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Letter from the Editor

I like to stroll in the recently renovated Greek and Roman galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The daylight bathing figures of white marble creates a sunny Mediterranean atmosphere even on a cold grey day. Here one feels immersed in a kind of happy idyll, but always there is the haunting question, “Who, really, were they – the ones represented by these carefully cataloged fragments displayed with instructive curatorial commentary?” The gods, athletes, portrait busts, sarcophagi, mosaics, and Pompeian wall paintings seem strangely distant yet closely familiar. In spite of the fact that the remains are so tantalizingly fragmentary, their world is somehow our world, the foundation of our Western culture. We sense the connection.

The Renaissance marked the end of centuries of indifference to ancient remains, and humanists’ avid curiosity about antique literature, art, and architecture initiated Western civilization’s recon-

nection with its past. Ruins began to speak.

In the eighteenth century, a pilgrimage to Rome was de rigueur for artists and young nobleman making the Grand Tour. The rediscovery of the buried cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum, along with the writings of the pioneering Hellenist Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768), helped give birth to the fields of archaeology and art history. It became possible to make period distinctions and discriminate between Greek, Greco-Roman, and Roman art. Neoclassicism came into fashion.

At the same time, the picturesqueness of broken

columns and ivy-entwined arches and the elegiac muteness of these signs of vanished glory stirred Romantic emotions. Ruins became a metaphorical mine for poets, a subject for artists, and a source of inspiration for landscape designers.

Paula Deitz writes about her first view of the Athenian Acropolis and her discovery of the landscape of the Agora below. The oaks, plane trees, and laurels planted there in accordance with archeological research during a restoration dating from the 1950s were intended to simulate the Agora’s appearance in the time of Plato. On a hill opposite stands the Temple of Hephaestus (449 BCE), the most intact Doric temple in Greece. Its grounds, replanted as part of the restoration

of the Agora, raise the issue of the validity of interpretive landscape intervention within an archaeological site, even when sponsored by scholarly institutions of the first order (in this case the American School of Classical Studies at Athens). Deitz, however, argues that “seeing the temple with its clipped hedges today, so complete in appearance itself and in balance with the landscape, makes the scene feel contemporary with antiquity.”

Kathryn Gleason, a professional archaeologist and landscape historian, tells us how she learned by the example of classical landscape archaeology pioneer

The Athenian Acropolis with the Erechtheion (421–407 BCE) in the background.

Wilhelmina Jashemski (1910–2007) to interpret the configuration of ancient landscapes. Using her recent work at the Villa Arianna in Stabia, Italy, as an illustration, she describes the methods contemporary landscape archeologists employ in this relatively new field. At sites such as Stabia that were buried by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE, wall paintings, mosaics, plaster casts, and ground-penetrating radar all play a part in identifying the types of vegetation that were originally planted and in recovering the outlines of walks and beds.

John Pinto, an architectural historian whose abiding interest in the classical tradition led him to coauthor the definitive work on Hadrian’s Villa, revisits this scholarly endeavor in order to explore the powerful combination of site and association. Pinto sees this magnificent landscape and architectural ruin as a paradigm of classicism’s role in Western art and the power of allusion. He maintains that by introducing themes that dominate the pastoral tradition – growth, decay, death, and rebirth – Hadrian’s Villa is a progenitor of the eighteenth-century gardens of English lords, many of whom visited the villa on

their Grand Tours. From this experience they were inspired to see landscape and antiquity as complementary forces. According to Pinto, “A garden in ruins, a garden with ruins, forces us to muse on the passage of time. Landscape is so allusive precisely because it combines place and time; the place is fixed, but it changes; it always looks both forward and back.”

In this issue we begin a new feature, “Place Keeper,” a profile of a land steward whose lifework exemplifies the nurturing, improvement, and interpretation of a particular landscape. Our first subject is Margaret Bamberger, a natural science educator who disseminates the methods used by her husband and fellow land steward, J. David Bamberger, to transform their Texas Hill Country ranch, “Selah,” from a derelict property into a cynosure of sound environmentalism as well as a place of great beauty.

Good green wishes,

Elizabeth Barlow Rogers
Editor



On the Cover:

Corinthian capital and Acanthus, the Athenian Agora, with the Temple of Hephaestus (449 BCE) in the background. (Unless otherwise credited, this and other photographs in this issue are by Elizabeth Barlow Rogers.)

The Landscapes of Classical Antiquity

Garden Letter from Greece

*But on a well-banked plot
Odysseus found his father in solitude
spading the earth around a young fruit tree.*

– Book xxiv, *The Odyssey* by Homer (24.250–52),
translated by Robert Fitzgerald

Many years ago, on our first visit to London together, my husband and I spent hours studying the Elgin marbles at the British Museum, particularly the sculptures from the east pediment of the Parthenon. On the left, Helios, the sun god, rises with his horse-drawn chariot at daybreak; the central figures depict the birth of Athena; and to the right, Selene, the moon goddess, descends with her chariot, closing the arc of the composition at the far end. So taken were we with the beauty of these figures that we bought from the museum shop a life-size replica of the head of the horse of Selene, the final figure in the sequence, straining visibly against the efforts of his night's run. Now mounted on driftwood at the end of my lawn in Maine, overlooking Blue Hill Bay, he presides over the watery path of the August full moon. Living with him each summer filled me with the desire to visit the sculpture's original setting on the Acropolis in Athens.

But it was another occurrence that finally propelled me to Greece last spring. In 2000 and 2001, respectively, I read the obituaries of the eminent archaeologists Dr. Homer A. Thompson (93) and his wife Dr. Dorothy Burr Thompson (101). The two died in Hightstown, New Jersey, almost exactly a year apart. Their romance began in 1934 when Homer was the acting deputy (he later became the director) of the excavation of the Agora, the civic center of ancient Athens, and Dorothy the first woman appointed a fellow of the excavation. His obituary told how her research on ancient gardens was eventually used to fulfill her dream of replanting the Agora. Although I tried to meet with her after learning this, her advanced age had closed the door to outsiders. Nevertheless, I followed up by reading *Garden Lore of Ancient Athens*, the booklet she prepared with Ralph E. Griswold, a prominent Pittsburgh landscape architect. In the 1950s, based on their research, Griswold undertook the

replanting, transforming the Agora into a tree-lined archaeological park ornamented with indigenous shrubs and flowers.

While the buildings and monuments of ancient civilizations crumble under the desecrations of time, which often buries their remains under new settlements, the landscapes that give these historic sites their sense of place – the contour of the terrain, the native vegetation – often endure. In the end, although I went to Greece to experience these ancient sites, I became equally entranced by exceptional contemporary gardens built in our own era by those who had wrested from this arid climate cultivated environments of singular beauty and purpose.

My embryonic knowledge of Greek gardens was first expanded in the unlikely setting of the Athens airport, as I awaited my flight to the island of Skiathos. The Airport Museum was hosting a prize-winning archaeological exhibition, *Mesogeia Attica History & Civilization*. The show documented the excavation of the rural townships or demes of Attica now occupied by the new international airport and its landing strips – excavations that exposed the many layers of development from 3200 BCE through the 18th century. After admiring the handsome collection of terracotta pottery from several periods, I concentrated on site models of Hellenistic-era country houses that were built, according to the catalogue descriptions, next to cultivated fields or at the far end of gardens, in landscapes that can't have been very different from those I would soon see for the first time.

Having arrived in Skiathos late at night, only the next morning did I experience waking up amidst a hillside olive grove that swept down to the sea. The gnarled and irregular branches, some interlocking with neighboring trees, formed a



Watercolor rendering of Ralph E. Griswold's 1950s landscape restoration plan for the Athenian Agora.

solid canopy over a dry terrain. At harvest time, the gardener gathers the ripe fruit and delivers it to a local press, sending some of the olive oil back to the grove's owners in exchange.

Views from the high cliffs of this pine-fringed coast to nearby outer islands, like Skopelos, reminded me of Robert Fitzgerald's travel notes to *The Odyssey* (8th century BCE) in which he describes how he recreated the voyages of Homer, and thus Odysseus, in order to translate accurately the Greek descriptions of the clustered islands and their landscapes. At night, brilliantly lighted ferryboats connecting these islands glide across the dark waters, illuminating each island port in turn.

I soon learned that Skiathos possesses an active garden club, its members including both seasonal and resident gardeners. In making a round of visits, I discovered how enterprising these women were in cultivating a kind of lush beauty alongside the practical. Christina Kofinas, who lived at the end of a dirt road on a cliff, had constructed a series of arcades, massed with climbing roses, leading up to her low-slung house with its ample verandah. An orchard of oranges, lemons and apricots, the source of her renowned confitures, shaded the surrounding garden areas, including a kitchen garden. While there was a marked difference between the cultivated areas and the scruffiness of the parched landscape, I found that this contrast between wild and tame added to the beauty of Grecian gardens.

At the end of another dirt road, Chantal Prieux and her husband had made a single long house out of three huts that had originally provided temporary shelter for shepherds grazing their sheep and goats on the high cliffs. The compound was painted gaily in the typical Grecian palette: pure white

walls set off louvered shutters, doors, and windows in cerulean blue. The patio, which hugged the perimeter of the house, was covered with flowerpots and ceramic bowls of the same vivid hue. These overflowed with a variety of tropical plants, all shaded by a pergola draped in wisteria vines that extended the entire length of the patio. Lavender fields terraced into the hillside provided Chantal with the raw material for her own special brand of lavender oil, which she packaged in elegant small bottles and sold locally.

On walks along the cliff roads, I could look down into gardens below – and in one instance catch glimpses of the most prominent rose garden on the island. Even from a considerable height it revealed trim beds with dense patches of deep red and pale pink roses. Though not native to Greece, roses have been grown there at least since Herodotus wrote about them in his *Histories* in the fifth century BCE. But beauty is often trumped by practicality in Greece; I found myself spending one day helping others gather basketsful of humble Saint-John's-wort, the small, five-petaled, yellow flower that has proven to have prodigious healing powers when stored in olive oil.

Though it was close to midnight when I arrived in Athens from Skiathos, I left my hotel in the Plaka, the old city, to visit the Acropolis. After climbing through narrow back streets, I suddenly faced a sheer wall of glowing rock rising to classical grandeur under a sliver of moon. That held me until morning when I began the true ascent. First I entered the new Acropolis Museum at the base of the mount, designed by Bernard Tschumi, who won the commission in a fourth round of international competitions. Worth the wait, in my opinion: it is a streamlined glass, steel, and concrete structure that hints at the classical by its delineated vertical sections. The top-floor exhibition gallery that is intended to house the Parthenon sculptures is rotated slightly off the base to face the object of its study. The museum was not yet officially opened with fully-installed galleries; nevertheless, visitors were permitted to view the building's grand entrance area, which turns out to be a museum in itself, perched over the ancient landscape. Through interior and exterior floors of fritted glass, people can examine the excavated ruins of the earlier neighborhoods that once clustered around the Acropolis as they walk above

them. Recently planted olive groves will be the main feature of the landscaped gardens surrounding the museum.

No photograph does justice to the physical sensation of approaching the monumental scale of the Acropolis along the Dionysios Areopagitou, the promenade that runs parallel to the powerful buttressed walls as it winds its way upward past the Dionysus Theater to the top amidst plantings of cypress and pine. Although visitors pass quickly between the Doric columns of the Propylaia, the ceremonial gateway, this edifice is in fact the only classical structure on the Acropolis that may be entered and therefore an experience to be savored both coming and going.

Unlike the ancient Romans, who constructed their buildings on direct axes derived from military installations, the Greeks preferred more circuitous routes. Hence the Parthenon is deliberately situated to one side of the Propylaia, providing an early example of their indirect site planning.

Although I had read copiously about the Parthenon, I still found myself counting the fluted marble Doric columns as I moved slowly around to view the east pediment. I knew that the original of my horse's head, that of one of the four horses drawing Selene's chariot, was lowered from the pediment on May 10, 1802, under the aegis of the permit or *firman* Lord Elgin received from the Turkish government. As I turned the southeast corner, I saw to my astonishment Selene's horse's head, like mine, straining over the edge of the pediment. There, too, were Helios's rearing horses and the reclining figure of Heracles at the opposite end. I discovered later that these casts of the originals were placed within what remains of the pediment by the Greek Archaeological Service. I was unprepared for this realism; nevertheless, the casts convey how details of the sculptures would have been starkly articulated in the searing light of the noonday sun.



The Acropolis, Athens, Greece.

Before I left the stony landscape of the Acropolis, I lingered for awhile near the caryatids of the Ionic temple called the Erechtheion (see page 2). As I watched, restorers worked feverishly to raise marble blocks on ropes, using a system of cranes and pulleys. They were filling in missing elements of the Parthenon to make it whole once more. It could have been 440 BCE, when the Parthenon was being constructed in the age of Pericles, except for the white beach umbrellas that had sprouted up all over the temple to protect workers from the sun. It was an engaging, industrious sight.

While this sacred summit was stunning in its architectural detail, I was anxious to descend to the Agora – literally the gathering place, the center of civic life. Though I could imagine the religious processions celebrating Athena on the Acropolis, my heart beat faster as I followed the paths once walked by Socrates. Because the teachings of the Greek philosophers are integral to our own culture, they feel closer in time than pagan rituals of the same period. Once, in writing about porches, I cited the stoa (an open gallery with a roof

supported by a colonnade) as an early example of this inside/outside form, and pointed out that Zeno's austere Stoic school of philosophy had been named after the Poikile Stoa on the north end of the Agora, where he taught his disciples. Now I could stand there.

I entered the Agora from the south end to find not the dry panorama of sun-baked ruins I still half expected, but a city park filled with wildflowers and families. Systematic excavation of the Agora by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens began in 1931. Before Dorothy Burr Thompson's study of the plants of antiquity in the Agora, however, scholarly interest in the 10-acre site related to its unique importance to the history of Athens' planning and the placement of its governmental, religious, theatrical, and commercial buildings. These would have been laid out in harmony with the natural landscape and established pathways, rather than superimposed on the site. It wasn't until 1953 that Ralph E. Griswold – who had been trained in landscape architecture at Cornell University and the American Academy in Rome, and designed Pittsburgh's Point State Park – arrived in Athens to draw up a landscape plan for the Agora and execute Thompson's vision. Realizing the pioneering aspects of the undertaking, he wrote in his report: "It is as unique in modern archaeological practice as the Agora was in its historical significance and will add new interest to its ancient traditions."

Fortunately, Griswold's elegant watercolor renditions of proposed plantings, painted over earlier photographs of the site, have been preserved and published in Craig A. Mauzy's *Agora Excavations 1931-2006*, a pictorial history celebrating the entire project's seventy-fifth anniversary (see page 3). The plant list, based on writings by ancient authors and inscriptions referring to the Agora, included only indigenous plants or others acclimatized to the area. According to the notes I took that day, most of them are still in evidence, although the trees have grown to a stately size, providing welcome groves of shade.

Griswold's plan, which was the result of his observations of tourist routes and his study of irrigation pits and aqueducts, has an intrinsic beauty that is structural as well as horticultural. Large trees – plane and oak –



Picnickers on the slope between the Agora and the Acropolis.

were planted along paths that frame the major antiquities; smaller laurels and carobs provided background for important structures; cypress and pine emphasized boundaries; and dark evergreens punctuated the landscape, replacing the myriad missing heroic statues that had once been a part of the panoramic view. For the rest, there are olive and almond trees, and an abundance of wildflowers and plants in open spaces: oleander, rosemary, tree heather, and yellow jasmine, to name a few. There is also, of course, acanthus, which gave its leaf form to the Corinthian column (see cover). (Thompson and Griswold point out that in antiquity wreaths were fabricated for every honorific occasion; their ubiquity in art and literature provided Griswold's team with additional guidance concerning plant material.)

Simultaneously with the landscape restoration, the American School rebuilt the Stoa of Attalos II (king of Pergamon in the 2nd century BCE) along its eastern boundary to be the Agora Museum. A shopping arcade in antiquity, the stoa now contains sculpture and artifacts from the excavation that portray the Agora's political and commercial life. Its verticality and long double colonnade of Doric and Ionic columns for the display of sculpture provide a welcome sense of scale, helping one to imagine how the now-mature landscape would have embraced buildings of comparable size.

Among the most challenging aspects of the excavation relating to landscape was the discovery of the planting pits around the Temple of Hephaestus, which stands on a hill overlooking the Agora (see cover). Built in 449 BCE by one of the architects of the Parthenon, the Temple of Hephaestus is the most intact Doric temple in Greece. Once surrounded by foundries, the temple is dedicated to the god of fire and the forge, who played a pivotal role in Greek mythology: Zeus commanded Hephaestus to alleviate his severe headache by striking him with a forging hammer, thus splitting open his head to give birth to Athena – the scene depicted on the east pediment of the Parthenon.

It was customary in the 4th century BCE to stick ter-

racotta pots filled with earth on the ends of tree limbs; once the limbs took root, they were cut off and placed into tree pits with the pots broken underneath. In this case, the trees were planted on either side of the temple, parallel with the temple's columns. Instead of reproducing the original design, Griswold created a starkly classical planting: a double hedge of pomegranate and myrtle surrounding the temple on three sides. Seeing the temple with its clipped hedges today, so complete in appearance itself and in balance with the landscape, makes the scene feel contemporary with antiquity.

This is what the restoration of landscape produces: a sense of continuity that the ruins themselves cannot convey alone. In the Mauzy book, there is a photograph of Ralph Griswold participating in a Greek circle dance with his male workers in May 1955, after completing the planting of these splendid spaces so significant to Western democracy and philosophy. I felt like dancing myself after I saw the Agora.

On the plain of Mesogeia, an agricultural and wine-growing region east of Athens extending to the Aegean Sea, three contemporary gardens preserving local traditions in horticulture have influenced and even inspired the wider world of gardening. In 1962, after spending many summers in Greece, Mary Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, an Englishwoman and professor of urban design at Harvard University who specialized in the evolution of human settlements, purchased land near Peania. She had spotted the location on a walk down Mount Hymettos, the mountain that dominates Athens and the surrounding area, and her knowledge of shifting populations told her that this site would not soon be suburbanized, although it offered her easy access to the city and the airport.

Thus was born Sparoza, "the hill of sparrows," a four-acre garden (purchased in narrow strips called *stremata*) that gradually climbed up a hillside. Tyrwhitt constructed a simple house of local stone, with a high-ceilinged living room furnished with tall bookcases and a southern glass wall shaded by a covered verandah. Entwined with wisteria vines, the verandah leads to a sunken walled garden partially shaded by a jacaranda tree. Tyrwhitt's purpose was to create a garden of drought-resistant indigenous plants capable of surviving strong winds and the unrelenting heat of stifling summer months, when the concrete-hard dirt had to be blasted to plant new trees.

After retiring from Harvard in 1969, she lived there full time, and, before her death in 1983, she wrote a book entitled *Making a Garden on a Greek Hillside* that includes a monthly journal of events, chores, climate, fauna, and native plant lists

totaling around five hundred species and sub-species. Penelope Hobhouse has pointed out that this number of plants is practically the same as the one found in *De Materia Medica* by Pedanius Dioscorides, a Greek physician in the first century who traveled the Mediterranean with the military forces of the Roman emperor Nero.

Bequeathed to the Goulandris Natural History Museum, the garden had one interim tenant before the knowledgeable and energetic Sally Razelou became the resident gardener in 1991. With intermittent advice from a few professional designers and a loyal volunteer corps, she has maintained the garden to perfection ever since. In 1994 Ms. Razelou and her associates, meeting at Sparoza, founded the Mediterranean Garden Society. The society, which now has twenty-three chapters in eleven countries (including three in California), spreads the garden's horticultural message through its informative quarterly journal, *The Mediterranean Garden*, and frequent meetings and plant exchanges.

By the time I arrived in late May, the brilliant wildflower season was over, and the garden was a lush silvery haze. It was entering what Ms. Razelou calls the estivation or dormant period of summer, characterized by little or no rainfall, and no watering. And although interns were already cutting back plants, the outlying gardens and three descending terraces along the east facade of the house had retained their layered appearance: canopies of trees, including olive, Mediterranean oak, and pomegranate with tiny red blooms, provided shade for the undergrowth of shrubs, grasses, and aloes, vines clinging to stone walls, and a preponderance of long-stemmed plants blooming in subtle shades of white, lavender blue, pink, and yellow – salvia, larkspur, iris. The hillside beyond was punctuated with dark cypress trees, and tucked in everywhere were decorative terracotta pots and jars overflowing with foliage. Sparoza is the mother lode of Mediterranean gardens.

From there I traveled north. At the base of Mount Penteli, after a circuitous route along suburban Socrates Street, the road narrows to the sort of a dirt trail that typically signifies an approaching dead end. But one more bend lands the visitor in a forested wilderness at 6 Asclepiou Street. This is Nea Penteli Phytorio, probably the most serious and specialized nursery in Greece. Fortunately, the owner, Chryssanthi Parayios, exudes a cheerful enthusiasm for her calling despite her embroidered black cotton widow's weeds. While other Greek nurseries sell typical resort flowers, like petunias and geraniums, Mrs. Parayios combs the mountainside and the

beaches for rare and unusual native plants, like *Saponaria officinalis* and *Bupleurum falvum*, which she grows from cuttings and seeds. She lays them out in unlabeled pots so closely packed together that the three acres of extensive clearings at the forest's edge are like a fantastic pointillist landscape. The nursery stretches out on either side of a mountain stream, which can be crossed on a wobbly but serviceable suspension bridge.

One of Mrs. Parayios's customers is Eleni Martinos, who owns an elegant gallery of antiques in Athens and gardens on a grand scale in Pallini, halfway between Sparoza and the nursery. When the Martinoses bought the land in 1991, the eight-and-a-half-acre site was covered in pine trees and had spectacular views of the foothills of Mount Penteli and of the Mesogheia plain. A devastating series of fires left the land barren and vulnerable to the fierce winds while the new airport destroyed the view.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Martinos made a fresh start in 1992 with the American architect Charles Shoup, who lives in the



Eleni Martinos's garden, Pallini.
(Credit: Maya Bailey)

Peloponnese, where he has built his own series of houses and gardens in the classical style. Though ample in size, the fieldstone house Shoup designed feels like a garden pavilion. It has arcaded outdoor rooms for family occasions and wide staircases that lead directly into an elaborate and seemingly endless series of walled gardens that bear the direct influence of other Mediterranean landscapes: the water gardens of the Generalife at the Alhambra, and the garden Nicole de Vésian designed near Bonnieux in Provence, with its clipped green globes using every imaginable plant conducive to the form.

Water is plentiful here. Green expanses of lawn, often ornamented with a pond, fountain, or a piece of sculpture, are surrounded by borders burgeoning with plants and flowers, some with elaborate color schemes. The high point is a long canal, bordered by olive trees trimmed into cubes, with underplantings cascading romantically over the water's edge. Levels are constantly changing as one climbs up and down the many stone staircases; distant views lure the visitor to outer gardens with ornate examples of topiary – an exuberant variety of shapes and shades of green juxtaposed one against the other. It is a masterful design that also has its hidden corners, like a secret garden where Cavafy's famous poem "Voices" recalling the voices of those who are departed has been inscribed.

While each of these three gardens represents a different approach to the landscape of Greece, their success derives from an understanding and appreciation by their overseers of the challenge of maintaining the rich selection offered in this arid climate. Through the centuries, the possibilities inherent in cultivating the harsh terrain of Greece have remained constant. In a final touching scene in *The Odyssey*, Homer relates how Odysseus, desperate to prove his identity to his father after returning to Ithaca, resorts finally to this shared memory:

*Again – more proof – let's say the trees you gave me
on this revetted plot of orchard once. . . .*

*You gave thirteen pear, ten apple trees,
and forty fig trees. Fifty rows of vines
were promised too, each one to bear in turn.
(24.371–72, 24.375–77)*

This could be a garden today, say, on the island of Skiathos.
– Paula Deitz

Hadrian's Villa and the Landscape of Allusion

From classical times to the present, artists of all kinds have drawn on landscapes both real and imagined to give significance to their works. In architectural and landscape design, the inspiration of place is obviously crucial – intrinsic to the designer's intentions and the ultimate physical manifestation of those intentions. In painting and poetry as well, a given place – metaphorical or substantial – often plays a central role in creating both a starting point and a final meaning. Artists use landscape and a sense of place to allude to eternal themes: the transience of fame and the desire for immortality.

Poetic and pictorial evocations of place are, of course, fundamentally different from existing sites. Whether we think of Shakespeare's forest of Arden or Poussin's poetic distillations of the Roman Campagna, we must acknowledge that they are idealized and abstracted versions of reality, and by virtue of their medium, incapable of change. In contrast, actual landscapes are perennially in flux. With the passage of time, function and patterns of use also change, and intended meanings become blurred or forgotten as new interpretations emerge and are projected onto the landscape.

Few classical sites illustrate this process – and the rich complexity of the landscape of allusion – better than Hadrian's Villa near Tivoli, twenty-two kilometers east of Rome. Laid out between 118 and 134 CE, Hadrian's Villa surpasses all other ancient villas in its scale, architectural originality, and resonance. It can also be seen as a paradigm of classicism's role in Western art, and its extended history is an unusually full record of the crosscurrents and projections such visionary creations can generate.

Set against the background of the Sabine Hills, the villa remains one of the most haunting sites in the Roman countryside: it represents an inspired integration of architectural structure with the contours of the surrounding landscape. As the great twentieth-century architect Le Corbusier remarked, "At Hadrian's Villa the levels are established in accordance with the Campagna; the mountains support the composition, which is indeed based on them." The villa's ancient limits are difficult to define, but it likely occupied more than 300 acres. Its scale is suggested by comparisons with modern parks: Kew Gardens (292 acres), Hyde Park (365), and the extended Washington Mall (357).



The so-called Temple of Venus at Hadrian's Villa. The circular temple anchors the northern end of what was once an extended landscape composition probably intended to evoke the Thessalian Vale of Tempe near Mount Olympus.

Hadrian's role in the creation of the villa is not directly documented, but ancient texts record his interest in planning and design. It is reasonable to assume that serious discussions took place among the emperor, his architects, and his artists, and that in this broad sense the villa was Hadrian's creation: we should view it through the lens of the emperor's will.

Hadrian situated a variety of discrete architectural forms – strongly differentiated enclosures, pavilions, and peristyles – in unanticipated sequences across a vast, broadly terraced park. With no grand allées, the design was one of considerable subtlety: the villa revealed itself only as it was traversed. The three

principal axes evident in the villa's plan were largely determined by the topography, but Hadrian's engineers also imposed structure upon the land, extending terraces out over valleys and accentuating the natural contours of the site. Water was brought in from the aqueduct lines that supplied the imperial capital. Displayed in over a hundred fountains of different types, including reflecting pools, grand *nymphaea*, and moving sheets, its visual and aural play contributed to the definition of place.

A pleasing place, or *locus amoenus*, emerges early as a central trope of the pastoral, and the veneration of its presiding spirit, the *genius loci*, is a recurrent theme

from Ovid to Alexander Pope, who memorably advised his patron Lord Burlington to "Consult the genius of the place in all, / That tells the waters or to rise, or fall." From its inception, Hadrian's creation was a pragmatic manifestation of the pastoral. To the east of the villa the contours drop off sharply to form a valley of great natural beauty, and temples and towers were erected to provide lofty viewpoints over the surrounding countryside. At the same time, the contradictions of the pastoral tradition are nowhere more starkly evoked than here. Although the villa was in one sense a rural retreat, a place where Hadrian could remove himself from the concerns of the capital, it was also the hub of an empire and a reflection of its ruler's authority.

In fact, the grounds themselves were designed to evoke portions of Hadrian's far-flung territories. In the course of his reign, Hadrian traveled extensively, acquiring a first-hand knowledge of the classical world in all its cultural complexity. On his tours of inspection he demonstrated a fascination with Greece and Athens in particular. A passage in a fourth-century biography of Hadrian relates that the emperor had portions

of the villa made in such a way that he might call them after famous places and provinces of the Greco-Roman world:

Hadrian fashioned the Tiburtine Villa marvelously, in such a way that he might inscribe there the names of provinces and places most famous and could call certain parts, for instance, the Lyceum, the Academy, the Prytaneum, the Canopus, the Poecile, the Vale of Tempe. And in order to omit nothing, he even made an underworld.

This passage in the *Historia Augusta* not only underscores the potential of one place to evoke another but also, through its reference to the underworld and its associations with the myth of Pluto and Proserpine, introduces themes that would dominate the pastoral tradition to come: growth, decay, death, and rebirth.

The circular colonnade of one structure, often identified as a Temple of Venus, anchors the northern end of what was once an extended landscape composition probably intended to evoke the Thessalian Vale of Tempe, near Mount Olympus, the pastoral setting par excellence. Hadrian's passion for collecting, as it were, evocations of buildings and places whose names ring with hallowed associations anticipates the attitude of well-traveled English lords whose gardens were sown with allusions to favorite spots on their Grand Tours.

Varro, in his treatise on agriculture, drily commented on the fashion among wealthy Romans for attaching exotic names to their villas. "They do not think they have a real villa," he observed, "unless it rings with many resounding Greek names." The villa of Cicero's friend Atticus, in Epiris, included an Amaltheum, named after the legendary site on Mount Ida where Zeus was raised. The Amaltheum comprised a grove, a stream, and a sanctuary, together forming a planned landscape composition that Cicero was eager to imitate at his own villa.

We also learn from Cicero that Brutus's villa at Lanuvium included a Eurotas and a Persian Porch. Brutus's Eurotas referred to a river flowing through Sparta, and his porch to a portico commemorating a Spartan victory over the Persians. Brutus's choice of these landmarks for inclusion in his garden declares his political and philosophical affinity with Spartan liberty as contrasted with Persian servility to an absolute monarchy. Hundreds of years later, similar moral and political values were expressed in eighteenth-century English gardens – notably Kent's Elysian Fields at Stowe. At the same time, such allusions to earlier eras may be expressions of poetry or power

as well as political opinion – and sometimes they are all three. The appearance and nomenclature of English gardens were meant to recall such classical locations as Palestrina or Posillipo but also, by extension, the order and grandeur of Augustan Rome. The landscape of Hadrian's Villa reflected a similar regard for yet more venerable sites such as Tempe, with its poetic associations of a golden age of pastoral ease, even as it simultaneously appropriated the site for its own enhancement.

If scholars are on less secure ground in identifying other surviving portions of Hadrian's Villa with famous places mentioned by his biographer, it is largely due to one extremely important characteristic of these topographical allusions. Rather than being *literal* imitations of the older monuments whose names they carried, all were of new and innovative design, often bearing only the most general visual relationship to their namesakes.

The revival of classical forms that emerged as a central accomplishment of the Renaissance similarly involved a vital, creative process of translation or imitation, inspired by active commerce with past masterpieces. Several centuries later, the English Augustans viewed the architectural forms of classical antiquity primarily through the medium of Renaissance translations codified in the treatises of Serlio, Palladio, and others. Their vision of landscape was likewise based on classical texts, many of which had been visually translated by such seventeenth-century painters as Claude and Poussin.

The most influential English landscape theorists and gardeners were at their ease with Latin verse – Alexander Pope and Joseph Addison were poets steeped in classical literature – and they were also often architectural dilettantes of considerable erudition. But this did not mean that they were content merely to illustrate

specific classical texts or to erect reproductions of Roman buildings. Literal copies of classical temples began to appear in English gardens only after the middle of the eighteenth century. For the generation of Pope and William Kent, it was enough to suggest a correspondence without realizing absolute visual congruity.

Roman taste had sanctioned copies of original works of art, especially of statues by Greek masters, recognizing the copies as admirable in their own right. The context and function of such copies, however, invariably differed from the originals. Witness the caryatids that line one of the most striking features of Hadrian's Villa, the so-called Canopus, or Scenic Canal. Hadrian's caryatids are reflected in the shimmering water of the canal and outlined against the shadowy concavity of the Serapaeum, rather than silhouetted against the Attic sky – a transformation that cannot fail to affect our perception of their form and meaning. The emperor's contextual transformation of the Erectheum caryatids was paralleled in a later age by James "Athenian" Stuart in a garden folly at Shugborough, which was modeled on the Arch of Hadrian at Athens.

Any man's time and accomplishments will pass, whether he leads the simple life of a shepherd or the sophisticated life of an emperor. After the collapse of the Roman Empire, Hadrian's Villa was systematically despoiled and served as a quarry for over fifteen hundred years. And yet the villa's connection to the enigmatic emperor and the great natural beauty of its



The Canopus, or Scenic Canal, at Hadrian's Villa.

setting ensured that it would be visited by future generations of artists, writers, and patrons. Most of these visitors would come from Rome, leaving the city behind them to enter this Arcadian scene, where shepherds tended flocks and farmers' ploughs turned up tessellated pavements and fragments of statuary. As they wandered over the vast site, so richly strewn with mementos of the past, they would inevitably muse on its imperial associations and ponder the implications of its decay. At the same time, the particulars of the scene before them – magnificent ruins in a pastoral setting – only strengthened the connection between landscape and antiquity, which would remain one of the central manifestations of the pastoral for centuries.

Landscape is so allusive precisely because it combines place and time; the place is fixed, but it changes; it always looks both forward and back. Evocations of place and time are themes intertwined through history at Hadrian's Villa, like the strands of ivy that form natural garlands pendant from the villa's ruined vaults. These strands appeared repeatedly in examples of villa and landscape design from the Renaissance through the eighteenth century, and we can trace parallel themes in painting and literature, extending through the haunting landscapes of Claude Lorrain and Marguerite Yourcenar's *Memoirs of Hadrian*.

When François-Auguste-René Chateaubriand, one of the fathers of French Romanticism, visited Hadrian's Villa in 1803, he was surprised by a rain shower and sought refuge in one of the baths:

A vine had penetrated through fissures in the arched roof, while its smooth and red crooked stem mounted along the wall like a serpent. Round me, across the arcades, the Roman country was seen in different points of view. Large elder trees filled the deserted apartments, where some solitary black-birds found a retreat. The fragments of masonry were garnished with the leaves of scolopendra, the satin verdure of which appeared like mosaic work upon the white marble. Here and there lofty cypresses replaced the columns, which had fallen into the palaces of death. The wild acanthus crept at their feet on the ruins, as if nature had taken pleasure in reproducing, upon the mutilated *chefs d'oeuvre* of architecture, the ornament of their past beauty. . . .

While I contemplated this picture, a thousand confused ideas passed across my mind. At one moment I admired, at the next detested Roman grandeur. At one moment I thought of the virtues, at another the vices, which distinguished the lord of the world, who had wished to render his garden a representation of his empire. I called to mind the events by which his superb villa had been destroyed. . . . While these different thoughts succeeded each other, an inward voice mixed itself with them and repeated to me what has been a hundred times written on the vanity of human affairs. There is indeed a double vanity in the remains of the Villa Adriana: for it is known that they were only imitations of other remains, scattered through the provinces of the Roman empire. The real temple of Serapis and Alexandria, and the real academy at Athens no longer exist; so that in the copies of Hadrian you only see the ruins of ruins.

Chateaubriand's text bristles with the contradictions implicit in the pastoral tradition: complexity and simplicity, urbanity and rusticity, reality and artifice, vanity and humility, the temporal and the eternal. He concluded his meditations with these remarks:

Many travelers, my predecessors, have written their names on the marbles of Hadrian's Villa; they hoped to prolong their existence by leaving a souvenir of their visit in these celebrated places; they were mistaken. While I endeavored to read one of the names recently inscribed which I thought I recognized, a bird took flight from a clump of ivy, and in so doing caused several drops of water from the recent rain to fall: the name vanished.*

Here is the preoccupation with mortality that informs so much of the pastoral mode, and yet in Hadrian's grand design the human desire for immortality still struggles valiantly against the inexorable cycles of nature. – John A. Pinto

*Chateaubriand, F.-A.-R., *Voyage en Italy* (Paris, 1969), pp. 134-135; translation: *Recollections of Italy, England and America* (Philadelphia, 1816), pp. 27-28.

Digging Ancient Gardens

In the dusty haze of this warm December morning, I am standing with archaeologist Ehud Netzer on the slopes of an artificial mountain at Herodium, looking out towards Jerusalem, visible to the north. This is where Professor Netzer of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem recently discovered the tomb of Herod the Great. The archaeological world is humming with the news, made vivid in a recent National Geographic special and cover story (November 2008). As part of a four-day conference on villas of the Roman Empire that we are both attending, Professor Netzer has agreed to give participants a private tour of the site. As we wait for the others, he says he has a surprise for me: a tomb garden. I urge him to explain how he knows this, but he responds simply, "You will see." We scramble along the steep slope, the fortress palace looming above and the great pool and colonnades of this ancient royal burial complex extending outwards below.

Reaching the terrace where the limestone tomb was recently discovered, we study the fine masonry of its central chamber, which contained the remains of several sarcophagi, or coffins, now at the university. (The most distinctive among them, presumably Herod's, had been deliberately smashed by vandals.) Outside the tomb, a pool originally flanked one side of the chamber, its waters leading out to the forecourt of the terrace. And there, sandwiched between the crushed white limestone construction fill below and the destruction debris above, is a deep brown layer of loam. The soil must have been carried up the hill from the surrounding fields and spread across the terrace, which would have been watered from a nearby cistern. Now we know that Herod – like his friend and benefactor, Augustus – was buried in a tumulus with a garden or grove.

The moment takes me back to 1985, during my doctoral studies, when Professor Netzer first offered me the opportunity to examine an ancient garden at the Hasmonean and Herodian winter palaces at Jericho, dating from the second and first centuries BCE. Excavations by various teams over the previous three decades had revealed a highly constructed landscape of terraces, palace structures, artificial hills, water systems, pools, and ornate retaining walls, including a stepped theater whose benches held flower pots rather than spectators. My first project was a small courtyard beside the dining hall, where Netzer had unearthed several pots in a test trench. The

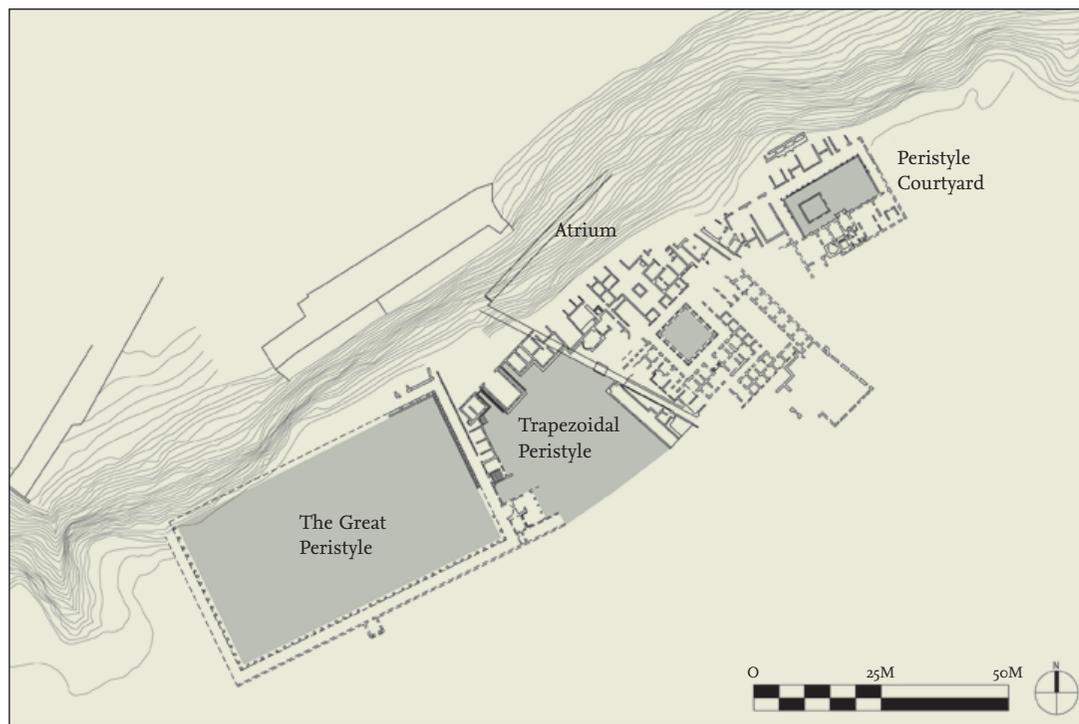
Plan of Villa Arianna, Stabia, Italy. The villa, with its large peristyle viridarium, sprawls along a high cliff above the Bay of Naples. (Credit: M. Palmer)

features and even the design of the garden emerged clearly: seven simple rows with eleven planting pots or tree pits in each. The original surface soil contours and subsurface construction were remarkably intact.

Cultivated soils are often the first indicator of an ancient garden or park, but they are not always so dramatically presented; it has taken me years to develop techniques to confidently identify garden features in the field. I subsequently found evidence of gardens on Masada and in the palace areas at Herodium, but it would be thirteen years before I found such well-preserved features as at Jericho – this time in Italy at the villa of the ancient Roman poet Horace, a contemporary of Herod's. Again, ceramic planting pots, cultivated soils, and soil discol- orations revealed a garden laid out along a central axis.

The most famous Roman gardens are those excavated by Wilhelmina Jashemski at Pompeii and other areas buried by Mt. Vesuvius in 79 CE. These landscapes were abruptly sealed by volcanic ash and lava flows instead of succumbing to over- growth, erosion, or changing uses. With the assistance of her husband Stanley, an eminent scientist, Jashemski excavated all kinds of gardens, from small urban peristyles decorated ornately in the latest fashion to shopkeepers' gardens, temple gardens, vineyards, commercial plots, and orchards. She also investigated the monumental and luxurious villa at nearby Oplontis, discovering delightful interplays among gardens, garden paintings, and architecture.

The conditions of the Vesuvian region are unique in the classical world. Many of the methods developed there for garden archaeology are not applicable to more typical sites, which are usually less well preserved. Indeed, gardens were generally



considered so ephemeral that few historians bothered with them. But the Jashemskis' work spurred first a new sense of possibility and then a dramatic growth in the field of garden study, and the couple's method of combining scientific techniques with humanistic inquiry remains the model. Professor Jashemski collaborated for nearly forty years with Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C., to gather archaeologists working around the world to develop garden-finding methods that would be useful on sites with more typical preservation conditions. The first of these conferences was held in 1979, featuring Barry Cunliffe of Oxford University, who had discovered an important villa garden at Fishbourne in Sussex, and Jorge Alarcão, who had found peristyle gardens with intricately plumbed fountain basins at Conimbriga in Portugal. Their success inspired many archaeologists to tackle the gardens of the famous places of antiquity.

Since then, Italian and Danish archaeologists have found the gardens of the imperial villa of Augustus and Livia at Prima Porta, which boasts the the most famous classical garden painting discovered to date (see page 11). Bernard Frischer and I studied the large peristyle of Horace's villa in Licenza, Italy, for the American Academy in Rome with great success. Investigators at the École Française de Rome revealed a series of gardens on the Palatine, and the Soprintendenza archeologica di Roma exposed for the first time the great public garden

of the Temple of Peace in the Imperial Fora. At Petra, Jordan, a young doctoral candidate, Leigh Ann Bedal, set out to explore the Lower Markets and discovered an extensive pool and garden complex that once greeted parched travelers along the Arabian trade routes. As part of an ongoing initiative begun by Michel Conan, then director of Landscape Studies at Dumbarton Oaks, and the Society of Garden Archaeology to create a sourcebook of garden archaeology, this project became a text case. Thanks to these and other discoveries, Dr. Jashemski was able to catalog over 1500 Roman gardens around the empire by the time of her death last year. With three fellow scholars, I am now preparing for publication the manuscript of this great work, *Gardens of the Roman Empire*.

The evidence for gardens in typical preservation conditions is a complex combination of soils, artifacts, and "ecofacts." We can detect the shape of planting beds, paths, and often post-holes of fences and trellises. We can recover rows of planting pits, which sometimes contain ceramic planting pots; these mark the location and suggest the general size of plants. The work of the young scholar Elizabeth Macaulay Lewis has demonstrated just how widely such vessels were used throughout the Roman Empire. Understanding the movement of water leads to further understanding of any garden, and we find water channels and pipes, pools, fountains, and grottos. Art played a large role in the Roman garden, and nymphaea, wall painting fragments, paths with mosaics, and statues and their bases are often among the remains. This cultural and environmental evidence, when interpreted together, allows us to visualize the three-dimensional space of the garden and the varied human activities that took place there. We can also begin to reconstruct the garden's relationship to the architecture and surrounding landscape.

One big surprise from archaeology is the nearly complete absence of the type of plan assumed to be quintessentially ancient: the quadripartite garden. Not one example has been identified in the hundreds of sites in Jashemski's catalog, yet it has been so ubiquitously represented since the Renaissance as the "Garden of the Ancients" that most gardens recreated at Roman villas opened for tourists take this form. Not only is the quadripartite garden absent in Roman culture, there is no firm evidence of it in the Persian, Egyptian, and Greek traditions either. We do have evidence within the geometries of Roman gardens for cruciform pools or paths that casually cross, and we may yet find a geometrically laid out quadripar-

tite peristyle garden. However, we must dispense with the Post-Enlightenment view of the garden as an axial and symmetrical form, one shared with the mandala and other symbols of the cardinal directions.

Most large Roman gardens were in fact laid out as sequences of linked spaces for perambulating on foot or in a litter. Each garden space was almost always oriented toward a scenic view. Wherever one ate, whether in temples, schools, urban domiciles, or villa gardens, reclining rather than sitting at meals was the norm. For that reason we find no conventional dining tables, only stone couches.

In two famous letters Pliny the Younger (61/63–113 CE) leads us through each of his villas not simply by stating the contents of the rooms and gardens, but by telling us what we will see and from what vantage point we will see it. Like other ancient Roman gardens, his appear to have been linear and view-based. In spite of Pliny's words to this effect, many latter-day architects have drawn imaginary reconstructions of his two villas that take the form of symmetrically axial layouts of the kind that became prevalent from the time of the Renaissance.

Earlier, in his famous *De Architectura*, the architect and engineer Vitruvius (c. 80–70 BCE–c. post-15 BCE) says that extensive walks should be laid out according to the status of owner. He describes a variety of architectural and garden walks, such as the colonnaded portico or peristyle; the freestanding *xystus* or linear walks along the cliffs of the Villa Damacuta on Capri; and the hippodrome garden – that strange horticultural adaptation of equine sport – seen on the Palatine and at Hadrian's Villa. All of these walks feature dramatic landscape views and gardens alongside or within the circuit. Places for delightful dining are arranged throughout the gardens and structures, with attractive views framed by windows to resemble paintings or illusionistic paintings simulating views.

The equivalent of landscape architecture in the Roman world was called *ars topiaria* – not the craft of clipping shrubs, but the art of making places. A Danish scholar, Lena Landgren, has recently shown that the term appears in Rome suddenly in the mid-first century CE, along with the word for its practitioner, the *topiarius*. Garden effects range from oases in desert locales, as at Jericho, Masada, or Petra, to miniaturized topographies, including hanging gardens in emulation of mountains, as on the Palatine in Rome or on the coast of Caesarea Maritima (Israel), and imitation rivers or canals, an example being the Canopus at Hadrian's Villa or the cool Euripus that carried the waters of the Aqua Virgo through the Campus Martius in



Rome. We know from poetry that flowery valley meadows were also recreated in miniature, although as yet no examples have been found archaeologically. All these innovative garden features were not merely surface treatments but instead expensive, man-made ecologies requiring engineering, aesthetic, and horticultural knowledge comparable to that employed in landscape architecture today.

Also appearing in the literary record in the first century CE are places called *viridaria*, long translated simply as green spaces. Oxford scholar Nicholas Purcell now interprets them as collections of green plants (*viridia*), perhaps in the sense of imported trees, shrubs, and herbaceous species, but more probably in the sense of arrangements curated to create a *topia*, or richly evocative place. During this period, garden paintings became popular as well. The earliest and preeminent example is the Garden Room of Livia at Prima Porta, now housed in the

Detail, garden painting, the Garden Room of Livia at Prima Porta. (Credit: Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.)

Museo Nazionale in Rome, a staple image of every garden history textbook. This garden has always been interpreted as an idyllic one, whose plants flower and bear fruit simultaneously in a timeless moment of abundance. The viewer can stroll around the room along the wall, studying its exquisitely portrayed plants and birds, all of which can be identified scientifically. Yet from a stationary position, perhaps while dining, the viewer notices a rocky ledge at the top of the painting, evoking the sense of reclining in a cave and looking out on a lushly planted garden.

Garden paintings abound around the Roman empire, both on interior and exterior walls, creating imaginary verdure for urban courtyards or extending small gardens into fictional spaces. This phenomenon is not, however, what has brought me to Jerusalem. Instead I am here to report on the discovery of what I believe to be an actual *viridarium* at the Villa Arianna in Stabia, Italy, a site buried by the eruption of Vesuvius. In fact, the great peristyle of the Villa Arianna appears to be the most densely planted monumental ornamental garden preserved in the Roman world.

Two years ago, archaeologists from the Soprintendenza archeologica di Pompei removed the volcanic lapilli from the surface of the villa's largest peristyle to find only dirt – no art, no pavements – which is highly unusual. At their invitation, I visited last spring to record the contoured surface with its many root cavities, which were awaiting plaster casts. Working with a team from the Restoring Ancient Stabia Foundation, we used LiDAR, a type of advanced scanning technology, to create a detailed contour map of the surface, allowing us to calculate the careful grading used to manage water flow across the site. Ground-penetrating radar has also allowed us to see, beneath the surface, the terrace's original construction and the varying sizes of the cavities left after the decay of plant roots. I worked with colleagues and students to carefully remove lapilli from hundreds of these cavities. Our analysis indicated that numerous small trees, shrubs, vines, and herbaceous plants had once grown there. We also found other holes indicating the former presence of fence posts and stakes.

While the final design awaits our studies later this year, we have the overwhelming impression that this garden at the Villa Arianna, with its rich array of vegetation held back by fine fence-work, strikingly resembles the garden room of Livia at Prima Porta, as well as other garden paintings around the Roman Empire. It seems that these beautiful representations were not merely idyllic; they portrayed actual *viridaria*, strolling gardens that, with the provision of abundant water and many kinds of plants, offered the smells, sights, and sounds of spring – even in the heat of an August day in the shadow of Mt. Vesuvius. – Kathryn Gleason

Place Keeper

Margaret Bamberger, Land Steward

“Have you seen my blog?” Margaret Bamberger asks me. It is the fall of 2008, and we are sitting in the kitchen of her house on a sparkling day in the Texas Hill Country. Both Margaret’s life and her work revolve around Selah, the 5,500-acre ranch cum nature preserve surrounding us that her husband of the last 11 years, J. David Bamberger, began creating in 1969. “I’m getting ready to post my 52nd entry,” she continues. “When I started last year I promised myself I would write one a week. As a cancer patient, it’s not always been easy. What I miss most is my energy. But the blog is my way of continuing my life as an environmental educator – even if I can’t teach at the Center, take kids on as many nature walks, or develop new programs like I used to do.”

In 2004 Margaret was diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer; a miracle of modern oncology has prolonged her life but not cured the disease. Many patients with terminal diseases make a career of illness. In contrast, Margaret’s career is life, the life of nature. During my visit last fall, I found her happy, relaxed, and focused on the beauty and ecological richness of world surrounding her. If you visit the Bamberger Ranch website (www.bambergerranch.org) and click on “Margaret’s Blog” at the top of the page, you will find a potpourri of information about life at Selah – part ranch news, part journal, and part lesson in environmental science – with wonderful illustrations, for Margaret is an excellent photographer.

The Bamberger house rests on a hilltop, and out of the window there is a view of rolling grassland punctuated with stands of live oaks whose dense low-hanging canopies provide shade and cover for whitetail deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*). The Texas live oaks are one of a number of oak species that are called “live” because their leaves are never shed at the same time and remain a glossy dark green all year. These include the Spanish oak (*Quercus buckleyi*), the Lacey oak, (*Q. laceyi*), and the plateau live oak tree (*Q. fusiformis*).

Even though the handsome live oaks are resisting the conventions of the season, we are also surrounded by deciduous

oaks in shades of scarlet, yellow, and russet – the Spanish oak (*Q. buckleyi*), the Texas red oak (*Q. Texana*), the bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*), and the small blackjack oak (*Q. marilandica*). And on the Bamberger ranch many other native tree species, such as the drought-tolerant big tooth maple (*Acer grandidentatum*) – now a glowing crimson – contribute to the fall spectacle. If you go to Margaret’s November 23, 2008, posting (brp-journal.blogspot.com/2008/11/selahs-colors-of-fall.html) you’ll find her images of these trees in their full autumnal splendor.

Although you wouldn’t guess that they weren’t spontaneously seeded, some of them are not indigenous to the Hill Country but were propagated from seeds of trees growing elsewhere in Texas. The Bamberger policy is to reintroduce to the extent possible native trees that may have grown on the ranch before being extirpated by overgrazing and agriculture. The tall thick grass rippling on the meadow slope below us is part of the same plan to replant the ranch with different species of native Texas vegetation.



Margaret Bamberger

Beauty is often deceptive. The Texas Hill Country is environmentally fragile, drought-prone, and historically unfriendly to farmers and ranchers. Although it looks entirely natural, the landscape of the ranch is as much a product of human ingenuity as is New York’s Central Park. To understand the nature of David Bamberger’s accomplishment and Margaret Bamberger’s love of this place it is necessary to look at the geological structure of the land and the dynamics of its vegetative community.

In geological terms the ranch is part of the Edwards Plateau, an uplifted portion of the calcified sediments of the Cretaceous sea that covered a large portion of the middle of the North American continent a hundred million years ago. Because it is a marine formation, the limestone has numerous fossils of mollusks and other forms of sea life embedded in it. It also has the occasional set of dinosaur tracks imprinted by the large reptiles that roamed the shallow margins of the prehistoric sea. The southern edge of the Edwards Plateau is sharply defined by an escarpment known as the Balcones

Canyonlands. As the soft, uplifted limestone weathered over time, creeks and rivers such as the Colorado, Guadalupe, and Pedernales carved numerous canyons between distinctive ridges. This undulating topography is what gives the Hill Country its name.

The geological uplift also caused fissures to open up in the porous rock. Water percolating belowground created what geologists call karst, a spongelike layer of partially disintegrated limestone in which caves form, some pocket-size and others quite large. Spelunkers are attracted to the caves, and bats often colonize them in huge numbers. But the main function of the permeable karst strata is to serve as an aquifer, an underground reservoir where subsurface water collects. Rainwater replenishes these aquifers, and it was through understanding the intimate bond between sky, earth, and subsurface aquifer that David was able to transform a formerly desiccated landscape into a parklike series of meadows and flowing streams, a continuing labor that Margaret has shared for the past fifteen years.

When David first bought the ranch in 1969 it was completely overgrown with Ashe juniper (*Juniperus ashei*). Often called “cedar” (a common misnomer), Ashe juniper is extremely rot-resistant, making it an ideal wood for fence posts, and its dense, green, feathery foliage is appealing to the eye. For Hill Country ranchers, however, these assets are far outweighed by the fact that this native species spreads like a weed in soil-impooverished, overgrazed areas. The remaining grasses have a difficult time surviving as the juniper’s shallow roots drink up much of the groundwater that would otherwise nourish their growth. Moreover, much of the rain falling on the juniper’s dense leaf canopy evaporates before reaching the ground. Because there is little vegetation and mostly bare earth beneath this canopy, the rain that does fall to the ground erodes the already thin layer of soil. The run-off washes over the bare ground and little water is absorbed. Thus the aquifer is not adequately recharged, and the seeps and springs that flow from it at the surface dry up.

David knew that the only way he would be able to restore the land to the kind of savannah Native Americans had kept open through periodic burning was to remove as much juniper as possible, leaving only a few stands to serve as breeding habitat for such birds as the Golden-cheeked warbler (*Dendronica chrysoparia*), an endangered species whose summer range is restricted to this part of Texas. With the purchase of a second-hand bulldozer and the hard work of a knowledgeable neighbor and a small crew of Mexican laborers, he began a multiyear clearing operation. Where open ground was exposed by the juniper removal, he sowed native grass seed. As the

grass roots trapped water in the soil and filtered it into the aquifer, dry springs started to flow again, and the rolling savannah visible from the kitchen window where Margaret and I were talking began to take form. The bulldozer also served as an earthmoving machine, which David used to carve basins and build earthen dams to create lakes that are fed by a large aquifer reservoir he was lucky enough to tap. The largest of these artificial water bodies is Lake Madrone, named for the Madrone tree (*Arbutus texana*), a rare and delicate species whose peeling bark reveals pinky tan limbs and trunk.

David named the ranch “Selah,” a biblical term meaning “pause and reflect.” Although it is nominally a working ranch and cattle are grazed there, its real mission is to teach the ethics of responsible land stewardship by serving as a role model for environmental regeneration and management practices that, in the words of David, “nurture Mother Nature.” He calls this “people ranching.” In 2002 he formed the Bamberger Ranch Preserve, a not-for-profit corporation whose purpose is to keep Selah intact and perpetuate David’s land-stewardship ethic beyond his own lifetime.

For now, however, the vigorous 80-year-old people rancher is working every day, planting native tree species or overseeing the prescribed mating patterns of a herd of scimitar-horned oryx (*Oryx dammah*) on a 640-acre section of pastureland he set aside in 1980 under the terms of an agreement with the Species Survival Program of the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums. The purpose of the program is to breed genetically diverse animals culled from the remaining 29 African bloodlines and in the future to reintroduce some scimitar-horned oryx back into the wild. In the meantime, to see a herd of these graceful animals running across the ranch range, as opposed to observing them individually in a zoo, is a thrilling sight. I

“Selah,” the Bamberger Ranch.

found a wealth of information

about their behavior, their native habitat (the savannahs of Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad, and Sudan), and the program to save them from extinction in Margaret’s blog posting of February 4, 2008 (brp-journal.blogspot.com/2008/02/scimitar-horned-oryx-at-bamberger-ranch.html).

In contrast to David, Margaret does not speak the language of mission statements; hers is the factual speech of someone trained in both biological and environmental science. Living in Austin as a single mother, she raised three children while working in a laboratory analyzing white blood cells. Because she was able to get her lab work done in a thirty-five rather than forty-hour week, she could use the remaining time to educate herself as a naturalist, learning a great deal about geology, botany, and ornithology by serving as a volunteer in the Austin Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas. The more she immersed herself in natural history, the better she understood how she could change her focus from the cytotechnologist’s microscope to the whole-earth perspective of the environmental educator. She jumped at the chance when she was offered the opportunity to teach at the Austin Nature and Science Center. She could never have imagined that she would eventually have a 5,000-acre ranch for her outdoor classroom.

In 1994 a mutual friend introduced Margaret to her future husband. At first, Margaret did not know what to make of this wealthy, ebullient man whom she admired but who was, she says, “much too rich for me,” adding, “I certainly didn’t want to become anyone’s trophy wife and buy expensive clothes. But I liked coming to the ranch on an occasional field trip to go birding or attend one of David’s land-stewardship conferences, so I kept driving over from Austin when something was going on.” David had by this time built the Center, a large, one-story meeting hall and dormitory of native Texas limestone. The purpose of the conferences at the Center, which were led by agricultural scientists, was, according to him, “to get all those

people who are thinking on conservation issues to come together.”

Part of David’s talent for people ranching lies in his ability to attract exceptionally knowledgeable and dedicated persons to work with him. Not long after they met he invited Margaret to come live at the ranch and begin a series of environmental education classes at the Center. Soon their relationship deepened into something more than mutual admiration, and they married in 1998. Although she often dryly teases her husband when his penchant for hyperbole in extolling the perfections of Selah exceeds her more scientifically descriptive approach, Margaret has obviously found both the perfect outdoor classroom and her ideal life partner.

David’s instinct for lucky recruitment paid off again in 1999 when he was selling Christmas trees for a charity in San Antonio and Colleen Gardener, a Peace Corps volunteer recently returned from Niger, stopped by to choose a Douglas fir. When her interest in environmental preservation became apparent, David invited her to the ranch, and soon she had become its indispensable factotum and Margaret’s teaching assistant. At the Center they set up easels for poster-board pictures of wildlife and built a library of field guides and other books on natural history subjects. Schoolchildren and families, as well as local ranchers in need of David’s persuasion in the ways of land stewarding, were invited to the Center. After focusing the attention of their ranch guests on the lesson of the day, Margaret and Colleen would take them on a walk where they learned to identify birds and marine fossils and – most exciting of all – to recognize a set of dinosaur footprints that calcified eons ago in the now-exposed limestone on one of the bluffs at the ranch.

Some say, “Build it and they will come.” This was true in the case of the bluebird nest boxes. As Margaret explains in her March 10, 2008, blog posting (brp-journal.blogspot.com/2008/03/bluebirds-set-up-housekeeping-at-selah.html), eastern bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) are found in the eastern and central United States, including Texas. When she set up the boxes on the ranch, a breeding pair soon took up residence in one. The photos for this particular lesson in bird identification and behavior are credited to Amanda Fulton, whose husband Steven, a biologist, teaches at the ranch along with Colleen. Accompanied by Margaret’s captions, the photographs show



what the bird looks like from different directions and how the male flies back and forth to feed the nesting female whose head pokes expectantly out of the box hole.

A yet greater triumph in habitat creation occurred soon after David and Margaret were married. Previously David had helped to make publicly accessible a privately owned Hill Country cavern that had been colonized by migratory bats. Disgusted by its subsequent commercialization as a tourist attraction, he decided to build his own bat cave on the ranch – an entrepreneurial piece of real estate development skeptics dubbed “Bamberger’s Folly.” He and Margaret wanted to use their manmade Chiropotarium – a neologism they coined, conflating the bat’s genus name, *Chiroptera*, with “auditorium” – not as a sightseeing experience but rather as part of the ranch’s nature education program. The only question was: Would bats populate the 6,500 square feet of domed spaces awaiting their arrival? For five years their organically irregular, grass-covered, manmade cave, nestled in the side of a low hill, remained empty. Then Mexican free-tailed bats (*Tadarida brasiliensis*), the most prevalent of the 32 species of Texas, began to colonize it. Today the bats are prolifically breeding, and one of the great Selah spectacles is the emergence on a mid-June evening at dusk of well over a hundred thousand bats. Margaret’s photographs in her January 11, 2008, posting (brp-journal.blogspot.com/2008/01/crazy-about-bats.html) show how, as if on cue, a cloud of these nocturnal-foraging mammals swoops from the cave mouth and soars into the darkening sky in search of moths and other insects.

In addition to the ones already mentioned, last year’s 52 postings on Margaret’s blog consist of descriptions of educational activities such as “Birding Workshop held May 17 and 18,” with her own painted illustrations of birds (May 19, 2008); plant and animal lessons, such as “Ragweeds and other Plants that Make us Sneeze,” written from her hospital room in Houston between chemotherapy treatments (September 22, 2008); images she has captured with her ever-busy single-lens-reflex digital camera while on vacation with David; and personal accounts of family visits, including “A Wonderful 70th Birthday” (December 18, 2008).

On this occasion, her birthday present to herself and her readers was her blog pledge “to continue for at least another 52 posts.” – Elizabeth Barlow Rogers

Books

The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, Volume VII, Parks, Politics, and Patronage, 1874-1882

Edited by Charles E. Beveridge, Carolyn F. Hoffman, and Kenneth Hawkins

The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007

The Master List of Design Projects of the Olmsted Firm, 1857-1979, 2nd ed.

Edited by Lucy Lawliss, Caroline Loughlin, Lauren Meier

National Association for Olmsted Parks and National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, 2008

If present trends continue, the ever-expanding shelf of Frederick Law Olmsted scholarship may soon require its own bookcase. Since the publication of Laura Wood Roper’s magisterial study *FLO, a Biography of Frederick Law Olmsted* thirty-five years ago, histori-

ans, biographers, and design critics have focused more attention on Olmsted than any other American landscape architect. No one is even a close second. Their labors have produced a wide spectrum of results, including reverent accolades, vigorous criticisms, and insightful histories.

The first of the accolades, which predates Roper’s biography, was the 1922 publication of a selection of Olmsted’s professional papers, *Forty Years of Landscape Architecture*, edited by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and Theodora Kimball with laudatory introductions and glosses. Censorious voices did not emerge until later in the century. Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar’s controversial *The Park and*

the People: A History of Central Park (1992) presents a revisionist view of Olmsted as an upper-class elitist who believed “it his duty as a gentleman to train the poor and uneducated, whom he did not entirely trust, in the tastes and manners he had inherited.” More nuanced and better-documented books and articles by Albert Fein, Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, Charles E. Beveridge, and Charles Capin McLaughlin, published during the last three decades, have struck a balance between these two poles, providing insight into Olmsted’s work and legacy.

Olmsted well deserves this ever-increasing application of scholarly effort. His extensive body of significant design work has shaped the American cultural landscape

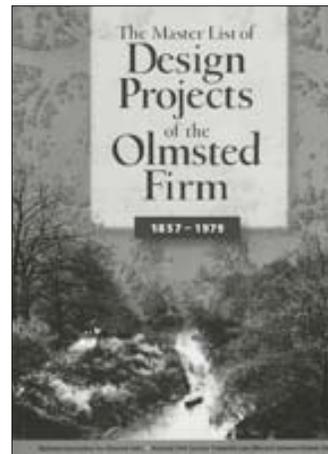
more than any other practitioner of landscape architecture. In addition, the sheer quantity and quality of his books, articles, professional reports, and private correspondence comprise a

rich legacy of design ideas to be reckoned with in the twenty-first century. Two recent works substantially contribute to our understanding of Olmsted’s

remarkable career.

The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, Vol. VII: Parks, Politics, and Patronage 1874-1882 is the latest addition to an editorial endeavor begun in the early 1970s by the late Charles Capin McLaughlin. Over the 65 years of his professional career, Olmsted produced no less than 60,000 personal and professional papers. The intent of this projected twelve-volume series is to publish “the most significant” of Olmsted’s personal correspondence, unpublished writings, professional reports, design plans, and newspaper and periodical articles in annotated form. This latest volume, produced by the editorial troika Charles E. Beveridge, Carolyn F. Hoffman, and Kenneth Hawkins, exhibits the superb scholarship of its predecessors and adds yet another significant I-beam to an impressive structure of editorial achievement.

Since it has taken almost a generation to arrive at volume VII, it is obvious that the various editorial teams of the series will not be rushed. The almost glacial time span is witness to their scholarly rigor as well as testimony to the formidable task they have undertaken. Their editorial policy is both clear and



sound. Every document selected must satisfy at least one of these criteria: “provide insight into Olmsted’s character, present valuable commentary on his times, or contain an important statement on design.” The 756 pages of volume VII render it literally one of the weightiest tomes of the series, yet its strict adherence to editorial policy makes it one of the most fascinating and informative of the lot.

As Beveridge notes in his introduction, the period from 1874 to 1882 was one of the most active and significant of Olmsted’s career. With a nod to the nautical terms Olmsted often used to spice his correspondence, one might say that his professional practice was running at full sail before the wind through often-stormy seas. The period begins with the last years of his New York office and ends with him happily relocated in suburban Brookline, Massachusetts. The editors have selected extensive material relating to his designs for Tompkins Square and Morningside Park, his continuing work on Central Park, and his planning efforts to develop a mass transportation system and topologically apt street system for the Bronx. An additional wealth of material includes plans for the Boston, Montreal, and

Buffalo park systems, reports on the site plan of the nation’s capitol, an architectural critique of the New York State capitol in Albany, several private estate commissions, preservation initiatives for Niagara Falls, suggestions for a resort hotel, and even an evaluation of the federal government’s Reconstruction policy and civil service reform.

The scale, complexity, and significance of many of these projects could occupy a full career, but for Olmsted they were less than a decade of work. This frenetic pace sorely tested his psychological and mental health. In letters to friends he wrote of being “dilapidated” and “so dog tired I could hardly sit up.” “A little exercise” set his “heart bouncing.” The additional strain of confronting the politics and patronage surrounding his work in Central Park was especially trying. Two long confessional ruminations on the vicissitudes of work in the public realm in New York City round out the editorial selections: the bitter, self-published catharsis “The Spoils of the Park” and a series of private journal fragments dealing with similar subject matter.

The volume contains a

lucid and informative general introduction by Beveridge highlighting Olmsted’s work of the period and placing it in historical context. Chapters are arranged in chronological order, and each is introduced by a helpful synopsis of its main events. Some chapters are devoted to only a few months, others several years. About 80 percent of the 136 entries are private correspondence, with the remainder consisting of project reports, published articles, and personal memoirs. Because the material is organized chronologically, the narrative leaps from topic to topic, conveying a sense of just how diverse, stressful, and fast-paced Olmsted’s practice was. Thus, to trace the development of a specific project, copious use of the well-designed index is a must. Each selection is provided with extensive footnotes on every imaginable subject related to the text. This will no doubt please the scholar, but less so the layperson who may well become entangled in the thicket of references or just bored.

The portrait of Olmsted that emerges from this wealth of material is consistent with the one revealed in the previous six volumes of his papers. By twenty-first century standards, Olmsted was clearly a work-obsessed polymath, but he appears

less so when viewed in a nineteenth-century context, surrounded by individuals of similar energy and idealism. We meet again the fervent idealist, certain his design work embodies the values of American democracy. Unwavering in his personal integrity, he abhors the chicanery of political patronage and is exasperated by those who fail to grasp the depth and nuances of his concept of urban parks. He constantly argues for the status of landscape architecture as a rigorous profession requiring such specialized knowledge as site engineering, planting design, aesthetics, design precedents, and the ability to relate design form to social and individual needs. His maturity and mastery as a designer are manifest – a quick and decisive eye for the intrinsic qualities of a site, the ability to weigh complex alternatives and choose the best, and the capacity to work effectively at a wide range of scales.

Olmsted was quite aware of his limitations as a writer and speaker. Responding to an 1877 invitation to lecture in Montreal, he remarked, “I cannot write in a popular way upon my subject and I have no gift for public speaking.” This rather Germanic

sentence from his entry on “Landscape Gardening” from *Johnson’s New Universal Cyclopaedia* (1877) is typical:

In the possibility, not of making a perfect copy of any charming natural landscape, or of any parts or elements of it, but of leading to the production, where it does not exist, under required conditions and restrictions, of some degree of the poetic beauty of all natural landscapes, we shall thus find not only the special function and the justification of the term landscape gardening, but also the first object of study for the landscape gardener, and the standard by which alone his work is to be fairly judged.

Much of his personal correspondence is warmer and more graceful, however, revealing him as a loyal friend and caring father. In one letter to his six-year-old son, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., he invents a tale featuring a locomotive named Succotash and a rat, Tzaskoe (the latter of Norwegian provenance). While revealing a playful imagination, the plot concludes with the tragic death of Tzaskoe, a clear warning to young Fred of the disastrous consequences of hubris and neglect of social responsibility. Olmsted’s moralism,

which was rooted in his Puritan heritage, prevails.

As Beveridge notes in his introduction, at no time in his career was Olmsted more directly involved in his design work than during these eight eventful years. While this volume does document the corruption and complexity of New York politics and illuminates a few interesting facets of Olmsted’s character, its greatest value lies in the amount of detail Olmsted reveals about the development of some of his most significant design projects – the U.S. Capitol Grounds, the Boston Park System, the Bronx, Tompkins Square, the Campaign for the Niagara Reservation, Mont Royal, Montreal, and several planned communities and private residences. The editors have included plans for many of these projects, but in most cases they are poorly reproduced. This has been a problem with all seven volumes. One hopes the two last volumes of the twelve-volume series devoted primarily to plans and drawings will fare better.

At the end of the volume we find Olmsted mostly freed from the turbulence of New York’s politics and taking up residence in the qui-

eter water of leafy Brookline, adopting the suburban life he believed to be “the ideal middle landscape between city and countryside.” His psychological health is much improved and no longer is there “a great noise” in his head, and he feels lighter on his feet. As he confides to his lifelong friend Charles Loring Brace:

You can have no idea what a drag life had been to me for three years or more. . . . I enjoy this suburban country expression beyond expression. . . . We have had great trials and agitation in the past year but their result on the whole has been withal tranquilizing. I am to turn sixty with two grandsons.

In the remaining thirteen years of Olmsted’s career, in a new place with a new beginning, even more outstanding work was yet to come.

Yet another valuable addition to the Olmsted shelf, *The Master List of Design Projects of the Olmsted Firm, 1857-1979*, is a much-improved second edition of a work published eleven years ago. It is an indispensable reference for scholars, lay persons, and preservationists interested in the

work of Olmsted himself as well as his firm, which continued practice until 1979. For over a century Olmsted and his successors at the Brookline office produced a prodigious number of projects – about 6,000 in all. These included site plans for 700 public parks, parkways, and recreational facilities, 350 subdivisions and planned communities, 2,000 private estates, 250 college and school plans, 100 hospitals and asylums, and 125 commercial and industrial buildings. Plans and correspondence for much of this work are housed in the office archives. Unless you live in a very remote part of the United States, there is a good chance that a design by Olmsted or his firm is nearby or at least once existed in your vicinity. If you wish to locate this work or perhaps engage in efforts to preserve it, this master list will perform admirably.

This second edition, cosponsored by the National Association for Olmsted Parks and the National Park Service’s Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, is a welcome metamorphosis of the more minimalist earlier version. Editors Lucy Lawliss, Caroline Loughlin, and Lauren Meier have added 1,000 new entries and four new succinct and informative essays on the history of the Olmsted firm and the scope and nature of

its projects. Of special merit is “Researching an Olmsted Landscape” by Lawliss and Meier, a step-by-step guide that also lists all available archives and their locations and Web sites. This entry will prove especially helpful to laypersons and preservationists. Excellent photographs and plans of representative examples of the firm’s work complement the essays.

The new editors have been wise to retain the very useful classification system of the old edition devised by Charles E. Beveridge and Carolyn F. Hoffman. In brief, the system is typological and geographical, dividing the material into fourteen categories (parks, private estates, suburban communities, arboreta and gardens, etc.). Within each category the projects are listed by state in alphabetical order, along with their job numbers. At present it is necessary to visit the archive at the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site to access this material, but eventually all the documents will be available online. Also, each typological section includes a brief, helpful introduction by a leading Olmsted scholar placing the designs in historical context.

This system is quick, informative, and comprehensive. For example, I may

want to know if the Olmsted firm designed any private residences in my hometown, Charlottesville, Virginia. A quick glance at the private estate category reveals that between 1932 and 1937 the firm produced a site plan for W.A. Rinehart, and that 27 plans and related correspondence are available under job number 09319. If I wish to research this project, I simply set up an appointment at the archive and make plans to journey to Brookline. To supplement my efforts, I will also follow the advice of editors Lawliss and Meier to consult my local historical society as well as the Olmsted Research Guide Online (rediscov.com/olmsted). The latter will allow me to reference additional materials in the manuscript division of the Library of Congress.

Both of these recent publications complement one another. Volume VII of the Olmsted papers is a fascinating primary source revealing Olmsted’s innermost thoughts concerning some of his most enduring and significant design work. *The Master List of Design Projects of the Olmsted Firm* leads us to the plans and correspondence relating to these projects, as well as many others by him and his successors.

Olmsted never wrote a systematic or comprehensive treatise on his overall design theory. However, when one

assembles the fragments of thought embedded in his collected papers and notes the extraordinary significance and range his projects, there emerges a powerful legacy of design that speaks to the challenges of the twenty-first century. He reminds us the essence of design is the giving of form to values. He affirms landscape architecture as a joint endeavor with architects, engineers, planners, and other professionals. He emphasizes meticulous, comprehensive, well-documented site analysis and the melding of design form with human needs and the welfare of the natural environment. He advocates the creative interpretation of design precedent to meet present challenges and insists on staunch commitment to the welfare of the public realm in a democratic society. Finally, his vision of park systems reminds us that one indispensable element of a vibrant, socially just, and functional city is an interconnected matrix of parks, plazas, parkways, and other types of civic spaces. These excellent books unroll a scroll of remarkable design achievements and testify to the scope of an enduring legacy. – Reuben M. Rainey

The Last Days of Old Beijing: Life in the Vanishing Backstreets of a City Transformed
By Michael Meyer
Walker & Company, 2008

All cities are palimpsests, landscapes on which the marks of time are constantly being inscribed and erased. Even a city’s topography and land forms, such as its hills and bodies of water, cannot withstand the relentless passage of time and the actions of subsequent generations of inhabitants. Infrastructure and street patterns may change at a slower rate than the structures that are constantly being erected, altered, and torn down as cities rebuild themselves, but even they are subject to transformation.

One of the most conspicuous examples of urban transformation today can be seen in Beijing. The 2008 Olympics focused the world’s attention on the dramatic rapidity of this city’s seemingly overnight alteration. The confidence with which its government planners are adding a Western-style inscription to the latest layer of its palimpsest gives pause to those who see cities as amalgams of new and old, places where past and present can coexist in harmony. China’s rapid modernization due to its recent economic prosperity is clearly bringing a higher

standard of living to many millions of people. But at what social and environmental cost? This is a critical question for our times.

In *The Last Days of Old Beijing: Life in the Vanishing*

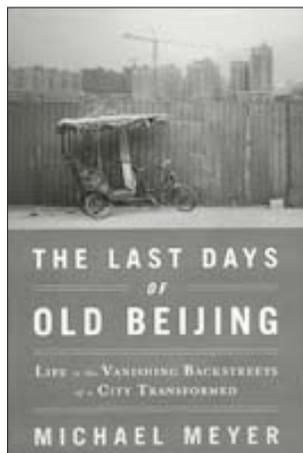
Backstreets of a City Transformed, Michael Meyer writes about the country's ruthlessly changed capital city not merely as an informed outside observer but also as someone with intimate knowledge gained by living inside

his subject. He first came to China in 1995, as a Peace Corps volunteer. For two years he taught in Neijiang, a mid-size city located on a bend in the Tuo River in the southwestern province of Sichuan. In 2003 he returned to China and settled in Beijing where he became fascinated by the city's vanishing traditional architecture and the social structure that it represents. To master written Chinese, he spent a year at Tsinghua University, using city-planning histories as his texts. Then he found two rooms for rent in a dilapidated courtyard of the *hutong* called Red Bayberry and Slanted Bamboo Street, in the venerable neighbor-

hood of Dazhalan.

Located just outside Front Gate, the main opening in what was once the outer wall along the city's north-south axis, Dazhalan, which includes 114 ancient lanes, or *hutongs*, dates from the 1200s. In the seventeenth century the neighborhood assumed its lively commercial character after the emperor forbade theaters, artisans' shops, teahouses, inns, restaurants, brothels,

and other such establishments within the imperial confines of the Inner City. Today a conglomeration of subdivided and badly decayed mansions housing 57,000 residents within half of a square mile, Dazhalan is one of the densest population clusters in the world, sustained by a vibrant web of human connection. Unfortunately, it is also in the process of being destroyed. For the Hand, as Meyer characterizes the impersonal governmental authority that anonymously paints the character *chai* – raze – under the cover of darkness on the mud and brick walls of its houses and shops, this ancient neighborhood is an affront to the city's image of itself as a major contender in the race toward modernization.



After it was announced that Beijing would host the 2008 Olympics, the Hand redoubled its efforts to eradicate the city's *hutongs* and relocate their residents to high-rise apartments on the urban perimeter. Because the communist government owns the land, long-term lease arrangements with real-estate developers have spurred the destruction of most old neighborhoods closer in toward the center and their replacement with commercial buildings, shopping malls, and chain operations. In this way Beijing is acquiring a cityscape where lanes and stall-lined streets are rapidly giving way to wide motorways and plazas anchoring banks and corporate headquarters. As everywhere, the city has sprouted a plethora of internationally familiar global franchises such as Starbucks, McDonald's, and Marriott Hotels. Signaling this aggressive westernization, new names such as Investment Plaza and Corporate Square are being conferred on old places, while *hutongs* like Glazed Tile Factory Antique Street, Prolong Life Street, and Red Bayberry and Slanted Bamboo Street in Dazhalan have become an endangered species. At the same time the government is aware of heritage as a tourist commodity, and therefore the Hand spares some

hutongs or architecturally interesting parts of them. But when restored, these are only semblances of their former selves, for their social vibrancy has been drained away as their current occupants can no longer afford to rent their old apartments.

To live in Dazhalan as its lone foreigner and not seem odd, it was necessary for Meyer to become an active member of the community, which he did by talking his way into a job as a volunteer teacher at Coal Lane Elementary School. With the ability to read the language and speak colloquially, he could both dig in historical archives and share in the lives of his fellow *hutong* dwellers as they went about their daily business while waiting for the Hand to mark their shops and abodes with the character *chai*. During his Peace Corps days, the Chinese name of Heroic Eastern Plumblossom had been conferred on him because his surname sounded like *mai'er*, the word for "sold son," meaning a boy that had been auctioned off by his parents. His Dazhalan neighbors now nicknamed him Little Plumblossom, and it was as Teacher Plumblossom that he was known in the classroom.

Meyer shifts back and forth between the grand sweep of Beijing's history and the quotidian details of his neighborhood and personal relationships, embedding his summary of the

city's many eras from prehistoric times to the present in a lively account of his life as a teacher and the lives of those he lived among. He lets his story emerge vividly from the voices of his neighbors: the officiously solicitous Widow, Recycler Wang, the Hans, who repair cell phones, Soldier Liu who runs his family's shaved noodle shop, and Miss Zhu, his Coal Lane Elementary co-teacher. Anecdotally, he makes the reader aware that an "urban corner," the Chinese euphemism for slum, can be a place where "you heard laughter and lively talk and occasionally, tears and arguments, just like anywhere else." He says that in comparison with the new Beijing of detached high-rise apartments, "People treated each other with something I missed the minute I set foot outside the *hutong*: civility."

The longtime tenancy of the Widow in the government-owned courtyard house Meyer shares gives her unspoken authority over the other residents. She keeps walking into his apartment with bowls of steamed dumplings saying, "Eat, Little Plumblossom!" Inside the classroom with Miss Zhu (who longs to have the one child she may bear under the country's population-control policy), he teaches the children of Coal Lane Element-

tary to read English from a Chinese primer featuring a mischievous monkey called Mocky. They are supervised by educational authorities with total jurisdiction over the school curriculum. These officials also provide songs encouraging patriotic right thinking that Miss Zhu and Meyer must teach the children to sing.

On Red Bayberry and Slanted Bamboo Street Meyer became friendly with his neighbor Recycler Wang, who haggles with the other neighbors over the amount he is willing to pay for their discarded rubbish and then, in turn, with the wholesale garbage entrepreneurs of Trash City who pay him a slightly marked-up price that yields him a profit of a few yen. Once Recycler Wang invited Meyer to accompany him to Trash City. The dump is organized as a series of lanes that are named according to the recyclables that are bought and sold there. Navigating Plastic Bottles, Bottle Caps, Fan Blades, Paint Buckets, Sink Basins, Cardboard, Musical Instruments, Bedsprings, Bicycle Frames, Bus Seats, Cooking Oil Bottles, Office Papers, and Pillows, Recycler Wang and his wife negotiate the best prices they can get for what they have brought in their dilapidated truck that day. Meyer notes that the name of one of Trash City's lanes is Beams from Old Courtyard Houses, thereby giving the

reader a sign of the times and an indication of the meager economic thread that will be broken when Recycler Wang and other *hutong* residents are relocated.

The modernizing of Beijing that Meyer describes is not a singular phenomenon. In the four chapters in which he recounts the city's urban history, it is apparent that the current transformation is only the latest of many periods of construction and alteration.

In 1271, a few years after conquering China and establishing the Mongol empire, Kubilai Khan founded the capital of the Yuan dynasty on the site that would one day become Beijing. He excavated the lake known as Bei Hai, or Northern Sea, and created hunting preserves – today public parkland – surrounding it. Little else of this first imperial city remains. After taking power in 1403, the second Qing emperor, Yongle, created what is now thought of as the ancient city. Guided by geomancy, Confucian symbolism, and cosmology, the imperial city planners created a hierarchical ordering of space in which three massively walled enclosures – the Inner City, the Imperial City, and the Forbidden City – were nested each within the other. This closely guarded triple complex, still the heart of the capital, was centered on a great north-south axis

punctuated by ceremonial gates. Just outside the gate of the Inner City – the outermost enclosure – Yongle built the Altar of Heaven flanked by two circular temples, the Temple of Heaven and the Temple of Agriculture, or Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests. To the south of Front Gate he decreed the creation of Dazhalan as a commercial quarter.

During the reign of Jiajing (ruled 1522–1566), altars were raised to the Earth, Sun, and Moon at the cardinal points just outside the Inner City. At about the same time a fourth wall was begun, only the southern portion of which was completed. The Outer City defined by this wall – an area containing Dazhalan and the adjacent neighborhood of Fresh Fish Junction, a *hutong* district where the current pace of demolition is even more advanced – was therefore a large rectangular appendage attached to the southern portion of the walls of the Inner City. Today the combined walls of the Inner and Outer City are gone, and in their place is the Second Ring Road. Beyond it are the Third and Fourth Ring Roads, where the suburban residential towers for former *hutong* residents are being built.

Forced relocation is not a new policy in Beijing. In

1648 when Qing emperor Shunzhi wanted to turn the Inner City into an ethnic enclave for Manchu administrators, Han residents, just like the residents of Dazhalan today, were subject to a compensated eviction policy. And over the next two and a half centuries, Beijing saw the usual transformations wrought by emperors, wars, and natural disasters as new imperial landmarks and pleasure gardens were built and subsequently destroyed by edict, conquest, and fire. But it wasn't until the twentieth century that the twin forces of politics and modern technology all but eradicated what remained of Beijing's past.

In 1912 Sun Yat-sen's Nationalist Party took control of the county and established the Republic of China. With this move toward an apparently more democratic society, the public was allowed to tour the Imperial monuments within the Inner City and admitted for the first time into the Forbidden City. The throne room became the Palace Museum, and the space adjacent to the Altar to the God of Land and Grain became Beijing's Central Park. Moats were dredged, the city wall was pierced by roads in several places, and trolley tracks were built around the perimeter of the old wall. Electric lights and macadam pavement appeared, and the bicycle became a common

mode of transportation. But Dazhalan remained in a time warp. Meyer conjures up the neighborhood then as “a procession of professions, including barbers, china menders, lamplighters, herbalists, toy makers, florists, fortune-tellers, magicians, and bear baiters” navigating the crowded narrow *hutong* on foot and in rickshaws – as is still the case today.

After Beijing was overrun by Japanese invaders in 1937, the occupation government built roads inside the Old City but located its own residential quarters in a new district. Westerners stayed on in the colonial sector, romantically attuned to the city's beguiling charms. Their idyll ended for good in 1949 when Communist forces defeated the Nationalists. Simultaneous with the founding of the new People's Republic of China, Chairman Mao Zedong proclaimed that industrial production would be the primary goal of the communist regime and that the old *hutong* neighborhoods of Beijing would become a sea of smokestacks. The Chinese architect and planner Liang Sicheng – whom Meyer met with several times and quotes at some length – questioned the transformation of the capital into a Chinese Manchester in a country where there are so many other urban centers.

Liang soon learned, however, that Mao's regime was if anything more authoritarian than its imperial predecessors. By the mid-1950s Beijing could boast of being the home of 149 of China's 164 types of industry including petrochemicals, rubber products, plastic, pig iron, power generators, woolen cloth, cars, color televisions, internal combustion engines, washing machines, refrigerators, sewing machines, and beer.

Mao declared that the Old City “completely serves feudalism and the imperial era” and that the eradication of this taint was one of the mandates of communism. Spurred on by Soviet planners, much of the Inner City was altered to serve as governmental headquarters. The remaining parts of the wall that once enclosed the Inner City were deemed politically incorrect. The *People's Daily* exhorted people who loved the Party to “use their hands to destroy – you pull down a piece of stone, who can stand by idly? ‘A single idiot can move a mountain,’ so should citizens of every district help pull down the wall.” The only part of the outer wall that was left standing was the historic Front Gate's twin towers. Inside the Front Gate, facing the Inner City's Gate of Heavenly Peace (Tian'anmen), Mao built the largest urban square in the world, now expanded to fifty acres with the capacity to hold a crowd of six hundred

thousand. Only the collapse of the Great Leap Forward in 1958 spared the *hutong* dwellings from being eradicated. They were simply left to deteriorate.

Further erosion of the city's imperial heritage accompanied Mao's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of 1966. The last remaining intact gate in the city wall came down in 1969 to enable the construction of the Second Ring Road. In spite of his earlier forced confession of the error of his opinions, Liang was labeled “a piece of contemptible dog shit” for protesting the destruction of his city's architectural patrimony. Although rehabilitated after the Cultural Revolution, his plan for a progressive city with a protected past went unheeded; it soon became abundantly clear that urban planning in China was still in the hands of authoritarian officials and that there would be as little transparency as in imperial times. Today “Progress” remains the Party line, and protesters are reduced to bargaining over the terms of resettlement.

The fate of the *hutong* residents in modernizing Beijing prompts reflection on all urban palimpsests as testaments to changing cultural values and systems of governance over time. In 1998, when Meyer was still

teaching in the northwest part of the city, he observed that a nearby farming village had been plowed under to make way for a high-tech research park. Noticing three pits dug in the now bare earth, he introduced himself to an archaeologist from the Cultural Relics Bureau who told him, "I don't have much time. These will all be buried next week."

The archaeologist had been collecting artifacts from what he surmised to be tombs of a Han dynasty settlement. He said that the government-sponsored developer had promised to build a museum to display the two-thousand-year-old pottery and tools discovered on the site. Wryly, Meyer remarks, "It never did. Now it is filled with identical rows of walk-up apartment buildings. They are made from cement and painted bone-white – ossuaries for a later generation to exhume."

Meyer does not see the current reinvestment in the urban core to be contextually beneficial. In one of their conversations, the architect Liang characterized the "starchitecture" of Beijing and so many other present-day cities as "objects" disconnected from their surroundings. These architectural icons as well as the uniform high-rise apartment buildings that are replacing the courtyard houses of the *hutongs* stand in isolation. Deprived of street life, their

environs are vulnerable to crime. However, the issue that Meyer wants his readers to face is not just the erasure of an architecturally historic and socially vibrant part of the Beijing palimpsest or the cost in human terms of destroying the homes of its present *hutong* population but rather the ways in which today's developer-driven urban planning is impoverishing human life everywhere.

No one would argue that the coal-burning stoves contributing to the city's pall of polluted air are better than central heating or that public latrines are preferable to indoor plumbing. What is being lost in Beijing and other globalizing cities is, besides their individual identities, the familiarity of neighbors who recognize each other as they mingle on the street or in the market. Meyer, who has read Jane Jacobs's *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, wants us to see that ripping apart the physical and social fabric of place and reweaving it with coarse indifference to the form and texture of what makes urban life rewarding – a vibrant mixture of commercial and residential uses, neighborly face-to-face encounters on a daily basis, easy access to work, and less dependency on bureaucratic governmental agencies – is,

in a word, insane. In sum, he is asking why, in its race toward industrial and commercial hegemony, should China repeat the sins of the West in copycat fashion? What is the toll that is being taken not only on Chinese society but also on the health of the planet if a country so large and populous continues on this present course?

History never reverses itself, and the economy and culture of China are changing irrevocably. To assert its real greatness as a nation China should be accommodating this process by building more humane and livable cities that mix technological improvements with local customs, indigenous planning forms, and building technologies, while instituting effective controls on industrial pollution. But without similar actions on the part of other countries this is not likely to happen. The real question to ask ourselves is why isn't the country that has been such an unfortunate role model for the whole world in terms of object architecture, heedless sprawl, automobile ownership per capita, and overall environmental degradation not engaging in leadership by example. Perhaps in these dawning days of an administration committed to change we can have the audacity to hope that American cities can be transformed into better planning models for the rest of the world.

– Elizabeth Barlow Rogers

Magnificent Buildings, Splendid Gardens

By David R. Coffin. Edited by Vanessa Bezemer Sellers
Princeton Department of Art & Archaeology in association with the Princeton University Press, 2008

In April 1971, eleven years after the publication of his groundbreaking study *The Villa D'Este at Tivoli*, David R. Coffin organized the first conference at the newly instituted Garden and Landscape Studies program at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C., modestly titled "The Italian Garden." In a later essay, Coffin described not only the limited character of publications on the subject at that time, but also how difficult it was to find panelists for the conference itself. His many phone calls and letters produced only four participants, one American scholar and three Europeans; there were simply no other scholars working on gardens.

Coffin invited as a respondent to the papers Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe, the prominent British landscape architect and co-author with John



Shepherd of *Italian Gardens of the Renaissance*, published thirty-six years earlier. Jellicoe's presence highlighted the revolution going on in the field, since he represented an earlier generation of landscape architects who had focused on garden plans

supplemented with snippets of largely familiar history and legend. Predictably he was irked by the new approaches he heard, which focused on meaning and social and cultural context, instead of on what he proclaimed to be most important about Italian gardens: their design. For younger academics, however, both the conference and the subsequent volume of its proceedings, which Coffin edited and published, represented the exciting future direction of garden studies.

Widely credited as one of the founders of the new academic discipline of garden history, Coffin approached Italian Renaissance gardens with the full apparatus of the discipline of art history. He published five books and the edited volume on the Dumbarton Oaks conference, as well as numerous articles and book reviews. His last book, *Magnificent Buildings, Splendid Gardens*,

assembles twenty of his most significant articles and essays on Italian Renaissance and later architecture and gardens, and on English gardens of the seventeenth century through the nineteenth century. Produced over fifty years, 1951–2001, the articles were chosen by Coffin himself and published after his death through the efforts of his former student, Vanessa Bezemer Sellers, herself a scholar of seventeenth-century Dutch gardens. The volume stands as witness to the accomplishments of this prolific scholar and reflects his many interests.

Coffin's academic and intellectual life centered around Princeton, where he was both an undergraduate and a graduate student, and subsequently a faculty member from 1949. There he studied with Erwin Panofsky, the German émigré scholar who from 1935 was professor at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton and taught at the university. Coffin's moving tribute to Panofsky (1968), which is included in this volume, praises him as "the greatest humanist." The legendary Panofsky is most associated with iconography – the study of subject matter or meaning in works of art and the ways in which cultural ideas resonate in images. Profoundly influenced by his mentor, Coffin was the first

to recognize that gardens, like painting and architecture, have intellectual content and culturally specific meanings; he was also one of the first scholars to investigate those meanings.

Scholarship resembles a good mystery story. The scholar tracks down clues – bits of evidence – and out of these clues constructs a narrative, whether about the attribution, meaning, or larger cultural significance of the object of inquiry. Departing from the limited information and interests that characterized previous studies on Italian gardens, Coffin sought a great range of evidence. He is famous for his emphasis on facts, but what is really novel in his early writing on gardens is not that he gets the facts right but that he gathers a whole new kind of evidence.

Evidence, for Coffin, began with documents. Many of the documents he sought are housed in archives in Italy. Handwritten documents from the early modern period are sometimes barely decipherable, especially those in Italian, as Latin was more suited to fine penmanship. Coffin spent long hours searching out the records of notaries documenting payments to artists and architects, property-sale deeds, and other legal matters. He also made great use of letters and *avvisi* – handwritten newsletters by a

private agent sent to his patron in another city. Coffin uncovered a cache of such documents in the State Archives of Modena during his study of the Villa d'Este, which allowed him to determine the dating and attribution of fountains and to compile a complete building history.

Coffin also unearthed clues in published texts, especially early guide books and travel journals, as both genres gained popularity in the later sixteenth century when Italy became the acknowledged cultural capital of Europe and both Italians and foreigners began to tour the country with gardens prominently on their list of sites to see. The words of some of those contemporaries form the substance of a brief essay in *Magnificent Buildings*, “The Gardens of Venice,” one of his later publications (2001). From the visitors quoted by Coffin, we learn that Venice was filled with lovely gardens as early as the late fifteenth century. We also discover how they were planted, organized, and decorated with fountains, and how they played an important role in entertaining. Titian, the most famous Venetian artist, had a garden overlooking the lagoon, where he invited other artists and intellectuals to

feast on delicious food and sophisticated literary conversation.

Documents themselves are idle clues – finding them is only the first step. They need to be checked against each other, analyzed, and questioned in order to construct a larger story. An early essay in this volume, “John Evelyn at Tivoli” (1956), concerns the visit of the English diarist and horticulturalist to Tivoli. Individuals, even learned ones like Evelyn, commonly copied descriptions from another travel journal or guidebook rather than recording what they actually observed, or added only limited original comments. To determine what was only planned, but never executed, or what may have been altered, Coffin in this case compares Evelyn’s diary entry with both printed views and early guidebooks.

Engraved views of gardens were increasingly popular from the late sixteenth century, but even more important for reconstructing the original state of Renaissance gardens are the views of villas that were commonly painted inside the villas themselves. These may indicate a state before later changes or losses, or alternatively, original intentions that were not carried out. In a relatively recent article, “The Self-Image of the Roman Villa during the Renaissance” (1998), Coffin brings together and analyzes a number of these painted

views and explains their significance as images of position and wealth, not just chronicles of the site.

Beyond gathering descriptions, views, and contemporary accounts to understand Renaissance gardens, Coffin also embarked early in his career on a sustained study of one of the architects most deeply involved in creating original gardens, Pirro Ligorio, the designer of the sixteenth-century Villa d'Este at Tivoli, near Rome. A humanist with wide-ranging interests and abilities, energy in abundance, and an encyclopedic knowledge of ancient artifacts (which he recorded in two unpublished manuscripts), Ligorio worked for an influential cardinal before he was appointed papal architect. After his ambitions collided with rivalries at the papal court, the architect and antiquarian ended his career in the employ of the duke of Ferrara. Ligorio’s erudition, his belief in the importance of facts, his curiosity, and his activity as supplier of intellectual content for paintings, architecture, and gardens, made him a fitting subject for Coffin. One of the articles in this volume, “Pirro Ligorio and the Nobility of the Arts” (1964), presents the disillusioned and bitter architect’s reflections on his own time. Ligorio castigated

those (including Michelangelo) who did not follow the model of the ancients and ignored the principle of decorum or appropriateness. This and several other studies did not exhaust Coffin’s interest in the multifaceted sixteenth-century figure. A monograph, *Pirro Ligorio: Artist, Architect, and Antiquarian*, was published posthumously in 2004.

Taking to heart Panofsky’s lessons about iconography, the study of meaning, Coffin deduced the existence of an iconographic program devised by Ligorio at the Villa d'Este at Tivoli. Clues came from the garden’s fountain imagery, and from contemporary writings about the villa. The brilliance in Coffin’s study was not just uncovering the meaning itself, but also in identifying how meaning emerged by means of design, plantings, and sculpted imagery as the visitor progressed through the garden. The garden joins two themes, both common at the time but both given particular relevance at this site – a garden as a unique marriage of art and nature and its ability to convey the story of a mythical hero – in this case, Hercules, the ancient deity of Tivoli and legendary ancestor of the Este family. The Villa d'Este was a work of art carved out of the raw materials of its natural setting, the land terraced at great expense and the abundant springs and rivers of

the region harnessed into spectacular and ingenious fountains. At the same time, its vertical axis, which branched into a Y at the steep upper garden, evoked through design and statuary the mythical Garden of the Hesperides and Hercules’s choice of virtue over pleasure – a choice that ultimately won him the golden apples of the Hesperides. By implication, the wisdom of Hercules was replicated by his descendant, Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, in creating this garden.

Coffin was also in the vanguard in seeking meaning in eighteenth-century English gardens. He once told me that it was the experience of seeing gardens in England during his war service that originally inspired his academic interest in them – although a return to those particular gardens came to fruition only a half century later in his book *The English Garden: Meditation and Memorial*, published in 1994. In “The Elysian Fields of Rousham” (1986), Coffin argues for a unified meaning of the Oxfordshire site through the statues, garden structures, and topography, within the framework of the natural garden and the cultural and philosophical context of the eighteenth century. In landscape design-

er William Kent's work he finds an evocation of the classical theme of the earthly paradise, interpreted in Renaissance gardens as the Golden Age, Parnassus, or the Garden of the Hesperides, but at Rousham acquiring the elegiac associations of the Elysian Fields, the Homeric paradise for the virtuous.

Coffin's habit of culling evidence from a wide variety of historical sources and subjecting it to rigorous inquiry was part of the legacy he passed on to those who studied gardens with him. He collected the fruits of his archival and library researches in small blue notebooks, assembled by topic, added to and mined throughout his life, and remarkably, shared with his students. Coffin also kept his comprehensive – some might say obsessive – bibliographic card file in the library, where it was accessible to all. This was a particularly valuable resource in the days before there were computers, electronic databases, or even a photocopy machine in the art library.

In May, 2003, five months before his death, Vanessa Sellers organized a celebratory dinner for Coffin and his former students at Prospect House on the Princeton University campus. Many of us fondly recalled Coffin's blue notebooks at that dinner, and our astonishment that they were entrusted to us. But this enormous generosity, which launched our

own work and spared us much labor, was typical. It was at this dinner that Sellers announced to Coffin the gift of this volume of his essays. In the years that followed, many of the students at the dinner, as well as others who could not attend, contributed to *Magnificent Buildings, Splendid Gardens* by writing brief commentaries on the selections. (These are published at the back of the book and might best be read as prefaces to the essays themselves.)

Unassuming in both personality and scholarship, Coffin was as devoted to undergraduate teaching and administration as he was to his own research. His graduate students, as well as some undergraduates, remained lifelong friends, and their work on gardens – in the Tuscan and Roman Renaissance, in eighteenth-century France and England, in seventeenth-century Holland – is a part of his legacy. At the celebratory dinner in 2003, Coffin was presented with a booklet of reminiscences from his former students. In it Richard Betts, architectural historian at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, wrote, "He inspired the highest standards of exacting scholarship while treating his students with kindness and respect." His words speak for all of us.

– Claudia Lazzaro

Memorial

Wilhelmina Jashemski (1910-2007)

Wilhelmina Mary Feemster Jashemski, the pioneering archaeologist and historian of ancient Roman gardens, has died at age 97. During decades of work at Pompeii and other sites buried by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79

CE, she studied the many and various gardens preserved there and brought them vividly to life for schoolchildren and scholars alike. Her work animated our vision of the Roman peristyle garden by supplying evidence for the mythical associations of its plants, the delicious meals served under its pergolas, the daily offerings made in its wall shrines, and the games played amidst its art and fountains. Much of this new evidence was a result of the scientific techniques she developed with her husband, Stanley Jashemski, a noted physicist, and a team of specialists; together, the couple and their colleagues established a new discipline, garden archaeology. In 1977 the American Society of Landscape Architects awarded Jashemski the Bradford Williams Medal, which she displayed proudly on a bookcase in her study, and in 1996 the Archaeological Institute of America gave her a Gold Medal, its highest honor.

Wilhelmina Feemster was born in York, Nebraska, in 1910. In her memoirs, she recalls how her mother, of Swiss and German descent, vainly tried to cultivate the northern European garden flowers of her ancestors on the hot Nebraska plains. With her daughter's help, she stubbornly persisted; perseverance would become a hallmark of Wilhelmina's character as well. A favorite family photograph from those years records Wilhelmina at about 11 years old, in a cotton dress, ankle boots, and neat braids, holding a plump, ripe tomato from her own garden.

Her father, a mathematics professor at York University, attached great importance to a classical education for his daughter. She recalls first learning about archaeology in *The Last Days of Pompeii* and reading under her covers for hours past lights-out. Her fascination with the way of life that had

been preserved there for millennia by the tragedy of the eruption ultimately led her to study history at York College. She went on to earn an M.A. in ancient history at the University of Nebraska and a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. She always considered herself a Nebraskan, however, in spite of a life spent far from the plains. The University of Nebraska presented her with an honorary Doctor of Humanities in 1980, and in 2004 she was honored by the city of York and the State of Nebraska with a citation and exhibition of her life's contributions.

At the University of Chicago she studied Roman law with Jakob A. O. Larsen, completing her dissertation in 1942. At Chicago she also met and married her fellow graduate student Stanley Jashemski. Subsequently they both found posts in the Washington, D.C., area, and settled permanently there. In 1946, Wilhelmina joined the history department at the University of Maryland and developed her dissertation into a well-received book on Republican Rome, *The Origins and History of the Proconsular and Proprietarian Imperium to 27 B.C.*

Then, tenured and in her forties, she pondered her next project.

One morning, while she and Stanley were enjoying breakfast in their own garden in Silver Spring, Maryland, he proposed the idea of studying the gardens of ancient Rome. Wilhelmina later confessed her trepidation in raising this delightful, and therefore possibly frivolous, idea with her mentor,

Professor Larsen. She recounted watch-

ing with bated breath as he paced along his bookshelves, pulling down volumes and thumbing through indices. Eventually he turned and pronounced the topic to be not only of great importance but also barely touched by scholars. Ancient history, he felt, had too long focused on war strategy, law, and political history. Gardens would shed new light on Roman culture.

After several years of research with the ancient texts, Wilhelmina traveled to Europe for the first time with Stanley during her sabbatical in 1955 to see what the archaeological sites might reveal of ancient gardens. She assumed that the excavation reports were already published and that she would quickly gather the evidence into a book entitled *Gardens of the*



Stanley and Wilhelmina Jashemski.

Roman Empire. A second trip, in 1957, brought the couple to Pompeii and Herculaneum. Here she met the distinguished Russian scholar Dr. Tatiana Warscher, who had worked in the ancient city since 1911, photographing the buildings with their garden peristyles. Knowing the extent of the unpublished evidence, Warscher predicted, “My dear girl, your first book will be on the gardens of Pompeii.” Warscher was correct. Thus in 1961, at an age when many field archaeologists are winding down, Jashemski began the systematic excavations of Pompeian gardens that she would continue over the next 25 years. Eventually she added gardens outside the region as well, at Hadrian’s Villa and Thurburbo Maius in Tunisia.

The eruption of Mt. Vesuvius had covered Pompeii in a layer of volcanic ash, or *lapilli*, small pebbles of pumice stone. As the trees and shrubs gradually decayed beneath the thick blanket of ash, the lapilli sifted into the cavities left behind. Jashemski employed a technique that had been developed to visualize the bodies of the human and animal victims of the eruption, in which a cavity is cleaned of the distinctive lapilli and braced with reinforcing wire. Plaster or cement is then poured into the cavity and allowed to set, creating a cast in the form of the original contents of the void. In many instances, a cast of roots allows botanists to identify the plant that originally grew there, or to narrow down the range of possibilities.

Stanley Jashemski, who always joined his wife on site as her staff draftsman and photographer, brought his scientific perspective to other kinds of evidence. Carbonized plants and charcoal were studied with scanning electron microscopes; pollen was sampled; the soils were analyzed; and zoologists and entomologists examined faunal and insect remains. The evidence was exciting, and the picture of Pompeii’s cultivated urban landscape grew, along with a new understanding of daily life in the residential gardens, temple groves, commercial nurseries and vineyards, and luxury villas.

By the time of her retirement from the University of Maryland in 1979, Jashemski had excavated and/or documented nearly six hundred gardens buried by Vesuvius. Decades of journal articles culminated in a spectacularly illustrated book, *The Gardens of Pompeii: Herculaneum and the Villas Destroyed by Vesuvius*, with a second volume containing a catalog following some years later. For many academics, this would have been a culminating achievement, but for Wilhelmina Jashemski it was but the beginning of the next phase of her career. She still envisioned the work at Pompeii within the larger context of the Roman world, and so she turned to her original goal of bringing to light the gardens from around the empire.

Dumbarton Oaks, Harvard’s famed landscape research center in Washington, D.C., was the locus of much of this effort over the following decades. Working initially with the Director of Landscape Studies, Elisabeth MacDougall, Jashemski hosted a conference in May 1979, “Ancient Roman Gardens,” to see whether what had been learned from Pompeii could illuminate garden sites around the Roman Empire. The conference at Dumbarton Oaks attracted not only archaeologists and historians but also landscape architects, horticulturalists, scientists, and others. It is widely regarded as marking the moment of emergence of a new discipline. Many archaeologists thought for the first time of looking for garden remains at their own sites, and I as a young student became determined to devote my career to this research. Wilhelmina encouraged me not to join her at Pompeii, as I had hoped she would, but to see what ancient gardens I might unearth elsewhere. As a promising beginning, that day I met Professor Barry Cunliffe of Oxford University who discussed his discoveries at the Roman villa of Fishbourne in England with me. He would later become my supervisor.

In 1982 Wilhelmina and Stanley’s remarkable 37-year collaboration came to end with his unexpected death. While pushing ahead with the excavations at Pompeii, Hadrian’s Villa, and Thurburbo Maius and promoting garden archaeology, Wilhelmina worked with their close friend Frederick G. Meyer of the National Arboretum to honor Stanley with the publication of *A Natural History of Pompeii* (2002), which details the scientific research the Jashemskis had undertaken over the years. The couple’s partnership at Pompeii was recognized in 2005 with the creation of the Stanley and Wilhelmina Jashemski Lecture sponsored by the Archaeological Institute of America, offered annually in Washington, D.C., on a Roman garden topic.

Shortly before Stanley’s death, the Jashemskis discussed the creation of a “garden room” off Wilhelmina’s study. When it was completed a decade later, she would receive colleagues and guests from around the world there to share news, books, and discoveries over tea or luncheons of chicken sandwiches or Waldorf salad. At Christmas, her home and tree were decorated with hundreds of dolls brought by these guests from their travels. Although long past retirement, she mentored three new generations of young garden archaeologists, several of whom stayed with her regularly to work on her projects with Dumbarton Oaks. Serving as a consulting advisor there,

Wilhelmina worked with its directors of landscape studies, especially Michel Conan during his tenure from 2000 to 2008, to make the institution the foremost center for the development of garden archaeology – not only of ancient Roman gardens but also of other gardens of other times and places. For those of us who worked closely with her in the last twenty years, Wilhelmina’s garden room was the intellectual salon for the continuing development of the discipline of garden archaeology.

Wilhelmina Jashemski’s greatest effort and perhaps ultimately her most important contribution is her posthumous *Gardens of the Roman Empire*, the 56-year project that began her explorations of gardens in 1951 and to which she returned in 1988. Because so many archaeologists, myself included, had begun to excavate gardens and ancient plant remains, she wanted to gather all of the new evidence in a catalog and volume of interpretative essays. As part of this effort, she and I put together a conference in 1995 at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at which scholars and members of the public learned of an astonishing variety of gardens that had been discovered around the Mediterranean and Europe since the Ancient Roman Gardens symposium, sixteen years before. The conference was followed in 2003 by a symposium at Dumbarton Oaks to review the importance of the findings. Since then, the project has collected nearly 2,000 sites of Roman gardens – many at Pompeii and Herculaneum – and Cambridge University Press has agreed to publish this research.

As Wilhelmina entered her nineties and could leave home less often, the scholarly world came to her. Fortified by her Nebraskan persistence, she worked daily in the garden room to complete the manuscript with the help of an assistant, former students, friends, neighbors, and a team of colleagues. At the same time, she insisted on mastering the constant new developments in internet technology so that she could stay in touch with her colleagues around the world. The volume’s progress and the constant arrival of new discoveries for the catalog delighted her daily. She died with the manuscript at her side on the morning of Christmas Eve, a year ago, but her legacy of scholarship and mentoring scholars has ensured that this monumental achievement will soon be available to all. – Kathryn Gleason

Author’s note: Some of the information from this essay is drawn from Wilhelmina Jashemski’s unpublished memoirs, which she assembled with the generous assistance of Professor Emeritus Clopper Almon of the University of Maryland. I would also like to thank her executor, Henry Ferry, for permission to use this material and for providing details.

Awards

2009 David R. Coffin Publication Grant

The Foundation for Landscape Studies is proud to announce the winners of the 2009 David R. Coffin Publication Grant, which is given for the purpose of research and publication of a book that advances scholarship in the field of garden history and landscape studies.

Lawrence Halprin
A Life Spent Changing Places: An Autobiography
Publisher: University of Pennsylvania Press

This book is an autobiography by one of the world's leading landscape architects, environmental planners, and urban design innovators.

John Dixon Hunt
The Venetian City Garden: Place, Typology, and Perception

Publisher: Birkhäuser

This book is a history of the Venetian garden as a representation of the city's unique cultural and environmental conditions.

Janet Mendelsohn and Christopher Wilson, Editors
My Kind of American Landscape: J. B. Jackson Speaks

Publisher: Center for American Places

This publication is made up of a DVD documentary, a book of essays, and a portfolio of images. It provides a composite portrait of the teachings, writings, draw-

ings, and photographs of the cultural geographer John Brinckerhoff Jackson.

Judith K. Major
The Evolution of a Landscape Critic: Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer

Publisher: University of Virginia Press

This book is the first full-length study of the artist, architect, critic, historian, and journalist Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer's writings on landscape gardening.

Contributors

Paula Deitz is editor of *The Hudson Review*, a magazine of literature and the arts published in New York City. As a cultural critic, she writes about art, architecture, and landscape design for newspapers and magazines here and abroad. *Of Gardens*, a collection of her essays, will be published in the near future by the University of Pennsylvania Press.

Kathryn Gleason, Ph.D., is associate professor of landscape architecture at Cornell University. A specialist on the archaeology of ancient Roman landscape architecture, she has excavated gardens around the Mediterranean, currently at Stabia (near Pompeii) and at Petra, Jordan. She is coeditor

with Naomi F. Miller of *The Archaeology of Garden and Field* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), and executive editor of *Gardens of the Roman Empire* by the late Wilhelmina Jashemski (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

Claudia Lazzaro, Ph.D., is professor of the history of art at Cornell University. Among her extensive publications on Italian Renaissance villas and gardens is *The Italian Renaissance Garden: From the Conventions of Planting, Design, and Ornament to the Grand Gardens of Sixteenth-Century Central Italy* (1990). With Roger J. Crum she edited *Donatello Among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy* (2005), which includes her own essay, "Politicizing a National Garden Tradition: The Italianness of the Italian Garden in Fascist Italy."

John A. Pinto, Ph.D., teaches in the Department of Art and Archaeology at Princeton

University, where he offers courses on Renaissance and Baroque architecture and the history of garden and landscape design. Together with William L. MacDonald he published *Hadrian's Villa and Its Legacy* (1995). He is currently finishing a book entitled *Speaking Ruins*, which explores architects, archaeology, and antiquity in eighteenth-century Rome.

Reuben M. Rainey, Ph.D., is William Stone Weedon Professor Emeritus in the School of Architecture at the University of Virginia. He is a former chair of the Department of Landscape Architecture and the author of a wide range of studies on nineteenth- and twentieth-century American landscape architecture. His most recent book, coauthored with J. C. Miller, is *Modern Public Gardens: Robert Royston and the Suburban Park* (2006). He is also coexecutive producer of *GardenStory*, a ten-episode documentary for public television.



David Coffin surrounded by his Princeton colleagues and former students at the tribute and reunion held in his honor on May 16, 2003, at Prospect House on the Princeton campus. Celebrating Dr. Coffin's forty-year career as an architectural historian specializing in the history of landscape design are, left to right: Lydia Soo, Patricia Fortini Brown, Meredith Gill, Vanessa Bezemer Sellers, Barbara Paca, Teri Noel Towe, Edward S. Harwood, David Coffin, Pierre du Prey, Claudia Lazzaro, John Pinto, Richard J. Betts, David van Zanten, Tracy Erlich, Graham Smith, Betsy Rosasco, David Gobel, John M. Schnorrenberg, and Richard Turner.

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