

viewpoints

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Garden History
and Landscape Studies
at the Bard Graduate Center

Letter from the Editor

The word landscape is commonly used in reference to wilderness, rural scenery, or social and domestic spaces such as parks and gardens – plant-dominated places for the most part. We often forget that great technologically driven cities are just as much a part of nature as any other landscape. The complexity of their contents and the relationship of their parts to one another are what make them so interesting to historians, especially those who seek to trace the ways in which the physical city both resists and embraces change through time.

The first-year survey course for Garden History and Landscape Studies students at the Bard Graduate Center deals with urban and regional planning as forms of landscape design. It examines

the ways in which cities and their environs are being continually transformed by social, economic, and cultural forces. This past fall, some recently designed parks in Lower Manhattan served as opportunities for field study in Professor Erik de Jong's "Reading the Landscape"
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The Changing Landscape of Lower Manhattan

Dutch settlers and their masters, the owners of the West India Company, which had in 1621 been granted a charter from the States General of the Republic of the United Provinces to claim for their expansive commercial empire the northeastern Atlantic seaboard between the Fresh (Connecticut) River and the South (Delaware) River, could not in their most ambitious dreams have imagined the landscape of Lower Manhattan today nor the technology that created it. But commerce, the economic engine that has defined it all these years, they well understood. With its ample bay at the confluence of two navigable rivers, a more fortunate site for a future port metropolis could not have been chosen.

In 1626, after a committee of the West India Company had assessed the potential of two other locations, the New Amsterdam

director Peter Minuit made his famous bargain purchase of Manhattan Island from the Native Americans who hunted, fished, and traded there. As Adriana Van Zwieten points out in her 2001 doctoral dissertation "A Little Land to Sow Some Seeds": *Real Property, Custom, and Law in the Community of New Amsterdam*, Minuit's purchase signaled policies entirely foreign to the sellers but important to the settlers and their descendants down to the present: namely, the recognition of property rights and the transfer of landownership according to commercial transaction. Ever since, Lower Manhattan's real estate has generated a number of private fortunes.

The seventeenth-century character of the mother city of Amsterdam as a multiethnic bourgeois capital of great riches gained from seafaring trade
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Left: Nieuw Amsterdam of Nue Nieuw Iorx opt 'T Eylant Man[hattan] (New Amsterdam, now New York off the Island of Manhattan).
Below: The same view today.



class. This part of New York is a particularly fertile area for such attention as more building and rebuilding of public spaces are happening here now than in many years.

Since the tragedy of September 11, 2001, the reconfiguration of Lower Manhattan has been much discussed in the press, promoting an unprecedented but welcomed interest in architecture and urban planning. Unfortunately, that interest has centered almost exclusively on the sixteen acres of Ground Zero. In this issue of *Viewpoints* we wish to widen the lens of landscape vision to include everything from City Hall to the Battery and from the East River to the Hudson River and the New York Harbor, which is the reason for the city's being located here in the first place.

From its Dutch colonial inception, Lower Manhattan has been inscribed with more human dreams and drive than perhaps any other landscape in the world. Its natural site is incomparable. Its rapid, dynamic, and continual metamorphosis is unparalleled. Today the rebirth of New York City's birthplace is being nurtured by many people who are far less celebrated yet ultimately more important perhaps than the competitors for the highly publicized design commissions at Ground Zero. Theirs is the story we wish to tell here.

Calendar

Exhibits

February 2 – March 15 Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Central Park Conservancy “Central Park Conservancy: Celebrating Central Park’s 25-Year Transformation.”

The exhibit celebrates the achievement of Central Park's restoration by the Conservancy from 1980 to 2005 with seventy images of park-wide projects. These include before-and-after photographs of the park's meadows, water bodies, gardens, playgrounds, woodlands, buildings, bridges, statues and rustic details. The exhibit features park furniture, utilities, and sculpture restorations.

Location: Urban Center Gallery, Municipal Art Society, 457 Madison Ave.

Forcing Garden, in Winter
Hand-colored aquatint
Humphrey Repton (1752-1818)
in *Fragments on the Theory and
Practice of Landscape Gardening*
London: Printed by T. Bensely
& Son for J. Taylor, 1816

May 13 – August 14, 2005
**Glasshouses: The
Architecture of Light and Air**
An exhibition of more than three centuries of evolving architecture, social class and style, horticulture, and plant collecting.

Curated by **Therese O'Malley, Ph.D.**, associate dean at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and current president of the Society of Architectural Historians, “Glasshouses: The Architecture of Light and Air,” will feature more than three centuries of glasshouse evolution and history. It will display drawings, prints, paintings, photographs, and illustrated books, many from the extensive collections of the library itself, including botanical illustrations of glasshouse plants such as camellias, palms, ferns, pineapples, and oranges. It will cover the structural and technological history of glasshouses, primarily in Europe, illustrating architec-



tural, stylistic, and functional variations. It will also record the history of botany, horticulture, and plant collecting as global travel, trade, and exploration grew rapidly.

Location: New York Botanical Garden: LuEsther T. Mertz Library, William D. Rondina and Giovanni Foroni LoFaro Gallery. (Gallery open Tuesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.)

Conferences

April 6 – 10, 2005 Annual Meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians

One of the many themes of the meeting in Vancouver will be the architecture, urbanism, and landscapes of the city. Study tours will examine landscape and garden traditions in a coastal/mountain setting. Participants will be able to visit the gardens of Cornelia Hahn Oberlander in Vancouver and the Butchart Gardens in

Victoria. Two scholarly paper sessions will be devoted to new research in landscape history. The ten topics included will range from “Islamic Gardens in India” to “Eighteenth-Century English Gardens” and from “The Social Agenda of Women Landscape Architects” to “The Tennessee Valley and the Rhetoric of Planning.” In addition, a meeting of the newly reconstituted Landscape Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians chaired by Marc Treib will provide an opportunity for landscape and garden historians to meet one another.

For an informational brochure and registration materials, please visit the SAH website at www.sah.org. If you would like to receive a copy of the meeting brochure by mail, please call the SAH office at (312)573-1365 or email SAH at info@sah.org.

Location: Fairmont Hotel, Vancouver

May 4 – 7, 2005 Dumbarton Oaks and the United States Botanic Garden Present: Existence and Experience in Contemporary Garden Design

A three-day symposium exploring how contemporary gardens have been created in

response to contemporary existential problems, how their owners and visitors have responded to these gardens, and how garden artists/designers are continuing to creatively confront emerging cultural or social issues with the invention of new garden types. Most presentations will be centered on a single artist. On the day prior to the opening of the symposium, Dumbarton Oaks and the United States Botanic Garden will host an event at the National Arboretum at which participants will meet some of the garden creators who will not be giving presentations during the symposium. A picnic on the Arboretum grounds will follow.

For further information and registration visit www.landscape@doaks.org or contact: Garden & Landscape Studies 1703 32nd Street NW Washington, DC 20007 (202) 339-6460

Contributors

Mac Keith Griswold, a journalist and garden historian, is director of archival research at the Sylvester Manor Project, Shelter Island, NY, where the papers date to the earliest European colonization of America. Griswold has taught landscape and garden history at Sarah Lawrence College, where she was recipient of the Noble Chair in Art and Cultural History, and has lectured on gardens and landscape as cultural history at the School of Environmental Design, University of Georgia; The New York Botanical Garden; and the School of Environmental Design, University of Pennsylvania. The author of three books of garden history, she is currently at work on a fourth, *Rediscovering Sylvester Manor, a Seventeenth-Century Slave Plantation on Long Island* (Houghton Mifflin Company), which will be published in 2006.

Denise Otis is an independent writer and editor. She holds a B.A. in History and Literature from Radcliffe College, and was for many years an editor at *House & Garden* magazine. She serves

on the library committee of the Horticultural Society of New York, and is the author of *Grounds for Pleasure: Four Centuries of the American Garden* (Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2002).

Melanie Simo is a historian of art and landscape who has held teaching positions at the Harvard Design School, Rhode Island School of Design, and Carnegie Mellon University. She is the author of several books on landscape history, including *Loudon & the Landscape: From Country Seat to Metropolis, 1783-1843* (Yale University Press, 1989), *Invisible Gardens: Search for Modernism in the American Landscape* (with Peter Walker. MIT Press, 1996), and *Forest & Garden: Traces of Wildness in a Modernizing Land, 1897-1949* (University of Virginia Press, 2003). A companion volume, *Literature of Place: Dwelling on the Land Before Earth Day 1970*, is in press.

Marc Treib is Professor of Architecture at the University of California, Berkeley. His most recent book is *Noguchi in Paris: The Unesco Garden* (William Stout Publishers, 2003).



gave the infant colony – a huddle of thirty bark houses – a commercial purpose from the start. Unlike its rival British colonies of New England and Virginia, its cultural complexion was more urban than agriculture-based. Initially, landownership in Nieuw Amsterdam was vested in the company; however, freemen (those who paid their own seaboard passage or who had fulfilled the term of their company contracts) could claim and transfer by sale parcels of land that they had settled. Then, in 1653, in spite of ownership privileges asserted by the West India proprietors, the city fathers in Amsterdam granted to the colonists a city charter, giving certain democratic powers to the colonists, which allowed

Redraft of the Castello Plan (Afbeelding Van De Stadt Amsterdam in Nieuw Neederlandt), 1908, after original pen-and-ink watercolor drawing of 1665-70. Date depicted: 1660.

New Amsterdam's increasingly prosperous merchant elite to form institutions of self-government and to further institutionalize the capitalization of land.

The view of New Amsterdam around 1650 in a watercolor drawing found in the Royal Archives in The Hague depicts the East River waterfront as seen from Nut (now Governors) Island (see page 1). A tall crane dominates the foreground, and beside it we see what was probably a weighing beam (thought by some to represent a gallows). Within the walls of the fort stand the Governor's Mansion made of brick, the church built in stone, and a wooden barracks. At the far right is the tavern, which was

converted into the State House (City Hall) after the promulgation of the 1653 Charter, the same year that the wall (now commemorated in the alignment and name Wall Street) was built.

By 1660, the year depicted in the redraft from the I. N. Phelps Stokes collection of the Castello Plan (so named because the original, based on a drawing by an unknown artist of an earlier one by the surveyor Jacques Cortelyou, is preserved in the archive of the Villa Castello in Florence), clearly urbanity was ascendant. In this remarkable view of New Amsterdam just prior to the British takeover, the harbor is filled with merchant vessels and local trading craft. The town has grown to a population of 2,500, and the recently enfranchised colonists have made numerous public improvements, notably the digging of a canal for transporting goods into the heart of the settlement (the model for transport by canal was derived from old Amsterdam) and the construction of a bulkhead and docks on the waterfront. The canal lies in the middle of Broad Street and has a narrow perpendicular subsidiary arm running down Beaver Street.

Lively traffic passes by the fifty-one houses facing Heere Straet (our Broadway), and a handsome new city hall has replaced the temporary one housed in the former tavern. What strikes the viewer most, however, is the apparent greenness of the city. House lots all have gardens – mostly vegetable but several ornamental ones as well. Trees are planted along property lines, and on larger tracts of land there are orchards.

Fast-forward to today, 340 years after the Castello Plan was drawn. Lodged in the canyons of Lower Manhattan is a scattering of tiny triangles created where the awkward juncture of old pregrid-plan Manhattan streets left parcels of land too small for developers to build on. Designed to serve as small parks, these are the only remaining fragments of Lower Manhattan's old green townscape. Along with infilling the old slips, previous generations of New York City developers swelled the girth of Lower Manhattan by adding landfill for additional streets. Later, engineers added more landfill for Manhattan's twentieth-century shoreline-hugging highways. Now, with the relocation of the city's port activities to Staten Island and New Jersey, this waterfront is being transformed into a chain of parks.

Battery Park City's handsome public art-studded, 1.2-mile-long waterfront promenade was begun in the 1980s in conjunction with the World Financial Center and a cluster of new residential apartments built on landfill created by spoil excavated for the footings of the nearby World Trade Center. It is now joined on the north by 550-acre Hudson River Park, whose 150-acre land-and-pier deck is a landscape in progress, and on the south by historic 23-acre Battery Park. There, the Battery Conservancy led by urban visionary Warrie Price is exchanging seedy decrepitude for landscape beauty with the installation of



Saratoga Associates' \$8.5 million, 8.75-acre Bosque. It will contain planting beds by the noted Dutch garden designer Piet Oudolf, who also is responsible for the linear planting beds that line the Conservancy's graceful redesign of the Harbor Promenade. Partially funded is a new \$60 million exhibition and performing space that will occupy a restored and delicately expanded Castle Clinton, one of the city's most historic structures (it has sequentially served as fort, concert hall, immigration center, aquarium, and National Park Services visitor center for tourists bound for Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty).

Price's dream is for the city to enlarge the park by acquiring the land to the east, now occupied by U.S. Coast Guard (with the evacuation of the Coast Guard station from nearby Governors Island, its onshore administrative building has lost its principal reason for being in this location). This would be the first step toward creating a continuous pedestrian linkage via Battery Park between the East River shoreline and the series of promenades now edging the Hudson.

Along the East River there are more structural impediments to waterfront greening than along the Hudson. In addition, the roadbed of the FDR Drive crowds the water's edge. But urban designers are coming up with imaginative ideas for circumnavigating the choke-point at the Battery Marine Terminal in order to carry a proposed stretch of waterfront parkland to the South Street Seaport and then further north to East River Park,

Warrie Price, the president of the Battery Park Conservancy beside one of the Harbor Promenade planting beds by Dutch plantsman and garden designer Piet Oudolf.

which extends along the Lower East Side and East Village up to 14th Street.

The renewal of thirteen small, publicly owned parcels scattered across Lower Manhattan, including Bowling Green, the city's first park, is being funded with a \$25 million grant from the federal government to the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, which was created by the New York State Legislature in the wake of the attack of September 11, 2001. Heeding Mayor Michael Bloomberg's directive to accomplish this work within a year, Commissioner Adrian Benepe short-circuited the process whereby outside landscape architects are selected to design city-funded projects. Instead, he had Deputy Commissioner Amy Freitag assign several Parks Department staff landscape architects to complete designs in record time using materials that could be bid as a package rather than individually for each park.

One of the newly created parks, Drumgoole Plaza, was designed by Steven Whitesell, a landscape architect now enrolled in the Bard Graduate Center's program in Garden History and Landscape Studies. Previously, its remarkably inhospitable site, a strip of no-man's-land overshadowed by the giant steel supports for the approach ramp to the Brooklyn Bridge, was used for parking. Now, hardy, vigorous-growing, shade-tolerant plants with light-colored foliage – golden black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia 'Frisia'*), gold-variegated Japanese angelica (*Aralia elata 'Aureovariegata'*), golden barberry (*Berberis thunbergii 'Gold Nugget'*), and other yellow-leaved shrubs and grasses – mitigate the gloom of its almost sunless location. With benches and a curvilinear swath of simulated brick-asphalt paving running down its center, Drumgoole Plaza has begun to attract visitors and no longer seems forbiddingly derelict.

Nearby, at Hanover Square, another of the small triangular parcels that punctuate the Lower Manhattan streetscape, the British Memorial Trust has begun construction of a \$3.5 million garden honoring the sixty-seven victims who perished in the World Trade Center disaster. Its design is the result of an invitational competition won by the British landscape architects Julian and Isabel Bannerman, who are perhaps best known for their work for Prince Charles and other members of the royal family. A jury of public art experts, including Therese O'Malley, landscape historian and current president of the Society of Architectural Historians, selected the artist Anish Kapoor to create the twenty-foot-high black granite sculpture to honor the unity of the United States and the United Kingdom, which will replace the over-life-size bronze statue of Abraham De Peyster, a Dutch colonial merchant and prominent city official (the De Peyster statue is being moved to City Hall Park). Kapoor's sober monument of polished stone will stand in bold contrast to the

Bannermans' English Country House-style landscape composed of a sinuous water rill flanked by topiary, curving benches, boxwood hedges, and paving stones from Caithness, Scotland, into which the sculptor Simon Verity has engraved the names of the sixty-seven victims.

There are other Lower Manhattan projects by prominent landscape architects that recently have opened or are on the drawing boards. At the northern end of Battery Park City, set within a frame of new residential buildings is Michael Van Valkenburgh's 1.8-acre Teardrop Park, so named because of its shape. In contrast to the ornamental, stately home approach adopted by the designers of Hanover Square, Van Valkenburgh has sought to create a *rus in urbe*, an evocation of the wild Hudson River scenery to the north. Inspired perhaps by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux's design of Central Park, he has created a rolling topography with a meadowlike lawn and a miniature woodland stream similar to the one in the Ramble. An architectural doorway at the base of a sloping "cliff" of quarried blocks of Hudson Valley alcove bluestone set to resemble the uptilted strata of some geologic formation allows the visitor to pass from one area into the next with a sensation of surprise since here the steeply graded topography with its protruding rocky ledge into which the door is intriguingly cut

conceals from one another the rolling lawn for picnicking and the sandy "beach" for children's play.

At the confluence of West Broadway and Greenwich Street, landscape architect Ken Smith was commissioned by developer Larry Silverstein to create a plaza at 7 World Trade Plaza, one of the tiny triangular parcels dotting Lower Manhattan. Scheduled to open in 2006, the plaza will contain a large bench-surrounded, multijet, circular fountain, geometrically aligned beds containing azaleas in the spring and boxwood in the winter, and attractive bollards (a standard security feature these days for almost all new Lower Manhattan architecture) adjacent to Silverstein's rebuilt office tower. On the opposite side of downtown, at 55 Water Street, is another new plaza designed by Smith. In contrast to Van Valkenburgh's plant-rich, nature-evoking aesthetic, both of these small spaces bear Smith's stamp of minimalist elegance.

It goes without saying that no other new landscape in the country has drawn more recent public interest than the site of the World Trade Center. Ground Zero will have at its heart the memorial to the victims of the September 11 inferno: architect Michael Arad's austere and emphatically subterranean proposal *Reflecting Absence*, the winning entry in the independently juried design competition sponsored by the Lower Manhattan Develop-

ment Corporation. Less banally sentimental than some of the other entries, it honors the buildings' footprints with a pair of reflective pools submerged thirty feet below street grade. The jury subsequently mandated collaboration with Peter Walker, the landscape architect whose design aesthetic probably corresponds better to Arad's minimalist approach than that of any other. As Robert Yaro, the president of the Regional Plan Association and leader of the Civic Alliance, the coalition of citizen advocates that spearheaded the revisioning of the future of the site after the first disappointing architectural scheme was scotched, puts it, "While public

response to the selected memorial design can best be described as lukewarm, it satisfies some parties' hope of reconnecting the memorial site with the surrounding neighborhood by creating an at-grade plaza."

Even before September 11, Lower Manhattan was a landscape where the precincts of death laid claim to valuable real estate, thus creating open spaces where otherwise there would be none. The city's earliest remaining cemeteries are here at Trinity Church and Saint Paul's Chapel. The eighteenth-century African Burial Ground, discovered in 1991 in the course of digging foundations for a new federal building, quickly became a sacred site for many African-Americans and a cause for historic preservationists. Battery Park has been a magnet for memorials to war heroes and others who lost their lives in defense of their country as well as to the emigrants who came through Castle Clinton to find freedom and opportunity in America. A few blocks to the north is the Vietnam Veterans Memorial honoring the 250,000 men and women of New York City who served in the armed forces from 1964 to 1975, especially the 1,741 who died in the Vietnam War. Its architecture – a wall of translucent glass blocks – lacks the emotional impact of Maya Lin's much admired Vietnam Memorial on the Mall in Washington, D.C., but its moving inscriptions of excerpts from servicemen's diaries, poems, and letters give it poignant immediacy. Its location in Jeannette Park, built when Coenties Slip was filled in 1835 and redesigned several times over the years, is now a three-quarter-acre plaza with views of Pier 6 and the East River. Its \$7 million restoration in 2001 by the city and a coalition of other sponsors makes it an attractive setting for the memorial as well as an important contribution to downtown serenity.

Although funded in the wake of catastrophe, with or without memorials, the new parks of Lower Manhattan are more than healing gardens, a stricken city's response to sudden violence. They are needed, lobbied for, and still inadequate to meet the needs of the residential population now moving into renovated commercial buildings and newly built apartment towers in Lower Manhattan. While the market for office space continues to lag behind that for the rest of Manhattan, the housing market is flourishing. Lower Manhattan below Chambers Street now has a residential population of 30,000 that is expected to grow to 50,000 by 2008. Tax incentives from the Liberty Bond program created by an act of Congress following September 11 combined with an earlier program allowing a tax break to developers for office-to-residential building conversion have sparked the construction of several new residential buildings and the



Teardrop Park, Michael Van Valkenburgh & Associates, 2004.



Pedestrian amenity, public art, or safety feature? NOGOs prevent vehicle entry on Wall Street.

rehabilitation of a number of old office towers. At this time, there are 4,000 residential units in construction and another 6,900 that are estimated to be built by 2008. New schools, stores, shops, and restaurants are opening to serve the current and expected population growth.

Given the push ever since Dutch colonial times toward turning as much land as possible into marketable real estate, one is prompted to wonder whether there can in fact be a unified network of public and private landscape spaces connected by pedestrian-friendly streets in Lower Manhattan. This depends upon interagency cooperation, something that has been difficult always to achieve in New York City and nowhere more so than in Lower Manhattan where there are multiple jurisdictional claims. Nevertheless, the same kind of thinking that envisions the waterfront as an unbroken, continuous promenade is going on with regard to creating crosstown linkages, a strategy impelled by the perceived need to restrict traffic on Wall Street and keep other areas car-free as both an antiterrorist measure and as a means of making Lower Manhattan a more inviting tourist destination.

The City Planning Commission and the Alliance for Downtown New York, the business improvement district that extends from Murray Street to the Battery, are thinking about opportunities for connectivity, and this involves improving the streetscape and increasing pedestrian amenity. Thanks to an investment of \$22 million by the Alliance that includes a

\$4 million contribution by the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, Broadway between City Hall Park and Battery Park – the spine of Lower Manhattan – has acquired a face-lift. Placing its faith in the ability of present-day designers to create new lines of street furniture more appropriate to the contemporary cityscape of tall glass office buildings than the miscellaneous pseudohistoric and just plain ugly items that clutter the sidewalks today, eight years ago the Alliance commissioned and has now overseen the installation of new streetlights and litter receptacles designed by the architectural firm of Cooper, Robertson and Partners.

Suzanne O’Keefe, the Alliance’s vice president for design who has been in charge of this effort to use private Business Improvement District funding to spark innovation in the New York City Department of Transportation’s design vocabulary, also worked with the New York City Department of Sanitation to install a companion litter receptacle and to make these items of street furniture the standard municipal ones for Lower Manhattan streets, as is now the case. At the same time, new environmental graphics developed by Pentagram have produced better-looking signs on Broadway as well as navigational cues for visitors wending their way through the tortuous side streets in the area. O’Keefe has overseen the replacement of broken concrete curbs along Broadway with twelve-inch granite ones, and these are also now accepted as standard throughout Lower Manhattan. At intervals of every ten to fifteen feet between Bowling Green and Vesey Street next to City Hall Park, new light-gray concrete sidewalks have been inset with two hundred horizontal bands of black granite incised with the names of visiting kings, American presidents, military generals, sports champions, aviators, and astronauts who once waved to cheering crowds as ticker tape rained down from brokerage-house windows on the parades held in their honor.

Paving provides perhaps the most subliminal yet powerful visual cue that makes a street inviting to walk on. The conver-

sion of Stone Street from a forlorn, traffic-choked alley into a historic district for pedestrians according to a \$1.8 million streetscape redesign by Beyer Blinder Belle and executed by the RBA Group and landscape architect Signe Nielsen has sparked an array of new restaurants and sidewalk cafés with umbrella-shaded outdoor tables on the bluestone sidewalks and traffic-free roadbed of Deer Isle granite paving blocks. A Soho in miniature.

Just above Stone Street is the heart of the Financial District at the intersection of Wall and Broad streets. As anyone who walks there now knows, the area is under heavy police and military surveillance and is closed to through vehicular traffic except for truck deliveries at certain specified times of day and taxis that have been checked by security guards. It is now perform a pedestrian zone. Sealed off by ugly concrete barriers and planter boxes in which hardly anything can grow on the skyscraper-shadowed narrow streets, its appearance seems designed to repel rather than attract visitors. Here, in order to protect the New York Stock Exchange and other important nearby buildings, New York City Planning Commission staff members under the direction of Manhattan Office Director Vishaan Chakrabarti are working in conjunction with the New York City Police Department, the Department of Transportation, and the Alliance for Downtown New York to install a series of artfully disguised security features that are also genuine pedestrian amenities. Drawing on \$10 million of the funds made available through the



Manhattan’s new green edge at Battery Park City looking across the Hudson River toward New Jersey.

federal government's Community Development Block Grant program for the rebuilding of this part of the city in the wake of September 11, the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation commissioned the architectural firm of Rogers Marvel to design security-oriented street furniture. Prominent among these is a large bronze-sheathed, cubelike structure made up of variously angled planes. When set in different ways depending on which surface is used as the base, these appear slightly dissimilar to one another. Called NOGOs, these stationary building guards might appear to be a constellation of sculptural forms constituting a public art project. Or one may wish to think of them as sidewalk seats put there as a consideration for passersby. At least, this is what the planning team hopes will be the case.

There will be new streetlighting at each of the seven entrances to the stock exchange area. Broad Street across from the stock exchange has been repaved with a product called Euro-Cobble, preset-by-hand paving blocks of Italian granite that come in 20 x 20 square-inch forms. Claimed to be equal to asphalt as a roadbed surface, it will signal the street's new pedestrian character. Newly designed barriers will prevent through traffic, but they will be retractable so as to allow vehicles to enter the area for specified purposes at certain times of day.

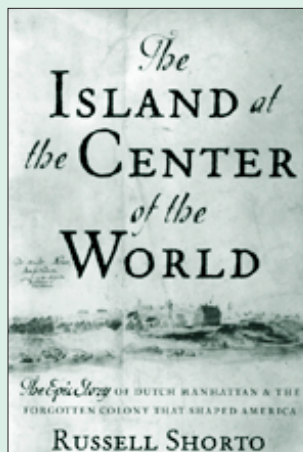
A second phase of the Financial District improvement project envisions the reintroduction of water as a latter-day echo of the canal that ran up the middle of Broad Street from the harbor. (The planners clearly consulted the Castello Plan for this inspiration.) If funded, the water will be fed from a series of fountains into a channel that will replace the forbidding-looking barrier fence that now keeps sidewalk traffic away from the stock exchange.

Lower Manhattan will never be as green as it was when the Castello Plan was drawn in 1665, but it is becoming greener than it has been in more than a century. Under vastly different circumstances it is harking back to Dutch colonial times when everyone walked and businesses and residences were in close proximity or under the same roof. Wounded but now recovering, this most compelling of landscapes in this most commercial of cities is seeking its future within the physical and economic framework of its historical past. It is a challenging task but one filled with promise if it reveals Lower Manhattan's extraordinary combination of natural and man-made qualities and allows the incomparable whole of it to function as a richly varied but integrated urban district in which the multi-layered past and contemporary architectural design, public art, memorials, streetscape, and parks are experienced in relation to one another. — EBR

Books

The Island at the Center of the World: The Epic Story of Dutch Manhattan & the Forgotten Colony That Shaped America by Russell Shorto (New York: Doubleday, 2004)

Nieuw Amsterdam, the capital of the short-lived colony of Nieuw Netherland, established by the Dutch in 1626 and peacefully taken over by the English in 1664, is at last enjoying a well-deserved revision of its history with the publication of *The Island at the Center of the World: The Epic Story of Dutch Manhattan & the Forgotten Colony That Shaped America*. Russell Shorto's colorful narrative of those brief thirty-eight years of Dutch domination is accessible, detailed, and fast-moving. Almost all previous worthwhile histories of the Dutch Colony were published long ago in multivolume format (try Marianna van



Rensselaer's *History of the City of New York in the 17th Century* [1909] or E. B. O'Callaghan's even hoarier but equally wonderful *History of New Netherland* [1848]).

More recently there has been a rush of scholarly articles such as Karen Ordahl Kupperman's "Early American History with the Dutch Put In" in *The Journal of*

American History (21, 1993), fruits of a broad new interest in the seventeenth-century world of exploration, conquest, and trade – newly configured as "the Atlantic world." By the beginning of the seven-

teenth century, "the Atlantic world" stretched from the Baltic ports of the Hanseatic League to South America, the Caribbean, and North America. "The Atlantic world" – a multiethnic and multicultural network, as the slave historian Ira Berlin has pointed out in his first chapter of *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* – was a "melting pot" long before Israel Zangwill wrote the Broadway play of that name in 1908. New York City can now take its place in popular consciousness both as a very early trade hub in and a cultural contributor to that

expanded world, thanks to Shorto.

This is also a timely publication in view of the documentary torrent pouring out of the New Netherland Project at the New York State Library in Albany. Shorto gives Charles Gehring, the scholar who has been translating and editing the Dutch Colony's papers for more than thirty years, his proper due. These papers and the recent scholarship they have inspired provide irrefutable testimony to Shorto's thesis that we should significantly alter the commonly held belief that America's colonial story begins with the Pilgrim settlement at Plymouth.

Shorto is also well aware that giving primary sources ample space pays off, quoting generously to portray Manhattan's vanished landscape and society as a place rich in wildlife and opportunities for agriculture and trade with the tribes of Native Americans who still lived in the vicinity of Nieuw Amsterdam. He draws on descriptions of contemporary explorers to paint rapid, convincing pictures such as this: "Fish streamed thickly around them: salmon, mullet, wrraith-like rays," and the land was rich in primordial oaks and "an abundance of blue plums."

He engages in a lively stylistic hunt for Adriaen Van der Donck, who is his protagonist (Peter Stuyvesant is more or less his villain), as the author of unattributed arguments that eventually pushed the Dutch government to give New Netherlanders broader liberties than other colonies enjoyed. Shorto notes that Van der Donck, the only trained jurist in the colony in the period to hold such political views, had used the highly unusual word "American" to describe the Indians in one document. He correlates the use of the word in eight other documents, all of which frame the same views in the same legal language. On this basis, he proposes (as have other scholars independently and simultaneously with Shorto) that Van der Donck is the indisputable author of all of these documents. This illustration of the landscape of law and politics of New Netherland, so fundamental to understanding Shorto's conception of its legacy in the United States, is only one of many he sketches.

Shorto sets up the colony's definition of itself as a struggle between the two men. Van der Donck, the forgotten intellectual and man of action, was a lawyer who had trained at the University of Leiden under the great humanist, Hugo Grotius. The authoritarian Stuyvesant, heretofore a mere cartoon

figure complete with a peg-leg, steel breastplate, and sword, is painted with appropriately tragic shadows. The two men tangled for years. Was New Netherland to be a military trading post or a municipality – what Shorto labels “an eighth province in the Dutch republic, a noncontiguous state along the lines of an Alaska or Hawaii”? It was on its way to that nearly autonomous eighth-province status when the British took over in 1664.

The book is divided into three parts. In Part One, “A Certain Island Named Manathans,” Shorto offers a variety of exploration narratives. An “Indian told of sighting ‘a large house of various colors’ floating on the water. (Dutch ships were indeed vividly painted with geometric motifs).” Trading began: “Out came the products. Hemp, dried currants, oysters, beans. Knives, hatchets, and beads.” During subsequent exploration of “an intricate mesh of islands, bays, and rivers, making the rounds of Brooklyn, Staten Island, and coastal New Jersey,” two violent encounters took place between the Dutch and the Indians. Shorto often jumps to the present at moments such as this, as when he writes, “It’s ironic that immediately upon

entering the watery perimeter of what would become New York City, these two things take place: trade and violence.” For the most part, his full-bodied and colorful narrative style can bear the weight of such generalizing.

Shorto uses some horrifying material to great effect. In Part Two, “The Clash of Wills,” he graphically describes the initial sea battles of the First Anglo-Dutch War in the English Channel and the North Sea when “ships of each fleet arrayed stem to stern so that their side-mounted guns could form a long deadly chain.” Following this encounter, they were reduced “to floating wrecks by the onslaught of flying metal, their masts and tackles, according to one witness, moiled with brains, hair, pieces of skull.”

Part Three, “Inheritance,” covers the denouement of the struggle between Stuyvesant and Van der Donck and sets up the scene of a peaceful English takeover that includes Stuyvesant’s surrender and the handover of the Dutch state papers. This is Shorto’s moment to deal with what he considers to be the Dutch legacy and how it has been treated historically. In almost every chapter, he already has claimed that this history has been ignored or misrepresented, as indeed it appears to have been. He describes how, almost from the beginnings of the New Netherland Colony, an English cultural

bias existed against the Dutch, swelling at the moment when the first of three Anglo-Dutch wars for supremacy of the seas – in 1653, 1664, and 1673 – were waged. The Dutch finally left the Atlantic arena (keeping Curaçao, Suriname, and Guiana) to concentrate on their Indonesian conquests. Shorto argues that the deathblows were administered to the very idea of any serious Dutch cultural inheritance by eminent nineteenth-century historians who focused on New England’s patrimony: John Winthrop’s “shining city on a hill,” along with its latter-day descendant, the doctrine of Manifest Destiny.

In arguing for the recognition of a Dutch heritage, however, Shorto makes his claim in a tone so partisan it occasionally injures his point. His statement that the tradition of Dutch tolerance, particularly religious and ethnic toleration as it existed in seventeenth-century Amsterdam, was instrumental in shaping not just New Netherland colonial policy in the form of the English charter of 1686 but a national American sensibility regarding immigration and religious toleration seems overstated. It is a thesis Shorto offers so persistently that he sometimes made this

reader momentarily wonder if he knew about the broad reaches of English humanism and the shaping of common law in the seventeenth century or the role of religious minorities such as the Quakers in extending the concept of religious toleration in Philadelphia or that of the Catholics in Maryland or the example of Rhode Island. (A look at Shorto’s bibliography nevertheless is reassuring on these points.) He does not discuss the lockdown on all freedoms for those of African descent, the so-called “black codes” that, at the end of the seventeenth century, followed the previous period of comparative tolerance under Dutch rule for blacks in New York.

In his last pages Shorto counters his own large claims with a scaled-down version that “the story of the original Manhattan colony matters” in terms of an American intellectual, political, and social legacy. “Its impact is so diffuse that it would be perilous to declare and define it too concretely,” he writes, “so here is a modest attempt: It helped set the whole thing in motion.” One might argue that this acknowledgment – that there were many traditions and events in American history that “helped set the whole thing in motion” – is somewhat overdue and at variance with previous statements in the book. However, questioning the strength of

his thesis recedes in light of what this brief history (325 pages of text with an additional fifty-eight pages of back matter) actually offers. Who would want to walk around Greenwich Village or the Lower East Side without having read this passage describing the landscape of Stuyvesant’s Bouwerie Number One?

Within five minutes they were in open country, meadows and pastureland punctuated by stands of forests. The road turned sharply to the right . . . then cut northward, elbowing through wilderness before opening . . . onto an expanse of lots that were being farmed by freed slaves . . . a settler from the Long Island district of Greenwyck (Pine District) would relocate here and give his property that name. . . . Stuyvesant brought his family down a lane and into the patch of island he was in the process of taming as his own. In its marshy serenity snipes and widgeons alighting on swampy ponds, stiff winds coming off the river bending the grasses, cows hunkering under bruised skies – it may have reminded him of home. . . . Here he built a manor and a chapel.

Here he would live out his life and be buried, and here, over the parade of centuries, flappers, shtetl refugees, hippies, and punks – an aggregate of local residents running from Trotsky to Auden to Charlie Parker to Joey Ramone – would shuffle past his tomb.

In a note, Shorto neatly scores his major point one last time: “As a nice metaphor for the way history has muddled Manhattan’s Dutch period, Stuyvesant’s tombstone, embedded in the foundation of the Church of St. Mark’s-in-the-Bowery, manages to get both his age and title wrong.”
– Mac Griswold

Gardens of the Arts and Crafts Movement: Imagination and Reality by Judith Tankard

(New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2004)

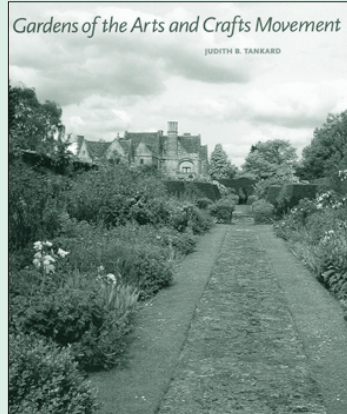
The last twentysome years have seen a widespread revival of interest in the Arts and Crafts Movement both in Great Britain and the United States with an increasing number of books devoted to examining its various facets. In *Gardens of the Arts and Crafts Movement: Imagination and Reality*, Judith Tankard makes a substantial contribution to this critical literature. She briefly but clearly establishes the movement in its

intellectual and social context before focusing on its gardens and their creators, with British projects during the crest years forming the core of the book. While she gives due appreciation to major figures including William Morris, C. A. F. Voysey, Edwin Lutyens, and Gertrude Jekyll, her attention to the work of many less well-known designers provides a valuable enrichment to our understanding of the period. Plans; period drawings, paintings, and photographs; and Tankard's own excellent color photographs of surviving or, more frequently, restored gardens illuminate her very readable text.

Few "movements" in the world of design can be clearly bracketed by dates, but the Arts and Crafts Movement is one of the slipperiest. Almost all art historians recognize John Ruskin's exhortations in the 1849 *Seven Lamps of Architecture* and in the 1851-53 *Stones of Venice* as its theoretical underpinning, a foundation more completely developed by Morris. However, many label early

responses like Norman Shaw's houses and Charles Eastlake's 1868 *Hints on Household Taste* as Aesthetic or House Beautiful or Queen Anne, limiting Arts and Crafts as such to the period between 1888 and 1914. These may have been the glory years, but such limits disregard the fact that Morris's very influential Red House, designed by Philip Webb, was built in 1859. World War I did not put an end to the movement – major figures such as Lutyens, Jekyll, Thomas Mawson, Clough Williams-Ellis, and Robert Lorimer went on creating gardens all through the twenties – and what about Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Frank Lloyd Wright?

Both architects subscribed to Arts and Crafts ideals, but their work led right into twentieth-century modernism. Tankard's succinct definition in the preface clears the ground: "the movement was a philosophical approach to design rather than an identifiable style." Central to the Arts and Crafts approach was a belief in the dignity and fulfillment of handwork, a reliance for inspiration on nature and regional traditions, and a



respect for artistic achievement in any material, which aimed to erase hierarchic distinctions between the fine and decorative arts.

While acknowledging the labeling fragmentation of the early years, Tankard makes clear that ideas and ideals flow seamlessly from Ruskin through the last half of the nineteenth century and beyond. From the beginning the proponents of Arts and Crafts considered it as much a moral and social program as an aesthetic one. Perhaps the current interest in the movement can be read as a search for a solution to today's perceived iniquities just as the original was to those of the mid-nineteenth century. For Ruskin, Morris, and others, triumphant industrialism dehumanized workers, destroyed regional character and traditional crafts with the mass production of meretricious quality, and poured dark disease-bearing blankets of smoke over cities. On an aesthetic level, they deplored the ostentatious exoticism, dark colors, heavy furnishings, and excessive, that is to say vulgar, ornamentation of High Victorian taste in houses and gardens alike.

The Arts and Crafts Movement called for simplici-

ty, utility, and artistic integration of house, garden, and interior. Such a program placed no bar to individuality on the part of designers, but it also created a movement full of complex and sometimes contradictory currents. Tankard's first chapter, "Gardens Old and New," offers a prime example. We think of Reginald Blomfield, author of *The Formal Garden in England* (1902), and William Robinson, author of *The Wild Garden* (1870) and *The English Flower Garden* (1883), as the polar opposites that their vigorous and vituperative verbal battles over garden design suggest. Tankard places both firmly – and convincingly – in the Arts and Crafts lineage. Blomfield, a member of the Art Workers' Guild, and fellow architects H. Inigo Trigg and John Sedding called for clearly structured architect-designed gardens: certainly one way to unify house and garden. They chose Elizabethan and Jacobean gardens as models and displayed a passion for topiary extending from hedges and simple geometric shapes used as vertical markers to the kind of whimsical birds and animals found in vernacular gardens. Given the Arts and Crafts goal of integrating house and garden, it is not surprising that most of its gardens were designed by architects.

Nonetheless, as one studies the collection of architects' renderings in that chapter and the one on architectural gardening, one realizes that however successful their structure and relation to the house as outdoor rooms, architects' gardens were often pretty thin stuff. It is very easy to see why Robinson excoriated them for their simplistic plantings and lack of horticultural knowledge. His call for the use of native plants and hardy perennials, a slap at greenhouse-dependent, bedding-out plantings, would lead to the herbaceous border, a still popular legacy of the Arts and Crafts garden. In a later chapter examining Robinson's home grounds and those of Jekyll, the era's master gardeners, Tankard notes that Robinson quietly adopted some of the architects' ideas for the gardens around his own Gravetye Manor. But unlike most architects, he also considered the land beyond the terraces and garden walls, and his practice of naturalizing bulbs and wild flowers in woodlands and meadows has become a common feature in landscape design. The partnership between Lutyens and Jekyll would demonstrate that architecture and horticulture could join hands – if those hands belonged to gifted designers –

to create magnificent gardens. Theirs, with many of them recently restored, are the best known and most studied of the Arts and Crafts gardens.

The Arts and Crafts Movement championed country living, but Tankard makes the very important point that the great majority of its houses and gardens were domestic in scale: "Small country houses within easy reach of London for weekend retreats for the upper middle class would be the realm of a new generation of architects." True, most of these were larger than most of today's suburban, or even exurban, properties but nowhere near the size of the great country estates that architects and garden makers had been called upon to create in previous eras. Sometimes the architects were commissioned to restore and create gardens for Elizabethan, Jacobean, or Regency manor houses; but in their own designs they rejected historicism and sought simply to capture the spirit of the past, using local materials but creating plans to suit the way their contemporaries lived.

Inspired by Morris's multifaceted craft production and his exaltation of working with one's hands, many of these architects took up one form or another of handcraft – often furniture making or metalwork – or chose the interior furnishings if they

did not produce them. Tankard does not write much about this branch of the Arts and Crafts design trinity of house, garden, and interior, but the pages of patterns by Morris, Voysey, and Candace Wheeler that serve as chapter headings provide a constant visual reminder of the dominant role that nature's forms play in Arts and Crafts interiors and decorative arts.

Tankard recognizes the importance of magazines – *The Studio*, *The Garden*, and *Country Life*, for example – and books in spreading the movement's goals and creations. Jekyll's books, particularly those dealing with her planting style and use of color, have had a broad and enduring influence. Much current British garden design is still rooted in her ideas, and they have seen a revival in this country. Tankard points out, however, that sensitivity to color was a hallmark of the Arts and Crafts approach and that in the period there were other garden makers renowned for their skill in planting design, among them Alfred Parsons, Ellen Willmott, and Norah Lindsay. Less known today but as influential as Jekyll's books in the first decades of the twentieth century was Mawson's *The Art and Craft*

of Garden-Making. It went through five editions by 1926. His exceptional knowledge of practical horticulture and excellent design skills earned him one of the largest national and international landscape design practices of his generation, and he was invited to speak at Harvard, Cornell, and Yale.

Its very complexity precludes, as she acknowledges, more than the quick sketch that Tankard gives of the American Arts and Crafts Movement. It would take a whole new book to examine in detail the various forms it took in different decades and in different parts of this country. The gardens she chooses to illustrate, with the exception of Charles Greene's Green Gables in Woodside, California, are ones rather reminiscent of British practice, but she still names most of the important figures in American Arts and Crafts.

As a demonstration of the relevance of Arts and Crafts principles to small contemporary gardens, Tankard ends the text with an epilogue featuring four gardens. Bryan's Ground, since 1993 an ongoing creation by editor/publisher David Wheeler and art director Simon Dorrell of the British magazine *Hortus*; York Gate; and Tony Ridler's garden, all in Britain, are shown in beautiful drawings by Dorrell, who also did many of the plans in the book. The

fourth garden, Robert Dash's Madoo on Long Island, is briefly described but not illustrated.

Tankard's endnotes and bibliography are helpful guides to learning more about the people and places that she mentions. There is an additional bonus: a list, including contact information, of houses and gardens that can be visited in both Great Britain and the United States. *Gardens of the Arts and Crafts Movement* is an invaluable resource on many levels. – Denise Otis

Waterfront: A Journey Around Manhattan by Phillip Lopate

(New York: Crown Publishers, 2004)

There is a genre of writing that can be called "On the Road" literature. It often attempts to portray the enigmatic ordinary of Elsewhere in a series of trenchant, if necessarily superficial, observations.

Writers of this kind of ostensible nonfiction are almost

always outsiders, intellectually curious sophisticates with a wandering bent who bring a sharp eye, ear, and journalistic voice to their travels. Photographers hit the road for the same purpose, sometimes producing indelibly memorable, culture-defining images. Still, there are pitfalls here. Within the seemingly dispassionate writer's pen or photographer's purportedly truthful lens lurk preconceived political positions and an inevitable, if unconscious, sense of superiority, which even the most sympathetic artists and writers have toward their subjects simply because they are in control of the presentation of their material.

In *Waterfront: A Journey Around Manhattan*, Phillip

Lopate has chosen a more restricted compass and an approach that is both more tentative and deeply exploratory than that of the "On the Road" authors who turn the fodder of a single journey into a book of vivid quick-

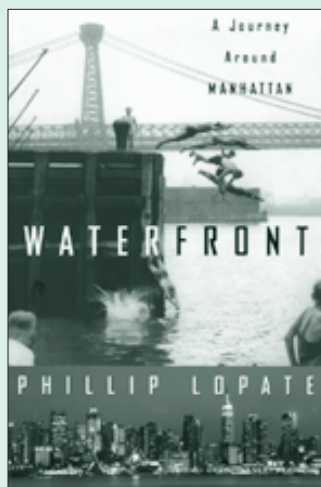
take vignettes and one-stop anecdotes. Lopate can entertain us with these, too, but his writer's sensibility leads him into meditative byways that carry him (and the read-

er) to a less complacent conviction of having fixed in words a particular local identity. He is not a motorcycle man streaking across Middle America, interviewing cattle ranchers, barflies, trailer-park residents, marine reservists, and gas station attendants. He is, first and foremost, a son of the city (New York City, of course), an inveterate urban walker, a latter-day *flâneur*, and a master of the personal essay, especially the *peripatetic* personal essay.

Lopate has two other taut strings in his literary bow. He is an anthologist and an aficionado of film. His first anthology, *The Art of the Personal Essay*, reflects his familiarity with the literary form he has appropriated for his own, and the second, *Writing New York*, made handy for immediate recall a rich body of New York waterfront literature. Linking word and place, he can summon at will lines of Walt Whitman and Hart Crane, make reference to the lurid and tantalizing plethora of nineteenth-century "Lights and Shadows" books that sensationalized New York's high- and lowlife, or heighten our social awareness of the past with incidents drawn from Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* or Herbert Asbury's *The Gangs*

of New York. As someone whose lifelong love affair with the movies has yielded a body of reviews and essays on the subject of film, he sees street life cinematically and remembers the streets of the city (or the Hollywood set designs of them) in all their moody film-noir glory and Woody Allen satirical charm.

As Lopate points out, most of our solitary walks take place not only on the pavement but also in our heads as our thoughts shuttle back and forth between self-absorption and observation. It is good, therefore, to find ourselves in the company of such a well-furnished head as his and to know that all the seeing and learning and remembering that are stored up in him will come to us as the same kind of interior monologue we would like to have with ourselves – pondering some flash of beauty or decrepitude, some piece of history or personal memory, some missed opportunity or qualified urban planning success – if we only had so much lightly worn historical research, behind-the-scenes interviews, quick recall of great old movies, and passages from hundreds of books about New York in our heads. Moreover, it is good to be reminded that we all see the world idiosyncratically and to realize that, if we live long enough in as restless a



city as New York, the scenery of our past and present walks in the same neighborhoods will become increasingly disassociated through change.

Nowhere is urban flux more evident than on Manhattan's twenty-first-century waterfront. Not only in New York but in many formerly important port and manufacturing cities, industrial lands adjacent to shorelines and river docks have become "brownfields," so-called because sites vacated by shipping and industry now present an opportunity to create recreational "greenfields." And nowhere is the opportunity to renew the urban edge more potently dramatic or more fraught with political and bureaucratic obstacles than in New York. In his self-assigned task of exploring on foot as much of the Manhattan waterfront as possible (the entire 578-mile New York City waterfront was understandably beyond the scope of his book and the endurance of his body), Lopate tells us that "All along, I kept coming up against certain underlying questions: What is our capacity for city-making at this historical juncture? How did we formerly build cities with such casual conviction, and can we still come up with bold, integrated visions and ambitious works?"

What is the changing meaning of public space? How to resolve the antiurban bias in our national character with the need to sustain a vital city environment? Or reconcile New York's past as a port/manufacturing center with the new model of a postindustrial city given over to information processing and consumerism?"

While these pressing issues engage Lopate's attention as they must ours, *Waterfront* is anything but a prescriptive book offering theories and best practices of a new urbanism. Like Baudelaire or Walter Benjamin, Lopate's real métier is walking to write, a desire to sample the pleasures and perils of modernity with a sensibility attuned to history, to experiencing what he calls the enigmatic fusion of presence and absence. He is, in other words, a connoisseur of how the transformation of cities by industrial, and now postindustrial, forces is played out in the lives and visages and words of casually encountered strangers. At the same time, he sees the waterfront as an anthology of past lives and a palimpsest of past places. It is a landscape that he has tried to read like a text, conjuring back the stevedores and the sailors, the gamins and the grit, the factories and the foghorns. Often pulling himself up short of sentiment, Lopate nevertheless slips into elegy, for, as he

remarks, "The walker-writer cannot help seeing, superimposed over the present edifice its former incarnation, and he/she sings the necropolis...."

In *Waterfront* we follow Lopate first up Manhattan's Hudson River shoreline from the Battery to Washington Heights and Inwood and then from the Battery to Highbridge Park along the East River as he traces the present shoreline and its bordering neighborhoods, reading them as layered accumulations of older narratives. Though its cacophonous vibrancy is stilled, his Manhattan waterfront is yet haunted by colorful, if continually fading, ghosts. He calls attention to the comparative vacancy of the once-busy harbor as abandoned piers rot or, as he explains in one fascinating chapter, are eaten away by shipworms. Always, we see tantalizing opportunity for waterfront "reclamation" being tortuously realized or just out of reach of political will and economic necessity as we follow Lopate's physical and intellectual perambulations.

Because *Waterfront* is personal in its perspective, one has to recognize Lopate's penchant for the vulgar, seedy, and picturesquely

decrepit: the "rotting timbers, tall grasses, jagged rocks, and wharfside warehouses which constituted the 1970s-1980s New York waterfront, after it had been given up as a port but before it had begun to be 'rehabilitated.'" Even before then, the waterfront had become a kind of abstraction devoid of almost all of its old marine traffic and commerce and sealed off from physical contact by highways. At best (and indeed a blessing), it could be viewed from a high promenade such as the one that decks over the FDR Drive as it passes beneath the grounds of Gracie Mansion and Carl Shurz Park. Only in a few marginal places can you thread your way through riprap, rusty fences, and high weeds alongside the water's edge, as is the case in East Harlem.

However, it is not precisely this "ragged, unkempt, undiscovered, and unidentified territory" that, sore of foot and leg, Lopate means as an antidote to the manicured edge represented by the Battery Park Promenade. What frustrates him are the too-timid, official planning visions and bland consumer-oriented public space improvements prevalent nowadays. He longs for an older, crustier reality that somehow acknowledges the vanished dockworkers and harbor traffic – but without turning pockets of the waterfront into self-themed,

commercially driven historic preserves, as is the case at the South Street Seaport. But none of us knows how to summon back an economically defunct past without having it seem like a staged revival. At best, one can join Lopate in applauding the kind of vigilante urbanism by communities that give up on government and improve derelict public spaces on their own.

Shoreline meditation gives rise to here and there an excursus, or digression. These chapters constitute thematic essays of a historical or biographical nature, thus differing from the more purely descriptive ones elsewhere. For this reader, the most telling of these excursuses is the story of the bitterly fought and defeated plan to replace Manhattan's West Side Highway with Westway, a submerged shoreline transportation corridor in the Hudson River that would have been decked over with several hundred acres of parkland. Lopate explains how this proposal for a boldly imaginative, federally funded public-works project would have reconnected the city's street grid with its waterfront, making the Hudson between 79th Street and the Battery as accessible as it is above 79th Street in the neighborhoods adjacent to Riverside

Park. Yet it was killed after a protracted fight that pitted community activists and planners against one another.

Lopate helps us see in hindsight how Westway fell victim to historical timing. By the late 1960s, when federal funding was available and this project was on the drawing boards, proposals for the kind of highway mega-projects advocated by mid-twentieth-century planners, particularly the misguided proposal of Robert Moses to build the Lower Manhattan Expressway, had begun to generate vociferous antipathy for the reasons that were soon to turn their most thoughtfully original and influential critic, Jane Jacobs, into a revered sage of new urbanism. Recounting the ensuing hearings and lawsuits, Lopate concludes that Westway would not have rent an important part of the urban fabric as the Lower Manhattan Expressway would have done and that the proposed ninety-acre public park was, as its planners claimed, the essential feature of the plan. However, in the early 1970s, as lawsuits to block Westway were wending their way through the courts, any Robert Moses-style top-down urban planning project had become de facto suspect, and newly established community planning boards were finding their principal political power to be opposition to large-

scale, government-sponsored urban renewal. For more than a decade, opponents fought the project, at last winning on environmental grounds based on the importance of the Hudson estuary as a breeding habitat for striped bass. Now, thirty years later, instead of the large park that would have united the riverfront with its adjacent inland neighborhoods, 9A – a rebuilt West Side Highway in the guise of a wide boulevard – continues to separate them from the bikeway and recreational pier projects that are gradually aggregating as state funding becomes available for a much narrower Hudson River Park. Such is Lopate’s revisionist take on the project that he, like many other New Yorkers, opposed at the time.

This affinity for planning analysis, combined with a sensory appreciation of Manhattan’s old waterfront landscape – a description of what was, is, might have been, and is coming into being in this most incessantly self-transforming of cities – makes Lopate’s book more original, balanced, and nuanced than others on the subject. That he himself considered becoming a city planner at one point makes him sympathetic to certain members of New York City’s vast civil service bureaucracy

who still maintain the idealistic perspective and dreams of social betterment through good urban design that characterized the reform movement and urban planning philosophy in the first two-thirds of the twentieth century. Thus, in the same evenhanded way that he was able to rethink Westway, Lopate provides a thoughtful analysis of the city’s housing projects, penitential in design and often castigated as ghettos for the poor. The belief that government has an obligation to see that all members of society should be decently housed produced, in his view, some very successful, as well as some direly flawed, public housing experiments, and he laments our stinginess in providing tax funds for this purpose today. Since many of the projects are sited on or near the waterfront because, when built, this land was not the prime real estate it is now, Lopate takes us on an excursive journey through a previously untold piece of New York City urban history as we follow in his footsteps along the East River from the Bowery to Harlem in a chapter called simply “The Projects.”

It is hard to say which of the personal essays that constitute *Waterfront* is best. The entire circuit that this walker in the city makes around Manhattan’s water-

front, narrated as the story of one man’s love affair with the greatest city on earth and the incomparable estuarine harbor that set its dynamic development in motion, is fascinating and timely as the city experiences profound change and its old waterfront landscape of commerce gives way to a twenty-first-century landscape emphasizing sports and recreation. – EBR

**The Modern Garden
by Jane Brown**

(London: Thames & Hudson, 2000)

**Modern Garden Design:
Innovation Since 1900
by Janet Waymark**

(London: Thames & Hudson, 2000)

While there are literally thousands of books on the history of modern art and hundreds if not thousands on modern architecture, a good history of modern landscape architecture remains to be written – and even a good history of the modern garden alone would be most welcome. Sadly, nei-



ther Jane Brown’s *The Modern Garden* or Janet Waymark’s *Modern Garden Design: Innovation Since 1900* is that book. Admittedly, the task before a potential author today is far more difficult than it would have been in the past. At one time a history of landscape meant a chronicle and explanation of stylistic development. Today, one needs to address a far broader range of considerations: examining social issues, the geopolitical situation, environmental factors, and the like – some of which arguably deny the very idea of evolution, stylistic or other, at all.

That all makes the task more difficult but not impossible. On the one hand, both these books qualify as “sur-

veys” and therefore are limited by the publisher to a certain number of words and a certain number of images. On the other hand, both authors – and the publisher of both

books – are British, no doubt injecting a bias toward the home team. But limitations are the realities of any writing project, and it is the author’s role to determine the stance from which he or she will view the subject, choose the dramatis personae and pro-

jects, and weave the tale. Constraints are not necessarily a bad thing; they may coerce a writer to be succinct and focus on ideas rather than minutiae. Let’s add one more ingredient to the mix: the images. For the most part, the photographs in both books are of high quality and are very well reproduced. While the Waymark book is short on plans, the Brown volume is quite the contrary. In fact, for some, garden plans constitute the principal means of representing the work, which also can be a shortcoming. The question then is how the images are used: Are they integrated with the text or played against it?

To start: the words “garden” and “modern.” To Jane Brown the garden is a specific area and an artifact with a specific definition:

The word Garden in my title is also carefully emphatic: it implies the use and enjoyment of a private space, within similar parameters to those we apply to our private lives, allowing room for friends and close and known local communities.

Janet Waymark, in contrast, seems to equate garden with landscape and casts her net farther afield, encompassing public landscapes and

even town planning. She takes her definition from the 1981 International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) Florence Charter:

“an architectural and horticultural composition of interest to the public from the historical or artistic point of view” . . . which later makes it clear that the term “garden” could equally well apply to landscape parkland, cemeteries, allotments, and cultivated and managed green areas in an urban context.

If that is so, why not announce landscape rather than the garden as the subject of the book? Brown wants to avoid this less constrained view: “There is a definite line to be drawn between the meaning of the word garden, and that other word, landscape, with which it is so persistently confused.” So at their very roots the two books are problematic for those seeking a concise position, a good stance, and a precise definition of modern and garden and modern garden.

“Modern,” by contrast, is even more slippery, not necessarily as an abstract concept but as the qualifier added to the term garden. For Waymark: “The term ‘Modern’ is used here inclusively, and refers to the present and the recent past.” For Brown, modern is used more or less as it is found in the

dictionary: “of the recent past, and most emphatically, ’not antiquated.” As her examples and case studies demonstrate, however, the modern path is hardly linear; in fact, it is less a path than a scattered field of bits and pieces linked weakly by chronology. The issue becomes further complicated as she includes in her view a notion of manner – or style, if you will – the form and spaces and materials of which the garden is made and the way in which they came to be.

Brown’s *The Modern Garden* is very curiously structured, with a collage of the author’s own writing, inserted project descriptions, and many quotations from books; its central idea remains elusive to the end. She centers modern garden activity from the 1930s to the 1950s and quite inexplicably claims: “Within a decade it was dead, mainly through misunderstanding, and a smothering in historic revivals and rampantly eclectic postmodernism.” I would beg to differ, but that’s another story. The book comprises numerous subsections and ultimately reads more as a series of vignettes rather than a history as the reader struggles for any sense of coherence.

The author begins by nominating her “oracles” of the modern landscape. These include, somewhat strangely, the Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen, Erich Mendelsohn, J. J. P. Oud, Le Corbusier, and Paul Klee. This is an odd, almost bizarre, set of protagonists for the modern landscape whose selection we might welcome as a very fresh take. But quite typically for this book, the case is never made. Like a military ambush, the author throws out some statement and then leaves quietly with neither qualification nor development. While Saarinen the elder was a very fine architect and site planner, his landscapes were only professionally competent and firmly in the model of the north European/Germanic formal (or architectonic, as it was termed) garden. He was sensitive to the site but he was no innovator in landscape design. So why is he elevated to “oracle” status? We are left wondering.

Nor is the inclusion of Erich Mendelsohn more convincing. His own 1928 ‘am Ruperhorn garden that Brown refers to on several occasions appears to be rather standard and almost mundane when viewed in both plan and photo. Either the author sees qualities in it that she does not elucidate or my eyes are failing me (which, of course, may be the case). As for Le Corbusier: Dorothee Imbert has shown rather

clearly that probably no one until Ian McHarg in the 1960s has argued more persuasively against gardens and landscapes concerned with form. Early singular works such as the Villa Meyer and the Beistegui roof terrace aside, the architect’s idea of generic greenery rather than configured spaces undermined the importance of designing any landscape at all, much less a garden. Paul Klee? Well, we know he provided inspiration for Geoffrey Jellicoe, but has any other influence on landscape been documented? Here again is the basic shortcoming of *The Modern Garden*: pronouncements without substantiation leave the reader at best tantalized but ultimately unfulfilled.

Normally, to be polite, a reviewer foregoes mention of errors in a text, but these are so plentiful that the potential reader warrants a warning. For example, the images of the Mexican Luis Barragán’s work near the end of the book combine three projects as if one: the horse stables and house at San Cristóbal with the horse-drinking trough at Las Arboledas and the Lovers Fountain at Los Cubes; and it is not Dolliver “Tommy” Church but Thomas Dolliver Church; and his 1955 book *Gardens Are for People* is

decidedly not an autobiography. In addition, descriptions of people – interjected perhaps for color or to enliven the writing – appear drawn from out of the blue, causing informed readers to question whether they are reading a factual study or fictional treatment.

Brown’s lack of research – or perhaps, more kindly phrased, lack of evidence of research – is troubling. The bibliography lists only books and neither articles or primary documents. One wonders also how many of the landscapes described in her book the author actually has visited. While the descriptions of the projects based on photos and drawings are usually to the point, the readings and deductions are at times far from the mark. Admittedly, the historian is constrained by the extant materials, whether textual, graphic, or vegetal, and landscapes are notoriously ephemeral, but ...

Waymark’s Modern Garden Design: Innovation Since 1900 is a more respectable study. It follows a generally chronological order, which makes its story easier to follow. It is more inclusive than Brown’s book, and this is one of its strengths. Waymark discusses the American modernists and the Brazilian Roberto Burle Marx, the British Thomas Mawson, and even the influential German nurseryman Karl Foerster. She maps out a

very broad constellation and presents a credible, if limited, view of the present and the future. Because Waymark sees the garden and the landscape as somewhat synonymous, however, her narrative wanders from time to time and one questions the balance of discussion on her various subjects. Claude Monet and Lord Astor receive extended discussions while J. C. N. Forestier – who is arguably far more significant – receives only a passing mention. Given that the length of the book probably was set by the publisher, the chapter on the garden suburb feels out of place – especially since none of the gardens in the garden suburbs merits any treatment. The garden suburb has received extensive discussion in books on urban and suburban planning, and little here adds to the basic story at the level of garden.

Like Brown, Waymark focuses on description and biography (these, and genealogy, appear to be favorites of

British writers) rather than on ideas and the integration of places and people. It seems that behind all of these should be the question: How does this person or this landscape contribute significantly to the development, maturation, or history of the modern garden? A history is more than a list of people and places and less than fictional flights of fancy – a good

history discusses interactions and the drama rather than just introducing the players. One would hope that a thesis undergirds all the facts and discussions. The reader needs to know about the consequences as

well as the stimuli. Instead, at the end of these books, one recalls the entries rather than a comprehensive narrative. While we are always told what, we are rarely told why.

In general, it is far more difficult to fashion a history of the future than one of the past, and the final sections of both books are quite unconvincing. I would not look to the American firm Oehme and van Sweden for future directions in garden design although they are masters at



using perennials, which, of course, fits very neatly in a British view of the course of the garden – as does the work of the eminent Dutch plantsman Piet Oudolf.

Stating the criteria for selection would have strengthened each author’s respective stance: What makes a particular designer or landscape a key player in the history of the modern garden? Were the selections of projects based on available photographs or were they constrained by reasonable travel distances? The inclusion and exclusion of certain personages are troubling, but to be fair, that is the call of the author. We can only think of our own nominees, our own discourse, and wonder why the garden of Walter Gropius’s house in Lincoln, Massachusetts (a thoroughly ordinary landscape utilizing elements already common to 1930s England), is included when more significant works – like Dan Kiley’s larger projects – are not.

How can any history of the modern garden or landscape architecture avoid discussing Lawrence Halprin and Peter Walker? Halprin in some ways saved landscape design in the United States by bringing it firmly into the city and, as such, into the political realm. His fountains and

plazas and his urban schemes – not to mention his psychosociological work with individual and community participation – were probably the most important contributions to American landscape architecture after the generation of Garrett Eckbo. An account of Richard Neutra’s attitude toward garden making also would have been welcome since he often took charge for designing the settings of his houses. Walker, who drew on the plastic arts in other ways, reintroduced a vitality to the garden and the corporate landscape that had suffered anorexia in the ecological age.

More positively, both books do include detailed mention of plant materials, as Brown puts it: “dressing the modern garden.” Rarely do would-be historians of the modern landscape examine the planting of the landscapes they discuss to this level of detail. Both Brown and Waymark are to be congratulated on providing their expertise in this area. Nevertheless, neither author really takes on the subject of space, a more central concern for most modern landscape architects, certainly to the American contingent.

What then made the modern garden modern? Brown hints at the qualities of modern landscape while Waymark assumes it to be implicit in the works under discussion. Some years ago I

laid out some ten qualifications for making a modern landscape, a list that I am sure could be improved upon. But in that discussion I attempted to provide a cohesive presentation of the subject so that the reader might evaluate this thought structure in part and as a whole. I wish that each of the authors would have proposed her own structure for understanding the modern garden rather than, with a few exceptions, just reintroducing known personae and places.

In a recent review concerning a symposium on modernism in landscape, I asked the following questions: “Could modernism be any project from the twentieth century or only those that shared some sort of formal resemblances, for example, with architectural modernism or modern painting and sculpture? Need they employ the spare clarity of modernist architecture or the shapes of surrealist painting? Should modernism be better defined by social agenda rather than by shape? What was the role of spatial production and use in formulating modernist ideas? And in addition, how was all this received from the various populations concerned?” These are difficult questions to ask, and they are

likewise difficult to answer. As noted at the start of this review, we demand – or should demand – more of authors today; we demand more about the many dimensions by which the landscape can be made, lived, and evaluated. There is a growing number of anthologies in all fields these days as our requirements grow and the time for research and writing is compressed. This is why so much writing today appears to be the product of teamwork. It may be too much to require this sort of comprehensive vision from any single author. Also unfair, perhaps, but let’s demand it anyway in the hope that some one or some group will some day rise to the occasion.

– Marc Treib

Benton MacKaye: Conservationist, Planner, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail by Larry Anderson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002)

In his autobiography, *A Quest for Life* (1996), Ian McHarg recalled the “great and unexpected efflorescence in environmental sensibility” that he sensed on the first Earth Day in April 1970.

Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962) had mobilized the movement, he noted, and before her there had been George Perkins Marsh, John Muir, Frederick Law Olmsted, Charles Eliot, Gifford Pinchot, Fairfield Osborne, Benton MacKaye, and Paul Sears. Benton MacKaye, aged ninety-one that spring, was not on the frontlines with McHarg, the outspoken landscape architect, biologists Barry Commoner and Paul Ehrlich, and others who traveled across the nation to address cheering crowds. But McHarg remembered MacKaye, placing him in good company.

After MacKaye’s death in 1975, recollections of his life and work appeared in the January/March 1976 issue of *Living Wilderness*, the journal of The Wilderness Society, of which MacKaye was a founder and former president. In fact, most of the issue was a tribute to MacKaye, the man who had conceived and led the efforts to create the 2,160-mile Appalachian

Trail. By many accounts, he was a Yankee visionary, a wilderness philosopher, a geotechnician, a forester, a

regional planner, and social inventor, as well as a writer, neighbor, and friend.

In this special issue Lewis Mumford, MacKaye’s fellow founder of the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA) in 1923, remembered his friend’s unique personality and prophetic ideas, such as townless highways and highwayless towns. Those ideas were grounded in a real place – MacKaye’s boyhood haunts in and around Shirley Center, Massachusetts, to which he would return from sojourns in Boston, New York, Washington, or Knoxville. And MacKaye had insisted on a firm grounding at RPAA gatherings. “He never allowed us to think of technological advances or urban forms without reference to the geological and biological foundations upon which our entire civilization rests,” Mumford recalled. Others recalled MacKaye’s stories of forestry work with Gifford Pinchot, his years at the Tennessee Valley Authority, his zest for hiking, haying, good talk – and solitude. But the planning consultant Frederick Gutheim suspected that, behind MacKaye’s craggy, Thoreauvian persona lay something as yet unknown.

Now we have Larry Anderson’s excellent biography, the result of many years of research, travel, writing



and, I imagine, re-writing. The prose is spare, understated. Anderson, the author of many articles on planning, conservation, and the environment, is also cofounder and past president of the Harvard Common Press. Like Mumford, who edited MacKaye's study in regional planning, *The New Exploration* (1928), Anderson has worked his way through a great mass of MacKaye's writings and found gems – bits of wisdom, flashes of insight – that he quotes now and again in this book. Unlike Mumford, however, Anderson never met MacKaye or listened to his reputedly spirited, salty conversation. As Mumford confessed to a friend, "If [MacKaye] could only write the way he talks, he would surpass Mark Twain."

Anderson's entrée to MacKaye was through other channels. He was brought up within a few miles of MacKaye's boyhood home and knew the same gentle, glacier-rounded landforms that young Benton studied like a map from the summit of Hunting Hill. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Anderson studied at MacKaye's alma mater, Harvard, where he took J. B. Jackson's course on the man-made American landscape and read

through the works of Lewis Mumford. A few more personal glimpses in the introduction – the author's backpacking in northern New England, reading Thoreau's *Walden* and Aldo Leopold's *Sand County Almanac* – suggest what the entire biography bears out: Anderson found in Benton MacKaye a kindred spirit. In time, while appreciating more analytical works by Paul T. Bryant, Robert Gottlieb, Paul S. Sutter, Robert McCullough, and other scholars of MacKaye and wilderness issues, Anderson set out to examine how this visionary man, MacKaye, lived his life. The result is marvelous: a scholarly biography that seems to live and breathe in the open air.

A man of few material needs, content with Spartan quarters, MacKaye had a passion for exploration, on the ground and in the imagination. He tossed out ideas and proposals freely – not with the brilliance of a Mark Twain or an Ian McHarg, but with colorful metaphors, a few scientific concepts, and plain words. He was an important figure in American environmental history, despite his modest number of "solid" independent achievements. As a catalyst and collaborator, he had no need of the limelight but a great desire for balance, equilibrium, some measure of peace for himself and

others. On the job with the Forest Service and later, in the Labor Department, among the loggers, farmers, and mill workers he came to know, MacKaye recognized more desires and needs – for fairness, a living wage, a place to call home, community. And so, rather than take sides in the battles between utilitarians and preservationists, he began to reframe the issues of conservation. By 1919, he was pressing for something akin to what we now call "environmental justice."

Born in 1879 in Stamford, Connecticut, MacKaye lived in several cities and villages as a child. Steele MacKaye, his father, was an actor, playwright, producer, and entrepreneur whose livelihood was often precarious. The members of Benton's immediate family (four older brothers, a younger sister, and parents) were creative, resourceful, and generally supportive. Cultural institutions in New York and Washington, D.C., stimulated the boy's curiosity, and so did opportunities to roam the countryside of New England. The untimely death of his father – Benton was fourteen at the time – was a terrible blow, but out of it came a

lifelong desire to emulate his father on his own terms. As in a theater, Benton would visualize and then dramatize his planning ideas with drawings, maps, metaphors, sometimes with dry humor.

Telling MacKaye's life story in a continuous narrative, Anderson takes care to explain the historical and intellectual contexts and to convey the essence of MacKaye's major writings. Some experiences clearly inspired MacKaye. Hearing John Wesley Powell speak in Washington about his 1869 exploration of the Colorado River and the Grand Canyon, for instance, stimulated young MacKaye's expeditions around Shirley Center. Two geology professors at Harvard also left penetrating impressions – Nathaniel S. Shaler, a captivating lecturer with a reverence for all life on earth; and William M. Davis, a theorist attentive to "the earth as a habitable globe."

Men are the major players in this story. The few women are often troubled, ill, or underemployed: In the era of muckraking journalism, a talented young woman's career and her engagement to MacKaye are abruptly ended. MacKaye's wife, a suffragist and peace activist, suffers from an obscure, chronic depression and eventually takes her own life. MacKaye's sister, a designer of pageants, finds no work in the era of

cinema and is, in time, committed to a series of institutions. MacKaye acts responsibly, nobly, turning inward. But he also turns outward, to blaze trails and plan greenways like the "Bay Circuit" around Boston. He defends wild lands against encroachment by metropolitan growth, or sprawl. The quest is endless – to broaden "our mental and spiritual horizon."

One of the pleasures of reading this biography is to recognize the multiple connections – a non-electronic web – through which people communicated and accomplished a great deal. Through his father's and grandfather's friends, MacKaye was connected back in time to Ralph Waldo Emerson and William James. Benton's introduction to the wilderness was a hiking trip in New Hampshire's White Mountains with his college friend James Sturgis Pray, later a professor of landscape architecture at Harvard and a close colleague in planning the Appalachian Trail. And that entire project depended on a vast network of friends, colleagues, and hiking club members from Maine to Georgia. MacKaye's circles of friends included Allen Chamberlain and Pray of the

Appalachian Mountain Club; Walter Lippmann, Lincoln Steffens, John Reed, and others who met at the Harvard Socialist Club; Clarence Stein, Henry Wright, Mumford, and others of the RPAA; and the foresters, naturalists, and other professionals who formed The Wilderness Society, including Aldo Leopold, Robert Marshall, Robert Sterling Yard, and Harvey Broome.

What linked these circles of friends and colleagues was an ability to imagine alternatives to current patterns of life and work in a nation that was chronically troubled by war, depression, poverty, nuclear weapons capabilities, and other issues. To dream of garden cities and truly urbane cities, an Appalachian network of trails and greenways flanked by recreational communities and farm camps, a ridgeline trail along the Continental Divide, a national network of wildland "belts" created gradually by local groups, and a global effort to preserve wilderness – all may have seemed preposterous at times. But as Mumford wrote to MacKaye in the mid-1960s, "Go on dreaming, dear Ben. There is plenty of time, and you have had far better luck in your dreams than the rest of us have had. For most of mine have been turning into nightmares, or have been lost like water in the sand." –Melanie Simo

[viewpoints]

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