

**A (Short) Annotated List
About Frederick Law Olmsted and the Olmsted Legacy
by Laurence Cotton, Public Historian**

Books by Frederick Law Olmsted

Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England

The Cotton Kingdom (the edition with introduction by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. is recommended)

Frederick Law Olmsted: Writings on Landscape, Culture and Society (Library of America, 2015)

Biographies of Frederick Law Olmsted

FLO: A Biography of Frederick Law Olmsted by Laura Wood Roper (older volume, but still excellent)

A Clearing in the Distance, by Witold Rybczynski

Genius of Place, by Justin Martin (the most recent)

Books on Frederick Law Olmsted and his landscapes

Frederick Law Olmsted: Designing the American Landscape by Charles Beveridge and Paul Rocheleau. (Beveridge is the dean of Olmsted scholars. This marvelous volume with beautiful pictures and wonderful content is available in both large format hardback and in paperback. Rizzoli recently published a coffee table edition.

Book on Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.

Beauty, Efficiency, and Economy: A Life of Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., Landscape Architect, Planner, and Conservationist by Elizabeth Hope Cushing (The first ever full-length biography of Junior/Rick Olmsted, published fall 2021.)

Newly and Soon-to-be Published Books

The Power of Scenery: Frederick Law Olmsted and the Origin of National Parks, by Dennis Drabelle

Architects of an American Landscape: Henry Hobson Richardson, Frederick Law Olmsted and the Reimagining of America's Public and Private Spaces, by Hugh Howard

Olmsted and Yosemite: Civil War, Abolition, and the National Park Idea by Rolf Diamant & Ethan Carr (due out March 2022)

Before Central Park, by Sara Cedar Miller (due out June 2022.) Miller's thoroughly researched history reviews two and a half centuries of the land that became Central Park. The park's prior residents and events include Indigenous peoples, the early Dutch and English families, the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, the African American settlement of Seneca Village, Irish and German immigrant farmers, and the Motherhouse of Catholic sisters and students. The book also narrates the two-decades-long struggle to realize Central Park from concept to creation and includes the beginnings of Frederick Law Olmsted's long and celebrated career.

Films About Frederick Law Olmsted and Olmsted Parks

Frederick Law Olmsted: Designing America—Produced and Directed by Lawrence Hott. I originated this project, served as content provider and Consulting Producer. A production of Florentine Films/Hott Productions and WNED Buffalo/Toronto, the original 60-minute PBS film and additional video material and select reading can be viewed at the site below:

<https://www.wned.org/television/wned-productions/wned-history-productions/frederick-law-olmsted-designing-america/>

Another fine film about the Olmsted parks

<https://www.olmstedfilm.org>

There are additional documentaries that focus on the Olmsted park legacies in places such as Upstate New York (Buffalo, Niagara Falls, Rochester) and Louisville.

A (Very) Short List of Recommended Resources

National Association for Olmsted Parks/NAOP: <https://www.olmsted.org/>

Olmsted Online: <https://www.olmstedonline.org/>

Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site/NPS: <https://www.nps.gov/frla/index.htm>

Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted/National Archives: <https://www.archives.gov/nhprc/projects/catalog/frederick-olmsted>

The Cultural Landscape Foundation: <https://www.tclf.org>

Resources Available at Individual Park Systems and Parks

Many Olmsted park systems (Buffalo, Boston, Louisville) and individual parks (Central Park, Prospect Park) have well-resourced conservancies with beautiful, content-rich websites that often include information that is far broader than any one park or collection of parks.

Many smaller parks and clusters of parks have active “friends” groups (Lake Park, Milwaukee, Seattle, Cadwallader Park). Most friends’ groups have websites with wonderful content. Check out these websites...and make contact with these extraordinary park advocates across the nation. The friends group personnel often include professionals and active volunteers -- trained horticulturalists, landscape design practitioners and historians-- who love their park/portfolio of parks and work to maintain and restore these landscapes.