, trees must be removed from shrubberies, competing trees must be kept away from veteran oaks and chestnuts, and so on. . . . To prepare for *increasing* the interest and beauty of the scenery, work must be directed to removing screens of foliage, to opening vistas through ‘notches,’ to substituting low ground-cover for high woods in many places, and to other like operations.”¹¹⁵

This assessment reflected Eliot’s sophisticated understanding of the cultural landscape, developed through site research and his training at Fairsted. The strategies he advocated for the new reservations around Boston established an important precedent for the design and management of larger, regional scenic areas to both preserve them and make them accessible to the public.



Fig. 6.5. Road map of the Boston district showing the metropolitan park system. Boston, Mass.: George H. Walker & Co., 1900 Boston Public Library, Norman B. Leventhal Map Center. Digital Commonwealth accessed September 26, 2017.

¹¹⁵ Eliot, *Vegetation and Scenery*, 23.



Fig. 6.6. *Wolcott Hill, From the Road under Hemenway Hill* by John Charles Olmsted, Sept. 14, 1895. Photo album 01504-03-ph02. Job no. 1504, Blue Hills Reservation, Massachusetts. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

CHAPTER SEVEN

NATIONAL PARKS AND NATIONAL FORESTS

One of the most significant developments in landscape conservation in the 1880s and 1890s occurred in the Adirondack Mountains of northern New York State. As with other early conservation efforts, a range of converging interests and a number of concerned individuals were involved. In this case, Olmsted's role was limited; there is little evidence the landscape architect, then busy with the Niagara campaign and his expanding office in Brookline, directly influenced the legislation that established what would eventually become the Adirondack Park. He did, however, have an indirect effect, as his neighbor and collaborator, the horticulturist Charles Sprague Sargent, was directly involved.

In 1878, Olmsted and Sargent were working together on the design of the Arnold Arboretum, which would become a comprehensive collection of all the world's woody plants that were hardy in the New England climate. The arboretum was designed as a landscape park—the scientific collections were displayed in groups determined by botanical genus, but the overall landscape was designed to create a series of landscape scenes—making it an innovative marriage of park and arboretum design. Sargent also worked with Olmsted and his associates in the development of the Brookline park system, specifically the portions of the Muddy River Improvement where the park formed the boundary between Boston and Brookline. Sargent had some interest in the park movement. Like Olmsted, he encouraged Charles Eliot in his plans for the Metropolitan Park Commission reservations around Boston, and, after a visit to the Rocky Mountains in 1882, he also advocated for the creation of Glacier National Park.¹¹⁶

Sargent played a pivotal role in the establishment of the country's first national forest, leading an unprecedented survey of American forests for the federal government. In 1884, Sargent, recognized as a national expert in silviculture, was asked to lead a New York state commission tasked with making recommendations for the management of the Adirondack Forest Preserve, which the state legislature had been considering creating for over a decade. Earlier in the nineteenth century, New York state government had facilitated the exploitation of the timber resources in this vast, mountainous region. By mid-century, the effects of unregulated logging, mining, and other industries were manifest. At the same time, books such as Samuel Hammond's 1857 *Wild Northern Scenes* and William Murray's 1869 *Adventures in the Wilderness* had popularized the Adirondacks as a destination for hunting, fishing, and wilderness tourism. By 1864, the New York Times editorialized that the region should be designated as "grand parks, owned in common," to prevent the wholesale despoliation of the remaining forests, fish, and game, which were all fast disappearing.¹¹⁷ Any such efforts were hampered, however, by the lack of even preliminary surveys for much of the region, much of which was in private ownership.

Franklin B. Hough, a doctor and Adirondack resident, began gathering data on the Adirondack forests in 1865. His expertise was recognized in 1876, when he was appointed the

¹¹⁶ Alfred Rehder, "Charles Sprague Sargent," *Journal of the Arnold Arboretum* 8, no. 2 (April 1927): 69–87.

¹¹⁷ Norman J. Van Valkenburgh, *The Forest Preserve of New York State in the Adirondack and Catskill Mountains* (Fleischmanns, NY: Purple Mountain Press, 1996), 10–11.

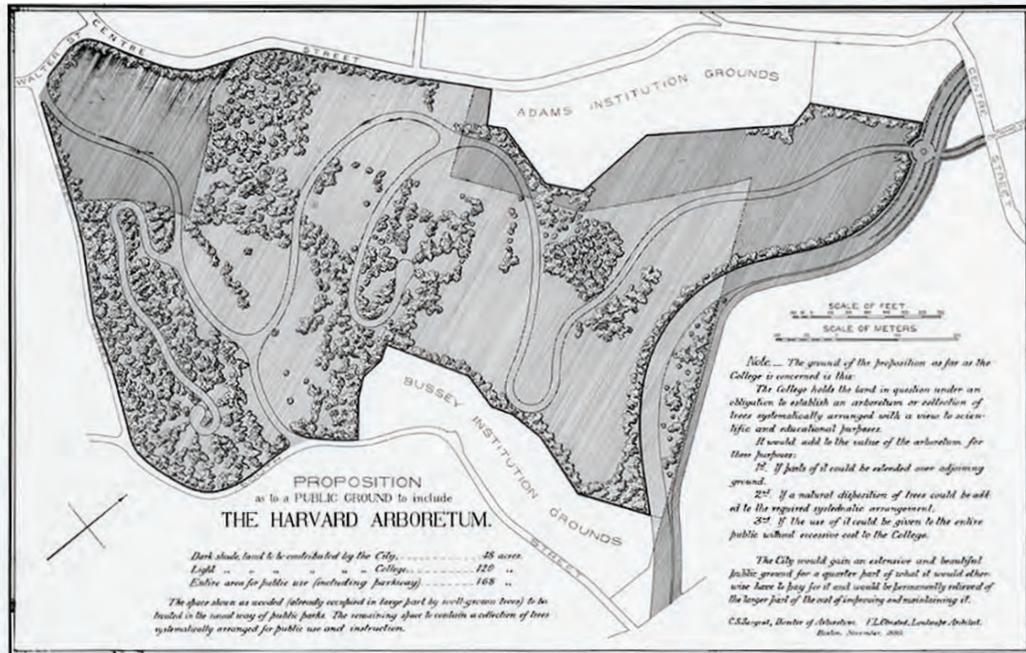


Fig. 7.1. *Proposition as to a Public Ground to Include the Harvard Arboretum*, November 1880. Charles Sprague Sargent, Director of Arboretum; F. L. Olmsted, Landscape Architect. Plan #902-7, Job no. 902 Arnold Arboretum, Boston, MA. Plans and Drawings Collection. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.



Fig. 7.2. *Birds Eye View of the Lilacs, Arnold Arboretum* by Leon H. Abdalian, May 25, 1916. Leon Abdalian Collection, Boston Public Library, Print Department. Digital Commonwealth, accessed September 26, 2017.

first “forestry agent” of the Department of Agriculture in Washington, the office that would later become the U.S. Forest Service. His efforts were complemented by those of a dedicated young surveyor, Verplanck Colvin, whose work in the 1860s and 1870s culminated in state-sponsored surveys of the Adirondacks, which were a necessary step in the effort to set aside the state-owned land in the region as a public reservation.

Central to the argument for preserving the remaining Adirondack forests were concerns about the effects of excessive logging, clearing, and soil erosion on the entire watershed, which Colvin and others asserted could threaten the viability of the Erie Canal and otherwise impede commerce and agriculture. These utilitarian arguments would be essential to the campaign to pass state legislation to preserve the Adirondacks. But those practical rationalizations were successfully conflated with other concerns, clearly not as pragmatic in nature. Sargent, as chair of the Adirondack committee, helped draft the unprecedented 1885 state legislation dictating that the 680,000-acre forest preserve should “be forever kept as wild forest lands.” But the struggle to preserve the Adirondacks had really only begun. In 1892, the state legislature acted again, to establish the 2.8 million-acre Adirondack Park (later expanded to more than 6 million acres, incorporating both the public Forest Preserve lands and private property within its boundaries) for the multiple purposes of “the free use of all the people for their health and pleasure, and as forest lands necessary to the preservation of the headwaters of the chief rivers of the State, and a future



Fig. 7.3. Lower Saranac Lake, Adirondack Mountains, Detroit Publishing Company, ca. 1902. No. 54037. Photochrome Prints Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

timber supply.” In 1894, a state constitutional convention enshrined the protection of the Forest Preserve (the publicly owned land within the larger Adirondack Park) through a constitutional clause guaranteeing that it remain “forever wild.”¹¹⁸

This conflation of utilitarian and public park purposes was typical of the period and indicated the growing influence of scientific forestry in government policy at both the state and federal levels. These efforts often rested on a benign ambiguity regarding the purposes of large “parks” and those of what would come to be called “forest reserves” or “national forests.” This ambiguity yielded significant results, including the establishment of the Adirondack Park, which was justified in terms of watershed protection (providing economic grounds) as much as recreation or wilderness preservation. In the Sierra Mountains of California, a similar ambiguity would result in significant national park legislation, establishing Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks.

By the 1880s, the meadows of the High Sierra provided pasture for huge herds of sheep, while sequoia groves and pine forests attracted growing logging operations. A local journalist, George W. Stewart, began to advocate for a park or scenic reservation to protect the alpine meadows and giant sequoias. At the same time, to the north, John Muir and Robert Underwood Johnson, the editor of *Century* magazine (and a close associate of Olmsted’s), had led a campaign to create an extended Yosemite National Park around the state park at Yosemite Valley. Both campaigns gained momentum when farmers in the San Joaquin Valley became convinced that overgrazing and deforestation in the southern Sierra threatened the seasonal water flow of streams that irrigated their land.¹¹⁹ The Southern Pacific Railroad, which owned significant tracts of land in the valley—the value of which was dependent on water for irrigation—also moved the region’s agricultural products and supplies on its rails. The railroad, otherwise not known for its interest in land conservation, perceived the preservation of the Sierran watersheds as essential to its economic interests.

Both initiatives achieved sudden and unimagined success in 1890, when Representative William Vandever of Los Angeles introduced two bills that created Sequoia and Yosemite National Parks, as well as General Grant National Park. The parks were all far larger than preservation advocates had hoped for and—with the backing of the Southern Pacific—they moved through Congress quickly. Historians Lary M. Dilsaver and William C. Tweed conclude that although the “origins and motivations” of the Sequoia-Yosemite legislation of 1890 remain mysterious, Vandever was probably acting as an agent of the Southern Pacific Railroad, which wanted to protect the watersheds vital to its interests.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Quoted in Alfred L. Donaldson, *A History of the Adirondacks* [1921] (Port Washington, NY: Ira J. Friedman, Inc., 1963), 175–189.

¹¹⁹ Lary M. Dilsaver and William C. Tweed, *Challenge of the Big Trees: A Resource History of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* (Three Rivers, CA: Sequoia Natural History Association, 1990), 62–69.

¹²⁰ Dilsaver and Tweed, *Challenge of the Big Trees*, 73.



Fig. 7.4. *Summit of the Sierras, Nevada* by Thomas Moran, ca. 1875. L. Prang & Co. Prang's American Chromo. Popular Graphic Arts Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

The largest state park in the country, the Adirondack Park, and some of the country's largest western national parks were thus the result of a conflation between the purposes of public parks, as defined by Olmsted and others, and the purposes of what would come to be described as "forest reserves," which had yet to be fully elaborated but primarily entailed watershed protection through forest conservation. This confusion did not last long, and the successes of the Sierran park bills would not be repeated, but new legislation would enable massive new reserves of forest land. In 1891, Congress passed the Forest Reserve Act, authorizing the President to declare "public reservations" on any federal land "bearing forests." By 1909, four presidents had carved 150 million acres of forest reserves out of the remaining public lands in the West.¹²¹

¹²¹ Harold K. Steen, *The U.S. Forest Service: A History* [1976] (Seattle: The University of Washington Press, 1991), 26–27; Michael Williams, *Americans & Their Forests: A Historical Geography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 403–415.



Fig. 7.5. *Crater Lake, Ore.* by Edgar Desmond Weston,, ca. 1913. Panoramic Photographs Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.



Fig. 7.6. *Mt. Ranier* [i.e., Mt. Rainier] by Haines Photo Company, ca. 1925. Panoramic Photographs Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

The locations and boundaries of many of these early forest reserves had been suggested by contemporary proposals for national parks. The borders of the Yellowstone Timber Land Reserve designated by Benjamin Harrison in 1891, for example, coincided with proposed extensions to Yellowstone that had been sought by General Philip Sheridan, George Bird Grinnell, Sargent, and other park advocates since the early 1880s. The status of the new Yellowstone forest reserve was at first ambiguous. The U.S. Cavalry in charge of Yellowstone simply extended its jurisdiction to include the forest reserve on the southern and eastern boundaries of the park, suggesting that the park had been expanded, but later attempts to add the reserve territory to the park failed.¹²² In 1893, Harrison declared the four-million-acre Sierra Forest Reserve between and around Yosemite and Sequoia national parks, including the Kings Canyon region that Muir had earlier advocated for national park status.¹²³ The Cascade and Pacific forest reserves, also declared in 1893, included the territories of the proposed Crater Lake and Mount Rainier national parks. Northwest park advocates had seen their park legislation defeated in Congress repeatedly in the 1880s; the forest reserves—which covered a far

¹²² Mary S. Culpin, “Yellowstone and Its Borders: A Significant Influence Toward the Creation of the First Forest Reserve,” in Harold K. Steen, ed., *The Origins of the National Forests* (Durham, NC: The Forest History Society, 1992), 276–283.

¹²³ Dilsaver and Tweed, *Challenge of the Big Trees*, 83–85.

vaster area of the high country of the Cascade Ranges—had been accomplished with relative ease by executive proclamation.¹²⁴

The forest reserves were a mixed blessing for national park advocates. Certainly they were a victory for Progressive principles of land conservation and scientific management, and they were far preferable to the chaotic exploitation of public lands by extractive industries. But if park advocates hoped that the new reserves would be managed as, in effect, giant national parks, they would be disappointed. Early events offered some fodder for that hope. Both categories of public land remained under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Interior; the Division of Forestry (in the Department of Agriculture) remained only an advisory body. With no explicit policies yet provided for the management of the reserves, Secretary of the Interior Noble and his immediate successors attempted to strictly limit logging, grazing, and other commercial activities.¹²⁵ Although such anti-trespass policies were politically and logistically impossible to enforce, the official policy continued to blur the distinction between national park status and that of the forest reserves.

In 1897, however, Congress clarified matters—and also stymied the hopes of park advocates—memorializing its goals for the selection and management of forest reserves in legislation. The effect was to open the reserves to timber sales, grazing, and other forms of development—economic developments to be regulated by the Secretary of the Interior. These kinds of industries were proscribed in national parks. From 1897 on, it was clear that Progressive land *conservation* implied very different land management policies than national park *preservation*.

As forest reserve policy became more defined, the situation only became more dire for advocates of total landscape preservation—in other words, park designation. In 1898, Gifford Pinchot arrived at the Division of Forestry and set out to revitalize that office. His influence grew steadily, especially once Theodore Roosevelt became president in 1901. By 1902, Pinchot and his division effectively wrote the policies and procedures for forest reserve management.¹²⁶ The Secretary of the Interior granted permits and collected fees for commercial uses of the reserves according to principles that promised sustained yields of lumber, grass, electricity, and water. Pinchot enlisted the political support of western politicians, stockmen, and irrigationists, who favored policies that defined the forest reserves in terms of economic uses—even if such uses involved fees and permits—rather than as inviolate game preserves or vast parks.

The politics of Progressive conservation relied on the fact that, if properly regulated, logging and grazing could continue in the forests without threatening the flow of water for irrigation. Water conservation was therefore an essential element of Pinchot's forest

¹²⁴ Williams, *Americans & Their Forests*, 307; Gerald W. Williams, "John Waldo and William G. Steel: Forest Reserve Advocates for the Cascade Region of Oregon," in Steen, ed., *The Origins of the National Forests*, 314–332.

¹²⁵ James Muhn, "Early Administration of the Forest Reserve Act: Interdepartment and General Land Policies, 1891–1897," in Harold K. Steen, ed., *The Origins of the National Forests* (Durham, NC: The Forest History Society, 1992), 262–263.

¹²⁶ Steen, *The U.S. Forest Service*, 58.



Fig. 7.8. *Gifford Pinchot* by Frances Benjamin Johnston, between 1890 and 1910. Johnston (Frances Benjamin) Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

management practices. In 1902, Congress passed the Newlands Reclamation Act, and the Reclamation Service (later the Bureau of Reclamation), headed by Frederick H. Newell, began to plan, permit, and subsidize major irrigation and hydroelectric projects on public lands. Working closely with Newell and Pinchot, Roosevelt developed policies to support the planned exploitation of water and land resources that defined the Progressive conservation movement and strengthened the political appeal of Progressive government.

In 1905, Pinchot, with Roosevelt's support, succeeded in transferring responsibility for the forest reserves from the Department of the Interior to the Division of Forestry in the Department of Agriculture. At the same time, the forest bureau was expanded and renamed the United States Forest Service; in 1907, the forest reserves were renamed "national forests." By this point, scenic preservation had been virtually excluded from the Progressive agenda of natural resource conservation. National parks, both existing and proposed, depended on aesthetic justifications for the preservation of scenery, but efficiency, not aesthetics, determined the conservation policies set by the Roosevelt administrations. Progressive conservation principles dismissed scenic preservation as a basis for federal land policies. For Pinchot and others like him, the total preservation of scenic areas was based on sentimental impulses, not the scientific land management practices of his trained foresters and engineers. Scientific forestry and reclamation engineering offered the promise of sustainable commercial utilization of public lands and resources in the West.¹²⁷ Thus, the "modern" management of the national forests seemed to make the entire idea of national parks obsolete, an idea belonging to the nineteenth century. It would fall on the next generation at Fairsted, along with the many other national park advocates across the country, to adapt the rhetoric, purposes, and practices of scenic preservation to the changing realities of the twentieth century.

¹²⁷ See Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890–1920* (New York: Atheneum, 1979).

PART 3

A CONTINUITY OF PURPOSE: FREDERICK LAW OLNSTED JR. AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

CHAPTER EIGHT

SETTING THE TABLE FOR A NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Frederick Law Olmsted retired from active practice in 1895. Charles Eliot, who had become a partner in the Fairsted firm (with Olmsted and his son, John Charles Olmsted) in 1893, died in 1897, depriving the office of its most important conservation thinker and advocate in the next generation. With Eliot's death, it was left to the young Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. to assume this role, as a new partner in the reorganized firm of Olmsted Brothers.

The younger Olmsted's background as a landscape architect and a scenic preservationist were impressive and unique. Born in 1870, he had grown up in his father's office and home, first in New York and then in Brookline. Having participated in major landscape design and park planning projects at an early age, he entered the family firm in 1895 and became a full partner, with his older half-brother, John Charles, just two years later, at the age of 27. In 1900, he was asked to organize the new academic program in landscape



Fig. 8.1. Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., ca. 1930. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

architecture at Harvard, the first degree program in the field. In 1901, he became a member of the Senate Park Commission and was a co-author of the 1902 McMillan Plan for the Capital, the first comprehensive city plan of its type in the United States.¹²⁸ He was drawn into the effort to create a national park service through his efforts in 1908 to prevent hydroelectric development at Niagara Falls and in 1913 at the Hetch Hetchy Valley of Yosemite National Park, preservation campaigns in which he played an important part.

Horace McFarland, president of the American Civic Association (ACA), launched a campaign in 1910 to create a national parks bureau, and he quickly drew Olmsted Jr. into the effort. Olmsted Jr. saw the need as urgent. “The present situation in regard to the national parks is very bad,” he wrote in a January 19, 1912, letter to the president of the Appalachian Mountain Club. “They have been created one at a time by acts of Congress which have not defined at all clearly the purposes for which the lands were to be set apart, nor provided any orderly or efficient means of safeguarding the parks.”¹²⁹ McFarland echoed that discouraging assessment. “The parks have just happened; they are not the result of such an overlooking of the national domain as would, and ought to, result in a coordinated system,” he wrote in the *Sierra Club Bulletin*. “There is no adequately organized control of the national parks.” McFarland went on to point out that, “With forty-one national parks and monuments, aggregating an area larger than two sovereign states, and containing priceless glories of scenery and wonders of nature, we do not have as efficient a provision for administration as is possessed by many a city of but fifty thousand inhabitants for its hundred or so acres.” He added despairingly, “Nowhere in official Washington can an inquirer find an office of the national parks, or a desk devoted solely to their management.”¹³⁰ Olmsted Jr. was ultimately influential in the effort to found such an office, but to understand his role, it is useful to look at the campaign in a larger context and understand some of the principal forces behind it.

“BUMPY AND NONLINEAR COURSE OF CHANGE”

Writing about the long-term impacts of the Civil War, Steven Hahn refers to a “bumpy and nonlinear course of change.”¹³¹ There is perhaps no more fitting description for the development of national parks in the United States. Management of the national parks had been a persistent challenge for Congress since the passage of the Yellowstone Act in 1872. Even after Yosemite Valley was granted to the state of California in 1864,

¹²⁸ See Susan L. Klaus, “Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.,” in Charles A. Birnbaum and Robin Karson, eds., *Pioneers of American Landscape Design* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2000), 273–276.

¹²⁹ Rolf Diamant, “The Olmsteds and the Development of the National Park System,” In Lucy Lawlis, Carolyn Loughlin, and Lauren Meier, eds. *The Master List of Design Projects of the Olmsted Firm 1857–1979*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: National Association for Olmsted Parks and National Park Service, 2008), 12.

¹³⁰ J. Horace McFarland, “Are National parks Worthwhile,” (*Sierra Club Bulletin* no. 8, 1911), 238, <https://archive.org/details/sierraclubbullet81912sier/page/238>

¹³¹ Steven Hahn, “What Sort of World Did the Civil War Make?,” In Gregory Downs and Kate Masur, eds., *The World the Civil War Made* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 340.

Congress remained entangled in resolving land claims in the Valley for another four years. And, not surprisingly, it proved easier to agree to create a park than to agree on how to fund it and operate it. Yellowstone National Park, for example, was not allotted any dedicated operating funds for its first eight years of operation. It wasn't until 1880 that Congress finally included in its budget a modest \$10,000 for improvement and protection of the park.

This haphazard process reflected a deep-seated ambivalence about government's role in creating, protecting, and managing vast national parks. Each time Congress established a new national park, it followed with a round of "buyer's remorse," evidenced in an inability to agree on management processes or funding mechanisms for the growing park system. The result was a somewhat jagged course toward the modern park service. As historian Robert Righter points out, "The idea that the democratic process moved with perfect purpose toward the creation of national parks . . . simply was not the case. National parks, although admittedly an outgrowth of the national interest, often were not established as a result of an outpouring of popular sentiment. Rather, they were the offspring of relatively small pockets of private individuals and public officials intent on manipulating, and occasionally avoiding, the congressional process."¹³²

Those pockets of interest expressed no such ambivalence. John Muir and Robert Underwood Johnson, for example, were remarkably prolific national park boosters and publicists. They made for an extraordinarily effective team: Muir, the great naturalist and storyteller and the founder of the Sierra Club, and Johnson, the indefatigable and well-connected activist who was also the editor of *Century* magazine. Though much of their energy was focused on establishing an expansive Yosemite National Park in 1890 (the existing Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Grove state reserve were added to the park in 1906), their campaigning did much to elevate public awareness about the value of these new national parks across the country.

High-profile individuals like John Muir represented a popular face for park advocacy; carefully hidden from public view, always operating behind the scenes, was another powerful national park ally—the railroads. A number of influential railroad corporations believed that national parks and tourism development could boost their long-term business interests by bringing new facilities and customers. These companies and their leaders "quickly realized that spectacular places such as Yellowstone, Yosemite, and the Grand Canyon would draw more tourists—and thus more passengers and freight for their lines—if they were preserved and managed by the government rather than turned over to private hands."¹³³ They also recognized the advantage of establishing a central administrative body for national parks that would be more effectively positioned

¹³² Robert W. Righter, "National Monuments to National Parks: The Use of the Antiquities Act of 1906," *History eLibrary*, National Park Service. <https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/hisnps/npshistory/righter.htm>.

¹³³ Benjamin Heber Johnson, *Escaping the Dark, Gray City: Fear and Hope in Progressive-Era Conservation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017), 159.

to press Congress for appropriations for roads, trails, and other needed infrastructure. “Both railroad and automobile interests advocated more consistent administration of the existing parks,” wrote historian Robin Winks in an essay on the 1916 NPS Organic Act, “in order to protect them more effectively, and also to make certain that accommodations and campgrounds were held to a consistent standard for the public’s pleasure.”¹³⁴ Secretary of Interior Walter Fisher assessed railroad support for the parks with unusual candor: “these men have reached that degree of enlightenment in their selfishness—in their self-interest—that they have come to the conclusion that it was for their own best interest to have a National Park Bureau established.”¹³⁵

Over time, national park champions began to emerge in Congress as well, such as Missouri Senator George C. Vest and Tennessee Senator William B. Bate, two former Confederate soldiers who became ardent Yellowstone supporters. Turning back an attempt to cut the size of Yellowstone in the 1890s, Bate reminded his colleagues, “Yellowstone National Park is a reservation set apart by the Government for the people in common . . . I do not desire to see it diverted from the original intention.”¹³⁶ Even though Yosemite was under state control, Bate recognized a continuing Congressional interest in the Valley’s future: “I look



Fig. 8.2. *The Fallen Monarch*, Southern Pacific Co., 1899. Troop F. of the 6th Cavalry, Mariposa Big Tree Grove, Yosemite Valley. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

¹³⁴ Robin Winks, “The National Park Service Act Of 1916: ‘A Contradictory Mandate’?” *Denver University Law Review* 74 (1997), 6; available at <http://npshistory.com/publications/winks.htm>.

¹³⁵ Terence Young, “Social Reform Through Parks: The American Civic Association’s Program For A Better America,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 22, no. 4 (1996), 460.

¹³⁶ See Louis C. Cramton, “Congressional Friends of Yellowstone,” *Early History of Yellowstone National Park and Its Relation to National Park Policies* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1932), https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/yell/cramton/sec12.htm.

upon it [Yellowstone National Park] as I do upon the reservation of Yosemite Valley and of the big trees in Mariposa Grove.”¹³⁷

Vest’s efforts to provide basic legal authorities to protect Yellowstone’s threatened resources repeatedly passed the Senate only to fail in the House. Finally, in 1886, the U.S. Army was called upon to stop the vandalism of the geysers and other fragile park phenomena and end poaching of the park’s remnant bison herd. The army played an essential role in immediately stopping this desecration, according to NPS historians Harlan D. Unrau and G. Frank Williss, but the military presence was by no means an ideal solution. Indeed, it complicated administration considerably: “Although the army officers performed a creditable job, the arrangement in Yellowstone, at least, resulted in a most confusing administration at the park level: All appropriations for improvements were expended by an office of the Engineer Corps who was completely independent of the Interior Department or the park superintendent. The management and protection were in the hands of an army officer appointed by the Secretary of War.”¹³⁸

It wasn’t until 1894 that energetic Iowa Congressman John Lacey, a member and later Chairman of House Committee on Public Lands, maneuvered the Yellowstone Park Protection Act (one of several “Lacey Acts”) through the recalcitrant House. For John Sheail, “The Act’s significance was in making the national park part of the U.S. district of Wyoming, and therefore, subject to enforcement by a resident commissioner, backed by a force of



Fig. 8.3. *Men Who Captured Poacher Howell, Posed with 8 Confiscated Bison Heads by Gandy, ca. 1894.* “Left to right, in uniform, are Dr. Charles M. Gandy (standing), Lieutenant John T. Vance, Captain George Lawson Scott, and Lieutenant Forsythe.” Catalog 16058, YELL 36953. National Park Service, Yellowstone National Park.

¹³⁷ United States Congress, *Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the Senate* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1892), 4124.

¹³⁸ Harlan D. Unrau and G. Frank Williss, *Administrative History: Expansion of the National Park Service in the 1930s* (Denver Service Center, National Park Service, September 1983), https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/unrau-williss/adhi.htm.

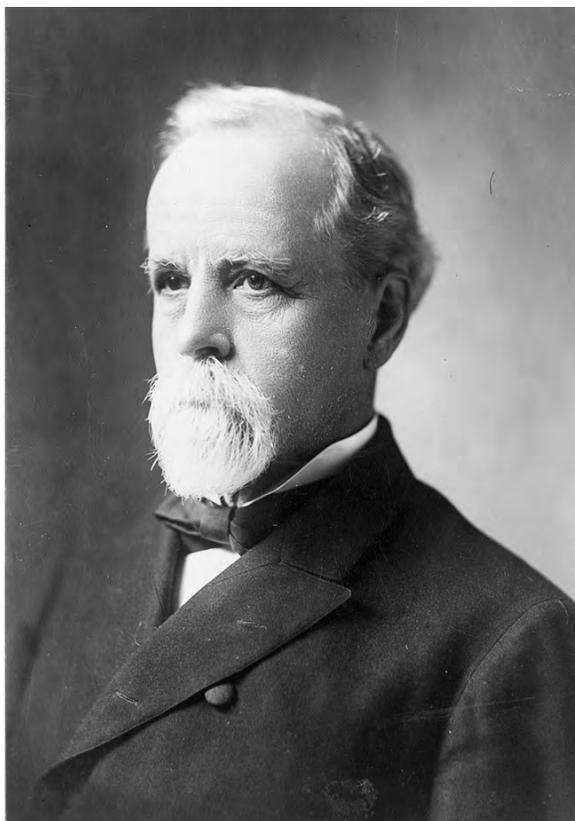


Fig. 8.4. John F. Lacey by B. M. Clinedinst, ca. 1903. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

marshals.”¹³⁹ Ultimately these authorities were applied by Congress to Yosemite, Sequoia, and General Grant (Kings Canyon). For the first time, an administrative framework was codified for national parks, laying the cornerstone for a national park service.

Lacey did not stop there. Richard West Sellars describes Lacey as “the first member of Congress to make preservation and conservation truly central to his political agenda, an agenda that advocated federal intervention to curb what he saw as waste and misuse of both natural and historic aspects of the American scene.”¹⁴⁰ In 1900, he introduced legislation to “establish and administer national parks, and for other purposes.” Lacey’s bill—in effect, an early draft of the 1906 Antiquities Act—suggested that the scope of places deemed worthy of preservation as a public trust should be expanded beyond scenic areas to include sites of archeological and cultural significance. The idea was new but not without precedent; the War Department had expressed a similar notion in its creation of a number of military parks on former Civil War battlefields.

Lacey’s bill stated that the President of the United States “may, from time to time, set apart and reserve tracts of public land, which for their scenic beauty, natural wonders

¹³⁹ John Sheail, *Nature’s Spectacle: The World’s First National Parks and Protected Places* (London, UK: Earthscan, 2010), 80.

¹⁴⁰ Richard West Sellars, “A Very Large Array: Early Federal Historic Preservation—The Antiquities Act, Mesa Verde, and the National Park Service Act,” *Natural Resources Journal*. 47 (Spring 2007), 272.



Fig. 8.5. *Cliff Palace, Mesa Verde* by Haines Photo Company, ca. 1918. Mesa Verde was one of the sites protected by President Roosevelt in 1906. Panoramic Photographs Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

or curiosities, ancient ruins or relics, or other objects of scientific or historic interest, or springs of medicinal or other properties it is desirable to protect and utilize in the interest of the public; and the President shall, by public proclamation, declare the establishment of such reservations.”¹⁴¹ The bill went on to provide that “such reservations shall be known as national parks and shall be under the exclusive control of the Secretary of the Interior, who is hereby empowered to prescribe such rules and regulations and establish such services as he shall deem necessary for the care and management of the same.” The contours of the national park system were beginning to come into focus. In the language of Lacey’s 1900 proposed legislation, observed NPS Historian Ronald Lee, “one may perhaps discern one of the first expressions of the idea of a National Park Service.”¹⁴² By establishing “rules and regulations” and providing “services . . . for the care and management” of “national parks,” this draft bill provided a conceptual framework for the unified administration of a national park system.

Thus, the final version of the Antiquities Act passed in 1906 (another Lacey Act) was in some respects the first national park service “organic act.”¹⁴³ The 1906 Act retained from key elements of the 1900 bill: it established a clear and systematic process for the executive branch to expand, through presidential proclamation, the domain of the national park system, and, perhaps most importantly, it gave the president the authority to protect not only prehistoric ruins but also any “objects of scientific or historic interest.” It was a watershed moment for the nascent U.S. park system. As Sellars noted, “In the realm of historic and natural preservation on the nation’s public lands, no law had ever approached the scope of the 1906 Antiquities Act. Much more broadly than with individual national park enabling legislation, the Act made explicit that preservation of historic, archeological, and other scientific sites on lands controlled by the federal

¹⁴¹ U.S. Government, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of the General Land Office* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1904), 61.

¹⁴² Ronald F. Lee, *The Story of the Antiquities Act*, Archaeology Program, National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/archeology/pubs/Lee/index.htm>.

¹⁴³ Lacey lost his bid for a ninth term in Congress in the fall of 1906 and headed home to Iowa. One can only speculate, but it seems likely that, had he served longer, the final legislation establishing the National Park Service would have been yet another Lacey Act.

government was indeed a federal responsibility.”¹⁴⁴ An eager President Theodore Roosevelt was prepared to interpret this new authority as broadly as he could—Roosevelt proclaimed no fewer than eighteen national monuments, including Muir Woods and Grand Canyon.

Despite his enthusiasm for national parks and monuments, President Roosevelt did not establish a national parks bureau, influenced no doubt by his outspoken Forest Chief, Gifford Pinchot, who steadfastly opposed the creation of a potential bureaucratic rival to his new Forest Service. Pinchot proposed that the 1904 legislation establishing the U.S. Forest Service include national parks in the Forest Service portfolio. President Roosevelt endorsed Pinchot’s idea, but John Lacey, ever-present park defender, blocked the provision in the House. Pinchot and Roosevelt did not quite give up. “I urge that all our national parks adjacent to national forests be placed completely under the control of the forest service of the Agricultural Department,” Roosevelt said in his last message to Congress, delivered in 1908, “instead of leaving them as they now are, under the Interior Department and policed by the army.”¹⁴⁵

By 1910, however, with Pinchot out of the government, President Howard Taft’s administration signaled its readiness to support the establishment of a professional parks bureau within the Department of Interior. In *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, Sellars recounts how Taft’s Secretary of Interior, Richard Ballinger, with help from McFarland, envisioned a parks bureau with a “suitable force of superintendents, supervising engineers, and landscape architects, inspectors, park guards, and other employees.”¹⁴⁶ Taft endorsed this plan in his 1911 message to Congress. Borrowing the themes of Olmsted’s Yosemite Report and Marsh’s *Man and Nature*, Taft declared that a national parks bureau was “essential for proper management of the parks” and “an obligation of the government to preserve them for the edification and recreation of the people.” Taft’s message requested funding to “bring all these natural wonders within easy reach of the people” to enhance the park’s “accessibility and usefulness.”¹⁴⁷ As Taft later explained to a meeting of the ACA, “We have the money. It is not going to take enough to exhaust the Treasury. It is a proper expense, a necessary expense. Let us have the bureau.”¹⁴⁸

In 1911, with Taft’s backing, Utah Senator Reed Smoot and California Representative John Raker introduced the first of many bills to establish a national park bureau. By 1912, even Theodore Roosevelt had come around to supporting the idea of a national parks bureau. While Congress was not yet prepared to act on legislation, J. Horace McFarland and his ACA began to lay the groundwork for a political campaign that would eventually lead to the establishment of what they now referred to as a “National Park Service.”

¹⁴⁴ Sellars, “A Very Large Array,” 293.

¹⁴⁵ Theodore Roosevelt, “Extracts From President Roosevelt’s Message To Congress,” (*Science*, Vol. XVIII, July-December 1908, The Science Press, New York, 1908,) 873 <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/28/729/868>

¹⁴⁶ Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 30.

¹⁴⁷ House Reports, 63rd Congress, 3rd Session, December 7, 1914–March 4, 1915 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1915), 36.

¹⁴⁸ President Howard Taft, National Park Service: Hearing Before the Committee on the Public Lands, United States. Congress. House. Committee on Public Lands, 1914, 6.

SEE AMERICA FIRST

McFarland and other early National Park Service advocates did not have to look far for a model to follow. In 1911, the Canadian Parliament created a unified administration for all of Canada's national parks, with the passage of the Dominion Forest Reserves and Parks Act. James Bernard Harkin, the first Commissioner of the National Parks of Canada, was eager to share the new act with national parks supporters in the United States. Harkin even sent transcripts of the parliamentary debate on the act to U.S. park service advocates.

Canadian progress on national parks added fuel to the fire lit by the "See America First" campaign, launched by U.S. railroad companies, which were alarmed by increasing numbers of U.S. tourists visiting Canadian national parks on Canadian trains. Taft's Secretary of Interior Walter Fisher weighed in, arguing, "We should try to make our people spend their money in this country instead of abroad, and certainly as far as spending it abroad

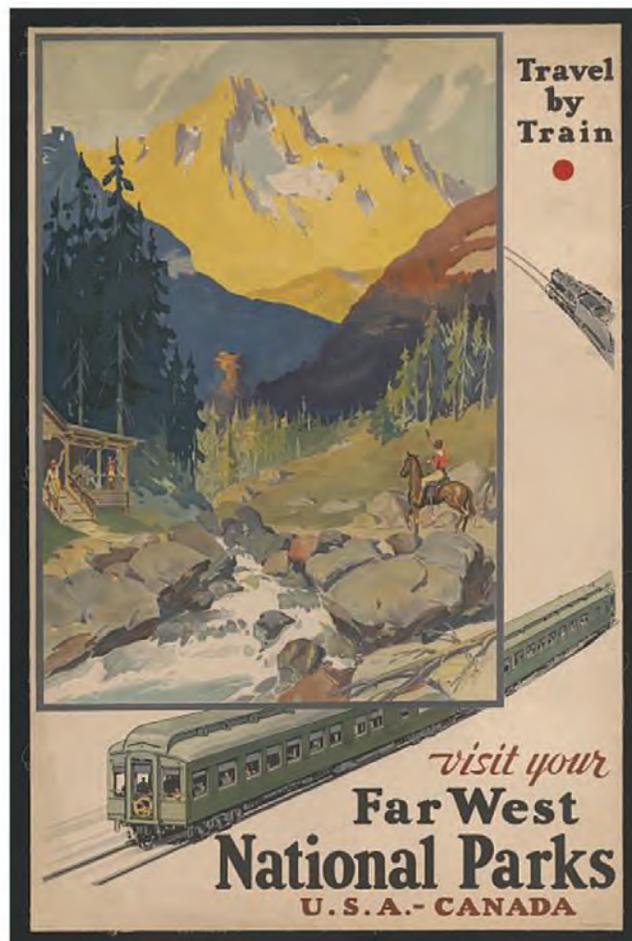


Fig. 8.6. *Visit your far west national parks. Travel by train.* Newman-Monroe Co., ca. 1920. This and the "See America First" travel posters promoted the railroad as the connection to national parks in the early twentieth century. Color lithograph. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

for the scenic effect.”¹⁴⁹ Even more to the point, as the ACA reminded Congress from its 1911 National Parks Conference, most of the money being spent in Canada would have remained in this country “if the United States had been as zealous in developing its national parks.”¹⁵⁰ ACA president McFarland pointed out that “the people of the United States will not need to go abroad if they are provided with the means here to see the things that are beautiful.” Reminiscent of the 1865 Yosemite Report, when Olmsted equated the importance of public parks with that of national defense posts, McFarland urged the United States to tackle the creation of a national park system “with the same spirit that has made possible enterprises like the Panama Canal.”

Adding further urgency to the cause was the U.S. Army’s signaling that the end was approaching for its administrative and enforcement role in the national parks. Every summer, cavalry units would leave their base at San Francisco’s Presidio and ride hundreds of miles into the Sierra Nevada mountains to patrol Yosemite and Sequoia national parks. The Army’s presence in the west was on the decline after the conclusion of the Indian Wars, which marked the final subjugation of native populations and full expropriation of their homelands. Providing personnel for summer patrols of the parks was even more of a drain on resources now required elsewhere, a drain the War Department had little enthusiasm for continuing indefinitely. External threats posed by the Mexican Revolution and the outbreak of the First World War in Europe further accelerated the military’s desire to end its involvement in the national parks.

SOME SORT OF COMPENSATION:

HETCH HETCHY AND THE BIRTH OF A NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

No development was more influential in setting the stage for a professional national parks bureau than the bitter battle over San Francisco’s proposal to dam the Tuolumne River in Yosemite National Park’s magnificent Hetch Hetchy Valley. As the long and contentious struggle played out in Washington, civic and conservation groups across the country, spearheaded by the ACA, mobilized to stop the dam. For the first time, a national park–related issue became a national cause. The effort was truly national: California’s Sierra Club and New England’s Appalachian Mountain Club struck a powerful east-west alliance to defeat the dam that grew into a larger organization. Together, the two groups founded the Society for the Preservation of National Parks, guided by an advisory council that included J. Horace McFarland and the poet Harriet Monroe (who was considered “second only to John Muir in efficacy and prominence as an opponent to the reservoir scheme.”¹⁵¹)

The Hetch Hetchy controversy was central in defining the thinking of Olmsted Jr. on national park policies. Olmsted became involved as a member of the ACA; he was charged with laying out the case for protecting the integrity of Yosemite’s scenic beauty. In doing

¹⁴⁹ Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 100.

¹⁵⁰ J. Horace McFarland, “Remarks by Mr. J. Horace McFarland, President of the American Civic Association, *Proceedings of the National Park Conference Held at the Yellowstone National Park, September 11 and 12, 1911*, Department of the Interior, https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/npc/proceedings-npc1/sec1.htm.

¹⁵¹ Johnson, *Escaping the Dark, Gray City*, 146.



Fig. 8.7. Map of a portion of the Sierra Nevada adjacent to the Yosemite Valley from surveys made by CHs F. Hoffmann and J. T. Gardner, 1863–1867, showing the geographic relationship between Hetch Hetchy Valley (#1) and Yosemite Valley (#2). Geological Survey of California. From J.D. Whitney, *The Yosemite Guide-Book: A Description of the Yosemite Valley and the Adjacent Region of the Sierra Nevada, and of the Big Trees of California with Two Maps* (Cambridge, MA: University Press, 1874). David Rumsey Map Collection, Stanford University.

so, Olmsted was forced to distinguish between what might be appropriate development for a municipal or regional park—in which reservoirs were often acceptable and even scenic features—from what was appropriate in a national park.

Olmsted’s summary of the affair, published by the *Boston Evening Transcript* in 1913, as the controversy neared its end, demonstrated the forcefulness of Olmsted’s opposition to the Hetchy-Hetchy reservoir proposal. The principal point to be considered, in his opinion, was “the effect of the proposal upon the value of the Yosemite National Park.”¹⁵² At issue was the legitimacy of the assertions of San Francisco’s municipal engineers that reservoir construction would not inhibit the appreciation of landscape scenery. The engineers reasoned, “Granting the desirability of keeping certain areas free . . . of population for the purpose of drawing public water-supplies from them, and the purpose of keeping certain areas free of population for the purpose of using them for parks . . . there seems to be no reason why these two classes of areas should be kept separate . . . There is every reason why the two uses should be combined.”

¹⁵² Frederick Law Olmsted, “Olmsted on Hetch Hetchy,” *Boston Evening Transcript*, November 19, 1913. Reprinted in the *Sierra Club Bulletin* 9 (1913–1915), 192-199, <https://archive.org/details/sierraclubbullet9115sier/page/n305>

Olmsted recognized this logic. “I have urged this principle again and again,” he admitted, “and have not done a little in helping to put it into practice . . . Not infrequently, land acquired and policed primarily for park purposes may serve incidentally . . . [as] sites for reservoirs, with no impairment of their park value or even with an actual increase in park value.” But while this principle may have been true of municipal or regional parks, at Yosemite, another principle was involved, that aesthetic value should not be compromised by utilitarian value. “Some things,” Olmsted explained, “. . . are of a value wholly or primarily for their beauty, and if they have any direct utilitarian value it is utterly secondary and incidental. If we can afford it, we direct our efforts toward conserving and making available its primary value, its beauty.”

In opposing the Hetch Hetchy reservoir, Olmsted was making the argument for scenic preservation in the twentieth century, using terms and reasoning that had justified public parks since the 1850s, now updated with a Progressive emphasis on value and efficiency: “Certain kinds of valuably refreshing scenery are so incompatible with the ordinary economic uses of land . . . [that they] must be given over specifically to that purpose . . . Until it is deliberately concluded that the value of the landscape beauty is no longer the prime justification for the maintenance of the park, the only safe rule is to permit no other avoidable use . . . which in any degree impairs the value of the park for that purpose.” The advocates of the dam, in other words, “must bear the burden of proving that the new use [would] not impair the scenery.” Olmsted quoted his father’s 1865 analysis and descriptions of the beauty from his Yosemite Report and specifically refuted the municipal engineers’ claims that the reservoir would not damage “the landscape qualities which, in all the world, are peculiar to Yosemite scenery . . . and which in the next few centuries will, I believe, become of incalculably larger value to humanity.” Olmsted defended “this commodity called Yosemite scenery” as a sound investment that would accrue value in the twentieth century as beautiful scenery became increasingly scarce. He concluded by summarizing a basic preservationist philosophy for the new century: “The lesson of history in this respect is unmistakable, a thing which many people have held to be of great and peculiar beauty and which cannot be replaced, even if the predominant men of the day fail to appreciate its beauty . . . ought not to be destroyed or radically altered.”¹⁵³

One aspect of Olmsted’s ultimately unsuccessful defense of the Hetch Hetchy Valley is worth noting. The 1865 Yosemite Report written by the elder Olmsted is often supposed to have been completely lost until 1952, when his biographer Laura Wood Roper pieced together portions of the report and published it in something like its original form in *Landscape Architecture*.¹⁵⁴ But the texts Roper pieced together had always been accessible to the younger Olmsted; he quotes from them extensively and verbatim in his 1913 analysis of the Hetch Hetchy controversy. He was in fact so interested in his father’s ideas that he became the first editor of his papers, a project he undertook with Theodora Kimball, the librarian of the Harvard School of Landscape Architecture.

¹⁵³ Ethan Carr, *Wilderness by Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 70.

¹⁵⁴ See discussion in first section of this report.

Their efforts resulted in the first edited volumes of the elder Olmsted's voluminous writings.¹⁵⁵ This direct connection to his father's Yosemite Report, and to his ideas and philosophy generally, indicate the degree to which Olmsted was grounded in nineteenth-century justifications for park making even as he addressed the challenges of the twentieth century.

The campaign against the Hetch Hetchy dam was national in scope; it was the first grassroots mobilization on behalf of a national park. The scope of the movement is evident in the range of organizations that joined the movement beyond the ACA. The American Society of Landscape Architects, an organization Olmsted Jr. helped to establish, complained in its publication *Landscape Architecture* that public opinion was being ignored: "It seems to be a necessary result of our scheme of democratic government that well-organized selfish interest can often bring greater pressure to bear on our legislators to turn public property to private account than our loosely organized public opinion can bring to bear to keep for the people the people's property."¹⁵⁶

At its biannual conventions in 1908 and 1910, the 800,000-member Federation of Women's Clubs, one of the nation's largest and most influential civic organizations, went on record opposing the flooding of Hetch Hetchy Valley. A national park "supplies the better, greater things of life" wrote Federation president Mary Belle King Sherman, who later championed the creation of a national park service. Sketching an expansive, forward-thinking vision for the future national park system, King declared that the parks possessed "some of the characteristics of the museum, the library, the fine arts hall, and the public school."¹⁵⁷ The Federation's member clubs followed their president's lead. "We are earnestly opposed to such a needless local use of a priceless national possession in which the entire citizenship is interested," wrote the Graffort Club of Portsmouth, N.H., in a petition, one of the 150 women's clubs that appealed to elected representatives.

Conservation organizations also joined the movement. At the height of the campaign, almost twenty conservation organizations, including the Appalachian Mountain Club, the Boone and Crockett Clubs, and the Sierra Club, advocated scenic protection for Hetch Hetchy. This list is not exhaustive, as Alfred Runte points out: "To these could be added a host of garden clubs, women's clubs, horticultural societies, and other sympathetic coalitions. The accelerating transformation of the United States from a rural to an urban-based nation foretold that the increasing appreciation of nature would continue."¹⁵⁸ Historian Benjamin Johnson describes the Hetch Hetchy movement as part of the "vigorous grassroots civic culture" that was taking root across America at the turn

¹⁵⁵ See Theodora Kimball, ed., *Frederick Law Olmsted: Landscape Architect, 1822–1903* (1922; reprinted by Leopold Classic Library, 2015), and Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and Theodora Kimball, eds., *Forty Years of Landscape Architecture: Frederick Law Olmsted, Landscape Architect* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1928).

¹⁵⁶ Frederick Law Olmsted, "Hetch-Hetchy: The San Francisco Water Supply Controversy," *Landscape Architecture* 4 (1913–1914), 72.

¹⁵⁷ Polly Welts Kaufman, *National Parks and the Women's Voice: A History* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 35.

¹⁵⁸ Runte, *National Parks*, 85.

¹⁵⁹ Johnson, *Escaping the Dark, Gray City*, 134.



Fig. 8.8. *Looking up Hetch Hetchy Valley from Surprise Point* by Isaiah West Tabler, 1908. Published in *Sierra Club Bulletin*, Vol. VI, No. 4, Plate XLVI, January 1908. Courtesy the Sierra Club.



Fig. 8.9. *Contemporary View of the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir* by Clarisa Flores. Courtesy National Park Service, Yosemite National Park.

of the century.¹⁵⁹ This civic culture, a byproduct of progressivism, reflected a renewed faith in the powers of equity and benevolence. “Only when American Progressives commenced their assault on laissez-faire and built the capacity of the state to regulate the economy,” writes Johnson, “could conservation thrive. . . . Benjamin De Witt noted in 1915, in so far as conservation of natural resources is considered, the progressive movement in the nation is of the utmost importance because of the aid which the national government, and it alone, can give.”¹⁶⁰

In the absence of an overarching national park legislative mandate, uniform management policies, and the oversight of a professional parks bureau, it was inevitable that the Hetch Hetchy would become a political football. The storm of controversy surrounding the dam proposal overwhelmed an understaffed Department of Interior. Following inconclusive deliberations by three presidential administrations—including five Interior secretaries—it fell to the legislative branch to make a decision. The Hetch Hetchy issue unified popular opinion, but it split the ranks of national park supporters in congress. Two stalwart friends of the parks, California congressmen William Kent and John Raker (who would both later introduce bills to create a national park service), endorsed the dam. In fact, Raker even had his name attached to the final Hetch Hetchy legislation. In December 1913, after much debate, Congress approved the Raker Act, and it was signed into law by President Woodrow Wilson. The Hetch Hetchy dam would be built.

The Hetch Hetchy battle left its scars; there was certainly little appetite for any more bruising battles. There was, however, broad agreement that there had to be a better, more efficient way to deal with future national park-related controversies that would inevitably emerge. Some of the organizations that had mobilized around Hetch Hetchy, including the Society for the Preservation of National Parks, turned their attention to finding that better way. According to Benjamin Johnson, “The crucible of the Hetch Hetchy battle deepened the belief held by McFarland and the other principals of the society [for the Preservation of National Parks] that the institutional arrangements for national parks were inadequate . . . The society continued its work after the approval of the reservoir, turning its attention to the creation of an agency to manage the national parks.” As John Muir bitterly declared, “some sort of compensation must surely come out of this dark damn-dam-damnation.”¹⁶¹

Those who had supported the dam but who were otherwise sympathetic to national parks (including President Wilson, his Secretary of Interior Franklin Lane, and congressmen Kent and Raker) were now searching for a way to publicly reassert their fidelity to the national park movement. Seizing this opening, Horace McFarland reached out to the Wilson administration within days of the Raker Act’s passage and enlisted its support for a renewed national park service campaign. “If the Hetch Hetchy

¹⁶⁰ Johnson, *Escaping the Dark, Gray City*, 134.

¹⁶¹ John Warfield Simpson, *Dam!: Water, Power, Politics, and Preservation in Hetch Hetchy and Yosemite* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006), 176.

fight accomplished anything,” Robert Righter points out “it magnified the need for a federal agency committed to parks,” an agency that would clearly define “their meaning and mission.”¹⁶²

John Lacey and the Antiquities Act, the example of Canada’s park commission, the “See America First” campaign, strong backing from powerful railroad and automobile interests, the Army’s withdrawal from its park stewardship role, and perhaps most importantly, the rise of a new civic culture and an organized national conservation constituency galvanized by Hetch Hetchy— all had a role in “setting the table” for the eventual establishment of America’s National Park Service. When the final push to pass a national park service bill began to gain momentum—thanks to the efforts of William Kent, John Raker, Reed Smoot, Stephen Mather, Horace Albright, J. Horace McFarland, and Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., among others—the stars were already aligning. Olmsted Jr. would make some of his greatest professional contributions in the field of scenic preservation, but none was to be more significant than his role in drafting key portions of the 1916 legislation creating the National Park Service.

¹⁶² Robert W. Righter, *The Battle Over Hetch Hetchy: America’s Most Controversial Dam and the Birth of Modern Environmentalism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005), 193.

CHAPTER NINE

AN ALIGNMENT OF INTERESTS: THE CAMPAIGN FOR A NATIONAL PARK BUREAU

In 1911, Secretary of the Interior Walter L. Fisher convened a national park conference at Yellowstone. The conference assembled park concessioners, superintendents, railroad executives, local businessmen, and government officials for the first time to discuss national park management. A common theme emerged from the diverse group of attendees: some kind of national park bureau within the Department of the Interior could improve the management of the parks and aid in securing increased appropriations from Congress to support park improvements—roads, trails, and sewers, for example—that they all felt were vital to the preservation and enjoyment of the national scenic reservations. Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., who had been friends with J. Horace McFarland, president of the American Civic Association (ACA) and a fellow national parks advocate, since their efforts to protect Niagara Falls and the Hetch Hetchy Valley, did not attend the conference. Instead, McFarland read into the record a letter from Olmsted supporting the creation of a national park bureau.

Over the course of the next five years, bills to establish a national park service benefited from the work of many people's hands, but three individuals—McFarland, Stephen Mather, and Olmsted—played particularly critical roles. Together, these three men shaped the contours of the final legislation and built the political support that led to its eventual enactment.



Fig. 9.1. Portrait of J. Horace McFarland, 1934. Pennsylvania State Archives, MG-85 J. Horace McFarland Papers.

J. HORACE MCFARLAND: PLAIN NECESSITY FOR GOOD CITIZENSHIP

A key figure advocating this administrative initiative was the Pennsylvania publisher and civic activist J. Horace McFarland. Although McFarland and his American Civic Association (ACA) played a central role in the creation of the National Park Service, the organization and its vision for the future of national parks is not well understood or adequately covered in many National Park Service histories. In part, this is because of the agency's intense loyalty to its legendary early administrators, Stephen Mather and Horace Albright; much of the credit for the establishment of the National Park Service has gone to them. Over time, the iconic image of the national park service campaign became the much-published photograph of Stephen Mather seated at the head of the dining table beneath the towering redwoods in Sequoia National Park with his "Mather Mountain Party" of influential politicians, editors, and railroad executives. McFarland may have been less photogenic than Mather, but he was no less effective. At the 1911 conference at Yellowstone, four years before Mather's dinner party, Interior Secretary Walter Fisher introduced McFarland as "one of the persons in the United States who is most deeply concerned with the development and use of our national parks."

At that conference, McFarland declared, "It seems to me that it is now time that the national parks shall cease to be incidentally handled and come to such handling as will make them as definite on the map of the United States as are the parks in any large city."¹⁶³ His goal



Fig. 9.2. *Stephen T. Mather's Mountain Party* by Dr. Gilbert Grosvenor, 1915. National Geographic Image Collection, Image 558147. National Geographic Creative.

¹⁶³ J. Horace McFarland, *Proceedings*.

to create a national park bureau modeled on the precedents of municipal and county park commissions was clear: “Parks are successful when they are the primary object of attention on the part of some one person . . . A park commissioner is the usual means.”

In the years before and after the 1911 conference, McFarland led the campaign to create a national park bureau, in the words of his biographer Ernest Morrison, with “single-minded perseverance.”¹⁶⁴ Between 1908 and 1916, ACA was the driving force behind no fewer than sixteen park bureau bills introduced in Congress. McFarland’s drive was clearly evident in the 1912 “Preamble of The American Civic Association’s Movement for a Bureau of National Parks,” published in the organization’s magazine:

When the American people make their demand insistent enough, it may be expected that Congress will enact the legislation necessary to make possible the large and dignified administration and development of the National Parks.¹⁶⁵

After the Yellowstone conference, McFarland convened his group’s 1911 annual meeting in Washington, D.C., dedicating the entire program to presenting the “needs for a federal Bureau of National Parks.”¹⁶⁶

McFarland’s address at the 1911 ACA conference offered a brief history of “the American park idea.” Like Olmsted Jr. and his father had, McFarland recognized the continuity between playgrounds, municipal parks, parkways, and “the nation’s larger playgrounds”: state and national parks. All these parks promoted the general goals of public health, enhanced welfare, and (with a nod to Progressive sensibilities) improved productivity. “Everything that the limited scope of a city park can do as quick aid to the citizen,” McFarland explained, national parks “are ready to do more thoroughly, on a greater scale.”¹⁶⁷

McFarland also continued a theme he had addressed earlier. Like many of his fellow progressives, McFarland worried that the influx of immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had eroded national identity and patriotism. Besides being sound investments in public “healthful efficiency,” McFarland and others often portrayed parks, and the appreciation of American scenic beauty generally, as a sure means of promoting sincere patriotism and a unified national spirit. An overarching objective of civic reform remained central to ACA’s vision for national parks and a national park service. “Who shall say that our natural beauty of scenery,” asked McFarland, speaking before the 1908 National Governor’s Conference, “is not the heritage of all and a plain necessity for good citizenship?”

¹⁶⁴ Ellen Terrell, “John Horace McFarland: Unsung Hero of the National Park Service,” *Inside Adams*, August 25, 2016 [Blog post], Library of Congress, https://blogs.loc.gov/inside_adams/2016/08/john-horace-mcfarland-unsung-hero-of-the-national-park-service/.

¹⁶⁵ American Civic Association, “Preamble of the American, Civic Association’s Movement for a Bureau of National Parks,” (*American Civic Association, Series 11, no. 6, 1912*), <https://books.google.com/books?id=npFIAQAAMAAJ>

¹⁶⁶ American Civic Association, Proceedings of the National Parks Session of the American Civic Association (1911), <https://archive.org/details/americancivicass00amerrich/page/n4>

¹⁶⁷ Ibid

One of the reason so many advocates wanted a federal bureau dedicated to the management of national parks was the concern that the parks might be managed as national forests, which would imply allowing dam construction and other development based on the scientific principles of Progressive conservation. They had reason to worry; following the transfer of the forest reserves to the Department of Agriculture, the first head of the U.S. Forest Service, Gifford Pinchot, repeatedly proposed legislation that would include the national parks in his ambit, under the assumption that his foresters and hydrologists were better prepared to manage them. Defining the difference between national parks and national forests, therefore, became the central argument for creating a national parks bureau within the Department of the Interior. McFarland offered an emphatic argument for the critical difference between national parks and national forests:

The primary function of the national forest is to supply lumber. The primary purpose of the national park is to maintain in healthful efficiency the lives of the people who must use that lumber. The forests are the nation's reserve wood lots. The parks are the nation's reserve for the maintenance of individual patriotism and federal solidarity.¹⁶⁸



Fig. 9.3. Stephen T. Mather at Glacier Point, Yosemite National Park, 1926. National Park Service.

¹⁶⁸ Johnson, *Escaping the Dark*, Gray City, 168.

STEPHEN MATHER, MASTER PUBLICIST

Over the year following the inaugural Yosemite conference, the campaign led by McFarland and Olmsted to define policies for the management of national parks began to achieve results. Fisher convened a second national park conference at Yosemite in 1912 in which the proposed creation of a “national park service” (a name intended to imply parity with the U. S. Forest Service) again met unanimous approval.¹⁶⁹ The political scene also offered hope; the election of Woodrow Wilson in November of that year was interpreted by national park supporters as a promising sign. In 1913, Wilson appointed Franklin K. Lane, a Californian and former San Francisco city attorney, as Secretary of the Interior. On the one hand, the appointment of Lane sealed the fate of the Hetch Hetchy Valley; he felt the dam was necessary for the continued prosperity of his home city. On the other hand, Lane brought with him an informed concern for the national parks, and as an antidote to Hetch Hetchy, an active agenda for their improvement.

In January 1915, Lane convinced Chicago businessman Stephen Tyng Mather to come to Washington to oversee the administration of the national parks. The charismatic Mather, who was born in California, had already made a fortune in the borax industry, but at age forty-seven he had no interest in retirement. Upon beginning his new duties, Mather immediately scheduled a third national park conference on the campus of the University of California at Berkeley where he and Lane had known each other as students. Mather and his new assistant, a young law student named Horace M. Albright, made passage of national park service legislation their first priority.

Opposition arose primarily from a handful of fiscally conservative congressmen concerned about the cost of expanding the federal bureaucracy. There was also criticism from the outspoken former chief of the Forest Service, Gifford Pinchot. McFarland, Mather, and Kent worried about Pinchot’s enduring influence on current Forest Service administrators and the “constant and continual hostility” of the Forest Service to national park service legislation.¹⁷⁰ Park service supporters eventually managed to execute an end run around Pinchot, by eliciting a supportive letter from Chief Forester Henry Graves. Graves wrote that he had no problem providing “adequate authority to organize and administer effectively the national parks,” just as long as national monuments managed by the Forest Service would not be transferred to the new agency. With this political obstacle overcome, Mather coordinated what was by now a familiar strategy for scenic preservation activists: a massive media campaign. He convinced railroad companies to underwrite the publication of 275,000 copies of a *National Parks Portfolio* that were distributed to legislators, civic leaders, newspaper and magazine editors, and other potentially influential individuals that could aid the cause.

¹⁶⁹ Department of the Interior, *Proceedings of the National Park Conference Held at the Yosemite National Park, October 14, 15, and 16, 1912* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1913), 96.

¹⁷⁰ Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 37

Mather provided national park service advocates with a high-profile, charismatic leader who was also an adroit salesperson. Mather was socially well connected, and he cultivated important and influential allies, particularly in publishing and the business community. His famous Mather Mountain Party, which brought together key influencers, many of whom he knew personally, was a public relations triumph. Mather also provided a critical bridge between the government, including senior government officials and powerful congressmen, and citizen activists, including civic associations and conservation campaigners (who were still stinging from their bitter Hetch Hetchy defeat.) His capacity to build an effective coalition of these former adversaries is a testament to Mather's strategic thinking and interpersonal skills. His appointment as the first director of the new National Park Service was expected and universally welcomed by a broad spectrum of national park interests.

FREDERICK LAW OLNSTED JR. AND THE ASLA COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS AND NATIONAL FORESTS

There may have been superior polemicists at the time, but probably no one in the early twentieth century was better qualified than Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. to prepare legislation and policies that would establish a national park system and a national park agency to manage it. He was one of the eleven founding members of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), established in 1899 with John Charles Olmsted as its first president.¹⁷¹ One of Olmsted's most important roles in the ASLA was his participation in the Committee on National Parks and National Forests, which was set up in 1915 at the recommendation of ASLA President James Sturgis Pray; other members of the committee included Harris Reynolds, Stephen Child, Percival Gallagher, and Warren Manning.¹⁷²

In February 1916, the ASLA devoted its annual conference, held in Boston, to a discussion of national parks. In the keynote address, Richard B. Watrous, secretary of the ACA, noted that the new park service would "have a large work to do in the proper exploitation of the parks."¹⁷³ Between about 1908 and 1916, a broad consensus had formed among many scenic preservationists (including landscape architects such as Olmsted) that tourism was the only "dignified exploitation" of national parks. Tourism, a relatively benign economic activity, would justify the exclusion of more destructive uses, such as dams, logging, and grazing, in the parks. And tourism—especially auto tourism—would foster a broader, middle-class constituency for the parks.

¹⁷¹ Founding members of the ASLA also included Nathan Barrett, Beatrix Jones Farrand, Daniel Langton, Charles Lowrie, Warren Manning, Samuel Parsons Jr., George Pentecost Jr., O. C. Simonds, and Downing Vaux. Manning had worked in the Olmsted office from 1888 to 1896; Downing Vaux was the son of Calvert Vaux, with whom Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. had collaborated on many important park projects beginning with the Greensward Plan for Central Park in 1857.

¹⁷² Pray had also worked in the Olmsted Brothers office before establishing his own practice in 1903. Percival Gallagher, a member of the ASLA committee, worked in the Olmsted office, from 1894 until 1904, when he joined Pray's practice; he returned to the Olmsted firm around 1906.

¹⁷³ Richard B. Watrous, "The Proposed National Park Service," *Landscape Architecture* 6, no. 3 (April 1916), 101–105; American Society of Landscape Architects, "Resolutions of the American Society of Landscape Architects Concerning the National Park Service," *Landscape Architecture* 6, no. 3 (April 1916), 111–112.

The proceedings of the ASLA conference were published in a special issue of the organization's quarterly journal, *Landscape Architecture*. The issue included contributions by Olmsted as well as Manning, Pray, and Henry Hubbard, all current or former principals and associates of the Olmsted office, though each provided a distinct perspective on national parks. They all called for an organized and systematic development of a national service. They advocated an organized, professional, and uniform approach to park development, marketing, and operation to replace the haphazard approach that had characterized the establishment and management of fourteen national parks and thirty-five national monuments up to that point.¹⁷⁴ They endorsed specific criteria for establishing new parks. At Stephen Mather's suggestion, Warren Manning worked with records in the Department of the Interior and the illustrations in Muir's book *Our National Parks* to create an up-to-date inventory map of existing national parks and monuments. This inventory would, Mather hoped, provide the guide map for a group tour of the parks that would allow members of the ASLA, and the Committee in particular, to understand the "characteristics of each park, the present facilities, and their possibilities in the way of future development."¹⁷⁵

One of the key issues for the ASLA membership—professional landscape architects and designers—was the fundamental difference between national parks and national forests, which Olmsted explained in the same way McFarland had done for the ACA. For Olmsted, the all-important distinction between national parks and national forests hinged on a broad public appreciation of the beauty of landscape scenery:

National *Parks* are set apart primarily in order to preserve to the people for all time the opportunity of a peculiar kind of enjoyment and recreation, not measurable in economic terms and to be obtained only from the remarkable scenery which they contain—scenery of those primeval types which are in most parts of the world rapidly vanishing for all eternity before the increased thoroughness of the economic uses of the land. In the National Parks direct economic returns, if any, are properly the by-products; and even rapidity and efficiency in making them accessible to the people, although of great importance, are wholly secondary to the one dominant purpose of preserving essential esthetic qualities of their scenery unimpaired as heritage to the infinite numbers of generations to come.¹⁷⁶

In other words, the idea of the landscape park—a park set aside to preserve areas of scenic beauty and developed to enhance the appreciation of that beauty—could be extended from its nineteenth-century, metropolitan context to become the basis of management policies for scenic reservations in the twentieth century, but only if the parks were visited and

¹⁷⁴ These included Yellowstone, Yosemite, Sequoia, General Grant, Mount Rainier, Crater Lake, Wind Cave, Platt, Mesa Verde, Hot Springs Reservation, Glacier, Rocky Mountain, Sully's Hill, and Casa Grande Ruins.

¹⁷⁵ Stephen T. Mather, "Letter to the American Society of Landscape Architects," February 1916, as published in *Landscape Architecture* 6, no. 3 (April 1916), 122.

¹⁷⁶ Frederick Law Olmsted, "The Distinction Between National Parks and National Forests," *Landscape Architecture* 6, no. 3 (April 1916), 114–115.

appreciated by the “public.” The national parks could then become a “national park system,” a term which implied that “park development” would proceed in all parks according to a consistent set of policies.

National park advocates like McFarland, Olmsted, and many others assumed park development would be the key to the successful administration of national parks in the twentieth century. But all agreed, as well, that such development would prove disastrous for the parks if it were not implemented in ways consistent with the ultimate goal: the preservation of landscape scenery. The art of landscape architecture—specifically landscape park design—would therefore be the critical undertaking of the new park service if it were to successfully develop parks in ways that would assure the preservation of scenic qualities.

Mather was the public face of the campaign that ultimately succeeded in creating a new parks bureau, and McFarland organized the campaign’s grassroots support and the overall focus and coordination needed to move the legislation through Congress. But it was Olmsted who crafted the bill’s key language and provided the new agency with a distinctive rationale and a clear sense of purpose. His thinking, and that of his father, Frederick Law Olmsted Sr., can be seen throughout the 1916 Act.

THE OVERARCHING INFLUENCE OF THE OLMSTEDS ON THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE ORGANIC ACT

The final version of the 1916 Organic Act that established the National Park Service can appear at first glance to be a rather dry, utilitarian, bureaucratic document. In fact, the first third of the Act deals almost exclusively with the salary rates for various administrative positions. The few lines directly attributable to Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. provide the most descriptive language in the document. Stepping back and examining the Act in a larger context, however, makes evident the pervasive imprint of the Olmsteds throughout the legislation—an arc of influence beginning with the 1865 Yosemite Valley Report and the Niagara Falls plan, continuing through the firm’s work on scenic reservations, parkways, and metropolitan park systems, and returning once more to Yosemite during the Hetch Hetchy fight.

In the Yosemite Report, Olmsted senior repeatedly invoked the fundamental republican principle of free, universal public access and use. Yosemite Valley was being preserved “forever for popular resort and recreation,” for the “the free enjoyment of the people,” the “benefit of the entire nation,” and the protection for “all its citizens in the pursuit of happiness.” In less evocative but no less effective language, the 1916 Act speaks to the “enjoyment of future generations,” and promises that there will be no interference “with free access . . . by the public.”

The echoes of the Yosemite Report are also evident in J. Horace McFarland’s 1916 testimony before the House Committee on Public Lands recommending “the separation of

these lands from the public domain, to be held for the public, instead of being opened to private settlement.”¹⁷⁷ Fifty years earlier, Olmsted declared in the Yosemite Report, “It is the will of the Nation as embodied in the act of Congress that this scenery shall never be private property.”¹⁷⁸ Olmsted Jr. championed this cause just as passionately as his father and friend had. “One thing which made the deepest impression on me,” he wrote, is the “most priceless recreational quality of these great reservations . . . to know that one is free, of his own right as human being . . . unfenced . . . by the vexing artificial web of property rights.”¹⁷⁹

The senior Olmsted had also called for park development “markedly inharmonious with the scenery” and “artificial construction” to be allowed only “within the narrowest possible limits.”¹⁸⁰ This theme was picked up and amplified by Olmsted Jr. at the 1916 ASLA conference, where a resolution was adopted that, if it was not written by Olmsted, still fully reflected his thinking. “The need has long been felt not only for more adequate protection,” the text stated, “but also for rendering this landscape beauty more readily enjoyable through construction in the parks of certain necessary roads and buildings for the accommodation of visitors in a way to bring minimum of injury to these primeval landscapes.” None of this work should proceed, the resolution continued, without “comprehensive plans . . . [and] designs for construction” approved by “qualified expert advisors,” (in other words, by professional landscape architects.)¹⁸¹ While the section of the 1916 Act that addresses park uses and development does not specifically address the need for professional planning and design, legislative language made clear that the new agency had a responsibility to take steps to “promote and regulate” the proper use of parks in ways which protected “natural curiosities, wonders, or objects of interest” and conserved “the scenery or the natural or historic objects.” Furthermore, Olmsted Jr.’s language about conserving these features “unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations” is consistent with his father’s call in the Yosemite Report for any park changes to be undertaken “within the narrowest possible limits.”

The Olmsteds, like McFarland and his ACA, had long championed the efficiency and other benefits of “systemization.” In cities such as Buffalo, N. Y.; Boston, Mass.; Rochester, N. Y.; and Louisville, Ky., the senior Olmsted had recognized the benefits of scaling up from individual landscape designs and preparing comprehensive plans for entire metropolitan park systems. In the early decades of the twentieth century, the Olmsted Brothers became famous for their metropolitan park system plans, reflecting the latest ideas in city and regional park planning. Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. organized the first National Conference on City Planning and later founded the American City Planning Institute.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁷ United States Congress, “National Park Service: Hearing Before the Committee on the Public Lands,” House of Representatives, Sixty-Fourth Congress (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1916), 53.

¹⁷⁸ Frederick Law Olmsted, Yosemite Report.

¹⁷⁹ Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., “A Vacation in the National Parks and Forests,” *Landscape Architecture* 12, no. 2 (1921–1922), 117.

¹⁸⁰ Olmsted, *Yosemite Report*

¹⁸¹ William C. Tweed, *Rustic Architecture: 1916–1942* (National Park Service, Western Regional Office Division of Cultural Resource Management, 1977).

¹⁸² Rolf Diamant, “A Time for Park-Making: The Olmsteds and the Coming of Age of American Cities,” *The Public Historian* 36, no. 2 (2014), 123.

Olmsted, McFarland, and others could clearly see the many advantages of unified system of national parks. “The act made systematic the creation and administration of parks,” wrote historian Terence Young, “and the ACA supported the creation of a national park service . . . because their urban park experiences had taught them that systematization improved the ability of parks to reform society. Systematization would enhance the ability of national parks to reform America if, like urban parks before them, it led to standardization, development, and improved access.”¹⁸³

Congress was prepared to go along with this concept in 1916, though it took more than 50 years for legislators to clearly articulate (and codify in legislation) the interdependent benefits to be derived from a unified system of national parks. In the introduction to the “Act to Improve the Administration of the National Park System,” otherwise known as the General Authorities Act of 1970, Congress, taking advantage of the hindsight and experience gained from nearly a century of national park making, thoughtfully reflected on the significance of their achievement starting with the 1916 Organic Act:

These areas, though distinct in character, are united through their interrelated purposes and resources into one national park system as cumulative expressions of a single national heritage; that, individually and collectively, these areas derive increased national dignity and recognition of their superb environmental quality through their inclusion jointly with each other in one national park system preserved and managed for the benefit and inspiration of all the people of the United States.¹⁸⁴

On one issue related to the 1916 Act, however, Olmsted Jr. came up short. A National Park Service advisory commission, which he had strongly lobbied for, was dropped from the final version of the legislation. In a letter to McFarland, Olmsted had first suggested the formation of a “permanent independent board of overseers or commissioners in a position to safeguard . . . a harmonious continuity of policy” and to “discuss questions of general policy with the executive officer” (the director of the national park service). “This is the theory of unpaid park commissions all over the country, and it is a sound theory,” Olmsted concluded.¹⁸⁵ This concept of an advisory board, however, would be realized years later. In 1928, a Yosemite National Park Board of Expert Advisors was set up and Olmsted Jr. was appointed its first chair (63 years after Olmsted Sr. chaired the Yosemite Commission). The Historic Sites Act of 1935 finally codified the establishment of a National Park System Advisory Board, a body of experts created along the same lines as Olmsted Jr. originally envisioned for the 1916 Act.

¹⁸³ Young, “Social Reform Through Parks,” 469.

¹⁸⁴ “Act to Improve the Administration of the National Park System” (General Authorities Act), 1970 (84 Stat. 825).

¹⁸⁵ U.S. Department of the Interior, *Proceedings* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1911), 19.

OLMSTED, JR. AND A STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The essential thing in this legislation was that there should be declaration as to what a national park was; what it was for. Frederick Law Olmsted (Jr.) it was who phrased that definition, and with all the mutations of the national park legislation his phrasing has remained. It has been the only thing we were unwilling to give up. Our idea of an advisory council we had to let go, but we have never been willing to see the declaration as to the purposes of the national parks eliminated from the bill, which is the reason we feel that the bill which was passed in August last is worthwhile.

—J. Horace McFarland¹⁸⁶

The legislation to create a national park service had many contributing authors, most notably Representative William Kent from California, Robert Sterling Yard, J. Horace McFarland, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr, Robert B. Marshall, and Horace M. Albright. It was Olmsted, though, who wrote the critical statement of purpose paragraph in the bill.¹⁸⁷ In the fall of 1910, Congressman Kent encouraged Franklin Pierce, acting Secretary of Interior, to forward an early version of the park bureau legislation to Olmsted Jr. for his initial review and comment. In his reply to Pierce, Olmsted pointed out that individual national parks had legislative authorization language with “omissions and defects” that could be exploited. An unfortunate example was Yosemite’s struggle to grapple with the proposed Hetch Hetchy dam. Given this situation, it simply was not enough, argued Olmsted, to vaguely state that no park uses shall be permitted that conflicted with Congressional intent. The park bureau legislation, Olmsted insisted, must contain an accepted “general definition of purpose” that would apply to all national parks. Olmsted provided a draft of such language:

Sec. 5· That the parks, monuments and reservations herein provided for shall not at any time be used in any way contrary to the purpose thereof as agencies for promoting public recreation and public health through the use and enjoyment by the people of the said parks, monuments and reservations, and of the natural scenery and objects of interest therein, or in any way detrimental to the value thereof for such purpose.¹⁸⁸

Park bureau supporters wholeheartedly embraced Olmsted’s recommendation. McFarland would later write in a letter to Secretary of Interior Franklin Lane, “I ought to bring to your attention the fact that this bill as it now stands is the result of exceedingly

¹⁸⁶ J. Horace McFarland, *The Economic Destiny of National Parks*, 4th National Parks Conference Proceedings, Washington, D.C., 1917, 3–4.

¹⁸⁷ Hillory A. Tolson, *Laws Relating to the National Park Service and the National Parks and Monuments* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1933), 9–10. Horace M. Albright and Robert Cahn, *The Birth of the National Park Service: The Founding Years, 1913–33* (Howe Brothers, 1986), 35–36; McFarland, “The Economic Destiny of the National Parks.”

¹⁸⁸ Letter From Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. to Frank Pierce, Acting Secretary of the Interior, December 31, 1920, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

careful preparation. The clauses in it defining the purposes of a National Park were drafted by Frederick law Olmsted (Jr.), . . . as you know, there is no greater authority in the world today upon parks and their uses.” The statement of purpose, with a few modifications, stayed in various versions of the bill until its final passage in 1916. According to McFarland, Olmsted’s addition was “jealously preserved with much fighting and effort.”¹⁸⁹

The early draft of the bill’s statement of purpose identified national parks as “agencies for promoting public recreation and public health through the use and enjoyment.”¹⁹⁰ This language harkens directly back to Olmsted Sr.’s 1865 Yosemite Plan and his proposition that “enjoyment of the choicest natural scenes in the country” was “favorable to the health and vigor of men” and that “recreation associated with them” be “laid open to the use of the body of the people.”¹⁹¹ Between December 1910 and November 1915, various versions of a national park service bill retained this reference to “public recreation and public health.” Inclusion of this language, suggests Richard Sellars in *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, reflected a prevailing consensus among park supporters that this utilitarian purpose of parks was thoroughly consistent with preservation of landscape scenery.¹⁹² The statement of purpose was given one last review by Olmsted in mid-October 1915 at the request of the ACA. He made some last-minute edits, including removal of a direct reference to “public recreation and public health,” although Sellars suggests “his final version seems to have been intended to further similar goals.”¹⁹³

Olmsted also references “historic objects” in his short statement of purpose. This reference to the field of history as being within the remit of the National Park Service would have significant ramifications for the future evolution of the national park system. However, Olmsted was likely only reflecting the groundwork already laid by Representative John Lacey and the 1906 Antiquities Act and the establishment of Mesa Verde National Park, which set the precedent for including historic and cultural sites in the growing national park system. In fact, Olmsted’s reference to conserving “historic objects” clearly echoes Antiquities Act language about declaring “objects of historic and scientific interest” as national monuments.

As written, the final statement of purpose has stood the test of time, expressing the mandate and philosophy of the new bureau: “The fundamental purpose” of the parks, as Olmsted finally phrased it, “is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”¹⁹⁴

In early 1916 ACA geared up for the final push to get the bill approved before the 1916 presidential election and the possible involvement of the United States in the ongoing world war—a situation that might derail the long legislative campaign. National park allies gathered at the homes

¹⁸⁹ Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 319.

¹⁹⁰ Letter From Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. to Frank Pierce.

¹⁹¹ Frederick Law Olmsted, Yosemite Report.

¹⁹² Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 40.

¹⁹³ Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 40.

¹⁹⁴ The National Park Service Organic Act (16 U.S.C. 123, and 4), consists of the Act of August 25, 1916 (39 Stat. 535), and amendments; see <https://www.nps.gov/grba/learn/management/organic-act-of-1916.htm>.

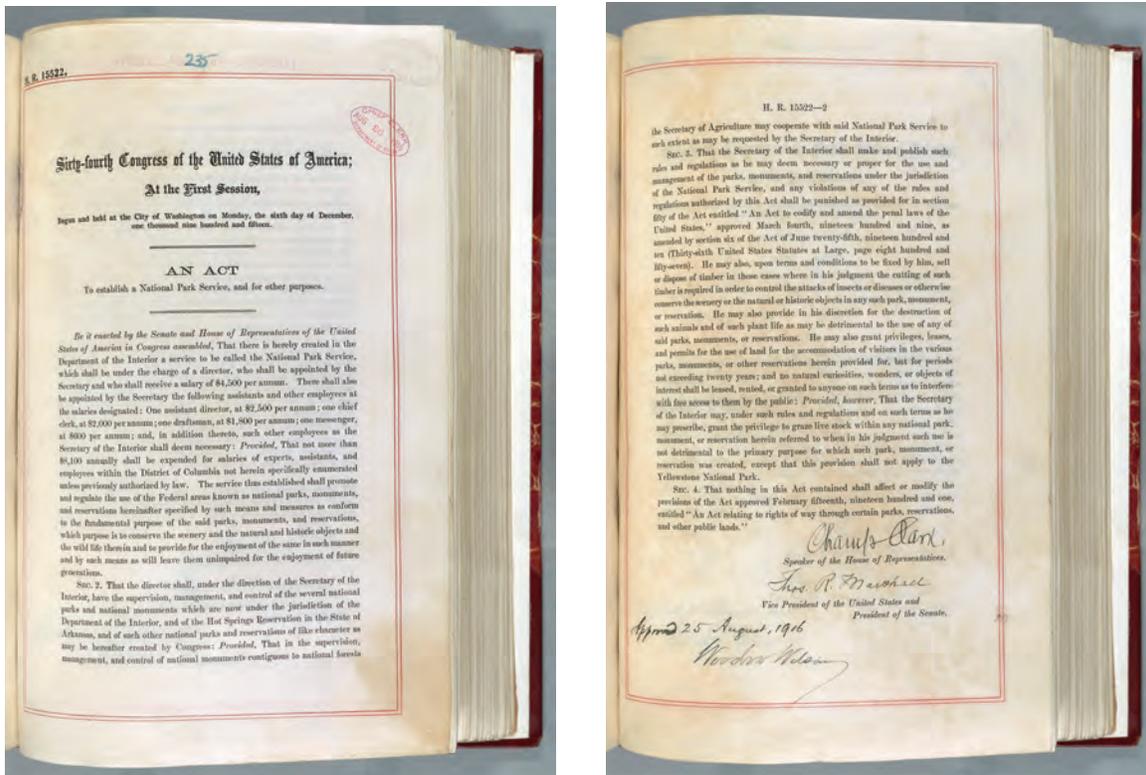


Fig. 9.4. An Act to Establish a National Park Service, August 25, 1916. General Records of the U.S. Government, National Archives.

of Robert Sterling Yard and William Kent that spring and summer to make final adjustments to the bill and plan strategy. Those who took part in these meetings included McFarland and Richard B. Watrous from the ACA; Mather, Albright, Yard, and Robert Marshall from the Interior Department; Congressmen Raker and Kent; Assistant Attorney General Huston Thompson; and Olmsted Jr. In mid-summer, with Congress preparing to vote on the legislation, most of the group convened to take one last look at a final compromise version of the bill.

This inner circle of national park service advocates was clearly attached to Olmsted's language—"the only thing we were unwilling to give up," as McFarland had stated earlier.¹⁹⁵ This commitment was evident in Horace Albright's recounting of the final gathering at Kent's home. According to Albright, Olmsted suggested making some small changes to the bill's statement of purpose. "Poor man," wrote Albright in his memoir, *A National Park Service is Born*. "Everyone jumped on him at once. McFarland said: "Don't you dare change a thing, Olmsted. Your one paragraph sells the whole bill."¹⁹⁶

In August 1916, the years of public relations and lobbying work by park supporters finally paid off: both houses of Congress approved, and President Wilson signed, "an Act to establish a National Park Service"—two and a half pages and 911 words.

¹⁹⁵ J. Horace McFarland, "The Economic Destiny of the National Parks."

¹⁹⁶ Horace M. Albright and Marian Albright Schenck, *Creating The National Park Service: The Missing Years* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 145.

CHAPTER TEN

PLANNER, ADVISOR, COLLABORATOR, MENTOR: FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED JR.'S ROLE IN SHAPING THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Although much study has been devoted to Frederick Law Olmsted's role in shaping the 1916 enabling legislation that created the National Park Service, little has been written about his role and importance in shaping the new agency. Indeed, his influence was long-running and extensive. His consulting role with the agency spanned the tenures of six directors: Stephen Mather, Horace Albright, Arno Cammerer, Newton Drury, Arthur Demaray, and Conrad Wirth. He had been schooled in all aspects of landscape architecture by his father, as well as in early apprenticeships in Daniel Burnham's office at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 and during the development of Biltmore estate in North Carolina. He joined his father's firm in 1895, after graduating from Harvard, just as the elder Olmsted's career was waning, and in 1897 formed Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, with his half-brother, John Charles. The vast majority of the profit-making work of the Olmsted Brothers comprised private estates, academic campuses, resorts, corporate headquarters, and the like, but Olmsted Jr. continued his father's vision for and commitment to public parks, leaving a vast legacy and a priceless contribution to the nation.

Among his larger concrete contributions was his work as one of the key designers of the federal city and the public landscape of Washington, D.C., which became part of the national park system. Beginning in 1901, as a member of the Senate Park Commission and co-author of the 1902 McMillan Plan for Washington, D.C., he shaped the future of the nation's capital and its public spaces, which in 1933 were transferred to National Park Service jurisdiction.¹⁹⁷ Olmsted's Washington, D.C., work included Rock Creek Park, the National Mall, Potomac Park, the White House grounds, the Jefferson Memorial, and Roosevelt Island, among other projects. Following the training and philosophical underpinnings of his father, Olmsted Jr. demonstrated in Washington, D.C., his strong commitment to the linkage between city planning, scenic preservation, and landscape architecture in both urban and rural park settings. It was Olmsted Jr. above all, who made his father's ideas relevant to and useful for the National Park Service in the years following the agency's creation.

FROM STATE PARKS TO NATIONAL PARKS

The state park movement served as a model for the national agency. State parks in the United States had achieved many important milestones long before the National Park Service was created, including the establishment of state parks at Yosemite, Niagara, and

¹⁹⁷ Olmsted was a member of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (1910–1918) and the National Capital Park and Planning Commission (1926–1932).

the Adirondacks. In addition, many city, county, and state governments, often emulating the metropolitan Boston park system created by the elder Olmsted, developed regional historic and scenic reservations in the 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth century. Before the end of World War I, state governments in New York, Minnesota, California, Ohio, Idaho, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Indiana, Iowa, New Jersey, and North Carolina had all empowered park commissions to acquire and manage parks in areas determined to have outstanding historical interest or scenic value.¹⁹⁸ County governments became active in creating scenic reservations beginning in 1895, when Olmsted Brothers planned and designed a park system for Essex County in northern New Jersey. The Essex County park system included scenic reservations on the hills around Newark, as well as smaller parks and playgrounds within the city.¹⁹⁹ In the west, municipal governments were sometimes able to create regional park systems. For instance, Olmsted Brothers planned a “Mountain Park” system for Denver, begun in 1912, which extended the Denver municipal park and parkway system they also designed to include a series of scenic reservations outside municipal boundaries.²⁰⁰ Such mountain parks, with connecting scenic drives, became characteristic of regional park development by western municipalities in the early twentieth century.

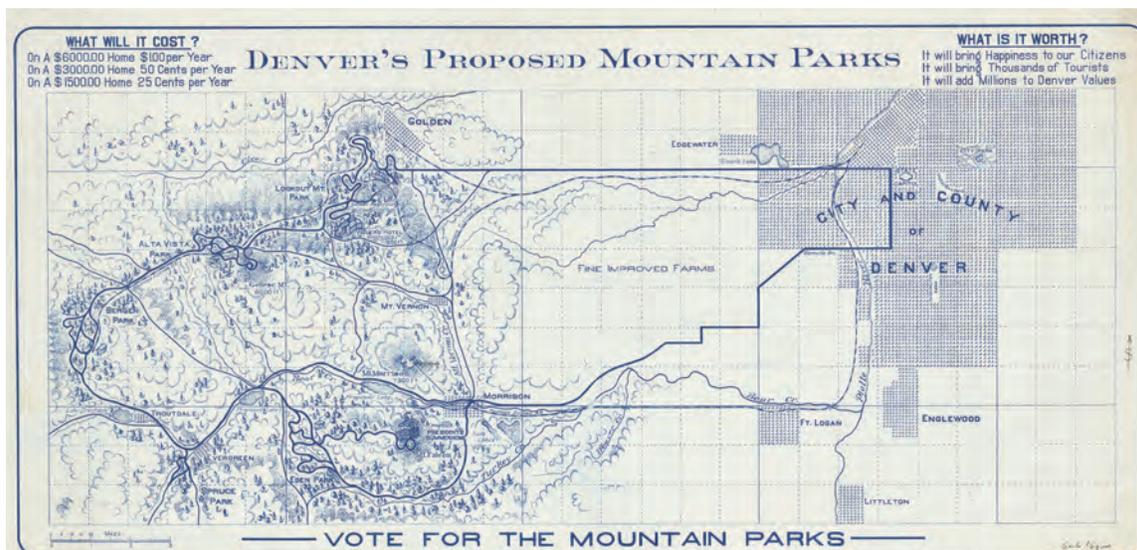


Fig. 10.1. *Denver's Proposed Mountain Parks—Vote for the Parks*, Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, October 1912. Chamber of Commerce. Plan #5582-3. Job No. 5582 Mountain Parks, Denver, Colorado. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

The most significant park plan undertaken by the firm—really the most significant state park plan of the early twentieth century—was the State Park Survey of California, completed by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. in 1928 and published the

¹⁹⁸ Raymond H. Torrey, *State Parks and the Recreational Uses of State Forests in the United States* (Washington, DC: The National Conference on State Parks, 1926), 20–22.

¹⁹⁹ Frederick W. Kelsey, *The First County Park System: A Complete History of the Inception and Development of the Essex County Parks of New Jersey* (New York: J.S. Ogilvie Publishing Company, 1905).

²⁰⁰ Ann Moss, *National Register of Historic Places Nomination for the Denver Mountain Parks System*, 1988.

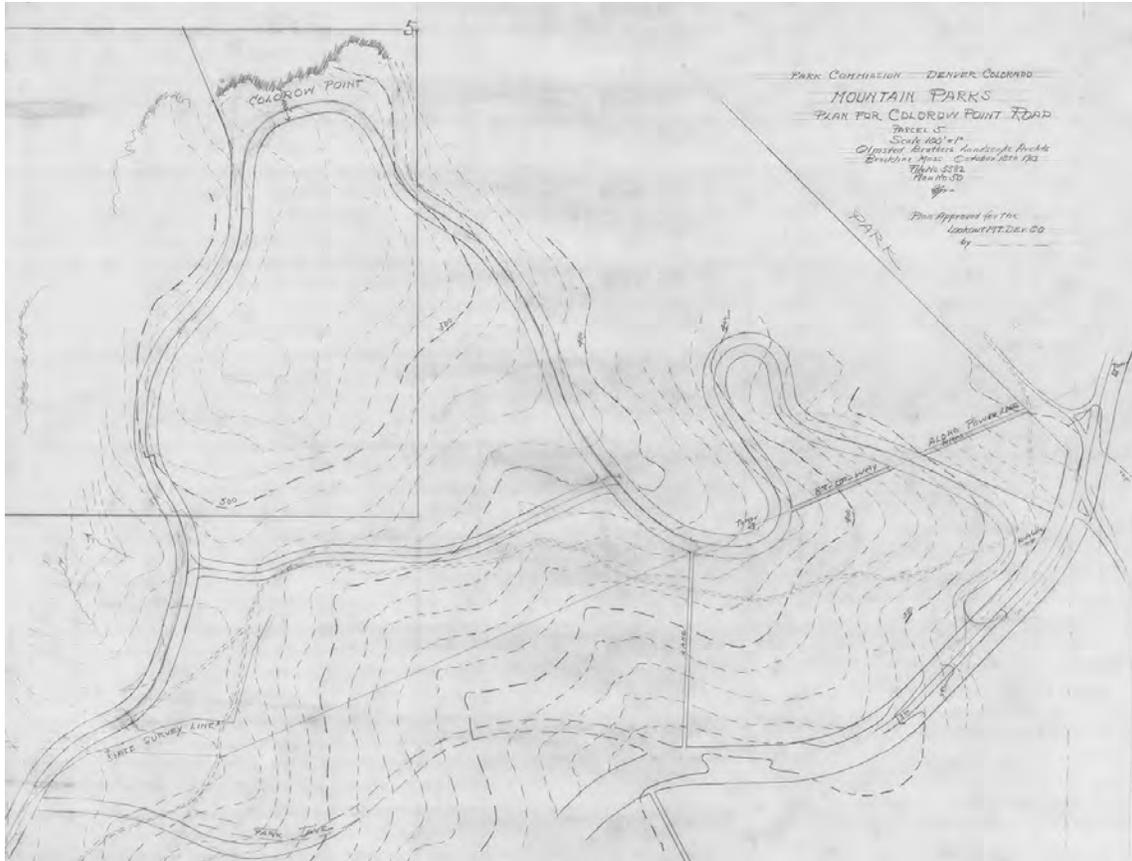


Fig. 10.2. Park Commission, Denver, Colorado, Plan for Coloraw Point Road, Parcel 5, Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, October 18, 1913. Plan #5582-50-sh1. Job No. 5582 Mountain Parks, Denver, Colorado. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

following year. Like New York, California had impressive state parks, most of which had been established to preserve groves of Coast Redwoods. In 1927, the California state legislature established a state park commission and authorized it to undertake a comprehensive survey to guide the “ultimate development of a comprehensive, state park system” as a means of “conserving and utilizing the scenic and recreational resources of the state.”²⁰¹ The commission immediately hired Olmsted, already well known in the state for his advocacy of national and state parks and as the planner of Palos Verdes Estates (1923), the town where he also built a home for his family in 1927. Olmsted, in turn, consulted with several California landscape architects over the next two years, including Daniel Hull, who had only recently ended his service as the chief landscape architect of the National Park Service and remained in private practice in Los Angeles.

Olmsted’s process for developing the California survey became recognized as a standard procedure for planning a diverse park and recreation system over a large and geographically varied area. He began by regionalizing the project into twelve districts and enlisting a committee of residents in each district to serve as an advisory group.

²⁰¹ Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., *Report of State Park Survey of California* (Sacramento: California State Printing Office, 1929), 3.



Fig. 10.3. *Lookout Mtn., Auto Road* by Louis Charles McClure, between 1913 and 1920. L.C. McClure Collection, Western History and Genealogy Dept., Denver Public Library.

He then determined criteria for the development of the comprehensive system he had been charged with planning. In what became an influential summary of state park goals, he specified that each park should be sufficiently distinctive to attract visitors from all parts of the state, not just the local area. The parks should also be geographically distributed in order to preserve characteristic forests, beaches, mountains, and a “wide and representative variety of [landscape] types for the state as a whole.”²⁰² These types included “areas of special interest, historic, scientific, and otherwise,” and especially desert parks and historical parks, which were not yet represented in the state park system. A state map, divided into zones according to vegetative associations, illustrated the diversity and distribution of the new parks recommended by the survey. The plan became a procedural blueprint for scientific and comprehensive state park planning, as well as the basis for the development of California’s exceptional state park system.²⁰³ Significantly, it served as a template for state park development during the busy years of the New Deal and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

²⁰² Olmsted, *State Park Survey*, 17.

²⁰³ Olmsted, *State Park Survey*, 9, 39–53.

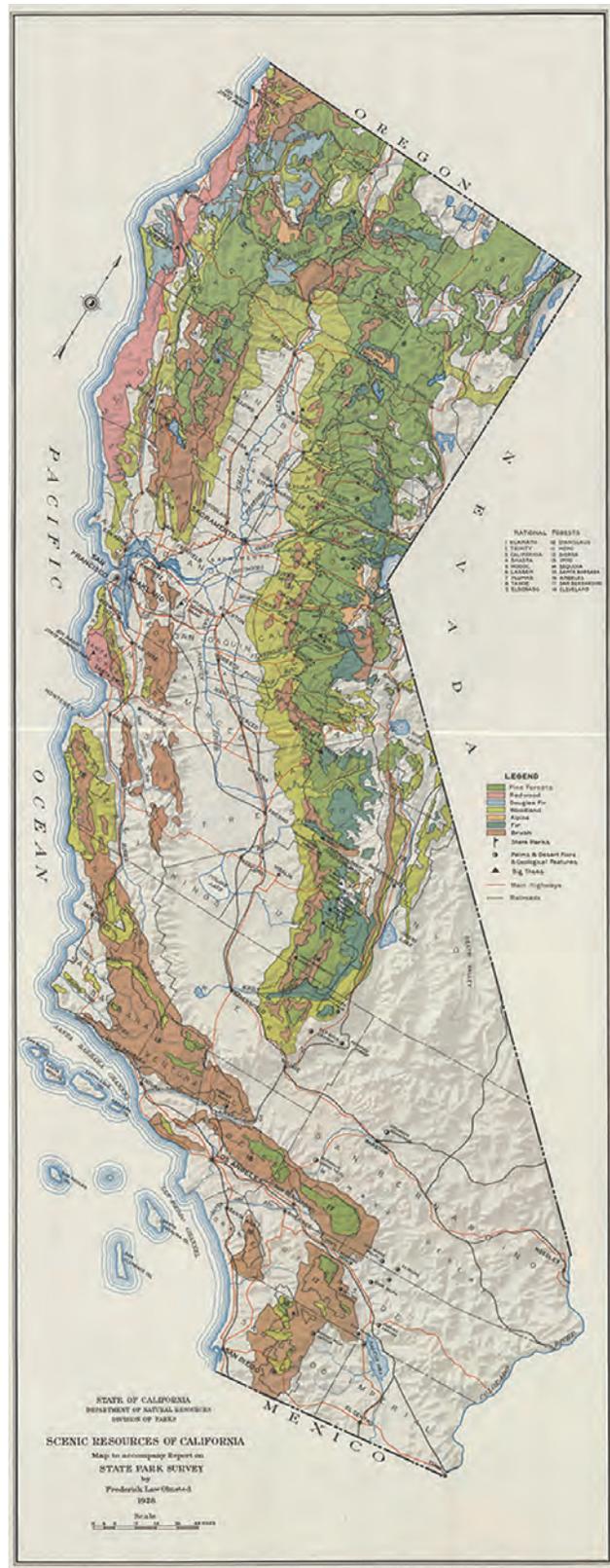


Fig. 10.4. *Map to Accompany Report on State Park Survey by Frederick Law Olmsted*, State of California, Department of Natural Resources, 1928. Plan #8072-73-pa2. Job No. 8072 California State Park Commission. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

This activity in state park planning, especially in New York and California, prefigured later events in Washington. After Franklin D. Roosevelt's executive reorganization in 1933, the national park system included a greater variety of park types, among them scenic areas, historic sites, and battlefields, all of which had to be managed as a unified park system. By 1941, several new categories of national parks had been created, including national parkways, national recreation areas, and national seashores. The national park system had grown to represent and preserve important landscapes in many regions of the country, just as Olmsted had suggested a well-planned state park system should exemplify the characteristic landscapes of the state. The park service also completed the first true national survey of existing park and recreational facilities, and although few states had developed state park systems in 1933, soon almost every state and territory at least initiated a comprehensive park plan—along the lines of Olmsted's California survey—under the guidance of park service planners.

FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED JR., ALL-PURPOSE PARK SERVICE ADVISOR

For nearly four decades, from the passage of the Organic Act until 1953, Olmsted Jr. provided a wide range of support to the fledgling National Park Service; he assisted with park-related issues, including regional studies and new areas, served in an official capacity as a collaborator and advisor, undertook an extraordinary number of planning and design projects, and mentored key agency leaders. He was particularly adept at navigating complex issues involving interagency jurisdiction, local property rights, and the larger national goals of the new agency. Throughout these consultations and negotiations, Olmsted Jr. held firm to the ideals of the 1916 enabling legislation: the new park system must have a *dual* mission of conservation and public access.²⁰⁴

Olmsted Jr. also made himself available to the fledgling agency in an unofficial capacity from its creation. He advised on issues and projects at Big Horn (now a National Forest/Recreation Area), Mesa Verde, Shenandoah, Glacier, Mescalero (Guadalupe Mountains), Olympic, Kings River, and Yellowstone National Park. He also reviewed park proposals that did not succeed, including those for Mount Katahdin in Maine and Ouachita in Arkansas. He was particularly devoted to Yosemite. He became a member of the newly formed Yosemite National Park Board of Expert Advisors in 1928, then served as the Board's chairman; he held a position on the board intermittently, between other federal appointments, until 1953, when he resigned at age 83. The Board was called upon to address a host of planning and design challenges in Yosemite Valley, from park road alignments to a proposed cableway from the Valley floor. It weighed in on land use conflicts, concession issues, building construction, sanitation issues, and siting of public campgrounds.²⁰⁵ Olmsted's personal commitment to the Board and the preservation of

²⁰⁴ Its dual mission of preservation and public access distinguished the National Park Service both from its counterpart agency, the U.S. Forest Service in the Department of Agriculture, whose mission was focused on maintenance and use of timber resources, and from the aims of proponents of pure wilderness areas, whose aim was primarily the conservation of wildlife and ecosystems and for whom public access was a welcome but not necessary outcome.

²⁰⁵ Documented in extensive correspondence and reports prepared by Olmsted Jr. and other members of the Board of Expert Advisors.

Yosemite as a scenic reservation embodied both his father's ideas and his own steadfast commitment to the concepts outlined in the Organic Act.

COLLABORATOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE BRANCH OF RECREATION, LAND PLANNING AND STATE COOPERATION

Perhaps due to the success of these early consultations or because of the relationships he developed over his long career, or most likely a combination of both, in 1943, at the request of Park Service Director Newton Drury, Olmsted Jr. was appointed to the position of "Collaborator" in the Branch of Recreation, Land Planning and State Cooperation. The Branch of Recreation, Land Planning and State Cooperation was organized in 1937 to combine CCC activities in state lands with the work being undertaken in National Parks. Olmsted's appointment, which he left the Yosemite Board of Experts to accept, allowed him to work in an interagency capacity; he was frequently called upon to consult with multiple branches of the federal government regarding park issues.²⁰⁶

Olmsted's unusual role extended beyond that of a consultant or even a staff member. He might be more appropriately described as a semi-autonomous advisor.²⁰⁷ During his term as Collaborator, Olmsted largely worked from the firm's Elkton, Maryland, office, which was conveniently located to facilitate consultation with Park Service and Department of the Interior staff in Washington, D.C. The work was far-reaching in scope, ranging from large-scale planning issues to consultations on individual design problems in specific parks.²⁰⁸ Olmsted was frequently called on to consult on complex land use issues in the western parks and to provide input and expertise regarding areas being contemplated as new parks.

Olmsted also assisted the Park Service with interagency coordination on a number of projects, many of which dealt with challenges the agency was facing related to water rights, dams, and water control projects, as well as highways and parkways. He also generated specific reports addressing existing parks. Olmsted's Colorado River Basin Recreation Study, for example, includes documentation related to the early establishment of the Grand Canyon National Monument, later National Park; issues around Native American rights and the proposed changes to the park

²⁰⁶ While Olmsted's services as Collaborator to the NPS had a separate job number at Olmsted Brothers—#9659—individual assignments were sometimes sufficiently elevated in importance to be catalogued as distinct design projects, or at least given a different job number. Projects were usually separate numbers when they generated a substantial amount of visual material, such as maps, or when the office undertook design or engineering work to address a specific issue, as the firm had done at Yosemite.

²⁰⁷ Project files for this job contain correspondence from Olmsted written on NPS stationery, an unusual occurrence for a consultant.

²⁰⁸ Olmsted was assigned specific tasks and compensated for hours worked and expenses, which included reimbursement for travel as well as a small subsistence allowance (*per diem*). Records in the job file indicate that Olmsted was appointed to the position/grade of P&S-8, pay for which was increased to \$33.65 per day with the passage of Section 405 of the Federal Employees Pay Act of 1945. The full scope of Olmsted's collaboration is difficult to analyze, as the correspondence folders for this job contain primarily vouchers for reimbursement and the results of the consultations are contained in the records of individual parks; only some of those consultations have corresponding job numbers in the Library of Congress collections or at the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.



Fig. 10.5. *Echo Cliffs, Grand River Canon Colorado* by William Henry Jackson,, ca. 1900. Detroit Publishing Company, no. 59020. Detroit Publishing Company Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

boundary; private grazing rights and subsistence farming in the area; and water rights and proposed dams along the Colorado River and its tributaries. The study was needed in large part to address the rapidly expanding efforts of the Bureau of Reclamation related to the construction of dams and reservoirs in and around national park areas. Olmsted's Survey of Recreational Resources of the Colorado River Basin evaluated dam and reservoir sites with respect to their impact on natural scenery and potential recreational, giving particular attention to Dinosaur National Monument and the Grand Canyon National Park. As late as 1950, Olmsted testified before Congress on the proposed Echo Park dam project, warning that the loss of "scenic and inspirational values obtainable by the public" at the monument would be "catastrophically great."²⁰⁹

The diversity of parks and projects on which Olmsted advised the NPS is noteworthy. In December 1943, for example, on one eight-day trip to Washington, D.C., he met with National Capital Parks and Planning Commission staff regarding highway bridges and reservoir sites in the Upper and Lower Potomac Basins and held discussions with Park Service planners on reports for the Colorado River Basin, the Upper Green River, and Dinosaur National Monument. He also found time to check on work under way at Anacostia Park and the Washington-Baltimore Parkway.

In the western states, Olmsted's attention was often focused on California's threatened redwoods, with advocacy and later work at Sequoia-Kings Canyon National

²⁰⁹ Frederick Law Olmsted, "Statement of Hearings Held by the Department of the Interior, April 3, 1950 in the Matter of Dinosaur National Monument, Echo Park, and Split Mt. Dams" as cited in Sarah Allaback, *Mission 66 Visitor Centers* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior–National Park Service, 2000), https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/allaback/vc1.htm.

Park, an unrealized proposal for an FDR Memorial National Forest, and years of unofficial advice to the Save the Redwoods League.²¹⁰ For example, in 1944, Olmsted and Henry Solon Graves were asked by the League, with support from the National Park Service, the California State Park Commission, and the U.S. Forest Service, to undertake a detailed survey of the North Coast Redwood Region and prepare a master plan for Redwood conservation. In its announcement of the project, the League noted, “These two noted authorities—both of whom have been for many years councilors of the Save-the-Redwoods League—are so impressed with the national importance and urgency of this Master Plan project, for the benefit of the American public, that they are giving their services without compensation.”²¹¹ A grove in Redwoods National Park now carries Olmsted Jr.’s name.

THE OLMSTED OFFICE AND THE “RUSTIC STYLE” OF PARK DEVELOPMENT

The most identifiable stylistic characteristic of national and state park development in the first decades of the twentieth century is the “rustic” architecture that was developed, mainly by the National Park Service, during this period. The National Register of Historic Places recognizes “NPS Rustic” as an architectural style typical of national and state park development between roughly 1916 and 1942. The projects discussed in more detail as part of this study, to a greater or lesser degree, are part of this design tradition.

The extensive influence of the Olmsteds on the “rustic” era of national and state park development must be considered in the broader context of the influence of Fairsted School landscape architecture on successive generations of park designers. The entire “rustic” style of park development, which was developed during this period for national and state parks, can be understood as part of the “Fairsted School” landscape architecture.²¹² This approach to the planning and development of large-scale scenic reservations, which was developed primarily at Fairsted between the 1880s and the first decades of the twentieth century, served as the starting point for the landscape architects—such as Thomas C. Vint and Conrad L. Wirth—who developed the characteristic and distinctive approach to national and state park design. The “rustic style” reached its high point, and the Fairsted School achieved its moment of maximum influence and realization in the American landscape, during the New Deal era, when the park service vastly increased its planning and design operations in both national and state parks.

Thus, the influence of the Fairsted office on national park design principles, as they were developed at the park service after 1916, amounted to far more than the individual projects in which Olmsted Brothers were actually engaged as consultants. The entire design philosophy for large scenic landscape reservations derived from the work of the elder

²¹⁰ Other western projects included the Colorado River Basin Recreation Study (Monte-Vista [National Wildlife Refuge] CO, Black Canyon of the Gunnison, Natural Bridges National Monument, Gooseberry Research Station, La Sal National Forest (U.S.D.A.), Mesa Verde National Park).

²¹¹ Save-the-Redwoods League, “A Master Plan for the Redwoods,” *Bulletin for the Members*, Summer 1944, 2. Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, Western and California Office Correspondence, Subseries II, Box 11-11-03.

²¹² See Carr, *Wilderness by Design*, 95–103.

Olmsted, going back to the 1860s, and the revision of those ideas in the early twentieth century, accomplished above all by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.

OLMSTED JR. AS PARK PLANNER AND MENTOR

While the Olmsted firm is best known for its prolific landscape architecture practice, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., aided at times by other members of the firm, consulted with the National Park Service on a broad array of park planning challenges. Much of this work was facilitated by the firm's local offices in California (Palos Verdes), Maryland, and Florida, but the Brookline office was also involved. Olmsted Jr., with the noteworthy contributions of Henry Vincent Hubbard and Edward Clark Whiting, successfully intervened in broader questions regarding the planning, acquisition, and design of national parks that went well beyond the ambit of traditional landscape architecture. His copious memos and reports provide insight into the early challenges around establishing and designing several new national parks, including issues concerning land use, private property rights, local tourism, public access and amenities, and the management of vegetation, including invasive species.

One role Olmsted played as an informal advisor on national parks, outside his employment as a Collaborator, was in the evaluation of potential new parks. For example, Olmsted helped overcome the opposition of Robert Sterling Yard, the founding executive secretary of the National Park Association (NPA), to a proposed Tropic Everglades park.²¹³ In 1932, Olmsted and William P. Wharton led a special NPA task force on the Everglades. The NPA Board of Trustees subsequently adopted their report. In their subsequent submission to Congress, Olmsted and Wharton noted, "An area in this region adequate in size to constitute a national park is characterized by essentially primitive natural conditions of nationally outstanding distinction for their scenic, inspirational, educational, and scientific qualities."²¹⁴

Olmsted Jr. could also turn opinions at the National Park Service. For example, in 1946, at the request of the Sierra Club, he reviewed Park Service plans for facilities at Cedar Grove in Kings Canyon National Park. (He was also the Club's vice president at the time.) He recommended that proposed roads be rerouted and proposed development be scaled down to safeguard against excessive congestion and give "the maximum enjoyment to the

²¹³ For additional information about Olmsted's involvement with the Everglades see "Tropic Everglades" in Chapter 11 below. Yard had previously fought the eastern expansion of the national park system and the establishment of the Great Smoky Mountains and Shenandoah National Parks; he believed the park system should be limited to superlative scenic phenomena of the high-elevation western mountains. Olmsted, George Melendez Wright, and others successfully argued that the Everglades merited inclusion in the system on the basis of its unique biodiversity. President Franklin D. Roosevelt agreed; his administration supported the establishment of Everglades National Park and took other steps to add historic areas, seashores, and recreation areas, significantly broadening the scope, size, and responsibilities of the national park system.

²¹⁴ Frederick Law Olmsted and William Wharton, "The Proposed Everglades National Park, Report of a Special Committee of the National Parks Association Appointed to Study All the Features in Connection with the Proposed Everglades National Park in the State of Florida." Senate Document No. 54, submitted by Mr. Fletcher. (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1932), 2.

motoring public with a minimum impairment of the scenery.”²¹⁵ In their resource history of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, *Challenge of the Big Trees*, Larry Dilsaver and William Tweed wrote, “Both the Forest Service, whose planners had consulted Olmsted about Cedar Grove during the 1930s, and the Park Service deeply respected his [Olmsted’s] abilities and opinion . . . The effect of this report by so eminent a commentator on park design and development was pronounced.”²¹⁶ The park service immediately changed its plans to align with Olmsted’s findings. These are but a few examples of how much respect and credibility Olmsted Jr. commanded, inside and outside the National Park Service. He was trusted not only as an impartial and eminently knowledgeable expert but also as a highly competent and experienced professional practitioner.

Last but not least, he had a large influence on the early planning and design professionals at the National Park Service. Thomas C. Vint, the park service chief landscape architect for more than thirty years, worked with Olmsted at Yosemite Valley in the 1920s. In 1930, Olmsted strongly endorsed Vint for membership in the American Society of Landscape Architects (of which Olmsted Jr. had been a founding member). In a letter supporting Vint’s application for membership, he praised Vint’s professional practice as a landscape architect:²¹⁷



Fig. 10.6. *Thomas Vint* (second from left) in the Western Field Office, by George A. Grant, 1928–1933. Courtesy National Park Service, NPS History Collection, HFCA 1607.

²¹⁵ Olmsted’s report was published in the *Sierra Club Bulletin* in May 1947. See “Kings Canyon National Park, Landscape Planning for the South Fork Canyon” by David R. Brower, *Sierra Club Bulletin*, May 1947, 115.

²¹⁶ Larry Dilsaver and William Tweed, *Challenge of the Big Trees: A Resource History of Sequoia and Kings Canyon* (Three Rivers, CA: Sequoia Natural History Association, 1990), 221.

²¹⁷ Frederick Law Olmsted to Alfred Geiffert, February 7, 1930, Thomas C. Vint Collection, Papers of Charles E. Peterson.

“His experience has probably been specialized in a manner distinctly different from . . . successful candidates for membership in this society,” Olmsted wrote to the examining board, a fact that made it difficult for Vint to present the portfolio of residential gardens and commercial developments ordinarily required for admission. “But it is the very essence of most landscape architecture,” Olmsted argued (perhaps remembering his own father’s career), “that it involves . . . the arrangement and management of land on a large scale, often under different administrative and personal conditions.” Since Vint had proven his ability to shape such arrangements “toward worthy ends, with a good appreciation of appropriate landscape values and an intelligent grasp of appropriate and available means for attaining the ends in view,” Olmsted concluded, “he seems to come clearly within the proper definition of a good landscape architect.”

Olmsted also had a close personal and professional relationship with Conrad L. Wirth, the park service landscape architect who oversaw the expansion of the agency’s state park programs in the 1930s and later became the longest-serving director of the agency. Olmsted was a friend of Wirth’s famous father, the Minneapolis park superintendent Theodore Wirth, and in 1927 arranged for Conrad to be hired by the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, where Olmsted was in charge of investigating and reporting on potential additions to the Washington park system. Three years later, when the position of assistant director in charge of land planning opened up at the Washington office of the National Park Service, then-director Horace Albright asked Wirth to take over similar planning responsibilities for the national park system. Vint and Wirth continued to have a close relationship with Olmsted that went far beyond the occasional consulting services the older landscape architect provided.²¹⁸

Daniel Hull, the park service’s Chief Landscape Engineer, also had a close professional relationship with Olmsted Jr. For example, Olmsted provided a kind of peer review for Hull’s work, such as his town planning ideas for a new National Park Service village on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon. Olmsted also provided guidance to newly hired park planners, particularly those who worked with him on the comprehensive study of recreation resources along the Colorado River, undertaken in the 1940s. This project gave these young planners insight into Olmsted’s comprehensive approach to complex land use issues.

Olmsted’s indefatigable productivity can leave researchers wondering whether he ever slept. For example, on a family trip to Hawaii in 1929, he prepared an extensive review of adjacent land uses at Hawaii National Park, with a particular eye to incompatible development that could adversely affect the park in the long term. Over time, however, despite this devotion to national parks, Olmsted’s advancing age and arduous schedule meant that reports and responses were often delayed, particularly in the 1940s as the coast-to-coast travel and workload took a toll on his health. As a testament to his lifetime commitment to the national parks, one of his last professional activities, at age 80, was to return to Yosemite to serve a few more years on the park’s advisory board, concluding the family’s involvement with national parks where it began.

²¹⁸ Conrad L. Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 11–15, 32.



Fig. 10.7. Daniel Hull, Stephen Mather, and W.B. "Dusty" Lewis pictured at the new administration building, Yosemite National Park by James V. Lloyd, 1924. Photograph. Courtesy National Park Service, NPS History Collection, HPC 000203.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CONCLUSION TO PARTS 1-3

WHERE ARE THE OLMSTEDS?

REWRITING THE HISTORY OF AMERICA'S NATIONAL PARKS

Much has been written about Olmsted Sr.'s contributions in establishing the professional practice of landscape architecture; developing an American prototype for parks, parkways, park systems, and scenic reservations; and to a lesser degree, laying the philosophical foundation for the National Park Service.²¹⁹ In his Preliminary Report on Yosemite and the Mariposa Grove, Olmsted Sr. declared, "It is the will of the nation . . . that this scenery shall never be private property," and he called for the "establishment by government of great public grounds for the free enjoyment of the people"—in essence, a prescription for our system of national parks. What is less recognized is the importance of Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. as the steward of this legacy, carrying it forward into the twentieth century through projects and consultations that led not only to more city, regional and state parks and park systems, but also to the creation and development of the National Park Service.

Throughout his life-long association with the National Park Service, Olmsted Jr. was a nationally respected advocate for careful planning and design and professional management of the national parks. His role in establishing the National Park Service and in defining the purposes of national parks in the 1916 Organic Act clearly demonstrates the degree to which he cultivated and enriched the "national park idea." After the National Park Service was created, Olmsted Jr. went on to develop and nurture important personal relationships with many individuals who would become leaders in the agency, such as Stephen Mather, Thomas Vint, and Conrad Wirth, as well as individuals in organizations and institutions that played key roles in advocating, documenting, and implementing plans for the developing park system. These deep personal relationships meant that many influential individuals associated with the park service's formative years looked to Olmsted as a kind of family *consigliere*, seeking his guidance on a broad range of issues.

So why have the National Park Service's own narratives on the origin of the national park idea and early history of the agency downplayed, and in many instances overlooked, these substantial contributions? Part of the answer lies in the public perception and understanding of the national park system, which is fragmentary at best. Largely shaped by iconic imagery and stereotypes, popular understanding of the system's origins and evolution is poorly developed. Even as this Historic Resource Study is being written, an image of the National Park Service as a predominantly western, natural park agency remains entrenched in popular imagination. This image persists despite the fact that today more than two-thirds of all national park areas have been designated predominantly for their historic character and that 40 of the 50 largest metropolitan areas of the United States have a national park within 50 miles. An extensive array of park service-managed historic preservation and conservation assistance programs that benefit millions of Americans outside of national parks is largely invisible to the general public.

²¹⁹ See Dwight Pitcaithley, "Philosophical Underpinnings of the National Park Idea," *Ranger* (Fall 2001), reprinted at <https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/hisnps/NPSThinking/underpinnings.htm>.

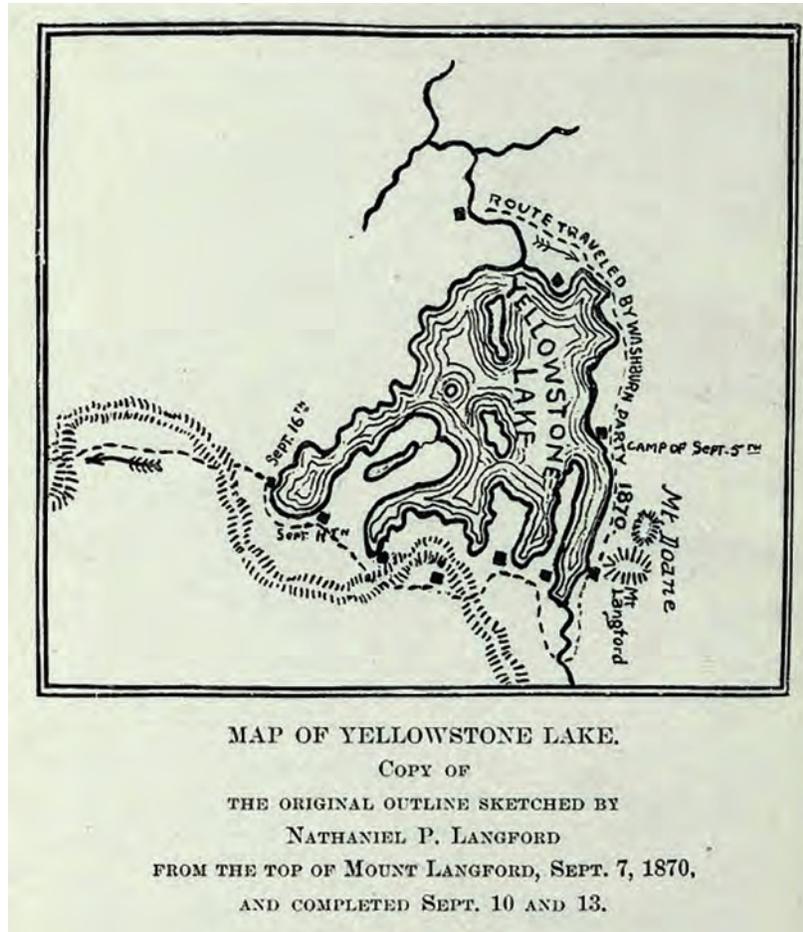


Fig. 11.1. Map of Yellowstone Lake from *Diary of the Washburn Expedition to the Yellowstone and Firehole Rivers in the year 1870* by Nathaniel Pitt Langford, 1905, p. 64. (Internet Archive)

This is also a story about the durability of early creation myths, or what historian Edward Linenthal refers to as “the power of the first narrative.” To better understand the Olmsteds’ place in history, it is instructive to take a closer look at the complicated origin of two dominant national park creation narratives that reinforce the agency’s self-image and the public’s perception of it. The first creation narrative attributed the national park idea to a Yellowstone campfire discussion that purportedly took place in 1870 and was immortalized by park explorer and booster Nathaniel P. Langford in an account published almost 25 years later. Horace Albright, acting park service director, retold Langford’s campfire story in the agency’s first annual report in 1917. The report repeated Langford’s assertion that Cornelius Hedges, a member of the 1870 Washburn-Doane expedition to Yellowstone, suggested (around the campfire) that the Yellowstone region should be made a national park. According to Langford’s narrative, the national park idea was born on that day, near Madison Junction, in what became Yellowstone National Park.

However, according to twentieth-century research by Yellowstone National Park historian Aubrey L. Haines, the idea for federal legislation establishing Yellowstone as



Fig. 11.2. Campfire at Agnew Camp, Yellowstone National Park, ca. 1930s; Horace Albright is fifth from left. Courtesy National Park Service, NPS History Collection, HPC 001763



Fig. 11.3. *Great Springs of the Firehole River* by Thomas Moran, 1871. National Park Service, Yellowstone National Park, YELL 8536.

the world's first national park originated with representatives of the Northern Pacific Railroad. The railroad was seeking to capitalize on tourism along its transcontinental route and recognized the potential attraction of the Yellowstone Plateau "Wonderland." There were certainly other, more altruistic advocates for the legislation, but Langford's campfire story about Hedges's brainstorm had no basis in fact. Langford came up with the story as a suitable creation myth for the park decades after the expedition, while he was promoting the park for the Northern Pacific. With the endorsement of Albright and the National Park Service, the story quickly became entrenched in the national popular imagination.²²⁰ The campfire story would become, in the words of Hans Huth a "sentimental legend."²²¹ In the words of Richard West Sellars in *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, "The belief that the national park idea truly began around a wilderness campfire at the Madison Junction [during the 1870 Washburn/Doane expedition] evolved into a kind of creation myth. . . . Surely the national park concept deserved a 'virgin birth'—under a night sky in the pristine American West, on a riverbank, and around a campfire, as if an evergreen cone had fallen near the fire, then heated and expanded and dropped its seed to spread around the planet."²²²

After Horace Albright included this anecdote in his report in 1917, it went largely unquestioned within the National Park Service for the next sixty years.²²³ "The process by which the campfire story became institutionalized in the annals and consciousness of the National Park Service was a simple one," wrote Paul Schullery and Lee Whittlesey in *Myth and History in the Creation of Yellowstone National Park*, "It was published, it was believed, and it was loved." Yellowstone park historian Haines had begun to raise serious doubts about Langford's veracity as early as the 1960s. "We are a federal agency," Haines cautioned his superiors in a memo, "from which the public expects literal truth. We should not engage in . . . propaganda."²²⁴ This was not what Mid-West Regional Director Lon Garrison, a former superintendent of Yellowstone, wanted to hear. "If it didn't happen," Garrison responded, "we would have been well advised to invent it. It is a perfect image. Let's use it."²²⁵ When Aubrey Haines sought to publish his research, he was moved to another park. Eventually, Haines was allowed to return to Yellowstone as the park geologist. However, he persevered with his historical research, and in 1974, he published his authoritative two-volume *Yellowstone National Park: Its Exploration and Establishment*.

²²⁰ Aubrey L. Haines, *The Yellowstone Story: A History of Our First National Park*, vol.1 (Louisville: University Press of Colorado, 1977), 154–155, 164–165; Cramton, *Early History of Yellowstone National Park*, 24–28.

²²¹ Hans Huth, "Yosemite: The Story of an Idea," *Sierra Club Bulletin* 33, no. 3 (March 1948), 47–78, w.yosemite.ca.us/library/yosemite_story_of_an_idea.html.

²²² Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 8.

²²³ National Park Service, *Report of the Director of the National Park Service to the Secretary of the Interior for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1917* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1917), 3–4.

²²⁴ Paul Schullery and Lee Whittlesey, *Myth and History in the Creation of Yellowstone National Park* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 48.

²²⁵ Schullery and Whittlesey, *Myth and History in the Creation of Yellowstone National Park*, 51.



Fig. 11.4. Theodore Roosevelt and John Muir on Glacier Point, Yosemite Valley, California by Underwood & Underwood, 1903. Stereograph published ca. 1906. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

At this point, as it was becoming clear that the campfire story's days were numbered, a second creation myth arose, this one centered around a meeting between John Muir, the famed naturalist who was the park's self-appointed advocate, and President Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt famously insisted on camping with Muir on a 1903 tour of Yosemite. Muir no doubt used every waking moment persuading the President to support the "recession" of Yosemite Valley from state to federal management as a vital component of the larger Yosemite National Park. (Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove did become part of Yosemite National Park in 1906.) This new creation myth asserted that the idea for national parks and even the creation of the National Park Service resulted from Roosevelt and Muir's campfire repartee.

This story, like the Yellowstone campfire myth before it, had no factual basis. National parks had been in existence for more than 30 years before Roosevelt and Muir's camping trip, and the National Park Service would not be established until 1916—thirteen years after the Yosemite camping trip and long after Roosevelt had left office and John Muir had died. Regardless, this second creation narrative became rooted in popular imagination, gaining momentum in the late twentieth century as Muir's popularity grew among a new generation of environmental and wilderness enthusiasts. In 2009, Ken Burns and Dayton Duncan's PBS television series on the national parks devoted part of an episode to the Roosevelt-Muir camping trip in Yosemite, further canonizing John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt, in the public's eye, as the principal architects of "America's best idea." One campfire story, it

seems, had replaced another as the creation myth for the national parks. This new story was embraced right up to the 2016 National Park Service centennial.

The National Park Service made no official effort to present an alternative founding narrative, even though there has been a growing body of scholarship, from both inside and outside the park service, pointing in other directions. The occasion of the 2016 centennial commemoration would have been an ideal opportunity for this new scholarship to be acknowledged, but instead, the National Park Service doubled down on the second campfire creation narrative. John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt were united again on the agency's Cultural Resources webpage, heralded as "Early Leaders of the Park Service Idea." Muir and Roosevelt were identified along with Stephen Mather, the agency's politically adroit and charismatic first director, as the three most important visionaries behind the founding of the National Park Service. Together, they are credited with "groundbreaking ideas preserving America's treasures for future generations"—with John Muir getting top billing as "Father of the National Park Service."²²⁶

Theodore Roosevelt was of course a conservation-minded president; however, Roosevelt favored Gifford Pinchot and his utilitarian approach to conservation, and Pinchot steadfastly opposed the establishment of a national park service. The agency's establishment had to await the departure of Roosevelt and Pinchot from the federal government. John Muir was a brilliant philosopher and wilderness advocate, but his influence in shaping the ideas and policies of the early National Park Service was extremely limited. He could be better described as the father of the wilderness idea, as expressed in the 1964 Wilderness Act. In any case, despite Roosevelt's and Muir's other conservation accomplishments, it is stretching the truth for either man to be described as a foundational figure of the national park idea or the idea of a National Park Service.

This presentation is just what the Organization of American Historians' report "Imperiled Promise: The State of History in the National Park Service" cautioned the National Park Service to avoid—interpretation that is "less the product of training and expertise and more the expression of conventional wisdom."²²⁷ What is most striking about this official web feature is not who is being given all the credit but who is being erased, in effect, from the history of the National Park Service.²²⁸ Perhaps the most striking omission is the absence

²²⁶ National Park Service, "Early Leaders of the Park Service Idea," *Visionary Leaders*, <https://www.nps.gov/bestideapeople/index.html>. The article remained even after an essay was published in the *George Wright Forum* at the end of 2016 questioning the accuracy and efficacy of keeping it on the website as written. As of the summer of 2018, it was still featured, unchanged. See Rolf Diamant, "Letter from Woodstock: More Than Campfire Conversation," *George Wright Forum* 33, no. 3 (2016), 271–274, www.georgewright.org/312diamant.pdf.

²²⁷ Anne Whisnant, Marla Miller, Gary Nash, and David Thelen, *Imperiled Promise: The State of History in the National Park Service* (Organization of American Historians, 2011).

²²⁸ It should be noted that the listing of "early visionary leaders" of the National Park Service also offers no mention of Congressman John Lacey, principal sponsor of the 1906 Antiquities Act that has been referred to by historians as the first National Park Service "organic act," or J. Horace McFarland, long-time leader of the American Civic Association, who was the driving force behind sixteen bills introduced into Congress to establish the national park service. Neither is there any mention of Mary Belle King Sherman, "the national park lady" who mobilized 3,000 clubs and nearly one million members of the General Federation of Women's Clubs behind McFarland's campaign.

of any recognition for Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. and his landmark Yosemite Report or Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and his oversized imprint on the creation and early development of the National Park Service. Only with exploration of the home pages for Yosemite National Park and the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site do the Olmsteds' contributions to the national park system emerge from obscurity. And that picture is far from complete.

WHERE IS OLMSTED SR.?

Part of the reasons for the Olmsteds' omission from the National Park Service's official history lies in the objectives of that narrative. The National Park Service, since its earliest days, has preferred to emphasize the degree to which national parks differ from other (municipal and state) parks. This difference is rooted in the agency's emphasis on resource "preservation" over more utilitarian "conservation." In the twentieth century, as national parks were visited by ever larger numbers of tourists—now in automobiles—maintaining these distinctions became more challenging. Supporters of the campfire narratives, determined to set national parks apart in a unique category of their own, were all too ready to overlook the historical association between early national parks and the nineteenth-century urban parks movement and by extension Frederick Law Olmsted Sr., that movement's recognized champion. This was the case despite the fact that the elder Olmsted had made clear in his plans for Yosemite Valley and Niagara Falls, as well as in his recommendations for scenic reservations around Boston, that more urbanized encroachments, from flower beds to swimming pools and tennis courts, were to be kept to a minimum in scenic reservations, even if they were acceptable in smaller urban parks.

Both of the park service's preferred narratives—the twin campfire origin stories—affirm the better angels of the national character and the purer impulses of scenic preservation, while avoiding the more difficult dimensions and narratives of national park history, which is closely associated with the Civil War and its controversial legacy. By the early twentieth century, when political momentum was building to establish a national park service, North-South reconciliation was a political priority and most of the civil rights gains of the Civil War and Reconstruction had been, or were being, systematically rolled back. National park service supporters, seeking support from southern legislators and the southern-born president, Woodrow Wilson, chose to publicize a national park creation narrative that avoided references to the 1864 Yosemite Act and Olmsted's 1865 Yosemite Report. Official agency histories and early annual reports sought to distance the national parks from potentially sensitive political and social contexts associated with the Civil War era, even as Congress was setting aside commemorative reservations on former battlefields, later to become national parks. In other words, as Richard Sellars observed, early park service leaders were content to give national parks a post-Civil War "virgin birth."

Race has always been a difficult issue for national parks, as it is for all American institutions. Not surprisingly, when the first national parks were established in the south, starting with Shenandoah in the 1920s, segregated recreational facilities and campgrounds were built, mirroring Jim Crow practices in nearby state parks. As historian Ronald A. Foresta observed in *America's National Parks and Their Keepers*, national parks have always been "tied up with American memory and mythology. The reality beneath the image is that neither the

national parks nor their keepers stand apart from our times.”²²⁹ Olmsted Sr. was therefore a problematic figure in several respects: he was closely identified with well-established eastern urban parks when the new national parks were being marketed as a concept born in the West, and he was a loyal unionist known for books generally critical of slavery and antebellum southern life. Langford’s Yellowstone campfire story, on the other hand, carried no such baggage and thus could serve as a comfortable substitute narrative.

The vigorous rearguard defense of the campfire myth waged by National Park Service leaders well into the second half of the twentieth century can perhaps be explained by how well this “first narrative” also aligned with the Cold War–era ideology of American cultural exceptionalism. Beginning the story of American national parks with Yellowstone “as the first national park in the history of the world” fit perfectly with this aspiration.²³⁰ “From the White House down,” wrote Alfred Runte about this period, “the United States took pride in the knowledge that it was both the inventor and exporter of the national park idea.”²³¹ During Yellowstone’s 1972 centennial, Runte points out, “the inconsistencies of the Washburn Expedition aside, major newspapers, magazines, television networks, and government reports told and retold its story literally in heroic terms. The explorers ‘could not have anticipated,’ one said, ‘that their idea would flower into a new dimension of the American dream and would capture the imagination of men around the world.’” As senior Park Service official E. T. Scoyen, who served with Albright on Yellowstone’s Centennial Committee in 1972, explained, it was highly desirable to credit the birth of national parks with “a wonderful and interesting group of rugged western pioneers.” “I, for one,” stated Scoyen, “will not be satisfied with mere confirmation as a reason for throwing this valuable National Park asset out the window or degrading it in any way.”²³² Olmsted, whose park ideas drew inspiration from his international travels and formative visits to places such as England’s Birkenhead Park, did not easily fit into this narrative of American exceptionalism.

WHERE IS OLMSTED JR.?

The harder question to answer is why Olmsted Jr. has been erased from the history of the National Park Service. Olmsted Jr.’s work was certainly recognized in the recollections of several of the National Park Service directors that he directly worked with. Horace Albright, writing about the 1916 Act (as recounted in Chapter 8,) credited Olmsted with being “responsible for the wording of the governing sentence, and contributing his ideas on other matters of policy.”²³³ Former director Newton Drury recalled, “Olmsted was a terrier. He never left a problem until he’d gotten out of it everything there was to get . . . his outstanding quality was his indefatigability. He never gave up. He’d work all hours of the night.” In Drury’s

²²⁹ Ronald A. Foresta, *America’s National Parks and Their Keepers* (Washington, DC: Resources for the Future, 1985), 67.

²³⁰ PBS, “Yellowstone National Park,” website for *The National Parks: America’s Best Idea*, dir. Ken Burns, <http://www.pbs.org/nationalparks/parks/yellowstone/>

²³¹ Runte, *National Parks*, 182.

²³² Schullery and Whittlesey, *Myth and History in the Creation of Yellowstone National Park*, 51.



Fig. 11.5. *Camping party of men and women cooking at campfire and eating near tent in Indian Henry, Mt. Rainier National Park, Washington by Curtis & Miller, between 1911 and 1920. National Photo Company Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.*

opinion, “We can credit him with really setting the tone . . . of the national parks.”²³⁴ Conrad Wirth, who enjoyed the longest and perhaps closest association with Olmsted, reminisced about their days working together on the National Capital Park and Planning Commission:

I remember spending several days with him on the location plans for George Washington Memorial Parkway. He wanted to be sure the land to be included was adequate, that the parkway roads would take advantage of the vistas. . . . Olmsted would go into the field and walk the boundary lines. It was not enough for him to track them on the ground; he wanted to see from a height and would shinny up a tree to look in all directions. I would accompany him on these trips, carrying the plans. Climbing the trees, we had to carry the plans in our mouths, as a dog carries a bone. Olmsted was a very thorough and studious man, very perceptive, and a deep thinker.²³⁵

But Olmsted Jr.’s star seemed to fade by the late twentieth century. The National Park Service’s own bureau historians bear some of the responsibility for this dimming. There is no mention of Olmsted Sr. and scant mention of Olmsted Jr. in Ronald Lee’s 1972 *Family Tree of the National Park System*. Similarly, Barry Mackintosh’s authoritative 1985 *The National Parks*:

²³³ Albright and Cahn, *The Birth of the National Park Service*, 35.

²³⁴ Newton Bishop Drury, Oral History Interview, University of California Bancroft Library/Berkeley Regional Oral History Office, 1972, <https://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/druryn.htm>.

²³⁵ Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*.

Shaping the System, reprinted in 1991 and 2005, has a full-page photograph of Roosevelt and Muir at Yosemite's Glacier Point but no mention at all of the Olmsteds. Mather, Albright, and Interior Secretary Franklin K. Lane are the only actors mentioned regarding the passage of the 1916 Act.

This exclusive focus on the larger-than-life characters of Mather and Albright may be part of the reason other key figures, including Olmsted Jr. and his close colleague J. Horace McFarland, have largely faded into the background. After all, Mather and Albright were of the National Park Service, not outsiders like the Olmsteds and McFarland. "Founder's syndrome" may be at work as well, with Albright having a disproportionate amount of power and influence in shaping official narratives, even after he left the National Park Service. This was certainly the case with the longevity of the Langford story.

Scholarship by historians such as Robin Winks and Richard West Sellars focusing specifically on the history of National Park Service Organic Act, have brought McFarland and Olmsted back into view. Thanks to their work and others, most veteran park service staff members now associate Olmsted Jr. with the 1916 Act's critical statement of purpose. Regardless, neither the Olmsteds nor McFarland have been officially recognized on the agency's website as "Early Leaders of the Park Service Idea." First narratives do die hard.

A FOUNDING NARRATIVE FOR A TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM

There is much discussion about how to make the National Park Service more relevant to all Americans and increase the diversity of park visitors. One important step in that direction would be a more inclusive founding narrative that embraces the broader themes, motivations, and historical context of the park system's founding, connecting back to Abraham Lincoln and emancipation, the Olmsteds, and the larger American parks movement.

Meaningful change does not arise from campfire conversations. Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. passionately argued that the idea of protecting special places for the benefit of all people, not only privileged groups, was worth fighting for. Olmsted's 1865 Yosemite Report methodically documents how closely the concept of parks is linked to political struggle and the commitment of popular government to principles of equity and benevolence. At a time of heightened cynicism about public service, such a narrative would serve as a reminder of government's foundational duty to advance, in Olmsted Sr.'s words, the "pursuit of happiness against the obstacles,"²³⁶ for the benefit all people, no matter how well entrenched those obstacles might be.

Olmsted Jr. championed professional park stewardship. Today, such stewardship must draw upon the best available planning practice, science, and scholarship. Such stewardship is needed now more than ever, as the park service looks for ways to contribute meaningfully to climate resiliency, ecosystem services, and public health. Finally, in the wake of the 2016 National Park Service centennial, there is a sense of urgency in the impulse to tell a refreshed National Park Service history that includes the Olmsteds—and why now, more than ever, it is important to get the story right.

²³⁶ Olmsted, Yosemite Report

PART 4

THE OLMSTED FIRM'S NATIONAL PARK PROJECTS

INTRODUCTION

Beginning with Frederick Law Olmsted's 1865 Yosemite report, the body of work by the Olmsteds and the Olmsted firms includes a large number of projects that formed what we today recognize as the national park system. While it is not possible to say that the Olmsted firms designed the national parks per se, the breadth of work done by the firm to advocate for scenic preservation, evaluate areas being considered for acquisition, advise on complex land use and park development issues, and design park facilities to allow appropriate public access without compromising scenic or conservation values, and the distinctive style and approach of that work, are noteworthy. This section presents a narrative description of the most important projects, including both planning and design work, which were planned or requested by the National Park Service or became units of the national park system at a later date. Not included is a substantial body of work related to the California state park system and projects the firms undertook for other federal agencies, such as the planning and design work for Mount Hood National Forest completed for the U.S. Forest Service (Department of Agriculture), that nonetheless address areas also of mutual interest to the National Park Service.

The body of work of the Olmsted firms, from 1857 to 1979, represents some six thousand individual projects, each of which was assigned an individual job number by the office. That number was used to track plans, photographs, correspondence, plant lists, and other records associated with the work. Not all of these projects advanced into detailed design and constructed works; in some cases, multiple projects were combined under a single job number. The firms' practice of assigning project numbers provides a key to understanding its contribution to the National Park Service.

It is also important to note that these project descriptions are not presented as definitive histories of the development of individual parks or park features, nor do they offer a comprehensive analysis of the complex interactions between the Olmsted firms, the National Park Service, and other agencies, organizations, and park service supporters. They are simply descriptions of the Olmsted firms' role in planning and designing elements of the national park system, including feedback to Department of Interior and National Park Service officials that helped shape the development of the system in its formative years. As such, it is not the intent of this study to define the final result or impact of the Olmsted firms' work on an individual park. The true picture of these interactions can only be found by an extensive and thorough investigation of written reports, correspondence, and visual material that is found at Fairsted and the Library of Congress and in the records of individual parks and organizations.

CHAPTER TWELVE

PLANNING STUDIES AND PARK REPORTS

Between 1916 and 1953, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. consulted or advised the National Park Service and individual parks on a broad range of topics. None of these projects resulted in the Olmsted firms producing design drawings or planning maps, which is what distinguishes this work from that of the next section, Designs for National Parks. Some, though not all, of these consultations related to parks in the western United States, facilitated by the Olmsted Brothers California (Western) office, as Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. traveled regularly between the two coasts. His role and level of effort varied somewhat among these projects. At one end of the spectrum, the report on Hawaii National Park (now Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park) exhibits his keen eye for current and potential future issues related to park management and maintenance, facility development, existing land uses, and preservation of the natural environment; the gist of his work for Hawaii National Park is contained in a single narrative report. At the other end is the Colorado River Basin Recreation Study, which encompassed a broad spectrum of issues around the Colorado River, Grand Canyon, and Dinosaur National Monument, particularly related to potential recreational uses of proposed reservoirs, adjacent land use concerns, and complications over private versus government interests around water rights and other issues. Some of this work was done after Olmsted was appointed Collaborator, an official position he held with the National Park Service in the 1940s.

Often, Olmsted's advisory work and design contributions in the national parks were the result of or influenced by his many professional or organizational affiliations and relationships, such as his connections with the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), the Commission of Fine Arts, the Wilderness Society, and the National Park Association (NPA). These connections also enabled him to facilitate the resolution of complex issues among many parties. For example, Olmsted's work at the Everglades involved an extensive field evaluation and written report on behalf of the NPA (not the National Park Service) that finally succeeded in getting the NPA to support inclusion of the Everglades in the national park system. Both Olmsted and Henry Vincent Hubbard were active in other national organizations that frequently brought them to Washington, D.C., as did Olmsted's important roles on the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Park Commission. This presence in Washington facilitated frequent meetings or consultations with Department of Interior and National Park Service officials. When Olmsted was indisposed or unavailable due to other commitments, Hubbard stepped in to work on both design and planning issues.

For all of these projects, Olmsted Jr.'s planning expertise, reputation, and personal connections provided the foundation for his involvement. In some cases, the association with his father's work as an advocate for scenic preservation gave even more weight to Olmsted Jr.'s presence and advice. This was true for two reasons. First, Olmsted Jr.'s role in the drafting of the 1916 Organic Act meant he was able to articulate and expand on the fundamental



Fig. 12.1. Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. (center in dark cap) and collaborators during Everglades reconnaissance on behalf of the National Park Association, January 1932. The report resulting from this work recommended establishment of Everglades National Park. Photo album 4022-01-ph21, Job No. 4022 Tropic Everglades, Florida. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

values and goals of the agency as it related to specific park issues. Second, he often passed his father’s writings along to colleagues on national park projects as a reminder of the importance of scenic preservation, wise planning, and appropriate use. This was certainly true when Olmsted Jr. was appointed to the Yosemite National Park Board of Expert Advisors, a position he held intermittently over two decades, and in his work at Acadia National Park for John D. Rockefeller Jr. and George Buckman Dorr. In contrast to the planning work on which this section focuses, however, Olmsted’s work for these two parks included physical design plans; consequently, they are included in the next section.

At the peak of his advisory work, Olmsted was already approaching what most would consider retirement age, yet he continued in various roles as advisor to the National Park Service. In 1949, he was called upon by the Council of the Wilderness Society to prepare a policy statement for park service director Newton Drury on wilderness values in national parks. He remained active until his final correspondence with the Yosemite Board in 1953, at age 83. With such an arduous travel and field schedule, ranging from coast to coast, it is no wonder that projects or responses were often delayed.

GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK

Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. worked on a number of issues at Grand Canyon National Park, often as part of design projects for a particular site in the park or larger initiatives to address land use and recreation planning. The El Tovar Hotel on the south rim of the canyon is the only design project at the Grand Canyon that has an individual job number; it addressed

the development of the village in the 1920s as an important public entrance to the park. In contrast, Olmsted Jr. served in a purely advisory role in the evaluation of a proposed land transfer to the Havasupai Nation. Both of these projects are discussed below.

EL TOVAR HOTEL

In 1926, National Park Service Director Stephen Mather asked Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. for assistance in evaluating the vicinity of the El Tovar Hotel and Bright Angel Camp in Grand Canyon Village at the south rim. The plan for the village at the south rim had undergone a number of changes in the 1920s. An early plan by Chief Landscape Engineer Daniel Hull was superseded by the concessionaire (Fred Harvey Company), which engaged architect Pierce Anderson to redesign the village to accommodate a major hotel expansion.²³⁷ By 1924, when Anderson died, the concessionaire had failed to initiate construction of a new hotel so Hull (and the park service) resumed control of the planning for the village and reinstated Hull's plan to allow much-needed work to benefit park operations to proceed. Hull's village layout created a new automobile entrance and central plaza area, but the question of what to do about the hotel lingered—whether to construct new hotel facilities or expand the existing El Tovar Hotel, which was designed by Charles Frederick Wittlesey, Chief Architect of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad, and opened to visitors in 1905.



Fig. 12.2. *El Tovar Hotel*, ca. 1905. National Park Service, Grand Canyon National Park Museum Collection.

²³⁷ Michael P. Scott et. al., *National Historic Landmark Nomination for Grand Canyon Village, Grand Canyon National Park* (1996), 53.

Olmsted visited the site in October 1926 so he could fully evaluate the village, Hull’s plan, and the question of the hotel expansion. His report to Mather advised against the construction of a new hotel between the El Tovar and Hopi House. He worried that a new hotel would “raise the scale and cost accommodations needlessly” and he could not “see any sufficient compensating public advantage.”²³⁸ But the major issue for Olmsted was the preservation of the view, as part of the arrival experience for visitors arriving by railroad and by automobile and as an irreplaceable aspect of the village’s character. He agreed with Hull regarding the need to protect specific vantage points, suggested that defined view corridors free of buildings be set aside to preserve views, and recommended that new park development be located west of the approach drive. He suggested expanding the existing hotel to the west (away from the rim), if additional accommodations were needed. In addition to preserving the view of the canyon, this plan would also keep the arrival experience distinct from the internal circulation in the individual camps.

Olmsted also provided a critical comparison of the development proposed by Hull and a plan proposed by Alfred P. Shaw of the Chicago architecture firm Graham, Anderson, Probst, and White, which was working on behalf of the Fred Harvey



Fig. 12.3. *View of the El Tovar Hotel from the west rim of the village, June 26, 1937. Photo #1157. National Park Service, Grand Canyon National Park Museum Collection.*

²³⁸ Frederick Law Olmsted to Hon. Stephen Mather, October 12, 1926. Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, California and Western Office Correspondence, Subseries II, Box 04-02-05. Job #8078 El Tovar Hotel, Grand Canyon National Park.



Fig. 12.4. *Scenic View of Grand Canyon from near Hopi Point, Looking East* by Collins, ca. 1931. Photo #137. National Park Service, Grand Canyon National Park Museum Collection.

Company. In that analysis, Olmsted was concerned about a number of characteristics in the village plans, particularly the size and location of buildings and the distances between them, distance of development from the rim, and the need to improve soil conditions to allow revegetation in some areas and further integrate new structures into the landscape. He also argued for the preservation of areas that had “much natural beauty which constitutes the frame of a view of really great permanent importance.”²³⁹

²³⁹ Olmsted to Mather, October 12, 1926.

PROPOSED LAND TRANSFERS

In 1943, National Park Service Director Newton Drury appointed a committee, headed by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., to study a proposed land transfer from Grand Canyon National Park, Grand Canyon National Monument, and Kaibab National Forest to the Havasupai Reservation, proposed by the “Indian Service” and the Havasupai Tribal Council. The existing Havasupai Reservation of 518 acres, located in Havasu Canyon, was not sufficient to allow the tribe to be self-sustaining; it did not provide sufficient grazing land, water rights, and exclusive occupancy to support the tribe’s traditional use of the land. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, including the Forest Service, and state and county governments all supported the transfer, but the park service remained opposed, because the proposed transfer constituted some 20 percent of the park’s land area, although the service did acknowledge that the plan included some “non-valuable” areas that could be transferred without damaging the park. This opposition presented potential legal and ethical issues for the agency, prompting Drury to appoint the committee to study the issue.²⁴⁰

Working with Grand Canyon Superintendent Harold C. Bryant and Harold M. Ratcliff, Superintendent of Dinosaur National Monument, Olmsted completed an assessment of the proposal in May 1943. While the report is generally sympathetic to and supportive of the Havasupai claims, it considers the effect of the transfer of lands primarily from the perspective of the Grand Canyon National Park; the analysis focuses on issues related to care



Fig. 12.5. *Havasupai Canyon, Taken from the Indian School* by H.G. Peabody, September 1899. Photo #14730. Grand Canyon National Park Museum Collection.

²⁴⁰ See Robert H. Keller and Michael F. Turek, *American Indians and National Parks*. (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1998), 160.

and control of the land, preservation of important viewsheds, protection of the Colorado River, and public access. Ultimately, the report recommended against the withdrawal of significant lands from park service control. The grazing and water rights issues, the committee suggested, could be addressed through interagency agreements.

The language of the report reflects Olmsted's Organic Act and his arguments for protecting scenery of the Grand Canyon; it notes that park service control remained "the best available guarantee of preserving inspirational qualities unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations, as provided by law."²⁴¹ Still, despite the park service opposition, the Havasupai successfully acquired 2,500 acres at the head of Cataract Canyon.²⁴²

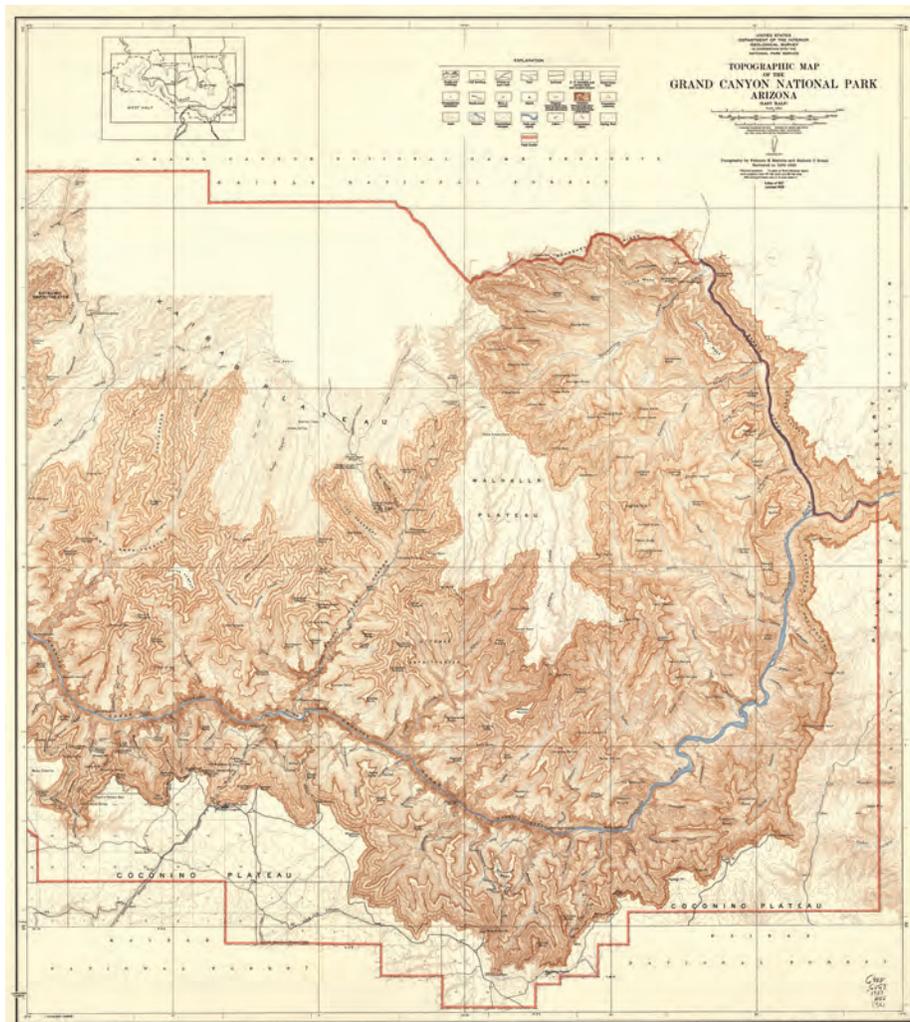


Fig. 12.6. *Topographic Map of the Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona, U.S. Geological Survey, 1948.* Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.

²⁴¹ Frederick Law Olmsted, H.C. Bryant, and Harold M. Ratcliff, "Report on Indian Service Proposal for Transfer of Grand Canyon National Park and Monument Lands to Indian Service as Reservation for Havasupai Indians," United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Grand Canyon National Park, May 4, 1943, 5. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, Western Office Correspondence.

²⁴² Keller and Turek, *American Indians*, 161.

HAWAII NATIONAL PARK

(HAWAI’I VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK)

Hawaii National Park is one of the earliest national parks, established by President Wilson in the same year as the National Park Service enabling legislation—while the island chain was still only a territory of the United States. Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. played a key role in its development, providing a comprehensive report in 1929.

Olmsted Jr. and his family traveled from Palos Verdes, California, to the Territory of Hawaii in that year; while there, he made notes for a detailed report on various issues related to zoning and regional planning, with a particular focus on the Kilauea section of the island of Hawaii.²⁴³ Olmsted’s report was widely circulated to the Secretary of the Interior, Ray Lyman Wilbur; Arno Camerer, National Park Service Associate Director; Thomas Vint, Chief Landscape Architect of the National Park Service; and Lawrence Judd, Governor of Hawaii. Many of the issues Olmsted identified in Hawaii and his recommendations for Hawaii National Park were applicable to other parks; his comments outline persistent challenges of incorporating human use and needed park development into an important scenic, cultural, and natural resource. Other issues, such as traffic management for shorter visits, were unique to Hawaii.

The most important priority, Olmsted noted, was the need to sort out issues related to some specific areas or facilities before the creation of a general plan for the park, which Thomas Vint would undertake. To this end Olmsted noted a few specific features that required such decisions, including the existing Volcano House hotel, the location for a park office, parking and traffic problems, the road to Mauna Loa, and vegetation management. The second overall concept Olmsted commented on was the relationship between the park and areas outside the park boundary, specifically other tourist facilities to the east, as well as the potential for incompatible development resulting from the increased public access to the remote scenic areas of the volcanoes.

With regard to park planning, Olmsted suggested immediate improvements be made to the existing Volcano House hotel until a new hotel could be built. He recommended that portions of the hotel be relocated to improve the auto turnaround and the “suburban” character of the exterior be addressed. Ultimately, in Olmsted’s mind, a park hotel should be constructed on the east side of the Kilauea crater, “because of the inherent advantages of this site, for impressiveness of outlook, freedom from complication with the main highway, and space available for expansion of subsidiary units and accessories eastward, and also because it would permit construction without interrupting service on the present site.”²⁴⁴ This location was consistent with what the

²⁴³ The original park established in 1916 consisted of the summits of Kilauea and Mauna Loa volcanoes on the island of Hawaii as well as Haleakala on Maui, which later became a separate park. Today, the Kilauea section is part of Hawai’i Volcanoes National Park.

²⁴⁴ Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., “Report of Visit by Mr. Olmsted to the Kilauea Section of the Hawaii National Park, July 1929,” 1. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, Series B 413: 339.

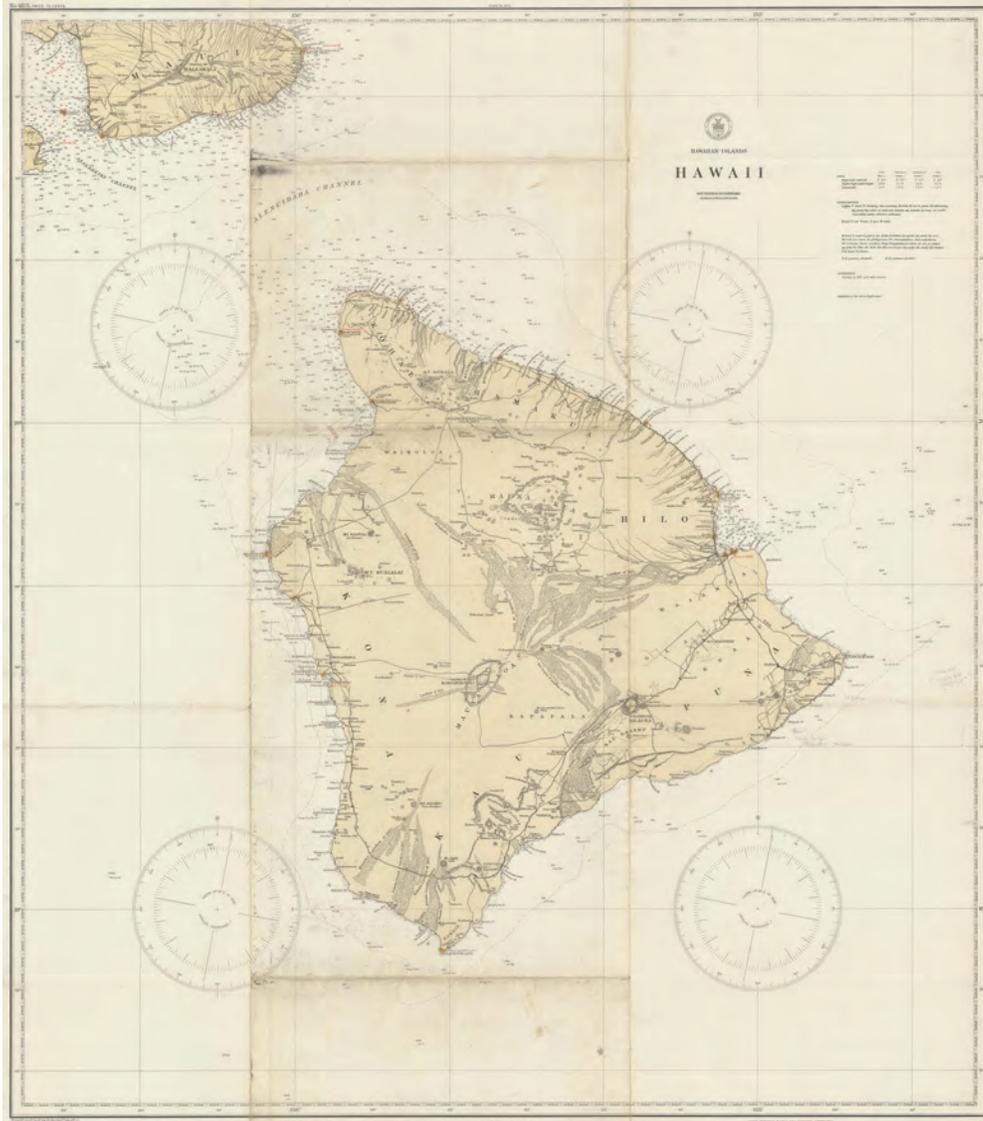


Fig. 12.7. *Hawaiian Islands, Hawaii*, U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, February 1919. Plan #7959-1-pa2. Job no. 7959 Hawaii National Park. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

park superintendent, Thomas Allen had suggested.²⁴⁵ Allen also advocated for a permanent park office that would provide museum and education facilities as well as an overlook of the crater, but Olmsted did not provide specific recommendations for this facility.

Olmsted noted that some of the visitor use and facilities challenges in Hawaii were different from those in other scenic parks, such as Yosemite, because visitors took decidedly shorter walks at Hawaii National Park. For instance, he was concerned about parking in and around the Thurston lava tube, because the considerable traffic, a result of many shorter visits,

²⁴⁵ Thomas J. Allen Jr. served as park superintendent in Hawaii from November 1928 until 1931. From there, he moved to Zion, Hot Springs, and Rocky Mountain National Parks and served as regional director and assistant director of the National Park Service. He was trained as a forester and was recognized with a silver Pugsley Medal for his work in conservation.



Fig. 12.8. *Volcano House* by Melvin Vaniman, ca. 1902. Panoramic Photographs Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

created an unsightly and congested environment detrimental to the “extraordinarily beautiful and intricate landscape of tree ferns and rough lava formations” found there.²⁴⁶ The solution was new automobile and pedestrian circulation routes as well as traffic management to avoid the bunching up of cars. Defined drop-off areas and pedestrian routes to the lava tube would eliminate automobile congestion at one of the park’s most scenic and picturesque sites.

Olmsted also suggested a system of bypass and feeder roads that would integrate cars more gradually into the main sightseeing loop, thus reducing congestion. He emphasized the desirability of narrow, one-way circulation routes, as opposed to wider two-way roadways, to preserve and encourage views of the delicate vegetation and picturesque rock formations. He also offered suggestions related to the road to Mauna Loa proposed by volcanologist Thomas Jagger, which would have an apparent consistent gradient of 10 percent up the mountain. Olmsted observed that a possible solution would be to build the road in phases, beginning with a relatively steep and narrow route and ultimately achieving a one-way ascent and descent of suitable grades (proposed at 6 percent for the ascent, for example). He proposed several ways this new route might meet the first phase road at intervals so that it could be built in sections and immediately made available for use.



Fig. 12.9. *Crater of Kilauea, Hawaii* by Melvin Vaniman, ca. 1902. Panoramic Photographs Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

²⁴⁶ Olmsted, “Report of Visit,” 2.



Fig. 12.10. *Thurston Lava Tube*, ca. 1940. Photographer unknown. UH Manoa Hamilton Rare Photograph H-00002-20a. University of Hawaii, Manoa Library, Hawaiian Collection, Hawaiian Photo Album.

The treatment and development of roads in the park more generally, including how and where they would be constructed as well as how increased visitation to particular areas would affect both the park landscape and scenic areas outside the park, also concerned Olmsted. One example was the planned extension of the Chain-of-Craters Road to Kalapana; Olmsted advised that this road could lead to an increase in tourism along the Puna coast, with corresponding private development that could diminish the special characteristics of the area's remarkable scenery. This concern was fueled by Olmsted's experience in California, where considerable public investment had been made to construct scenic roads without proper planning to prevent inappropriate development, resulting in the exploitation and destruction of scenic values. The National Park Service, Olmsted argued, has a "grave responsibility" to educate local officials about the potential problem and take responsibility for preserving the most valuable scenic assets of the region. The first step, he argued, should be a detailed study of land ownership, particularly areas between the road and shoreline. Next, he suggested that key seaward views, particularly between Kalapana and Pohoiki, be protected through public ownership or easements. Olmsted's report also



Fig. 12.11. *Kilauea Iki Lookout, South.* From Superintendent’s Monthly Report, December 1933. Crater Rim Drive, Volcano, Hawaii County, HI. HAER HI-48-15. HABS/HAER/HALS Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

advised that the landward sides of the roads should be governed by proper planning to ensure appropriately wide building setbacks depending on specific site conditions. He suggested creating a “Puna District Protective Association” that would give public agencies, including the National Park Service, legal and discretionary authority to permit only approved structures and have some advisory influence on private landowners, with the goal of preserving the scenery of the Puna coast.

Olmsted was also keenly interested in the challenges of native vegetation management in the park. That interest in Hawaii’s native tropical vegetation may have been influenced by his father, who had on several occasions made reference to the lushness and profusion he witnessed traveling through Panama en route to Yosemite; that journey inspired Olmsted Sr. to incorporate the character of the tropics into plantings in Central Park and at Stanford University. In Hawaii National Park, Olmsted Jr. saw an opportunity for Americans to share that experience: “For hundreds of thousands of Americans, and ultimately for millions, a visit to Hawaii is their first perhaps only opportunity to see wild tropical vegetation and it seems to me that the National Park Service has a very important duty before it to keep the vegetation of the Hawaii National Park as free as possible from exotics, i.e. from non-native plants and especially so in respect to non-tropical exotic vegetation.”²⁴⁷

To protect that unique vegetation, he strongly advised against introducing nonnative, cultivated subtropical plants like those in common use in the populated areas of the islands, and he strongly objected to “familiar garden plants of the continental United States,” which, he argued, “were entirely out of place in Hawaii National Park.”²⁴⁸ Particular species of concern

²⁴⁷ Olmsted, “Report of Visit,” 4.

²⁴⁸ Olmsted, “Report of Visit,” 4.



Fig. 12.12. *Hawaii Road to Volcano; Giant tree ferns in the Fern Forest of Hawaii National Park. Hawaii Visitors Bureau photo PP-29-2-038. Hawaii State Archives)*

included double roses, nasturtiums, guava, lantana, blackberry, eucalyptus, and conifers (trees). The problem, Olmsted noted, was the potential for introduced plants to naturalize freely in the favorable climate of Hawaii, outcompeting the delicate and distinctive natural vegetation. Noting that the eucalyptus and conifer trees planted at the Volcano House provided needed shelter, Olmsted advised that native vegetation should be planted in areas where it did not block important views and the non-native trees removed after the native vegetation was established.

Another of Olmsted's concerns at Hawaii National Park was both park and private development on the east side. The first issue involved the relationship between the park and private lands close to the Kilauea crater. Olmsted Jr. viewed regional planning and interagency cooperation as key to the future of the park and its adjacent lands; he suggested that the park service engage in cooperative planning with the Inter-Island Steam Navigation Company, large landowners in the areas east of the park, and county and territorial officials to guide and focus development adjacent to the park. He noted that the landscape on the northeast side of the crater was particularly suited for resort areas because of its specific climate conditions and speculated that the area would likely be subject to increased development of pleasure resorts on private land.

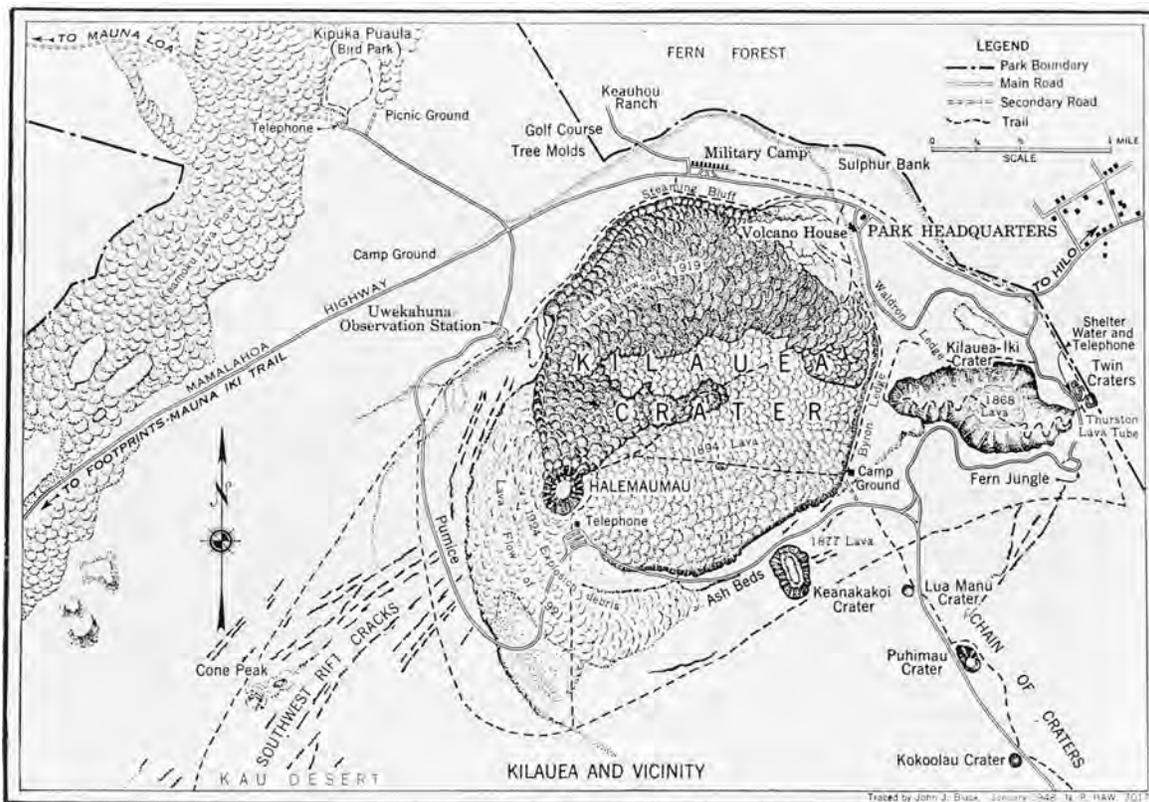


Fig. 12.13. Map of Kilauea Crater Section Roads, 1948. From 1948 National Park Brochure, traced by John J. Black. Hawaii Volcanoes National Park Roads, HAER HI-47-6. HABS/HAER/HALS Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

Perhaps surprisingly, Olmsted did not object to potential nearby development. Rather, he saw it as meeting the needs of visitors whose purpose in visiting Hawaii was something rather different than what the national park offered, distinguishing between visitors whose trip to Hawaii National Park was incidental to a resort experience from those whose primary goal was to enjoy the natural phenomena of the park. In looking toward the future, Olmsted was supportive of the current management of the Volcano House and noted that future improvements would not conflict with private development, as the clientele and characteristics of the park facilities would be different than those in private pleasure resorts. Thus, the two approaches to overnight accommodations—the Volcano House with its quiet, comfortable setting focused on viewing and studying the Kilauea caldera and other park features and private development to the east with tennis, golf, and dancing—could “supplement each other’s functions instead of conflicting.”²⁴⁹

²⁴⁹ Olmsted, “Report of Visit,” 6.



Fig. 12.14 *Rock Shoulder Work*, ca. 1931–1932. From loose photographs collection, Hawaii Volcanoes National Park Roads, HAER HI-47-1. HABS/HAER/HALS Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

TROPIC EVERGLADES (EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK)

Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.'s role in the ASLA Committee on National Parks and Forests led to consultations with local Florida and National Park Service officials regarding the potential acquisition of land in the Everglades for a new national park. While there are several plans in the Olmsted archives, the principle task that Olmsted Jr. undertook at the Everglades was advocacy and evaluation of the Everglades with respect to the park service's Statement of Purpose. Through savvy coordination with local advocates, legislators, and national conservation groups to rally support for the idea, followed by a study to determine the park's boundaries, he played a key role in the ultimate creation of the park, at a time when

Florida was undergoing a surge in population, development, and land speculation, along with rampant poaching and destruction of rare wildlife and plants. One of the initial proponents of the Everglades park, Ernest Coe, a landscape architect from Florida, had started promoting the Everglades in 1928, when he helped found the Tropic Everglades Park Association. As part of those efforts, he met with Stephen Mather in Washington and then with the supporters of the Great Smokey Mountains National Park project, from whom he hoped to learn about the process of national park designation.

In 1929, David Fairchild, president of the Tropic Everglades Park Association, asked for Olmsted’s support for a new national park. In reply, Olmsted noted his expertise and promised his support:

As one who has for years carefully studied the development of the National Park System against a background of long professional training in public park matters, as one who has had occasion to oppose many proposals for the extension of that system in ways that seemed to me contrary to sound public policy, as one who is personally somewhat familiar with conditions in Florida. I can say very positively, that in my opinion it would be highly desirable to round out the system of National Parks by acquiring a properly selected area representative of the best of the natural tropical scenery and flora and fauna of Southern Florida, and that procedure outlined in the circular relative to the proposed Tropic Everglades National Park seems to me thoroughly well-conceived. You may be assured of any support I can give.²⁵⁰

The initial proposal for the park, advocated by the Coe and the association, encompassed a considerable geographic area south of Lake Okeechobee, some 2,500 square miles. Supporters hoped that federal ownership and national park designation for this area would be sufficient to “protect its varied flora and fauna, much of it unique to this area,” which would otherwise be lost forever.²⁵¹ In 1929, Senator Duncan Fletcher drafted legislation authorizing the Department of the Interior to investigate the “advisability and practicality” of establishing a national park in the everglades of Dade, Monroe, and Collier counties.²⁵² The following year, Coe reported to Olmsted that a small delegation of park service staff under the direction of Horace Albright, including W.A. Clark, Hermon Bumpu, Harland Kelsey, Caspar Hedgson, and T. Gilbert Pearson, had made the first investigation of the Cape Sable area on February 10, 1930.²⁵³ Coe requested Olmsted’s help with additional investigation related to the potential national park, as well as with issues related to the state park and the state highway system.²⁵⁴

²⁵⁰ Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. to David Fairchild, Tropic Everglades Park Association, February 6, 1929. Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records 238: 195.

²⁵¹ Ernest Francis Coe, Landscape Architect, to Frederick Law Olmsted, February 15, 1929. Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, 238: 197.

²⁵² John Isne, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1961).

²⁵³ Ernest Francis Coe to Frederick Law Olmsted, April 4, 1940. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, 238: 203

²⁵⁴ Coe to Olmsted, April 4, 1940.

At the time, Olmsted was engaged in regular and somewhat adversarial correspondence with Sterling Yard, Executive Secretary of the National Parks Association, with whom he had some differences of opinion regarding the appropriateness of the Everglades as a national park. He advised Yard to work collaboratively with the Department of the Interior, the National Park Service, and local promoters of the Everglades park idea to encourage Congress to both create the park and fund it. Among the issues at hand were challenges to the merits of the Everglades scenery, which differed, in Yard's opinion, from what had been considered "national park stuff" to date, as well as offers of private funding to secure adequate studies and land acquisition.

Yard, who was active in promoting the idea of national parks early on with Stephen Mather and later became Secretary of the National Park Association, was adamant that national parks be created only to preserve distinctive, profound natural scenery such as that found at Yosemite, Glacier, Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, Mount McKinley (Denali), Hawaii National Park, and Mount Rainier. In his 1919 volume, *The Book of the National Parks*, Yard argued that national parks should constitute "supreme examples" as they represented distinctive masterpieces that represented superlative examples of scenery, historical association or scientific significance that provide "the museum of the ages."²⁵⁵ They are the "gallery of masterpieces," landscapes that offer both inspiration and an enriched sense of national identity.²⁵⁶ The Everglades were harder for Yard to appreciate—the flat expanse of dense swampland and mangroves contrasted sharply with the extreme geologic landscape of the Grand Canyon or the immensity of the Giant Sequoia.

Olmsted, in contrast, was unwavering in his support for the Everglades park, considering some areas within the proposed park boundary "in a high state of perfection within the region under question" and insisting that a "National Park in that region is immensely to be desired."²⁵⁷ He did acknowledge that he would have recommended a detailed survey of the area before proceeding to legislative authorization, but he tried to assure Yard that national park designation was an appropriate future for the Everglades and expressed full support of the Department of Interior and the National Park Service in their evaluation of the region and determination of the park's final boundaries.

Yard appeared to be concerned about the motives of local park promoters and private land owners. To this worry, Olmsted reiterated that the methods employed by the park's promoters were just as he would have recommended, including small group discussions, the suggestion that the park service investigate the idea and report on it, and the proposal to draft a bill to authorize the park service to proceed if it produced a favorable report. While the Association did not blatantly oppose the Everglades park idea, Yard's objections did complicate matters by bringing into the analysis, in Olmsted's view, unconstructive and accusatory communications that did little to accomplish their purported goal of clarifying the need for defensible criteria for national park making. Olmsted also expressed concern about Yard's suggestion that the proposed legislation be amended to allow for two kinds of parks,

²⁵⁵ Robert Sterling Yard. *The Book of the National Parks*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919), 20-21.

²⁵⁶ Yard. *Book of National Parks*, 20.

²⁵⁷ Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. to Robert Sterling Yard, February 2, 1931. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, 238: 210.

with the land constituting the western half of the Everglades north of Cape Sable reserved as a “sanctuary of nature without invasion of any kind.”²⁵⁸

Fortunately, the contretemps with Yard was relatively short-lived. By late 1931, Olmsted was on board to lead a study trip to the Everglades to assuage any remaining reservations on the part of the principal conservation and park groups supporting national parks. He requested that William Lyman Phillips, the key Olmsted firm representative for the firm’s Florida design projects, be included in the study trip. Undertaken in January 1932, the trip was officially a Special Study Committee Trip of the National Parks Association and included Olmsted Jr. and William Lyman Phillips (Olmsted Brothers), William F. Wharton (National Parks Association), Charles Edgar, Frank Button (civil engineer), Doris Elizabeth Smith, Henry G. Frampton (*Miami Daily News* editor and naturalist), Claude Matlack (photographer), and Ernest Coe (landscape architect). As the final report, written by Olmsted and Wharton, details, the trip itinerary offered a well-choreographed visual inspection of the proposed park area utilizing plane, blimp, automobile, motor yacht, and hiking:

We traversed (a) by automobile, in the northerly portion about 12 miles near the Royal Palms State Park, in the southeast portion on and near Key Largo about 20 miles, (b) by motor cruiser, a 7-days’ circumnavigation of the entire coast from the ocean northeast of Key Largo to the town of Everglades, with excursion up the Shark River and connecting channels, into Whitewater Bay, up the Turner River and through the northwest archipelago; (c) by small boat, excursions in the south of about 13 miles into Alligator Lake and Whitewater Lake, and in the west of about as much in the upper reaches of the Shark River to the rookeries and in the lower reaches of the Rogers River; (d) on foot, several miles in the Cape Sable region, in the district north of the trail, and at other scattered points; (e) by blimp, some 40 or 50 miles over the northern portion; (f) by airplane, about 150 miles over the southern and west central portions.²⁵⁹

The trip was a success; the favorable impression of the participants and the data gathered in their ten-day trip was instrumental in the passage of a resolution by the National Park Association, drafted by Olmsted and William Wharton, that recommended support for the park with a boundary similar to what had been previously proposed by the Department of the Interior. While Ernest Coe is largely credited as the principal instigator behind the establishment of the park, he relied heavily on Olmsted’s professional advice and skill at bringing together individuals to research, evaluate, and ultimately support the park idea, a role Olmsted often played for the National Park Service and others.

Olmsted and Wharton’s report, published in 1932, contained the full text of a resolution in support of the park adopted by the NPA. The resolution provided the support Congress needed to advance the project.

²⁵⁸ Olmsted to Yard, February 2, 1931. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, 238: 212

²⁵⁹ Frederick Law Olmsted and William Wharton, *The Proposed Everglades National Park: Report of a Special Committee of the National Parks Association Appointed to Study All the Features in Connection with the Proposed Everglades National Park in the State of Florida*. Presented by Mr. Fletcher, January 22, 1932. (Washington, DC, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1932), 1.



Fig. 12.15. *Everglades Reconnaissance Party Preparing to Depart by Boat, January 1932.* Claude Matlack, William Wharton and Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., in dark cap, are pictured on the left. William Lyman Phillips is on the far right. Photo album 4022-01-ph20. Job #4022 Tropic Everglades, Florida. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.



Fig. 12.16. *Everglades Reconnaissance Team Boarding the Blimp, January 1932.* Photo album 4022-01-ph03. Job #4022 Tropic Everglades, Florida. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

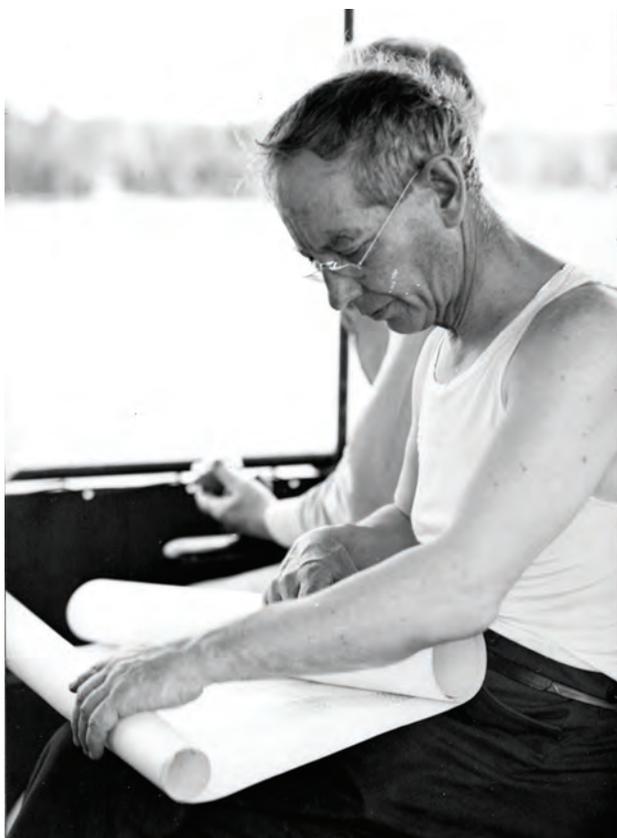


Fig. 12.17. *Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.* consulting maps during the Everglades reconnaissance, January 1932. Photo album 4022-01-ph22. Job no. 4022 Tropic Everglades, Florida. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.



Fig. 12.18. *View of the Everglades* by Claude Matlack, taken during Olmsted and Wharton’s reconnaissance trip, January 1932. Photo album 4022-01-ph07, Job #4022 Tropic Everglades, Florida. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

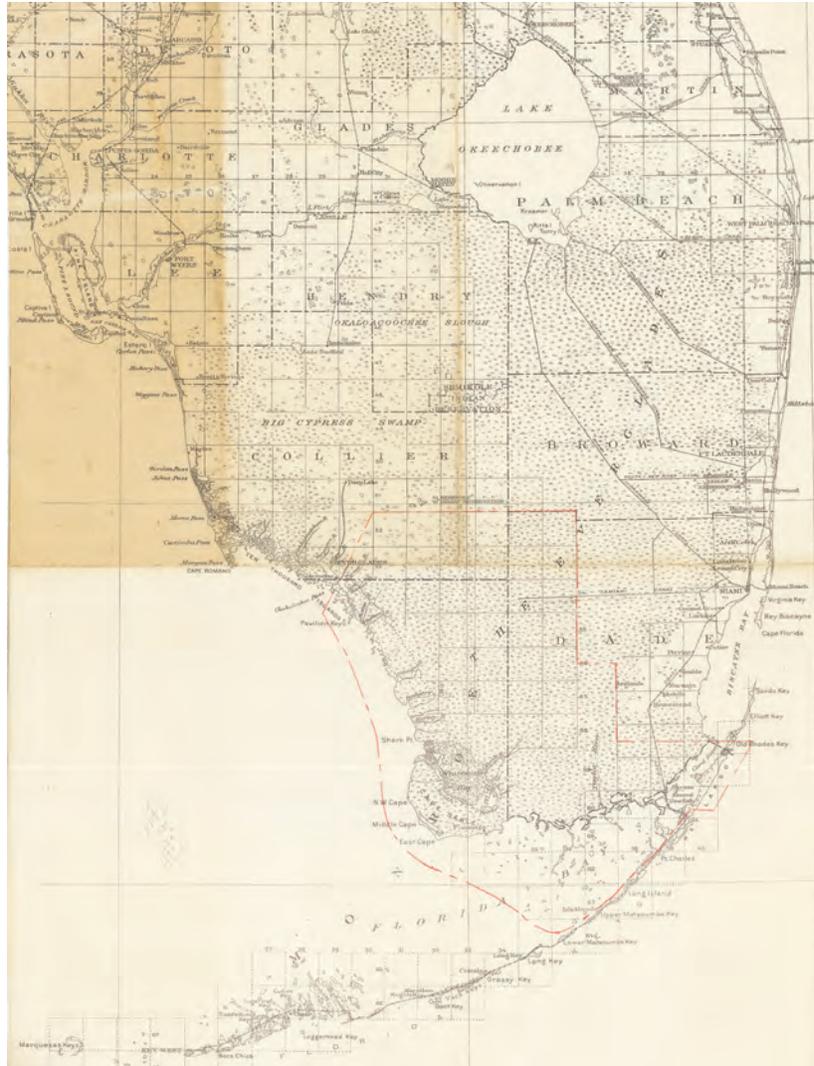


Fig. 12.19. *Everglades, Proposed Boundary, n.d. Plan #4022-1. Job #4022 Tropic Everglades, Florida. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.*

RESOLUTION OF NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION

Under a resolution of the National Parks Association on October 9, 1931, a committee on new national park projects was appointed to study areas pending and to be proposed thereafter, and report thereon to the board of trustees.

At a special meeting of the trustees held at the Cosmos Club in Washington on January 18, 1932, the subcommittee of the above committee which had been appointed to investigate the proposed Everglades National Park in the State of Florida, consisting of Mr. Frederick Law Olmsted and Mr. William P. Wharton, both of Massachusetts, after 10 days examination of the area, reported approval of the project.

Whereupon the trustees adopted with enthusiasm the accompanying report and voted unanimously to support the bill in Congress and aid in effectuating the park.²⁶⁰

²⁶⁰ Olmsted and Wharton, *Proposed Everglades National Park Report.*, iii

COLORADO BASIN RIVER RECREATIONAL SURVEY

The first and largest project Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. undertook in his role as park service Collaborator was the survey of recreational resources along the Colorado River. Olmsted’s Collaborator position was created at the request of Newton Drury to fill the National Park Service’s need for an advocate and representative to work cooperatively with other agencies, particularly around complex issues of water rights, dam construction, water-based recreation, and scenic preservation in the arid southwest. The need coincided with a robust construction program to improve the nation’s water supply, particularly in the Colorado River basin, which extends into Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, and California, and a shift in attitudes toward dams in and around national parks. The National Park Service had established a cooperative agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation in 1936 primarily related to the Boulder (Hoover) Dam and Lake Mead.



Fig. 12.20. *The Colorado River Basin Showing the Upper and Lower Basins.* From *Bureau of Reclamation: Origins and Growth to 1945* by William D. Rowley, Denver, CO: Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, 2006, p. 241. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

Olmsted's appointment as Collaborator meant that a well-respected leader from outside the park service could represent park service interests in relation to the bureau's upcoming plans. Olmsted's attention also provided the opportunity to address broader recreation, land use, and scenic preservation issues in the Colorado River basin. These were the objects of the Colorado River Survey of Recreation Resources.

One of the first phases of the project involved coordination with the bureau and meetings to establish a scope of work. In September 1941, Associate Park Planner Neal Butterfield assisted Olmsted at a joint meeting with the bureau, for which Butterfield prepared background material. While there were a number of small projects related to the Colorado River under way, the scope of work identified several "large and important" projects "situated in regions having "notable scenic or other recreational qualities."²⁶¹ They included

Bridge Canyon dam in relation to Grand Canyon National Monument

Dewey Reservoir site, Grandy/Shadow Mountain near Dinosaur National Monument

Bullshead Dam in relation to Boulder Dam National Recreation Area

Dark Canyon and Glen Canyon Dams in relation to the Escalante Region²⁶²

In developing the scope for the study, Olmsted noted, "If one of the principal unifying threads of the Survey is to be the relationship of recreational resources to the comprehensive general plans of the Reclamation Service for the water resources of the Basin . . . one of the more obvious of the sets of problems to be investigated relates to the opportunities for land-use units of the type represented by Lake Mead and the Boulder Dam National Recreational Area, combining water storage and recreational uses."²⁶³ Economic and engineering factors would likely determine the locations of future dam and reservoir sites, he noted, and he expressed the hope that the Bureau of Reclamation could at least estimate the approximate locations so they could be evaluated from the perspective of the park service, based on surrounding terrain, suitability to different types of recreational uses, and other aspects that required conservation.

Olmsted was also interested in the geographic relationship between individual reservoir sites and hoped there would be opportunities to combine areas of federal ownership or adjust boundaries to achieve multiple goals. He remained concerned that a survey based solely on recreational grounds might also benefit from other considerations, particularly archaeological and scientific values. Finally, it is worth

²⁶¹ Agenda for Conference with Bureau of Reclamation Officials in Denver, Tuesday, November 4, 1941. Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, California and Western Office Correspondence.

²⁶² Agenda, November 4, 1941.

²⁶³ Frederick Law Olmsted, Memorandum for the Director: Preliminary Notes in Regard to Proposed Survey of Recreational Resources of the Colorado River Basin, June 1941, revised October 1942. Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, Western and California Office Correspondence, Job #9626.



Fig. 12.21. *Colorado River—Lake Mead between Pierce Ferry and Site of Bridge Canyon Dam* by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., n.d. In folder “enlargement of Leicas.” Photo album 9626-02-ph20, Job #9626 Colorado River Basin Recreation Survey. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.



Fig. 12.22. *Colorado River, West Side, at End of Road from Nelson, Nevada (between Boulder Dam and Site of Davis (or Bulls Head) Dam)*, by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., November 21, 1941. Photo album 9626-01-ph02. Job no. 9626 Colorado River Basin Recreation Survey. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.



Fig. 12.23. *Bridger National Forest, Wyoming, Burnt Lake* by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., n.d. in folder "enlargement of Leicas." Photo album 9626-02-ph12, Job #9626 Colorado River Basin Recreation Survey. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

noting that one of Olmsted's major contributions to this unwieldy project was the development of a clear methodology for the multi-year project, from interagency coordination and reconnaissance to identify potential sites, to creation of standards for mapping and aerial photography, to definitions of criteria for evaluation. With such a large geographic area to cover and multiple competing interests to address, Olmsted's clear methodology provided a work plan that could be undertaken by the assigned team, primarily Olmsted and planners from the park service as well as subject matter experts.

The work for this first set of assignments took Olmsted over some 3,500 miles in late 1941, resulting in a list of potential recreational sites. Olmsted and his trusty Leica camera produced a large number of photographs documenting the trip and the individual locations considered, beginning in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, and ranging to Dinosaur National Monument and Pipe Springs National Monument. Two additional trips by Olmsted produced additional photo documentation that provides a visual diary of the vast geographic area evaluated in the study. In October 1942, he photographed extensive areas of the Grand Canyon, Happy Canyon, Lands End Ridge, Upheaval Dome, Green River, and Castleton Valley, and in April–May 1943, he photographed sites at Arch Canyon, Utah, and Monument Valley, Arizona, and ended back at Grand Canyon National Monument.

Several locations in the Bridge Canyon area were identified as having scenic or geologic interest: Pierce Ferry and Grand Wash Cliffs, Spencer and Mariwitica Canyon, Diamond Creek and Peach Springs Draw, and Prospect Canyon and Granite Park. Reports also recommended boundaries for the Boulder Dam National Recreation Area. The evaluation did not focus only on recreation, conservation, and scenery, but also included

considerations of anthropology and archeology, an element aided by Frank Selzler, head curator of anthropology at the Smithsonian. The Yampa and Green Rivers were a specific focus of the archaeological investigation, above the Echo Park Dam site as well as at Juniper Springs.

Many of the Bureau of Reclamation proposals did not appear to have associated public benefits beyond water supply. In 1942, Olmsted submitted a report on the Upper Green River Basin in Wyoming and North Flaming Gorge in Utah in response to the Bureau’s plans to create reservoirs to improve irrigation in Black Fork and the Upper Green River basins. This project entailed evaluating four proposed reservoirs in the Ashley and Wasatch National Forests: Bridger, Lyman, Hickerson Park, and Big Basin. For the most part, Olmsted felt these locations offered little if any scenic or recreational value. “They have no distinctive character to be destroyed by impounding lakes in them. Nor does it appear that the lakes to be created will have other than the most minor and local recreational value.”²⁶⁴



Fig. 12.24. *Wasatch National Forest at Tunnel-Intake Site on Duchesne River* by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., n.d. In folder “enlargement of Leicas.” Photo album 9626-03-ph09, Job #9626 Colorado River Basin Recreation Survey. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

The survey project entailed a number of disparate efforts to evaluate water resources projects in the Colorado River Basin in view of their scenic or recreational potential. Not all projects provided opportunities for the National Park Service; some projects were under the current or future jurisdiction of the Forest Service. This was not surprising given the interagency collaboration for the Colorado River Basin project. For example, in 1943 Olmsted evaluated a proposed channel from Shadow Mountain Reservoir to Grand Lake in central Colorado.²⁶⁵ Extensive photographs from Olmsted’s reconnaissance capture the extensive

²⁶⁴ Frederick Law Olmsted, “Partial Report on the Upper Green River Basin South of the Green River, Wyoming, Highway Bridge and North of Flaming Gorge, Utah” preliminary draft, December 28, 1932. Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, California and Western Office Correspondence.

²⁶⁵ Shadow Mountain Reservoir became part of the Arapaho National Recreation Area, established by the U.S. Forest Service in 1978.

land areas he surveyed so that he could provide feedback to the National Park Service and other agencies on issues related to scenic preservation and potential recreational value.

There is also some overlap between the work catalogued as Grand Canyon National Park and the related study of the Colorado River Basin. One example is the Bridge Canyon Dam, located in the lower Grand Canyon, proposed by the Bureau of Reclamation as part of the Pacific Southwest Water Plan. During a review in 1948, Olmsted suggested that the dam location presented the likelihood that a large area within the national monument would be flooded to create the required reservoir. This was an area Olmsted had earlier proposed be included in the boundary of the national park. He approached this problem a little differently than he did the response to Hetch-Hetchy in 1913. In the case of Bridge Canyon, Olmsted feared that the economic benefits of the new water supply would make it difficult to prevent the dam from being constructed. Instead, he recommended a “reasonable” (compromised) limit on the final reservoir elevation (water level) and suggested that this arrangement would necessitate establishing a national recreation area around the borders of the reservoir, rather than keeping it part of the national monument or park. In other words, he did not offer strong opposition to the project. Instead, apparently resigned to its inevitability, he suggested ways to mitigate the outcome by making the new reservoir available for recreational use.

Olmsted was still consulting on water and reclamation issues on the Colorado River as late as 1950, when Secretary of the Interior Chapman asked for his help developing a statement of the pros and cons of including the Echo Park and Split Mountain Dams in Dinosaur National Monument; he also organized Olmsted’s appearance at public hearings related to the proposal.

ISLAND BEACH NATIONAL MONUMENT PROPOSAL

Not all of the consultations regarding potential new parks provided by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. resulted in the acquisition of new lands. One example is Olmsted’s role in the preliminary study of Island Beach, New Jersey, a barrier island peninsula midway between Atlantic City and Long Branch, as a potential national monument. This long barrier island had been the site of several land proposals and developments, including U.S. Life Saving Service stations and the Barnegat Lighthouse, established in the nineteenth century, hotels, and a 1926 proposal by industrialist Henry Phipps to develop the area as a summer resort. The first work to establish a national monument at Island Beach had begun by 1945; in 1948, the National Park Service initiated a study to evaluate the area. In January of the following year, Director Newton Drury asked Olmsted Jr. to visit the island and prepare a report. Olmsted submitted his report in May 1949 following a site visit in April with chief park service landscape architect Thomas Vint, landscape architect Charles Richey, and senior engineer E.F. Preece.

In the report, Olmsted expressed mixed feelings about the suitability of Island Beach as a national monument, but he concluded that it was indeed worthy of becoming a public reservation. The report presents an interesting evaluation of the challenges of protecting fragile dune and coastal ecosystems and the opportunities to enhance public appreciation and recreation of these areas, provided that the facilities built to do so were carefully designed. An underlying theme throughout the report was the tension



Fig. 12.25. *Island Beach National Monument Proposal, S. 1583, 81st Congress, New Jersey, July 1946. Plan #4025-1. Received from Charles A. Rickey, U.S. Dept. of Interior, in letter. National Park Service, Land and Recreation Planning Division. Job no. 4025 Island Beach Park National Monument Committee. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.*

between the urgent need to provide access to the natural environments of the barrier islands and the compromised condition of the landscape in some sections, which would require considerable restoration to create the kind of distinctive ecological conditions and scenery required of a national monument. Another key aspect of the report was a set of recommendations about the kind of public facilities that are appropriate in such a setting and how to integrate public use into a fragile environment in a way that retains and preserves the natural scenery, as opposed to the urban treatment found at Jones Beach, which Olmsted objected to.

Olmsted’s report included observations on the characteristics of the area as well as the purposes and objectives of the proposed monument so that the National Park Service could further evaluate the potential of the area. To Olmsted, the most interesting parts of the proposed monument were about 250 acres on the Barnegat Bay side of the peninsula and a nine-mile stretch of the island that had not yet been built on. This southernmost area had important scientific and recreation value that was entirely “dependent on perpetuating its natural botanic and ecological characteristics.”²⁶⁶ This section of the island presented small, intricate details combined with great sweeping views of the bay that Olmsted reported as both an attribute and a challenge, as the combination presented a real practical problem of “adequately protecting, maintaining and exhibiting for public enjoyment such a delicate and highly vulnerable ecological and scenic complex.”²⁶⁷ Protecting the character of the landscape in this area, Olmsted said, would require restricting public access, limiting the number of visitors, defining specific, constructed paths, and developing techniques for landscape

²⁶⁶ Frederick Law Olmsted, Collaborator, Memorandum for the Director, Island Beach National Monument Project, May 17, 1949, 1. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, Series B, 239: 5.

²⁶⁷ Olmsted, Memorandum, Island Beach, 2.

restoration to repair scars and maintain the complex ecological balance without “any signs of gardening operations.” These elements would all be very difficult to accomplish.

The well-vegetated region between the Bay shore and the dunes along the ocean beach north of the area of scientific interest was decidedly less interesting to Olmsted, due in large part to the amount of damage to the natural landscape by vehicles, shacks, and fire. There was still some native vegetation, but the current condition did not lend itself to large numbers of visitors without a large effort to remove structures, repair the damaged landscape, fence or patrol areas that should be protected from trampling, and develop defined trail routes that would allow visitors both to move back and forth between the bay and ocean sides and to ramble within the sylvan zone of the vegetated inland. Olmsted recommended that aquatic recreation—boating, fishing, crabbing, sheltered-water wading and bathing—could be developed on the Bay side.

Olmsted felt the dune complex in this area was not as distinctive as those found elsewhere; these dunes did not contain the more impressive or interesting dune formations or vegetation found elsewhere, and they were compromised in some areas by buildings, roads, and alterations to the natural sand formation. To rise to the level of a national monument, these dunes would require extensive restoration, healing, and repair, rather than mere preservation of a notable example of natural conditions. Clearly, Olmsted was weighing the intangible values—scenery, scientific, and inspirational value—he felt were necessary to justify a National Monument designation. Still, he saw great public benefit in preserving the dunes on this stretch of beach:

The chief potential value of the dunes for a National Monument or other public recreation here, assuming skillful and laborious healing and minimizing of such artificial scars, is, in my opinion, not the perpetuation of any very notable example of natural dune conditions, but the contribution of something of great and constantly increasing importance to the public value of the great beach on which the dunes border—namely the opportunity to use that magnificent beach for enjoyment thereof, and for the enjoyment of its surf and the ocean on which it fronts end of the sky and sun and clouds and winds, completely free from intrusion into that superb natural environment of anything conspicuously and aggressively artificial or citified (as contrasted with the quasi-natural dunes), such as would almost certainly replace the dune if they are not scrupulously preserved.²⁶⁸

This use at Island Beach presented a challenge common to many new coastal facilities and particularly acute on a narrow barrier island—balancing the relationship between intangible values and public enjoyment and recreation. Olmsted argued that the only way to enable visitors to truly experience a sense of environmental inspiration was to ensure they could conveniently partake in recreational activities on both the bay and ocean sides. But to make Island Beach suitable for recreational enjoyment, a considerable number of utilitarian facilities would be required, including dressing rooms, sanitary facilities, large-capacity parking areas, and a system of narrow, one-way loop roads. All of these structures had the potential to be “injurious to the qualities on which its distinctive and priceless intangible values depend.”²⁶⁹

²⁶⁸ Olmsted, Memorandum, Island Beach, 5.

²⁶⁹ Olmsted, Memorandum, Island Beach, 6.



Fig. 12.26. *Dunes and Beach with Lifesaving Station, Perspective View Looking Southwest* by David Ames, 1992. Island Beach State Park, Island Beach, East of Barnegat Bay, Seaside Park, Ocean County, NJ. HABS No. NJ-1071. Historic American Building Survey, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

Olmsted’s final recommendations for Island Beach include statements regarding the national need to preserve coastal islands south of Long Island both for the potential scenic and ecological value and because they presented the opportunity for unurbanized coastal access:

To perpetuate specific natural, or historic, or archaeological, objects or conditions, meticulously and perfectly in every original detail—the Island Beach Peninsula has this great advantage over any of the comparable areas of National Monument caliber much further south: it is near great populations that would be immensely benefitted by keeping open to them such an opportunity when all the other accessible beaches are lined with rows of miscellaneous buildings. This is about the last possible chance for it anywhere between Jones Beach, Long Island and the Chincoteague region.²⁷⁰

Despite the support of President Herbert Hoover, Congress did not authorize sufficient funds to acquire the property. It was finally purchased by the State of New Jersey in 1953 and became Island Beach State Park.

²⁷⁰ Olmsted, Memorandum, Island Beach, 10.



Fig. 12.27. *Dunes and Beach, General View Looking South* by David Ames, 1992. Island Beach State Park, Island Beach, East of Barnegat Bay, Seaside Park, Ocean County, NJ. HABS No. NJ-1071. Historic American Building Survey, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

CHINCOTEAGUE-REHOBOTH PROJECT

(CAPE HATTERAS NATIONAL SEASHORE, ASSATEAGUE ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE, CHINCOTEAGUE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE)

In 1941, Conrad Wirth and National Park Service Director Newton Drury asked Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. to examine barrier islands along the eastern coast, following up on work James Dawson had been asked to do but never completed. There was considerable confusion in the Olmsted office about the exact area Dawson and later Olmsted were asked to evaluate, but the general concern seems to center on two sections of barrier islands: Ocracoke (North Carolina) to Virginia Beach (Virginia) and Chincoteague (Virginia) and Assateague Island (Maryland) to Rehoboth (Delaware). It seems Dawson had originally been asked to evaluate the Maryland-Delaware section, but he was unable to complete the work, apparently for health reasons (Dawson died in 1941). When Olmsted Jr. was asked to revisit the barrier islands, the park service was also looking at the Cape Hatteras section, so the priorities for evaluation expanded to include both the southern and northern sections.

As he did on the reconnaissance trip for Tropic Everglades, Olmsted undertook this evaluation “by plane, motor boat and on foot”; he examined “the coast from Ocracoke to a point several miles north of the Wright Memorial Bridge” and from “Roanoke

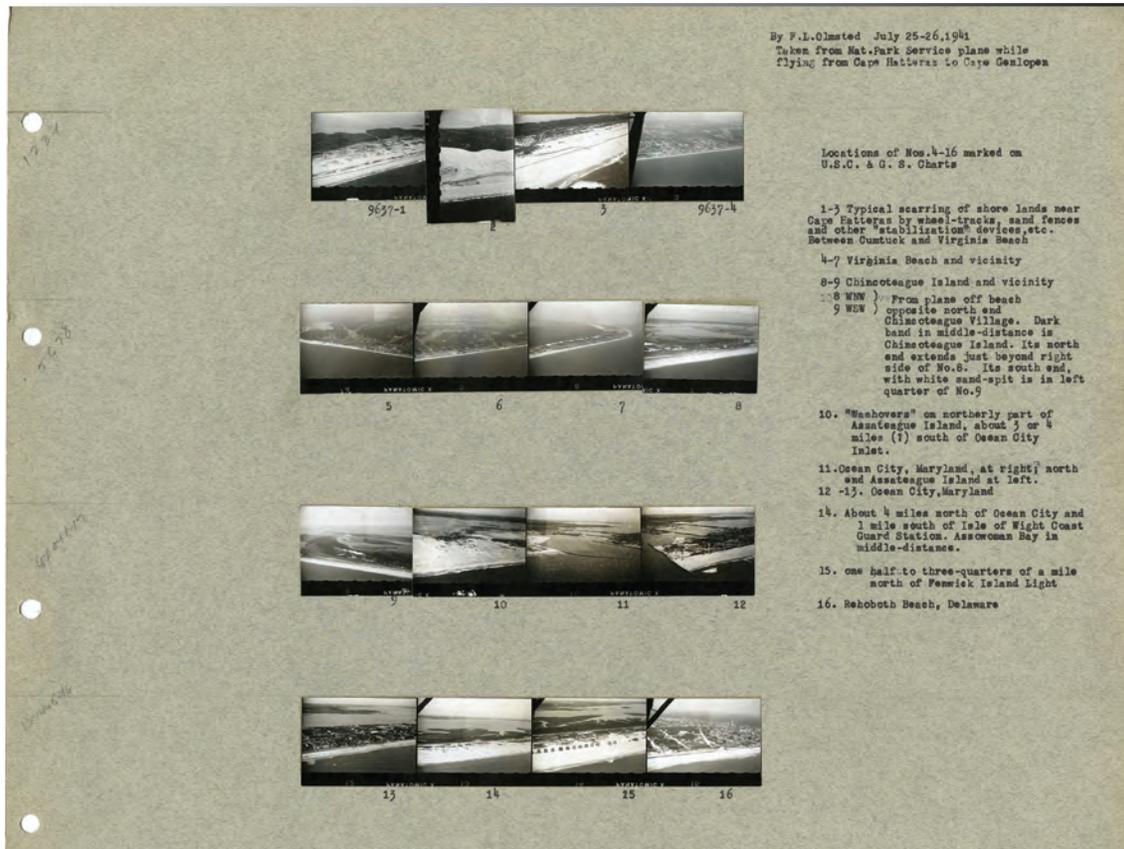


Fig. 12.28. Taken from Nat. Park Service Plane While Flying from Cape Hatteras to Cape Genlopen by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., July 24–26, 1941 This image is of the Olmsted office photo album page for Olmsted’s aerial reconnaissance for the Chincoteague-Rehoboth project, 1941, showing photos taken and Olmsted Jr.’s notes. Photo album 9637-01-p03. Job no. 9637 Rehoboth-Chincoteague Seashore Project. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

Island northward to Virginia Beach and the south of Chesapeake Bay.”²⁷¹ Olmsted’s photographs, taken from the air, were used to document current conditions and support his recommendations. He was accompanied by park service biologist Ben Thompson, who briefed Olmsted on a variety of issues under discussion at the park service. Together, they also reviewed previous reports on the stretch of barrier islands.

Olmsted made three primary observations about the coastline. First, from Ocracoke to Cape Henlopen, most of the “seashore islands . . . have been much man-handled”²⁷² and thus did not meet his criteria of “primitive” natural conditions. Much of the landward side of the islands along the entire stretch was, in Olmsted’s view, “shabbily scarred with widely-scattered wheel tracks, trails, pits, ditches, dykes, etc. in many places with sand drift fences and other markings of the ‘stabilization’ process, with the almost continuous telephone pole line, with some long stretches of paved highway and with numerous (though still rather widely-spaced) aggregations of

²⁷¹ Frederick Law Olmsted, Memorandum for the Director, National Park Service, August 12, 1941, 1. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, Series B, 469: 6.

²⁷² Olmsted, Memorandum, August 12, 2.

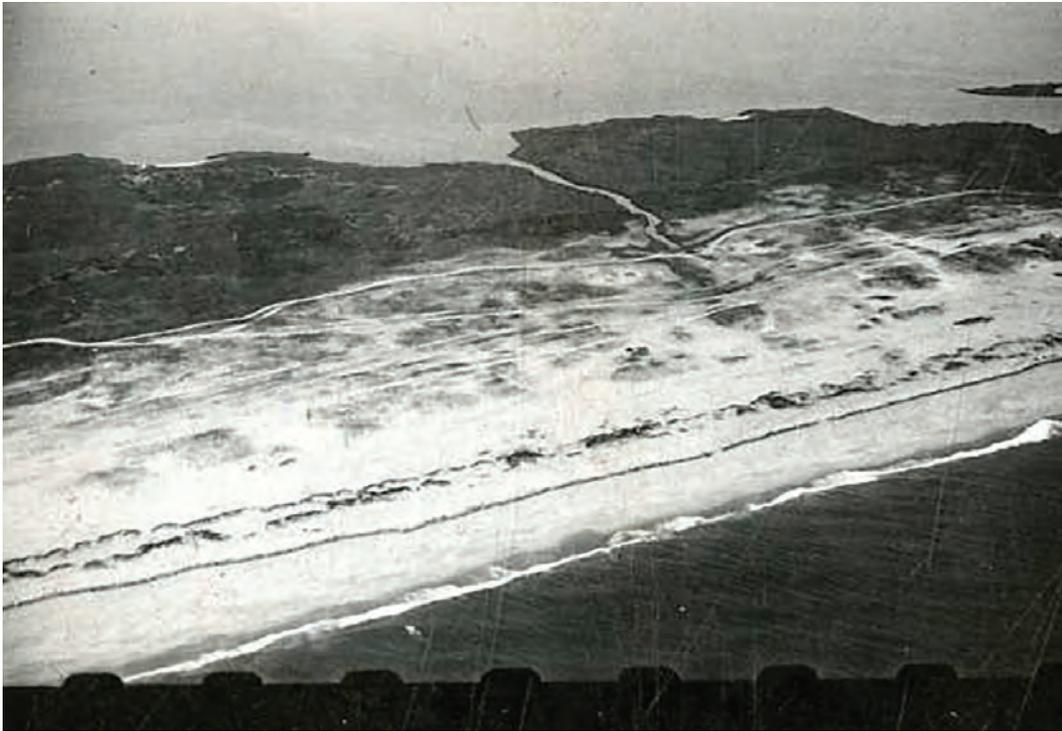


Fig. 12.29. *Typical Scarring of Shore Lands near Cape Hatteras by Wheel-Tracks, Sand Fences, and Other Stabilization Devices, Between Cumtuck and Virginia Beach, July 1941 by . Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., Photo album 9367-01-ph01. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.*

buildings.”²⁷³ There was one large area that struck Olmsted as meeting the criteria of “primitive” condition, extending from twenty-five miles from the mouth of the Chesapeake north to the Hog Island lighthouse, where inlets and underwater shoals periodically interrupted the beaches; the resulting tidal area had a well-developed system of mud flats and tidal marshes. Although this stretch presented few opportunities for practical purposes or recreation, it illustrated “a perfect example of relatively early and active stages in the natural processes which have shaped much of our Atlantic coast.”²⁷⁴ In contrast, the area from Hog Island Light north to Chincoteague was both more developed and periodically interrupted by increasing levels of human activity, terminating in the urban conditions at Ocean City.

Olmsted’s second major observation was that the existing condition of most of the barrier islands would provide opportunities for intensive recreation use that could be of great value. That said, he felt the opportunity was so great that “artificial” development might be inevitable and would likely spread along the coast:

In other words, I do not believe on the one hand, that it is practicable for the National Park Service or any other agency to permit relatively intensive use of a good bathing beach for popular bathing and related popular and valuable beach activities without de-naturalizing and rather completely sophisticating the

²⁷³ Olmsted, Memorandum, August 12, 3.

²⁷⁴ Olmsted, Memorandum, August 12, 4.

immediately adjoining hinterland—though it might be a thoroughly agreeable and relatively spacious kind of sophistication instead of the generally sordid-looking, congested and quasi-urban sophistication which is apt to occur along much-used beaches where the adjacent land is wholly or largely subject to subdivision, sale, and lease in a speculative market. And, on the other hand, I do not believe, in view of the enormous potential demand for seasonal bathing and related beach activities on good ocean beaches, that any long stretches of beach which are physically suitable for such use, and capable of being made accessible by road, car—or should—be kept in perpetuity, from year’s to year’s end, primitive and lonely, unused by the swarms of bathers, etc. will ultimately want to use them.²⁷⁵

This potential outcome led to Olmsted’s third point—the urgent need for public acquisition of long stretches of the best ocean beaches and the adjacent upland and dunes both to ensure protection of an entire section from ocean to bayside and to allow certain types of recreational use that were not currently being provided through private development. Olmsted noted that improving transportation systems were creating the potential for these ocean beaches to be within a day’s drive of large population areas; they were thus likely to be greatly threatened by speculative commercial development. His primary objection to this private development was the exclusive use of sections of the good beaches that should be reserved for the benefit of the general public.



Fig. 12.30. *Kitty Hawk Bay Viewed from the Wright Brothers’ 1900 camp*, attributed to Wilbur and Orville Wright. Wright Brothers Negatives Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

²⁷⁵ Olmsted, Memorandum, August 12, 5.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

OLMSTED DESIGN PROJECTS IN NATIONAL PARKS

HOT SPRINGS RESERVATION

(HOT SPRINGS NATIONAL PARK)

The Olmsted firm's plans for Hot Springs, Arkansas (job #1244), represent one of the earliest examples of the firms' design work for federal reservations; at the time the work was done, Hot Springs was under the control of the Department of the Interior and not yet a national park. Unlike other examples included here, the Olmsted plans were not implemented. The reservation was originally established by President Andrew Jackson, who signed legislation in 1832 to protect the hot springs and make them available for public use. The reservation was placed under the control of the Department of the Interior at its creation in 1849; over the next four decades, the department implemented improvements to the area around the existing town of Hot Springs to make the thermal waters usable through public baths. After a major fire destroyed many structures in 1878, the department implemented standards for bathhouse construction and proceeded with improvements to address a number of other site issues, including sewage and flood control. By 1892, it was ready to undertake additional site improvements in areas around existing bathhouses; Lt. John R. Stevens was appointed to direct the work. One of Stevens's first actions was to appoint the Olmsted firm to design landscape improvements to the resort.

Interior Secretary John Willock Noble had advised Stevens of a number of improvements he recommended for the reservation, including walkways for "invalids and visitors," carriage roads, "retreats and resting places," areas for restaurants, fountains, and entertainment amenities, including possibly a covered gallery where concerts could take place.²⁷⁶ In May 1892, Stevens wrote to Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. regarding specific areas of the reservation that needed upgrades, providing dimensions and a suggested scope of work, and later provided feedback on the budget and his desire that Olmsted be "personally connected with the work here":²⁷⁷

The watering-places of any country are recognized as being entitled to the highest attention of a landscape artist, and stand out as master-pieces of decorative improvement. The field afforded for landscape work here would, I think, be fully appreciated by Mr. Olmsted, and for many reasons besides the actual result of the work as shown on the plan, I would like to have his personal interest and name associated with the work.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁶ Interior Secretary John W. Noble to Lieutenant. Robert R. Stevens, May 31, 1892. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, Series B, 59: 441–442.

²⁷⁷ Robert R. Stevens to Frederick Law Olmsted, May 20, 1892. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, Series B, 59: 445–446.

²⁷⁸ Robert R. Stevens to Frederick Law Olmsted & Co., June 25, 1892. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, Series B, 59: 449.

Harry Codman also weighed in on the proposed work, although he was skeptical of taking on a government project.



Fig. 13.1. *Panoramic View #2, Hot Springs, Ark.* by Haines Photo Company, ca. 1910. Panoramic Photographs Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.



Fig. 13.2. *Hot Springs, Arkansas, Bath Houses* by Woodward & Tiernan ca. 1888. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

The primary focus of Olmsted’s interest in the Hot Springs reservation was the immediate landscape around Bathhouse Row, as well as access to the mountainside above the resort. Following a preliminary visit, the firm notified Stevens that considerable study of site conditions would be required and recommended some initial treatment related to planting along roads and walkways to remove all semblance of bareness and integrate the newly constructed circulation routes into the steep mountain scenery. Much of the firm’s design work addressed a proposed covered walkway along Bathhouse Row intended to create a shaded arcade and visually and architecturally united the line of bathhouses along Central Avenue at the base of the mountain. The walkway would provide a pedestrian promenade protected from the elements, satisfying Olmsted’s desire to provide opportunities for invalids, convalescents, and visitors to spend leisure time experiencing fresh air. Drawings for the entrance to the reservation were prepared by the firm of Andrews, Jacques, and Rantoul, with whom Olmsted had collaborated on the summer resort at Lake Wauconda (Perry Park), Colorado. They



Fig. 13.3. *Bathhouse Row, Hot Springs, Ark.,* Detroit Publishing Company, between 1900 and 1910. No. 034358. Detroit Publishing Company Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

objected to “erecting fountains along this Park front, since they are likely to prove an embarrassment rather than a help in the development of any future scheme.”²⁷⁹

In further pursuit of opportunities to provide therapeutic exposure to fresh air, the Olmsted firm proposed for the slopes of North and West Mountain, the hills above the back of Bathhouse Row, a circulation system that would enable both vigorous exercise and pleasant exploration of scenery by carriage. The system included walking trails, some of which were to be constructed with a gradual even grade suitable for wheelchairs, as well as walkways with intermittent stairs going to the top of the ridge. The carriage drive was designed with a gradual slope to make easy ascent by horse-drawn carriages possible. Changes in federal administration and Department of the Interior

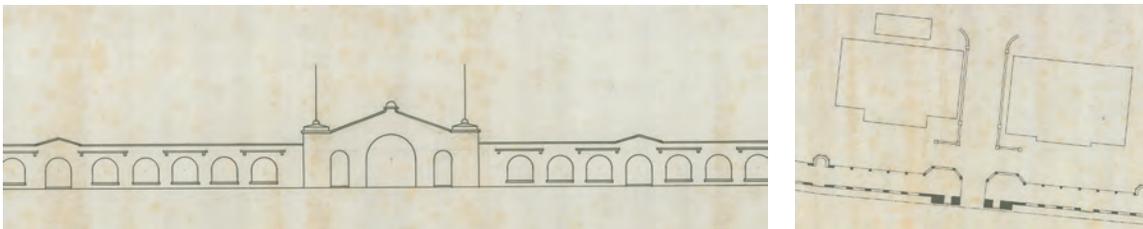


Fig. 13.4. *Plan and Elevation of Entrance Gate and Wall; Plan Also Indicates Bath House,* Frederick Law Olmsted & Co., n.d. This plan and detail sections show the proposed design for an arcade and entrance providing a covered walkway in front of Bathhouse Row. Plan #1244-11. Job no. 1244 Hot Springs Reservation, Arkansas. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

²⁷⁹ Andrews, Jacques and Rantoul to Messrs. Olmsted and Codman, December 15, 1892. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, Series B, 59: 439-482

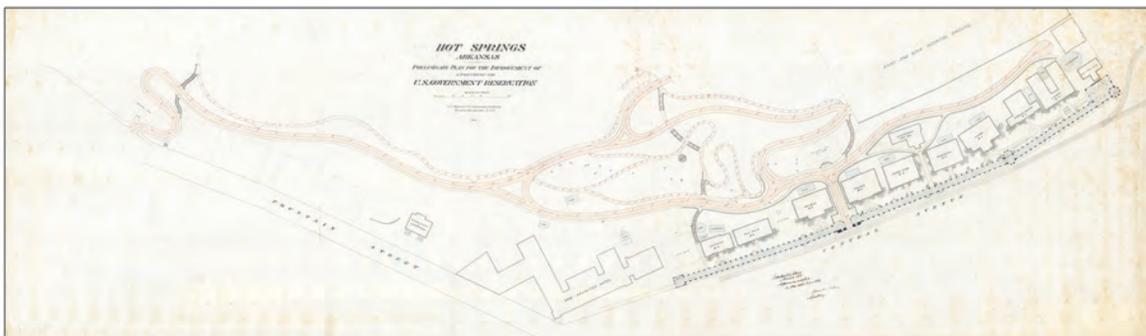


Fig. 13.5. *Preliminary Plan for the Improvements of a Portion of the U.S. Government Reservation, December 31, 1892.* Frederick Law Olmsted & Co., Landscape Architects. Approved by John W. Noble, Secretary. This plan is one of the few to show both objectives of Olmsted’s work at Hot Springs: the design of the arcade and circulation system that would provide opportunities for therapeutic walks and drives. Plan #1244-17. Job no. 1244 Hot Springs Reservation, Arkansas. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

leadership in the 1890s meant that the Olmsted firm’s vision for the arcade along Bathhouse Row was never carried out, but the design work remains as an important record of the firm’s ideas for resorts.



Fig. 13.6. *Roadway through the Pines, Hot Springs, Ark.* by Detroit Publishing Company, between 1900 and 1910. While it is generally thought that the design work was never carried out, this image does show the kind of carriage drive Olmsted advocated. No. 34359. Detroit Publishing Company Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Yosemite National Park is an important entry in the Olmsted firms' portfolio of national park work not only for the foundation Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. laid in his 1865 report for Yosemite and Mariposa Grove but also as an example of the kind of consultations and direction related to park development Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. provided up to 1953 and of the design projects undertaken by the Olmsted Brothers Western Office between 1927 and 1940. Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.'s work at Yosemite shows a commitment to scenic preservation and park management that extended some eighty-five years after his father's landmark report and well into Olmsted's eighties, continuing what may be the longest association for the Olmsted firms.

Yosemite is represented in three jobs in the Olmsted Archives: job #12301 relates to Frederick Law Olmsted Sr.'s early work between 1861 and 1893; job #8099 is the primary job file, containing design studies related to specific sites in the park as well as Olmsted Jr.'s contribution to the Board of Expert Advisors; job #8204 is simply a folder of topographic surveys, including a plan for the Bridal Veil area received from the National Park Service Office of the Chief Engineer for the Bridal Veil.

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK BOARD OF EXPERT ADVISORS

Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. had been involved in informal consultations related to the park in the early 1920s, particularly related to the increasing control of the Yosemite Company in park development. It had been over a half century since Olmsted Sr. wrote of the importance of preserving Yosemite, and the scenic reservation had been subject to some intensive development to accommodate visitors, much of it by private concessionaires. In 1927, with concerns growing over development of the park by organizations outside the agency, John Merriam, president of the Carnegie Institution in Washington, D.C., pressured National Park Service Director Stephen Mather to establish a special commission to create a broad plan for Yosemite that would ensure that protection of the park's scenery remained paramount. What Merriam envisioned was what many viewed as a return to preservation as the fundamental purpose of Yosemite National Park. From the park service perspective, the commission offered Mather the opportunity to bring Merriam into a collaborative role to counterweight his criticism of the agency. The challenge was to form a committee all could support. Thus, in 1928 Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. was appointed chair of the new Yosemite National Park Board of Expert Advisors, joined by Duncan McDuffie²⁸⁰ and John P. Buwalda, a geologist at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena; the three gentlemen all had made "outstanding contributions to science, land planning and national parks."²⁸¹ Olmsted served on the board intermittently to the end of his career, resigning in January 1934 to work on another government contract and then rejoining the board from 1937 to 1941 before being named a park service Collaborator. He returned again from 1951 to 1953.

²⁸⁰ A real estate developer, conservationist, and avid hiker, McDuffie was instrumental in the development of the California state park system as well as the residential community of St. Francis Wood, designed by the Olmsted firm in 1918.

²⁸¹ Alfred Runte, *Yosemite, the Embattled Wilderness* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), Chapter 10, "Sanctuary on Trial," https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/runte2/chap10.htm.



Fig. 13.7. William Colby of the Sierra Club, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., and geologist John Buwalda (left to right) at Yosemite, 1951. California and Western Office Correspondence, Subseries II, Box 05-07-03. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

The Yosemite National Park Board of Expert Advisors (or Advisory Board as it was also called) corresponded and met frequently to address “every issue that might have affected the park’s destiny.”²⁸² These varied issues required a broad range of expertise; the board analyzed problems of engineering, scenic preservation, and visitor experience ranging from sanitary problems in the valley to road alignments and parking. The correspondence and reports are extensive, providing great insight into both the challenges and conflicts the park faced and Olmsted’s response to them during a critical period of the park’s development.

The Advisory Board was particularly involved in issues related to existing and proposed park development in a handful of areas, including Glacier Point, Wawona, and Yosemite Valley, although it addressed issues ranging from appropriate winter recreation activities to the role of park service naturalists, public sanitation systems, and the question of how much human development was appropriate in the valley. One of the first controversial issues the committee undertook was the proposal for a Glacier Point Cableway that would

²⁸² Runte, *The Embattled Wilderness*, Chapter 10.



Fig. 13.8. *Yosemite Valley Panorama from Glacier Point* by Albert M. Price, ca. 1914–1929. Albert M. Price Panoramic Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

extend from the valley floor up the rock face to Glacier Point. The cableway was intended to provide public access in lieu of costly road construction.

At first, the Advisory Board took the proposal seriously; members appeared to waver somewhat on whether or not such an addition would be advantageous to the park. On the one hand, it would potentially reduce the need for costly (and destructive) road construction. On the other hand, the cableway had limited capacity and would have a large effect on the viewshed. The initial report, authored by Buwalda, argued that the cableway “would be very advantageous to the best enjoyment of the Park by the public,” but Olmsted offered an alternative perspective. In a letter to Buwalda, he suggested that “the effect of such a cableway . . . and the intermittently continuous movement of cars up and down the long-stretched, man-made lines binding the top to the bottom of the cliffs, would involve a critical loss to the majesty of the Valley wall and to its power of stirring the imagination to contemplate the vast geologic units of space and time to whose story the Valley is key.”²⁸³ Olmsted’s view ultimately prevailed: when the Board submitted its final report on the matter in December 1930, it was unanimous in opposition. The cableway was never constructed.

While Olmsted Jr.’s work at Yosemite was undertaken largely under the aegis of the Advisory Board, which generated memos, letters, and reports on a variety of topics, the firm often provided support with design plans to facilitate the exploration and resolution of site-specific issues. One example is Olmsted’s 1932 report on automobile access and parking at Glacier Point, which included plans by James Sturgis Pray in the Olmsted Brothers office. The report addresses the problem of bus turning radius and circulation directions, as well as the challenges of aligning a road up the saddle due to the steep grade. Olmsted’s recommendations echo many of the park service’s rustic design standards, which developed during this period. Thus, parking spaces were to be designed as:

Informal terraces, each supported on the outside by retaining walls or hand-placed rock fills with an adequate guard rail, presumably wire rope. As drawn on this diagram they are almost wholly in fill, because I don’t know where

²⁸³ Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. to John Buwalda, September 9, 1929. Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, California and Western Office Correspondence, Job no. 8099 Yosemite National Park.

cutting should be done without undue sacrifice of existing trees, but they would presumably be in fact partly in cut although rock for the retaining walls would presumably be brought in largely from neighboring portions of the main road so adjusted as to give a large surplus of rock excavation. In general, the terraces would be wide enough for a central gangway flanked on both sides by right angle parking spaces. For the purposes of this diagram a clear width of 50 feet has been assumed, and an average longitudinal spacing of cars at 8 feet on centres. This capacity so figured may prove from 10 to 25 percent greater than can actually be accommodated after allowing for trees which are not shown on the map but which it may be advisable to save.²⁸⁴

Olmsted also recommended, “A foot-path with steps, connects across all the parking-space terraces, down the line of the valley to connect with the main grade-path from the Terminal Plaza to Glacier Point.”²⁸⁵

With regard to the road extension, Olmsted suggested separating upward and downward traffic on these turns by a central wall and superelevating the two roads separately, using a minimum radius for the inner side the inner road on each turn

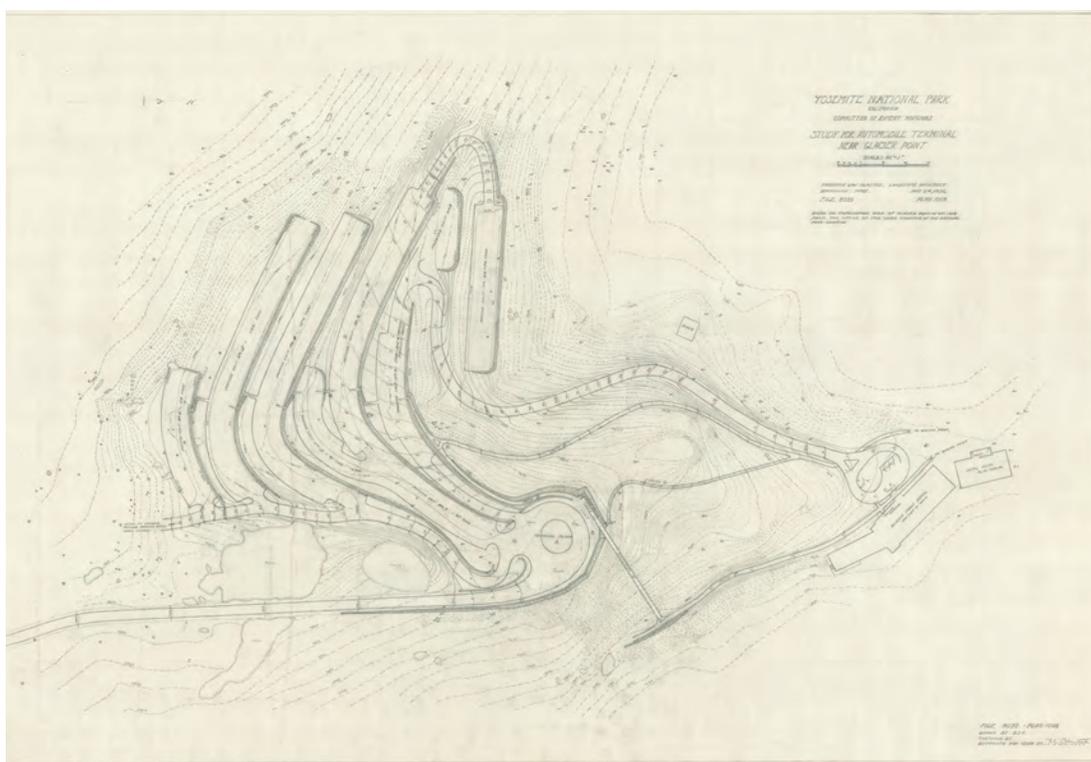


Fig. 13.9. Yosemite National Park, Committee of Expert Advisors, Study for Automobile Terminal, New Glacier Point, by James Sturgis Pray, May 24, 1932. Olmsted Brothers Landscape Architects, approved by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. Plan #8099-1008. Job no. 8099 Yosemite National Park, California. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

²⁸⁴ Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. to NPS Field Office, San Francisco, May 24, 1932. Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, California and Western Office Correspondence, Job no. 8099, Yosemite National Park.

²⁸⁵ Olmsted Jr. to NPS, May 24, 1932.

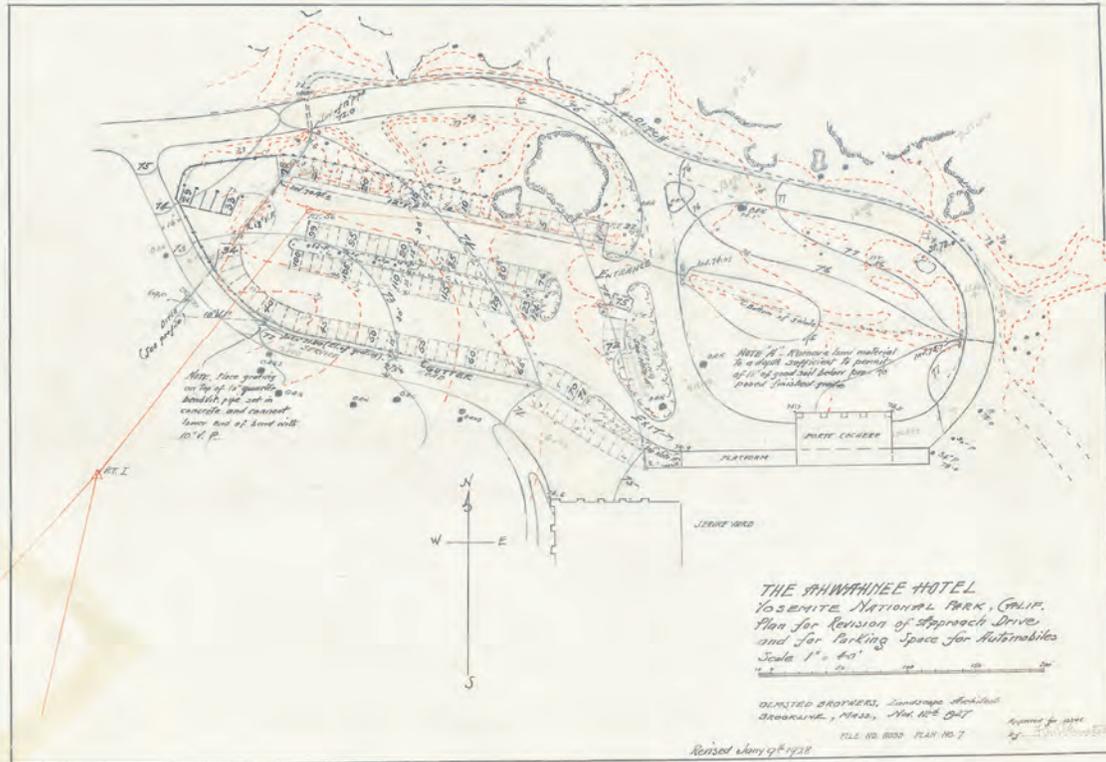


Fig. 13.10. *The Ahwahnee Hotel, Yosemite National Park, Plan for Revision of Approach Drive and for Parking Space for Automobiles*, Olmsted Brothers, November 12, 1927. Approved for issue by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. Plan #8099-7-tp1. Job no. 8099 Yosemite National Park, California. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

as short as all busses can negotiate at a slow pace, widening each of the pair of one way roads on the turn literally and using at the outer edge of each of them an exaggerated concave superelevation supplemented by such a smooth, high and solid parapet as to minimize the seriousness of accident likely to result if a bus should enter the turn out of control.²⁸⁶

Over the lifespan of the Advisory Board and throughout Olmsted Jr.'s participation, the group addressed additional, and often politically complex, issues stemming from the congestion of people, vehicles, and buildings and the need to accommodate visitors to the park without compromising its natural scenery. To address some of these challenges, the board proposed developing “zones” within the park, particularly in the Valley and at Wawona, in which only certain uses would be allowed. In 1933, following a trip by the board to Glacier Point, Buwalda wrote to Superintendent D.G. Thomson, “We were struck on this visit more even than on earlier ones with the need for a very definite plan for development in the valley, at Wawona, and in the park at large.”²⁸⁷

²⁸⁶ Olmsted Jr. to NPS, May 24, 1932. At the time of the first phase of work at Yosemite, Olmsted was also consulting with Acadia National Park at the request of J.D. Rockefeller Jr. on the development of a motor road system; there are some similarities between the recommendations for the two parks.

²⁸⁷ John Buwalda to Col. D.G. Thomson, September 18, 1933. Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, Western Office Correspondence, Job no. 8099 Yosemite National Park.

Olmsted’s presence on the board was greatly appreciated by all involved, particularly because he exhibited the ability to see a larger picture of the management of the park without the constraints of day-to-day administration. He brought to the board’s deliberations not only his father’s experience with Yosemite and Mariposa but also the important foundational concept expressed in the Organic Act (which he reiterated at every opportunity) and the resources of the Olmsted Brothers landscape architecture office, which prepared plans to accompany many of the board’s reports or to evaluate specific questions. Shortly before Olmsted resigned the second time—to take on the role of park service Collaborator—Buwalda wrote:

I recently read again the statement issued by your father in 1890 entitled “Governmental Preservation of Natural Scenery.” It is perhaps the best expression of desirable National Park policy that I have ever encountered. It is, as you remark in your letter, worth re-reading periodically. It is moreover so excellently phrased that it should be studied by students in English classes. I am grateful to you for sending it to me.²⁸⁸

The statement Buwalda referred to, published privately, was at the heart of the matter of the Yosemite Advisory Board. It concluded:

Having regard to the enjoyment of natural scenery, and considering that the means of making this enjoyment available to large numbers will unavoidably lessen the extent and value of the primary elements of natural scenery, nothing of an artificial character should be allowed a place on the property, no matter how valuable it might be had, the presence of which can be avoided consistently with the provision of necessary conditions for making the enjoyment of the natural scenery available²⁸⁹

DESIGN PLANS FOR YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

Many of the technical issues the Advisory Board reviewed were also addressed in design studies or analysis by the Olmsted Brothers office, as in the study for the Automobile Terminal at Glacier Point. In addition, some design plans associated with job #8099 precede the Advisory Board; the job also includes some maps, diagrams, publications, or data Olmsted Jr. received to inform the recommendations of the board. For instance, in late 1927 and early 1928, before the Advisory Board was established, Olmsted Brothers prepared plans for the grounds of the Ahwahnee Hotel, including grading and alterations to the approach drive, vehicular circulation, and parking that changed the General Plan prepared by Yosemite Park & Curry Co. Cross sections were used to evaluate grade alterations, particularly cut and fill related to the hotel lawn and to address drainage issues, which may have been needed due to flooding by the Merced River. In December 1927, Olmsted visited the site

²⁸⁸ John Buwalda to Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., March 14, 1941. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, California and Western Office Correspondence, Job no. 8099 Yosemite National Park.

²⁸⁹ See Ethan Carr, Amanda Gagel, and Michael Shapiro, eds. *The Early Boston Years, 1882–1890*, The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, vol. 8 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 781.



Fig. 13.11. Plot Plan of Ahwahnee Hotel Grounds, Yosemite National Park by Eldridge T. Spencer, December 12, 1927. Prepared by Yosemite Park & Curry Co., issued by Olmsted Brothers December 16, 1927. Plan #8099-11-pt3. Job no. 8099 Yosemite National Park. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

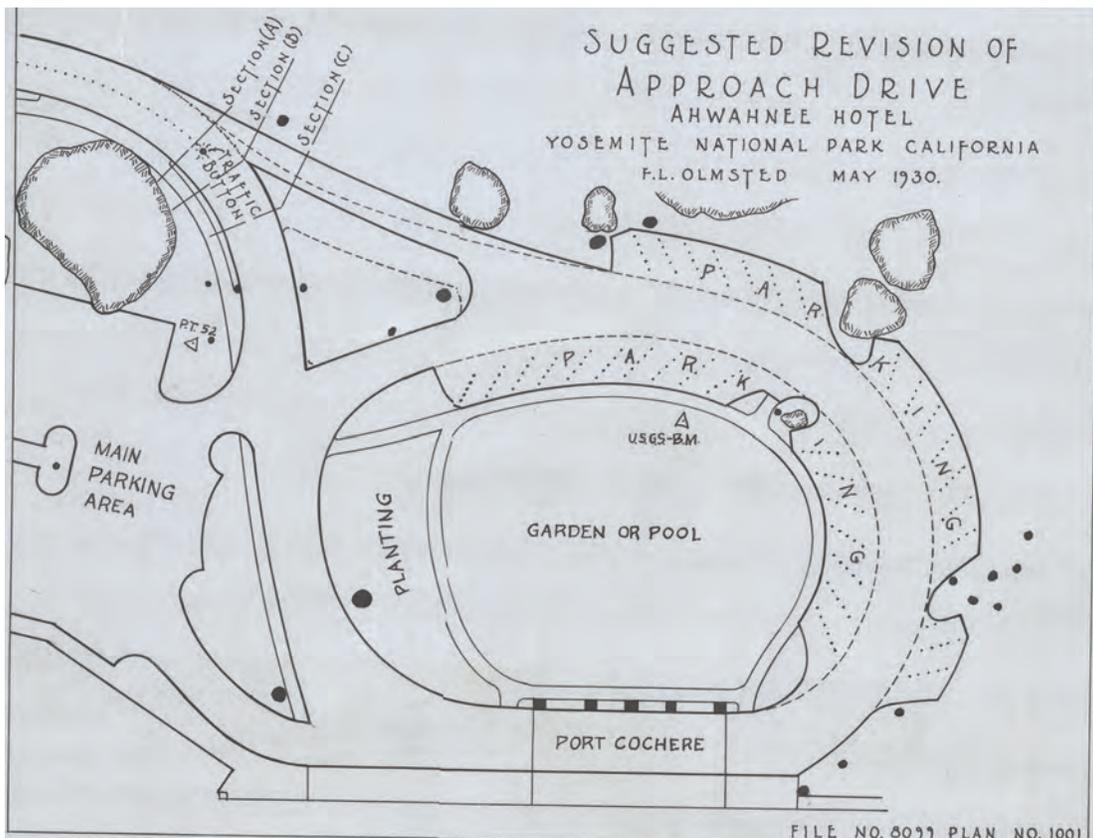


Fig. 13.12. Suggested Revisions of Approach Drive, Ahwahnee Hotel, Yosemite National Park, Frederick Law Olmsted (Jr.), May 1930. Plan #8099-1001. Job no. 8099 Yosemite National Park, California. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

and took photographs that show layout stakes in the ground in the vicinity of the hotel; the photographs also carry notations related to the effect of deer browse on vegetation on the hotel grounds. In 1929, the National Park Service Landscape Division proposed an option to address the deer problem with designs for the placement of deer fencing around the hotel grounds. In 1930, with the Advisory Board now appointed and actively working, the firm developed additional plans for the arrival area at the hotel as the first of several diagrams and design options completed for the board.

Olmsted Brothers also supported the work of the Advisory Board by providing diagrams to illustrate written reports and recommendations. The Olmsted Archives also contains a number of plans prepared by the National Park Service and by consulting architect Eldridge Spencer that Olmsted reviewed and made notes on. In some cases, original and

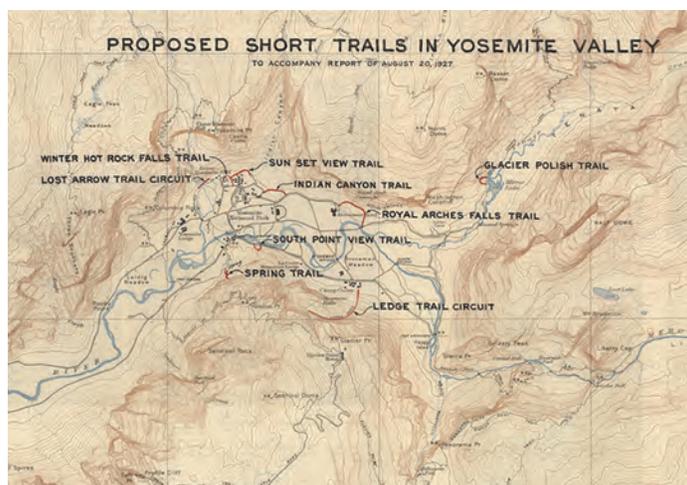


Fig. 13.13. Detail of *Proposed Short Trails in Yosemite Valley to Accompany Report of 20 August, 1927*. Plan #8099-1016. Job no. 8099 Yosemite National Park, California National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

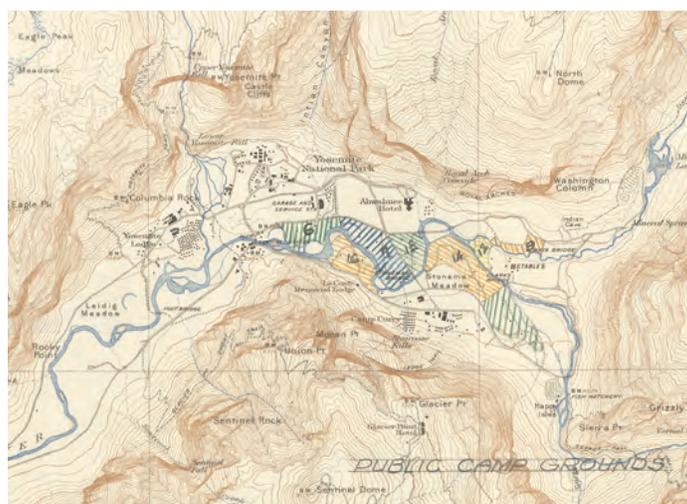


Fig. 13.14. Detail from *Map of Yosemite Valley, Yosemite National Park, California, Public Camp Ground, Map to Accompany Report by McDuffie, April 18, 1934*. Plan #8099-1015. Job no. 8099 Yosemite National Park, California. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site

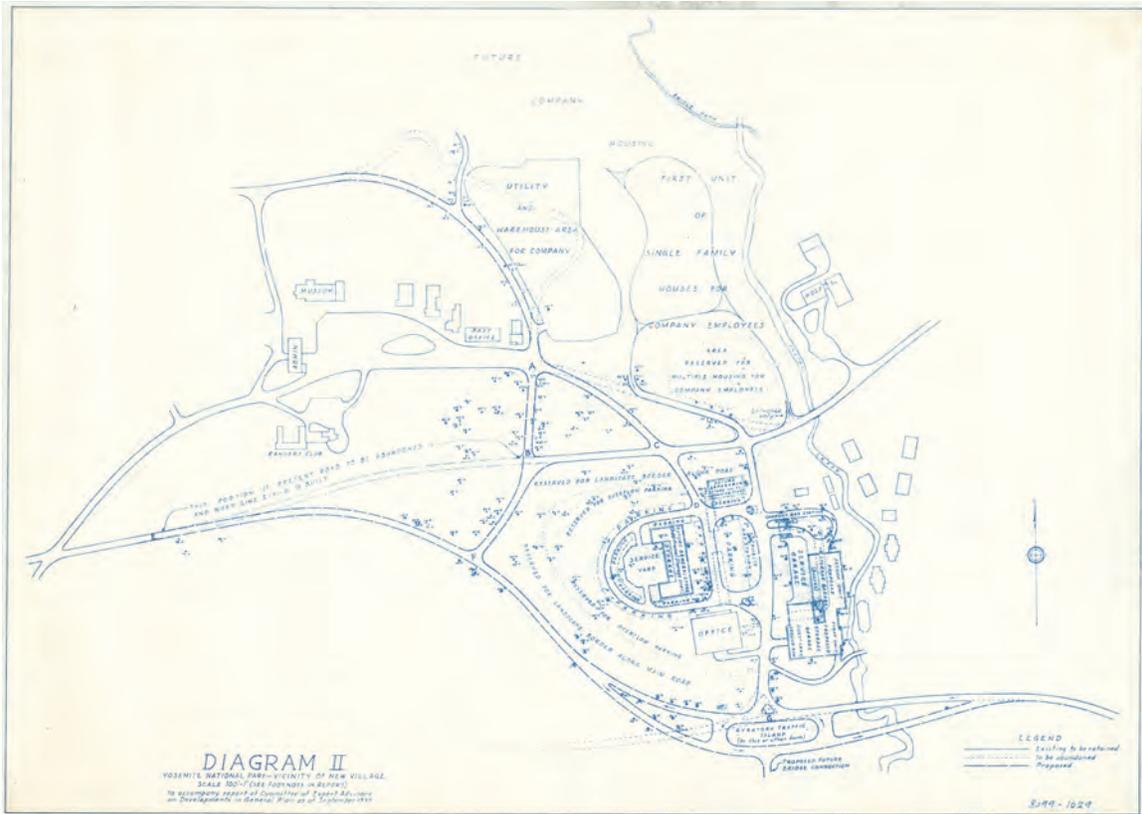


Fig. 13.15. *Diagram II, Yosemite National Park, Vicinity of New Village, September 1939.* To Accompany Report of Committee of Expert Advisers on Development in General Plan as of September 1939. Plan #8099-1029. Job no. 8099 Yosemite National Park, California. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

amended plans indicate changes made after consultation with Olmsted, as in Eldridge’s 1929 Plot Plan of Camp Curry Grounds, which shows proposed road and parking improvements. In some instances, it is hard to determine whether the author is the Olmsted firm or one of the other members of the Advisory Board. This is the case for two interesting diagrams for Yosemite Valley. The first, dated 1927 and reviewed again in May 1934, shows a system of short trails in the valley; the second, created to accompany a report submitted by McDuffie on behalf of the board, shows general areas for a series of public campgrounds south of the Ahwahnee Hotel grounds. Another major contribution of the firm was a 1939 design plan for a “New Village,” submitted to address ongoing issues with development, the placement of buildings, and appropriate uses in the valley, which were a major topic for the Advisory Board.

Aside from the challenges of human development in Yosemite Valley, the Advisory board also spent a considerable amount of time addressing the challenges of road alignment. The board’s members were well versed in the topography of the Sierra Nevada and careful to avoid unnecessary scarring of the steep slopes and rock cliffs that could compromise the park’s scenic values. This focus produced frequent suggestion for or changes to alignments proposed by the National Park Service and the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR). The Advisory Board reports sometimes included alternatives developed by the Olmsted Brothers. One example is a suggestion, likely developed by Olmsted and sent from the office in Palos Verdes, that suggested other options for a section of the Wawona



Fig. 13.16. *Wawona Road, Between South Entrance and Yosemite Valley, Facing East at Retaining Wall Beyond End of Turnout, Base of Turtleback Dome Visible at Right* by Brian C. Grogan, 1991. HAER Cal.22-WAWO,4—3. HABS/HAER/HALS Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.



Fig. 13.17. *Yosemite Valley Seen from Discovery View, Looking East* by Brian C. Grogan, 2001. HAER Cal.22-WAWO,4—10. HABS/HAER/HALS Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

Road alignment proposed by BPR from the base of Cathedral Rocks to Turtleback Dome. The board's plan suggested an alternate location for the Wawona tunnel and kept the road lower in elevation at Turtleback Dome. The road that was ultimately constructed follows a somewhat different alignment, but elements of the board's suggestions are evident in the final layout, particularly at Turtleback Dome.

ACADIA NATIONAL PARK

Acadia National Park on Mt. Desert Island, Maine, is one of the largest national park design commissions for the Olmsted office; records for the project are filed under several job numbers related to specific locations within the park and sites that were incorporated into the park after its designation. The park began as Sieur de Monts National Monument in 1916 and was renamed Lafayette National Park in 1919. It finally took on its modern name, Acadia National Park, in 1929. The island had been a well-known subject of nineteenth-century landscape painters, including Frederic Edwin Church, who romanticized the scenic landscape, often juxtaposing the rugged picturesque qualities of the wilderness with encroaching human settlement.²⁹⁰

Charles Eliot's family had a home on the island; Eliot, who was a partner in the Olmsted firm from 1893 until his death in 1897, had helped to form the Champlain Society, a cohort of young men from Harvard interested in the natural sciences that studied the natural history of the island. Beginning in 1880, the society set up camps in the area, first on Somes Sound and later at Northeast Harbor. The society's journals provide the first organized description of the natural history of the island, and Eliot and fellow society member Edward Lothrop Rand were instrumental in advocating for the preservation of its landscape. In 1883, Eliot wrote, "The scenery of Mount Desert is so beautiful and remarkable that no pains should be spared to save it from injury—to the end that many generations may receive all possible benefit and enjoyment from the sight of it."²⁹¹ Eliot's promising career at Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot ended prematurely when he died at age 37, but his work on Mt. Desert Island inspired his father, Charles W. Eliot, to take up the cause through the Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations, which was instrumental in establishing the national park.

Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. and his early firm had consulted on a number of summer estates on Mt. Desert, including Point d'Acadie in Bar Harbor for George W. Vanderbilt (1883–1897), as well as many summer properties in Bar Harbor, Seal Harbor, and other locations on the island.²⁹² Later, in addition to design and planning proposals for land that became part of Acadia National Park, Olmsted Jr. and his firm consulted on several important

²⁹⁰ Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Otter Creek, Mt. Desert by Frederic Edwin Church, adapted from Elliot Bostwick Davis et al., *American Painting* (Boston, MA: MFA Publications, 2003), <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/otter-creek-mt-desert-34511>.

²⁹¹ Charles Eliot, personal diary, 1833. Champlain Society Records, Mount Desert Island Historical Society.

²⁹² The most important and earliest of the Mt. Desert summer estates on which the Olmsted firm consulted included work for Hugh McMillan (1892–1893), Mrs. George Gray (1892), Charles Fry (1892–1894), Joseph Pulitzer (1894–1895), J.A. Garland (1895–1896), John Mitchell (1909–1910), and George B. Dorr (1902–1909,



Fig. 13.18. *Otter Creek, Mt. Desert* by Frederick Edwin Church, 1850. Accession #1982.419, Museum of Fine Arts, Americas Collection. Photograph © 2019 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Fig. 13.19. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. at Acadia. National Park Service, Acadia National Park Archives.

projects on the island, among them town planning and park design for the Northeast Harbor Village Improvement Society (job #7989, 1928) and design work for the grounds of the Jackson Memorial Laboratory (job #9866, 1948–1950). The first decade of the twentieth century was critical in establishing the need for Acadia National Park. The effort began with the founding of the Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations, which was incorporated in 1903 as the result of efforts of George Buckman Dorr and Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard and Charles Eliot’s father, and others in response to growing concerns about land development and deforestation on the island.



Fig. 13.20. Path Map of the Eastern Part of Mount Desert Island, Maine Compiled by Waldron Bates, Edward J. Rand, and Herbert Jacques, 1928. Plan #9138-2-pt1. Job no. 9138 Acadia National Park. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

BAR ISLAND

The earliest Olmsted correspondence concerning the property that would eventually become part of Acadia National Park began in 1902, with an initial inquiry to Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. from the Rodick family regarding the disposition and potential development of Bar Island. The island and its connecting spit form a portion of the small, protected bay of Bar Harbor. Initial discussion with the family involved the division of the island among various family members; by 1908, discussions shifted to coordination with George Buckman Dorr around the appropriate design of a causeway and a pleasure drive on the island that would both define parkland and create opportunities for the subdivision of lots.

Olmsted Jr.’s chief concerns regarded preserving views of and from the island and setting aside land to be protected for public benefit, while providing for advantageously situated lots.²⁹³ Olmsted Jr.’s extensive report to Dorr outlines in great detail how the public reservation lands, roads, and lots could be configured to protect the island’s most distinguished characteristics. He proposed parkland along the entire perimeter shore to secure protection of key vistas from and to the island, a summit reservation, and protection of the “flats” from future development. Considered together, Olmsted argued, protecting these critical elements of the island would enhance Bar Harbor’s attractiveness as a summer destination by ensuring that future development of the island would not damage the view and at the same time, protect the most important character of the island. To achieve these ends, Olmsted recommended that the reservation lands be transferred to the town; Dorr reported

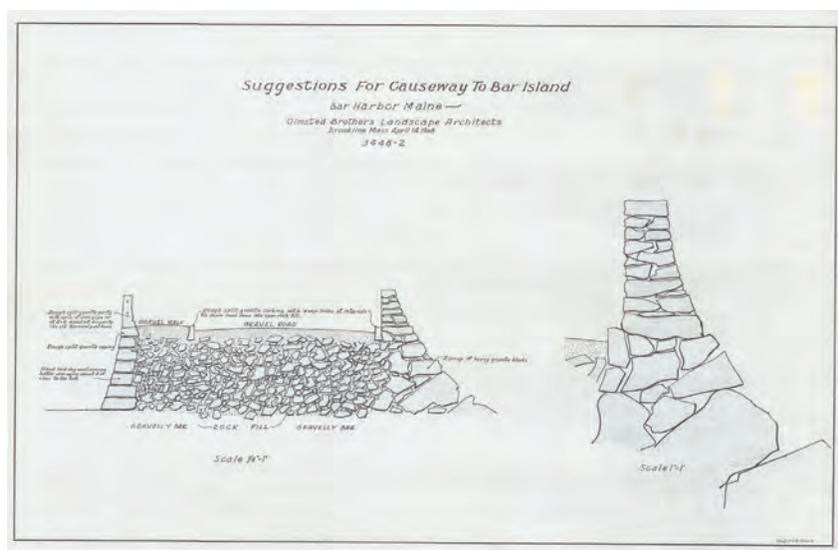


Fig. 13.21. *Suggestions for Causeway to Bar Island, Bar Harbor, Maine*, Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, April 14, 1908. Plan #3448-2. Job no. 3448 Bar Island. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

²⁹³ Olmsted Jr.’s concerns here were similar to those expressed by Olmsted Sr. with regard to another coastal Maine site—Cushing’s Island at the entrance to Portland Harbor, for which Olmsted Sr. prepared recommendations with the assistance of Charles Eliot in 1883. See “Report of Fred’K Law Olmsted, Landscape Architect to the Trustees of Cushing’s Island Company,” in *Summer Homes, Cushings Island*, Portland Harbor (New York: Hosford & Sons, 1883), 6–9.



Fig. 13.22. *Bar Harbor from Great Hill, Mount Desert Island, Maine* by Detroit Publishing Company, between 1901 and 1906. Detroit Publishing Company Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

that a committee had been established to consider the recommendations, but the island was never developed. Instead, it became part of Acadia National Park.

OCEAN DRIVE AND NEWPORT MOUNTAIN

Between 1901 and the establishment of the Sieur de Monts National Monument in 1916, Dorr continued his efforts to secure land protection under the auspices of the Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations. Inevitably, he considered how these lands could be made accessible to the public. In October 1909, Richard Hale wrote to Olmsted Jr. regarding Dorr's desire for a preliminary study of Ocean Drive and Newport Mountain. In November of that year, Olmsted traveled to Maine to investigate.

Olmsted's evaluation of the area between Newport Mountain and Schooner Head involved walking a number of areas in the vicinity of the Bliss meadow, Red and White paths, Schooner Head Road, among others, with an eye toward the construction of a new road proposed by Dorr. This project preceded the firm's work on the Motor Road in the park and thus had a separate job number. While Dorr and Olmsted may have had slightly different ideas about the design approach, there seemed to be agreement on the scope of work. As Olmsted noted,

The general project you have in mind, if I understand it aright, seem to me feasible at a reasonable cost so far as road construction. As a pleasure drive the proposed road would be decidedly more interesting than the present one. It is very clear that the change would improve the salable value of the shore property.²⁹⁴

In response, Dorr replied in summer 1910 that he was busy acquiring land for "our Public Reservations on Mt. Desert Island," and he wanted "someone able to plot this out for

²⁹⁴ Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. to George B. Dorr and Richard W. Hale, November 30, 1909. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records 225: 552.

me accurately and skillfully, and intelligently too with regard to the study of details.”²⁹⁵ This development proved to be fortuitous, leading to an important later collaboration related to road design in the park.

One of Dorr’s first concerns for the preservation of Mt. Desert Island was the importance of wildlife conservation. With this goal in mind, he formed the Wild Gardens of Acadia Corporation to “provide sanctuaries for the plant and animal life—the flora and fauna—of the Acadia region, places of special fitness where that life in every valuable or interesting form may dwell securely and perpetuate itself in its natural environment; and to make those sanctuaries useful not only in conservation, but as an opportunity for study, a sources of pleasure, and a means of information.”²⁹⁶ The corporation was governed by trustees representing a number of academic institutions and the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA).

Shortly after the Wild Garden’s initial formation in 1918, Dorr sent Olmsted Jr. the articles of incorporation and asked him to assist in recruiting ASLA as a member. Olmsted immediately contacted James Sturgis Pray, the president of ASLA and chair of the Department of Landscape Architecture at Harvard and a former member of the Olmsted firm. Olmsted noted the importance of Dorr’s invitation to be an active participant in the Wild Gardens “both in carrying on its special educative work on tracts under its control and in acting as a watchdog over the management by the National Parks Service of the Sieur de Monts Monument, or Park, if Park it is to be.”²⁹⁷ Pray was very interested in the idea; he replied to Olmsted, “I think the profession and Society will still again be in debt if you arrange for the Society’s having the privilege of being one of the guardians of this tract.”²⁹⁸ The final note of interest in this aspect of the park’s development is that Dorr requested that Olmsted be designated the ASLA representative.

For reasons both personal and other, I should especially like to you represent the trustees of the American Society of Landscape Architects in the matter . . . Both your own name and your father’s, you bear, are peculiarly associated with such end as I have in view in our understanding here, both educationally and artistically, and I also desire particularly to consult with you—on the spot if possible, should the opportunity come—with regard to the plans I am making for the development of the park lands and the Wild Gardens’ lands on the approach from Bar Harbor.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁵ George B. Dorr to Frederick Law Olmsted, July 28, 1910. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records 225: 555.

²⁹⁶ George B. Dorr, “The Sieur de Monts National Monument and the Wild Gardens of Acadia: A Reprint from the Journal of the International Garden Club,” *Sieur de Monts Publications* 22, 10. The Wild Gardens of Acadia Corporation is a different entity from the current Wild Gardens of Acadia, a native plant garden located adjacent to Sieur de Monts Spring and nature center in the park.

²⁹⁷ Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. to J.S. Pray, April 13, 1918. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, Series B, 437: 364. Pray had worked briefly in the Olmsted office following Eliot’s death and succeeded Olmsted Jr. as chair of the department.

²⁹⁸ J.S. Pray to Frederick Law Olmsted, April 26, 1918. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records 437: 364.

²⁹⁹ G. B. Dorr to Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., June 25, 1919. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records 437: 367.

The Wild Gardens of Acadia had a broad mission and scope to act as an early intermediary in the acquisition and transfer of lands, a custodian and advocate for the park, and the creator of a wild sanctuary with pleasure walks enhanced with native and hardy introduced plants, possibly in association with Mount Desert Nurseries, which Dorr had established in 1896. Dorr transferred some of his private holdings, such as Sieur de Monts spring, to the Wild Gardens before it was incorporated into the park. While Dorr's grand vision for the Wild Gardens organization was never fully realized, it brought Dorr and Olmsted Jr. together to contemplate roads and walks and the development of Acadia as a scenic reservation in what Dorr hoped would be the tradition of Olmsted Sr.

PARK DESIGN PROJECTS

Acadia National Park had a somewhat complicated beginning. It was first established as Sieur de Monts National Monument in 1916 and then designated Lafayette National Park in 1919. Acadia National Park was finally created ten years after that. The effort to create the park was complemented by private initiatives, such as the efforts of George Dorr, with his Wild Gardens, and those of island resident John D. Rockefeller Jr., who both contributed significantly to the vision, character, and land protection of the park. By 1926, the park was well into its first decade as a public reservation.

In December of that year, Daniel Hull, National Park Service Chief Landscape Engineer, and Thomas C. Vint, Associate Landscape Engineer, visited Lafayette National Park to inspect various landscape improvements undertaken by Dorr. They also had the opportunity to meet with John D. Rockefeller Jr.'s manager, Mr. Ralston; his engineer, Mr. Simpson; and his "rock man," Mr. Cordidge to inspect the carriage roads in the park and on the Rockefeller property, with a particular focus on bridges.³⁰⁰ The report of the visit provided a glowing review of the sensitive placement and alignment of the carriage roads on the Rockefeller estate and the quality of workmanship in both road design and bridges. This important visit underscored the park service designers' approval and support of the private work Rockefeller had undertaken, which helped set the stage for the later involvement of the Olmsted Brothers firm. By confirming their confidence in Rockefeller's approach to managing his own land, park service designers could in turn support Olmsted's involvement in the park roads. They urged Mather to complete the "horse road system as soon as funds become available," ending the report with the recommendation that a "comprehensive landscape development plan should be prepared . . . to indicate the ultimate road layout, trails, camping areas, Government utility development, entrance gateways and such service unites as might be required for public use."³⁰¹

The most significant aspect of the Olmsted firm's involvement with Acadia began in 1929, when the firm was contacted by Rockefeller with a request regarding the

³⁰⁰ Report by Daniel Hull and Thomas Vint to Stephen Mather on Lafayette National Park, December 3, 1926, 2. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records 437: 411.

³⁰¹ Hull and Vint Report, p. 3-4.

creation of a motor road to run partially on his land adjacent to the park and partially within park boundaries:

I have been greatly interested in the park and with government approval have built both horse and automobile roads through my land and the park. This has led to my acquiring extensive tracts of land which may ultimately round out the park area, although I am under no slightest obligation or committal to offer these lands to the Government. In all of this work I have been in close touch with Mr. Cammerer, Acting Director of National Parks, and with the Secretary of the Interior, and, naturally with Mr. Dorr. . . . I am working now on a scheme for a motor road, partly over park land, partly through lands which I have acquired, which will connect with and supplement the present park motor road of five miles, built by me and given to the park.³⁰²

He sought the Olmsted firm’s assistance with the “scheme” he described, which involved several road design challenges that required negotiation with Dorr, as both Dorr and Rockefeller were actively involved in acquiring and developing land that would eventually become part of the park. While Rockefeller reached out to Henry Hubbard in Olmsted Jr.’s absence, it was clear that all parties, particularly park service director Horace Albright and Arno Cammerer, really wanted Olmsted Jr. himself to address the motor road issue—not just the issues identified by Rockefeller, but the design and implementation of an entire motor system for the park.

Rockefeller hoped that the Olmsted firm could assist with three specific road design challenges in which he was at odds with Dorr: the alignment of a new motor road in the vicinity of the Kebo Range, Dry Mountain, and Sieur de Monts spring; the character of a park entrance road from the National Park Service office in Bar Harbor; and the possible rearrangement of roads in the vicinity of Sieur de Monts Spring. Rockefeller noted, “Since the Government has appropriated very little money thus far for road construction in Acadia National Park, aside from the fund for the construction of a certain mountain road, the carrying out of any program which you gentlemen may recommend will not be possible except in a very limited way, only so far as I may be disposed to finance it.”³⁰³

The Olmsted firms were well known to Rockefeller as they had undertaken a number of projects for the Rockefeller family, beginning with work as early as 1887, for Rockefeller’s uncle, William, at Rockwood in Tarrytown, New York, and including John D. Rockefeller’s Kykuit at Pocantico Hills beginning around 1895. The firm had also taken on many projects under the direction of John D. Rockefeller Jr., including the design of Fort Tryon Park in New York City. The development of these residential and civic projects often required addressing complex design challenges, particularly grading, drainage, and circulation issues on steep sites with important views or natural features to preserve. As a result, Rockefeller was well informed of the Olmsted firm’s capacity.

³⁰² John D. Rockefeller Jr. to Henry V. Hubbard, September 18, 1929. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records 437: 417.

³⁰³ Rockefeller to Hubbard, 3.



Fig. 13.23. *View of Drive* by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., April 1928. "Received from California Office." Photo album 243-04-ph04. Job no. 243, John D. Rockefeller, Sr. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

Between 1929 and 1935, the Olmsted Brothers firm completed approximately 130 design plans for the park, primarily focused on the development of motor roads. Rockefeller was both a proponent of appropriate road design and a major financial contributor to the Olmsted firm's projects; he provided his personal engineering and construction team and hired the Olmsted firm to assist in the design and construction of the roads. The situation on Mt. Desert was a complicated one with respect to three individual entities involved in the park's development—the National Park Service and Dorr and Rockefeller, two very strong-minded and vastly different individuals who both were developing their own land, some of which they hoped would eventually become part of the park, and who both cared deeply about the creating the best possible national park to showcase Mt. Desert Island's beauty. The relationships were further complicated by the fact that Dorr was still operating Wild Gardens of Acadia, which had control over Sieur de Monts Spring.

On September 21, 1929, shortly after receiving Rockefeller's initial request, Hubbard visited Mt. Desert and met with Dorr and Rockefeller's team to assess the issues on site. His report of the visit offered suggestions for alignments in specific areas with an emphasis on the preservation of natural features. Dorr seemed generally pleased with the variety of options Hubbard suggested, which likely proved more palatable coming from a neutral party, but Rockefeller took issue with some of Hubbard's recommendations; he preferred a route that would direct the new motor road to allow visitors to experience the grandest scenery of the park:

There is another reason why it seems to me that the park motor road should go on the west side of the tarn instead of running parallel to the highway on the east side, and this also is a reason which your lack of familiarity with the larger aspects of this motor road scheme has kept you from seeing. The motor road now being planned will be in its entirety some ten or fifteen miles in length. For two or three miles it will run along the most beautiful portions of the rugged seacoast of the island, portions as grand and inspiring as any on the island. The new road will be coupled with the existing motor road, five miles in length, which runs through some of the most important mountains in the park and passes by three of its most attractive lakes. It will also be connected with a road which the Government is now building to the top of Green Mountain, the highest mountain on the island. You will see, therefore, that this entire motor road system when completed will be one of extraordinary scenic beauty and grandeur, taking the sightseer from the top of the highest mountain, where the view in every direction is superb, intimately past three of the most beautiful lakes, and then along the seacoast for several miles, where the granite cliffs are most imposing and bold. My feeling is that to throw the road to the east side of the tarn, where it can never be anything but a dull uninteresting piece of road, because of its close relation to the proposed new highway, necessarily making an ugly gash in the mountainside, and to let the one hundred percent preservation of the west side of the tarn dominate this magnificent drive, is placing a wholly unjustified emphasis on what is after all only an incident on the road, although a uniquely beautiful one, to the serious detriment of the far larger and more important consideration of the road itself.³⁰⁴

The perceived conflict in the favored alignment of the motor road prompted Rockefeller to reach out to Olmsted Jr. to step in and address the problem in what he hoped would be a more satisfactory way. Olmsted visited Mt. Desert a few weeks later to repeat Hubbard’s onsite evaluation. His written analysis took a slightly different approach and tone than Hubbard’s; perhaps out of awareness of how Rockefeller would react, Olmsted explicitly noted his desire to determine a route that would give motorists the most pleasure. Olmsted’s involvement met with great approval from Director Albright, who continued to hope that the firm would assist in the development of the entire motor road scheme for the park.

The firm submitted its report to Rockefeller and Dorr in November 1929.³⁰⁵ The design plans, which focused on the initial issues identified by Rockefeller, included plans and grading studies for a new park automobile road that would connect to and modify roads at the existing development at Sieur de Monts Spring, including both the Spring House and Abbe Museum, and provide an alignment on the east side of the Tarn apart from the existing “state highway” that provided views of the Great Meadow and the “gorge” between Dry Mountain and Pocket Mountain. It also provided studies for an overpass that would provide a grade separation between the new park motor road and the existing highway. Rockefeller

³⁰⁴ John D. Rockefeller Jr. to Henry V. Hubbard, October 2, 1929, 2. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records 437: 423.

³⁰⁵ Olmsted Brothers. “Report–By Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects to Accompany Plans Showing Recommendations and Suggestions for Road Locations and Other Improvements in the Region Between Red Rock Spring and South End of the Tarn, Acadia National Park.” November 14, 1929. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records Series B, 437: 446–451.

reviewed plans and reports prepared by the Olmsted Brothers and voiced strong opinions regarding a number of its recommendations. He disagreed with the specifics regarding the grade separation between the carriage road and motor road at Eagle Lake road and Mountain Road, as well as connections eastward from the Great Meadow, but he supported Olmsted's recommendations for the treatment of the road at Otter Point and Ocean Drive, where the recommended alignment would take great advantage of the topography and views.

Resolution of the problem of a suitable entrance drive into the park from Bar Harbor was delayed until spring 1930, as Olmsted spent the early part of the year in California and in poor health. Providing a graceful and scenic drive into the park required cooperation from the Town of Bar Harbor and Dorr, and the project was complicated by a number of existing, incompatible land uses, including the town incinerator, new development and associated clear-cutting, and gravel excavation, not to mention the often-opposing ideas of Dorr and Rockefeller.

Olmsted continued to study the issues around automobile circulation in the park into the summer of 1930, corresponding primarily with Rockefeller and his associates, but also with Dorr and others as he investigated and evaluated several alignments on the east side of the island, including Otter Cliff Point. Rockefeller was very concerned about the details of the design, writing to his superintendent S. F. Ralston,

It is vital to preserve the beauty of this spot which we are trying to make accessible, for to restore any parts destroyed will be difficult and slow; therefore every precaution that can be taken to protect the surrounding area and to keep the work and travel of the men within the width of the road itself seems desirable. In making your plans for this work, please be guided wholly by Mr. Olmsted's suggestions³⁰⁶

After spending time on Mt. Desert in June 1930, Olmsted Jr. provided Rockefeller with two reports in mid-July, one related to horse-carriage roads and another outlining a series of recommendations for a "pleasure route for passenger automobiles." The report sets out clear objectives for a park motor road, defines design standards (18 mph, 18' width, 2' vegetated shoulders, maximum grade of 7 percent), and recommends five specific sections to be considered. Olmsted, working with Rockefeller's engineers, finally had definitive recommendations regarding the "best possible solution" he had been seeking for nearly a year.

The road he now proposed would "enable motorists to enjoy in high degree some of the typical and notable types of scenery of the Acadia National and of adjoining lands suitable for including in the park" and simultaneously avoid areas that would provide "unpleasant interruptions" in an otherwise continuous scenic experience.³⁰⁷ By offering clear rationale for the construction of the motor road and explaining why the existing road system did not provide a suitable experience of the Acadia scenery, Olmsted also addressed the previous controversies surrounding the motor roads—not only where they should be constructed but also to what degree automobile access should be expanded on the island, an idea Charles Eliot had opposed.

³⁰⁶ John D. Rockefeller Jr. to S. F. Ralston, June 2, 1930. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, Series B, 437: 578.

³⁰⁷ Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. to John D. Rockefeller Jr., July 11, 1930. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, Series B, 437: 604.

Despite Olmsted’s convincing narrative, Rockefeller’s offer to fund the construction of the motor road system met with considerable controversy and drew objections from many summer residents. Because it represented a large private initiative during the Depression, it attracted extensive press coverage that caught seasonal residents (and Dorr to some degree) by surprise; consequently, the plan was the subject of many letters to the Secretary of the Interior. Rockefeller withdrew his offer to appease his friends and others on Mt. Desert. Over a three-year period, he was gradually coaxed back to the table by civic leaders, the National Park Service, and the Secretary of Interior. By 1933, the pieces finally seemed to be in place for the construction of the Acadia Motor Road envisioned and funded by Rockefeller.

Perhaps the most identifiable section of the Acadia Motor Road (now known as the Loop Road) attributed to the Olmsted firm is at Otter Cliff, between Thunder Hole and Sand Beach. This section took a few years to fully realize and was at least partially under way in summer 1930, when L. H. Zach visited the project site to report on progress. Rockefeller was intimately involved in the details, as this section, constructed in 1933–1934 was the first of his comprehensive program to be built after he agreed to fund the project the second time. It also benefited from the addition of CCC labor, from the camps at Acadia, under the direction of landscape architect Benjamin Breeze.

The Otter Cliff grade separation, one of the most distinctive features of the road, integrates two lanes of traffic at slightly different elevations, along with a parallel trail along the ocean side that provided a continuous pedestrian route from Sand Beach around Otter Point. The grade separation allowed the road to be constructed around exposed bedrock and the cliff face, offering a spectacular view with minimal damage to the landscape. Stepping the two lanes allowed both directions of traffic a view of the ocean; the separation is supported by a set of rustic walls. This section of the road incorporated many of Olmsted’s ideals for national park design—preserving existing landscape, maximizing visitors’ experience of spectacular scenery, utilizing native materials, and integrating and separating automobile and pedestrian routes.

The second section of Olmsted’s plan was Stanley Brook Road, which runs north from Seal Harbor through a narrow valley along the brook. Rockefeller had worked hard to acquire land for the route, and he provided clear direction to Olmsted to preserve the valley’s character. Olmsted in turn, offered feedback on the alignment and suggested ways to minimize damage to

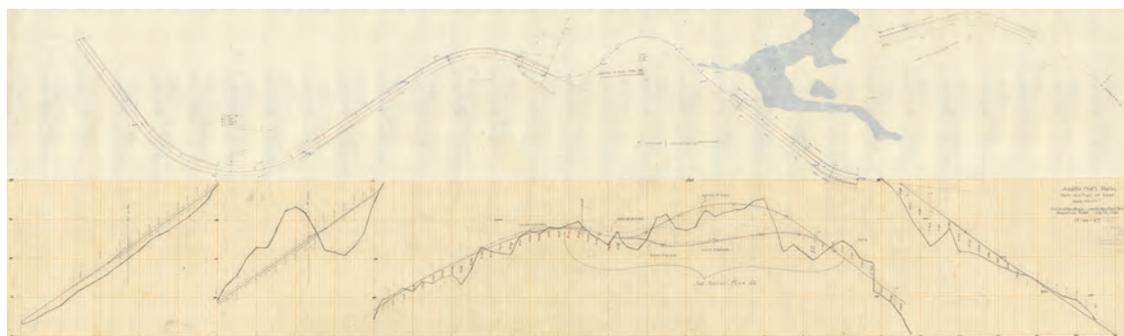


Fig. 13.24. Acadia National Park, Profile and Plan of Road, Otter Cliff Road Plan and Profile from Sta 0 & 00 to 30 & 86.9, Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, July 23, 1930. Plan #9138-57. Job no. 9138 Acadia National Park. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

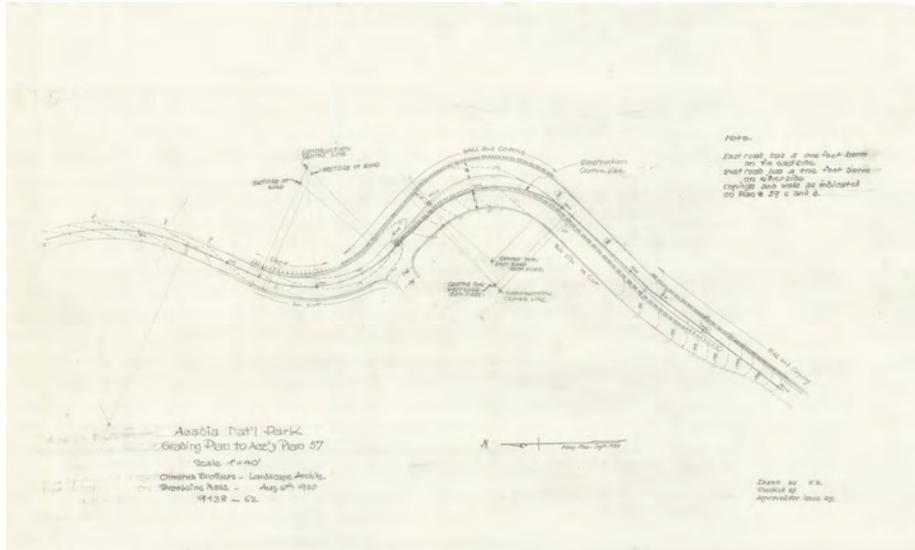


Fig. 13.25. Acadia National Park, *Grading Plan to Accompany Plan 57 Otter Cliff Road, sta 15-21,* Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, August 6, 1930. Plan #9138-62. Job no. 9138 Acadia National Park. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

the valley, including efforts to preserve tree roots and a minimal approach to bridge crossings. One of the design challenges of this road was the need to balance vehicular safety, road engineering, and driving experience along the scenic brook. In approaching this challenge, the firm studied the design of low barriers the report called “wheel guides” over which uninterrupted views of the valley would still be possible from moving automobiles. The plan’s exploration of multiple design solutions for these barriers also provided considerations regarding materials and detailing to complement the character of the motor road and carriage roads, as well as the rustic engineering features that had become an important part of the character of Acadia.

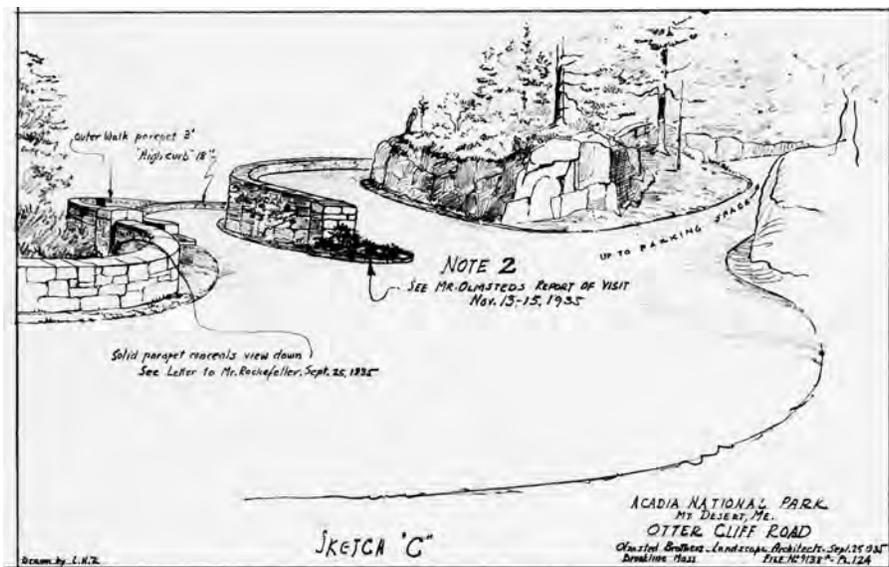


Fig. 13.26. Acadia National Park, Mt. Desert, ME. *Otter Cliff Road, Sketch "C"* drawn by L.H.Z., Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, Plan #9138-124-sh2. Job no. 9138 Acadia National Park. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

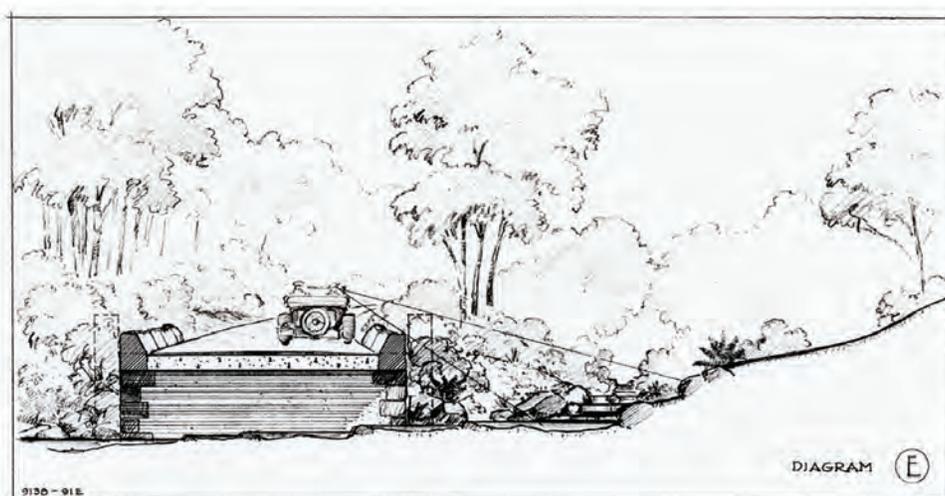


Fig. 13.27. *Section & Perspective of Culvert Parapets and Auto Guard Rail, June 6, 1933.* Prellwitz, draftsman, Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects. Plan #9138-92E. Job no. 9138 Acadia National Park. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

While the work on automobile roads seems to be the most significant aspect of the Olmsted firm’s contribution to Acadia, it was also involved in a number of studies with and for George Buckman Dorr that supported other aspects of the park, particularly the Wild Gardens of Acadia. L. H. Zach, a junior member of the firm, assisted Olmsted with studies they were conducting in the Great Meadow related to plant species and flooding.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial

Olmsted Brothers’ work in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park encompasses two job numbers; one of those files contains detailed design plans that led to a constructed project, the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial. In December 1937, National Park Service Director Arno Cammerer wrote to Olmsted Jr. regarding the design of a memorial for Laura Spelman Rockefeller at the newly established Great Smoky Mountains National Park. J. D. Rockefeller Jr. had contributed a large sum toward completion of the park, and part of that contribution was to be directed to a memorial dedicated to his mother, Laura Spelman Rockefeller. The park was not yet realized, and other funds were pending from Tennessee and North Carolina, but Cammerer asked Olmsted to consider this commission so that some work could move forward. Henry Hubbard stepped in to work directly with the Director to define the scope of work and fee.

The park service provided some direction regarding the nature of the monument, outlined by Hubbard in a letter to Cammerer: “We understand that the memorial will take the form of some kind of tablet, presumably cast in bronze, with an appropriate inscription, affixed to a boulder or cliff, or otherwise supported in a more or less natural setting, with simple surroundings all handled with care to produce an effect of simplicity, dignity, and permanence.”³⁰⁸ Hubbard also defined the scope of work for

the project, which would include providing assistance to the park service in defining the requirements for the memorial, selecting a site, creating preliminary drawings to be reviewed and approved by Rockefeller, and providing “complete drawings of its setting and the treatment of its surroundings so that the Park Service could complete these in detail.”³⁰⁹ Hubbard’s proposal promised the work would be done by Olmsted or himself, estimated the fee at \$1000; it was accepted by Director Cammerer in January 1938, with an agreement that investigations would not begin before April of that year. The Tennessee Division of State Parks and the North Carolina Park Commission agreed to work with the park service and the Olmsted firm on site selection and design review and to share the cost for the firm’s work.

Hubbard visited the Great Smoky Mountains in late March. National Park Service Chief Architect Thomas Vint visited locations with him; Thomas Wadley Raoul, Treasurer of the North Carolina Park Commission, and Robert Livingston of the Tennessee Department of Conservation also asked to meet with Hubbard at the end of the trip. Hubbard and Vint explored several potential locations for the memorial; their criteria included, at a minimum, views of the mountains in both states, as well as the potential for parking and access. They began with two locations on the trans-mountain road and evaluated sites at the summit of Klingman’s Dome and in Collins Gap and Indian Gap, as well. They eventually settled on Newfound Gap;

We chose a nose of rock partly shattered by necessary grading operations, for the road and parking space which bounds the parking space and closes the gap on the east. We propose a terrace at a lower level, accessible at one end from grade and back of this, clothing the rocky nose, a higher terrace accessible by steps on one side, from the top of which terrace would be really much the best view to be obtained anywhere in the Gap in both directions, and on the face of the terrace would be an extra large stone bearing the tablet with the inscription.³¹⁰

Hubbard and Vint traveled together to Washington to report their recommendations to Cammerer, which included a suggestion that the design be submitted as a model with associated drawings. Cammerer immediately wrote to Rockefeller with a status report in which he described the approach suggested by the Olmsted Brothers, confirmed receipt of federal funding to complete land acquisition for the park, and proposed a revision to the language for the memorial.

Cammerer also reported a new, more complex design for the memorial. In place of the simple tablet affixed to a boulder, Cammerer suggested that the memorial would “take the form of two stone terraces built around a low point with a memorial plaque on the back wall of the upper terrace. The view from the upper terrace will be unusually fine. It will not be roofed over nor will

³⁰⁸ Henry V. Hubbard to Arno Cammerer, December 31, 1937. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, 463: 58.

³⁰⁹ Hubbard to Cammerer, December 31, 1937. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, Series B, 463: 58.

³¹⁰ Henry V. Hubbard, Report on Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Visit, April 2–7, 1938, 3. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, Series B, 463: 66.



Fig. 13.28. Two views of the memorial site prior to construction, “received from Mr. R.P. White, Acting Supt. of Park. April 26, 1938.” Photo album 9516-01-ph01 and ph02. Job no. 9516 Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, Great Smoky Mountains National Park. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

it contain rooms. I might add, that I am very much pleased over the proposed site and scheme of memorialization.”³¹¹ In reply, Rockefeller accepted the concept with some edits to the wording of the memorial plaque and proposed that Paul Manship design the tablet.

As a result of this more complex design, which arose during Hubbard and Vint’s joint site visit, the Olmsted firm found itself designing something more complex than had originally been anticipated. The new design included two levels of terraces and extensive masonry and site work. Considerable survey detail, showing existing site features and grades, was needed to complete the design, and Hubbard found the topographic data initially provided by the NPS to be problematic. This was finally corrected with the help of the park’s superintendent, J.R. Eakin.

There were also complications in the design of the memorial tablet. Manship’s original sketch for the tablet included a three-dimensional image of a deer, which the National Park Service and the Department of Interior’s Wildlife Division objected to, largely because its artistic expression was not scientifically accurate and because it singled out a single animal (as opposed to a “frieze, in bas-relief of numerous animals,”³¹² which had been suggested). The North Carolina treasurer also objected to Manship’s design, because it was costlier than what had been originally discussed—particularly important since North Carolina and Tennessee were sharing the cost. (The additional cost was likely because the tablet was to be fabricated near Manship’s New York studio and transported to the site, while the site work for the memorial landscape could be completed by labor available at the park.) However, the memorial inscription offered one positive addition: the plaque included in reference to the parks’ founding, the Olmsted firm’s suggestion of the “humanitarian” phrase “for the permanent enjoyment of the people”—an addition both Cammerer and Rockefeller welcomed.³¹³ Ultimately, the park service rejected the elaborate

³¹¹ Arno B. Cammerer, Director, to John D. Rockefeller Jr., April 8, 1938. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, 463: 67.

³¹² Memorandum, Victor H. Cahalane, Acting Chief, Wildlife Division, to NPS Director, June 7, 1938. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, 463: 90.

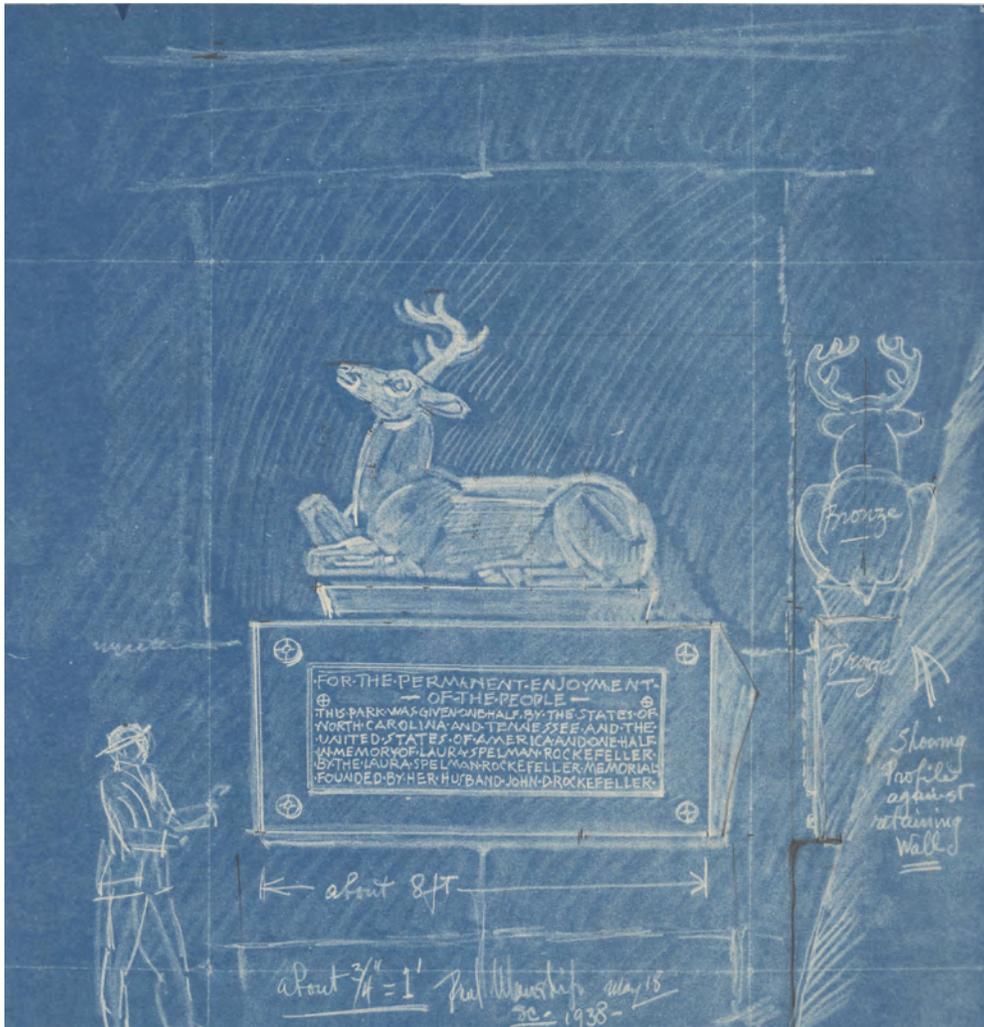


Fig. 13.29. *Plan for Tablet*, Paul Manship, May 18, 1938. Received from A. B. Cammerer, Washington, D.C., in letter. This design was rejected by the National Park Service in favor of a simpler plaque. Plan #9516-8. Job no. 9516 Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, Great Smoky Mountains National Park. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

design for cost reasons. The Olmsted firm redesigned the plaque, eliminating Manship's grand sculptural element in favor of a simple, rectangular bronze plaque, mounted to the stone wall of the memorial.

The remaining issues related to the design were more technical in nature, particularly concerning the size of stone that could be handled onsite, details of the construction of the steps, and establishment of radii onsite to allow the curves of all elements to be accurately located. The North Carolina treasurer requested that the firm add a drinking fountain to the site, an addition he felt would be more beneficial to park visitors than Manship's elaborate design. By June 1938, the complete concept for the memorial plaque and its curved and elevated terraced setting had crystallized

³¹³ Paul Manship to Henry V. Hubbard, May 26, 1938. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, 463: 82.

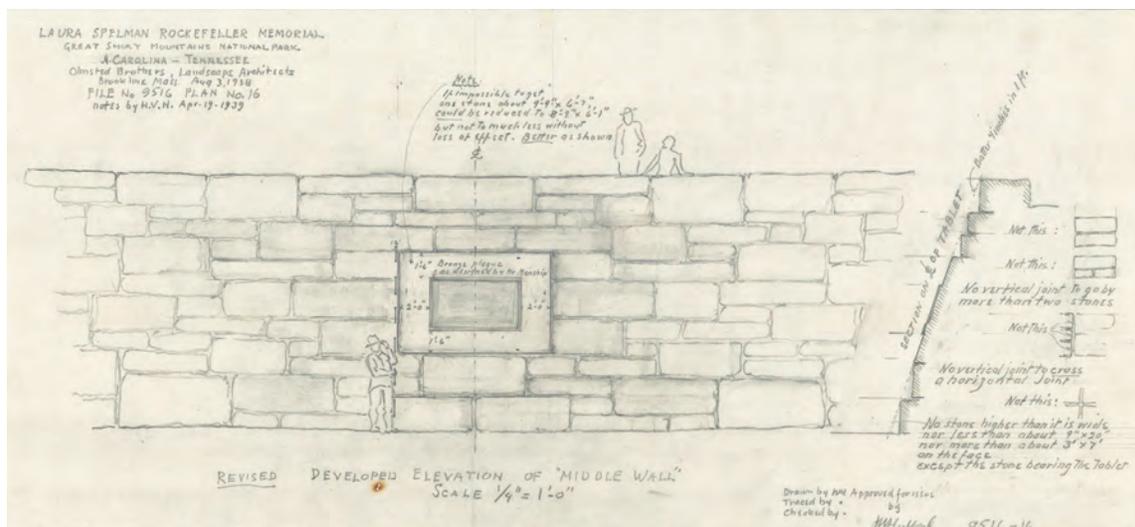


Fig. 13.30. *Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, Revised Developed Elevation of Middle Wall*, Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, August 3, 1938; revised April 19, 1939. Plan #9516-16. Job no. 9516 Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, Great Smoky Mountains National Park. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

and Hubbard sent a complete set of plans and photographs of the model to the Cammerer.

The preliminary design plans show a design composed of a concave, curving structure built onto the exposed hillside, with half-spiral stairs and walkway extending up the slope to two upper terraces with parapet wall. The face of the design was composed of a randomized ashlar pattern of native stone, with the memorial plaque centered on the middle terrace wall. Hubbard advised against the construction of something “altogether too slick,” as he felt that the human desire to complete a neat and accurate job would destroy the feeling of irregularity and naturalness that he deemed “necessary for this structure, in this place.”³¹⁴

Plans and photographs of the model included Radial Sections, Construction Layout Plan, Elevation of Upper Steps and Parapet, Developed Elevation of “Middle Wall” (noted as “not approved”), and Explanatory Architectural Details related to the construction of the curved steps. This detail allowed Cammerer and the park service landscape architects to estimate the overall construction cost, which Cammerer felt would far exceed the available funds. Harry Thompson, Assistant Chief Architect, Branch of Plans and Design, prepared an updated cost estimate for construction of the memorial structure with more accurate figures based on local materials and labor. It would be built of blue-grey sandstone quarried from Clingman’s Dome a short distance from the site, with the terrace paving made of striated, conglomerate sandstone available near Smokemont Campground. Equipment and labor were available locally. With these adjustments, Thompson predicted the cost of the memorial at \$15,000, less than half Cammerer’s initial estimate.

³¹⁴ Henry V. Hubbard to Arno B. Cammerer, June 9, 1938. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, 463: 92.



Fig. 13.31. *Perspective Sketch, Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, May 29, 1939. Plan #9516-28-sh2. Job no. 9516 Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, Great Smoky Mountains National Park. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.*



Fig. 13.32. *Photograph of the Memorial Model by Harry Perkins, Photo album 9516-01-ph10. Job no. 9516 Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, Great Smoky Mountains National Park. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.*

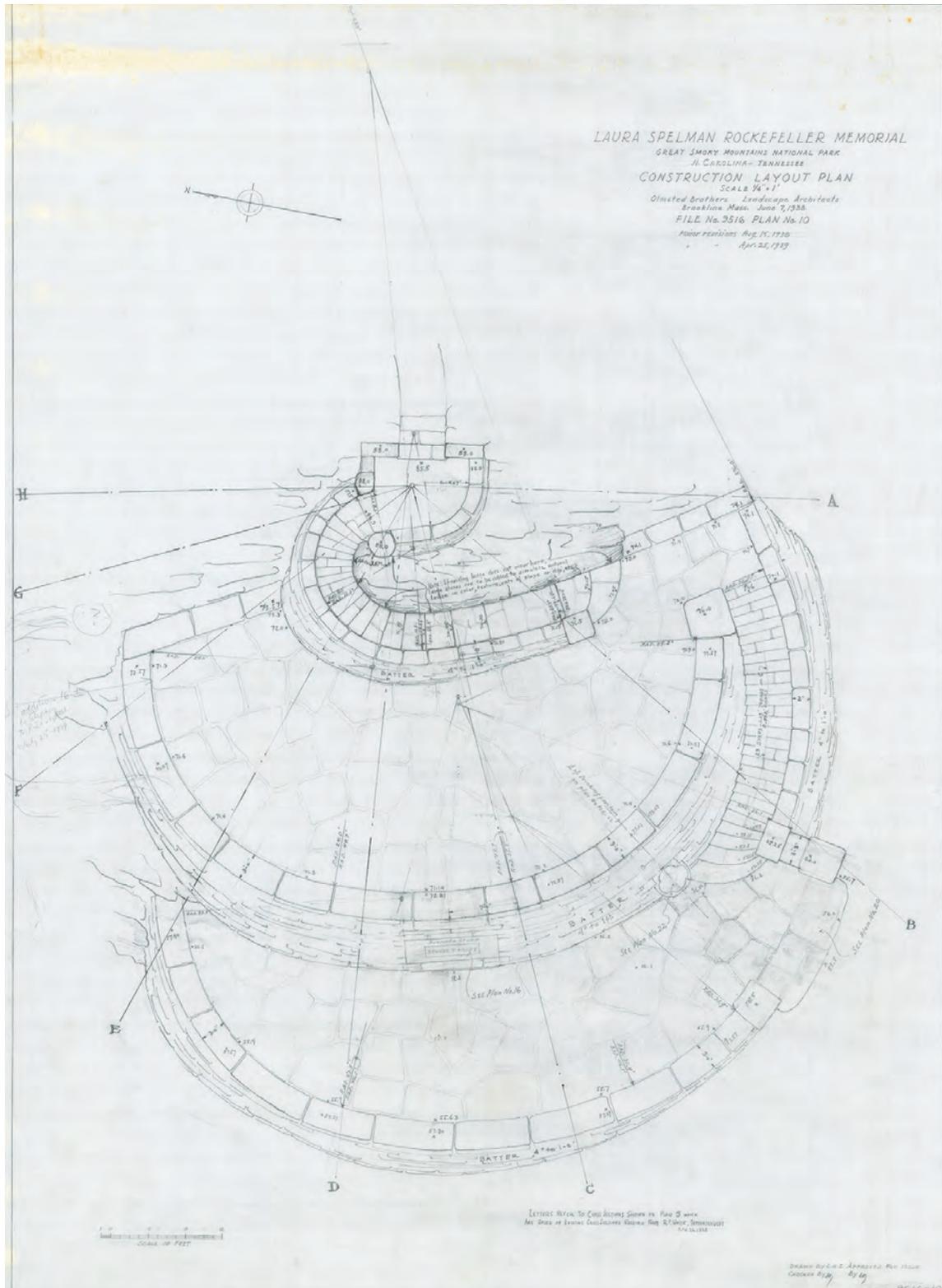


Fig. 13.33 Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, Construction Layout Plan, Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, June 7, 1938. Plan #9516-10. Job no. 9516 Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, Great Smoky Mountains National Park. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

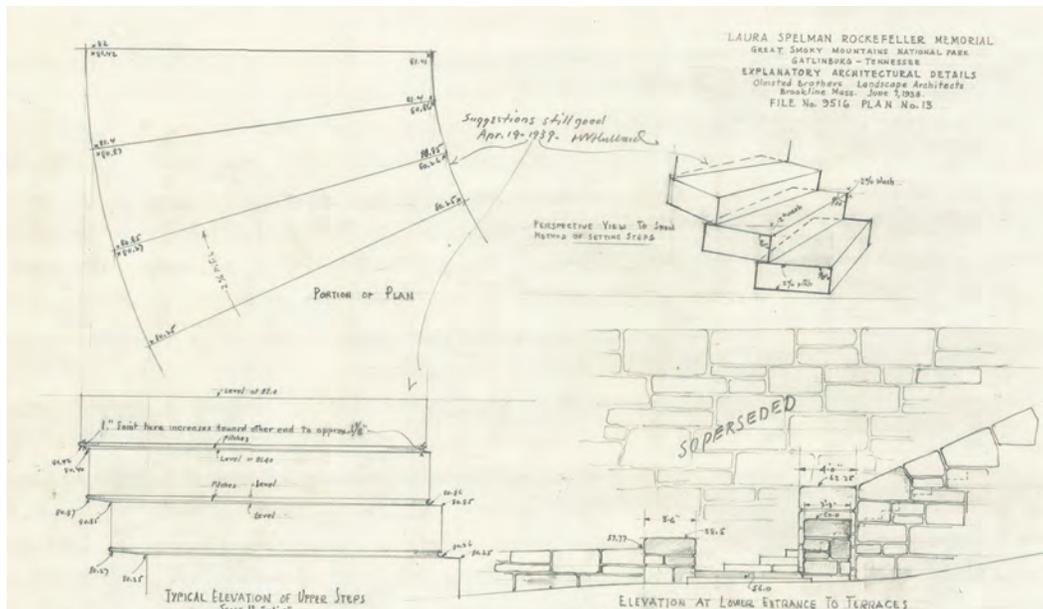


Fig. 13.34 *Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, Explanatory Architectural Details*, Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, June 7, 1938. Plan #9516-13. Job no. 9516 Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, Great Smoky Mountains National Park. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

Cost remained an issue, though. The project had to be accomplished with the funds available, including Manship's fee for tablet design and bronze fabrication, construction costs for the memorial structure, and overhead. Greatly simplifying the tablet and eliminating the sculptural deer made a significant dent in the cost, but there was also discussion of reworking some elements of the Olmsted design, particularly the steps, to further reduce cost. Thompson suggested, for example, that upper and lower steps be treated in a more naturalistic way; Hubbard agreed to this, with the understanding that the execution of the curved steps would be worked out in the field during construction, provided that the overall design layout was staked out in detail *in situ*, and that Henry Rice (who was selected by Vint to supervise the construction) was up to the challenge of finessing the details in the field.

Two small elements of the design continued to bother Hubbard. First, the deer sculpture and associated tablet originally designed by Manship was mounted on a vertical plane so that the top protruded from the wall of the memorial. With the more simplified version, the rectangular plaque would be mounted flush to the memorial wall, in the same vertical plane as the rest of the wall structure. The addition of the drinking fountain, requested by the North Carolina, presented a problem for this arrangement. Hubbard felt the fountain should not compete with the plaque; as a result, the fountain was finally located near the base of the lower stairs. With the final revisions to the design accepted by the National Park Service and Hubbard in August 1938, Cammerer asked Manship to redesign the plaque consistent with the concept proposed by Hubbard; in September, Cammerer met with Rockefeller to secure his support for the revised design. Manship presented a series of new sketches to the NPS, reporting to Hubbard that the final approved design was “the least interesting of the sketches which I presented.”³¹⁵

³¹⁵ Paul Manship to Henry Hubbard, November 6, 1938. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, 463: 142.

With concern about the construction schedule growing and winter approaching, Cammerer sent the Olmsted Brothers drawings and model to the park so that the North Carolina and Tennessee representatives could approve them and implementation of the project could begin. Before that point, though, Thompson took some liberty with the design, making a slight revision to the Olmsted plan—a note that the “masonry flanking the two flights of steps has been indicated to simulate natural rock formations.”³¹⁶ This final plan was approved by North Carolina and Tennessee, and Rockefeller; on October 29, the Secretary of the Interior approved the project. In December, Cammerer reported that the park service editors had suggested copy-editing changes to the text of the plaque, which he conveyed directly to Manship. Construction began early in 1939, beginning with investigations into the stone at Clingman’s Dome. Shortly thereafter, Rice wrote to Harry Thompson with several questions and suggestions as to how the stone should be treated. He proposed that it be seam-faced and artificially colored because of the potential for iron ore to seep through the seams and discolor the rock. Thompson and Hubbard disagreed and also proposed that the some of the stone blocks would have to be cut to reflect the curved form of the wall.

By April 1939, the project was well under way and Hubbard, who was at the time professor of regional planning at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard, traveled to the park during spring break to inspect Rice’s progress and address questions that had arisen in the first few months of construction. Coordination of design decision, between Rice in the field, Thompson and Vint in DC, Hubbard in Massachusetts, Manship in New York, and Cammerer, who provided ultimate approval, sometimes in consultation with North

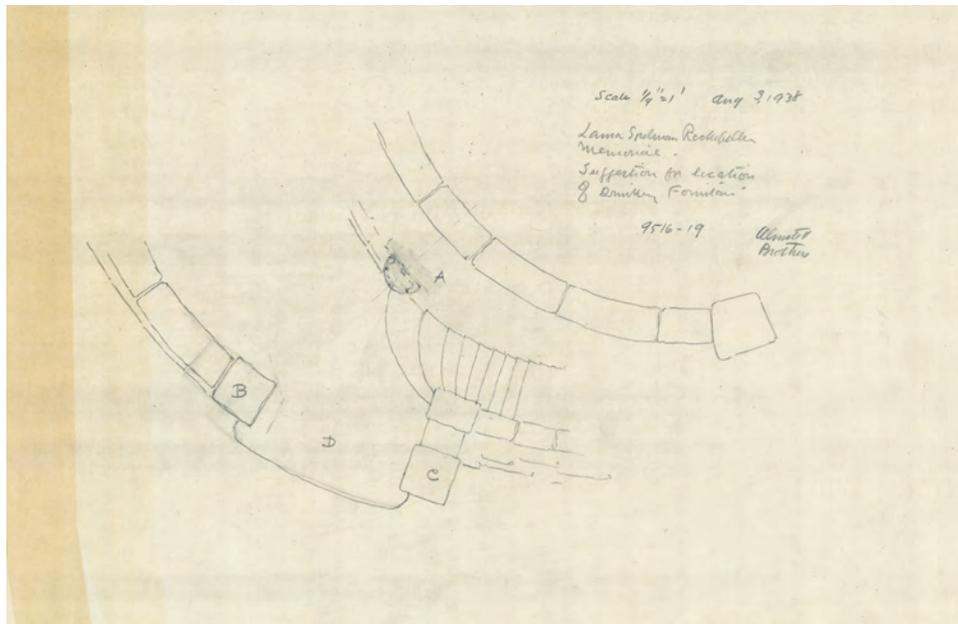


Fig. 13.35. *Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, Suggestions for Location of Drinking Fountain*, Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, August 3, 1938. Plan #9516-19. Job no. 9516 Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, Great Smoky Mountains National Park. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

³¹⁶ H. T. Thompson, Assistant Chief of Planning to Henry V. Hubbard, October 19, 1938. Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, 463: 132.



Fig. 13.36. *Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, Sketch of Entrance to Lower Terrace, with Drinking Fountain, Olmsted Brothers, August 15, 1938.. Plan #9516-20. Job no. 9516 Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, Great Smoky Mountains National Park. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.*

Carolina and Tennessee representatives, continued to be complex. The simplest (and smallest) design element, the drinking fountain, caused considerable confusion and upset when the park service suggested that Manship be asked to fabricate a small bronze element consistent with the large plaque. Despite the difficulties of communication, Manship was able to make enhancements to the design developed by Hubbard, so that the Roman Bronze Works could cast the fountain element at the same time as the memorial plaque. Hubbard and Rice continued to communicate as construction progressed in April and May 1939; Rice sent photographs so that Hubbard could review the work and Hubbard offered suggestions for improvement, particularly related to the stonework. The general result was that the Olmsted firm had review and approval authority over any design changes and, in collaboration with Thompson, review and approval authority regarding the craftsmanship and execution on site.

The memorial was completed in time for the dedication of the park, on September 2, 1940. The event was packed; President Roosevelt gave the keynote address, introduced by Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes. In the following years, the memorial was lauded for the way it was integrated into the existing landscape. The only element that received criticism was the treatment of the bare slope above the monument, which the new National Park Service Director Newton Drury thought unsightly. As a result, there was some communication with the Olmsted office in 1942 regarding Hubbard's original recommendation to replant the area at the top of the slope.



Fig. 13.37. Construction view, *Received from Mr. Rice, Aug. 30, 1939 (no neg.).* Photo #9516-01-ph35. Job no. 9516 Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, Great Smoky Mountains National Park. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.



Fig. 13.38. Construction view, *Received from Mr. Rice, Aug. 30, 1939 (no neg.).* Photo #9516-01-ph38. Job no. 9516 Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, Great Smoky Mountains National Park. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.



Fig. 13.39. *Construction View, Rockefeller Memorial.* Photo album #9516-01-ph31. Job no. 9516 Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, Great Smoky Mountains National Park. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

The design for the Rockefeller Memorial at Great Smoky Mountains National Park is a completed example of the Olmsted Brothers design aesthetic, implemented in collaboration with National Park Service administrative and design leadership. It represents both the park service’s rustic design tradition and the Olmsted firm’s commitment to contextual solutions—designs that fit the landscape and are constructed of native materials. It is an important civic work for the firm, and for its principal designer Henry Vincent Hubbard, finished just before Hubbard’s retirement in 1941.

The role of the Olmsted firm in creating this important feature at the Great Smoky Mountains is largely absent from public understanding. On the park’s website, the story of the park’s dedication and the Rockefeller memorial makes no mention of the Olmsted firm. It implies that the plaque’s description of the establishment of the park “for the permanent enjoyment of the people” represents the words of Franklin Roosevelt—when in fact was the Olmsted firm that requested the language be added to the memorial plaque. It also implies that the CCC was solely responsible for the memorial, when it was the Olmsted firm (as the landscape architect for the memorial) that created and implemented the vision, working closely with Thompson and Rice at the park service and sculptor Manship. Local “force labor”—likely provided by the CCC—completed the actual construction of the memorial, as the park service website notes. Even the Historic American Building Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) report on the Great Smoky Mountain National Park Roads and Bridges, which identifies Newfound Gap as the most impressive and well-known overlook site in the park, credits the National Park Service as designing it (the park service did design the parking area, but not the memorial). Interestingly, the HAER report notes similarities



Fig. 13.40. President Franklin D. Roosevelt speaking at the dedication ceremony for the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, September 2, 1940. Image #18275. Courtesy Tennessee State Library and Archives.

between the road and masonry structures along the Newfound Gap Road and Acadia’s Loop Road, which represents similar work by the Olmsted Brothers;³¹⁷ both parks also have strong historic connections to John D. Rockefeller Jr. Furthermore, these two park roads are considered among the finest in the national parks, along with Shenandoah’s Skyline Drive and the Going to the Sun Highway at Glacier National Park.

FIGHTING CREEK GAP ROAD

In fall of 1938, Director Cammerer asked the Olmsted Brothers firm for assistance with work being considered to relocate sections of the Fighting Creek Gap Road. The problem, Cammerer noted, was that the roadwork had the potential to create a great many “scars of cut and fill,” which the Director hoped to avoid. Both the Bureau of Public Roads and the park service had already made several studies of the problem presented by the topography of the area; Cammerer now desired assistance from a “competent landscape architect not connected with either the National Park Service or the Bureau of Public Roads.”³¹⁸ The Olmsted Brothers again provided Henry Hubbard to assist. In December 1938, the Secretary of the Interior appointed

³¹⁷ Historic American Engineering Record, Great Smoky Mountains National Park Roads and Bridges, HAER No. TN-35, p. 57. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, HABS/HAER/HALS Collection.

³¹⁸ Arno B. Cammerer, Director, to Olmsted Brothers, October 26, 1938. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, 464: 467

Hubbard a Consulting Landscape Architect, Grade 19, in the Branch of Plans and Design, with a temporary appointment not to exceed 30 working days. Hubbard visited Fighting Gap in April 1939, immediately following his site inspection of work under way at the Rockefeller memorial at Newfound Gap. Hubbard's product for this project followed the pattern of Olmsted Jr.'s work as Collaborator to the park service. He prepared a detailed, written report summarizing his observations of and recommendations to address the problem.

WILDERNESS VALUES IN THE GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS

One of Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.'s last projects for national parks involved the development of a National Park Service policy on wilderness values, undertaken by the Council of the Wilderness Society in 1950. Olmsted served as chair of a small committee formed to develop the policy; committee members included wildlife biologist Olaus Murie and Charles Woodbury of the National Parks Association. The committee's report was based on field work (by car, on foot, and on horseback) by Woodbury and Olmsted and consultations with park service director Drury; the park service's regional director, chief ranger, and landscape architects; Wilderness Society representatives from Knoxville; and the Smoky Mountains hiking club. In May 1950, Woodbury and Olmsted traveled to North Carolina, where they met with Thomas Vint and others. At some level the trip and resulting report were perfunctory. Olmsted reported that Vint and Allen were in general agreement with the ideas expressed in a number of communications transmitted by the Wilderness Society and that many of the concerns had already been incorporated into the park service's Master Plan for the park.

The committee was charged with two primary tasks: evaluating the relationship between the Smoky's "wilderness values" and specific planning and development activities of the National Park Service and addressing questions of broad general policy relating to "any or all units of the National Park System that contain areas notable for their 'wilderness values.'" ³¹⁹ The Wilderness Society wanted to be kept informed of the park service's development and adoption of Master Plans for park units with important wildlife values. The upshot of the evaluation was two-fold. First, the committee emphasized that every detail of the Great Smoky Mountains planning and development activities should be evaluated under the provisions of the Organic Act, including both conservation of the "high, moist, superbly forested mountain masses distinctive of the Southern Appalachians" and provision for public enjoyment "in such manner and by such means as will leave [the mountains] unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."³²⁰ Of the many reasons cited by Olmsted and the committee for this focus on preservation was the fact that such areas were becoming increasingly scarce.

The committee considered the existing foot trails, horse trails, campgrounds, picnic areas, and motor roads, particularly in relation to wilderness hikers and the preservation of

³¹⁹ Olaus Murie, Charles G. Woodbury, and Frederick Law Olmsted (Chairman), "Interim Report from the Committee on Questions Raised by Letter of Ernest M. Dickerson to Howard Zahniser of 25 June, 1949 Concerning Wilderness Values in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and Related Matters," June 29, 1950. Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, Post 1949 Correspondence, Wilderness Society Writings.

³²⁰ Murie, Woodbury, and Olmsted, Interim Report, 5, citing the NPS enabling legislation, 1916.

Appalachian forest. They noted that the design standards of the CCC resulted in unnecessarily wide and regraded trails, leaving broad areas of scarred terrain that did not appeal to hikers seeking a wilderness experience. Finally, while the Committee determined that it was the society’s responsibility to keep itself informed about projects under consideration by the park service, it also noted that a more systematic method was needed to allow the society to review the park service’s Master Plans.



Fig. 13.41. *General View of Road with Grey Birch trees Looking East* by David Haas, 1996. Great Smoky Mountains National Park Roads & Bridges, Heintoga Round Bottom Road & Balsam Mountain Road, Between Blue Ridge Parkway & Big Cove Road, Gatlinburg, Sevier County, TN. Library of Congress, HABS/HAER/HALS Collection, Prints and Photographs Division.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

SHAPING THE NATIONAL PARKS OF THE NATION'S CAPITAL

The Olmsted Brothers' role in the development of the public landscape of Washington, D.C., is a continuation of both the senior Olmsted's work in city and regional planning and urban park design and the Progressive Era ideals that underlay Olmsted Sr.'s approach to park making and ideas for the Federal city. Beginning with plans for the U.S. Capitol Grounds (1876–1889) and continuing with city planning studies for District streets (1891–1904), residential community design for the Chevy Chase Land Company (1891–1896), design of the grounds of government buildings such as the U.S. Fish Commission (1881–1882), and the initial concept and layout of the National Zoo (1889–1905), the senior Olmsted had already made a significant contribution to landscape of the District.³²¹ As early as 1874, he voiced concern about the lack of cohesion in the design of the central city. But it was the later firm, and especially Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., that led the landscape design work for many federal monuments and parks in the District, which by then was administered by the National Park Service.

In 1901, Olmsted Jr. was appointed to the Senate Park Commission, charged with implementing a cohesive design for the central core and park system of Washington D.C. The new plan was to be in the spirit of the original L'Enfant Plan but embrace the new and growing City Beautiful movement and add a heavy dose of Progressive Era ideology. The project came to be known as the McMillan Plan, for the commission's chairman, Senator James McMillan. At the relatively young age of 30, Olmsted served alongside an impressive roster of committee members, including Daniel Burnham, Charles McKim, and sculptor Augustus St. Gaudens; Charles Moore, McMillan's aide, served as secretary.

Olmsted Jr.'s inclusion was likely the result of three key events. First, by 1901, Olmsted Sr. was nearly 80, retired, and unwell; he would have been unable to serve had he been asked. Second, early in his career—he was still a student at Harvard—Olmsted Jr. had worked on the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 with Burnham, McKim, and St. Gaudens, as well as his father. Finally in 1900, he gave an important presentation to the American Institute of Architects on the role of monumental landscape design; the talk established an important link between the disciplines of landscape architecture and city planning. Thus, despite his relatively young age, Olmsted's appointment was a natural outgrowth of his training, his work on the World's Columbian Exposition, and his interest in the developing field of city planning.

The commission's report and public exhibit were enormously successful. The cohesive plan centered around a National Mall, an expanse of grass, lined with low neoclassical buildings; to accommodate this design, the commission recommended that

³²¹ Date ranges are derived from the Olmsted Research Guide Online, <http://ww2.rediscov.com/olmsted>.

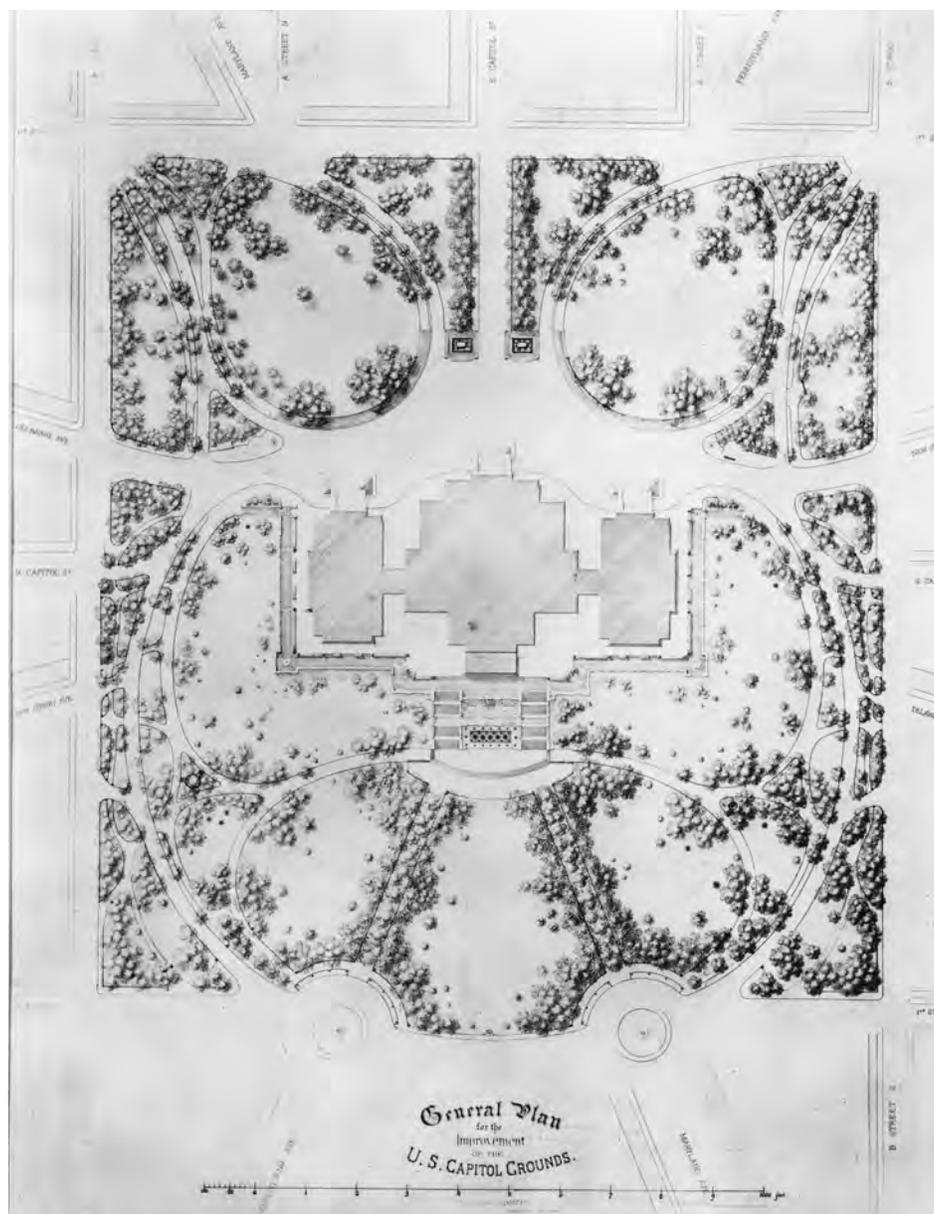


Fig. 14.1. *General Plan for the Improvement of the U.S. Capitol Ground*, n.d. Lithograph. Job #2828 National Capitol Grounds, Washington, D.C. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

the existing railroad station be relocated north of the U.S. Capitol building. The plan also included a park and parkway system suggested by Olmsted Jr. that was undoubtedly influenced by other works of the firm, including park systems in Boston and elsewhere. The plan drew wide public support, but its implementation was hampered by a lack of Congressional approval. Still, Olmsted’s recommendations for landscape emphasis, particularly for the Mall, created a context for future construction and continued to be popular well beyond the life of the plan.

Several federal projects initiated shortly after the plan’s completion were in conflict with the McMillan Plan’s design principles, including a new Department of Agriculture building and the construction of the Lincoln Memorial. The creation of the

U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) in 1910, however, followed by the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, in 1926, represented progress toward ultimate realization of the McMillan Plan. Not surprisingly, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. was appointed to both organizations, serving on the Commission of Fine Arts from 1910 to 1918 and on the National Capital Park Planning Commission from 1926 to 1932. Membership on those groups and the design commissions for the firm that followed meant frequent trips to the Washington, D.C., metro area. In fact, in 1936, Olmsted Jr. moved to Elkton, Maryland, for a time, to allow for periodic consultations and meetings with Department of Interior and National Park Service senior staff related to his advisory work on national parks.

THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS AND RELATED PROJECTS

The Olmsted Brothers completed many design studies for parks, memorials, and related projects in Washington, D.C. These studies are both captured as individual design jobs catalogued by the firm and consolidated under job #2843, the CFA. The organization of the design records corresponds, to some degree, to Olmsted's appointment to the commission. Some projects that began before 1910, for example, have their own job numbers, while nearly a thousand plans representing several distinct landscapes are included under job #2843. Individual design jobs are catalogued for the White House grounds (job #2827), Mall (job #2828), Rock Creek Park (job #2837), Rose Garden (job #2846), and the Washington Monument grounds (job #2848). McMillan Park (job #2840), managed by the District of Columbia, is not included in this report. The Olmsted firm's work in the region was focused on three geographic areas: the National Mall and Memorial Parks, President's Park, and Rock

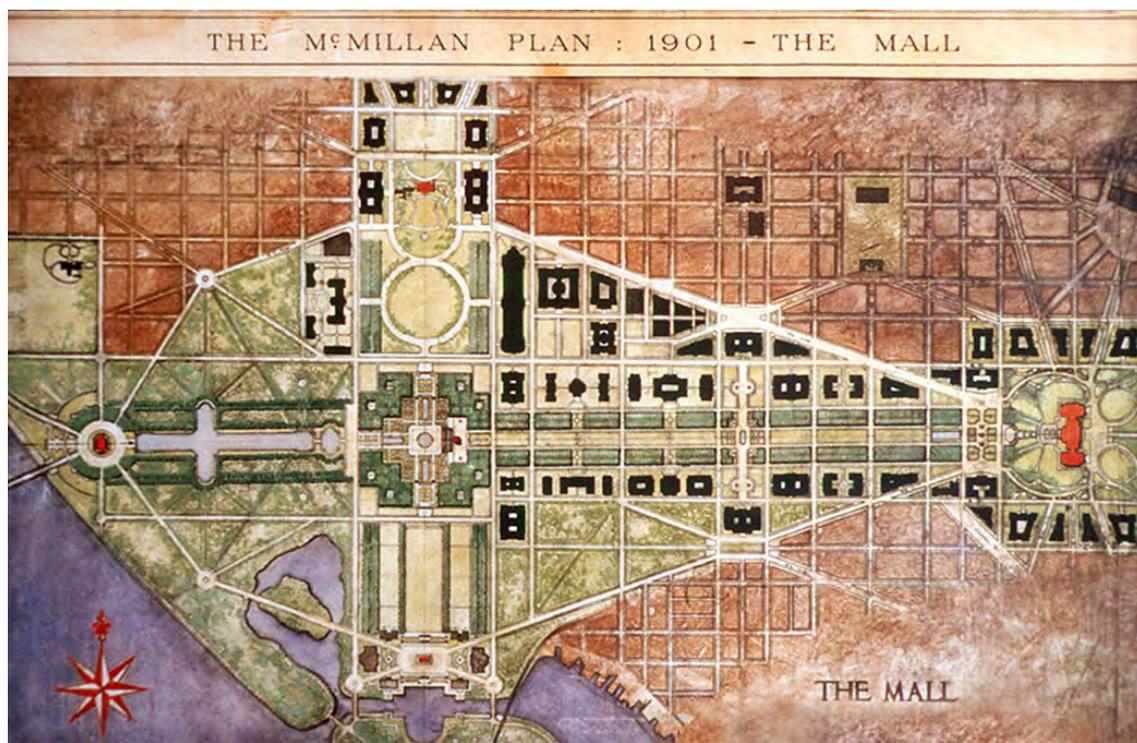


Fig. 14.2. *The McMillan Plan of 1901 – The Mall*. National Capital Planning Commission.



Fig. 14.3. *Theodore Roosevelt Island, Washington, D.C. General Plan for Development*, Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, May 8, 1945, revised October 10, 1946. Plan #2843-AI-815. Job no. 2843 Fine Arts Commission. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site

Creek Park. However, there is considerable overlap among the jobs, and many of the most important sites are catalogued in the CFA project.

Established in 1910 in response to the work of the Senate Park (McMillan) Commission, the CFA was a seven-member body headed by Daniel Burnham; members included Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., Daniel Chester French, Cass Gilbert, Thomas Hastings, Francis Millet, and Charles Moore, with Colonel Spencer Crosby serving as secretary. Olmsted served as an appointed member of the CFA until 1918 and as Vice Chairman 1912–1918. The CFA was responsible not for planning and design but rather for design review; it exerted a strong and extensive influence on the aesthetics and physical design of the federal city.

Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.’s role in the CFA, and that of the Olmsted firm, evolved in a similar way as in the first decades of the National Park Service. In both cases, Olmsted Jr. played an important part in shaping the vision of the organization and carried that vision into consultations and advisory work for the agency. In both cases, the firm was subsequently asked to undertake design work on specific elements. That said, there were two key differences in the approaches toward the DC work and that of the national parks. First, while the work for national parks was scattered over many states, commissions undertaken in the District of Columbia were geographically close and often interrelated. Second, the city and regional planning principles reflected in the DC projects is fundamentally different from the focus on scenic or ecological preservation in the national parks, with the exception of village plans at Yosemite and the Grand Canyon, developed by Daniel Hull.

It is important to note the broad spectrum of the work contained in the job files for the CFA, only a small portion of which are discussed here. The Olmsted firm consulted on

many aspects of the city's open space and circulation plans, serving as adviser, reviewer, and designer for many parks and roads now managed by the National Park Service. These consultations extended over a fifty-year period, primarily corresponding to Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.'s active practice. Furthermore, Olmsted Jr. was involved in design review for nearly every physical, exterior landscape element that came in front of the CFA during his tenure, including the city's vast number of commemorative statues and monuments.

ROCK CREEK PARK

Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. considered the appropriate treatment of the valley of Rock Creek in projects undertaken for D.C. Streets (job #2821) and the National Zoological Park (job #2822), which both focused on areas adjacent to the southern end of Rock Creek. Rock Creek Park was authorized in 1890 in response to the creation of the National Zoo; it was to be composed of no more than 2,000 acres and designated as a public pleasure ground.

Running north to south, the valley of Rock Creek cuts a dramatic section through northwest Washington, D.C. In 1901, the McMillan Commission, with Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. responsible for landscape issues, had supported a concept for the Rock Creek valley that retained its natural beauty and included a scenic parkway along the creek. Concerns remained, however, about preserving the scenery of Rock Creek while also providing access across the valley to the developing areas of the city on its east and west sides. Then, in 1911, as a member of the CFA, Olmsted was asked to assist in developing plans to relocate the botanic garden into Rock Creek Park. Olmsted felt strongly that the botanic garden was an inappropriate use of the scenic park land. After fending off the idea as best he could for some time, Olmsted submitted in 1916 a proposal that his firm prepare a general report on Rock Creek Park.

As part of that report process, Olmsted Brothers undertook in 1917 a significant effort to document the park lands, mapping the topography and making extensive field observations and notes. Olmsted Jr. and Edward Clark Whiting, who became an associate partner in the firm in 1920 and full partner in 1927, largely did this work. The result was a series of diagrams that analyzed the landscape, along with an extensive narrative report. In its Foreword, the Rock Creek Report, submitted in December 1918, noted:

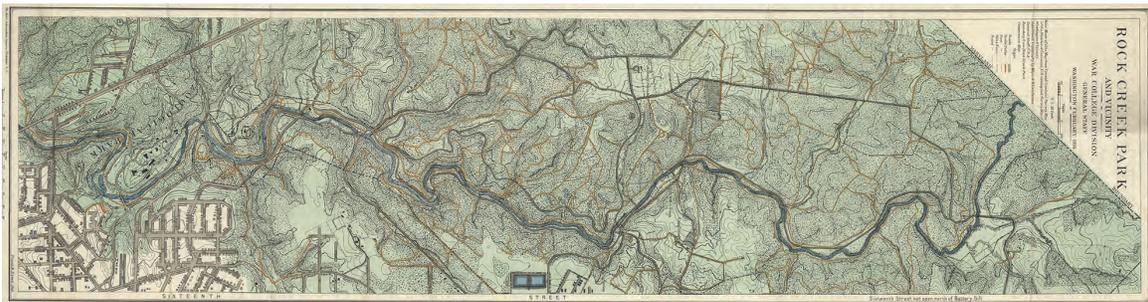


Fig. 14.4. *Rock Creek Park & Vicinity*, War College Division, General Staff, February 1916. Plan #2837-z4. Job no.2837 Rock Creek Park, Washington, D.C. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

The dominant consideration, never to be subordinated to any other purpose in dealing with Rock Creek Park, is the permanent preservation of its wonderful natural beauty, and the making of that beauty accessible to the people without spoiling the scenery in the process.³²²

The report presented a justification of the value of the park; subdivided the land area into “divisions,” each of which fulfilled specific landscape and administrative functions; identified distinctive landscape characteristics that should be retained and restored; recommended specific construction projects, such as roads and bridges; addressed park boundaries; identified ways to facilitate “thoroughfare crossings”; and discussed plans for special projects at Rittenhouse Street and a playfield on Brightwood Reservoir. The two Rittenhouse Street projects were later developed as individual designs by the Olmsted office.

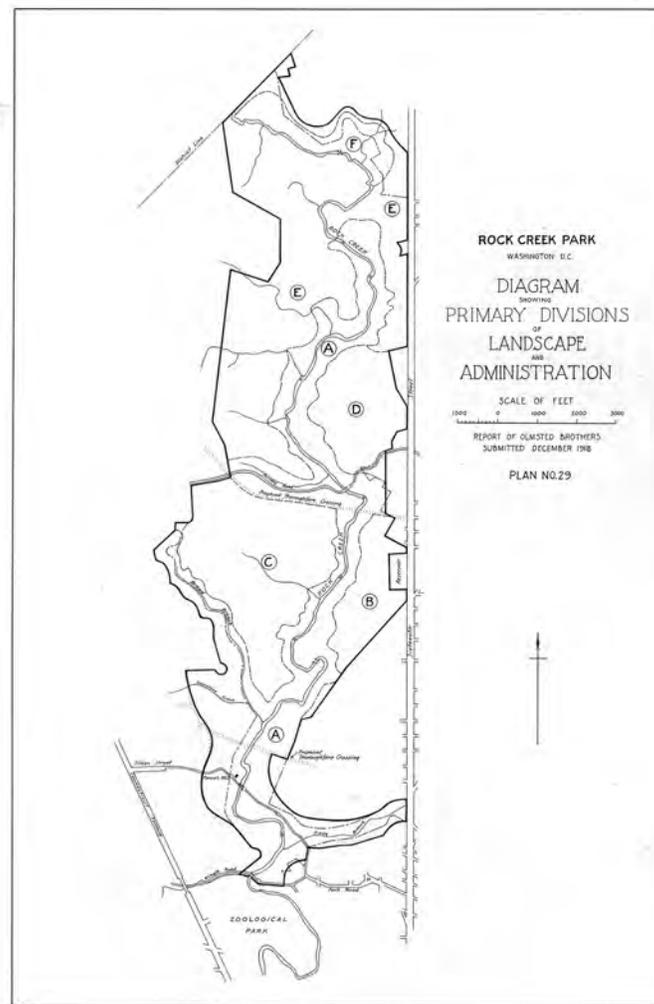


Fig. 14.5. *Rock Creek Park, Washington, D.C. Diagram Showing Preliminary Divisions of Landscape and Administration, Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, submitted December 1918. Plan #2837-29. Job no. 2837 Rock Creek Park, Washington, D.C. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.*

³²² Olmsted Brothers, Foreword to “Rock Creek Park, District of Columbia, A Report by Olmsted Brothers,” 1918. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.



Fig. 14.6. Rock Creek Park, Diagrammatic Plan for Landscape Units Showing also Proposed Traffic Thoroughfares Across the Park and a System of Park Drives, Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, November 30, 1917. To accompany, Report by Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, 1910. Plan #2837-27. Job no. 2837 Rock Creek Park. Courtesy National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

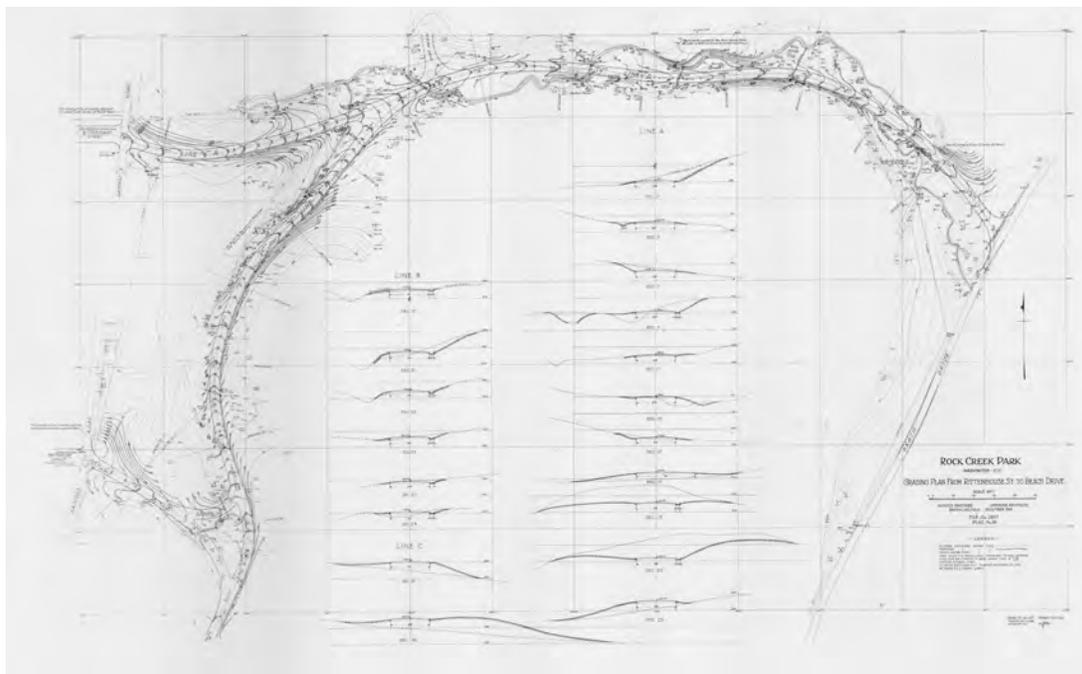


Fig. 14.7. Rock Creek Park, Washington, D.C., Grading Plan from Rittenhouse St. to Beach Dr., Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, Approved for issue by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., June 7, 1918. Plan #2837-35. Job no. 2837 Rock Creek Park, Washington, D.C. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

The importance of the Rock Creek report, and of the projects in the firm's portfolio of work in Washington, D.C., is that it implemented the ideals of the National Park System in an urban natural area. Three important tenets, explicitly enumerated in the report, form the foundation of the Olmsted Brothers' approach to Rock Creek:

1. Its interesting, varied, natural scenery must be saved intact insofar as possible, must in some respects be restored or perfected by intelligent, appreciative landscape development, and must not be replaced by other and more or less foreign types of "treatment."

2. The park must be opened up to the driving, riding, and walking public; but the roads, paths, and other accompaniments of intensive use must be so located and so built that the essential qualities of the Park are impaired in the least possible degree.
3. Adequate transportation must be provided to and into the park for people dependent upon streetcar service.³²³

As the narrative descriptions of the landscape character make clear, the scenery Olmsted sought to preserve was widely varied topography. The description of that scenery is supplemented by photographs and diagrams that also make a case for the subtle manipulation of the natural landscape. Illustrations using an overlay method developed by Humphrey Repton placed sketches of existing conditions over those of “proposed restoration”; the current conditions sketches could be lifted up to visually demonstrate Olmsted’s ideas.

The plan suggested by the report applies many of the techniques Olmsted Sr. used to create large country parks, providing contrast between areas of picturesque character, gentle slopes and open fields, and the landscape of the creek and its rocky, forested valley. The report also evidences an appreciation of the smaller-scale, nuanced attributes of the landscape character, evident in small outcroppings or a “picturesque group of Kalmia,” as one might experience walking the ramble at Fairsted. But, the report cautions, those charged with the park’s administration bear the responsibility for enacting a policy of control to prevent the process of “progressive deterioration of fundamental values, and to inaugurate a process of progressive restoration and conservation.”³²⁴

Note: this is a series of paired before and after views.



Fig. 14.8. Before and after view: *Sketch Showing the Landscape Effect of the Proposed Restoration (By Clearing) of the Meandering Meadow along the Creek at the Northern End of the Park, Rock Creek Park Report, Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, December 1918, p. 17. Photo album 2837-z and 2837-z2. Job no. 2837 Rock Creek Park, Washington, D.C. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.*

³²³ Olmsted Brothers, “Rock Creek Park,” 2.

³²⁴ Olmsted Brothers, “Rock Creek Park,” 9.

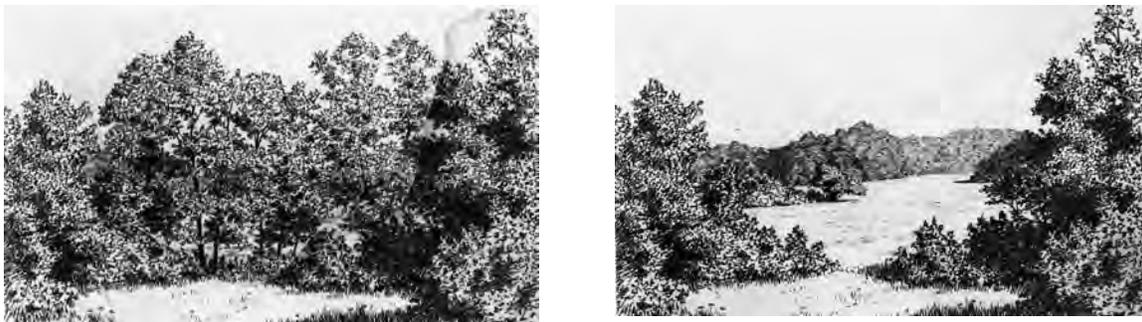


Fig. 14.9. Before and after view: *In the Northern Part of the Park, Showing the Effect of Removing a Few Trees*, Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, December 1918. "Numerous opportunities similar to this and of less or more importance may be found throughout the Park. A careful and intelligent use of the axe will often reveal such latent beauties of landscape scenery." Rock Creek Park Report, p. 32. Photo album 2837-x and 2837-x2. Job no. 2837 Rock Creek Park, Washington, D.C. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.



Fig. 14.10. Before and after view: *One of the Landscape Units of the Park—At the Mouth of Broad Branch*, Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, December 1918. "A suggestion [of] the harm which may be done to the beauty and value of the Park if the hillside on the right remains under private control. For the most part the several boundary adjustments recommended in this report are urged in order to protect the present beauty of the park landscape from possible damage of this sort." Rock Creek Park Report, p. 38. Photo album 2837-y and 2837-y2. Job no. 2837 Rock Creek Park, Washington, D.C. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

THE MALL, POTOMAC PARK, AND THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT GROUNDS

Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.'s contribution to the character of the National Mall is found in the final report of the Senate Park (McMillan) Commission, his writings on behalf of the CFA, and in design studies for the Washington Monument Grounds, which the office catalogued as job #2828. The McMillan Commission report, which Olmsted is a co-author of, is a remarkable feat of urban planning, building on the earlier work of L'Enfant. L'Enfant's work had addressed a broad spectrum of design recommendations in central Washington, from the arrangement of buildings and location of memorials and monuments to a broad plan for parklands in the District. One of the most important ideas from the McMillan Commission report was a clear concept for the National Mall, which was lengthened and realigned slightly to make it a central feature around which the rest of central Washington was planned.³²⁵ This concept aligned the central Mall with the U.S. Capitol building at one

³²⁵ John Reps, *The Making of Urban America: A History of City Planning in the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), 508.

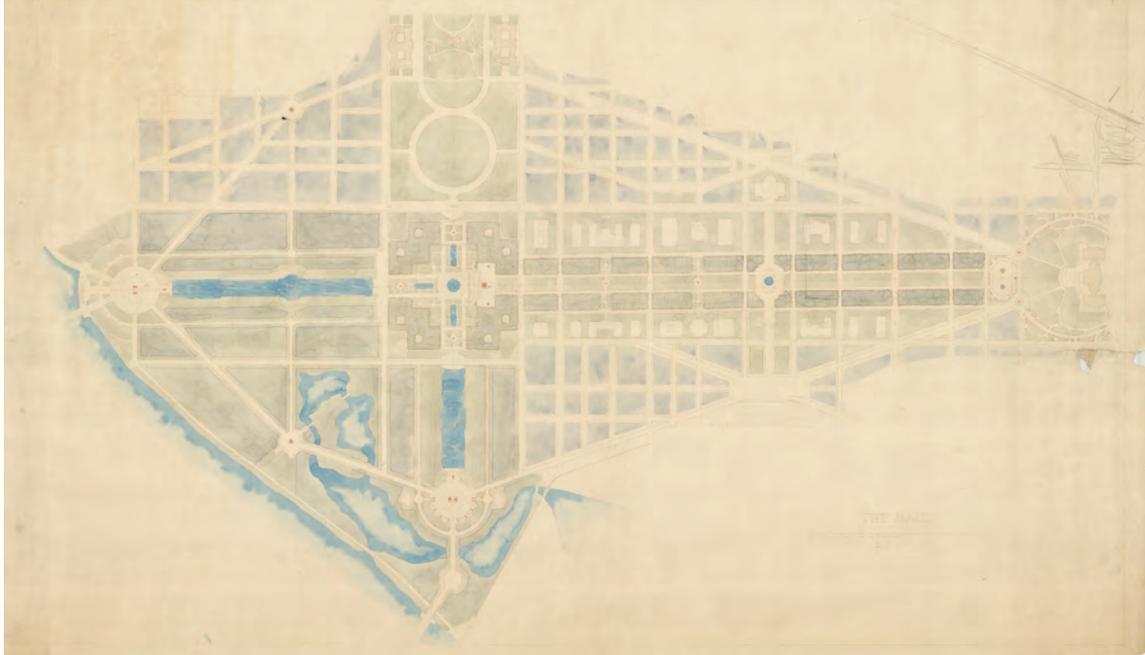


Fig. 14.11. *The Mall*, August 30, 1901. This unidentified plan in the Olmsted Archives is likely a study produced for the McMillan Commission. Plan #2828-z1. Job no. 2828 The Mall, Washington, D.C. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

end; the Washington Monument served as a central pivot point that marked the cross axis. A double row of American Elms on each side of a central grass panel directed views toward each end, reinforcing the visual axis along the length of the Mall. The report also recommended creation of a walled garden around the base of the Washington Monument and considered the importance of the cross-axis extending from the White House, past the Washington Monument, to a new memorial location that eventually became the site of the Jefferson Memorial.

During Olmsted’s tenure with the CFA between 1910 and 1918, the firm did not participate in design work associated with any areas within the authority of the Commission. Instead, his role was primarily design review. As his father had done, Olmsted often used his discussion of specific projects to convey broader design concepts. For example, in 1911 in response to a proposal for planting on the Mall, he wrote:

In the design of the Mall, extreme simplicity of detail, almost to the point of baldness was felt to be desirable, not only as to the open vista of turf in the center and its inconspicuous bordering roads, but as to the avenues of elms on either side. Beyond these avenues, separated by the least space that would be in proper scale and would provide for the necessary roads and walks, elements in the design, are flanking or enclosing where large monumental buildings may be set in the midst of such enrichments [of foliage] and of architectural and gardening accessories as will provide a foil for the extreme simplicity of the central design and provide the interest of varied detail. The quality of richness and intricacy . . . will be of great importance [in the flanking arches]; for without it a person walking or driving along the Mall would be in some danger of growing weary of the very

quality of quiet repetition or sameness upon which the impressiveness of the whole design chiefly depends.³²⁶

Later in the same letter, he reiterated, “It has always seemed to me both as a matter of the best design and as a matter of expediency, it is important to enrich the areas on the north and south sides of the Mall very greatly and in a relatively permanent manner before attempting the still more important task of opening and simplifying the central part of the composition.”³²⁷

In 1915–1916, Olmsted also devoted a significant effort to recommendations related to tree species to be used on the Mall. He reviewed all of the requests made by the Office of Building and Grounds, providing specific instructions as to the species to be used and, in many cases, facilitating the ordering of plant material from nurseries in the United States and England. Interestingly, he initially advised against planting American Elm in favor of English Elms, which were acquired from Dicksons of Chester, England, and later from John Waterer & Son. He also recommended planting Lindens—Little-leafed or European—in some locations, such as in front of the State, War and Navy Building.

MALL DESIGN PLANS

Recommendations for the treatment of the Mall were of sufficient importance to the Olmsted office that the firm assigned this work its own job number, although there is significant overlap between it and the job for the Washington Monument grounds. The earliest Olmsted Brothers drawings following Olmsted Jr.’s contribution to the McMillan Commission, distinct from plans prepared by others that Olmsted was asked to review, were created in 1902. These drawings show a series of plan and section studies related to grading, primarily between 2nd and 15th Streets, proposed building locations and recommendations for trees, and a plan for the location and grounds of a new museum, opposite the Mall from the “old museum,” that became the Museum of Natural History.

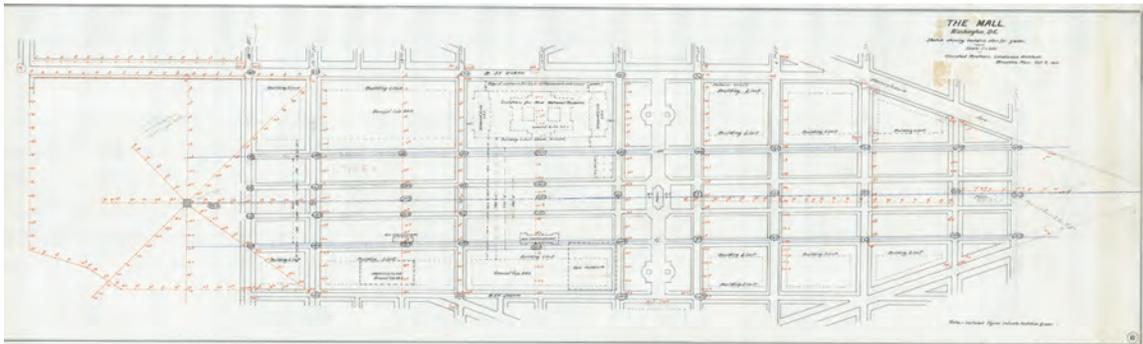


Fig. 14.12. *The Mall, Sketch Showing Tentative Plan for Grades*, Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, October 5, 1902. Plan #2828-6. Job no. 2828 The Mall, Washington, D.C. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

³²⁶ Frederick Law Olmsted to Commissioners, December 9, 1911, 1–2. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, 102: 18–19.

³²⁷ Frederick Law Olmsted to Commissioners, December 9, 1911, 3.

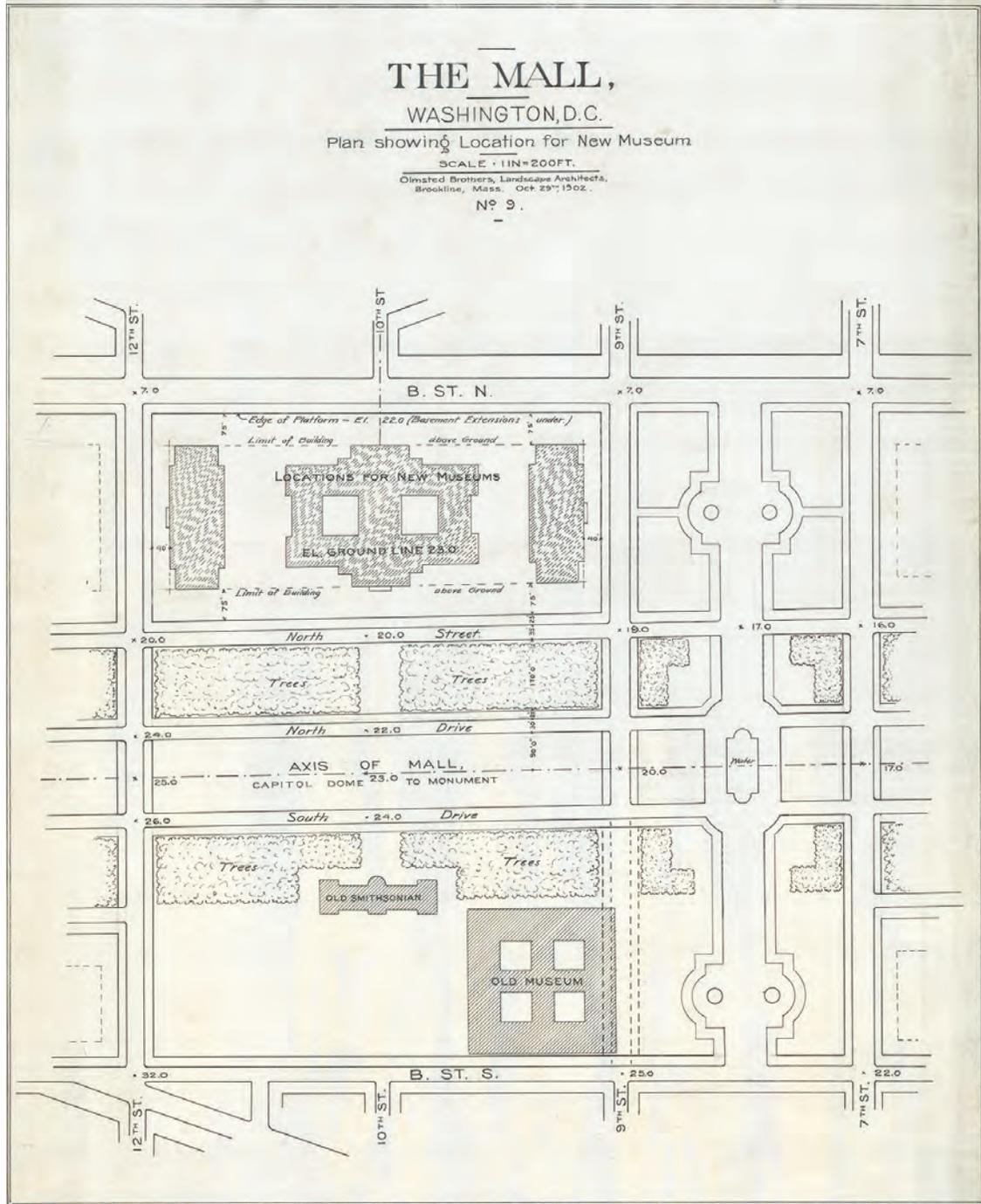


Fig. 14.13. Plan Showing Location for the Museum, Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, October 29, 1902. Plan #2828-9. Job no. 2828 The Mall, Washington, D.C. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

By 1904, Olmsted was concerned about the fate of the National Mall, as it was the subject of a number of proposals that threatened the vision of the McMillan Plan. The first proposal, by the Department of Agriculture, sought to construct a group of new buildings that would compromise both the L’Enfant and McMillan Plans. In March 1904, Olmsted

wrote several letters to colleagues and clients—accompanied by sample letters he had drafted for others to send—urging them to contact members of Congress regarding this threat to the “integrity of the plan.” In response to this effort, the Senate passed bill no. 4845, regulating the construction of buildings on the Mall, but the bill failed in the House. The Department of Agriculture reversed its position regarding the location of its new building, but ultimately selected another site that infringed on the clean boundaries of the Mall.

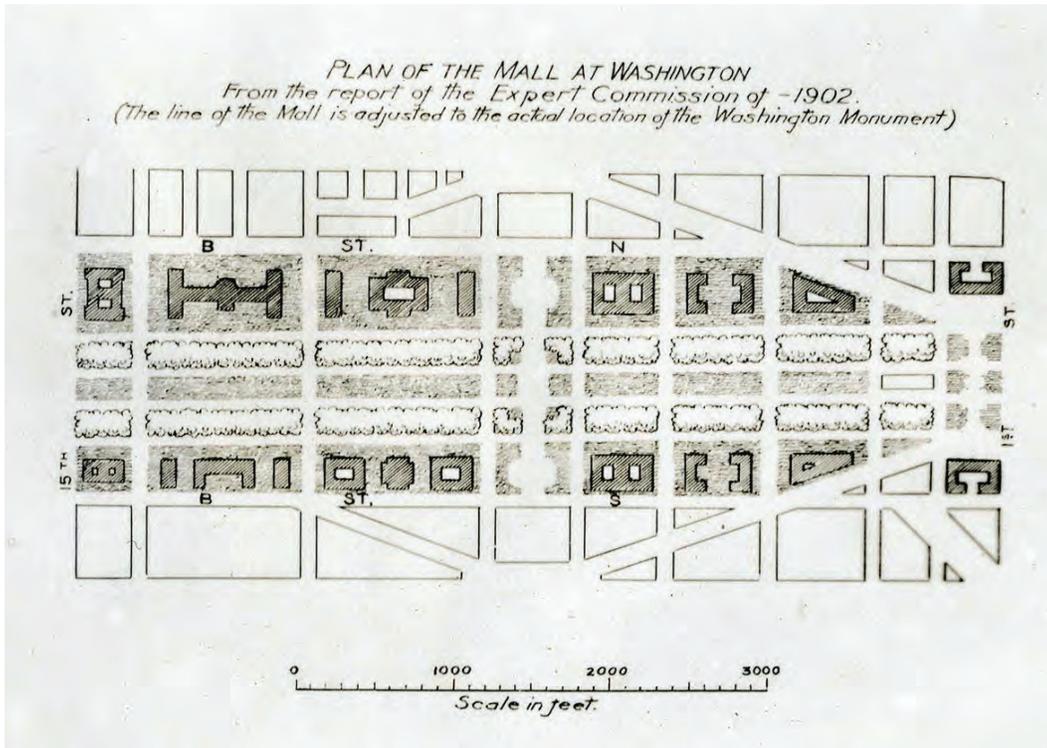


Fig. 14.14. Two views of the formal vegetation treatment of grass panels and Elm trees Olmsted recommended. Images are in a Fairsted album with other photographs taken by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. in 1907. Photo #2828-01-ph09 and 2828-01-ph12. Job no. 2828 The Mall, Washington, D.C. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

The first two decades of the twentieth century were a particularly active period of new construction (or proposals for new buildings) in the vicinity of the Mall. Olmsted Jr. had been the primary voice of the Olmsted firm addressing issues that affected the vision of the National Mall presented in the L’Enfant and McMillan plans, but he was not the only one to respond to proposals for new buildings that would compromise the landscape. One example occurred in 1914, when Warren Manning entered the discourse about the proper treatment of the Mall in response to a proposal for a national gallery by architect Franklin Webster Smith. Manning wrote to Smith:

I feel your point of view in the great improvement that you suggest is almost wholly controlled by your study of architecture, and that you are thinking of great buildings rather than landscape. I recognize fully that great buildings must necessarily dominate a city’s plan, and that you cannot expect to have the same informal park-like sylvan beauty about such buildings, as you would expect in a country park. The use of foliage must to a large extent be formalized . . . I cannot see, however, that you fully appreciate its value as a harmonizing of discordant architectural features, which are bound to exist for a long time even though your scheme be ultimately executed.³²⁸

POTOMAC PARK

The area known as Potomac Park was designated by Congress in 1897 after the Army Corps dredged the river in an effort to reduce flooding. This new landscape area served a number of objectives in the McMillan Plan, as the landscape context for the site that eventually became the Lincoln Memorial and as part of a larger Washington, D.C., park system. In 1907, Olmsted Brothers prepared a series of studies for the southern section of Potomac Park, which forms a peninsula along the southwest side of the Tidal Basin where the Roosevelt Monument is now located. The project was developed by Hans Kohler, who was employed by the firm to assist Olmsted at that time with a number of planting design projects in New York and elsewhere. The design for Potomac Park included an encircling series of separated ways: a 44 foot wide curved drive was flanked on either side by a 12 foot planting strip that separated the drive from a 12 foot bridle path on the inside and an 8 foot wide walking path on the outside. Another 8 foot footpath ran along the water’s edge. An informal planting of specimen trees such as American Elm, Swamp White Oak, and willows were to be placed around the periphery of the peninsula. West Potomac Park, which anchors the western end of the Mall, became a more formal space in 1909, when the CFA approved the site for the Lincoln Memorial designed by Henry Bacon and Daniel Chester French.

After 1910, when Olmsted was appointed to the CFA, many of the D.C. projects were catalogued under job #2843. In his role as member of the CFA, Olmsted advised on a variety of proposed facilities and recreation uses for East Potomac Park, many of which involved buildings proposed by the Officer in Charge of Public Buildings and Grounds. Beginning in 1913, the Officer had developed plans and consulted with the CFA and Congress with the objective of securing funds and approval “for the improvement and beautification of this

³²⁸ Warren Manning to Franklin Webster Smith, March 22, 1914, 2. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, 99: 63.

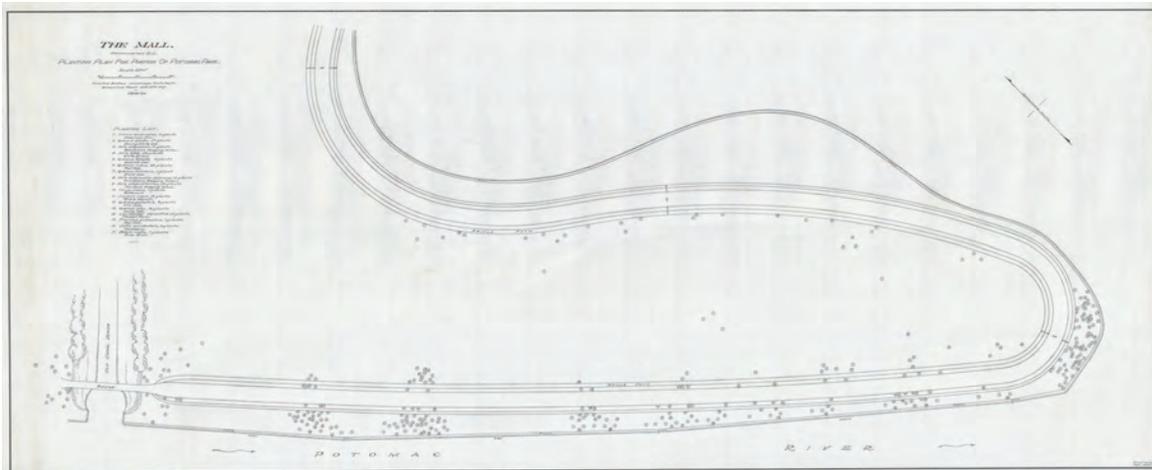


Fig. 14.15. *Planting Plan for Portion of Potomac Park*, Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, October 15, 1907. Plan #2828-24. Job no. 2828 The Mall, Washington, D.C. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

portion of Potomac Park which promises to become one of the great popular playgrounds of Washington.”³²⁹ The question of boathouses and yachting was particularly important; in 1913, Olmsted was appointed to a subcommittee to study the issue, along with members Francis Millet and Cass Gilbert.

Olmsted devoted a considerable amount of time to the plans for Potomac Park in this advisory role, even while still on the CFA. There were issues regarding appropriate grades, the design of recreation facilities, and tree planting to consider. In Olmsted’s opinion, the park design needed a “thoroughly studied general plan,” for which there were two options—the work could be done by the landscape architects in the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds or by Olmsted’s office.³³⁰

THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT

The Olmsted firm assigned the Washington Monument grounds its own job number, but ideas, drawings, photographs and documents related to the monument are found in a number of project files, largely due to Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.’s varied roles and the long period of involvement by the firm in the development of DC. The monument grounds were also studied carefully in the context of the McMillan Plan, which sought to pivot the axis and cross-axis of the Mall to work with the U.S. Capitol building, White House, and other monuments. Plans in the Olmsted archives suggest two periods of activity and study of the monument grounds. The first phase, largely related to the McMillan Plan, involves a careful analysis of the location of the monument in the L’Enfant plan and its relationship to the revised plan for the Mall in the McMillan report. It includes consideration of the placement of elms and grading and the preparation of a few plans and sections to illustrate the relationship between the monument grounds and the Mall.

³²⁹ Fine Arts Commission, Supplementary Memo, September 22, 1922, 7. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, 100: 601.

³³⁰ Frederick Law Olmsted to Colonel William H. Harts, January 21, 1915, 1-2. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, 101: 424.



Fig. 14.16. *Washington Monument, Washington, D.C.* by Detroit Publishing Company. ca. 1904. No. 17455. Detroit Publishing Company Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

Most of the Olmsted firm’s design plans for the Washington Monument Grounds were done in the early 1930s. In 1930, the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital completed test borings that revealed that a proposed lower-level terrace, originally part of the McMillan Plan, would endanger the monument.³³¹ This finding prompted a series of studies to reconsider the design approach for the monument. Architects Delano & Aldrich and Charles Eliot II sent the firm a series of new designs for the “Balustrade Plan,” which showed the monument on a raised terrace with a curved stairway extending to a lower-level oval grass terrace that would align on axis with the White House. Olmsted worked with William Delano to replicate some aspects of the architect’s plan but eliminate the formal stairs and lower terrace, instead creating space definition with groves of trees.

At the same time, after extensive study of the existing topography, Henry V. Hubbard and Olmsted prepared a series of preliminary plans that proposed a slightly different approach, with an oval roadway around the base of the hill on which the monument stood connecting to other roads on the Mall. Groves of elms on the north and south sides of the

³³¹ See plans #2848-W.Mm-425-pt1 and pt2 at the Olmsted National Historic Site and National Park Service, *Cultural Landscape Inventory for Washington Monument Grounds* (2009), 44.

monument defined two distinct landscape spaces at the east and west and served to screen two parking areas with paths connecting to the monument. The Hubbard and Olmsted design is referred to as the “Informal Plan” in the cultural landscape inventory for the monument grounds. After extensive review, engineers determined that both the Balustrade and Olmsted (Informal) Plans presented potential risks to the Monument. After careful consideration, the advisory council opted for a partial implementation of the design by Olmsted and Hubbard.³³²

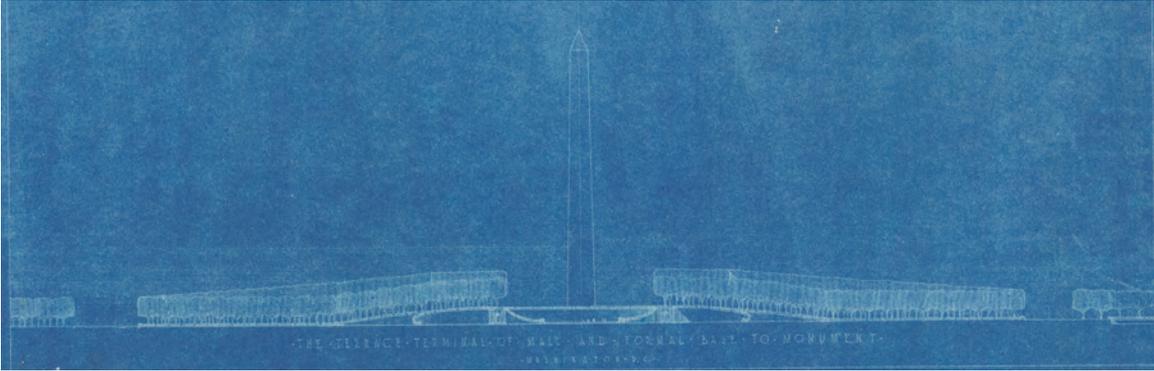


Fig. 14.17. *The Terrace Terminal of Mall and Formal Base to Monument, Washington, D.C.,* received from Charles Eliot II. This plan, dated February (likely 1931 or 1932), corresponds to the Balustrade Plan proposed by Delano & Aldrich. Plan #2848-M.Wm-428-sh1. Job no. 2848 Washington Monument. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

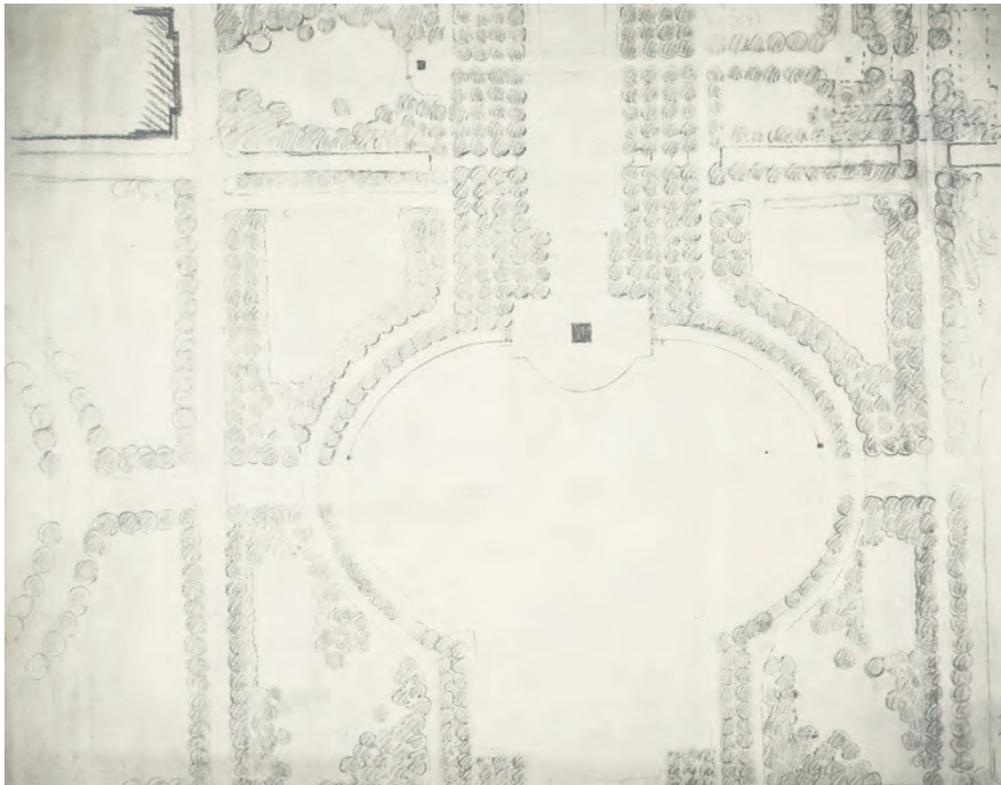


Fig. 14.18. *Study for Balustrade Scheme, Washington Monument Grounds, Study by Olmsted & Delano,* received from Charles Eliot II, June 7, 1932. Plan #2848-M.Wm.-428-sh2. Job no. 2848 Washington Monument Grounds. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

³³² National Park Service, “Cultural Landscape Inventory for Washington Monument Grounds,” 44.

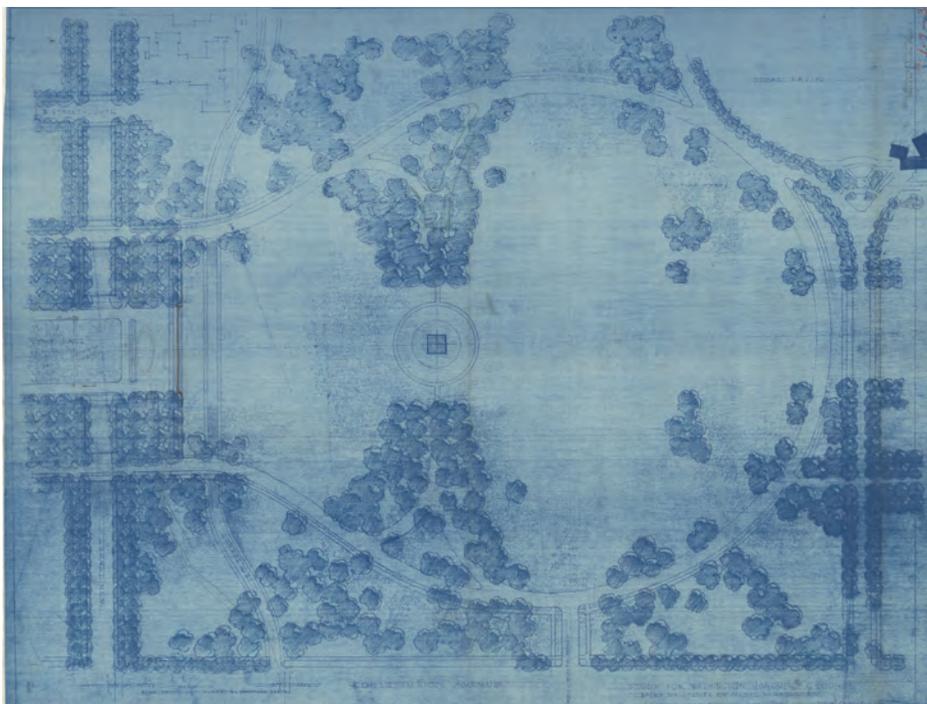


Fig. 14.19. *Study for Washington Monument Grounds*, Submitted to N.C.P. & P. by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. June 1931. Plan #2848-M.Wm-429A-sh1. Job no. 2848 Washington Monument Grounds. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

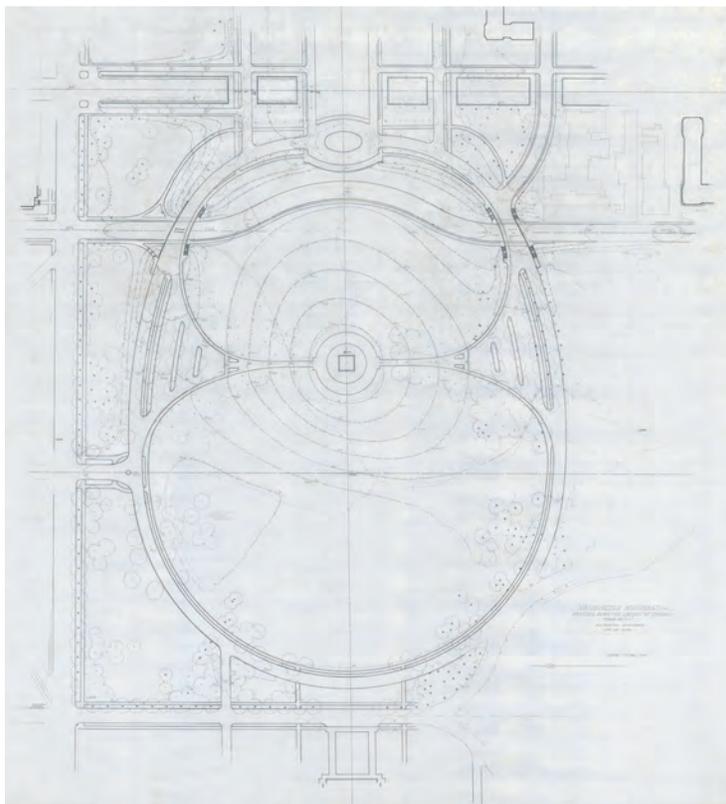


Fig. 14.20. *Washington Monument, Revised Plan for Layout of Grounds*, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and H. V. Hubbard, October 18, 1932. Plan #2840-M.Wm.-440. Job no. 2848 Washington Monument Grounds. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic.

PRESIDENT'S PARK AND THE WHITE HOUSE GROUNDS

The CFA had identified the need to study the White House Grounds, particularly related to any proposed enlargement of the executive offices, as early as 1916. Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. began to consider needed improvements to the grounds in 1928, as he was considering the design of the south vista. While he considered the condition of the landscape “respectable,” he clearly did not think it provided a suitable and dignified setting for the President’s house: “It would be fair to say that almost anyone of cultivated taste and a fairly broad and appreciative acquaintance with fine examples of the landscape surrounding great mansions, both private and official, in this country and elsewhere, would have to rate the White House grounds as distinctly disappointing,” he wrote to a correspondent.³³³ His primary objection was that the grounds were not differentiated in any way from that of a public building and thus did not express the “honor due to the President of the United States.” The grounds also missed a great opportunity to set an “educative example”— opportunities to create a sense of domestic beauty that could still provide a high degree of seclusion from the public for the President’s family. Of course, Olmsted argued for a careful analysis of the grounds and a design that would create differentiated spaces of high artistic merit.

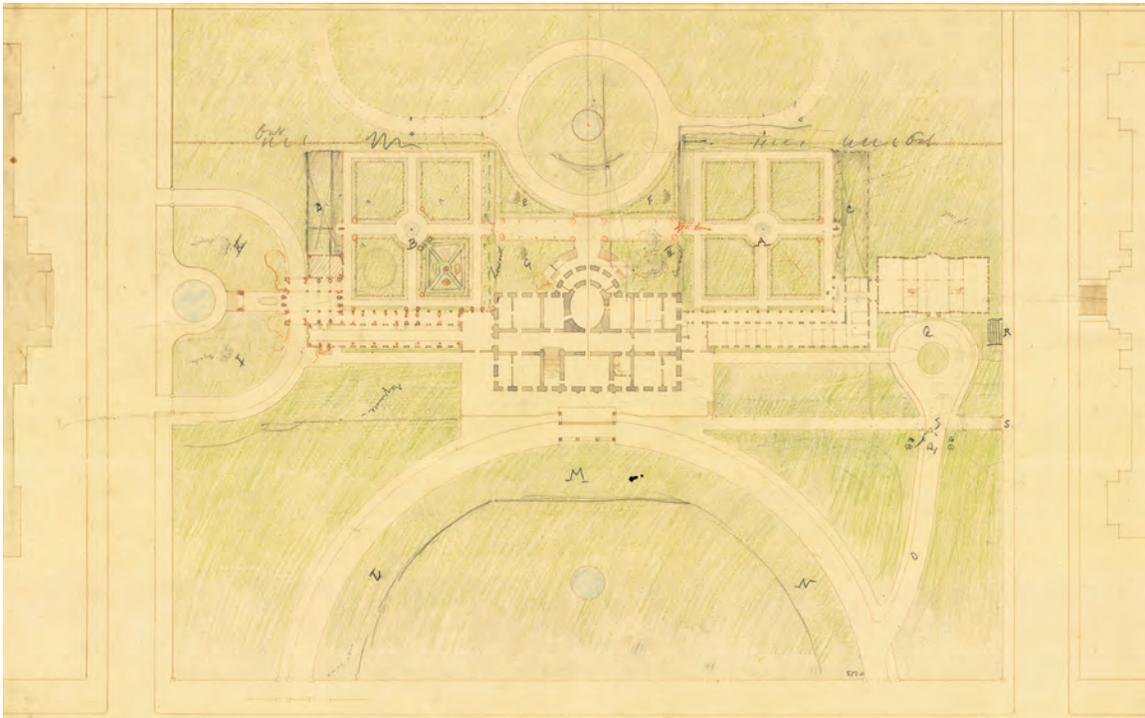


Fig. 14.21. *General Plan of the President’s House & Grounds, Washington, D.C. White House, February 19, 1903. Received from McKim, Mead & White by mail. Plan #2827-1. Job no. 2827 White House, Washington, D.C. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.*

³³³ “Extract of a Letter to Colonel Grant from Mr. Olmsted, dated January 24, 1928,” 1. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, Series B, 104: 256.

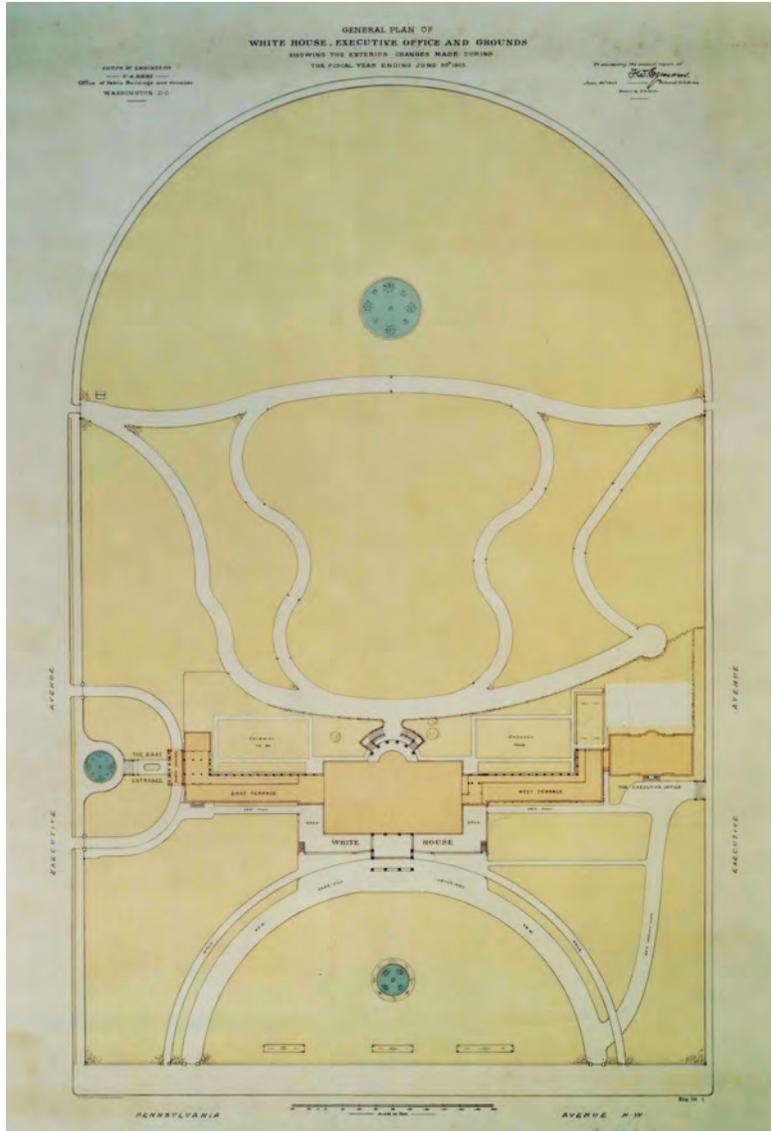


Fig. 14.22. *General Plan of White House Executive Office and Grounds, Showing the Exterior Changes Made During the Fiscal Year Ending 30 June, 1903.* U.S. Army Office of Public Buildings & Grounds.

In 1934, H. P. Cammerer, Secretary of the CFA, wrote to Olmsted to set up a meeting with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his secretary, Marvin McIntyre, regarding the White House landscape. Roosevelt was very familiar with the design of large estates, and he suggested a number of improvements “generally minor in character but cumulatively important, including among other things, some changes in the roads south of the building, in the fences, hedges, etc. between those roads and the building, and in the planting.”³³⁴ Hans Kohler assisted Olmsted in the evaluation of the grounds, particularly with respect to plant

³³⁴ Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. to Honorable Marvin H. McIntyre, May 4, 1934. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, Series B, 104: 263. FDR’s own home, Springwood, located in Hyde Park, NY, became the Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site in 1945.

material, while Olmsted gathered information regarding security requirements. Upon his return to Brookline, Olmsted contacted Morley Williams, professor of landscape architecture at Harvard, who had in the early 1930s studied a number of historic Colonial-era plantations in Virginia and Maryland and developed an analytical approach to the study of these historic landscapes. Olmsted was interested in Williams's knowledge of the early records of the White House grounds at the National Capital Park Commission; he soon brought Williams into the project to aid in the evaluation and recommendations.

After extensive analysis of the grounds, in October 1934, Olmsted delivered a preliminary report that addressed issues such as the need for planning in advance of building expansion. One of the first serious issues identified in the report related to vehicular circulation. Areas for loading and unloading visitors to the East Entrance were inadequate and the road system south of the White House was plagued by multiple problems. Interruptions to the axial lawn created an "unpleasant landscape effect" when viewed from the White House and Olmsted noted a number of conflicts related to parking and access for different groups of visitors. Olmsted's goal was to solve these conflicts and keep vehicles out of the view of the south side. The second area of concern related to the general lack of privacy on the White House grounds, caused in part by the circulation issues, but also by the absence of a vegetation screen. The report offered detailed recommendations for plantings to achieve a "dignified effect," such as careful placement of long-lived specimen trees, reduction in "floral displays," and the removal of vegetation that did not contribute to the overall landscape composition. One solution proposed to address the desire for flowering plants was to select flowering shrubs that could be integrated into the landscape design.

As Olmsted headed back to California toward the end of 1934, Hubbard continued to monitor the project and address contracts and cost estimates for the project, which was being coordinated by the National Park Service's Deputy Chief Architect Charles Peterson and Chief Architect Thomas Vint. Work continued into 1935; in February, Vint informed Hubbard that the Public Works Administration had budgeted funds for the Olmsted office to prepare plans for the grounds. This work would involve finalizing the preliminary report submitted in 1934, as well as preparing a general plan for the grounds, excluding formal gardens, that would illustrate and clarify elements of the report. In October 1935, the firm submitted plans and narrative for the improvement of the White House grounds. This plan was formulated with a particular eye toward reinforcing axial relationships, addressing the south façade and its associated landscape, improving planting design and composition, and solving the vehicular circulation issues. This "dignified" and appropriate improvement to the grounds was rooted in the historic design of the White House landscape, an element of the plan enhanced by the contributions of Morley Williams.

The implementation of the Olmsted firm plans proceeded along a complex and frustrating trajectory, due in large part to a number of economic and jurisdictional challenges, but the firm remained devoted to the project, continuing to guide improvements for several years.

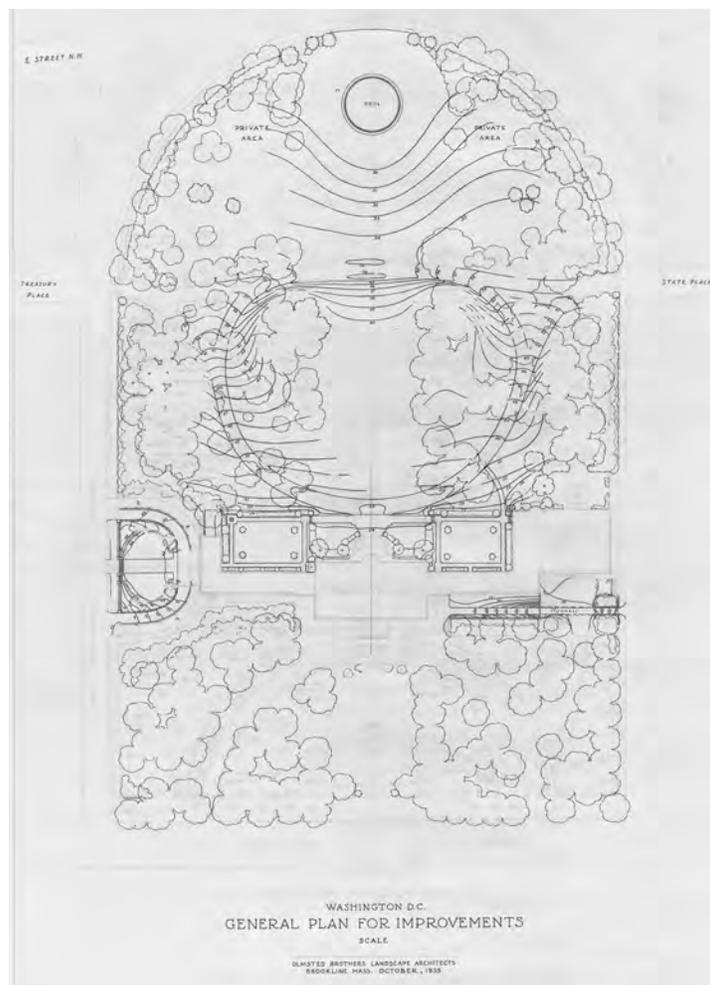


Fig. 14.23. *Executive Mansion Grounds, General Plan for Improvements, Plan No. 2, Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, October 1935. Plan #2843-EX-618. Job no. 2843 Fine Arts Commission. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.*

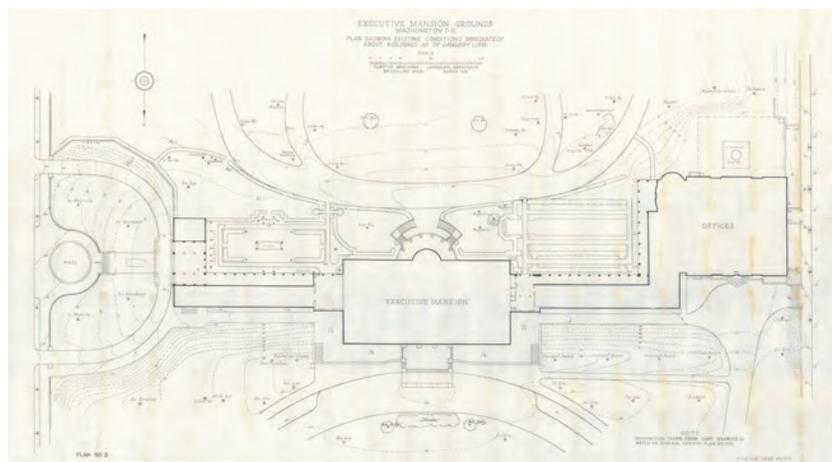


Fig. 14.24. *Executive Mansion Grounds, Plan Showing Existing Conditions Immediately About Buildings as of 1 January, 1935, Plan No. 3, Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, March 1935, Plan #2843-EX-579. Job no. 2843 Fine Arts Commission. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.*

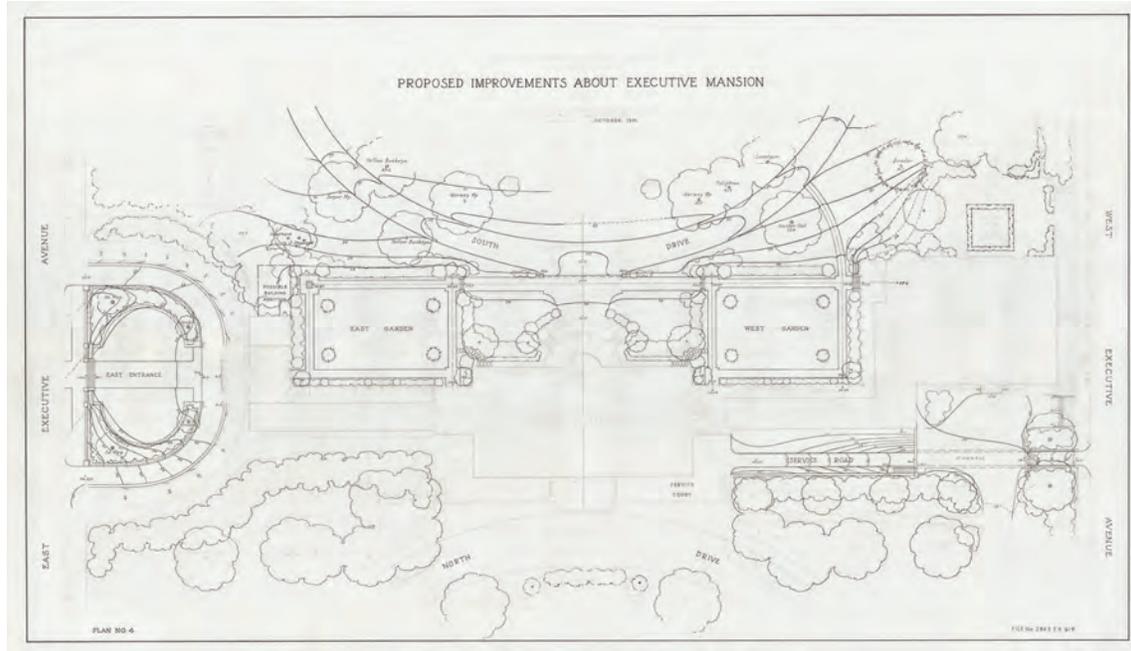


Fig. 14.25. Executive Mansion Grounds, Proposed Improvements About Executive Mansion, Plan No. 4, Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, October 1935. Plan #2843-EX-619. Job no. 2843 Fine Arts Commission. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

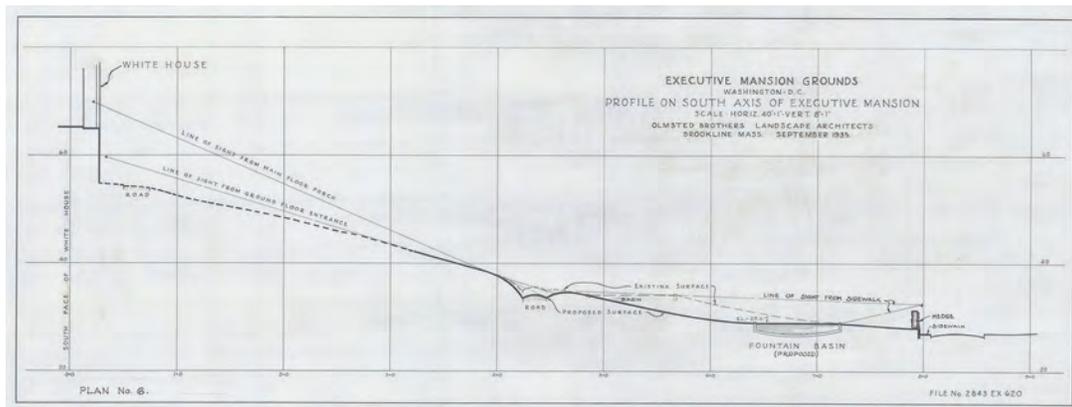


Fig. 14.26. Executive Mansion Grounds, Profile on S. Axis of Executive Mansion, Plan No. 6, Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, September 1935. Plan #2843-EX-620. Job no. 2843 Fine Arts Commission. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

THOMAS JEFFERSON MEMORIAL

Authorized in 1934, the Jefferson Memorial Commission set out to create a memorial on one of the two sites originally identified by the McMillan Commission for new memorials (the other was the location of the Lincoln Memorial). In 1935, it asked the CFA for help in creating a design. Charles Moore envisioned a grand Jefferson Memorial designed by John Russell Pope on an island in the Tidal Basin. The idea was not without controversy on many fronts, namely the memorial building design, location, and overall scale and monumentality. Pope’s grandiose neoclassical design placed the Parthenon-inspired pavilion on a massive plinth, which many worried would be out of scale with the other buildings and memorials in the central core. In July 1935, National Park Service Director Arno Cammerer asked Olmsted to serve as a consultant to the project.³³⁵ One of the first challenges was administrative—Olmsted was already working for the federal government on the White House grounds and on plans for Union Square—but Olmsted appeared willing to work in any capacity provided he received compensation for his out-of-pocket expenses. Although these design projects and his ongoing work with the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Commission meant that he made regular trips to D.C., his health apparently precluded taking on a major study of the project; instead, he opted to undertake the first evaluation in a volunteer capacity.

In July 1935, Olmsted submitted his first report on the Jefferson Memorial to Cammerer. He reiterated the visual importance of the existing axial relationships and examined the potential effect of the proposed design. His first concern was the current conditions at the Washington Monument grounds, which he felt were not yet sufficient to form a strong visual axis. Olmsted felt a new memorial should not be considered until issues related to the cross-axis and the Washington Monument grounds were addressed. He also voiced concern about the island envisioned as the site for the monument, as he felt the memorial would be “stranded in an isolated location in Potomac Park, forever shut off from the central composition of the Washington Plan.”³³⁶

At the same time, John Nolan, William Partridge, and Gilmore Clark were asked by the National Capital Park and Planning Commission to assess alternative sites for the memorial. They too addressed the problems at the Washington Monument, namely the question of which plan (the Balustrade or the Informal Plan) should be adopted, and recommended that the Olmsted (Informal) Plan be completed. Their most important recommendation related to the Jefferson Memorial was that the island location be abandoned to ensure sufficient water area in the Tidal Basin (likely for flood control). However, they did support a location on the southern end of the cross-axis (on the peninsula forming the southern boundary of the basin).

By 1937, as neither the National Capital Park and Planning Commission nor the CFA approved the design of the memorial and basin proposed by the Jefferson Memorial Commission, plans for the memorial became increasingly controversial. Olmsted was asked again to provide his opinion in the matter, this time by the American Planning and Civic Association (APCA), whose board at the time included Henry Hubbard, Eleanor Roosevelt,

³³⁵ Interestingly, it was the Jefferson Memorial Commission that asked Cammerer to bring Olmsted on board, perhaps to assuage concern about the location and scale of the proposed memorial.

³³⁶ Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. to Arno Cammerer, July 22, 1935. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, Series B, 105: 553

Frederick Delano, and Horace Albright, among others. Olmsted took his concerns directly to President Roosevelt, writing to the president, “There is, in my opinion, very grave danger that if construction is started on the Jefferson Memorial as now designed, and with no reasonably acceptable solution in sight for the problems to which I have referred, it may prove wholly impossible to avoid making a botch of things.”³³⁷ Five days later, Horace Albright and the APCA released a statement on the monument design. The statement said the commission’s plans were “entirely out of keeping with the area as it now exists” and objected to the “sacrifice of West Potomac Park, which we know is beautiful, for the doubtful possibility of much stone and concrete which may dwarf existing buildings, will not certainly destroy a beautiful scene, and create highway and traffic problems difficult or impossible to solve.”³³⁸ When Pope died unexpectedly, his successors Eggers & Higgens stepped in to complete the project; the change opened the door to reconsider some aspects of the monument architecture, which ultimately resulted in a slightly scaled down, though still neoclassical, design.

After this shift, Henry Hubbard continued his role, working with Eggers & Higgens to address the concerns Olmsted had conveyed. Hubbard remained the principal contact with Eggers & Higgens, preparing several reports that conveyed Olmsted’s perspectives on the design. In 1938, for example, there was much discussion about the scale of the memorial, particularly in relation to the Lincoln Memorial; its precise location on the north-south axis; and the complexities of site planning, which many were keen to have the Olmsted office solve. Hubbard’s dual role as both a partner in the firm and a member of the National Capital Park & Planning Commission created a contracting challenge in much the same way Olmsted’s work with the CFA had. Pope’s office was amenable to having the firm be responsible for site planning, but didn’t want to give up any of its design fee to achieve that. Finally, in Fall 1938, the director of the National Park Service prepared a contract, as agent to the Memorial Commission, to hire the Olmsted Brothers as landscape architects for the memorial. The plans under this contract were issued as prepared by Frederick Law Olmsted & Co., Landscape Architects, although Henry Hubbard appears to have been the primary draftsman.

Hubbard worked with the architects to address a number of design considerations relating to the location of the memorial and vehicular access, particularly to prevent flooding of both elements and to ensure the most favorable view of the monument from a variety of locations. If parking was needed, he recommended parallel parking on the periphery of the road around the memorial. He also sent the recommendations for vegetation massing that would frame an open area on the south of the memorial and somewhat enclose the memorial on the north. With the completion of general site plans for the memorial, National Park Service Acting Director A.E. Demaray issued a new contract in 1939 to Frederick Law Olmsted specifically; Olmsted was to act as landscape architect for the memorial and collaborate with the architects on the relationship between the architectural design and

³³⁷ Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. to President Roosevelt, April 22, 1937. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, Series B, 105: 567.

³³⁸ American Planning and Civic Association, “Statement on the Site and Plans of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial by Horace M. Albright, President, American Planning and Civic Association,” April 27, 1937, 4. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, Series B, 101:572.

the memorial’s surroundings. This contract was essentially for design development work, including detailed grading and layout plans, contract drawings, planting plans, and review of construction specifications prepared by the contracting officer.

Much of Olmsted Jr.’s work on the Jefferson Memorial was executed in 1941, in challenging conditions plagued by increasing traffic, disagreements over planting design, and less than ideal workmanship. Still, the completion of the Jefferson Memorial provided an appropriate and beautiful southern terminus for the north-south axis of the Mall. It was an important element of the central core Olmsted had an envisioned during his tenure on the CFA.

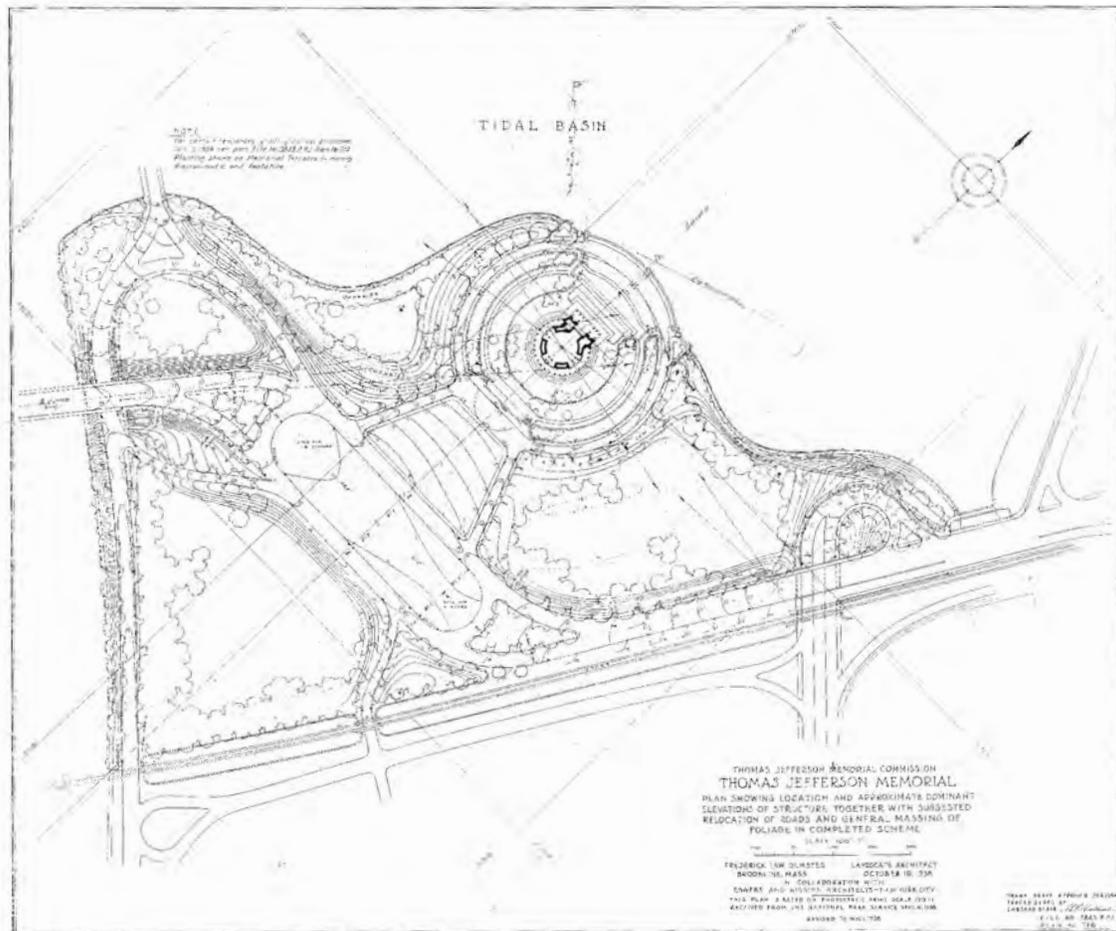


Fig. 14.27. *Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission, Thomas Jefferson Memorial, Plan Showing Location and Approximate Dominant Elevations of Structure Together with Suggested Relocation of Roads and General Massing of Foliage in Completed Scheme D of C, Frederick Law Olmsted & Co., October 10, 1938. Plan #2843-PPJ-716-pt1. Job no. 2843 Fine Arts Commission. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.*

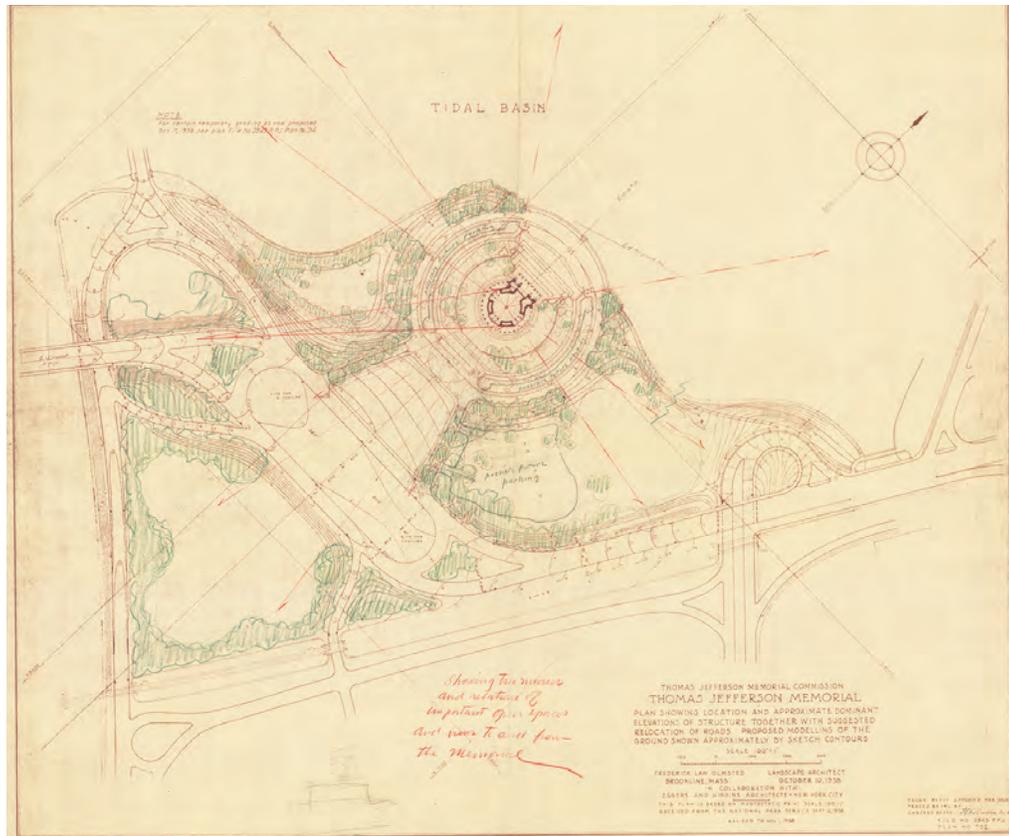


Fig. 14.28. Thomas Jefferson Memorial Commission, *Thomas Jefferson Memorial, Plan Showing Location and Approximate Dominant Elevations of Structure Together with Suggested Relocation of Roads, Proposed Modeling of the Ground Shown Approximately by Sketch of Contours*, Frederick Law Olmsted & Co., October 10, 1938. Plan #2843-PPJ-z23. Job no. 2843 Fine Arts Commission. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.



Fig. 14.29. *Planting Plan, Area Outside of Circular Roadway, Thomas Jefferson Memorial, West Potomac Park,* Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., November 14, 1941. This plan, made in Olmsted's role as consulting landscape architect, shows the changes to the Olmsted design of 1938. One key aspect of the change was the alteration of the landscape space south of the monument, from a trapezoid forced perspective to a rectangle. US Dept of Interior, National Park Service, Planning and Construction Division, National Capital Parks. Plan #2843-PPJ-791-sh1. Job no. 2843 Fine Arts Commission. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.



Fig. 14.30. *Aerial View from the Southwest, Jefferson Memorial, East Potomac Park, Washington, D.C.* by Jack Boucher, February 1992. HABS DC WASH 453-17. HABS/HAER/HALS Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

DESIGNS FOR HISTORIC PLACES

From the mid nineteenth through the mid twentieth century, the Olmsted firm practice included several design or consulting projects that became part of the national park system after the firm completed its work. The most well known of these is of course Fairsted, Frederick Law Olmsted's home and the location of the landscape architecture practice from 1883 until it became a national historic site. Less documented, and mostly absent from park service history, are the firm's contributions to a handful of historic places outside of its work for the U.S. Fine Arts Commission in Washington, D.C. These include Fort McHenry in Baltimore, Grant's Tomb in New York City, and George Washington's Birthplace in Virginia. Washington Square in Philadelphia, originally a historic city park and now part of Independence National Historical Park, is also included in this section. What distinguishes these from the Fine Arts Commission work and the projects in more traditional national parks such as Acadia and Yosemite is that the work was not prepared for federal government clients, but for municipalities, private owners, or memorial associations. Thus, the projects completed in this chapter also fit into the context of the firm's work in other categories, including private estates, municipal and urban parks, and others.



Fig. 15.1. *Aerial View of Fort Looking North—Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine, East Fort Avenue at Whetstone Point, Baltimore, Independent City, MD. Historic American Building Survey Official Navy Photograph, July 1954. HABS/HAER/HALS Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.*

**FAIRSTED, FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED ESTATE
FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE**

The Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, established in 1979, preserves the home and office of Frederick Law Olmsted and the successor firm. In 1883, Olmsted Sr. purchased the Joshua Clark property, an 1810 farmstead in Brookline, Massachusetts. The property was appealing because of its proximity to the studio of H. H. Richardson, with whom Olmsted was actively collaborating on the design of the Boston park system as well as numerous other important commissions. Olmsted and his wife, Mary Perkins Olmsted, named the site Fairsted. Over the next fifty years, the Olmsted family made numerous changes to the buildings and landscape to accommodate the growing office, creating at the same time a model of the firm’s ideal residential landscape.



Fig. 15.2. *Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., 1895.* GUSN-252575. Personal photographic collection. Gift of Joseph Hudak, firm of Olmsted Brothers, Brookline, Mass. Courtesy Historic New England. This view shows Olmsted (Sr.) seated in the conservatory at Fairsted.

One condition of the Olmsted’s purchase of the property was that he construct a house for the current residents they could live in for the remainder of their lifetime. John Charles Olmsted designed a Shingle-style house for the Clark sister, up the slope on the west side of the property. Once the Clark sisters were relocated, Olmsted began alterations to the house and landscape to suit his office and family. John Charles Olmsted directed some of

the early work on the grounds, redesigning existing landscape features to create a variety of landscape spaces.

The existing barn was moved adjacent to the house. Olmsted added to it a plant room or “out of doors apartment” and in 1889 expanded the area known as the north parlor to form the firm’s first office space. The entrance to the house was moved from the south to the east side, with a circular drive and puddingstone retaining wall that both formed a level drop-off to the new front entrance and created a sunken landscape room known as “the hollow.” On the south side of the house, Olmsted created an undulating lawn area with an irregular edge defined by dense, layered planting of shrubs and trees; bays and passages of grass were designed to draw the eye and make the relatively small greensward appear much larger. A few stately elms were retained, with one large elm in the south lawn forming a distinctive, sculptural object in the landscape. A rustic outcropping was enhanced with additional grading, a stone-lined path, and shrubs to create a small picturesque “ramble” that provided the shaded walk Olmsted felt was essential to the ideal home grounds. The street sides of the property were defined by a rustic spruce-pole fence and archway at the entrance to the circular drive that forms a distinctive feature of the site. Vines were used prolifically for picturesque effect on the house, walls, and stone outcroppings, contrasting with the smooth surface of the lawn and adding to the sense of mystery and profusion common in the firm’s early work.



Fig. 15.3. The Fairsted house covered in vines by Miss Kimball, n.d.. Photo album 673-90 F2, Job no. 673 F.L. Olmsted Estate. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.



Fig. 15.4. The archway at the entrance to the property, by Mr. Perkins, n.d.. Photo album 00673-02-ph144, Job no. 673 F.L. Olmsted Estate. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site



Fig. 15.5. *North Parlor, April 1897.* This was the original Olmsted office, before the addition of the office wing. Photo album 673-4-ph01, Job no. 673 F.L. Olmsted Estate. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

As the other partners took over the firm, beginning around 1896, and the number of design commissions expanded in the first decades of the twentieth century, the landscape architects implemented a series of additions to the office to accommodate growing staff and business activities, expanding the complex on the north side and retaining the southern half as the domain of the home grounds. This expansion ultimately took the form of a two-story office wing and plans vault, which contained offices and spaces for specific functions of the design process, including architects' and engineers' offices, a planting design department, a drafting room, areas reserved for reproducing plans, and a two-story vault that housed the firm's drawings. The firm stayed in business at Fairsted until the buildings and design records were acquired by the National Park Service.

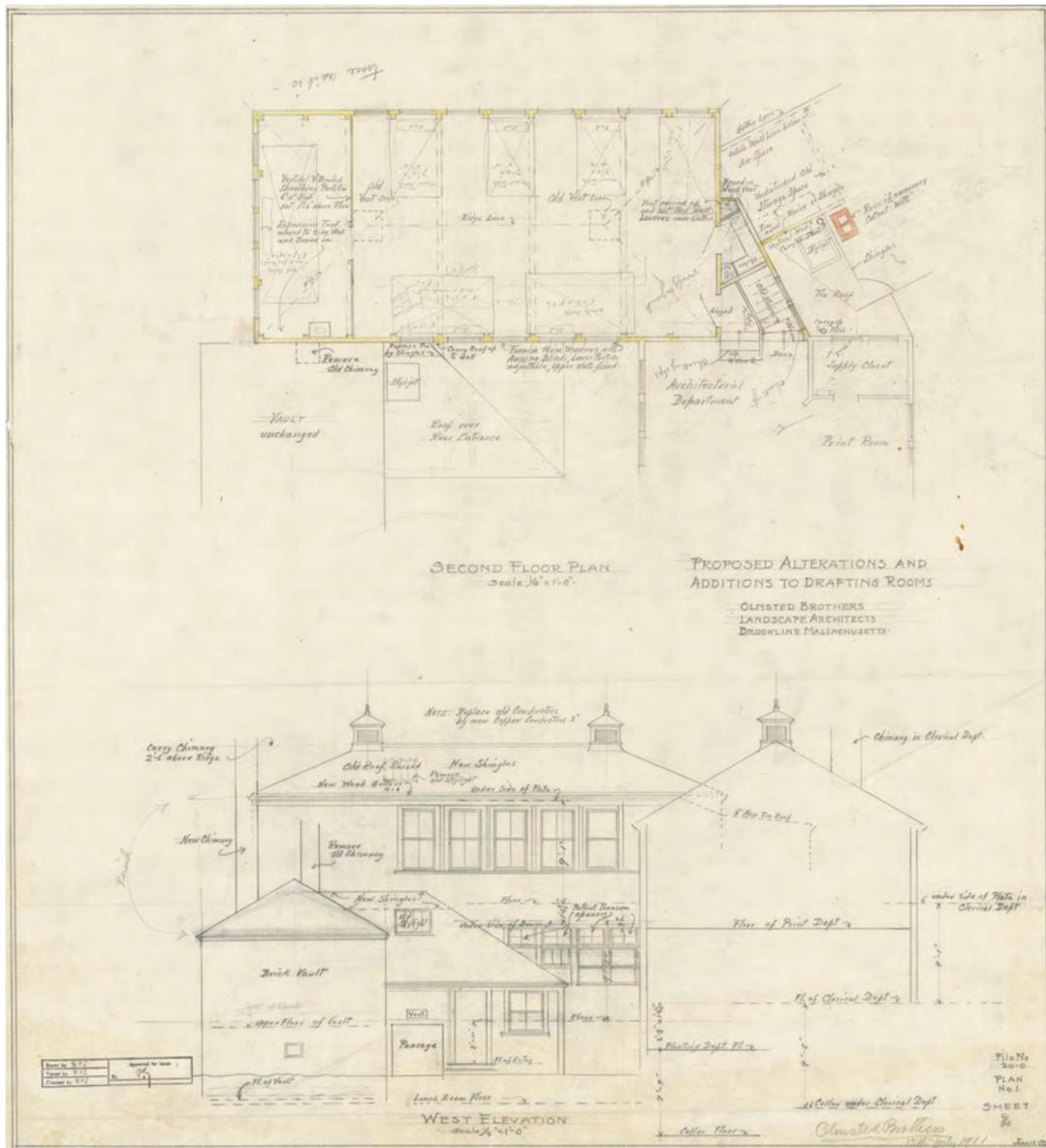


Fig. 15.6. *Proposed Alterations and/or Additions to Drafting Rooms, June 16, 1911. Plan #20-1-sh2. Job no. 20 (20-9) Office Alterations, Brookline. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.*

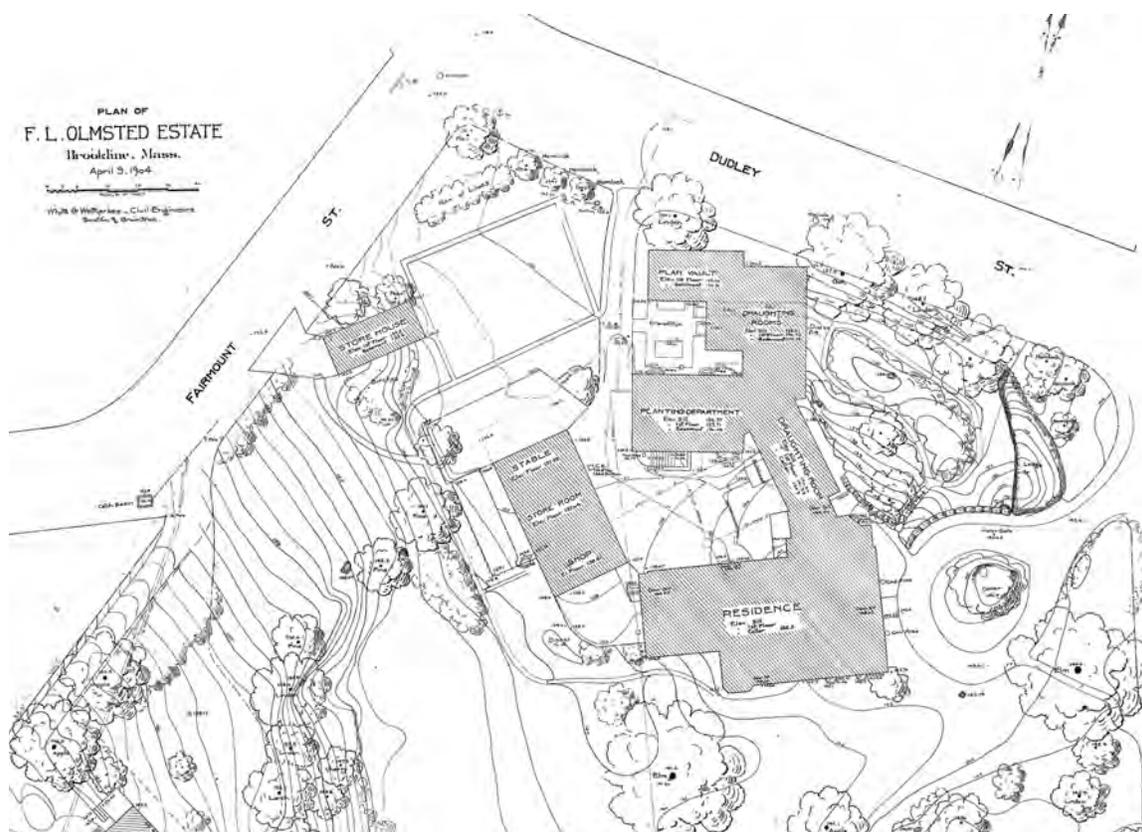


Fig. 15.7. Plan of F.L. Olmsted Estate, Brookline, Mass., April 9, 1904. Plan #673-1-pt1. Job no. 673, F.L. Olmsted Estate. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site

This use of the property as an office, including the significant building expansion, had implications for the landscape as well, particularly on the north side. Directly north of the circular drive, the retaining wall that supported the new entrance and an adjacent outcropping of Roxbury puddingstone, defined two boundaries of what would become known as “the hollow.” With the construction of the two-story drafting wing and plans vault, the sunken garden area was both framed by office space and the visual focus of the area. On the west side of the office, a new entrance provided an employee entrance, and a working garden was converted into a small parking lot for the office, which eliminated a problem with employees parking on nearby Dudley Street.

Fairsted was designated a National Historic Landmark by the National Park Service in 1963 as part of a national theme study devoted to the conservation of natural resources; the site was recognized largely for the importance of Olmsted’s role in the preservation of natural scenery. Between 1979 and 1981, the park service acquired the home, office, and archival collection of plans and drawings and established the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site. The bulk of the firm’s correspondence became a major collection in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, donated by the firm in installments beginning in 1947. However, many documents remained in Brookline, including a large archival collection, “The Olmsted Brothers California Office Correspondence, and Western Office Correspondence,” a part of the Correspondence



Fig. 15.8. *View of Fairsted from the South Lawn*, n.d. The house is in the center, the barn and office wing is on left. Photo album 673-01-ph51. Job no. 673 F.L. Olmsted Estate. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.



Fig. 15.9. *The Hollow, O.B.* (Olmsted Brothers), Spring 1926. Photo album 673-02-ph114a. Job no. 673 F.L. Olmsted Estate. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

series of Landscape Design Records of the archival collection at the Olmsted National Historic Site.³³⁹

One interesting aspect of this archive that is particularly germane to the subject of this Historic Resource Study is the amount of primary source material contained in the Western Office Correspondence that relates to the early history of the National Park Service, particularly western parks where Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. played a role in advising the agency. Often, the park service and other agencies sent copies of correspondence, reports, and maps, as a way to orient Olmsted and the firm in the issues at hand; these records remain as a valuable and instructive tool in the land use and conservation challenges faced by the park service in its early decades, including differing agendas of other agencies within the Department of Interior, private property and Native American rights, and water rights. Thus, the importance of Fairsted to the history of the National Park Service reaches beyond the Olmsted firm’s direct role in landscape design, advocacy, and planning for specific parks and historic sites. The archival collection housed in Brookline provides considerable and significant insight into the administrative history of the agency.



Fig. 15.10. View of the employee entrance to the office wing. Photo album 673-02-ph158. Job no 673 F.L. Olmsted Estate. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

³³⁹ Anthony Reed and Audrey Jawando, “Finding Aid for the Olmsted Brothers California Office Correspondence and Western Office Correspondence, 1872; 1907–1958,” Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, 2002.

**FORT MCHENRY, FRANCIS SCOTT KEY MONUMENT
FORT MCHENRY NATIONAL MONUMENT AND HISTORIC SHRINE**

In Spring 1914, in anticipation of the centennial of the “Star Spangled Banner,” which was inspired by the flag raised at Fort McHenry, the mayor of Baltimore consulted with the Olmsted firm regarding the fort. He wanted advice about improving the condition of the fort’s grounds and consultation on the siting and landscape design for a new monument commemorating Col. George Armisted, which was sculpted in bronze by Edward Berge, and the landscape design around a monument to Francis Scott Key. It was not surprising that the mayor turned to Olmsted Brothers for help improving the grounds and circulation at Fort McHenry. The firm had been involved in a large number of civic projects in Baltimore, beginning with Frederick Law Olmsted Sr.’s design of the Sudbrook Land Company residential community and continuing into the twentieth century with plans for Roland Park, Johns Hopkins University, many Baltimore parks, and several roads, parkways, and urban squares.

For the Fort McHenry project, the task of site reconnaissance was given to P. R. Jones, who visited the Fort and Berge’s studio and consulted with the mayor regarding various improvements, including a circuit drive and auto concourse. Jones reported on the difficulty of siting for the Armisted monument, which presented numerous challenges, including the preservation of the existing flagpole and the “one-sided” character of the statue. Jones’s 1914 report also noted the new Immigrant Station to be constructed on the north side of the Fort grounds, “which would have to be connected by a road with any road we may plan.”³⁴⁰ The siting challenge was resolved by a creative design; plans prepared by Olmsted Brothers show grading, formal planting, and circulation to create a raised platform at the terminus of Fort Avenue, on which the monument was placed.

³⁴⁰ P.R. Jones, “Fort McHenry, Visit by P. R. J. 6th April, 1914.” Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, 93: 378.

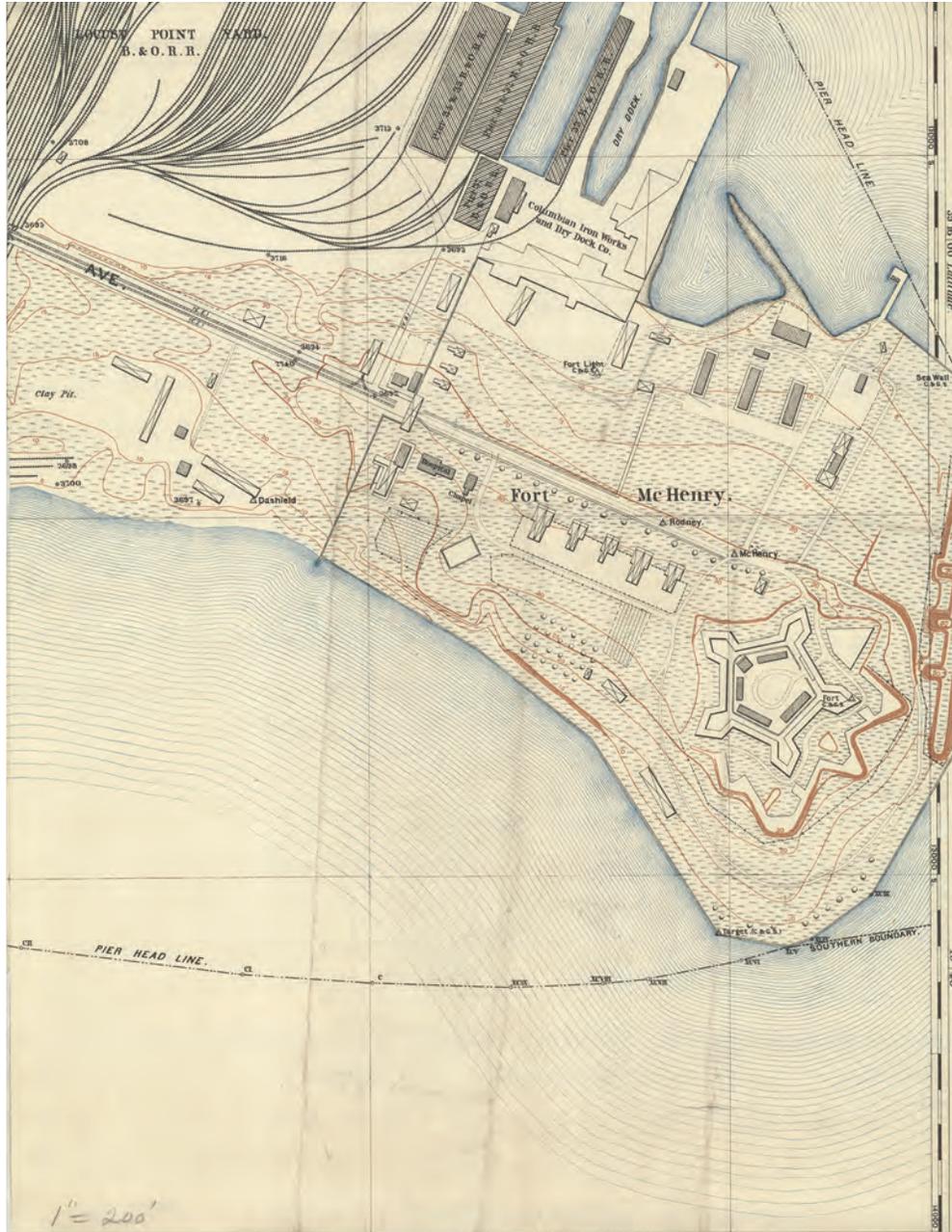


Fig. 15.11. Fort McHenry, Showing Existing Conditions, n.d. Plan #2437-z2. Job no. 2437 Fort McHenry, Francis Scott Key Monument. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

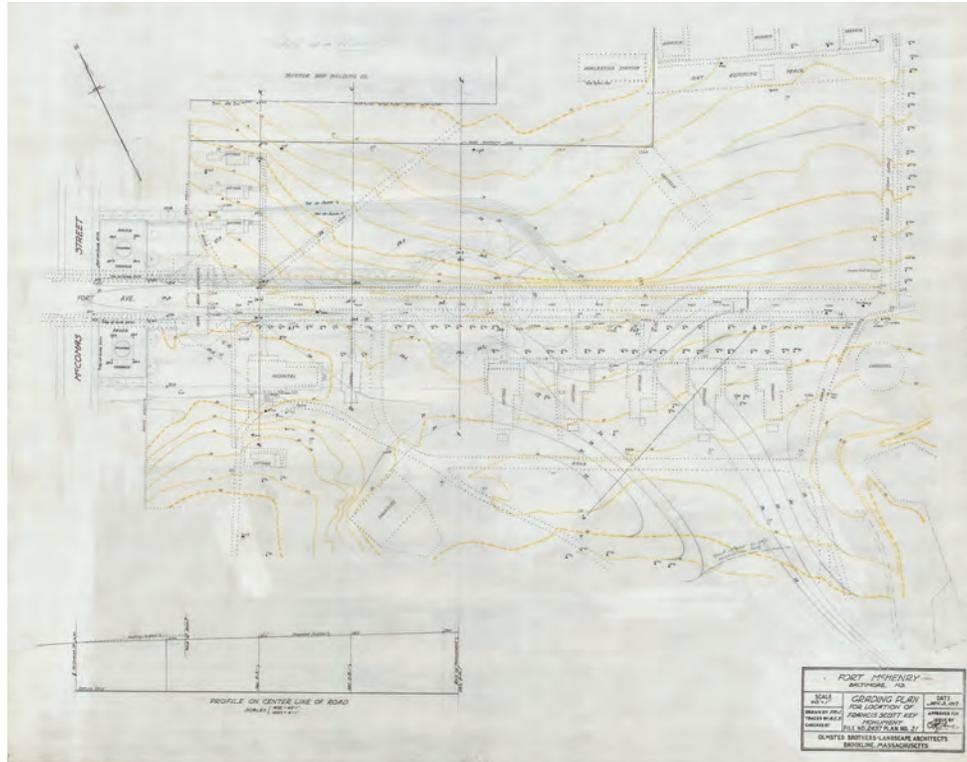


Fig. 15.12. Fort McHenry, Study for Temporary Grading to Accommodate Mr. Edw. V. Warren's Plan for Location of Approach to Key Memorial, Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, November 4, 1916. Plan #2437-16. Job no. 2437 Fort McHenry. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.



Fig. 15.13. Grading Plan for Location of Francis Scott Key Monument, Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, January 2, 1917. Plan #2437-21. Job no. 2437 Fort McHenry, Francis Scott Key Monument. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

WASHINGTON SQUARE INDEPENDENCE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

The Olmsted firm’s work on Washington Square, which became part of Independence National Historical Park in 2005 through an agreement with the City of Philadelphia, represents a phase in the park’s early-twentieth-century development in which the landscape was refined rather than redesigned. The Olmsted firm’s report also serves as an important historical record of the condition and use of the Square in 1912–1913.

Originally one of five public squares in William Penn’s 1682 plan for Philadelphia, Southeast Square (later renamed Washington Square) has been used as a potter’s field, common grazing land, and, during the Revolutionary War, a burial ground. Its transformation into a public pleasure ground and city park began around 1815, as the land around the park was developed with fashionable residences and businesses and the local citizenry became more interested in the condition of the landscape. The Philadelphia City Council initiated work to transform the square into a public pleasure ground in 1817. The process began with a landscape design by George Bridgeport composed of a tree planting and a circular pattern of shaded gravel walks for public promenades. Planting was supervised by Andrew Gillespie. The square formally opened for public use in 1825, when it was renamed Washington Square.

Continued improvements in the mid-nineteenth century resulted in a verdant public garden with shaded promenades and a large collection of shade trees. With over four hundred trees of fifty varieties, Washington Square was, in the words of Andrew Jackson Downing, “that really admirable city arboretum of rare trees.”³⁴¹ It was the most lushly planted and elegantly designed of the original Penn squares, and its close proximity to Independence Square created an urban oasis. William Dixey’s redesign eliminated the circular walks of the earlier plans, shifting the walkways to the diagonal to connect opposing corners, with additional connecting paths at right angles to the adjacent streets. Dixey also removed an enclosing fence and repaved the walks with flagstone. This is the basic design condition the Olmsted Brothers were asked to improve in the early twentieth century.

The Olmsted firm’s involvement began in early 1913, after the Department of Public Works appointed a committee to consider a new round of improvements to Washington Square, when the City of Philadelphia contacted Percival Gallagher with the idea that the Olmsted firm could serve as consulting architects for the project. At the same time, the City was working with a committee of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) to implement improvements to nearby Independence Square. The Washington Square project was being overseen by the Washington Square Improvement Association, whose members—nurseryman William F. Dreer; G. Colesbuerry Purves, president of the Philadelphia Savings Fund Society; and Edward Bok, editor of the *Ladies Home Journal*—all had a keen interest in horticulture. Charles Francis Jenkins, editor of the *Farm Journal*, served as Secretary; both the Curtis Publishing Company (*Ladies Home Journal*) and the Atkinson Company (publisher of the *Farm Journal*) had offices overlooking the square and a vested interest in ensuring that the square remained in good condition.

³⁴¹ Andrew Jackson Downing, *Rural Essays*, cited by Anna Coxe Toogood, *Cultural Landscape Report for Independence Square*, National Park Service, Independence National Historical Park, 1996.”

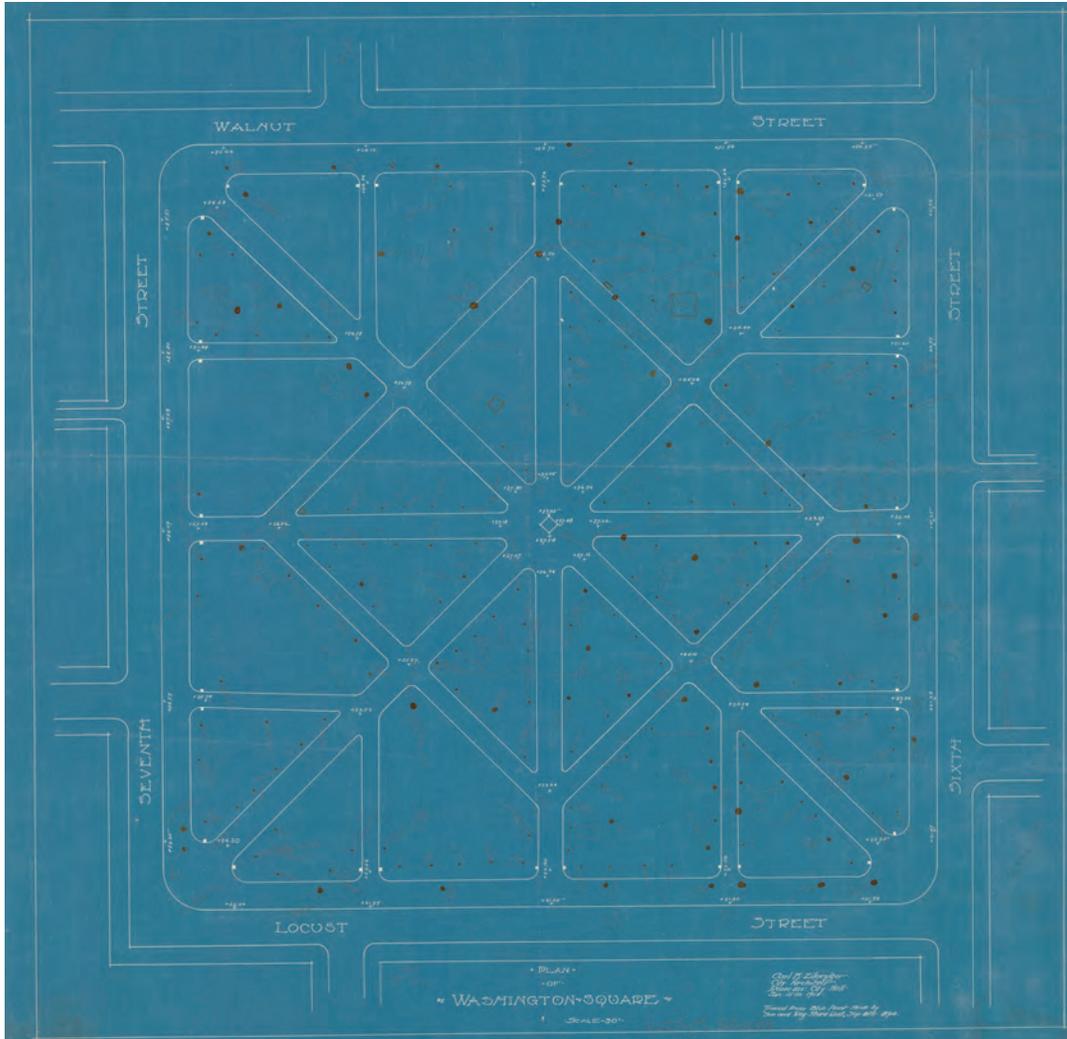


Fig. 15.14. *Washington Square*, Percival Gallagher, February 11, 1913. Note the existing arrangement of paths in the square. Plan #3825-1. Job no. 3825 Washington Square, Philadelphia. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

Gallagher visited Washington Square in February of that year, noting “the location and condition of all trees and other objects on the ground” in preparation for design work to be undertaken by Olmsted Brothers.³⁴² The task was complicated when another group, the Pennsylvania Society Sons of the Revolution, proposed a statue to General Anthony Wayne be constructed in either Washington or Independence Square. Gallagher responded by suggesting that Independence Square would be a more fitting location.

Gallagher submitted his report on the improvements to Washington Square on April 22. He accompanied it with a sketch plan to illustrate Olmsted Brothers’ suggestions. Gallagher noted there is “much that is of real value in the present condition of the Square” and advised against imposing a design on the City that could not practically maintain; he

³⁴² Washington Square, Visit by P.G., 10th Feb. 1913. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, Series B, 238: 7.

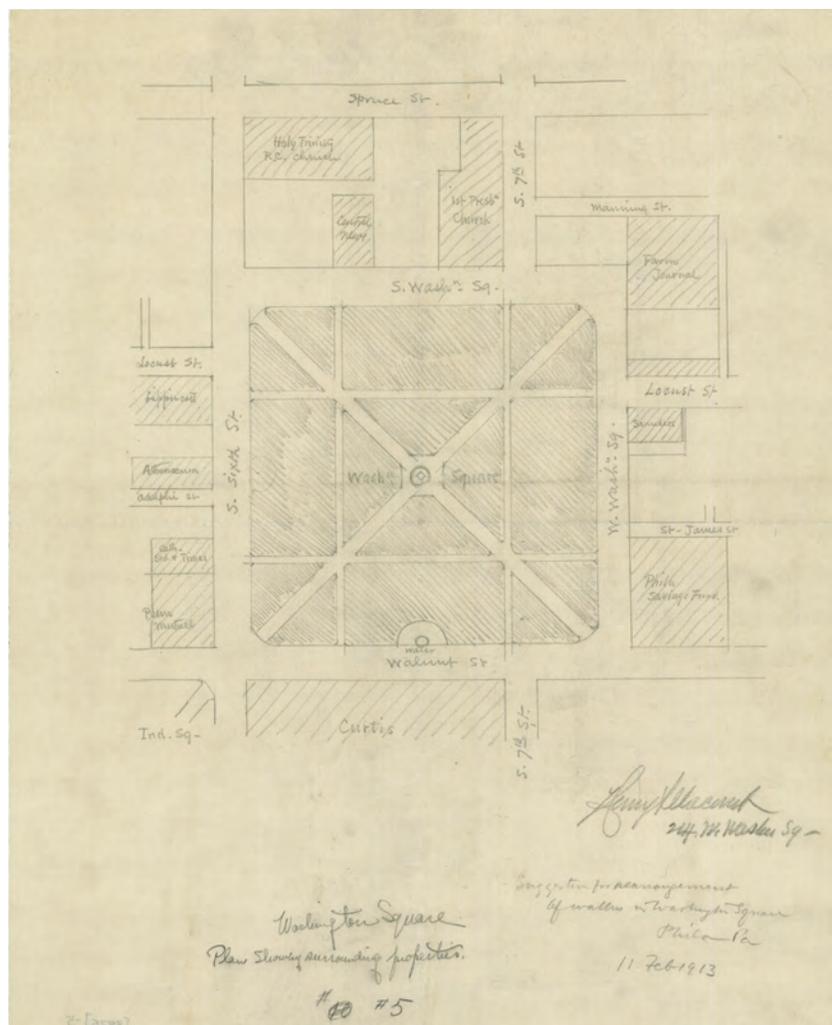


Fig. 15.15. *Washington Square, Plan Showing Surrounding Properties, Suggestion for Rearrangement of Walks, February 11, 1913. Plan #3825-5. Job no. 3825 Washington Square, Philadelphia. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site*

proposed six factors to be considered in any improvement plan:³⁴³ the condition and value of existing trees; placement of pavements, curbs, and lampposts; pedestrian and vehicular circulation; uses of the square as public open space; design and aesthetic considerations; and soil. The report also included a detailed analysis of the 239 existing trees in the Square, which confirmed their species composition and health, and included commentary on which species were suitable for a public square. Sixty trees were particularly noteworthy due to their size and healthy condition; a third of these were between two and a half and four feet in diameter. The report supports the use and retention of many of the existing trees, particularly American elms, plane trees, oaks, sugar maples, horse chestnuts, and tulip trees; silver maples, ailanthus, and Kentucky coffee trees were in the poorest condition. The report also advised that existing Carolina poplars be replaced with trees of better character.

³⁴³ Percival Gallagher to Charles Francis Jenkins, April 22, 1913. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, Series B, 238: 30.

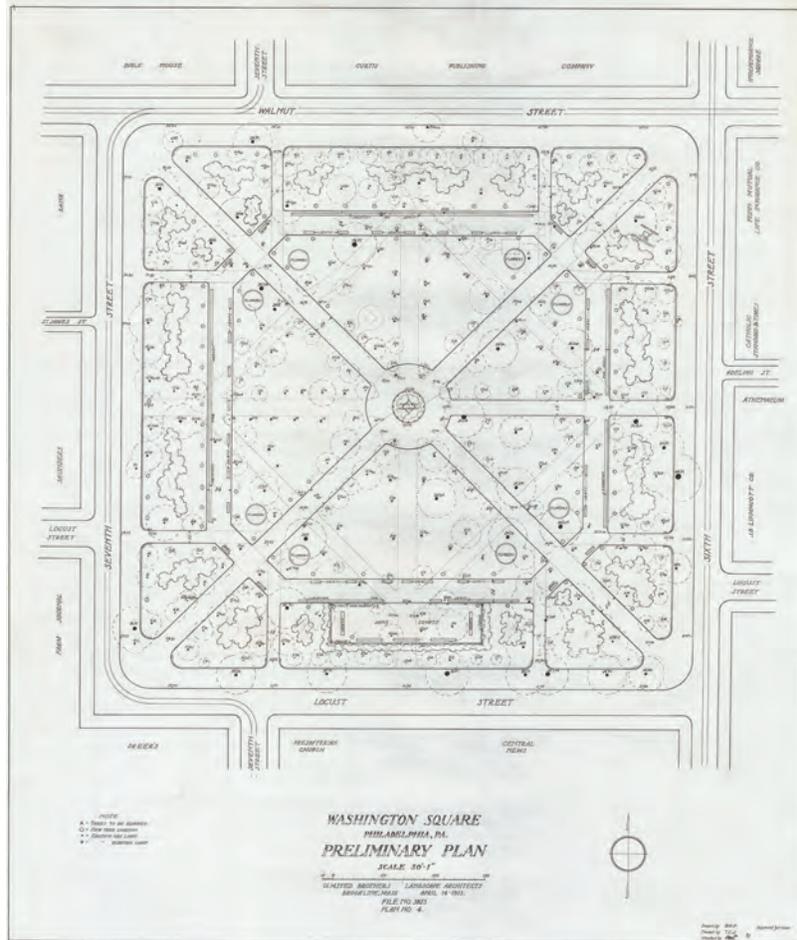


Fig. 15.16. *Washington Square, Preliminary Plan*, Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, April 14, 1913. Plan #3825-4. Job no. 3825 Washington Square, Philadelphia. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

The existing flagstone in the square was, according to Gallagher, in excellent condition, and though “not as perfect as the modern granolithic pavement,” it was a good choice for paving in areas close to tree planting because it did not require as deep a foundation layer and allowed rain to penetrate the soil.³⁴⁴ He noted that the irregularities in the surface were not large enough to distract pedestrians, and they had the beneficial effect of minimizing the monopolization of the walks by children on roller skates. The existing curbing was in generally good repair, but many of the existing gas lamps were no longer in use, in some cases because they were damaged. New electric lights were, in Gallagher’s opinion “shatteringly [sic] arranged without regard to their appearance in an orderly scheme.”³⁴⁵ Not surprisingly, Gallagher recommended that the treatment of park lighting should be improved.

The walkways and lighting were important characteristics of the square’s layout, which featured two broad diagonal walks. Gallagher appreciated these for their capacity to facilitate the

³⁴⁴ Gallagher to Jenkins, April 22, 1913, 5.

³⁴⁵ Gallagher to Jenkins, April 22, 1913, 6.

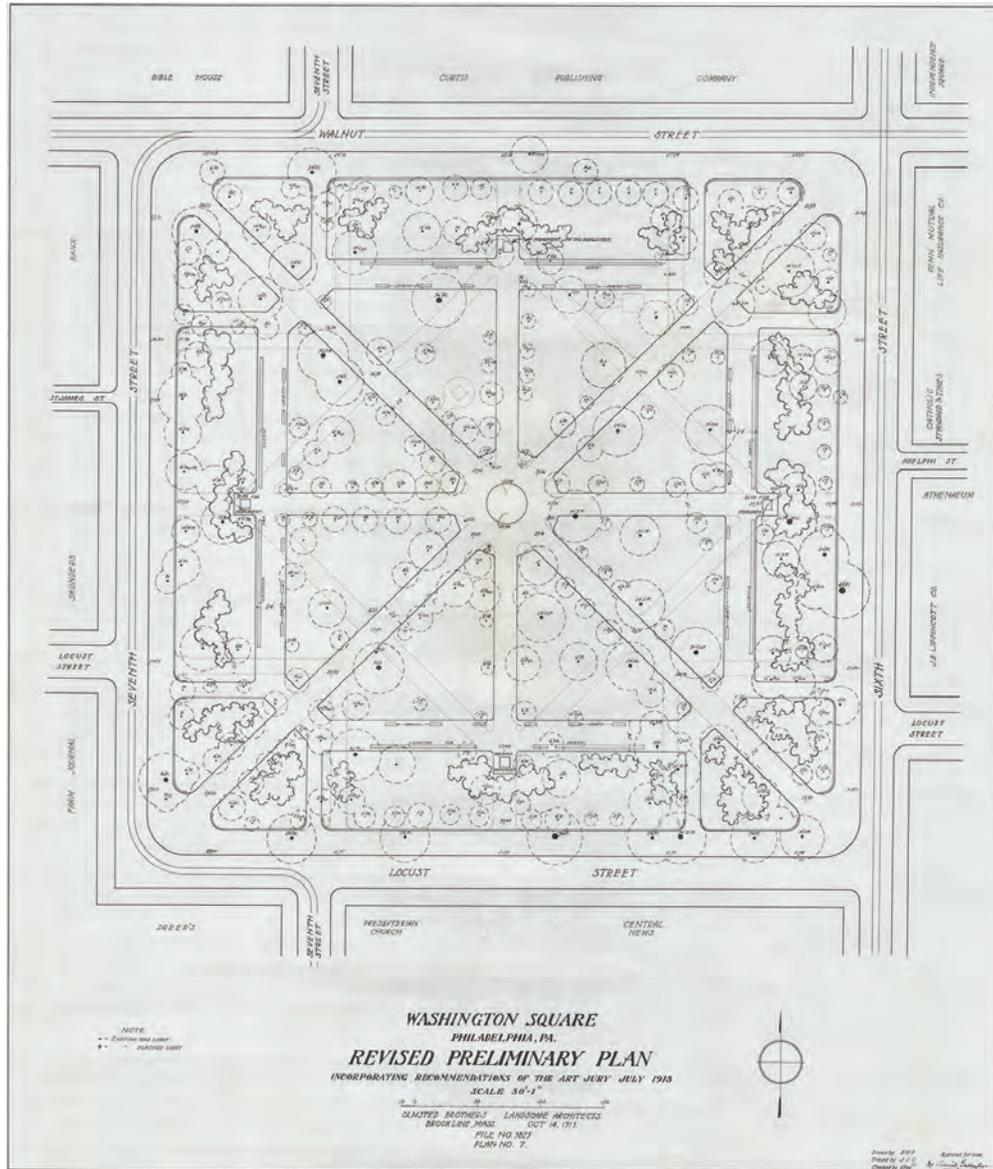


Fig. 15.17. *Washington Square, Revised Preliminary Plan Incorporating Recommendations of the Art Jury, July 1913, Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, October 14, 1913. Plan #3825-7. Job no. 3825 Washington Square, Philadelphia. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.*

majority of foot traffic. At the time of Gallagher’s visit, street traffic still included horse-drawn carriages and carts, which regularly stopped at the trough opposite 7th Street, disrupting the flow of vehicles, including “electric cars.” The firm had evidently been asked to advise about a variety of changes to the square to improve vehicular circulation; in particular, local newspapers had advocated routing 7th Street through the square. To these ideas, the report replied, “We do not think the Square should be sacrificed for any possible improvement of the street traffic. It does not seem practicable to us to satisfy all the possible requirements in this regard without a very considerable sacrifice of the Square.”³⁴⁶ The City never endorsed the changes.

³⁴⁶ Gallagher to Jenkins, April 22, 1913, 8.

Gallagher's final observation on the use of the square and potential enhancements suggests that in general, the verdant character and broad walks provided a beneficial and appropriate public open space that enhanced the urban setting and provided opportunities for promenading. He noted the evolution of children's active play equipment in popular use, including tricycles, velocipedes, and roller skates. Roller skating was, fortunately in Gallagher's opinion, primarily being practiced on the granolithic sidewalks outside the square, keeping the noise remote from the quiet interior. He noted that the square was a functioning playground, serving "a large population of poor people living quite near" and suggested that more attention be directed "to facilities for the play of very little children, such as would be provided by one or two sand courts and swings," on condition that they were properly fenced and supervised.³⁴⁷ Above all, Gallagher argued, the square should be maintained to facilitate all kinds of uses, for all ages: "At all events, the Square should have good broad walks to permit the play of little children, besides the ordinary foot traffic and the chance to sit out of doors in seats well-arranged as to shade from trees and with pleasant views."³⁴⁸



Fig. 15.18. *Washington Square Looking Northeast*, n.d. At upper left-hand corner of photo is the Curtis Publishing Company. *Washington Square Area Study*, HABS PA, 51-PHILA, 603—2. HABS/HAER/HALS Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

³⁴⁷ Gallagher to Jenkins, April 22, 1913, 9–10.

³⁴⁸ Gallagher to Jenkins, April 22, 1913, 10.

Even though the existing arrangement of walks, trees, and grass areas was relatively successful, Olmsted Brothers presented a plan for the square that would refine the design further, ensuring a verdant environment through refinements to the arrangement of walks that would allow additional shrub planting, a lavatory and caretaker’s house, and a sand court and address the placement of the Washington Grays monument and the D.A.R. monument of the Revolution. The plan was referred to the City’s Art Jury for comment; that board made suggestions related to grading and the opportunities for a decorative feature in the center of the Square.³⁴⁹ Horace Wells Sellers, who was chair of the Philadelphia Chapter of the AIA, was interested in enhancing the relationship between Washington and Independence Squares; he went on to spearhead work at Independence Hall and the associated square. In July 1913, the Olmsted Brothers submitted a revised Preliminary Plan that included the recommendations of the Art Jury, changes to the circulation plan, and additional seating. The sand courts, flowerbeds, and a proposed monument in the center of the Square were eliminated from the plan, with two new locations for monuments proposed along the interior walks. The revised plan retained the addition of shrub planting around the perimeter, which provided additional screening and visual separation from the adjacent streets.

In 1915, the Fairmount Park Commission assumed responsibility for the care of Washington Square. Subsequent plans by Edwin Brumbaugh and Thomas Sears in the 1950s introduced Colonial Revival elements, including the perimeter brick wall and revival-style electric lights, to the Olmsted design, and added the Memorial to the Unknown Revolutionary War Soldier. With the creation of Independence National Historical Park in 1956, the National Park Service and the city began discussions regarding both Independence Square and Washington Square. A Memorandum of Understanding in 1991 ultimately led to the transfer of care and control of Washington Square to the park service as part of Independence National Historical Park.

GEORGE WASHINGTON’S BIRTHPLACE **GEORGE WASHINGTON BIRTHPLACE NATIONAL MONUMENT**

The Olmsted firms’ correspondence related to George Washington’s birthplace sheds some light on Frederick Law Olmsted’s design philosophy with respect to historic sites, which was well ahead of its time in terms of historic preservation practice.

George Washington was born on the estate of Pope’s Creek Plantation, later known as Wakefield, located in Westmoreland County, Virginia. Although Washington moved away from the property at age three, the site retained a symbolic association with the first president even after the house burned in 1779. Continued reverence for the site was maintained largely through the efforts of Washington’s descendants, including his step-grandson, George Washington Parke Custis, who placed a stone marker there around 1815. After multiple changes in ownership, the core of the property was acquired by the U. S. War Department in 1882; the site was placed under the supervision of the Army Corps of Engineers. A granite obelisk by John Crawford & Son

³⁴⁹ DHM Design, Pressley Associates, and RK&K Engineer, “Cultural Landscape Report for Washington Square, Independence National Historical Park,” National Park Service, September 2010, 1.86.

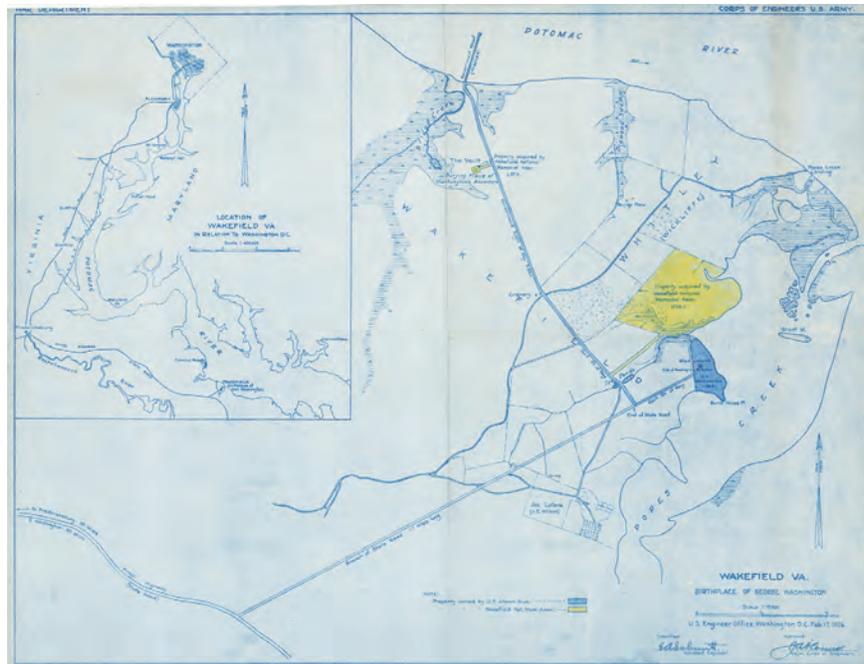


Fig. 15.19. *Washington's Birthplace [Wakefield Plantation], Wakefield, VA, Army Corps of Engineers, Engineer's Office, February 17, 1926.. Plan #3680-1. Job no. 3680 George Washington's Birthplace. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.*

was placed on the site in 1896. The War Department continued as steward until the Wakefield National Memorial Association was founded in 1923, inspired by the work of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association. The Wakefield National Memorial Association was charged with maintaining the memorial landscape and constructing a replica of the original house in anticipation of the bicentennial of Washington's birth in 1932. Both the CFA and the War Department were to review all of the association's plans. Olmsted Jr. was asked to consult on the project during these years of the War Department's control of the property and the active involvement of the Wakefield National Memorial Association leading up to the bicentennial.³⁵⁰

In October 1928, Major Brehon Somervell, District Engineer for the War Department Engineer's Office (the Army Corps of Engineers), wrote to Olmsted in California to inquire about the possibility of the Olmsted firm "making up plans" to improve the condition of the place in advance of the 1932 bicentennial. Somervell noted that "your association with the place would prove incalculable when we appear before Congress to secure money for carrying them into effect."³⁵¹ He also lamented the pressure the War Department, which was the steward of the reservation at the time, was feeling from forces outside the government, most likely the Memorial Association, to improve the condition of the property. General Herbert Lord had expressed support for an authorization of \$5,000 to support plans for the property; Somervell suggested that a portion (\$1,000) be used for a survey, with the balance to fund the Olmsted firm's design work. Olmsted had visited the property as a member of the Park and

³⁵⁰ George Washington Birthplace National Monument was established on January 23, 1930.

³⁵¹ Maj. Brehon Somerville, War Department, to Frederick Law Olmsted, October 10, 1928. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, Series B, 218: 404.

Planning Commission and had previously given Major Somervell some advice. Despite this, he responded to the request with a concern about his present workload and suggested that they discuss the matter in person at a later date.

Olmsted also directed the question of taking on the project to Edward Clark Whiting, who was coordinating work in the firm’s Brookline office and thus geographically closer to the project than the California (Western) Office where Olmsted Jr. was based at the time. Olmsted’s instructions to Whiting provide a succinct description of current conditions and the design challenges involved in addressing access and transforming the property into a fully functional, commemorative historic site:

The problem is to provide a wharf and landing on the water side; and a dignified approach road and a parking space (and perhaps a landing field?) on the land side; to provide caretaker’s quarters and a shelter and probably refreshment place for visitors and possibly a sort of museum in the form of reproduction of a typical house of the locality at the time of Washington’s birth; to relocate a rather a rather commonplace granite shaft erected some years ago to mark the site; and finally and generally to do what is necessary for putting the grounds and keeping the grounds in a condition appropriate for their function as a historical site and to their location, with such kind of unobtrusive beauty and impressiveness as may be consistent therewith.³⁵²

Olmsted sought Whiting’s input regarding whether or not the firm should undertake the work, with a particular goal of ensuring a thoughtful study and evaluation of alternatives that would produce a solution that avoided “mediocrity.” Whiting responded with an evaluation of various members of the firm—Prellwitz, Marquis, Zach—who might (or might not) be suited to do the work, as well as consideration of other landscape architects, particularly Louis Adams, Fletcher Steele, and Clarence Fowler. But Whiting did think that Olmsted Jr. was the best person for the project, even though the fee was inadequate to support the level of design needed.

The opportunity for the firm appeared to change in 1929, when Charles Moore, Chair of the Commission of Fine Arts, wrote to Olmsted to report, “Mr. Rockefeller has come to the rescue of the Wakefield National Memorial Association to the tune of \$115,000, with which he has bought about 400 acres of land between Pope Creek and Bridges Creek.”³⁵³ This letter also recommends that the whole property be treated in a comprehensive manner and identifies some specific elements that should be addressed, including the birthplace and gardens, graveyard and tomb, the site of the original Washington house, a log cabin for the entertainment of visitors, flying field, parking, and a dock.

The final element Moore named—“to construct on the very site of the birthplace a copy of the original house”—was the source of Olmsted’s objection to the project. Olmsted voiced serious objection to the concept of a reconstruction. To support his argument, he shared his experiences with another such challenge in California. The main issue, he said, was the fact that the reconstruction

³⁵² Frederick Law Olmsted to Edward Clark Whiting, October 17, 1928. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, Series B, 218: 406.

³⁵³ Charles Moore, Commission of Fine Arts, to Frederick Law Olmsted, March 5, 1929. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, Series B, 218: 410.

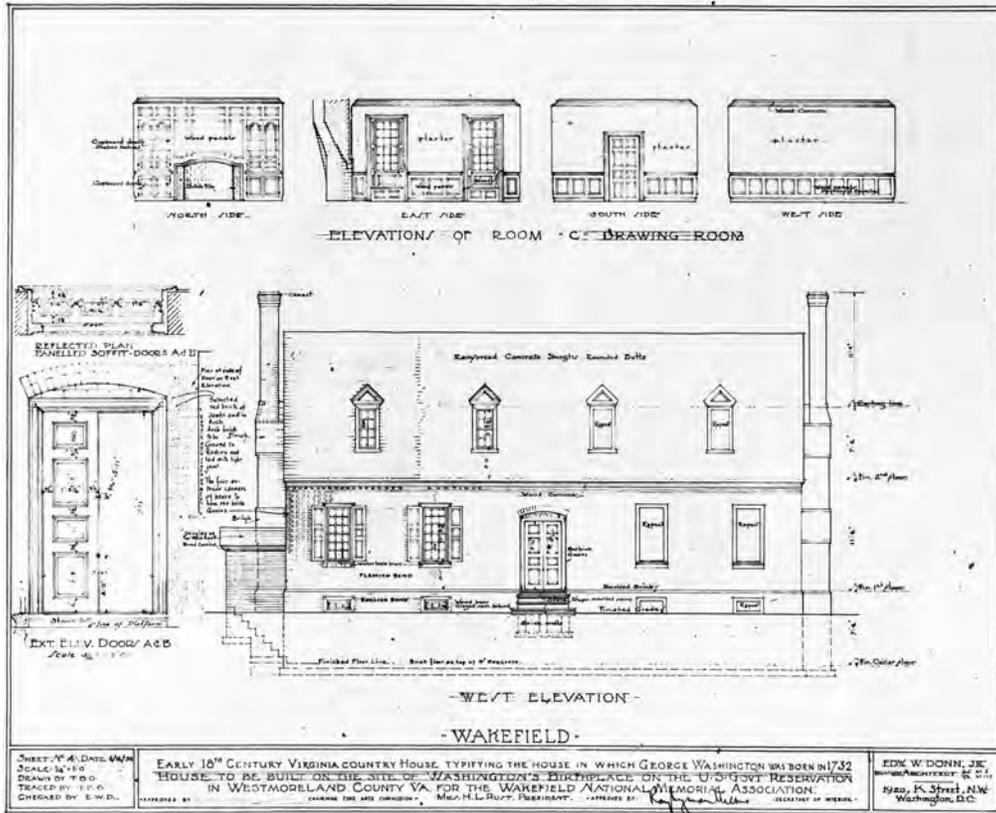


Fig. 15.20. House to be Built on the Site of Washington's Birthplace in Westmoreland County, VA for the Wakefield National Memorial Association—Early 18th Century Virginia Country House Typifying the House in which George Washington was born in 1732, Edw. W. Donn Jr., Architect. July 1, 1930.

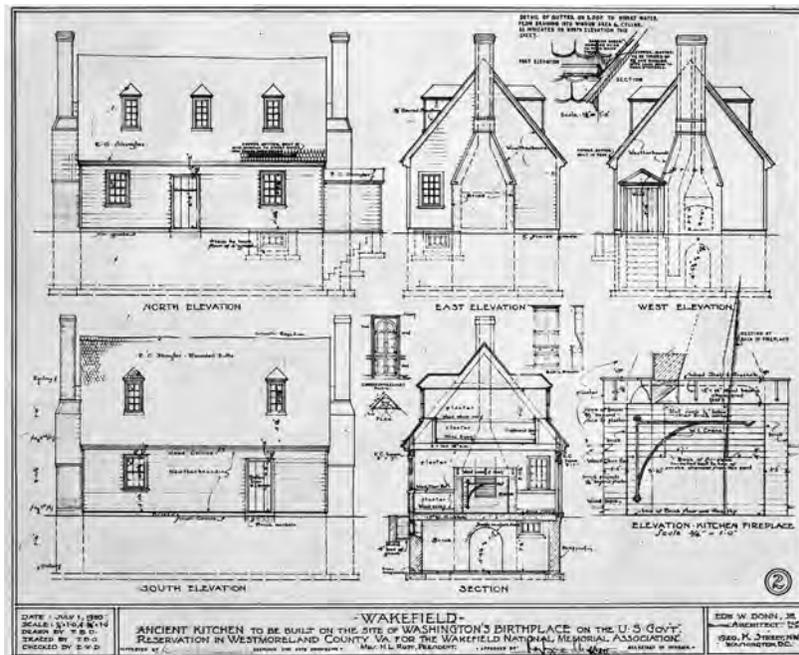


Fig. 15.21. Ancient Kitchen to be Built on the Site of Washington's Birthplace on U.S. Gov't. Reservation in Westmoreland County, VA for the Wakefield National Memorial Association, Edw. W. Donn Jr., Architect, July 1, 1930. HABS VA 97-, 38—1. HABS/HAER/HALS Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

would be highly conjectural. Instead, he suggested a prototype of a typical building of the period be built in another location, so as to provide a sort of three-dimensional interpretive exhibit:

I think it would be not unreasonable and a highly interesting thing to erect somewhere near the actual birthplace a structure representing our present ideas of what the type of building was in which George Washington and others of his time and station were born and reared, and to use it as a sort of museum illustrative of some of the conditions under which he was born and reared. But I think it fundamental that such a structure should be distinctly not on the site of the original house; that it should make no pretense of being even a “copy” of that particular building, and that the foundations of the latter should be respectfully preserved and clearly marked as all that is left of the “real thing.”³⁵⁴

Olmsted was so steadfast in his opposition to the conjectural reconstruction that he informed Moore he would be unable to assume any role in carrying out the Association’s ideas. It would, in Olmsted’s view, be insincere, theatrically pretentious, and disrespectful. While there is evidence that the Memorial Association was offended by the view of Olmsted (and others) that the reconstruction was inappropriate, Major Somervell still expressed hope that Olmsted would continue work to develop the best plans possible for Wakefield. In 1931, Olmsted received a series of letters from John C. Merriam, President of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, who was very concerned about reconstruction work, citing his experience in Mexico, Europe, and other countries. Merriam had had considerable experience handling archeological remains and understood very clearly the difference between leaving archeological sites and foundations in place so as to focus attention on “reality” and constructing “something that presents the idea without reality.”³⁵⁵ Despite the sympathetic voices opposed to the reconstruction, the house was constructed and opened to the public in July 1931, in advance of the 1932 centennial of Washington’s birth. Ten years later, archeologists determined that it had in fact been constructed on the wrong foundation.

The importance of this dialogue is its demonstration of Olmsted’s clear understanding of the challenges of managing historic sites, something he had also faced in his work with the California state parks. It also illustrates Olmsted’s contribution to the early formulation of ideas around the appropriate treatment of historic properties and the standards for documentation for restoration and reconstruction that would be developed and codified by the National Park Service many years later.

OTHER CONSULTATIONS

In addition to the parks and projects listed in previous sections, a few additional Olmsted jobs later became national historic sites. Not all projects that were assigned job numbers ever progressed into the preparation of design plans or detailed park reports, and some were simply inquiries regarding the potential for a project or the firm’s availability or interest in the work.

³⁵⁴ Frederick Law Olmsted to Charles Moore, Commission of Fine Arts, March 18, 1929. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Olmsted Associates Records, Series B, 218: 413.

³⁵⁵ John C. Merriam to Frederick Law Olmsted, January 8 and January 13, 1931. Olmsted Associates Records, Series B, 218: 415.



Fig. 15.22. *Wakefield* by Frances Benjamin Johnston, 1931. Carnegie Survey of the Architecture of the South Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.



Fig. 15.23. *Wakefield* by Frances Benjamin Johnston, 1931. Carnegie Survey of the Architecture of the South Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

Grant’s Tomb (General Grant National Memorial) was a subject of correspondence and design interest by the Olmsted firm beginning in the 1870s when Olmsted Sr. was working on Morningside and Riverside Parks in New York City. Fifty years later, between 1928 and 1932, the firm was asked again to consult on the monument landscape, first at the request of John Russell Pope’s office and later by the Grant Memorial Foundation. The foundation was seeking a satisfactory scheme to harmonize with work under way for Riverside Church—actually the area to the north of the church—and Claremont Park (now Sakura Park), which the Olmsted firm was working on with John D. Rockefeller, Jr. (The Claremont Park site was directly adjacent to Grant’s Tomb, on the east side of Riverside Drive.) Consultation on Grant’s Tomb began with Henry V. Hubbard, followed by Olmsted Jr., who was assisted by Zach on site; Zach remained available to consult with both Pope’s office and the Memorial Association when Olmsted was busy and traveling in other parts of the country. While it does not appear that the plans in the Olmsted archives represent new design proposals by the Olmsted firm for the tomb site, the correspondence and project reports by Zach and others provide input into planting, paving, and plaza design and other aspects of the memorial setting, with a particular eye toward creating an integrated and compatible landscape design for the two adjacent sites.

In 1916, Mrs. Thomas Edison wrote to the firm requesting a visit by John Charles Olmsted to advise her on her “trees and plantings,” should he be visiting parks in the vicinity. John Charles Olmsted replied that he would not be traveling to New York in the near future, but he would be happy to visit and offer advice, for a consultation fee (without plans) of \$100 plus traveling expenses. Although Mrs. Edison doesn’t say specifically, this request was most likely related to the property at Glenmont that is now part of the **Edison National Historical Park** in New Jersey. No other correspondence exists to suggest the firm ever visited the Edison home in an official capacity, and there are no plans in the Fairsted archives.

John Charles Olmsted was also contacted by Colonel Andrew Cowan of Louisville, Kentucky, in 1919 regarding the possibility of establishing an arboretum adjacent to the Lincoln homestead for the Lincoln Farm Association, which had been established in 1906 to preserve the birthplace of Abraham Lincoln. The site came under U.S. Army stewardship in 1916, and the National Park Service took over Abraham Lincoln National Park, now **Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park**, in 1933. John Charles Olmsted worked on Cowan’s Louisville residence between 1904 and 1906, as well as property for Gilbert Cowan and a later proposed subdivision plan for the estate of Andrew Cowan. As for the Edison home, no plans were drawn for the Lincoln farm and while John Charles Olmsted expressed an interest in the arboretum project, the only response appears to be some financial information the firm provided from Arnold Arboretum, likely to give the Association information on projected operating costs should it invest in the project.



Fig. 15.24. *Grant's Tomb*, n.d. Photo album 537-01-ph03. Job no. 537 Grant's Tomb, New York City. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

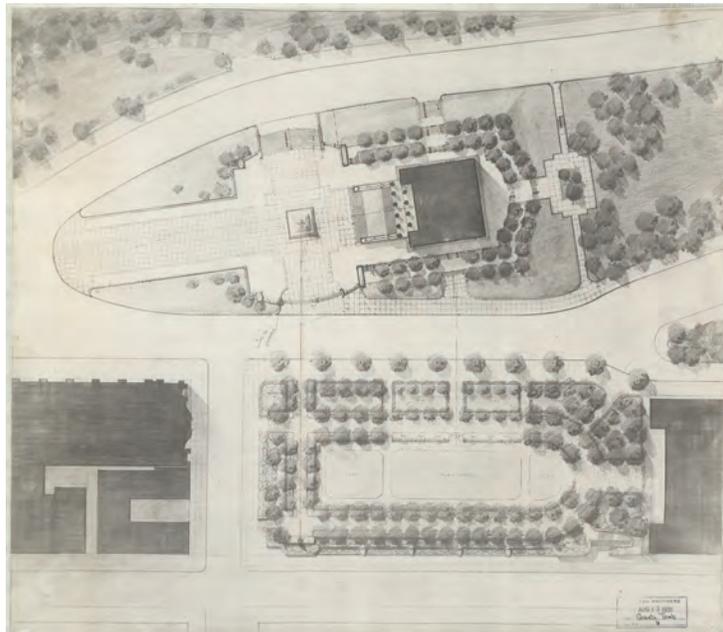


Fig. 15.25. *Grant's Tomb*, Plot Plan, received from J.R. Pope by mail, August 13, 1931. Plan #537-6. Job no. 537 Grant's Tomb, New York City. National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

RECOMMENDATIONS, SOURCES OF INFORMATION, AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The scope of this Historic Resource Study necessitates a limit to research and analysis and leaves a number of areas deserving of additional work. This is not a research project *per se*, but we recommend that the National Park Service handbook *The National Parks: Shaping The System* be updated to reflect research from this Historic Resource Study and other recent scholarship referenced in it. The objective of such an update is to provide a larger context for understanding and using park history, as explained in this Historic Resource Study, above:

One of the most important goals of the 2016 Centennial celebrations was to make the national park system more relevant and appealing to all Americans and to increase the demographic diversity of park visitors. Recognizing the urban roots of the national idea during the Civil War era—in effect putting the Olmsteds back into the story—would be one important way to present a more honest and useful history of the nation’s great scenic and historic reservations and of the agency tasked with their stewardship. Another step would be to interpret a more inclusive history of the “national park idea” and scenic preservation in America that embraced broader themes, motivations, and historical context. The National Park Service can use this more inclusive founding narrative to connect back to Lincoln and emancipation, and the Olmsteds and the larger American parks movement.

Part 4 surveys planning and design projects that were undertaken for the National Park Service by the Olmsted firm or that involved sites that were included in the national park system later. Each of the projects described is contained in design jobs catalogued by the Olmsted firm, and all of them have some preserved visual material that records the ideas, designs, or recommendations of the firm, regardless of whether or not the project plans were ever implemented.

The volume of primary source material held at the Olmsted National Historic Site and the Library of Congress is so extensive that a complete review was simply not possible. This report has attempted to summarize key ideas to provide a first comprehensive picture of the role of the Olmsteds in shaping the National Park System. Of the projects included in this study, several contain extensive written documents and plans that would be worth additional study to more fully understand the scope of the Olmsted firm’s work, particularly contributions by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. These include the Colorado River Basin Recreation Survey, Yosemite National Park, the design projects catalogued by the firm under the Commission of Fine Arts, and other parks in the District of Columbia. Finally, the design drawings, surveys, reports, correspondence, and photographs contained in the archives of the Olmsted firm can increase the knowledge and understanding of individual park histories.

One interesting aspect of the firm’s work that is missing from this report, but is nevertheless important, is Olmsted Jr.’s work related to state and national parks in California beyond Yosemite. In particular, there is tremendous overlap between the work the firm was doing to frame the California state park system and the ongoing advisory and review role

Olmsted held with the National Park Service. Project files in the Western and California office folders related to Sequoia and Kings (River) Canyon and Save the Redwoods League (Master Plan for the Redwoods), as well as state park projects at Calavares Big Trees, Humboldt Redwood State Park, California Redwood Park, and others, deserve additional study and evaluation.

In *Rightful Heritage: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Land of America*, Douglas Brinkley indicates that Franklin Roosevelt met with Olmsted Jr. at the White House around April 1934 and that the 1932 NPA Everglades report was discussed at that meeting.³⁵⁶ However, historian Bob Blythe, who has completed an Everglades Park legislative history, said in an email to Rolf Diamant, an author of this report, that he had no record of such a discussion. Lauren Meier subsequently discovered a report of an Olmsted White House visit in April 1934 to discuss the design of the White House Grounds—but with no mention of the Everglades. Further investigation may be merited to better understand Olmsted Jr.'s relationship to Roosevelt and to New Deal programs.

Much of the primary source material used in this study comes from the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site and the Library of Congress. Each of the parks or administrative offices of the National Park Service has its own records and archives; reviewing these in the context of the issues facing the Olmsted firm would add to the body of knowledge of the Olmsteds' role in shaping the National Park Service. Records of the organizations that were active advocates or participants in the development of the National Park System, including the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), the Wilderness Society, the Sierra Club, the National Park Association (NPA), and the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, could also provide additional insight.

Due to time constraints, the design project for Grants Tomb in New York City, now General Grant National Memorial, is not included in great detail. This project, which is extremely well documented with plans and photographs that illustrate the Olmsted firm's civic monument and city planning expertise, is a worthy subject for additional study.

One other major area has not yet been evaluated: job #4016—the National Park Service, which is comprised solely of correspondence files contained at the Library of Congress, beginning with work by the ASLA in 1910 and extending until 1938, before Olmsted Jr. was appointed Collaborator in 1941. This archive includes general files related to the National Park Service (1916–1937), ASLA (1910–1941), the NPA (1927–1956), the New England Conference for Protection of National Parks (1920–1925), and the Council on National Parks, Forests, and Wildlife (1920–1937), as well as park- or site-specific correspondence for Big Horn National Park (1923), Glacier Bay National Park (1936), Hetch-Hetchy Valley Reservoir (1913–1924), Katahdin National Park (proposal, 1937), Kings River/Roosevelt Sequoia Park (1921–1932), Mesa Verde National Park (1934–1935), Mescalero National Park (1922–1923), Olympic National Park (1938), Ouachita National Park (1928–1930), Shenandoah National Park (1924–1939), and Yellowstone National Park (1917–1938).

³⁵⁶ John C. Merriam to Frederick Law Olmsted, January 8 and January 13, 1931. Olmsted Associates Records, Series B, 218: 415.

SOURCE MATERIAL RELATED TO THE OLMSTED FIRMS' WORK FOR THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The wealth of expertise represented by Frederick Law Olmsted Sr., Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., and the Olmsted firms, and the cumulative effect of that expertise on the development of both the park system and a professional national park agency, is scattered amongst the correspondence and reports of numerous projects in the repositories at Fairsted (Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site) and at the Library of Congress. Even more may be found in the legacy of records related to organizations and committee on which the Olmsteds and their partners served, including the American Society of Landscape Architects, Boston Society of Landscape Architects, American Institute of Planners, American Civic Association, American Academy in Rome, National Institute of Arts and Letters, National Academy of Design, National Parks Association, and the Century Association, among others.³⁵⁷

With regard to files related to individual Olmsted firms' jobs—those with assigned job numbers—it is important to note that the records at the Olmsted National Historical Site and the Library of Congress extend far beyond the scope of work or specific issue undertaken by members of the firm. These records also contain an important archive of early park reports, correspondence, and background information that is both useful and informative to anyone studying the early development of the National Park Service, as well as specific issues that confronted the agency from its inception.

THE OLMSTED ARCHIVES AND THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The majority of the archives of the Olmsted firm are held at the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site in Brookline, Massachusetts, a unit of the National Park System, and in the Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, in Washington, D.C. Generally, the visual records—plans, lithographs, drawings, photographs—as well as planting lists, records and reports, California and Western Office correspondence (1928–1958), and post-1949 correspondence are held in Brookline. The Library of Congress holds personal and professional correspondence, excluding the dates and subject matter described above.

While key material related to this study is located in both repositories, the wealth and breadth of material contained in the California and Western Office Correspondence collections at Fairsted, particularly related to the development of the National Park Service in its early years, is noteworthy. This archive includes many original National Park Service and Department of the Interior memos and reports, early legislation, and interagency communication related to water, Native American, and private property rights that were particularly important in the early western parks. This is not material prepared by the Olmsted firm, but rather primary documents related to the planning and administration of the National Park Service sent to the Olmsteds as background material. Thus, the Olmsted archives at Fairsted provide an invaluable reference for anyone studying the early history of the National Park Service.

³⁵⁷ In 1947, Olmsted reported a long list of his affiliations and memberships to John Davis, National Park Service Acting Regional Director in Sante Fe, following a request to comply with Presidential Executive Order No. 9835, the Federal Loyalty Program, which required that he demonstrate that he was not subject to “influences which are subversive to the best interests of our government.” Olmsted Associates Records, Series B, Box 514, Folder 10 Job. no. 9659–Mr. Olmsted, Collaborator to NPS. This list also included memberships in the Cosmos Club, Washington, DC, the American Academy in Rome, and the Harvard Clubs of Boston and New York.

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NOTE: The following abbreviations are used in the index:

FLO is Frederick Law Olmsted

FLOJ is Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.

NPS is National Park Service

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