

The
**Prairie
School**
Review

Volume XII, Number 2

Second Quarter, 1975

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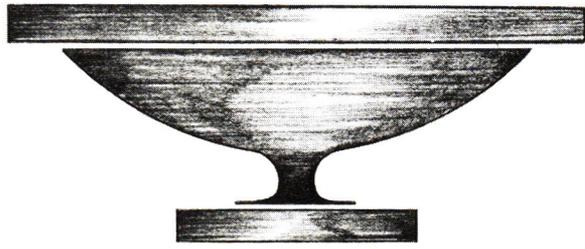
COVER: The main entrance gate to Graceland Cemetery. From here, one can see the picturesque groupings of plants and trees which Ossian Simonds designed while he was superintendent there during 1881-98.

BELOW: This view of one of the gates at Graceland Cemetery is typical of the way Ossian Simonds used local plants to frame vistas.



The photographs in this issue, unless otherwise credited, are all from the archives of the University of Michigan.

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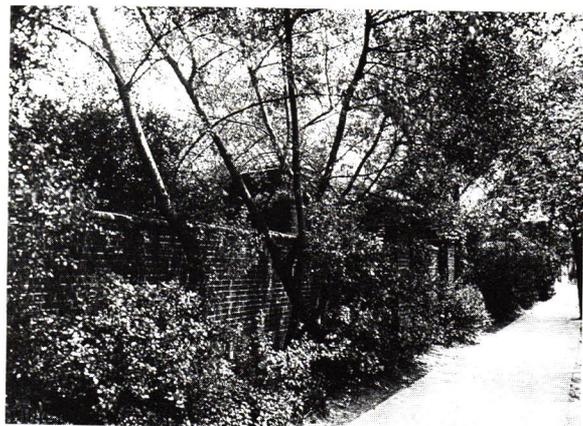
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Plantings by Ossian Simonds at Graceland Cemetery now nearly hide the handsome brick wall at the edge of the property.



From the EDITORS

Recently we attended a national seminar on the conservation and recycling of a particular building type. It was an excellent session, well planned, well attended, and worthwhile to all of the 150 attendees.

One portion of the two day seminar was concerned with a case study where the building in question had been saved by a citizens action group. Two leaders of that group spoke formally to the meeting and were highly complimentary to their architect who shared the speakers platform. This architect, who has advocated restoration/recycling for years, practiced his convictions long before it became popular. The two hours or so we spent were most interesting with professionally prepared slides, eloquent presentations and a clear definition of how to convince an owner to save a building followed by the architect's solution to the problem of reuse. So why do I comment?

At no time during any of that seminar did anyone tell of the enormous amount of highly skilled technical work the architect and his staff did after their recycling design solution was accepted. After the seminar we privately had the privilege of examining the hundred or more working drawings, along with the specifications which accompanied them, all of which were done for this building. It can be mind boggling to see the detail required to convey architectural restoration/recycling plans to a contractor for execution. It is extremely doubtful that the audience that day, save for the dozen architects in attendance, had any idea of the complexity of the architect's task.

We raise this subject because our experience in restoration architecture has been that a substantial number of the dedicated laymen, who are deeply involved in preservation, have little if any concept of what an architect can and must do to bring most preservation projects to reality. We have heard intelligent people ask where they can get "free" architectural services time and time again. These same people couldn't conceive of suggesting that a real estate broker or an attorney forgo fees at the closing of the purchase of a structure worth saving. It seems that most potential clients of the restoration architect have the impression that an architect's services are incidental to all else. This attitude is partially due to the architectural profession's reluctance to discuss time consuming research work or "nitty-gritty" drafting room details with clients.

Restoration architecture is hard grueling work. It takes a special kind of background and training which is not presently taught in our architectural schools. The architect usually teaches himself over a long period and at great personal investment of time and money. Successful recycling of buildings consumes more of an architect's time, and thus commands a higher fee, than new buildings of similar size and use. The results, however, ultimately are a lower cost to the client with the bonus of preserving a piece of our heritage. I suggest we find ways of educating potential clients about the complexities of excellence in restoration architecture.

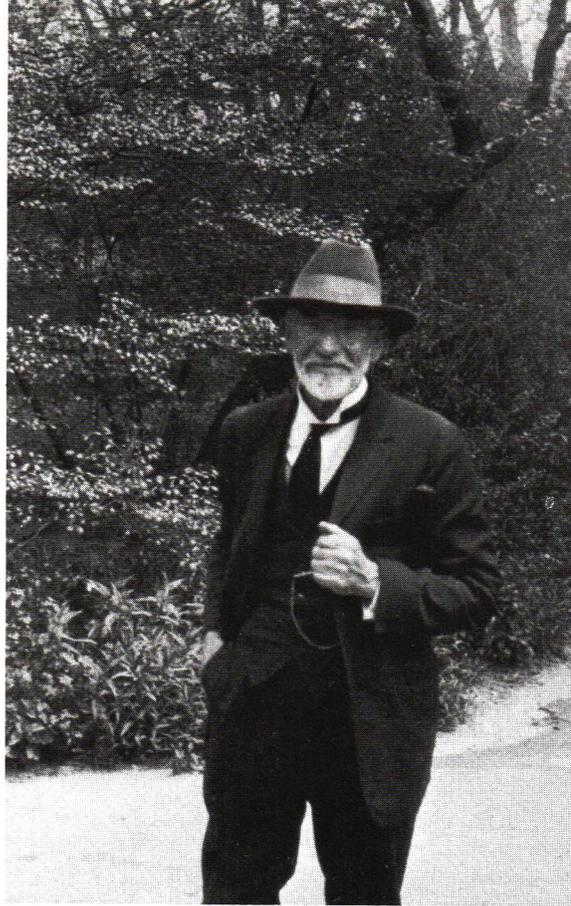
Ossian Simonds: Prairie Spirit in Landscape Gardening

by Mara Gelbloom

Ms. Gelbloom's Master's thesis was written under the direction of Professor Paul E. Sprague at the University of Chicago. This article is derived from that paper. She has served as an intern with the National Trust for Historic Preservation and is presently employed in the field of preservation.

By 1900 Midwesterners felt themselves in a position to challenge the traditional leadership of the East, politically, economically and culturally. Bryan's campaign for the presidency in 1896 was the first political manifestation of the Middle Western challenge to the East, considered 'enemy country.' After 1900 the forces that Bryan had represented were channeled into the progressive movement, whose new leaders drew their critical support from Midwestern businessmen who felt disadvantaged in relation to Eastern 'money power.' At the same time, in Chicago, a civic renaissance was occurring unique in the history of American urbanism. The University of Chicago was established in the 1890's by John D. Rockefeller. The first verses of Carl Sandburg, Edgar Lee Masters, and Vachel Lindsay were published in Harriet Monroe's magazine. Theodore Dreiser was creating his Chicago novels, built around the career of Charles Yerkes, one of the magnates representative of the self-made business tycoons who were to determine much of the character of Chicago architecture by commissioning work to progressive Chicago architects and landscape designers.¹ Bernard Duffey has described the Chicago renaissance in American letters in his book of

¹ A short analysis of the Chicago Renaissance is given in Leonard Eaton, *Landscape Artist in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963, p. 31 and in Eaton, "Jens Jensen and the Chicago School," *Progressive Architecture*, December 1960, p. 146.



Ossian Simonds at Graceland Cemetery.

the same name while H. Allen Brooks has documented the Prairie School of Architecture. However, there existed a third major area in the arts at this time which was fully integral with the renaissance of Chicago's artistic and civic life, but which remains unnoticed: a Prairie School of Landscape Architecture postulated by Professor Wilhelm Miller in a now obscure University of Illinois Agricultural Experiment Station Circular of 1914. The same regional nationalism and a new love for the prairie that had allowed the growth of an overall "new and virile school of Western art"² also inspired the "Prairie Spirit in Landscape Gardening."

Wilhelm Miller is the key figure in the recognition of a Prairie School of Landscape Gardening, for without his writings, the Prairie School Landscape Architecture would have probably been bypassed by contemporaries and certainly would have gone un-

² Wilhelm Miller, "The 'Illinois' Way of Beautifying the Farm," Agricultural Experiment Station Circular #170, Urbana: University of Illinois, Department of Horticulture, 1914, p. 3. "This is the work of a new and virile school of Western art, which believes in 'local color.' Its home is the Cliff Dwellers Club in Chicago. These men no longer fear or despise the prairie; they love it, and are opening our eyes to its true wonder and beauty. Among them are Lorado Taft in sculpture; Hamlin Garland and Nicholas V. Lindsay in poetry; Louis H. Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright in architecture; Frank G. Peyrand and Charles Francis Browne in painting; O. C. Simonds and Jens Jensen in landscape gardening."

recognized today. A native mid-westerner, Miller was a professor of horticulture at Cornell University and editor of *Garden Magazine* from 1905-1911. In 1912 he left the East coast for a position as the head of the landscape extension program at the University of Illinois. Miller was a prolific writer, particularly for *Country Life in America*, of which he was assistant editor. It is through Miller's articles for *Country Life* rather than those in *Garden Magazine*, which are more technical in nature, that it is possible to trace the development of his thought.³ From his earliest articles for *Country Life* in 1903, Miller was seeking a style of gardening unique to America. He even travelled to England in search of a prototype, the result being a series of twelve articles on "What England Can Teach Us About Gardening," published January 1909 to March 1910 in *Country Life*, which appeared in book form in 1911.⁴ In the series of articles Miller suggests that we do not imitate England, but adapt the English naturalistic mode of gardening to American needs: privacy, relaxation, and comfort. According to Miller, "We have failed to get English effects because we have used European material. . . . Therefore I lay down this bold challenge: We can get ninety percent of the English luxuriance in our own life-time by planting our longest-lived native trees and shrubs."⁵ Miller's challenge to design in a naturalistic style with native plants was a bold one, during a time when "showy" foreign plants were "bedded-out" in a formal manner, as a proof of wealth in America's most fashionable estates.

Following the former instructional series on how to attain English effects, Miller moved on to a nine part series on "Successful American Gardens." It is clear from an addendum to "Successful American Gardens, VII," that by 1911 Miller found a style of landscape design which in restoring and recreating regional landscape features and by utilizing local plant and rock materials was completely American.

In the ravines near Lake Forest lovely pictures have been made by saving and intensifying the native arborvitae . . . The naked bluffs that face Lake Michigan have been clothed with locusts and other native trees that keep the soil from

3 In the same way that homemaker magazines were a contributing factor to the development and existence of the prairie school of architecture, journals, particularly *Country Life in America*, were an extremely important factor in the development of the prairie school of landscape architecture.

4 Wilhelm Miller, *What England Can Teach Us About Gardening*, London, Hodder & Stoughten, 1911.

5 Wilhelm Miller, "What England Can Teach Us About Gardening," *Country Life in America*, January 1909, pp. 266-67.

slipping into the lake. At Humboldt Park I saw a prairie river in miniature, its banks clothed with lush, water-loving vegetation. . .

The great landscape artists of the Middle West love the prairie and use its horizontal lines in their art. For instance hawthorns and crab apples are full of horizontal lines and therefore these are used as accent marks on lawns, to frame lake vistas and to reduce the apparent height of buildings that seem too tall. And these artists love the rocks that are occasionally found in prairie rivers. They are stratified rocks and therefore the rock work in Humboldt Park is stratified.

In every part of America we should study nature and make pictures full of local color.⁶

This description of a regional style of landscape gardening is precisely what Miller would later call the "Prairie Spirit in Landscape Gardening." Miller continued his propagandistic efforts for a middle western style of landscape design with "How the Middle West Can Come Into Its Own," in *Country Life's* "Heart-of-the-Country Number," September 15, 1912, devoted exclusively to the Middle West. In this article Miller states that the Middle West is entering a stage of development in landscape gardening where mid-western character or "local color" is considered more desirable than "cosmopolitan material."

At first Western color seems elusive and impossible to define because . . . it generally consists in the absence of well known Eastern features. Sometimes the hills are gone; only flat land is left. Sometimes the evergreen trees are gone; only deciduous plants remain. There are very few western plants of importance that have never been found growing wild in the East. Many are commoner West than East, but the most famous of these and the ones easiest to grow are now in the gardens of the world and people forget that they are of Western origin.

Every new country imitates the old one from which its settlers came. The East is now busy copying England and Italy, while the Mid-West is joyfully spending its millions copying the East. Neither community will find itself until a century has proved the superiority of natives; and until natives are everywhere dominant.⁷

In the same Middle West issue of 1912 Miller identifies two primary practitioners of what he calls

6 Miller, "Successful American Gardens VII," *Country Life in America*, September 1, 1911, p. 38.

7 Miller, "How the Middle West Can Come Into Its Own," *Country Life in America*, September 15, 1912, p. 12.

the prairie school of landscape design: Ossian Cole Simonds and Jens Jensen. In "What is the Matter with Our Water Gardens?" Miller discusses Jens Jensen's creation of a new type of water feature — the prairie river.⁸ In "A New Kind of Western Home" Miller praises O.C. Simonds' Sinissippi Farm as the first Western country estate which did not copy the East in that the landscape design was adapted to the local topography. At Sinissippi Farm, Simonds' work exemplified a regional style of landscaping which Miller had been seeking for five years.⁹

Although Miller equated Jensen and Simonds by proclaiming them both practitioners of regional landscape design, it was Simonds who originated the middle western movement in landscape gardening.¹⁰ Despite this fact, Simonds, a noted designer and writer during his lifetime, has received scarcely any recognition since his death.¹¹ The prevailing belief is that it was Jens Jensen who invented the mid-western style of landscape architecture, but, in fact, it was Simonds who began designing landscapes in harmony with the regional environment four years before Jensen even emigrated to America.

Ossian Cole Simonds was born in west Michigan country, now a part of Grand Rapids, Michigan, on November 11, 1855. According to Simonds, it was his early life on his father's farm that influenced his feelings with regard to the character of parks. Simonds' early appreciation of nature would provide the foundation for his future appreciation of the native landscape. Simonds entered a civil engineering program at the University of Michigan in 1874. During the last two years at Michigan he switched to the study of architecture under William Le Baron Jenney. Insufficient appropriations for the department of architecture caused Jenney to abandon teaching and he returned to Chicago. Simonds thus graduated as a civil engineer in 1878. He was first employed by Jenney in Chicago.

8 Miller, "What is the Matter With Our Water Gardens?," *Country Life in America*, June 15, 1912.

9 Miller, "A New Kind of Western Home," *Country Life in America*, April 1913.

10 Miller, "Prairie Spirit in Landscape Gardening." Agricultural Experiment Station Circular #1841, Urbana, University of Illinois, 1915, p. 3.

11 Mark Peisch, *The Chicago School of Architecture*. New York, Random House, 1964, p. 88 is the only contemporary author to recognize Simonds stating: "Graceland Cemetery was planned on a large scale and as a spatial entity. As such it is a significant venture in planning. Because of his preference for the informal use of Mid-Western varieties in his planting schemes and his insistence on a plan in sympathy with the environment of the Middle West, Simonds must be considered a pioneer in the development of what became a regional school of landscape architecture."

In 1878 Jenney's firm sent Simonds to survey land for a lagoon in Graceland Cemetery. At this time Bryan Lathrop, the wealthy philanthropist and devotee of landscape art,¹² was president of the Graceland Cemetery Association. Lathrop was to be the second decisive influence upon Simonds. Lathrop had had an early love for the English naturalistic school of landscape gardening and believed in the continued development of the art along naturalistic lines. He felt that landscape gardening had the most potential for further development of any of the fine arts and would therefore be a fine profession for any talented young man to pursue. It was Lathrop's vision to make Graceland a great park cemetery. When a large additional area of land was acquired Lathrop engaged Simonds to engineer the enlargement of the cemetery, originally established in 1861 and laid out in sub-division form. In the meantime Simonds, still an aspiring architect, joined with William Holabird, a draftsman in the Jenney firm, to form the firm of Holabird and Simonds which later became Holabird, Simonds and Roche in an association which lasted from 1880 to 1883. It appeared that Simonds would pursue his architectural interests, but as a result of Lathrop's influence he became interested in landscaping the cemetery after the completion of the engineering. Simonds was given the superintendency of the cemetery in 1881 with the full authority to develop it. He remained in this position until 1898 when he became a member of the Board of Managers of the cemetery and consulting landscape architect.¹³

Simonds became so well known for his naturalistic design at Graceland Cemetery that Chicago's wealthiest families demanded his services to design naturalistic grounds for their estates. Simonds thus established an office in Buena Park at the cemetery founding O.C. Simonds and Company in 1903.

Unfortunately a complete examination of Simonds' work and role in the history of landscape architecture is no longer possible. Simonds' papers, kept at the Buena Park office and at the Nichols

12 Lathrop's opinions on landscape architecture are contained in the appendix of Simonds' book: Ossian Cole Simonds, *Landscape Gardening* New York, MacMillan, 1920.

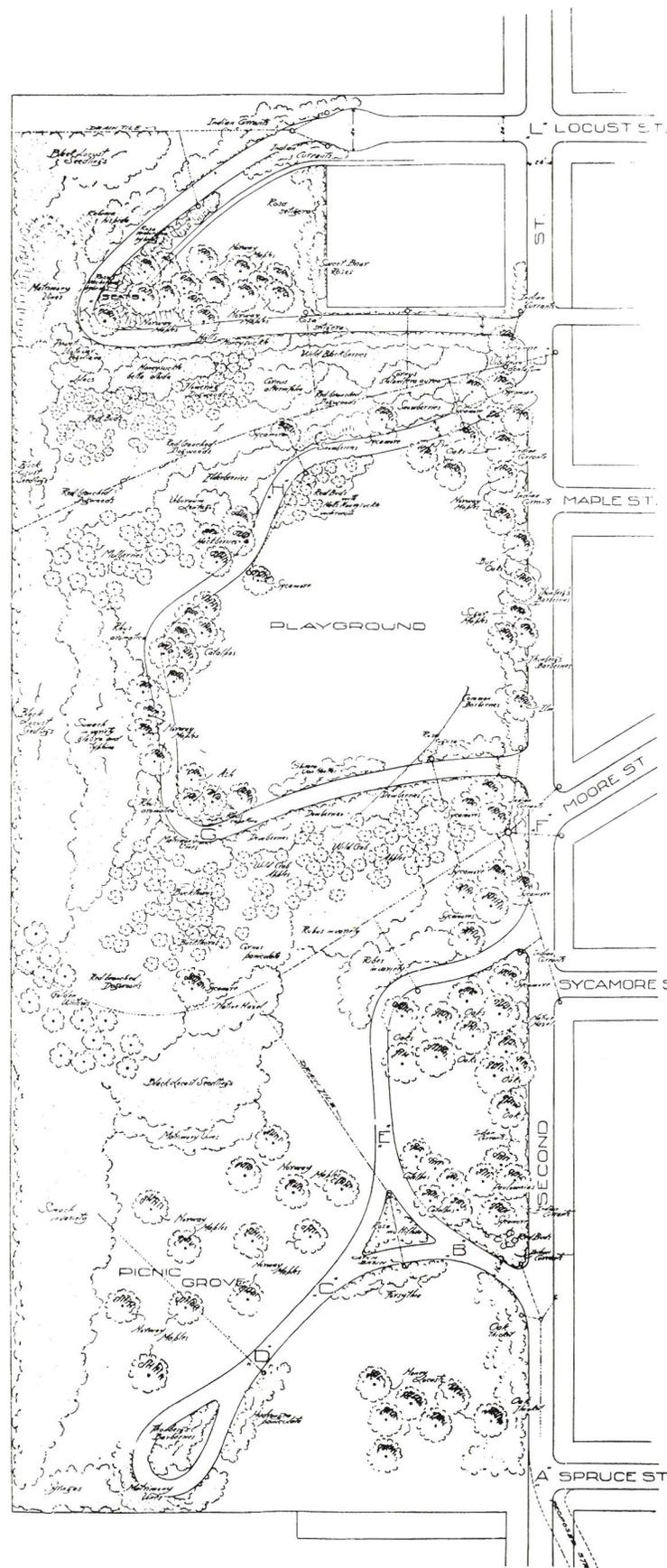
13 There is no source of complete biographical information on Simonds. The preceding information concerning his life and work was culled from the National Encyclopedia of American Biography and several obituaries. There are discrepancies in the dates given by these sources so that chronological information may not be exactly accurate. The information that Simonds worked on the design of University of Maryland was derived from reprints of correspondence in the Olmsted papers of the Library of Congress sent to the author. There is apparently extensive correspondence between Simonds and Olmsted in the Olmsted files which could provide clues to Simonds' other work.

Arboretum, have been needlessly destroyed. Grace-land Cemetery has not received proper maintenance and his original planting arrangements no longer exist. The firm of O.C. Simonds and Co., which became Simonds and West in 1918, has no successors.

Simonds is credited with having designed landscapes across the country, but so far only a small part of his work can be pieced together. Simonds was responsible for the design of Riverview Park, Hannibal, Missouri; Washington Park, Springfield, Illinois; Frick Park, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; parks in Dixon, Illinois; parks in Quincy, Illinois; several parks in Madison, Wisconsin; the Nichols and Morton Arboretums; the grounds of the Universities of Maryland and Iowa, at Ames; the company town of Kincaide, Illinois; the layout of Fort Sheridan, Illinois; the original estates of Lake Forest; twenty-seven homes and several parks in Winnetka; and the grounds of the Winnetka Golf Club, now a city golf course. Simonds is also credited with the extension of Lincoln Park, although the date of his work there is not known and could not be located in park records. There is a record of Simonds having been elected gardener for Lincoln Park from 1908-1911, appointed consulting landscape gardener in 1912, and of having received a commission for the preliminary landscape designs of the Field Museum. Among Simonds' notable estate designs were Governor Frank Lowden's Sinissippi Farm and Anton G. Hodenpyle's estate at Locust Valley, Long Island. Simonds was active in national landscape organizations having been one of the founding members of the American Society of Landscape Architects and its president from 1913-14. His professional and personal attitude stood in extreme contrast to that of Jensen who "attacked" Eastern practitioners and resigned from the ASLA after a brief membership.¹⁴ Simonds was also a founder of the first four year professional landscape architecture program in the midwest, established at the University of Michigan in 1909. He was active in the national cemetery association and continued to design cemeteries throughout his career, being esteemed as the foremost cemetery designer during his lifetime. Simonds died in Chicago, November 20, 1931.

Simonds' philosophy of landscape design can be reduced to two major components: Picturesque principles in arranging his landscapes and the use of native plants. In using native species transplanted from the countryside to man-made landscapes, Simonds was an innovator. From Miller's account of

14 For the 'Eastern' opinion of Jens Jensen as a landscape architect see Norman Newton, *Design on the Land*. Cambridge, Harvard, 1971, p. 433.



Plan for Sunset Hill Park in Quincy, Illinois. Plan courtesy of the Quincy Park District.

Simonds' work in Graceland Cemetery, it is clear that the landscape architect was using native plants as early as 1880:

It is more than a mere cemetery for it is full of spiritual suggestion and its wonderful effects produced by trees and shrubs native to Illinois have profoundly influenced the planting of home grounds. In 1880 Mr. Simonds began to transplant from the wilds the common Illinois species of oak, maple, hornbeam . . . and the like. . . . All the species named are nowadays called "stratified plants," but there was no talk then of "repetition," or even "restoration." The guiding spirit was that respect for the quieter beauties of native vegetation which comes to every cultured person . . .¹⁵

15 Miller, "Prairie Spirit in Landscape Gardening," p. 2 substantiated by a letter from Harlowe O. Whittemore to the author, May 29, 1974. Mr. Whittemore was a close friend of Simonds and was trained in his office in the summer of 1914. Mr. Whittemore also knew Wilhelm Miller quite well, having worked for him during a brief period when Miller attempted to open a landscape firm in Detroit in the summer of 1919 as well as having been offered a job by Miller in 1914 upon graduation from University of Michigan's MLA program. Mr. Whittemore is a retired member of the landscape architecture faculty at the University of Michigan and was director of the Nichols Arboretum there.

Simonds transplanted native species to the "landscape lawn cemetery," originated by Adolph Strauch at Spring Grove Cemetery, Cincinnati, in 1869, where the designer eliminated fences, railings, gravel walks and obtrusive monuments. Simonds was thus able to implement his design on a continuous surface, whereas in the original park cemeteries visible boundaries interfered with the unity of the landscape design.

Simonds' naturalism in cemetery design was part of an overall philosophy which is well summed up by the title of an address delivered at the University of Illinois, January 12, 1922, "Nature as The Great Teacher." It was a consequence of his belief that Nature is the best teacher of the landscape artist that Simonds created a regional style of landscape design. Thus in the address Simonds stated:

Nature teaches what to plant. By going to neighboring woods and seeing what trees and shrubs they contain, one can tell pretty well what trees will do well in any given locality . . .

In making a planting design for any given territory, one should seek to retain the local

No artificial boundaries break up the continuous landscape in this winter view of Spring Grove Cemetery designed by Adolph Strauch in 1869. Strauch was a predecessor of Simonds who reworked this important site using native species to demonstrate his philosophy of landscape design.



character, and this he can do very largely by using indigenous plants.

However Simonds did not believe in the haphazard choice of plant arrangements found in nature and emphasized that a proper selection of the material and arrangements which nature offers must be made, for "While Nature is the best teacher and does some things incomparably well, she does not always produce the most artistic effect, at least from man's point of view."¹⁶ Simonds' statement "it is the perfection of art to conceal art,"¹⁷ thus expresses his belief that while it is in the landscape gardener's job to skillfully arrange the materials of nature, his artifice should never be visible in the recreation of the natural landscape.

Simonds' ideas emerged out of the English and early American landscape tradition. Simonds derived from that background Picturesque principles which determined the arrangement of his predominantly native plants. Simonds designed his landscapes as a series of pictures and felt that the artistic landscape should be beautiful enough to paint or photograph from every angle.

What power has the landscape painter? He depicts scenery upon canvas . . . The landscape-gardener works in the same way. He studies the out-of-doors. He looks at nature on lines usually varying but a few degrees from the horizontal. He notes the sky lines, the masses of foliage, the lights and shadows, the varying colors and shapes of leaves and flowers, the lay of the land, the reflections in the water. He learns the things that make a view pleasing and then when he grades land, plants trees, shrubs, and flowers, introduces water, rocks, or other objects, he makes use of the pleasing effects he has learned to produce . . . pleasing scenery appropriate to the locality. His canvas . . . is the sky . . . Against this canvas, he plants trees and other objects to form a pleasing composition, a picture if you will. . .¹⁸

But Simonds realized the creation of naturalistic, local landscapes not only through his use of Picturesque principles and native plants, but also through his introduction of sculptural form.¹⁹ In the purely pictorial landscape the smooth surface of

lawn, diversified by groupings of plants, acts as the flowing norm. In Simonds' sculptural landscapes the foliage mass of molded surface is the undulating norm which can be relieved by sinuous ribbons of grass, pavement, or water. His sculptural landscape possessed a lineal quality which forced the land back in a direction of quiet recession. The recession-al quality was intended to create a sense of surprise and mystery which Simonds believed to exist in the natural landscape. Simonds differentiated the landscape through sculptural massing, composed of native plants, resulting in microcosmic worlds of local color that were elements of the prairie itself. Within these worlds Simonds gave great consideration to the details of skyline and the effects of shape, form, color and contrast of landscape features, in different seasons, times of day and types of weather, espousing the Picturesque viewpoint that Nature should be consulted for the details of landscape arrangement.

Simonds understood the contradiction inherent in the human position in a prairie landscape; that the infinity of the prairie drew one toward the horizon while, at the same time, it repelled one away. It was this ambiguity of the human position in relation to the prairie and Simonds' desire to give the prairie meaning in terms of human measure, that became the primary motivating force in prairie design.²⁰ In order to endow the prairie with a measure that could be grasped by the human intellect, Simonds differentiated the essential components of the prairie landscape. Miller remarks that prairie scenery may be reduced to two units: the broad view and the long view; the former suggesting infinity and power, the latter the finite, more intimate and human view of the prairie. Miller considered Simonds the master of the long view created by a narrow opening between vegetation blocked by an open or terminal vista. Miller cited the long view at Graceland Cemetery as one of the most "inspiring" in America.²¹ Simonds' design of Graceland Cemetery was thus unique, not only because of his use of native species, but also because Simonds introduced a spatial design in harmony with the Middle Western landscape.

Simonds succeeded in introducing movement into his landscape through the differentiation of a continuous series of spaces whose character was defined by sculptural form of native vegetation and whose arrangement took into consideration the spectator's movement through the landscape.²²

20 *Ibid.*

21 Miller, "The Prairie Spirit in Landscape Gardening," p. 3.

22 Werle, *op. cit.*

16 Ossian Cole Simonds, *Landscape Gardening*. New York, MacMillan Co., 1920, p. 63.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 61.

18 *Ibid.*, pp. 4-6.

19 Robert William Werle, *A Historical Review and Analysis of the Iowa State University Landscape from 1858-1966*, pp. 40-46. Unpublished MA thesis. Werle is the only author besides Miller, to give an analysis of Simonds work. He defines Simonds' sculptural form.

Simonds was aware that "unlike painting, which appears substantially the same from different points of view, the perfect home, and its grounds, should form a combination of pictures changing with the position of the observer."²³ A Winnetka garden where Simonds designed a series of four outdoor salons exemplified his spatial treatment. The salons or "sylvan living-rooms" leading from the house to the country through flowery glades and returning to the house by woodland trails, encompassed only five or six acres. In order to create as large a sense of space as possible and to preserve the existing landscape, each natural enclosure was carved out of the forest and differentiated by size and shape. The rooms contracted at either end to suggest a natural door, opening into vistas of the other rooms. The first room, articulated with a swimming pool, could be seen from the back porch, another with a miniature brook gave way to a broad view of the country. Simonds, who typically never took credit for his innovative ideas, insisted that there was nothing new about his design of this landscape and insisted that he used old and well known principles. But although Simonds' arrangement of "pictures," dissolving, one into the next, can be traced to Picturesque theory, Simonds did introduce a new spatial format articulated by sculptural form which intrinsically emphasized the experience of movement through the landscape.²⁴

Simonds' most direct link with early landscape tradition was through Horace William Shaler Cleveland who brought these traditions to the West. It is likely that the two landscape architects were acquainted because when Cleveland retired in 1895, the Quincy Park Commission asked Simonds to take over for him as landscape architect for the parks of Quincy, Illinois. According to Miller the parks at Quincy are in fact Simonds' first work which suggests restoration of the natural landscape, an idea continually stressed in Cleveland's writings.²⁵

Cleveland was originally in landscape practice in Boston in association with Robert Morris Copeland. In 1856 Cleveland and Copeland published "A Few Words on Central Park," which may have initiated the competition for the design of Central Park. In their pamphlet Cleveland expressed himself in terms of early design philosophies by the American landscape gardener Andrew Jackson Downing, and the English landscape gardener John Claudius Loudon. Although Cleveland and Copeland lost the

23 Simonds, "Home Grounds," *House Beautiful*, March 1899, p. 169.

24 Miller, "A Series of Outdoor Salons," p. 139.

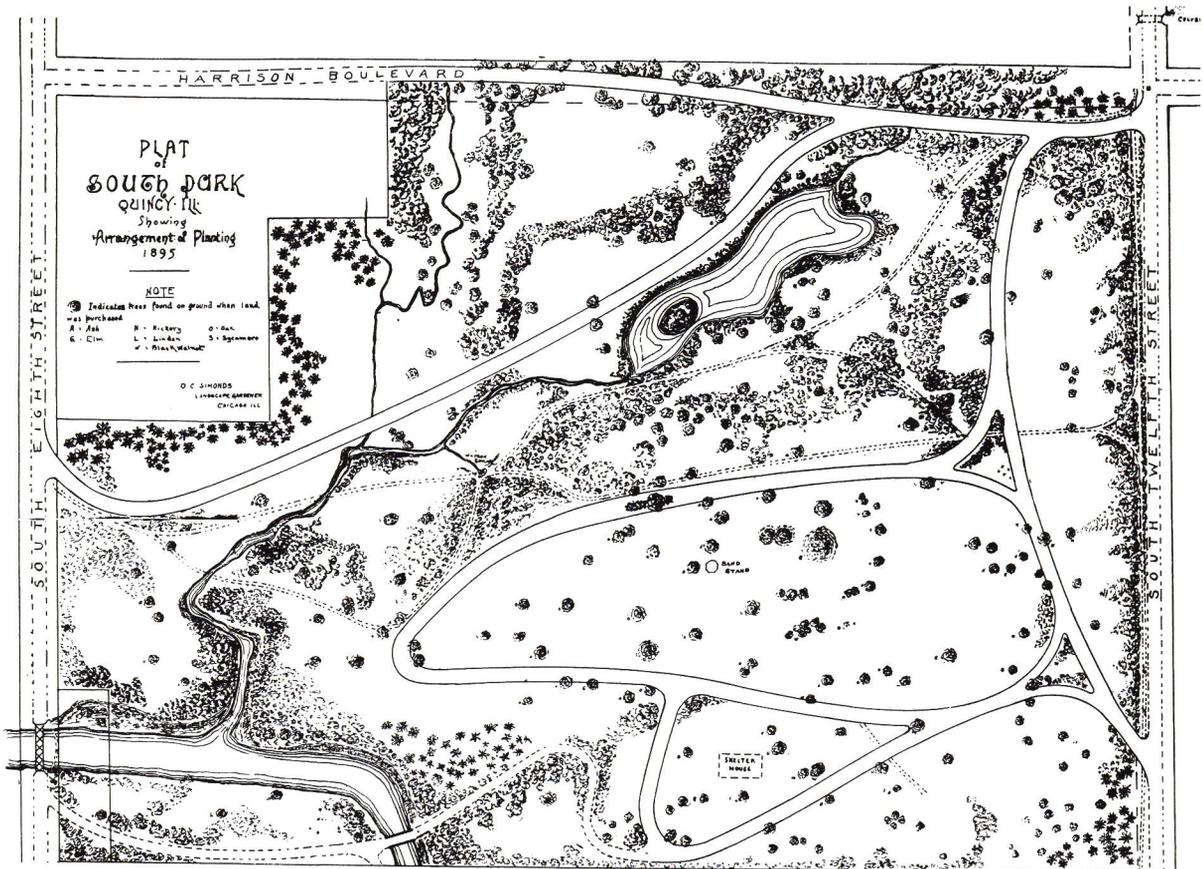
25 Miller, "Prairie Spirit in Landscape Gardening," p. 3.

Central Park design competition to Olmsted and Vaux, he and Olmsted remained good friends, and frequently corresponded on matters of professional as well as personal interest. In 1869 Cleveland moved his practice to Chicago thinking that the Midwest would be the best place to promote and establish his ideas about preserving the natural features of landscapes, which was in opposition to the prevailing conception of landscape gardening as an art of ornamental embellishment. This idea of relating the original layout to natural landscape features was espoused by Downing and Olmsted, but Cleveland's innovation was to conceive of applying this idea to Western landscapes. Cleveland's principles of landscape design as related to the West were contained in three publications: *Public Grounds of Chicago; how to give them Character and Expression* of 1869; *A Few Hints on Landscape Gardening in the West*, 1871, intended as an announcement of the availability of Cleveland's professional services; and *Landscape Architecture as Applied to the Wants of the West*, 1873, now considered a radical document in the history of town planning.²⁶ But although in *Public Grounds of Chicago* Cleveland asserts that each city possesses a unique character "resulting from the nature of the situation, and the topography of its surroundings as well as its history and growth," and stated that affecting the Picturesque on mid-western land would be so artificial as to appear "ridiculous," Cleveland considered the flatness of the prairie land monotonous and thus a "deficiency." Ossian Cole Simonds may have derived the idea of preservation and enhancement of local topography from Cleveland, but Simonds was to introduce the idea of local mid-western character as a positive attribute.

In 1872 Cleveland began to carry out the plans for the South Park System in Chicago designed by Frederick Law Olmsted in 1869. Like Cleveland, Olmsted had recognized that the development and elaboration of the natural landscape would be more suitable than the artificial imposition of an area of highly picturesque character. But he, too, did not appreciate the inherent qualities of the prairie landscape, having placed the prairie meadow in Central Park and in South Park, not because of its inspirational value, but as a useful recreational feature.

The first obvious defect of the site is that of its flatness. That this is to be regretted is undeniable. Yet it is a mistake to suppose that a

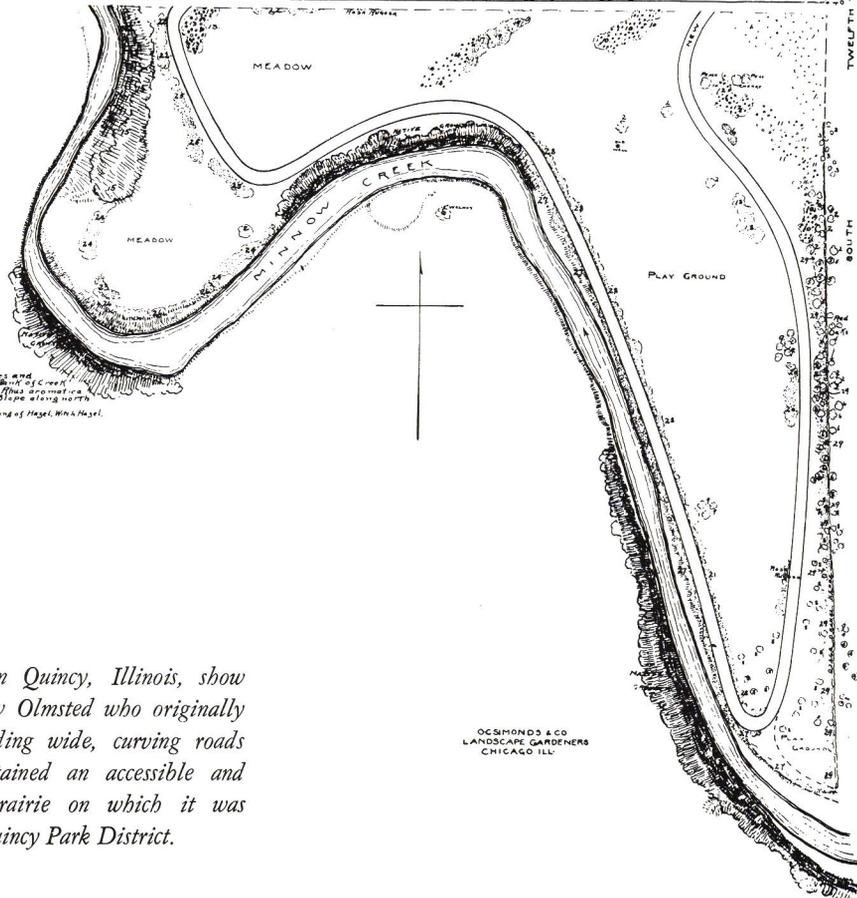
26 Roy Lubove, in his introduction to Horace William Shaler Cleveland, *Landscape Architecture as Applied to the Wants of the West*. Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1965, discusses the significance of Cleveland's ideas for regional planning.



PLAN OF 18 ACRES ADDITION
TO
SOUTH PARK
QUINCY-ILL.
1904

— EXPLANATION —

- 1 Pines
- 2 Elms
- 3 Norway Spruces
- 4 Sugar Maples
- 5 White Spruces
- 6 Starling Oaks
- 7 Elm Oaks
- 8 Pine Oaks
- 9 Liriodendrons
- 10 Wild Cat Apples
- 11 Red Dicks
- 12 Ornamental Peaches
- 13 Flowering Dogwoods
- 14 Sycamores
- 15 Laurel Seedlings
- 16 Norway Spruces
- 17 Yuccas
- 18 Norway Spruces
- 19 Norway Spruces
- 20 Rose Setons
- 21 Sweet Olive Bushes
- 22 High Bush Cranberries
- 23 Wild Dogwoods
- 24 Indian Currants
- 25 Elderberries
- 26 Indian Currants, Matrimony Vines and Straggling Vines to be planted in bands of Green
- 27 Indian Currants, Matrimony Vines, and Straggling Vines to be planted on slope along north side of Drive
- 28 Undergrowth of Native Shrubs, consisting of Hazel, Witch Hazel, Dogwoods, etc.



These plans for South Park in Quincy, Illinois, show Simonds' debt to Frederick Law Olmsted who originally designed it in 1869. By providing wide, curving roads around large meadows he maintained an accessible and informal area related to the prairie on which it was constructed. Plan courtesy of the Quincy Park District.

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considerable extent of nearby flat ground is inadmissible or undesirable in a great park, or that it must be overcome, at any cost, by vast artificial elevations and depressions, or by covering all the surface with trivial objects of interest. The Central Park of New York . . . is one of the most costly constructions ever made for public, open air recreation. The view just expressed may then be thought to be strengthened by the fact that one of the largest items of its cost, and unquestionably, one of the most profitable, was that for reducing considerable portions to a prairie-like simplicity . . . Chicago in the future, would no doubt be glad if there should have been provided for it, somewhere within the thousand acres of its principle park, a considerable district of a highly picturesque character, a mountain glen with a dashing stream and cascades, for example, but agreeable as this might be if it were to be obtained by the simple appropriation and development of conditions already existing . . . it would, after all, in a thoroughly well ordained park, be an episode, not essential, and far less useful than a district of low rolling prairie.²⁷

Thus although there exists a striking difference between Simonds' approach to landscape design and that of Olmsted and Cleveland in that Simonds drew inspiration from the local topography in creating his landscapes, Olmsted's basic principles were, nonetheless, adopted by prairie landscape architects. His principles have been summed up as follows: 1) avoid formal design except in very limited areas about the buildings 2) keep open lawns and meadows in large central areas 3) provide circulation by means of organically curving and wide sweeping roads and paths 4) place the principle road so that it will approximately circumscribe the whole area.²⁸ Olmsted, in turn, derived these principles from English Picturesque theories and precedents which were originally introduced into this country by designers of the romantic park cemeteries, the first of which was Mt. Auburn in Cambridge designed by Dr. Jacob Bigelow in 1831.²⁹ The park

27 "Landscape Architect's Report to the Commissioners of South Park," 1873, pp. 12-30, in *Chicago South Park Commissioners Annual Report*, vol. I. 1871-1890.

28 Olmsted's principles are summed up by Mary Louise Gothein, *History of Garden Art*, v. II, London, Dent, 1920, p. 428.

29 Jacob Bigelow was a doctor of medicine who apparently had some fondness for landscaping. He may have actually been responsible for the introduction of Picturesque landscape to America, but in his *A History of the Cemetery of Mt. Auburn*, Boston, Monroe, 1860, he gives no clue as to where he derived his ideas.

cemeteries, used for family outings and grand celebrations, provided the precedent for the establishing of public parks in this country. Andrew Jackson Downing was the first American to advocate public parks, pointing to the success of the park cemeteries as justification. Downing solidified interest in the English Picturesque landscape in America through his *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening Adapted to North America* published in 1841. Olmsted, who admired Downing's work, had corresponded with him on matters of professional interest. In addition to these contacts with the originators of American Picturesque landscapes, Olmsted was also acquainted with the writings of English Picturesque theorists having read Price's *Essays on the Picturesque* and Gilpin's *Forest Scenery* as a boy; "books of the last century which I esteem so much more than any published since, as stimulating the exercises of my judgment in matters of my art, that I put them into the hands of my pupils as soon as they come into our office."³⁰ When in England, in 1850, Olmsted also visited English picturesque landscape parks, remarking especially upon Sir Joseph Paxton's Birkenhead Park.³¹

30 Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., Theodora Kimball ed., *Frederick Law Olmsted, Landscape Architect*. New York, Blom, 1970. "Study and Reading."

31 Olmsted described Birkenhead Park, in detail, in *Ibid.*, "European Travel."



An example of Simonds' use of the "long view" at Graceland Cemetery where a narrow opening into space is provided by the curving roadway cut between masses of vegetation.

Mature Picturesque theory originated with Sir Uvedale Price in *Essays on the Picturesque* published in 1894. Price advocated "Counterfeit neglect" of the landscape garden in order to emulate nature in its wild, undisturbed state. The standard for this idealized state of nature were the seventeenth century landscape paintings of Salvator Rosa and Claude Lorrain. Humphrey Repton was the major landscape gardener practicing when Price's work appeared. Repton's landscapes combined the characteristics of Price's Picturesque: "roughness and sudden variation joined to irregularity," with the features of the landscapes of his immediate predecessor, Capability Brown: an encircling belt of trees to contain the view from within, admitting vistas when agreeable, the use of William Kent's invention of clumps of beeches to enliven the middle distance, a serpentine lake or artificial river with naked banks, and the sweep of the park lawn up to the walls of the house.³² Brown's landscapes, although arranged according to Picturesque principles, were a reflection of Edmund Burke's definition of the beautiful put forth in his *Enquiry into the Origin of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, published in 1759 where he states that the two contrasting manifestations of visible objects are the vastness and obscurity of the sublime and the smoothness and gentleness of the beautiful. Burke actually created the framework for Price's Picturesque in that Price added the new visual category of the Picturesque to Burke's already established Sublime and Beautiful. To Brown's practices and Price's theories, Repton added the concept of utility. He was the first landscape gardener who insisted that Price's picturesque landscape ideal must be modified to coincide with considerations of "propriety and convenience."³³ Repton was in partnership for several years with John Nash, the architect of Picturesque country houses. Repton designed landscapes for Nash's country estates bringing together Picturesque architecture and landscape architecture.

The importance of the theories of Price and the practices of Repton lay in the tremendous impact their precedents were to have on the subsequent evolution of architecture and landscape architecture. The idea that Nature provided the standard for Picturesque intricacy and variety, the conception of the landscape as a series of pictures, and the assertion that the home should be treated as an

32 George Chadwick, *The Park and The Town*. New York, Praeger, 1966, pp. 20-21.

33 Humphry Repton's letter to Sir Uvedale Price in London, J.C. ed., *The Landscape Gardening and Landscape Architecture of the late Humphry Repton, Esq., being his entire work in these subjects*. London, 1840, p. 115.

outgrowth of the landscape, were put forth by Price and epitomized by the Repton-Nash partnership. Olmsted thus derived his knowledge of Picturesque landscape design from Downing's theories, from his visits to English parks, and from English theoreticians. Central Park, Olmsted's first interpretation of the former precedents, became famous almost at once, launching the 'park era' in the United States.

Simonds considered Olmsted the "greatest authority" on landscape art and frequently Simonds' articles are hardly more than a series of quotations from Olmsted. Simonds who also refers to Repton and Downing, in his writings, derived three major principles of design from these earlier landscape gardeners. Simonds took the concept of the "Beautiful" in landscape design, from Repton.³⁴ Simonds believed that the landscape must be designed with regard for comfort, convenience and safety. In respect to these considerations he thought landscape design more closely related to architecture than painting. Simonds also followed Repton and Downing, in opposition to Price, in insisting that the object of landscape gardening is not to produce a "fac-simile of wild nature" but to preserve only the "leading character" or "spirit" of the place,³⁵ a criteria which related back to the insistence upon the modification of the landscape ideal to meet considerations of utility and convenience.

Simonds' design methods may thus be traced to Picturesque landscape tradition. However his preference for using native species of plants to achieve local color in landscape design cannot be associated with the English naturalistic landscape school. The arrangement of vegetation rather than the types of plants were stressed in the writings of Price and Repton. However towards the end of Repton's thirty years of practice his interest changed from dealing with the landscape park, which eliminated the flower garden from its confines, to a greater preoccupation with the flower garden and a growing insistence on the use of definite plants in particular ways.³⁶

John Claudius Loudon took up Repton's "plant fancying" and combined it with new horticultural techniques to produce what Loudon called the "Gardenesque" style of landscape design.³⁷ Loudon's Gardenesque was concerned with the cultiva-

34 Letter from Harlowe O. Whittemore to the author, June 24, 1974.

35 Andrew Jackson Downing, *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening adapted to North America*. New York, Judd, 1859, pp. 50-51.

36 Chadwick, *op. cit.*, chapter 3.

37 *Ibid.*

tion and display of the individual plant rather than obscuring the single plant in masses of vegetation, as the Picturesque landscape gardeners had done. But unlike Simonds' insistence on native plants or on those plants which had already been introduced to the rural countryside, Loudon based his style on exotic plants newly introduced to England at the beginning of the nineteenth century.³⁸ In his *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* Downing combined Repton's Picturesque principles with Loudon's Gardenesque, advocating the placement of odd, exotic plants throughout naturalistic Picturesque landscapes. This practice soon dominated garden design in America, from the time of Downing's publication in 1841 until a trend toward the use of more naturalistic plants developed. Although in theory Olmsted seems to have advocated the use of native plants, this principle, attributed to Olmsted, is questionable in his practice. In South Park, Chicago, Olmsted wrote that he wanted to "secure a combination of the fresh and healthy nature of the North, with the restful dreamy nature of the South . . ."³⁹ This appears to indicate that although many of Olmsted's principles were adopted by Simonds and Prairie School landscape designers, the use of plants, native to mid-western regions, was introduced solely by Simonds.

A trend, contemporary with Simonds, toward a greater horticultural naturalism in landscape design which may have influenced his work is found in the theories of H.W.S. Cleveland and the English gardeners William Robinson and Gertrude Jekyll. The interest in naturalistic horticulture in the Middle West begins with Cleveland, although he was not as advanced as Simonds in advocating the use of native plants. Cleveland's horticultural preoccupation can be traced directly back to Loudon's Gardenesque. Like Loudon, Cleveland suggested that science and art "be brought into close communication with each other" thus proposing the development of an arboretum for the clear display of trees along a continuous boulevard.⁴⁰ But Cleveland departs from Loudon's conception of an arboretum as a series of odd and exotic individual specimens, in

that he was interested in creating the character of a scene by families of species, although occasional specimens may be introduced to contrast with the group. Cleveland did not specify that the families must be composed of odd and exotic species, thus introducing a design in greater harmony with the Mid-western environment. The naturalistic, horticultural orientation found in Cleveland's theories may then have been taken by Simonds and matured into a landscape style which recreated scenes in the Middle Western landscape through the use of native plants.

Botanical interests and naturalistic tendencies coincide in the theories of William Robinson and Gertrude Jekyll who were frequently quoted, approvingly, by Wilhelm Miller.⁴¹ As Cleveland had done, Robinson also turned back to Loudon's Gardenesque, representing the survival and extension of the purely horticultural bases of the Gardenesque. But at the same time Robinson's theories were at complete variance with the Gardenesque promulgation of the rearing of exotic plants with stoves and the concomitant idea that because the exotic was difficult to grow it was therefore beautiful and desirable.⁴² Robinson, instead, advocated the use of hardy plants that could grow unaided in Nature and the "exquisite and inexhaustible way"⁴³ in which they are naturally arranged, creating the concept of the Wild Garden. However Robinson's theories differed from those of Simonds in that he advocated the use of plants that "are mostly from other countries than our own."⁴⁴ Robinson presented no design theory, using the individual plant as the basis of design, with the consequence of there being as many visual effects as plants. Gertrude Jekyll adopted Robinson's ideas of natural gardening, but as a painter, she considered gardening nothing but art and transformed Robinson's garden anarchy into a unified design concept. Miller knew both Robinson and Jekyll personally, and stated that Robinson had admired Simonds' long view in Graceland Cemetery. It therefore is probable that Simonds and Robinson met and that Simonds may have profited by the ideas of Robinson or Jekyll. Cleveland may have come in contact with Robinson or Jekyll, as well, which may account for his more naturalistic bent in contrast to Loudon's promulgation of exotics. In any case, the ideas of Cleveland, Robinson

38 G. A. Jellicoe, "Consider your Forbears," *Journal of the Institute of Landscape Architecture*, November 1954 mentioned in *ibid.*, p. 56 which states that the double victories of Trafalger and Waterloo gained England access to all parts of the world and precipitated the introduction of exotic plants, welcomed by the wealthy amateur and artisan alike.

39 Olmsted, "Report to the Commissioners of South Park," *op. cit.*, *Chicago South Park Commissioners Annual Report*, p. 12.

40 Horace William Shaler Cleveland, *The Public Grounds of Chicago: how to give them Character and Expression*. Chicago, Lakey, 1869.

41 Jekyll wrote the introduction to Miller's book, *The Charm of English Gardens*, London, Hodder and Stoughton. For information on Jekyll and Robinson see Chadwick, *The Park and the Town*, chapter 10.

42 Chadwick, *op. cit.*, chapter 10.

43 Robinson as quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 244.

44 Robinson as quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 243.

or Jekyll may have been absorbed by Simonds and transformed into his unique idea of recreation of the native landscape through the use of native plants.

The conscious symbol of the prairie per se is not strongly expressed in Simonds' writings although Miller stated that Simonds did acknowledge the prairie as a leading motive.⁴⁵ As Miller pointed out, Simonds employed "stratified" plants before the word stratified was applied to native Illinois plants and he restored natural scenery before "restoration" was officially coined to describe the preservation and recreation of natural scenery within the context of the Prairie School.⁴⁶ Thus the ideas and techniques of the Prairie Spirit in Landscape Gardening were first expressed in Simonds' work and philosophy, and these were later labelled by Miller and integrated into a theoretical construct. It remained for Jens Jensen to bring Simonds' ideas to maturity and to publicize them as his own. An example of this phenomena is the fact that although Simonds planted the hawthorn as early as 1880 at Graceland Cemetery, the hawthorn became, in the public mind, Jensen's personal symbol for the horizontal lines of the prairie.

According to Jensen's own account in a *Saturday Evening Post* interview of 1930 when he had his first opportunity to design a garden as foreman of gardeners in the West Parks of Chicago in about 1887-1888, he laid out "as formal a plantation as was ever made" and was quite proud of it because "at that time there was nothing else done."⁴⁷

Jensen was born in Denmark, September 13, 1860, and emigrated to the United States in 1884. He worked successively as a laborer on a celery plantation in Florida, on a farm in Iowa, and by 1886 Jensen was working in a soap factory in Chicago which he left for a job as a laborer in the West Parks.

When Jensen moved away from the formal design that he initially espoused as head gardener for the West Parks, he stated that he did so because he found that foreign plants did not thrive in the native soil. He also cited his growing appreciation of the native landscape as a reason for the abandonment of formal design.⁴⁸ Jensen began spending all of his

45 Miller, "Prairie Spirit in Landscape Gardening," p. 3 states that "those who acknowledge the prairie as a leading motive in their work are, however not numerous at the time this paper is prepared," implying that Simonds personally acknowledged to Miller that the prairie was his leading motive.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

47 Ragna Eskil, "Natural Parks and Gardens as told by Jens Jensen to the author," *Saturday Evening Post*, March 8, 1930, p. 18.

48 *Ibid.*

spare time botanizing in the country. In 1888 Jensen transplanted a collection of perennial wild flowers from the woods to a corner of Union Park and called his work the American Garden.⁴⁹ At that time Jensen, who characterized his garden as a unique idea, was probably unaware that O.C. Simonds had already introduced midwestern plants at Graceland Cemetery eight years earlier.

In 1900 Jensen was dismissed from his position with the West Park System for attempting to defy political corruption. From then until 1906 when Jensen received his first major commissions to design the grounds of estates of some of Chicago's wealthiest businessmen on the North Shore and at Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, he formulated his design theories which also were to determine his later work. Throughout his career Jensen deviated little from this established norm basically consisting of: features taken directly from the Mid-western landscape as the prairie river, stratified rock work found along the sides of the prairie rivers, emphasis upon and preservation of natural features as ravines, spatial differentiation and continuity from one area to the next, contrast between light and shade, usually in the form of "sun openings" cut through the woods, and presumably the use of native plants.⁵⁰

In 1906, with the advent of a new political administration, Jensen was rehired by the West Park Commission as the superintendent of parks. The parks were in total disrepair and Jensen undertook to redesign Douglas, Garfield and Humboldt Parks, originally laid out by William Le Baron Jenny in 1871. However Jensen's total creation, exemplifying the epitome of his principles was Columbus Park.

In Columbus Park Jensen allowed the shape of the land itself which was formed around an ancient glacial beach to determine the general design of the park.⁵¹ At the foot of the beach Jensen placed a lagoon, symbolic of the prairie rivers. The interior of the park was made into a large meadow symbolizing the prairie landscape. Jensen raised the land, with excavations from the prairie river, to exclude the city to the east. The elevation formed

49 Some sources, as Eaton, state that the American Garden was planted in Washington Park, but in *Ibid.*, Jensen states that it was planted in Union Park.

50 Miller's observations in conjunction with Jensen's plans for the West Park System, discussed later in this paper, bring into question the extent of Jensen's use of native plants, particularly in his early years.

51 A description of Columbus Park by Jensen is found in Jens Jensen, *Siftings and the Major Portion of the Clearing*. Chicago, Ralph Fletcher Seymour, 1956, pp. 75-77.

the bluffs of the river and also made a natural division between the playgrounds, swimming pool and the park. The pool was Jensen's renowned 'swimming hole,' surrounded by limestone cliffs covered by native wild flowers and backed by heavy plantings.⁵² The playgrounds represented a natural meadow with pools and woodland so as to "bring a bit of Illinois landscape" to the city child.

Jensen's design of Columbus Park illustrated that he had a real sense of spatial articulation and could use aesthetic landscape features, which defined spatial entities, to serve practical ends as well. Jensen is noted for the ability to make an area seem much larger than it is in actuality through flowing spatial sections, designed and arranged on the basis of Picturesque principles, which are akin to separate "rooms," hence evoking a sense of surprise and mystery in the transition from one "room" to the next. Even if the observer is stationary Jensen created a sense of movement, for the spectator is always provided with Picturesque views which exhibit undulating areas of ground space in the flowing transition from one zone to the next. Jensen transplanted or recreated features of the native landscape as native plants, the prairie river or stratified rocks. Because of his use of Picturesque principles in the recreation of natural scenes Jensen, heretofore, has been seen as the last figure of the English, naturalistic landscape tradition.⁵³

Yet all of these elements which predominated in Jensen's landscapes were first elucidated in Simonds' work: the recreation of natural scenes, the sense of a larger space than what exists in actuality created by the "sylvan rooms," the sculptural massing and differentiated spatial areas creating a sense of movement, the aura of mystery and surprise which intentionally accompany movement through Simonds' landscapes and Simonds' emphasis upon the artistic elements of landscape composition as light, shade, contrast, and texture. Thus even though in his writings Jensen never credited any outside sources with having influenced his theories of landscape design he profited from contact with Simonds, stating that he admired Simonds' work. It would be difficult to believe that while Jensen spent time exploring the native countryside, searching for garden ideas, he could have failed to notice Grace-

land Cemetery.⁵⁴ By 1904 Simonds and Jensen certainly knew each other as both served on the board of a Special Park Commission assembled to make recommendations for a metropolitan park system, and both men were members of the City Club. Further, Simonds preceded Jensen in his work on the famous Armour estate in Lake Forest which Jensen landscaped in approximately 1909. The extent of the work done by Simonds, and the reason for the termination of his work is not known.⁵⁵ It is also evident from a series of *House Beautiful* articles by Simonds that he had clearly formulated all of his design principles, as well as the idea of transferring native plants from woods to landscape, by 1899 when Jensen was just beginning to formulate his style of landscape design. There is, of course, the possibility of interaction between the two men. Simonds had never claimed to be a purist in the use of native plants, believing in the occasional inclusion of plants that had been introduced to, but had become a part of the rural or natural landscape, as the common lilac or apple tree. But, as evidenced by his plans for the Quincy Park System as time progressed from 1895 to 1913, he used a greater percentage of plants native to the Midwestern landscape.

Jensen, who certainly gave the impression of being an ardent purist, in reality did not use solely native plants as evidenced by several of his plans for the West Park System which he did not begin to design until 1906. Those same plans show that Jensen also becomes progressively purer in the use of native vegetation, perhaps under the continuing influence of Simonds. However as late as 1912 Miller criticized Jensen for using 'Japanese barberry' around a garden lake, which seemed to him too Gardenesque, as well as two other species of foreign plants that belong to the "dangerously showy class."⁵⁶ This observation, in conjunction with the plans for the West Parks, raises questions about Jensen's practice in later years.

In the "Prairie Spirit in Landscape Gardening" the culmination of an entire "Illinois Way" series initiated by Miller in 1913, Miller adopts the ter-

52 Jensen's water feature, which is presumed to be unique, was also designed by Simonds. In Arthur G. Eldredge, "Making a Small Garden Look Large," *Garden Magazine*, February 1924, 1. 334 the author describes a "miniature cliff and water edge of limestone" which appear by the pool. Unfortunately the late date of the article, makes it impossible to tell who actually used the water feature first.

53 Eaton, *Landscape Artist in America*, p. 89.

54 Eaton, interview with Genevieve Gillette, July 4, 1959, "Jensen admired Graceland Cemetery."

55 This information was given to the author by Stephen Christy, Madison, Wisconsin who is in possession of a set of newly discovered Jensen files containing photographs of his work, thought to have been destroyed in a fire at The Clearing. According to Christy, Jensen also visited Sinissippi Farm often.

56 Miller, "What is the Matter with Our Water Gardens?," p. 26.

minology Jensen used in the description of his own work to define the characteristics of the prairie style suggesting that these terms may have been coined by Jensen himself. Miller states that the new Middle Western style is composed of three primary elements: 1) *conservation* of the prairie 2) *restoration* or recreation of miniature prairies and 3) *repetition* of the horizontal lines of the prairies through the use of stratified rocks and plants.⁵⁷ The word spirit is used to denote that it is more than a style; that restoration of the prairie is "poetic," literal restoration or recreation of the regional landscape being impractical. There are three methods of restoration. The Prairie Spirit could be idealized, conventionalized, or symbolized. According to Miller, and Jensen as quoted in Miller, the prairie was idealized inside Jensen's Garfield Park Conservatory through the suggestion of the appearance of the Illinois landscape in ancient geological ages. Jensen also conventionalized the prairie in his Rose Garden in Humboldt Park in that the garden contained no prairie flowers, but he placed hawthorn at the entrance to signify the meeting of the woods and the prairie, and dropped the garden level two feet below eye level so as to give the impression of viewing a continuous expanse of prairie. Jensen symbolized the prairie by means of plants with horizontal branches and flower clusters, most notably the native crab apple and hawthorn, both of which became the symbol of prairie landscape architecture and Jensen in particular. Yet the prairie spirit in landscape gardening, which depended on a new regional pride and love of the prairies, also depended on the English and early American landscape tradition from which Simonds emerged. Jensen was clearly aware of Picturesque theories and precedents, carrying over the Picturesque frame of reference in referring to a view or vista as a "picture." Jensen was also actually in direct contact with English planners and designers as Thomas Mawson and Raymond Unwin, whom he counted as a good friend.⁵⁸ Miller draws his basic design principles and garden ideas from Price, Repton, Downing, Robinson and Jekyll. He believed that the new middle western style lay in the application of "cosmopolitan principles": the open lawn, irregular borders of shrubbery, and the avoidance of straight

lines, in a word the Picturesque, to local material.⁵⁹ Miller recognized that the principles of the Prairie School were a strange admixture of the old and new:

So far as I am aware, America has contributed no new principles of design in any fine art — at least no new ones that are fundamental. . . . Some people believe that the only new things under the sun are . . . new combinations of old principles. Others say that new effects are produced by adapting old principles to new conditions. But the fact of novelty and westernism no honest person, I believe, can deny . . .⁶⁰

The role of Ossian Cole Simonds as the originator of the Prairie Spirit in Landscape Gardening has been totally obscured by the fame of Jens Jensen, who today is generally accorded the full credit for having created a regional style of landscape architecture. The reason for Simonds' obscurity would seem to be that Jensen tended to campaign strongly for his beliefs while the self-effacing Simonds usually submerged his own unique ideas amid quotations from other landscape architects such as Olmsted. Similarly Simonds seemed to have denied being responsible for any innovation, as in the case of the Winnetka "sylvan rooms," attributing his design ideas to "old principles." Jensen's role was to have provided a symbolic construct (which in itself may have contributed to Jensen's popularity) for Simonds' naturalistic regional landscape, thus bringing Simonds' style to maturity and simultaneously providing the concrete factor needed for the postulation and definition of the Prairie Spirit in Landscape Gardening. Ossian Cole Simonds actually represented the culmination of the naturalistic English landscape tradition in this country having completely transformed Price's basic Picturesque tenet of copying Nature to the recreation of natural scenes. Simonds' innovation of creating spatial units and utilizing plants that were integral parts of the Mid-western landscape began the only regional school of landscape architecture in the United States before the turn of the century.

59 Miller, "How the Middle West Can Come Into Its Own," p. 12.

60 Miller, "The Prairie Style of Landscape Architecture," *Architectural Record*, p. 591.

I would especially like to thank Mr. Harlowe O. Whittemore, a personal friend of the late Mr. Simonds for his invaluable information. I would also like to thank Stephen Christy of Madison, Wisconsin for access to the Jensen photographs and Professor Charles Cares at the University of Michigan for providing the only existing slides of Simonds' work, some of which are reproduced in this article.

57 Miller, *The Illinois Way of Beautifying the Farm, The Illinois Way of Foundation Planting, Arbor and Bird Days*, Springfield, Ill., Department of Public Instruction, 1914, pp. 7-19; *The Illinois Way of Roadside Planting*, Fourth Report of the Illinois Highway Commission, 1913, pp. 334-35.

58 Jensen introduced Mawson, and spoke of his admiration for Picturesque design which took into consideration the relationship of architecture and landscape, in *City Club Bulletin*, March 6, 1912, p. 263.

Book Reviews

PRAIRIE SCHOOL ARCHITECTURE: STUDIES FROM "THE WESTERN ARCHITECT", edited with introduction by H. Allen Brooks. University of Toronto Press, 1975. 333 pp., illus., \$30.00.

Prairie School Architecture: Studies from "The Western Architect", edited and introduced by H. Allen Brooks, is a welcome and important companion volume to Brooks' original study, *The Prairie School: Frank Lloyd Wright and His Midwest Contemporaries*. In *Prairie School Architecture*, Brooks has collected in one volume the major articles on the work of the Prairie School that appeared in the *Western Architect*, an architectural periodical published in Minneapolis from August, 1902 until 1931. This collection begins with the 1911 publication of Frank Lloyd Wright's City National Bank of Mason City, Iowa and extends beyond the "Prairie School years" to include ecclesiastical work by Barry Byrne such as his Christ King Church in Cork, Ireland published by the *Western Architect* in 1929. Brooks' effort now makes available primary source material unlikely to be reprinted in any other format, considering recent ill fated attempts at publishing complete reprints of European periodicals such as *Wendigen* and *L'Architecture Vivante*.

In his introduction Brooks tells us that the *Western Architect*, an "ultra-conservative" magazine, was initially unsympathetic to the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and the Prairie School, but changed its position under the protest of its readership. The editor, Edward A. Purdy, in his about-face came to rely on the advice of William Grey Purcell concerning editorial policy. While such tantalizing information explains in part the prominence of Purcell and Elmslie in the pages of the *Western Architect* including the devotion of three entire issues in 1913-15 to their work, it doesn't really explain the relationship of Purcell to the magazine, or to Purdy. Brooks' overly brief treatment of the history of the magazine raises more questions than it answers: How did this major architectural periodical come to be published in Minneapolis? What were its stated or implicit editorial policies prior to 1911, from 1911 to 1918 (the later date being the time by which Brooks feels the Prairie School lost much of its popularity and impetus), and in the 1920s? How did the editorial policy of the *Western Architect* and the architectural work it published relate to that of the *Inland Architect and News Record* between 1902 and 1908, the year it ceased publication? Considering the presumed specialized audience for *Prairie*

School Architecture: Studies from "The Western Architect" a more extensive study of this periodical might have been appropriate. In the *Prairie School: Frank Lloyd Wright and His Midwest Contemporaries*, Brooks, perhaps for the first time in a major book, stresses the importance of periodicals in the dissemination of architectural ideas and movements. As he suggests, magazines such as *The Craftsman*, *Studio*, *The Ladies Home Journal*, and *House Beautiful* influenced not only architects, but established an architectural "taste" creating "common ideals" that were shared by clients and their Prairie School architects.

The distribution and impact of the *Western Architect* deserve study. In the July, September, and November issues of 1912, the *Western Architect* published articles by H.H.P. Berlage along with photographs of Berlage's work, but could this suggest that the *Western Architect* would have been seen in Amsterdam? Brooks writes that the magazine is "so rare that only three or four complete sets exist" but does not mention where they are located. Did the Burnham Library (later merged with the Ryerson Library) of the Art Institute, Avery Library at Columbia University, and the R.I.B.A. Library in London, generally acknowledged to be among the best architectural collections in the world, receive the *Western Architect* by subscription? Considering the early appreciation of midwestern architecture in Europe, in which major European cities were issues of the *Western Architect* to be found?

If it is important to know, as Brooks points out, that Berlage's writing appeared in the *Western Architect*, is it also important to know the frequency with which articles on English residential architecture illustrating work by architects such as Voysey, Ballie Scott, and Newton, were published, particularly after the height of the Arts and Crafts Movement in America? Certainly the work of Spencer & Powers, which is reprinted from the April, 1914 issue of the *Western Architect*, relates as strongly to such English sources as does the early eclectic residential work of Howard Van Doren Shaw. Is the publication of Irving Gill's work in the April 1913 issue of the *Western Architect* worth noting in relation to the work of Prairie School architects such as Griffin, and Barry Byrne who had met Gill in 1913 during the year Byrne spent in California?

In relation to articles such as "Trier Center Neighborhood, Winnetka, Ill. "A Domestic Community For Immediate Zone, Chicago," by Walter Burley Griffin and his design for "Ridge Quadrangles" in Evanston, Illinois, from the August 1913 issue of the *Western Architect*, which Brooks reprints, one wants to know where the article might have been seen. While Griffin's planning ideas relate

to picturesque suburban planning of the time, the specifics of Griffin's site plans and his *cubic-house* prototypes, call to mind the residential quarters of Tony Garnier's *Cité Industrielle*, which Garnier worked on from 1904 until its publication in 1917. There is also a resemblance to studies done by Le Corbusier in 1914-15 for his "Domino" house as *maison en série*. Le Corbusier's early debt to the Prairie School, thus far documentable, is his knowledge of Wright's Wasmuth folio, and his Villa Schwob of 1916 in La Chaux de Fonds, Switzerland, a Peret-like house that is identical in plan and section to Wright's Thomas P. Hardy house of 1906 in Racine, Wisconsin. While Wright's impact is well known, if as Brooks suggests the work of the Prairie School "eclipsed" Wright's own career after 1909, and if the *Western Architect* was the most important single original source of published material on the Prairie School, then, as already suggested, the history of the magazine needs a fuller treatment.

Brooks writes, "In selecting material for this volume, virtually all Prairie School work published in the *Western Architect* has been included. Omitted are a few plates that appeared in scattered issues (unless they could be appended to a longer series. . .) and the occasional photograph illustrating designs by lesser architects." While the need to select exists, at 333 pages, it is hard to believe that anything of real significance has been left out. Further, with 115 pages devoted to the work of Purcell & Elmslie as well as a major article on Elmslie's Woodbury County Court House in Sioux City, Iowa done in association with William L. Steele, *Prairie School Architecture: Studies from 'The Western Architect'* must be the best single documentation of their residential work.

As Brooks suggests, lesser architects have been omitted. Commercial work by Prairie School architects such as Hugh Garden and Dwight H. Perkins among others are conspicuously absent, and one wonders if this is the extension of a mildly perjorative judgment to these architects. While the *Western Architect* never devoted a major piece to Perkins, his work did, none the less, appear frequently in its pages. Independent of the question of authorship, the schools produced under Perkins for the Chicago Board of Education from 1905 to 1910 had an enormous architectural impact. The omission of at least some representation of "lesser" men and designs, makes it difficult to understand how widespread the influence of the Prairie School was, an impression gained from the actual pages of the *Western Architect*.

It is of course quite unfair to discuss what Brooks has not done without also acknowledging

the enormous value of this book. *Prairie School Architecture: Studies from 'The Western Architect'*, along with Brooks' introduction, usefully includes brief biographies of each of the architects whose work or writing is reproduced. In all fifteen articles from the *Western Architect* have been reprinted covering the work of Louis Sullivan (Merchants National Bank, Grinnell, Iowa), Frank Lloyd Wright, Walter Burley Griffin, Purcell & Elmslie, Purcell, George Feick, Jr. & Elmslie, and Purcell & Elmslie in association with William L. Steele, George W. Maher, Spencer and Powers, Guenzel & Drummond, John S. Van Bergen, Tallmadge & Watson, and Barry Byrne. Where slight alterations to the original format or layout of an article have been made, they have been done with care and in sympathy with the original. The collected articles have been made totally accessible as a reference source by the addition of a complete index.

It is important that these articles are now available, for they form the best existing source of illustrations of Prairie School architecture in print today, making *Prairie School Architecture: Studies from 'The Western Architect'* a necessary addition to any serious architectural library.

Reviewed by Stuart E. Cohen
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H. H. RICHARDSON AND HIS OFFICE: SELECTED DRAWINGS, by James F. O'Gorman. Boston, Godine, 1974. 220 pp., plates in color and black and white. \$25.00, cloth, \$12.00 paper.

Henry Hobson Richardson occupies a strategic place in the history of modern architecture, for he belongs to the nineteenth century as well as to the beginnings of the twentieth, to the academic camp as well as among the progressives. His mature buildings, reduced to simple functionally expressive geometric forms, attracted the attention of Henry Russell Hitchcock, already the historian of the International Style, in the early 1930's and resulted in 1936 in an exhibition of Richardson's drawings at the Museum of Modern Art and the simultaneous publication of what remains the most comprehensive study of Richardson's work. While Hitchcock's book went through three editions, and in paperbound form is now widely available to scholars, students, and those interested in American architecture in the 1880's, the drawings remained in the office of Richardson's successors, Coolidge, Shepley, Bulfinch and Abbott, until 1942 when they were donated to the Harvard Library where they are now preserved. They were not exhibited in any general or systematic way after 1936 until James O'Gorman prepared an exhibition in 1974 for which this book is the catalog.

The show of 1936 had been organized to celebrate the semicentennial of the death of Richardson, while O'Gorman's exhibition was keyed to the centennial of the transfer of Richardson's office from the quarters he shared with Charles Gambrell at 57 Broadway, New York to Brookline, Massachusetts in 1874. Hence the catalog does not include any of the formative works of the early years. Still the occasion of the exhibition, the centenary of the establishment of Richardson's own office, prompted O'Gorman to preface the catalog proper with an extended essay, "The Making of a 'Richardson Building,' 1874-1886," which discusses the reasons for Richardson's move, describes the physical arrangement of the new drafting rooms, and, most important, presents in some detail just how Richardson's office was managed and how his sketches went through drawings and became finished buildings.

The organization and method of a mid to late nineteenth century office differed in important ways from modern practice, and Richardson's office more so because it incorporated something of the atelier spirit he had absorbed in France. Different too, and critically important for the study of Richardson's work, was the preparation of drawings on opaque paper. The drawings remained the property of the architect, and it is because of this that such a relatively complete collection survives. Because of the nature of the drawings, great care and skill were lavished on presentation drawings in the tradition of the *École*, though the actual drafting style used from 1874 when Stanford White was Richardson's major draftsman was based on PreRaphaelite work and the renderings of Richard Norman Shaw. This particular linear style was retained in the office through the 1880's as the drawings in the catalog reveal.

Another reason for the individual character of the office and work methods was the fact that certainly after 1880 Richardson knew he was in a race against time. As O'Gorman makes especially clear, Richardson's health was precarious at best and deteriorating rapidly; as one reads the essay and surveys the drawings the frenetic pace of the architect and his rapid, generalized, bold sketches become a study in pathos. Richardson never knew for certain if he would have another day and his drawings toward the end show no patience for fussy detail as he pushed himself to get out the best work that was in him. Thus the exhibition and the catalog become a tragic drama.

The drawings themselves, now selected and available for protracted study for the first time, show the development of a particular style resulting from White's early work in the office, moving from the study of the modified Trinity Tower (catalog entry

1g) through Coolidge's later studies for the porch towers (1t). Of particular merit are the crisp ink drawings for the Cheney Block in Hartford (17c), and the Ames Building in Boston (18a), but perhaps the finest of these delicate evocative line presentation drawings is that for Austin Hall, Harvard, of 1882 (24d).

There is also a good mix of various drawing types, including autograph sketches by Richardson himself such as the sketch plan for Trinity Church, Boston (1d), the Glessner house plan (9a), the plan for Albany City Hall (21a), and the marvelously direct sketches of the elevation and plan of the Crane Memorial Library (26). There are also preliminary drawings and presentation drawings for competitions such as the elegant perspective of the Albany Cathedral project (2s). Studies of details, particularly interior finishing, such as the studies for the woodwork of the Hay House, Washington, D.C., (8i, 8j), and the study for the side entrance to the Glessner House, Chicago with its now-famous occluded round arch (9h) are also included. Particularly instructive is the color reproduction of a working drawing for a foundation pier for Trinity Church (1f) which shows the use of color washes to indicate materials. Besides the reproductions there are extensive notes on each drawing with bibliography giving previous publication if any.

The color reproduction of a select number of the drawings makes clear two things. First, that color played a crucial role in the development of Richardson's designs, both in the materials themselves and in the projected finishing and embellishment of the interiors. This in turn touches on the other point made by the color plates, that Richardson was a firm believer in integrating all the arts in his buildings. The various studies (by Stanford White) for the interiors of the Albany capitol (20h) show how sculpture was to be a part of the overall design, and it was here that Augustus Saint-Gaudens was to be employed, a project that never materialized. One sees this union of the arts in the Buffalo arch project (36a) with its band of relief sculpture that recalls the frieze by Bartoldi atop the Brattle Square Church of 1870-72 and the study for the frame of the Shaw Monument (39a), both presumably drawn up by White.

It is particularly fortunate that the elevation of "Lululand," the house designed for Sir Hulbert von Herkomer in Buchey, Hertfordshire, 1886, is reproduced in color. This helps to illustrate the enormous and still largely unstudied influence of Richardson on European architects such as C. Harrison Townsend in his Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 1898.

What may strike those who study the construction drawings closely is the marked absence by

modern standards of copious notes to the builder. As O'Gorman stresses Richardson had the unfailing assistance of one of the best contractors of the century — O. W. Norcross. To Norcross and others like him the phrase in the contract "to be finished in a workmanlike manner" was a sacred obligation and it was not uncommon for entire sections to be rebuilt and replaced at Norcross's order long before the architect's representative saw the work — and all at the contractor's expense. O'Gorman has discussed elsewhere the relationship between Richardson and Norcross, but what he develops here is the idea that a building which we refer to as being "Richardson's" is actually a team effort in the best tradition of the École. Sponsored by clients who wanted and demanded the best (though not the most expensive), these buildings were developed from Richardson's sketches by draftsmen such as White, McKim, Coolidge, built by Norcross, supervised by Rutan, and often landscaped by Olmsted; each played an important part in such enterprises.

Readers of this journal may be particularly interested in commissions such as the Glessner house (9), the Henry S. Potter house, St. Louis (14a, plan only, unfortunately), and the Field Wholesale Store in Chicago (19b, a color study of the whole block, plus other studies).

Like the Frank Furness catalog which preceded this, the Richardson catalog is a model of design and scholarship. Its deficiencies pale in comparison to its strengths. Certainly one could wish for more of the drawings being reproduced, but that would be unpracticable. One might wish for firmer attributions to the various draftsmen. Some might wish the plates were bolder, but the halftone process is so fine as to appear to be gravure and so renders minute detail well; the publisher, a relatively new concern specializing in histories of photography, has done a splendid job in design and production. The riches shown after 1874 beg to have material prior to the move to Brookline published as fully. Perhaps most serious of all, the catalog raises the question why this material was shown only in three galleries on the east coast. Why was the exhibition not sent to midwest locations, for certainly the Richardson influence was strong in Detroit, Chicago and Minneapolis-St. Paul? Why, for similar reasons, was the recent École des Beaux-Arts drawing shown restricted only to the Museum of Modern Art? At least in the case of the Richardson drawings we have a handsomely produced record which may well come to exert an influence as lasting as Hitchcock's pioneering study.

Reviewed by Leland M. Roth
Northwestern University

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Preview

The third quarter issue of *The Prairie School Review* in 1975 will have as its major article an essay by Kenneth W. Severens, Assistant Professor at Oberlin College. Professor Severens will write about the reunion of Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright.

We will also be including several reviews of current books and our usual letters to the editors and news notes.

We continue to be interested in receiving manuscripts for possible publication in future issues of *The Prairie School Review*. Major articles should be concerned with the development of modern architecture. Minor articles on the same subject or on contemporary architecture will be considered. Criticism will also be considered, as will be book reviews. It is suggested that prospective authors submit outlines to the editors before completing their manuscripts to avoid possible duplication of efforts.

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