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Charles E. Beveridge, Carolyn F. Hoffman, Kenneth Hawkins, eds. *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Parks, Politics, and Patronage, 1874-1882.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007. 784 pp. $85.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8018-8336-1.

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Landscape Architecture and Its Discontents

The great public figures of the late nineteenth century left troves of manuscript collections that are housed in the Library of Congress and archives across the United States. We should all be thankful that persistent editors have doggedly put several of these important collections into annotated published volumes. Historians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have benefited greatly from the access afforded by published papers of Henry Adams, Grover Cleveland, Ulysses S. Grant, Theodore Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson, to name a few, as well as the diaries of James A. Garfield and Rutherford B. Hayes. *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted*, edited by Charles E. Beveridge, stands among the first rank of these collections.

This is the seventh of a twelve-volume set of the *Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted.* It is a rich collection of letters, reports, unpublished memoranda, editorials, magazine articles, and other ephemera from the hand of America's greatest landscape architect. Covering the time between January 1874 and March 1882, this volume finds Olmsted at the zenith of his influence. In addition to his most well-known creation, New York City's Central Park, Olmsted worked on Back Bay Fens in Boston, the U.S. Capitol grounds in Washington DC, the New York State Capitol grounds in Albany, Mount Royal Park in Montreal, Riverside Park in New York City, the private estate of John Phillips, and a nature preserve along the Niagara Falls, among other projects. Such an impressive display of work had its cost. In October 1877, Olmsted suffered a significant physical breakdown due to exhaustion. In addition to his projects, this volume contains documents relating to an important trip to Europe in 1878 and Olmsted's highly politicized removal from the New York City Park Board in 1879, as well as several significant contemporary events, including the disputed presidential election of 1876, the Railroad Strike of 1877, and the assassination of President Garfield in 1881. Personal events are also captured, such as the devastating loss of his son Owen in 1881. There are no letters addressed to Olmsted in this volume; it is all outgoing correspondence.

In many of the selections, Olmsted lays out the rationales for his various designs, such as his "doctrine of terraces." He criticizes the work of others, and led a personal campaign against Thomas Fuller's design of the New York State Capitol, which he considered expensive and gaudy to excess. This volume also captures his numerous lobbying efforts. It is clear from the documents that all levels of government considered any expenditure on parks to be a luxury, and Olmsted had to make a considered case for each of his appeals for scarce public resources. Because of this, Olmsted took special interest in what was said in the press. Several selections contained in this volume show Olmsted trying to correct a story that appeared in a newspaper or magazine. He was greatly annoyed by the sloppy work of reporters who consistently misquoted him.

Although the editors used relevance to his profession as a deciding factor when selecting items for inclusion into this volume, historians should not dismiss the *Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted* as being narrowly focused on the details of landscape architecture. The value of this collection to historians interested in that particular topic is self-evident. The broader value is in chronicling the rise of the professional class and how that class confronted problems caused by rapid urban growth in the late nineteenth century.

As a professional, Olmsted saw himself as something of an artist. Much as a painter would not have wanted spectators to tread across his canvas, Olmsted wanted the public to stay on the walkways that he provided. He made it his business to tour the grounds of his creations

and was ever disappointed by the total lack of enforcement of the rules he had written to govern public behavior. To uphold his high standards, Olmsted cataloged the misdeeds and failures that he had witnessed and voiced his displeasures. But, again, law enforcement at a park was another public expense that was difficult to justify. In 1878, he wrote guidelines for the watchman at the U.S. Capitol grounds in hopes of enacting his principles into action. They were stern, but also loosely adhered to.

The public was one frustration, political hacks were another. No matter the level of his success and reputation, Olmsted could not escape the politicization of New York City's Park Board. Tammany boss "Honest" John Kelly successfully ousted Olmsted from office. Olmsted, who astutely maintained a nonpartisan, independent position because he considered himself a servant of the public, took his frustrations out in an article that went unpublished. Entitled "The Spoils of the Park," it tells his side of the story and highlights the fact that the needs of the city's parks were always subservient to the needs of the political machine. The editors have appended this article to this volume. After the assassination of President Garfield, Olmsted penned a short article entitled "Influence" that was also never published. "Influence" recounted his experiences from 1857 when he was first laying out the design for Central Park. During that time, it was not uncommon for dozens of men to wait outside his house in the morning because some ward heeler had told them that Olmsted had numerous jobs to dispense. The men followed him as he commuted to work, took the liberty of calling on his home at all hours, and even threatened violence. As a professional, Olmsted, whose designs always stressed simplicity, was concerned that the superfluous workforce was causing immense damage to the land. He recorded other numerous instances of political interference in his "patronage journal," which is included as an appendix.

In the realm of urban growth, Olmsted grappled with many issues. One important area was public health. In Washington DC, he suggested a belt of trees as a defense against malaria. In Brooklyn, he was concerned about the manner in which hotels on Coney Island discharged waste into Sheepshead Bay. His Back Bay Fens project in Boston was equally directed toward the issues of drainage and dissipation of obnoxious odors as it was to establishing pleasant scenery. The volume, however, clearly indicates the limits of professional public health as it was practiced at the time. Olmsted appears to have had no knowledge that mosquitoes carried pathogens, blaming, instead, miasmic gasses. It would be another two decades before engineers and doctors addressed public health issues more effectively and efficiently. Regardless of his faulty perceptions, however, Olmsted was correct that draining swampy areas improved health, and he provided some order where little existed before.

The *Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted* are marvelously edited and documented. Every person, event, and place mentioned in the selections is footnoted to provide the context and connection to Olmsted. The appendices include a detailed, and very helpful, chronology of Olmsted's activities during the period covered in this volume and an index of plant names. His patronage journal and the "The Spoils of the Park" are published in full in the appendix. Several sketches and drawings are included, but a future volume in this planned twelve-volume set will be devoted to plans and views of landscapes.

Volume 7 of the *Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted* provides an excellent primary source for illustrating important features of the period. It gives a personal and refreshing perspective on the realms of political patronage, urban growth and planning, the rise of the professional culture, conceptions of public space, and the early environmental movement.

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