

*Places* includes Bethel AME in Davenport, Iowa, while *In Their Footsteps* features the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Portland, Maine, where James Augustine Healy was consecrated as the first black Catholic bishop. The books also note many schools, such as the Penn School on St. Helena Island, South Carolina, and Goffe Street Special School for Colored Children in New Haven, Connecticut.

*Historic Places* begins with eight essays that place the sites in their social and historic milieu. James O. Horton offers an excellent discussion of issues and developments relating to African-American social history, while A. Lynn Bolles provides an informative essay on black music and art. Joan Maynard shows the crucial role that community action can play in historic restoration.

*Footsteps* has five sections, each introduced with an essay by a noted writer—Gloria Naylor and Amiri Baraka, among others. Although moderately entertaining, these pieces add little to the reader's knowledge or appreciation of historic places. The space might have been better used to provide criteria for the inclusion of sites in this volume and to cover others in the four states omitted. Excluding states suggests that they have no relevant places. *Historic Places* also should have covered all states, or at least given rationale for the omissions.

*Footsteps*, although generally historically accurate, is weakened by a number of factual errors. For example, one entry in the chronology indicates that in 1830 "the first free black national convention is held in Philadelphia" (xviii); the correct date is 1816. A notation for 1850 claims that "Congress passes . . . the Missouri Compromise" (xix); the Compromise of 1850 was passed in that year; the Missouri Compromise was passed in 1820.

The nearly two thousand entries in these two volumes clearly show the richness of African-American culture and history, as well as the strength and diversity of the black community from the colonial to the modern era.

*Olmsted's America: An "Unpractical" Man and His Vision of Civilization*, by Lee Hall. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1995. A Bulfinch Press Book. ix, 270 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$40.00 cloth.

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Frederick Law Olmsted's stature in the history of landscape architecture and environmental design increases another measure with the publication of Lee Hall's *Olmsted's America: An "Unpractical" Man and His Vision of Civilization*. Given all that has been published about Olmsted, one might wonder if we need another biography of him.

Indeed, Hall frequently cites Laura Wood Roper's 1973 biography when she discusses Olmsted's forty-year career in landscape architecture, from the late 1850s to approximately 1895, and the body of major works for which he is chiefly known, including Central Park, Stanford University, the Vanderbilt Estate at Asheville, North Carolina, and the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Yet Hall takes a broader view of the master, places him within the social context of his times, and lays open the extremes of his complex personality.

In so doing, she reveals a life pattern of manic activity: Olmsted willfully embracing new challenges; frenetically working himself to emotional and physical exhaustion; leaving half-finished projects in the hands of others when he could take no more; recharging himself by escaping to Europe, the seashore, or the country; then throwing himself into another new project and beginning the cycle again. Without fully probing the psychological roots of his drive, Hall nonetheless leads the reader to imagine that his workaholicism stemmed in part from an erratic education—a series of tutors and apprenticeships—and in part from the expectations of financial success that came with birth into an upper-class, old-stock New England family. In lieu of attending college, Olmsted embarked on a restless twenty-year quest for a career that took him through land surveying, a stint at sea, scientific farming, and literary journalism before a chance encounter with Charles W. Elliott in 1857 propelled him to a pivotal role in New York's Central Park Project and his formative partnership with Calvert Vaux.

The subtitle, emphasizing Olmsted's "unpractical" nature, is a play on words that Hall borrows from her subject, for it was his unpracticalness that inadvertently launched his true career. The Democratic and Republican commissioners who selected him to supervise the Central Park Project based their decision on political accommodation. Olmsted got the job because he was not a "practical man," meaning, in the polit-speak of the day, that he was not obliged to dispense political patronage to the enhancement or detriment of either party. Thereafter, Olmsted often referred to himself as an "unpractical man." Hall deftly weaves this theme through to the end, where she sums up his legacy of works and ideas by reflecting that "common sense would never have given the world a good many things the world values" (245).

Olmsted's contacts with the Midwest were few and fleeting. He mostly traveled *through* the Midwest, spending only brief periods in Chicago in the late 1860s to design a park system (not carried out) and then again in the early 1890s as part of Daniel Burnham's remarkable group of architects, landscape architects, and artists who planned and

executed the buildings and grounds for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Yet Hall states that his first occasion to experience mid-western life, on a business trip to California in 1863, left him with the impression that here resided the first real evidence of civilization in the United States, an intriguing observation that she does not explore (100). Thus, one might wonder what meaning Olmsted's life has for midwesterners. Well, indirectly, quite a bit.

The White City of the 1893 Columbian Exposition, a design concept that Burnham acknowledged was chiefly Olmsted's, influenced city planning in the United States for decades. Many cities, including Des Moines and Cedar Rapids, reflect ideas that were born with the White City, such as stately civic centers and urban parks linked by tree-lined boulevards. In addition, Olmsted shaped a philosophy of parks as integral aspects of community life, not isolated entities. His park designs embodied this philosophy, which he further articulated in lectures and writings. To Olmsted, parks had a vital role to play as civilizing influences in an increasingly industrial society. He created rural interludes in urban spaces, parks designed to civilize city dwellers by providing both respite and recreation, easily accessible yet removed from the grime and hustle of commerce and industry. His ideas about the value of parks influenced a whole generation of park advocates who, beginning in the late nineteenth century, sought to marry social reform with natural resource conservation. Many state park systems, including Iowa's, were born, in part, from such ideals.

Regardless of where one lives, though, Lee Hall's biography, beautifully written and richly illustrated with historic photographs, prints, and drawings, offers us a fascinating view of Olmsted's life and work. Those who feel they know Olmsted well will learn something new; those who want to know more about him could not choose a better place to begin.

*Planning for the Private Interest: Land Use Controls and Residential Patterns in Columbus, Ohio, 1900-1970*, by Patricia Burgess. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1994. xii, 258 pp. Illustrations, maps, charts, graphs, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$59.50 cloth.

REVIEWED BY JOHN D. BUENKER, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-PARKSIDE

Patricia Burgess's superbly crafted study of the development of Columbus, Ohio, in the twentieth century resonates on several different levels simultaneously. First and foremost, *Planning for the Private Interest* is the very model of a brilliant monograph—imaginatively conceived, meticulously researched, tightly focused, logically argued,

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