

## **Central Park as a Model for Social Control: Urban Parks, Social Class and Leisure Behavior in Nineteenth-Century America**

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Throughout the nineteenth century, the leading landscape architects and park advocates believed that parks were important instruments of enlightenment and social control. Consequently, they praised and promoted parks for their health-giving characteristics and character-molding capabilities. Landscape architects used these arguments to convince city governments to invest in elaborate urban parks. Many of these parks became spaces of social and political contestation. As the middle and working class mingled in these spaces, conflicts arose over appropriate park use and behavior. The escalating tensions between the middle and working class led to working class activism for increased access to park space and for greater latitude in defining working class leisure behavior. These struggles laid the foundation for the recreation movement. They were also pivotal in the emergence of urban, multiple-use parks designed for both active and passive recreation.

**KEYWORDS:** *Urban parks, social control, inequality, leisure, recreation, social class, landscape architects, Olmsted, Central Park, environment.*

### **Introduction**

#### *A Social Constructionist Perspective*

Historical accounts of American parks tend to ignore the constructionist perspective in analyses of urban parks. In addition, few historical analyses view urban parks as contested spaces, do systematic examination of class relations in the parks, or recognize the use of parks as tools of social control. This paper addresses this oversight. It analyzes urban middle class activists' attempts to build parks and establish rules regarding acceptable park behavior. The paper adopts a social constructionist approach that views the American urban park not just as a physical place but also as a socially-constructed entity. By social construction I mean that urban parks and the issues relating to them are not static. They are not always the product of readily-identifiable, visible or objective conditions. Instead, urban parks are the product of many events and were defined through collective processes (Spector & Kitsuse, 1977, 1973; Klandermans, 1992; Hannigan, 1995). That is, groups in a society perceive, identify, and define park problems by developing shared meanings and interpretations of the issues. Therefore, a constructionist perspective is concerned with how people assign meanings to their social world. More spe-

cifically, the contexts in which urban park issues are constructed are also important. Consequently, this paper uses a contextual constructionist approach to study park activism. It does this by examining how the social, historical, and institutional contexts shaped experiences and events; influenced definitions, ideologies and perceptions; and stimulated activism (Best, 1989; Hannigan, 1995; Rafter, 1992).

A contextual social constructionist perspective helps us to understand that park advocates and other elites developed shared meanings about urban parks that enabled them to propagate the idea that parks were a public good. Park advocates were also able to stimulate demand for parks, design and manage them. Though park advocates subscribed to some core values and ideas about urban parks, this paper will show how the social construction of urban parks changed (a) over time and (b) as different groups of elites attempted to develop and manage parks. The social construction of urban parks was also strongly influenced by class relations. These class relations can be viewed as an iterative process in which the attitudes and actions of the middle class affected the working class. The working class response, in turn, influenced further middle class response. Consequently, by the turn of the century, the social construction of urban parks reflected a synthesis of middle and working class perceptions of parks rather than the unilateral views of either class.

### *Social Location and the Construction of Social Problems*

Social location or positionality also influences the construction of social problems. Social location refers to the position a person or group occupies in society. That position is influenced by factors such as gender, race, and class. Social location affects how people construct the meanings that define grievances, opportunities and collective identities. In addition, social location helps to determine the type and amount of resources available for movement activities. There is also a link between social location and knowledge of collective action tactics and strategies. In addition, the ability to mobilize or use resources effectively is also dependent on the activists' social location (Mueller, 1992; Oliver & Marwell, 1992; Zald, 1996). In the case of urban parks, it is important for us to understand how social location influenced attitudes and perceptions, access to and control of resources, and social relations.

### *Elites*

This paper is also informed by elite theory. It contends that the parks were conceptualized, designed and managed by elites in accordance to middle class values, tastes and mores. In the context of this discussion, elites can be viewed as the key actors or inner circle of participants who play structured, functionally understandable roles in the urban park system. Elites are those that get most of what there is to get in the institutionalized sector of the

society. That is, at every functional stage of any decision-making process, some participants (the elites) will inevitably accumulate disproportionate amounts of valued attributes such as money, esteem, power, or resources which people desire and try to attain. Elite theory helps us to recognize three types of park elites: (a) innovative, (b) planning and (c) implementing elites who played significant roles in the development of urban parks. The theory also helps us to understand the role park advocates assumed as the guardians of public open space, societal morals and culture (Czudnowski, 1983; Lasswell, 1977; Mills, 1994; Kuper & Kuper, 1985).

### *Social Control*

This paper contends that park planning elites designed and used urban parks as tools of social control. According to Talcott Parsons (1951), the study of social control is the analysis of the processes that tend to counteract deviant tendencies. Every social system has, in addition to the obvious rewards for conforming and punishments for deviant behavior, a complex system of unplanned and largely unconscious mechanisms that serve to counteract deviant tendencies. Broadly speaking then, social control is an attempt by one or more individuals to manipulate the behavior of others by means other than a chain of command or requests (Parsons, 1951; Gibbs, 1981).

### *The Injustice Frame*

Framing is an important aspect of urban park analysis. Framing refers to the process by which individuals and groups identify, interpret and express social and political grievances. It is a scheme of interpretations that guides the way in which ideological meanings and beliefs are packaged by movement activists and presented to would-be supporters. Beliefs are important because they can be defined as ideas that might support or retard action in pursuit of desired values, goals or outcomes. Frames organize experiences and guides the actions of the individual or the group. Collective action frames are emergent, action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings developed to inspire and legitimate social movement activities and campaigns designed to attract public support (Gamson, 1992; Turner & Killian, 1987; Snow & Benford, 1992; Snow et al., 1986; Goffman, 1974). There are three components of collective action frames: injustice, agency and identity. The injustice element refers to the moral outrage activists expound through their political consciousness. This moral indignation is more than a cognitive or intellectual judgement about equity or justice, it is a "hot cognition,"—one that is emotionally charged. Agency refers to individual and group efficacy, i.e., the sense of empowerment activists feel. Empowered activists or those exercising agency feel they can alter conditions and policies. The identity component of collective action frames refers to the process of defining the "we" or "us"—usually in opposition to "they" or "them" (Gamson, 1992, 1997; Zanjon, 1980). As later discussions will show, working class park advocates used

the injustice frame to articulate their grievances regarding limited access to parks and other leisure constraints they faced.

### *Efficacy and Advocacy*

Activists not only frame issues in ways that are advantageous to them, they also execute the plans and activities of a movement. Activism is dependent on the existence of efficacious individuals who are willing to devote their efforts to a cause. Efficacy refers to a situation in which an individual perceives that he or she can assert himself or herself politically to make social and political changes. Political assertion can take place through citizen's organizations, or through individual or group efforts (Eisinger, 1972; Verba & Nie, 1972; Miller et al., 1979; Rotter, 1966; Converse, 1972; Balch, 1974; Neal & Seeman, 1964; Seeman, 1972). However, Sharp (1980) argues that political inefficacy, the perception that one's actions are unlikely to have an impact upon governmental affairs because government officials are not responsive, is closely related to advocacy. Inefficacious individuals do not recognize ways of advocating their needs if they perceive unfair treatment. Two levels of efficacy are considered here: (a) individual efficacy—the perception that the individual can change things, and (b) group efficacy—the perception that a group with which the individual is affiliated can change things. This paper shows that as the conditions of the working class improved, they began expressing their own recreational needs and visions of park designs.

### *Spillover and Compensatory Theories of Leisure Behavior*

Finally, this paper examines the differences between middle class and working class leisure behavior. The parks became the socially-constructed spaces in and around which these conflicts were aired. The tensions around leisure space brought to the fore two distinct and conflicting definitions and perceptions of the park. While the middle class emphasized passive leisure pursuits, cultural improvement and refined manners, the working class sought active, outdoor recreation, fun, and games (Rosenzweig, 1987; Jackson, 1972). Though the park designers, planners and middle class park users were not sympathetic to the way the working class related to parks, working class park behavior was not difficult to understand. Two leisure theories, the compensatory theory and spillover theory, help to explain working class behavior. The compensatory theory of leisure explains the behavior of some workers. According to this theory, work is the dominant force in a person's life and leisure compensates for the rigors, monotony, and brutality of the job. Therefore, excessive drinking, exuberant park play, demonstration of power, and loud, rowdy behavior is the opposite of the routinized danger and boredom of the job (Engels, 1892; Wilensky, 1960; Burch, 1969; Bammel & Bammel, 1996). The spillover theory of leisure explains the behavior of workers as well. It argues that the alienation the worker experiences in the workplace extends itself to all aspects of his or her life. The boredom, mental

stupor and fatigue that characterizes work also characterizes leisure. Therefore the worker has a tendency to engage in activities that numb the senses and blur his or her mental judgements (Bammel & Bammel, 1996; Wilensky, 1960).

### Class, Cultural Nationalism and Park Advocacy

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, urban elites began lobbying for the establishment of parks in American cities. Influenced by the urban parks of Europe, their desires to beautify American cities and guide the cultural enlightenment of its citizens, they worked tirelessly to design, build and manage these parks. Urban park advocates were also concerned with improving environmental conditions for themselves, and they believed they had to improve living and working conditions and the lives of the working class in order to achieve this goal. Thus, by "civilizing" the masses, there were fewer assaults on middle class sensibilities. In addition to the perceived threat of eroding moral standards, culture and levels of civility, there were real health threats (from infectious diseases) to urban dwellers. The middle class, therefore, sought to enhance their life chances by improving the health conditions for the working class.

The urban park advocates subscribed to the cultural nationalistic sentiments that swept through elite circles. However, they responded to cultural nationalism<sup>1</sup> and prevailing anti-urban sentiments not by embarking on a quest to find Romantic,<sup>2</sup> Transcendental<sup>3</sup> experiences in the rugged, untamed wilderness, but by finding upliftment, delight and contemplation in the creation of "pastoral" and "rural" (manicured and highly-controlled) landscapes that they created in urban settings. Supporting, building and maintaining parks emerged as an important form of cultural nationalistic expression among urban elites. For instance, Richard Morris Hunt who saw the park as a repository for the artistic expression of "great national ideas,"

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<sup>1</sup>The notion that the vast wilderness, the rugged, immense mountains, natural features like the giant Sequoias, Yosemite, Yellowstone, Niagara Falls were unique features that helped to shape a new American identity. Rather than focusing on the negative characteristics of wilderness and continuing the quest to find European replicas in the American landscape, the elite began reveling in the landscape features that had no European counterpart (see Nash, 1982).

<sup>2</sup>Romanticism connotes an enthusiasm for the strange, remote, solitary and mysterious. As it relates to nature, Romantics prefer wild, untamed places like the American wilderness where they could express their freedom. They disdain tamed and manicured landscapes (Lovejoy, 1955; Nash, 1982).

<sup>3</sup>Transcendentalism refers to a set of beliefs regarding the relationship between humans, nature and God. American Transcendentalists believed in the existence of a reality or truths beyond the physical. Transcendentalists argue that there is parallel between the higher realm of spiritual truths and the lower one of material objects. Natural objects are important because they reflect universal spiritual truths. People's place in the universe was divided between object and essence. Their physical existence rooted them in the material portion while their soul gave them the ability to transcend their physical conditions. For Transcendentalists, the wilderness was the place where spiritual truths were most pronounced (Emerson, 1883; Thoreau, 1893; Paul, 1952; Nash, 1982).

(Hunt, 1866) and Clarence Cook (1854: 247-248) declared that a park in Manhattan would

Convert the central part of the island on which New-York is built into a pleasure ground, around which will spring up terraces, villas, and blocks of dwelling houses excelling in beauty and magnificence any we can boast of in the New World, and giving new ideas of the beneficent principle of democracy, which permits the mind to expand to its utmost possibilities.

Furthermore, others believed that the Central Park along with the other cultural institutions of the city would create in New York the "national, liberal and cosmopolitan spirit that is generated only by one acknowledged central city of a great country" (Schuyler, 1986: 80).

Like the preservationists and conservationists of the time, the middle class, urban park supporters were strongly influenced by European notions and standards of art, nature and beauty. These advocates were part of the intelligentsia that belonged to organizations such as the Union Defense Committee, the Park and Outdoor Art Association, and the American Social Science Association; elite social clubs comprised of judges, bankers, doctors, merchants, attorneys, art collectors, etc. The Romantic influence is not surprising since the leading landscape architects of the 1850s-1880s were schooled in the European tradition. In addition, the landscape architects were influenced by the Hudson River School painters (ardent cultural nationalists) and the Romanticism preached by Emerson. Both Downing (who grew up among the Hudson River painters in Newburg), and Vaux, who also lived in Newburg and married the sister of a Hudson River School painter were influenced by this school of art. Olmsted, the other leading landscape architect, had less contact with the Hudson River School but was influenced by Emerson. Young Olmsted grew up listening to George Perkins Marsh and Ralph Waldo Emerson lecturing at the Young Men's Institute in Hartford, Connecticut, his hometown. When he was a teenager, he was introduced to Emerson and Ruskin's works by Elizabeth Baldwin, a young woman he was enamored with (Roper, 1973; Cranz, 1982).<sup>4</sup> While living on Staten Island, Olmsted was a neighbor and legal client of William Emerson, Ralph Waldo Emerson's older brother (Roper, 1973; Cranz, 1982; Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997). Later in life, Olmsted was elected to the Saturday Club in Boston; Emerson, Agassiz, Lowell, Prescott, Hawthorne, and Longfellow, were among the luminaries active in the club in the mid 1800s (Roper, 1973; Turner, 1985; Wille, 1972).<sup>5</sup>

Despite having interlocking social networks, the urban park advocates conformed closely to European notions of Romanticism *a la* Rousseau or Wordsworth than Romantics like Muir who became wilderness advocates. To the American Romantics who remained in the city, "wild" meant the pastoral and manicured settings of large urban parks. Like Rousseau, they believed

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<sup>4</sup>Olmsted claimed these works had a profound impact on his life.

<sup>5</sup>Olmsted was elected to the Club in 1883, the year after Emerson's death.

in the idea that the lives of the working poor in the cities would be vastly improved if they could experience pastoral beauty and rural bliss (Blodgett, 1976; Nash, 1982; *Second Annual Report*, 1859; Cranz, 1982). Emerson, a disciple of Rousseau, conceptualized wild, wilderness and human nature relations in a way that was closer to Rousseau and the European interpretation, than the second generation of American Romantics and Transcendentalists like Muir (Nash, 1982). The urban park advocates, with their emphasis on rural recreation in the city, adopted a more Emersonian view of wildness and rural beauty than leading Romantics and Transcendentalists. As part of the social construction of urban parks, landscape architects adopted a muted form of Transcendentalism which I will refer to as pastoral Transcendentalism to distinguish it from the more "purist" form of wilderness Transcendentalism practiced by Muir and his followers. Pastoral Transcendentalism attributed virtues to natural things like trees, meadows, and brooks that could be replicated in urban park like settings, thereby justifying the need for parks and laying the foundation for park design theory (see also Cranz, 1982).

### The Social Construction of Urban Parks

One of the major urban environmental concerns was the development of urban parks and open spaces. As early as 1785, a park advocate writing under the pseudonym "Veritas" suggested that the Battery and the Fields (New York) be reclaimed and turned into a public park (Roper, 1973; Chadwick, 1966). As the social construction of the urban park evolved, elite ideology regarding these parks converged on a range of functions and meanings. Urban parks were not construed as benign plots of land in the city; they were accorded special significance, and imbued with special values and virtues. Consequently, the parks were thought to serve the following functions:

- (a) Social control
  - i. Moral upliftment
  - ii. Improved civility
  - iii. Socialization into middle class norms and values, cultivate tastes
  - iv. "Tranquilizing" recreation
  - v. Public education
  - vi. Freedom
  - vii. Reduce anomie
  - viii. Induce better attitudes towards work, produce more efficient workers
- (b) Cultural enlightenment—exposure to beauty, pastoral settings
- (c) Improve health
- (d) Ease overcrowding—literally provide a breathing space in congested cities
- (e) Act as urban resorts for people with no access to the countryside
- (f) The Commons—the social nerve-center of the city
- (g) Structure the plan and growth of the city

- (h) Protect the urban water supply
- (i) Increase property values
- (j) Mute class conflicts.
- (k) Repositories for works of art.

As these ideas were propagated in elite circles, by 1811, city park advocates trying to acquire public park lands used the above arguments to rationalize, gain support for park projects and allay the fears of their social contemporaries (Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997; Beveridge & Schuyler, 1983; Peterson, 1967; Blodgett, 1976; Cranz, 1982). For example, in 1818 Andrew Jackson Downing, renowned landscape architect and horticulturalist, wrote "You may take my word for it, [the parks] will be better preachers of temperance than temperance societies, better refiners of national manners than dancing schools and better promoters of general good feeling than any lectures on the philosophy of happiness." Olmsted and other park advocates also believed in the restorative and calming powers of parks, and in their ability to help the classes bond, thereby, reducing their antagonisms towards each other. Olmsted thought the parks would "inspire communal feelings among all urban classes, muting resentments over disparities of wealth and fashion." The park's scenery would "more directly assist the poor and degraded to elevate themselves," calm the "rough element of the society," "divert men from unwholesome, vicious, destructive methods and habits of seeking recreation," and counter "a particularly hard sort of selfishness" and anomie prevalent in the cities. Gregarious recreation, the coming together of thousands of people of various walks of life in the parks, was the remedy for the anomie, alienation and hard selfishness of urban life (Peterson, 1967; Blodgett, 1976; Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997; Olmsted & Vaux, 1868a; Olmsted, 1853). As early as 1853 Olmsted urged his friend Charles Loring Brace to "Go ahead with the Children's Aid [Society] and get up parks, gardens, music, dancing, schools, reunions, which will be so attractive as to force into contact the good & bad, the gentlemanly and the rowdy." Other park elites echoed Olmsted's words. For instance, Stephen Duncan Walker, a Baltimore clergyman, saw the parks as "A commonwealth, a kind of democracy, where the poor, the rich, the mechanic, the merchant and the man of letters, mingle on a footing of perfect equality (Schuyler, 1986). Furthermore, Walker described the park as a place

Where the rough corners of the character became smoothed by the attractions of genteel intercourse, by the communications that such places afford; multiple influences insensibly steal over the heart of the most pure and desirable character, and while the sight is gratified by an exhibition of what is beautiful in nature and art, the taste improves, the mind becomes buoyant, the manners chastened by viewing what is pleasing, refined, cultivated and appreciable in the more active graces of life (cf. Schuyler, 1986: 65).

Throughout his life, Olmsted promoted parks as places where the classes mixed and inequalities erased. In a talk given to the American Social Science Association, Olmsted (1870a) declared:

Consider that the New York Park [Central Park] and the Brooklyn Park [Prospect Park] are the only places in these associated cities where . . . you will find a body of Christians coming together, and with an evident glee in the prospect of coming together, all classes largely represented, with a common purpose, not at all intellectual, competitive with none, disposing to jealousy and spiritual or intellectual pride toward none, each individual adding by his mere presence to the pleasure of all others, all helping to the greater happiness of each. You may thus often see vast numbers of persons brought closely together, poor and rich, young and old, Jew and Gentile. I have seen a hundred thousand thus congregated”

These arguments convinced the politicians and other urban elites to support park building. For example, Charles Sargent (1894: 221), editor of *Garden and Forest*, wrote about the calming powers of parks. He said:

No mere playground can serve the purpose of recreation in this truer, broader sense—the purpose of refreshment, of renewal of life and strength for body and soul alike. The truest value of public pleasure grounds for large cities is in the rest they give to eyes and mind, to heart and soul, through the soothing charm, the fresh and inspiring influence, the impersonal, unexciting pleasure which nothing but the works of Nature can offer to man.

These arguments were still persuasive in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. For example the *San Francisco Call* (1912: 5) published this excerpt on the Spreckels Lake Yacht Club in Golden Gate Park.

In the common week-a-day life the commodore is the capitalist and the sailor is a ‘gas Man’ . . . But when these two men . . . meet on Sunday on the shore of Spreckels Lake with their boats tucked under their arms ready for action, they come together as two swaggering boys. There is no pride of ancestry or joy in being a millionaire nor misery in having to serve.

A variety of techniques were employed to see that the parks served these functions. The result was the criminalization of many forms of working class behaviors and increased class conflicts. From the outset, urban environmentalist came head-to-head with working class styles, values, needs, and capabilities, and government politics. The middle and working classes met in city parks; it was the only space in many cities where both classes met and mingled (even in a limited way) outside of the workplace. Despite pronouncements of park elites to the contrary, these encounters were awkward and sometimes hostile. Consequently, this led the middle class to establish rules of behavior and decorum, thus setting the stage for greater confrontations and rebellion. Middle class interference with working class park use fueled discontent among workers and helped stimulate working class environmentalism and political resistance. Some of the earliest and most sustained forms of working class environmental activism came over the issue of park use and contrasting behavioral styles (Rosenzweig, 1987; Peiss, 1986). These conflicts were heightened somewhat because many of the park building projects were huge public works projects conceptualized and managed by the middle class elites and built with working class labor. Though Olmsted had a crew as large

as 4,000 working on Central Park, this figure is dwarfed by the 80,000 laborers and 1,800 professionals that Robert Moses employed in 1934 to complete the New York park system (Beveridge & Schuyler, 1983; McLaughlin & Beveridge, 1977; Olmsted, 1860f, 1873c; Chadwick, 1966; Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997).

As late as 1857 not a single city in the U.S. had a major, completed park. Anyone wanting to experience pastoral landscapes had to go the countryside, the town square, commons, or the cemetery. As the first planned open spaces close to urban centers, cemeteries like Mount Auburn (outside Boston), Laurel Hill in Philadelphia and Greenwood near New York were enormously popular. For instance, two thousand people attended the opening ceremonies for Mount Auburn, and soon after its opening in 1831, the roads leading to the cemetery were often lined with coaches. The horticultural society that managed the cemetery had to limit access to it. Pedestrians were admitted, but horseback riders and coaches (except those of lot proprietors) were denied access. The Sunday crowds grew so large that only proprietors, their families and guests were admitted on that day. Laurel Hill Cemetery was also popular. Almost thirty thousand people visited it between April and December 1848 (Schuyler, 1986).

Noting the popularity of the rural cemeteries and the general lack of open space in the cities, park advocates like the poet, William Cullen Bryant and landscape architect, Andrew Jackson Downing stepped up their efforts to get cities to build public parks in the 1840s. About the same time, Americans traveling to Europe began advocating the construction of public parks in America. For example, Catharine Maria Sedgwick wrote that she found it impossible to "Enter the London parks without regretting the folly (call it not cupidity) of our people, who, when they had a whole continent at their disposal, have left such narrow spaces for what has so well been called the "lungs of the city" (Sedgwick, 1841: 53-54). Bryant's trip to England also influenced his campaigns for parks. He promoted the idea of a planned park system in New York. He began his campaign in 1844 and intensified it a year later while visiting the public parks of London. He was an ardent supporter of Central Park. Influenced by Londoners who saw their parks as the lungs of the city, Bryant, like Sedgwick, used this metaphor to describe the potential role of American parks (D'Innocenzo, 1983; Chadwick, 1966; Schuyler, 1986).<sup>6</sup> Bryant argued that it was a "Cause of regret that in laying out New York, no preparation was made, while it was yet practicable, for a range of parks and public gardens along the central part of the island." He urged the city's leaders to create parklands immediately, as "The advancing population of the city is sweeping over them [the available land] and covering them from our reach" (Bryant, 1844). Other prominent Americans traveling in Europe like Olmsted, S. D., Walker, J. O., Choules, and Caroline Kirkland,

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<sup>6</sup>Bryant was a friend of Olmsted. He was very supportive of Olmsted's appointment and tenure at Central Park (Chadwick, 1966).

were quite taken by the public parks and urged Americans to develop such parks. Caroline Kirkland had a similar reaction to Sedgwick. Kirkland wrote,

Nothing we saw in London made our own dear city of New York seem so poor in comparison as these parks . . . After seeing these oases in the wilderness of streets, one can never be content with the scanty patches of verdure . . . that [in New York] form the only places of afternoon recreation for the weary, the sad, the invalid, the playful. (Kirkland, 1849: 93-94)

Back in America, Walt Whitman then editor of the *Eagle*, also campaigned for parks. He led the campaign to create a park in the working class section of Brooklyn. The campaign led to the choice of the Fort Greene site for a park. Other luminaries like Henry David Thoreau also called for public parks. Thoreau urged each community to set aside "a park or primitive forest" as a way of keeping "the New World new [and] preserve all the advantages of living in the country" (Schuyler, 1986). But it was Downing who emerged as the most prominent park advocate of the period. Blending the arguments and goals of the sanitary reform movement and the emerging park movement, he became one of the first people to articulate a comprehensive vision for American urban parks. He, like Bryant, was an ardent admirer of European public parks and one of the most influential designers of urban landscapes. Between 1848 and 1851, Downing published editorials and articles calling for public parks modeled after those in Europe (Roper, 1973; Bryant, 1844; Downing, 1948; Beveridge & Schuyler, 1983). Downing was an ardent believer in the idea that parks were a valuable source of cultural enlightenment. In an 1851 essay he wrote:

The higher social and artistic elements of every man's nature lie dormant within him, and every laborer is a possible gentleman, not by the possession of money or fine clothes, but through the refining influence of intellectual and moral culture. Open wide, therefore, the door of your libraries and picture galleries, all ye true republicans! Build halls where knowledge shall be freely diffused among men, and not shut up within the narrow walls of narrower institutions. Plant spacious parks in your cities, and unloose their gates as wide as the gates of morning to the whole people . . . not only common schools of rudimentary knowledge, but common enjoyments for all classes in the higher realms of art, letters, science, social recreations, and enjoyments. (pp. 348-349)

He pointed to the popularity of cemeteries like Mount Auburn, Greenwood, Laurel Hill, Spring Grove in Cincinnati, and Graceland in Chicago and argued that public gardens should also be provided in cities. In 1833, a year after a cholera epidemic swept the country and two years after Mount Auburn opened, S. D. Walker encouraged cities to create open spaces within their limits to provide places of "healthy recreation." He urged the establishment of rural cemeteries as the most efficient way of getting a "public walk" (Schuyler, 1986). Downing was influenced by the design of rural cemeteries and the way they were funded. He suggested that cities could fund parks by copying the cemetery model, that is, form joint stock companies to finance park building efforts in various cities. The parks would then be open

to the carriages of share holders and non-share holders who paid a small entrance fee. According to Downing, such a scheme would pay for park construction and provide surplus funds for cities (Schuyler, 1986; Chadwick, 1966). He stated that, "Such a project, carefully planned and liberally and judiciously carried out, would not only pay, in money, but largely civilize and refine the national character" (Chadwick, 1966: 181). Some park advocates did not support Downing's idea of charging entry fees to the park. They contended that "the park is a priceless boon to the weak and invalid of all classes, but particularly to the poor." Free admission was also a way of demonstrating that parks were democratic and welcoming to all classes (Cranz, 1982; San Francisco Park Commission, 1897). In this vein, the *San Francisco Bulletin* (1900) proclaimed:

The man with a small purse and a large family should be made to feel that he has an equal interest with his richer neighbor in this one spot on earth's surface. This equality can only be assured by demonetizing money at the entrance to the park. The procession of fine turnouts and of fashionably dressed pedestrians does not inspire a sense of inequality so long as appeals are not made for expenditures which the poor man cannot afford.

Downing also suggested that cities should acquire parkland by asking rich individuals to donate land; their generosity should be commemorated in the parks with inscribed statues or marble vases. An article in *Park International* (1920: 48) quoted Downing as saying,

. . . Make it praiseworthy and laudable for wealthy men to make bequests of land . . . for this public enjoyment, and commemorate the public spirit of such men by a statue or a beautiful marble vase, with an inscription, telling all succeeding generations to whom they are indebted for the beauty and enjoyment that constitutes the chief attraction of the town.

Downing was not alone in calling for the private financing of parks. For example, the San Francisco park commissioners sought private donations of land when they wanted to extend Golden Gate Park to the Presidio on the northern shore of the peninsula. Park contributors included some of the city's most prominent families: Ghirardelli, Lick, Alvord, Hotaling, Crocker, Spreckels, Standford, Kezar, Fleishacker, Stern, Sharon, de Young, Phelan, Hearst, Sweeney, Sutro, and Haas (Cranz, 1982). Recognizing that such funding schemes could exacerbate inequalities and limit access to urban parks, Olmsted opposed the private financing of parks. Olmsted declared:

The enjoyment of the choicest natural scenes in the country and the means of recreation connected with them is thus a monopoly, in a very peculiar manner, of a very few, very rich people. The great mass of society, including those to whom it would be of the greatest benefit, is excluded from it . . . private parks can never be used by the mass of the people in any country nor by any considerable number even of the rich, except by the favor of a few, and in dependence on them. . . The establishment by government of great public grounds for the free enjoyment of the people under certain circumstances, is thus justified as a political duty. (Olmsted, 1865)

Thus, Olmsted preferred municipalities to fund their parks through public spending rather than relying on the whims of private benefactors (Cranz, 1982). Indeed, working people in cities like Baltimore funded their parks through a "park tax" derived from charging an extra penny to ride the street car. Modeled after the Central Park Improvement Fund, the park tax revenues were put in a "Public Park Stock" that was used to purchase and develop park sites. However, despite his opposition to private financing of parks, Olmsted and Vaux did plan Seaside Park in Bridgeport, Connecticut. The land for this park was donated by P. T. Barnum (circus entrepreneur) and Nathaniel Wheeler (a manufacturer and inventor). Olmsted also worked on Beardsley Park in Bridgeport. That park was a gift from James Walker Beardsley (Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997; Waldo, 1917; Department of Parks, 1873; City of Bridgeport, 1884; Schuyler, 1986).

In 1848 Downing started lobbying for a public park in New York City. Believing that parks were works of art, he argued that a properly planned and managed public park would have a civilizing and refining influence on the inhabitants of the city. Initially business elites opposed municipal spending on parks, fearing that such a scheme would remove valuable real estate from the market. However, Downing's articles, which appeared in many leading newspapers, were quite influential. Shortly before he died the city began the process of acquiring a tract of land on the East River for a public park. Some of the land speculators, originally opposed to the idea of a park, became ardent park advocates. They bought land in the vicinity of where they thought the parks would be established and reaped huge profits from the increased price of the land adjacent to parks. Downing's most influential works were the Washington Mall, the White House and Smithsonian grounds (Beveridge & Schuyler, 1983; Chadwick, 1966; Cran, 1982; Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997). In designing the Mall in Washington, D.C., Downing wrote that he wanted the area between the White House and Capitol Hill to be an "Extended landscape garden, to be traversed in different directions by graveled walks and carriage drives, and planted with specimens, properly labeled, of all the varieties of trees and shrubs which will flourish in this climate" (Downing, 1848). Downing's articles in the *Horticulturalist* and the *Journal of Rural Art and Rural Taste* influenced both Vaux and Olmsted—two men who would go on to become the most influential landscape architects this country has ever known. Downing published one of Olmsted's early essays "The People's Park at Birkenhead, Near Liverpool," in 1851 in the *Horticulturalist* as part of the campaign to develop parks in America. Olmsted believed Downing's ideas that parks were an anchor that encouraged the masses to appreciate landscape architecture and art. Parks were also a mechanism to improve the level of civilization in America (Olmsted, 1870a). Olmsted was quite taken by this view even before he met Vaux.

Calvert Vaux and Frederick Law Olmsted would carry on Downing's tradition. They shared Downing's conviction that parks were works of art and that art could play a significant role in helping American society reach a higher level of civilization. Like Downing, they strongly believed that parks could bring rural recreation to city residents with no access to the country-

side. Vaux continued Downing's work by lobbying for the construction of Central Park and for holding a design competition for the park. Once the competition was announced, he convinced Olmsted, the newly-appointed superintendent of the park, to join forces with him to submit a plan. The Vaux-Olmsted Greensward Plan won. In 1865, after years of collaborating together on various projects, Olmsted and Vaux formed an architectural firm. Their company was responsible for designing several of the nation's most impressive urban parks (see Table 1). In addition they designed several college campuses, hospital grounds and private estates (Beveridge & Schuyler, 1983; Chadwick, 1966).

### Creating Central Park

#### *Rural Scenery, Pastoral Transcendentalism and Tranquilizing Recreation*

Olmsted was steeped in the European park building tradition. He got early and frequent exposure to European parks and gardens from (a) the prints his father kept around their Connecticut home and (b) the tours the family took every summer. He also traveled and studied in Europe in the 1850s (Beveridge & Schuyler, 1983; Chadwick, 1966). From a very early age, Olmsted believed that scenery, nature and parks put one in a contemplative mood—a state of mind he found highly desirable. Throughout his career he sought to foster or induce that state of mind through the designs of his park. In an 1893 letter he wrote,

The root of all my good work is an early respect for, regard and enjoyment of scenery . . . and extraordinary opportunities of cultivating susceptibility to the power of scenery. Not so much grand or sensational scenery as scenery of a more domestic order. Scenery to be looked upon contemplatively and which is provocative of musing moods. I think that I was largely educated for my profession by the enjoyment of which my father and mother took in loitering journeys; in afternoon drives on the Connecticut meadows.

While in Yosemite Olmsted reflected on the natural scenery as a way of counteracting what he considered to be the "severe and excessive exercise of the mind" (Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997; Ranney, Rauluk & Hoffman, 1990). He wrote:

The power of scenery to affect men is in a large way, proportionate to the degree of their civilization and to the degree in which their taste has been cultivated . . . The whole body of the susceptibilities of civilized men and with their susceptibilities their powers, are on the whole enlarged. But as with the bodily powers, if one group of muscles is developed by exercise exclusively, and all others neglected, the result is general feebleness, so it is with the mental faculties. And men who exercise those faculties or susceptibilities of the mind which are called in play by beautiful scenery so little that they seem to be inert with them, are either in a diseased condition from excessive devotion of the mind to a limited range of interests, or their whole minds are in a savage state; that is, a state of low development . . . But there is a special reason why the reinvigoration of those parts which are stirred into conscious activity by natural scenery is more effective upon the general development and health than that

**TABLE 1**  
*Parks and Public Grounds Designed by Olmsted, Downing, Vaux.*

Park, Grounds	Location	Years
<b>Downing (with Vaux)</b>		
Washington Mall	Washington, D. C.	1851
White House grounds	Washington, D.C.	1851
Smithsonian	Washington, D.C.	1851
<b>Olmsted, Vaux (while employed by the New York Park Department)</b>		
Central Park	Manhattan	1858-1861
Lay out streets of Manhattan above 155 <sup>th</sup>	Manhattan	1860
Hartford Retreat for the Insane	Hartford, Connecticut	1861
Bloomington Asylum	New York City	1861
Hillside Cemetery	Middletown, New York	1861
Riverside Park and Avenue	New York	1873
<b>Olmsted, Vaux &amp; Company (1865-1872)</b>		
Morningside Park (preliminary plan)	Manhattan, New York	1865, 1873
Prospect Park	Brooklyn, New York	1865
Fort Greene Park (Washington Park, 1847)	Brooklyn, New York	1867
Eastern Parkway	Brooklyn, New York	1867
Carroll Park	Brooklyn, New York	1867
Tompkins Square (designated 1839)	Brooklyn, New York	1867
Newark Parks (preliminary plan)	Newark, New Jersey	1867
Fairmount Park (preliminary plan)	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	1867
Seaside Park	Bridgeport, Connecticut	1867
Washington Park	Albany, New York	1868
Delaware Park	Buffalo, New York	1868
Front	Buffalo, New York	1868
Parade	Buffalo, New York	1868
Suburban village of Riverside	Near Chicago, Illinois	1868
Tarrytown Heights Plan	Tarrytown, New York	1870, 1872
Walnut Hill Park (preliminary plan, 1867)	New Britain, Connecticut	1870
South Park	Fall River, Massachusetts	1870
Springfield Parks	Springfield, Massachusetts	1870
Staten Island	Staten Island, New York	1871
Hartford parks (preliminary plan)	Hartford, Connecticut	1871
Chicago South Parks	Chicago, Illinois	1871
Union Square (suggested improvements)	New York City, New York	1872
Morningside Park	Manhattan, New York	1887
Galludet University campus	Washington D.C.	1866
Yale College Memorial Chapel (rejected)	New Haven, Connecticut	1866
Yale College (dormitory)	New Haven, Connecticut	1867
Harvard College—North Yard	Cambridge, Massachusetts	1867
Cornell University (preliminary plan)	Ithaca, New York	1867
State Agricultural College (plan rejected)	Massachusetts	1867
State Agricultural College (plan rejected)	Maine	1867
Amherst College (expansion and grounds)	Amherst, Massachusetts	1870
Trinity College (preliminary plan)	Hartford, Connecticut	1871

*Table 1*  
(Continued)

Park, Grounds	Location	Years
Hudson River State Hospital for Insane	Poughkeepsie, New York	1867
Buffalo State Hospital for the Insane	Buffalo, New York	1871
Andrew Jackson Downing Memorial	Newburg, New York	1889
<b>Olmsted &amp; Vaux</b> (after the partnership dissolved)		
Niagara Falls	Niagara Falls, New York	1887
<b>Vaux</b>		1872-1877
American Museum of Natural History	New York	
Metropolitan Museum of Art	New York	
Jefferson Market Courthouse		
Children's Aid Society homes		
<b>Olmsted</b>		
Mountain View Cemetery	Oakland, California	1864
San Francisco pleasure grounds (rejected)	San Francisco, California	1865
Col. of Calif. (Berkeley)—(Plan rejected)		1865-1866
Berkeley, California		
Layout of Tacoma (Plan later rejected)	Tacoma, Washington	1873
McLean Asylum of Mass. General Hospital	Massachusetts	1873
U.S. Capitol grounds	Washington, D.C.	1874
Hartford Capitol	Hartford, Connecticut	1875
Mount Royal Park	Montreal, Canada	1876
Albany Capitol grounds	Albany, New York	1878
Back Bay Fens	Boston, Massachusetts	1878
Beardsley Park	Bridgeport, Connecticut	1881
Belle Isle/Detroit parks	Detroit, Michigan	1883
Franklin Park	Boston, Massachusetts	1884
Wood Island Park	Boston, Massachusetts	1884
Stanford University campus	Stanford, California	1886
Minneapolis park plan	Minneapolis, Minnesota	1886
Rochester parks	Rochester, New York	1888
Louville parks	Louisville, Kentucky	1888
Boston park system	Boston, Massachusetts	1888
South Park	Buffalo, New York	1888
Perry Park community	South of Denver, Colorado	1890s
World's Columbian Exposition	Chicago, Illinois	1890
Hartford parks	Hartford, Connecticut	1895
<b>Olmsted &amp; Henry Hobson Richardson</b>		
Buffalo State Hospital	Buffalo, New York	1871
Niagara Square	Buffalo, New York	1874
Boston Parks' Agassiz Bridge—the Fenway	Boston	1880s
<b>Olmsted &amp; Charles Sprague Sargent</b>		
Arnold Arboretum	Boston	1878

Compiled from: Beveridge & Schuyler, 1983; Ranney, Rauluk & Hoffman, 1990; Schuyler & Censer, 1992; Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997; Roper, 1973.

of any other which is this: The severe and excessive exercise of the mind which leads to the greatest fatigue and is the most wearing upon the whole constitution is almost entirely caused by the application of the removal of something to be apprehended in the future. . . . In the interest which natural scenery inspires there is the strongest contrast to this. It is for itself and at the moment it is enjoyed. The attention is aroused and the mind occupied without purpose, without a continuation of the common process of relating the present action, thought or perception to some future end. There is little else that has this quality so purely. There are few enjoyments with which regard for something outside and beyond the enjoyment of the moment can ordinarily be so little mixed. . . . It therefore results that the enjoyment of scenery employs the mind without fatigue and yet exercises it, tranquilizes it and yet enlivens it; and thus, through the influence of the mind over the body, gives the effect of refreshing rest and reinigorating to the whole system. (Olmsted, 1865)

Olmsted sought to use subtle designs in his parks to create this mood. These efforts were belittled by wilderness enthusiasts like Muir, who found such scenery tame compared to the grand sensational scenery of the wilderness. However, it was not Olmsted's intent to recreate the grand and sensational scenery. Instead he intended to use the subtlety of domestic arrangements to stimulate the unconscious, and elevate people to a higher plane of thought, i.e., help the park visitor to forget their mundane concerns and clear the way to explore other thoughts and feelings.

Olmsted wanted to include pastoral scenery in the parks he built. Consequently, he built them with broad stretches of gently rolling greensward edged by irregular borders of trees and shrubs creating a sense of space and distance. This technique was used to induce a sense of unconscious or indirect recreation—a way in which the recreationer is absorbed in the park experience without being fully conscious of the process by which it occurs. Olmsted also referred to this as “tranquilizing” recreation (Olmsted, 1865; 1882; Olmsted, Vaux, & Company, 1866; Beveridge, 1977; Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997). In writing about the “unconscious influence” of nature and the way it affected him in the past, Olmsted (1882: 517) wrote,

Dame Nature is a gentlewoman. No guide's fee will obtain you her favour, no abrupt demand; hardly will she bear questioning, or direct, curious gazing at her beauty; least of all, will she reveal it truly to the hurried glance of the passing traveler . . . always we must quietly and unimpatiently wait upon it. Gradually and silently the charm covers over us; the beauty has entered our souls; we know not exactly when or how, but going away we remember it with a tender, subdued, filial-like joy.

Olmsted recognized that the demands of urban life left people with the need to unwind, to stimulate the brain in ways that compensated for work-related stress, however, he did not favor recreation that would lead to overstimulation. He drew on Aesop's life story to help him make his point. He thought that the “unbending of the faculties” was an important exercise. Olmsted applied the following passage from Aesop:

The mind of man is not formed for unremitted attention, nor his body for uninterrupted labour; and both are in this respect like a bow. We cannot go

through any business requiring intense thought, without unbending the mind, any more than we can perform a long journey without refreshing ourselves by due rest at "several stages of it. Continual labour, as in the case of the bended bow, destroys the elasticity and energy of both body and mind. It is therefore, absolutely necessary for the studious man to unbend, and the laborious one to take his rest, these extremes, that pastimes aren't diversions ought to be kept up, provided they are innocent. The heart that never tastes of pleasure, shuts up, grown stiff, and is at last incapable of enjoyment. (cf. Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997: 107-108)

Olmsted and Vaux expound on the theme that gentle exercise relieved the brain in their description of pastoral scenery in Prospect Park. They wrote:

Civilized men, while they are gaining ground against certain acute forms of disease, are growing more and more subject to other more insidious enemies to their health and happiness, and against these the remedy and preventive cannot be found in medicine or in athletic recreation but only in sunlight and such forms of gentle exercise as are calculated to equalize the circulation and relieve the brain. (Olmsted, Vaux & Company, 1868b)

Olmsted and Vaux also wanted to build picturesque parks and were largely responsible for the spread of picturesque landscapes in America. Rejecting the symmetrical, geometric designs of European gardens like Versailles that were laid out in the gardenesque style (i.e., dominated by floral arrangements and specimen plantings), they opted to contrast wilderness vistas with more subtle arrangements to express their vision of the picturesque (Cranz, 1982; Downing, 1848; Olmsted, 1859b, 1865; 1870a; Olmsted & Vaux, 1866, 1868b; Schuyler & Censer, 1992). Commenting on the application of gardenesque techniques that he saw in England, Olmsted wrote:

During the last 20 years Europe has been swept by a mania for sacrificing natural scenery to coarse manufactures of brilliant and gaudy decoration under the name of specimen gardening; bedding, carpet, embroidery, and ribbon gardening, or other terms suitable to the house furnishing and millinery trades." (cf. Schuyler & Censer, 1992: 424)

Drawing on Romantic and Transcendental beliefs that wilderness provided the sharpest contrast with civilization, Olmsted and Vaux sought to work with wilderness themes. However, recognizing that pure wilderness would be very difficult to recreate in an urban environment, they opted for a compromise—pastoral Transcendentalism (that is, creating rural and pastoral landscapes instead). Such composition combined densely planted native foliage with a manicured look (Cranz, 1982; Downing, 1848; Olmsted, 1865, 1870a; Olmsted & Vaux, 1866; 1868b). This compromise is seen in Olmsted and Vaux's discussions of Prospect Park. They write,

Although we cannot have wild mountain gorges, for instance, on the park, we may have rugged ravines shaded with trees, and made picturesque with shrubs, the forms and arrangement of which remind us of mountain scenery. We may perhaps even secure some slight approach to the mystery, variety and luxuriance of tropical scenery, by an assemblage of certain forms of vegetation, gay with

flowers, and intricate and mazy with vines and creepers, ferns, rushes and broad-leaved plants. But all we can do in these directions must be confessedly imperfect and suggestive rather than satisfying to the imagination. It must, therefore, be made incidental and strictly subordinate. (Olmsted, Vaux, & Company, 1866)

We therefore abandon all ideas of contrasting the publicity of the city with the privacy of deep woods, mountains, lakes, and rocky fastnesses, and accept another ideal altogether, that of pastoral rural life, as the most valuable and universally available one, for the purpose we have in view. (Olmsted, Vaux, & Company, 1870a: 58)

While in Yosemite, Olmsted described the pastoral Transcendentalism he experienced and the images that would influence his later landscape designs in the cities<sup>7</sup> (Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997: 47). Olmsted was more fascinated with the scenic valleys and meadows than the dramatic peaks. He preferred the peaks when the detailed features were obscured by fog. These preferences would influence his later works. In accordance with the picturesque theory of landscape design, Olmsted avoided calling attention to individual trees (trees were not labelled; this despite the fact that Downing, who adhered to the gardenesque style, called for labels in order to educate the masses). Native varieties were planted instead of exotic ones, and specimen planting, characteristic of the gardenesque style, were avoided (Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997; Cranz, 1982; Downing, 1848; Olmsted, 1870a; Schuyler, 1986).

Olmsted and Vaux expressed their cultural nationalistic sentiments by campaigning for and building, pastoral parks. They rejected Downing's idea that, like the rural cemeteries, the parks could serve educational, recreational and associational functions. While Downing wanted to use the cemetery model as the template for urban parks, Downing and Vaux took a different path. As the above discussion shows, Downing wanted the parks to serve as the repositories for monuments, statuary, fountains, and buildings commemorating "great men". Olmsted and Vaux thought such associational features and functions would detract from the rural experience they sought to induce in their parks. Downing was aware that the associational features of the cemetery could interfere with contemplative recreation. In fact, Downing commented that the "gala-day air of recreation" in the crowded cemeteries marred the contemplative intent of such places. Olmsted shared Downing's latter sentiment claiming that the cemetery was a "constant resort of mere pleasure seekers, travelers, promenaders, and loungers." Other park advocates shared Downing's vision of the park. For instance, Richard M. Hunt believed the park should be more associational than pastoral. Even the rules of original design competition for Central Park called for an associational park not a pastoral one. However, Olmsted and Vaux boldly strayed

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<sup>7</sup>This is in sharp contrast to the wilderness Transcendentalism described in Muir's Yosemite writings.

from the competition guidelines and held firm to their convictions as they built pastoral parks across the country (Schuyler, 1986).

Olmsted sensing that Central Park, the first major testing grounds for his ideas, would be a significant symbol of American parks. He stated, "It is of great importance as the first real park made in this country—a democratic development of the highest significance & on the success of which, in my opinion, much of the progress of art & esthetic culture in this country is dependent." To keep the park as a unit, he also argued that "The park throughout is a single work of art, and as such, subject to the primary law of every work of art, namely, that it shall be framed upon a single, noble motive, to which the design of all its parts, in some more or less subtle way, shall be confluent and helpful" (Olmsted, 1858).

### *Land Use Conflicts*

Park designers quickly ran into constraints and class conflicts in their attempts to develop the parks. For example, the following issues and constraints had to be addressed in the process of designing and developing the urban parks: (a) land use conflicts, (b) traffic, noise, congestion, (c) large numbers of users, (d) incompatibility of working class and middle class values and behavior, (e) labor relations, (f) city politics, (g) economic conditions, and (h) social lifestyles. Parks like Central Park were not built in uninhabited open space. Often unemployed and working class whites and blacks lived in spaces chosen for these parks. Notwithstanding, these areas were perceived as urban wastelands standing in the way of efforts to "improve" and develop the city. Differing land use perspectives between the middle and working class resulted in poor people being evicted as their communities were cleared to make way for the parks. For example, Downing's (1851: 383) and Rosenzweig and Blackmar, (1992: 59-91) proposal to acquire land for Central Park described the proposed site as, "Five hundred acres . . . between thirty-ninth street and the Harlem River, including a varied surface of land, a good deal of which is waste area, so the whole maybe purchased at something like a million . . . dollars." Eight years later, Olmsted described the Central Park site as follows:

When purchased by the city, the southern portion of the site was already a part of its stragglng suburbs, and a suburb more filthy, squalid and disgusting can hardly be imagined. A considerable number of its inhabitants were engaged in occupations which are nuisances in the eye of the law, and forbidden to be carried on so near the city. They were accordingly followed at night in wretched hovels, half hidden among the rocks, where also heaps of cinders, brick-bats, potsherds, and other rubbish were deposited by those who had occasion to remove them from the city. During the autumn of 1857, three hundred dwellings were removed or demolished by the Commissioners of the Central Park, together with several factories, and numerous "swill-milk" and hog-feeding establishments. . . . Even after the removal of the buildings of all kinds, and the drainage of the pools, the lower park still presented a most confused and unsightly appearance. (*Second Annual Report*, 1859: 59-68). See also Rosenzweig

and Blackmar, (1992: 59-91) for an alternative description of this neighborhood.

However, it should be noted that because of the cost of acquiring parkland, parks were often sited in the cheapest (often most inconvenient) locations. They were located on the outskirts of town, on garbage dumps, abandoned industrial sites, swamps, hilly or rocky terrain, or on land otherwise unsuited for cultivation or other forms of development (Cranz, 1982; Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997). Park advocates also played on city officials' fear when lobbying for parcels of land they wanted converted into parks. They argued that if the land was not used for parks it could "be given up . . . exclusively to shanties, stables, breweries, distilleries, and swine-yards" (Olmsted, Vaux & Company, 1868b).

Landscape architects constantly wrestled with the tensions inherent in building rural, pastoral parks in teeming cities. The park for them was a serene, contemplative, beautiful, space intended to improve the lives of the people, but the city around most of these parks was noisy, bustling, filthy, disease-ridden, and congested. The local people, the most likely users of these parks, were overworked, uneducated, and highly desirous of active recreation. Olmsted and Vaux's Greensward Plan, submitted to the Central Park design competition, resolved the problem of noise and congestion by "planting out" the city from within the park. This feature became characteristic of many of the other parks they designed. They attempted to exclude the sights and sounds of the city by planting a barrier of trees and shrubs along the perimeter of the park. In addition, the long straight sides of the park were obscured, thus making the park appear more extensive than it really was (Greensward, 1858; Olmsted, Vaux, & Company, 1872). According to Olmsted and Vaux, "No one, looking into the closely-grown wood can be certain that at a short distance back there are not glades or streams, or that a more open disposition of trees does not prevail" (Greensward, 1858). Other park advocates also viewed the park as the antithesis of the city, not an extension of it. Cook argued that "We want to forget the city utterly while we are in the Park, and we want to get into it as soon as possible . . . we want to find ourselves, without unnecessary delay, among trees and grass and flowers" (Schuyler, 1986). In later years Olmsted justified this view in his proposal for Boston parks. He argued that:

. . . We want a ground to which people may easily go after their day's work is done, and where they may stroll for an hour, seeing, hearing, and feeling nothing of the bustle and jar of the streets, where they shall, in effect, find the city put far away from them . . . We want, especially, the greatest possible contrast with the restraining and confining conditions of the town, those conditions which compel us to walk circumspectly, watchfully, jealously, which compel us to look closely upon others with sympathy. (Olmsted, 1870a: 13)

Another innovative way landscape architects kept the city from intruding on the park was by submerging all transverse roads as a way of reducing and eliminating the sights and sounds of the city from the park. Such an arrange-

ment did not interfere with the movement of people and the flow of wagons and carts around the park. In addition, a wall or line of heavy planting was used to screen surface transverse traffic from view. Such treatment achieved the "range" and openness that Olmsted and Vaux thought were very important features of landscape design (Beveridge & Schuyler, 1983; Greensward, 1858).

### Central Park and Social Order

Above all else, Olmsted and Vaux, like their mentor Downing, saw parks as important tools of social control.<sup>8</sup> The use of leisure and public recreation space as instruments of social control was not new. The ancient Romans organized recreation events to control urban populations and guard against social unrest (Kelly, 1996). In modern times, as workers sought to control their free time (by advocating the reduction of the work week, seeking predictable blocks of free time, and time away from the factories), the middle class and the employers sought to monitor and control what workers did when they were away from the workplace. Parks were seen as very effective tools of social control. By controlling how, when, and how many parks were provided; the distribution of parks; their size, layout, and management; the middle class could supervise the working class in their non-work hours and attempt to control their behavior. Olmsted, who once described himself as "a moderate drinker, semi profane swearer [and] a Sabbath cracker" who would "gamble if . . . [he] had brains enough," sought to develop the model for and set the precedence of parks functioning as effective agents of social control (Olmsted, 1873b). To this end, Central Park was designed to maximize desired behavior and limit or eliminate undesirable ones. The park was heavily monitored and supervised and "bad" behavior was punished by arrests and fines. Although the park was promoted as one serving all the classes, Central Park and others like it were built to accommodate the interest and desires of the middle class (*Second Annual Report*, 1859; Blodgett, 1976; Downing, 1851; Olmsted, Vaux, & Company, 1867a). The working class and the poor were forced to abide by middle class mores in order to use these parks. Assuming that "a rising tide lifts all boats" park advocates expected the working class to raise their standards of park behavior to match that of the middle class; however, the middle class was not expected to lower their standards to match the working class" (Cranz, 1982). See also Rosenzweig and Blackmar, (1992: 211-237).

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<sup>8</sup>However, by the 1930s, the idea of parks as tools of social control had lost currency. As Robert Moses claims, "We make no absurd claims as to the superior importance and value of the particular service we are called to render, and we realize that budget making is a balancing of comparative needs of competing agencies." Similarly, the president of the American Institute of Park Executives said that park managers should no longer view themselves as their brothers' keepers, because they could hardly hope to effect their salvation." (New York City, Department of parks, 1940; Keyser, 1937; Cranz, 1982).

### *Enforcing Social Order*

Olmsted and Vaux believed in enforcing social order by a variety of means. First, they used indirect and unconscious techniques that were enforced through park design. Olmsted and Vaux had conscious motive for every design and detail included in Central Park. There was a logic and rationale, driven in part by the sentiment described previously, for the inclusion and exclusion of facilities and activities permitted in the parks. In the *Second Annual Report to the Commissioners of Central Park*, "The Motive of the Park," (1859: 59-68) was described as:

The primary purpose of the Park is to provide the best practicable means of healthful recreation for the inhabitants of the city, of all classes. It should present an aspect of spaciousness and tranquility with variety and intimacy of arrangement, thereby affording the most agreeable contrast to the confinement, bustle, and monotonous street-division of the city. The Park should, that is to say, as far as practicable, resemble a charming bit of rural landscape, such as, unless produced by art, is never found within the limits of a large town; always remembering, however, that facilities and inducements for recreation and exercise are to be provided for a concourse of people, and that the object of the scenery to be created is only to further the attainment of this end in the most complete and satisfactory manner. No kind of sport can be permitted which would be inconsistent with the general method of amusement, and no species of exercise which must be enjoyed only by a single class in the community to the diminution of the enjoyment of others. Sports, games and parades, in which comparatively few can take part, will only be admissible in cases where they may be supposed to contribute indirectly to the pleasure of a majority of those visiting the Park. The Park is intended to furnish healthful recreation for the poor and the rich, the young and the old, the vicious and the virtuous, so far as each can partake therein without infringing upon the rights of others, and no further.<sup>9</sup>

Olmsted (1873a) argued further:

The park is not simply a pleasure-ground, that is, a ground to which people may resort to obtain some sort of recreation, but a ground to which people may resort for recreation in certain ways and under certain circumstances *which will be conducive to their better health.*

Olmsted also wanted the parks to be taken seriously both as works of art and as public spaces where people followed prescribed behavior. Consequently, elaborate entrance gates were built in Central Park<sup>10</sup> (and other

<sup>9</sup>The park had cricket grounds and provisions were made for horseback riding and carriages. These activities attracted middle class users. Recreational pursuits such as baseball fields were not provided; such pursuits attracted more working class participants (Brooklyn Park Commissioners, 1871: 37-59; Olmsted, Vaux, & Company, 1867a).

<sup>10</sup>Other landscape architects designed more elaborate gates for other parks than the Central Park entryways. In fact, when a design competition was held in 1863 for the main Central Park entrance, designers drew very elaborate entrances. However, Olmsted, Vaux and their supporters opposed such ornate entrance ways. They thought entryways that were more associational than pastoral would detract from the rest of the park (Schuyler, 1986).

parks also) and details such as the ornamental tile floors in the esplanade were added to give the park an aura of importance. In addition, Central Park's gates were manned by uniformed gate keepers who tracked the flow of visitors (Beveridge & Schuyler, 1983; Cranz, 1982).

Secondly, Olmsted pioneered a form of park management in which independent commissions oversaw the running of the park while landscape architects guided the day-to-day design, building, and operations of the park. This arrangement helped buffer the park from demands to use it in ways that would dilute its intent and purpose (Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997). Thirdly, Olmsted devised more explicit ways of maintaining social order. The rules and regulations of Central Park provide one example. To ensure the park was used in the "proper way," Olmsted drafted the following rules and had them posted in the park:

Regulations for the Use of Central Park  
November 3, 1860

Central Park Visitors are Warned

Not to walk upon the grass; (except of the Commons)

Not to pick any flowers, leaves, twigs, fruits or nuts;

Not to deface, scratch or mark the seats or other constructions;

Not to throw stones or other missiles;

Not to annoy the birds;

Not to publicly use any provoking or indecent language;

Not to offer any articles for sale.

Disregard of the above warnings, or any acts of disorder, subject the offender to arrest and fine or imprisonment.

The park keepers, in uniform, will give visitors all necessary directions and information but must not be unnecessarily engaged in conversation.

Other regulations included, entry or egress was prohibited except through the established entryways and no one could climb the walls or be in the park after closing. The possession of firearms; playing musical instruments and displaying flags, placards, or banners were also prohibited. In addition, park visitors could not play games of chance, make speeches, or engage in any indecent act (Olmsted, 1873a, 1873d). Similarly regulations prohibiting walking on the grass were found in Chicago's parks. However, "Keep off the Grass" signs were banned in San Francisco's parks (Cranz, 1982).

Fourth, liquor sales were strictly controlled within the bounds of the park. Liquor was sold at park concessions in the inner sections of the park where visitors could drink under very controlled environments. Though Olmsted was concerned about liquor consumption in the park, strictly monitoring the sale of alcohol within the park was a way of discouraging the establishment of liquor stores around the perimeter of the park. Critics predicted that the park would be a haven of wild drinking because it was surrounded by liquor stores. Consequently, Olmsted was careful to point out

that the socially-acceptable park liquor concessions were in competition with saloons and grog-shops, not churches and Sunday schools (New York Herald, 1857; Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997). As Olmsted (1870a) said in a speech:

At three or four points in the midst of the Park, beer, wine, and cider are sold with other refreshments to visitors, not at bars, but served at tables where men sit in company with women. Whatever harm may have resulted, it has apparently had the good effect of preventing the establishment of drinking-places on the borders of the Park, these not having increased in number since it was opened, as it was originally supposed they would. I have never seen or heard of a man or woman the worse for liquor taken at the Park, except in a few instances where visitors had brought it with them, and in which it had been drank secretly and unsocially. The present arrangements for refreshments I should say are temporary and imperfect. . . . While most of the grog-shops of the city were effectually closed by the police under the Excise Law on Sunday, the number of visitors to the Park was considerably larger than before. Shortly after the Park first became attractive, and before any serious attempt was made to interfere with Sunday liquor trade, the head-keeper told me that he saw among the visitors the proprietor of one of the largest saloons in the city. He accosted him and expressed some surprise; the man replied, "I came to see what the devil you'd got here that took off so many of my Sunday customers." I believe that it may be justly inferred that the park stands in competition with grog-shops and worse places, and not with the churches and Sunday schools.

Fifth, Olmsted also relied on the criminal justice system to punish deviant behavior and keep social order. Olmsted lobbied for a park police force modeled after the force that patrolled London's West End parks. He argued that New Yorkers, unused to a large park, "Will need to be trained in the proper use of it, to be restrained in the abuse of it" (Schuyler, 1986: 94). Consequently, law enforcement officers operating as park keepers patrolled Central Park. In 1858 Olmsted hired 22 keepers to patrol the park, this number was increased to 55 by 1860<sup>11</sup> (Olmsted, 1860a; Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997). As Table 2 shows, these 55 men recorded 228 arrests in that year. Almost half of the arrests were for violations of the ordinances, i.e., walking on the grass; picking flowers, nuts, twigs; using foul language, etc. Another 33% of the arrests were for drunkenness and disorderly conduct. Assaults, battery and petty theft accounted for about 15% of the arrests. While on duty, the Central Park keepers behaved more like a military unit than the public park liaisons or educators they were touted to be. Among other things, keepers could not leave their post or beat till they were relieved by another keeper, and then only to capture an offender. They were on duty up to 18 hours per day. Keepers could not speak casually with each other, consume alcohol in the park and, while off duty, could not visit taverns or tipping houses or get drunk. Keepers were ordered to keep an eye out for drunkenness and apprehend and report any one violating the park rules.

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<sup>11</sup>While Olmsted was away from Central Park, the keepers' position became another patronage job. When Olmsted regained control of the keepers in 1872, the number of keepers had reached a high of 149 (Beveridge and Hoffman, 1997).

*TABLE 2*  
*Arrest Record of Central Park: 1859*

Type of Violation	Number	Percent
Violations of the Ordinances of the Commission	111	48.7%
Drunkenness and disorderly conduct	75	32.9%
Assault and battery	21	9.2%
Petty larceny	12	5.3%
Indecent conduct	7	3.1%
Vagrancy	1	0.4%
Insanity	1	0.4%
TOTAL	228	100.0%

Compiled from: Olmsted, 1860a.

Keepers found violating any of the rules were fired at the end of the day. They were to appear at all times as a model of "studied respect and vigilance." Keepers were required to keep their uniforms clean and neat and carry themselves "erect according to instructions received at drill, and march at a quick step from one part of his beat to another, except when it is necessary to move slowly or to halt entirely for the observation required in his duty, or for the detection or apprehension of offenders." Keepers had to salute their superiors in military style. Keepers were disciplined and went unpaid for absences due to illness or injury, even those occurring on the job (Olmsted, 1859, 1860c, 1860d, 1860e, 1873a, 1873d; Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997). According to Olmsted, the keepers exercised "A distinctly humanizing and refining influence over the most unfortunate and lawless classes of the city. . . ." (Schuyler, 1986: 94). Prospect Park had keepers too. The park was patrolled by 14 keepers. In addition, 48 gardeners assumed park keepers' duties during peak visiting hours (Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997).

Olmsted used the popularity of the park and perceived incidences of deviant behavior by park users to increase police supervision of the park. In a letter to the Board of Commissioners of the Central Park, Olmsted rationalized police supervision of the park as he tried to request additional keepers. He argued that the existing police force was inadequate to counteract deviant, depreciative and/or criminal behavior. In addition, compared to the Metropolitan police force, Olmsted's keepers were overworked and underpaid. Olmsted analyzed the distribution of park visitors as a part of his request for more keepers. He argued that the park received the largest number of visitors in the late afternoons and on Saturdays and Sundays. The largest police force was deployed during peak visiting hours. Olmsted estimated that in 1860, the park attracted 2,000 carriages and 10,000 people during the afternoons while 100,000 visited on special occasions. The popularity of the park continued to increase. By 1863, an estimated 3.6 million people visited the park with up to 90,000 entering on foot during a single day. The average number of carriages per day were about 1,000 (the largest number counted

was 9,460, and the largest number of saddle horses on a single day was 1,640). In all, about 7.5 million people visited the park in 1865 and that number increased to 11 million by 1871. From 1866-1870 Olmsted estimated that 30 million people visited the park (Olmsted, 1860a, 1861b, 1870a; *New York Herald*, 1860a, 1860b; *Seventh Annual Report*, 1864; Vaux, 1864; Chadwick, 1966; Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997).

The crowds were not evenly distributed. Some activities like ice skating was extremely popular. For instance, on two occasions in December 1860, an estimated 10,000-15,000 people showed up to skate in the park. The park's skating rink spawned a cottage industry of private owners advertising their ponds as skating rinks. The commissioners and the tram and buggy companies went to great lengths to let people know when the skating was good. Trolleys hung out white flags with red dots when the ice was skatable. Soon ice skating spread to Chicago's parks where they flooded small lakes to make ice rinks (*New York Herald*, 1860a, 1860b; Cranz, 1982; *Scribners Monthly*, 1873; Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997).

Olmsted was concerned with the defacement of park structures which he thought occurred during peak visiting hours, so he had constant and frequent patrols during those times periods. He wrote:

Owing to the leaning and handling of dirty and sweaty persons, tobacco-spitting, the deposit of broken fruit, and waste of all sorts of eatables and other filthy practices, voluntary or otherwise, the summer houses, seats, balustrades [and] balconies of bridges are frequently forbidding to cleanly persons, who are thus deprived of what they deem their rights upon the park. These structures should be cleaned thoroughly every morning, and should be visited for the same purpose once or twice during the day. Water closets and urinals and the walks leading to them, of which there will soon be several established in the park, will especially need a service which could not be altogether well performed by the regular keepers consistently with their other duty (Olmsted, 1860e).

Olmsted wanted to extend police supervision of the park to night time hours. He argued that this was a common practice in Europe that could be replicated in America. Olmsted found that despite extensive use of the park police, people were still engaging in behaviors that violated park rules. After years of being away from Central Park, Olmsted returned to his old job and tried to reshuffle the park police force. Olmsted argued that there was a strong connection between the erosion of behavioral standards and ineffective supervision. Olmsted went on to suggest that the change in park behavior of the public was due to a park government indifferent to public behavior, and an underpaid and overworked police force. He suggested a shake-up of the park police force (*Seventh Annual Report*, 1864; Vaux, 1864; Olmsted, 1872). Olmsted instituted a strict system whereby keepers walked at a brisk pace to complete the seven-mile circuit of the park. Each keeper did three rounds of the park, each round taking 2 hours forty minutes, with a ten minute rest period between rounds. This new regime drew sharp criticism. The *New-York Daily Tribune* argued that Olmsted had turned the keepers into "human velocipedes" who could hardly stop to suppress crime because they

were preoccupied with completing their rounds. The paper claimed that while keepers struggled to complete their rounds in time, young "ruffians" stole flowers and stoned visitors, libertines roamed the park insulting unescorted women. Olmsted responded by arguing that his system had restored order to the park and that Civil War reports showed that soldiers and surgeons improved their health by marching 20 miles per day. However, this time the controversy was too much for Olmsted to overcome. In 1873, he was stripped of much of his authority by the newly-appointed park commissioners (Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997; *New-York Daily Tribune*, 1873a, 1873c; Olmsted, 1873c, 1873d).

### *Replicating Central Park*

Once Central Park was established, Olmsted embarked on a crusade to influence other American cities to build parks. Harkening back to cultural nationalistic sentiments, he broadened the social construction of the urban park as an amenity that was good not only for New York City, but good for national pride and crucial to the development of other cities. In 1861 Olmsted wrote an article in which he laid out the rationale for expanding the system of public parks in America. He argued that "almost every large town in the civilized world" had public parks and that in the U.S. there was "scarcely a finished park or promenade ground deserving mention." He noted that "in the few small fields of rank hay grasses and spindle-trunked trees, to which the name is sometimes applied, the custom of promenade has never been established." Yet, in reality, the promenade could only be applied to the Capitol and White House, and to the still unfinished Central Park (Olmsted, 1860e, 1861b). Olmsted frequently compared Central Park to European Parks. In an editorial urging the City of San Francisco to establish a public park, he made favorable comparisons of Central Park to other parks and used it as a selling point for establishing a park in the city (*Seventh Annual Report*, 1864; Vaux, 1864). Olmsted also argued that Europeans, having visited New York and seen Central Park, were deciding to become naturalized citizens and live in the city because of the park. Central Park was also credited with improving the lives of both poor and rich. A network of elites came forward to support Olmsted's claims. For instance, prominent bankers and business establishments adjacent to the park supported it by indicating that their property values had risen substantially because of the park (Chadwick, 1966; Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997). According to the Sanitary Commission, women's and children's lives were improving because they were spending parts of the day in the park. Olmsted wrote, "There is no doubt that the park has added years to the lives of many of the most valued citizens and many have remarked that it has much increased their working capacity" (*Seventh Annual Report*, 1864; Vaux, 1864). Olmsted also referred to the following reports from doctors:

As to the effect [of Central Park] on public health, there is no question that it is already great. The testimony of the older physicians of the city will be found

unanimous on this point. Says one, "Where I formerly ordered patients of a certain class to give up their business altogether and go out of town, I now often advise simply moderation, and prescribe a ride in the Park before going to their offices, and again a drive with their families before dinner. By simply adopting this course as a habit, men who have been breaking down frequently recover tone rapidly, and are able to retain an active and controlling influence in an important business, from which they would have otherwise been forced to retire. I direct school-girls, under certain circumstances, to be taken wholly, or in part, from their studies, and sent to spend several hours a day rambling on foot in the Park." The lives of women and children too poor to be sent out of the country, can now be saved in thousands of instances, by making them go to the Park. During a hot day in July last, I counted at one time in the park eighteen separate groups, consisting of mothers with their children, most of whom were under school-age, taking picnic dinners which they had brought from home with them. The practice is increasing under medical advice, especially when summer complaint is rife. The much greater rapidity with which patients convalesce, and may be returned with safety to their ordinary occupations after severe illness, when they can be sent to the Park for a few hours a day, is beginning to be understood. The addition thus made to the productive labor of the city is not unimportant.

Olmsted's appeal to cities to build parks did not go unheard. Even before Central Park was completed, residents in cities like Brooklyn, San Francisco, Baltimore, Boston, Buffalo, Philadelphia and Chicago began lobbying for and building parks of their own (*Seventh Annual Report*, 1864; Vaux, 1864; Ranney, Rauluk, & Hoffman, 1990; Schuyler & Censer, 1992).

Eventually, Olmsted and Vaux replicated the Central Park model in numerous parks all over the country. The Olmsted-Vaux parks had ample plantings, promenades, and places for strolling and carriages (a primarily middle class leisure pursuit). They resisted placing facilities (except for cricket grounds) for active games and sports. From a very early age, Olmsted enjoyed horseback riding, sailing, sleighing, skating. He did not perceive these activities as sports but rather as means of transportation. Olmsted would make ample room for these types of activities in the parks he designed. Still, the quest for rural and pastoral vistas continued to dominate their thinking. Olmsted and Vaux continued to express concern that the parks have a rural character and be used for a prescribed range of activities (Roper, 1973; Schuyler & Censer, 1992; Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997). In reference to Washington Park (Fort Greene) they wrote,

The general treatment which will be likely to those who frequent the grounds, during the day, the greatest enjoyment, must be of a somewhat rural character; but it is undesirable, with reference to public morals and the general police of the city, that grounds laid out in this way should be left open after dark, or that they should be used for the assemblage of public meetings, the display of fireworks, or for other incidental purposes which bring together large crowds. (Olmsted, Vaux, & Company, 1867a)

They did provide space in Washington Park for public gatherings, talks, military practices, etc. However, parts of Prospect Park were designed exclu-

sively for rural recreation. In describing the Dairy section of Prospect Park they wrote:

. . . It is designed to be used by visitors only when in search of a more thoroughly rural experience than can be looked for at any point which furnishes accommodation for an assemblage of carriages. It is of course impracticable anywhere within the necessary limits of a city park, to make sure that visitors shall enjoy a sense of complete rural seclusion, but the inclination which influences those who are able to go far into the country for recreation, is often strong with thousands, who are in no position to leave their business and their families . . . (Brooklyn Park Commissioners, 1871: 37-51) Similar features were included in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park.

It may be considered one of the great advantages of a public domain of this kind, that it gives occasion for the coming together of the poor and the rich, on ground which is a common possession, and that it produces a feeling which to the poor is a relief from the sense of restriction, which they generally experience elsewhere in comparing their limits of activity with the apparent freedom of those whose cares and duties have a wider scope. As Art deals with the manners and morals of men through the imagination; this is one of many reasons why the expression of amplitude and free sweep in the scenery of a Park, which can only be produced by broad meadow like surfaces with shadowy and uncertain limits, is an artistic requirement of the first importance. (Park Commission of Philadelphia, 1868: 151-165)

Early on in the process of designing active recreational spaces in parks, Olmsted was in favor of allowing public school children to play ball and croquet in Central Park if they presented a certificate showing that they were in "good standing and regular attendance" (Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997; Olmsted, 1870a; Board of Commissioners of Central Park, 1867; Rosenzweig & Blackmar, 1992). By 1868 Olmsted, responding to public demand for more active recreational space, started to design parts of some parks for active recreation. In Buffalo he designed a park system that had a baseball lot. Recognizing the need for open space in poor communities, he also wanted some of the parks in Buffalo's park system to be close to the East Side working class neighborhoods (*Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, 1868; Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997). Using parkways to connect the parks in the city (a concept pioneered by Olmsted and Vaux), Olmsted argued:

Thus, at no great distance from any point of the town, a pleasure ground will have been provided for, suitable for a short stroll, for a playground for children, and an airing ground for invalids, and a route of access to the large common park of the whole city of such a character that most of the steps on the way to it would be taken in the midst of a scene of sylvan beauty and with the sounds and sites of the ordinary town business, if not wholly shut out, removed to some distance and placed in obscurity. The way itself would thus be more park-like than town-like. (Olmsted, Vaux, & Company, 1868b)

By 1870 Olmsted and Vaux began to realize the difficulty and futility of trying to keep people off the grass. They started experimenting with ways to permit use, relax restrictions of people's movements in parks, but still main-

tain the turf in good condition for a reasonable price. In the design of New Britain's Walnut Hill Park they argued that:

There is nothing which people desire more in a park than to walk upon the turf; there is no regulation so offensive or so difficult to enforce as one requiring them to keep off from it. When it is attempted even with an expensive police force, unless the walks are absolutely fenced in, encroachments upon the turf near them are seen to be made which keep it in an untidy condition and oblige frequent repairs. . . . For this reason we propose to lay the larger part of your ground completely open to the public, to study landscape effects of a large, free, simple character, the beauty of which shall be dependent on trees and turf alone, and, the further to extend our margins and avoid expense, to dispense with exterior fences wherever the boundary comes upon the public streets. (Olmsted, Vaux, & Company, 1870b)

Olmsted designed the Boston park system from 1878 through the 1880s. After building the Back Bay fens, the Country Park and Playstead sections of Franklin Park with no accommodations for active recreation, he included some of these elements in Charlesbank, a recreational ground in the West End tenement district. He also included active recreational sites for the remaining sections of Franklin Park. When Olmsted designed South Park in Buffalo in 1888, he argued that there was great demand for active recreational space in the park, so it was prudent to build facilities for such purpose. He now argued that workers needed more than tranquilizing scenery; they needed facilities for active recreational pursuits. This shows the extent to which Olmsted's thinking on the question of active recreation evolved in his three decades of park building (Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997). In general, by 1895, more active and unstructured recreation was common in parks. Cranz (1982) found that racing, galloping and jumping, polo, bicycling, merry-go-round, tobogganning, ice skating, rowing, circuses, shooting matches, tennis, croquet, baseball, and lacrosse were allowed in parks across the country.

With their design of Central Park and several other major parks and public grounds in over 20 different cities across the country, Olmsted and Vaux successfully propagated the idea of parks as: (a) works of art, (b) tools of social control, (c) a mechanism to improve health and well being, and (d) an apparatus to produce better workers. They laid the groundwork for the later park and playground movement and set the tone for the move to control working class park behavior in an aggressive fashion by using police, laws, supervision, limited operating hours, layout and design, the inclusion or exclusion of activities, and the tracking of the number of visitors. As later discussion will show, the levels of confrontation escalated as the working class started to assert their will regarding access to open space and desired park behavior. They had a profound impact on the social construction of parks and how people came to understand them. They used their social location as elite, middle class white males entrusted with enormous power and discretion to implement their moral, cultural, and social agenda. Olmsted and Vaux dominated park building from the 1850s to the 1880s, designing many large, expensive public and private projects. Though the design competition

for Central Park called for a park to be built for \$1.5 million, by 1863 \$8 million had been spent on the park. Seven years later, more than \$15 million was spent on Central and Prospect Parks combined (Olmsted, 1870b). After guiding the early years of park building, the work of the landscape architects gave way to a more extensive building of large and small parks, playground and recreational facilities. The later phases of construction also involved a variety of amateur and professional park builders and managers.

### Progressive Era Middle-Class Reformers and the Working Class

#### *The Condition of the Working Class and Parks as Sites of Social and Political Contestation*

During the great park building era, the conditions of the working class were harsh and there was widespread urban poverty and unemployment. In desperation, people protested in the streets. For instance, in the Panic of 1857, 10,000 people rallied in Philadelphia to bring attention to their hunger and unemployment. The parks became a focal point for some of the social unrest of the period. Parks lay at the intersection between recreation, work, unemployment, and labor unrest. They served as open spaces for rest and recreation as well as sites for social unrest—demonstrations and protests. For example, in 1857, 15,000 people rallied in Tompkins Square (Brooklyn) to demand work. In that same year when the 35-year-old Olmsted took over as architect-in-chief of Central Park, the aldermen authorized \$250,000 for park construction and gave Olmsted the order to hire 1,000 men (Piven & Cloward, 1979; Beveridge & Schuyler, 1983; *Seventh Annual Report*, 1864; Vaux, 1864; *New York Times*, 1857a, 1857c; Rosenzweig & Blackmar, 1992). Despite the fact that park building was hard work, wages low, conditions severe, and park employment—patronage jobs controlled by politicians—short-lived and uncertain, Olmsted was inundated with applications. Even before he reported to the first day on the job, his flustered servant rushed to inform him that there were 20 men waiting outside his door for jobs and four had already forced their way inside the house. Later that morning, he reportedly walked past a throng of about 5,000 men waiting outside his office (Beveridge & Schuyler, 1983). Olmsted wrote:

As I worked my way through the crowd, no one recognizing me, I saw & heard a man then a candidate for reelection as a local magistrate addressing it from a wagon. He urged that those before him had a right to live; he assumed that they could live only through wages to be paid by the city; and to obtain these he advised that they should demand employment of me. If I should be backward in yielding it—here he held up a rope and pointed to a tree, and the crowd cheered. (Olmsted, undated draft manuscript entitled, "Influence").

It was impossible for Olmsted to satisfy the demand for employment. Consequently, his office was regularly surrounded by demonstrators carrying banners reading "Bread or Blood." The protestors sent him a list of 10,000 men in desperate need of work who also had starving families. Once hired,

there was little hope that these workers would even maintain their jobs for long. In an effort to stretch park employment as far as possible, politicians and park commissioners employed the tactic of rotated employment. Frustrated with the ever-changing workforce, Olmsted wrote to his father, "We unexpectedly received an order to pay off & discharge all the men this week, & have been doing it. Probably we shall take on even a larger force, a thousand is talked of, next week" (Olmsted, 1857a, 1857c, 1860f; Roper, 1973; *New York Times*, 1857a, 1857c; McLaughlin & Beveridge, 1977; Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997. See also Beveridge & Schuyler, 1983 for descriptions of people trying to get jobs at the park). There were similar demonstrations during the 1873 depression; 15,000 rallied in New York, and 20,000 marched in Chicago (Piven & Cloward, 1979).

Consequently, park commissioners moved quickly to limit public gatherings in the parks. Rallies, public meetings, religious services (all deemed to have the potential to excite people and incite rebellious activities) were excluded from park programming. So, while the Boston park commissioners did not allow any public meetings in the parks, Philadelphia allowed only religious meetings and the Chicago South Parks forbade public meetings that would lead to speech making and crowds. On the other hand, Brooklyn only permitted gatherings for parades of Sunday School children. Commissioners wanted the parks to appear apolitical to retain public support. Though the commissioners banned public gatherings in Central Park and others, the parks were built with military parade grounds and military exercises were conducted in the parks. While public gatherings had the potential to spin out of control, military exercises was seen as a show of law, order, civility, and national unity. Thus the high visibility of the military personnel in the parks could be considered another dimension of social control (Cranz, 1982; Beveridge & Schuyler, 1983; Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997).

Despite efforts to improve their economic condition, many urban people continued to live in deplorable conditions. It is in this milieu that middle-class reformers attempted to provide services and advocate improvement in the living conditions of the poor. Olmsted, Vaux, Withers (who worked at Olmsted and Vaux's company) and others focused on building parks,<sup>12</sup> while the reformers concentrated on a more comprehensive package of services of which access to parks was only one part of the package. The reformers also protested child labor, hazardous work conditions, occupational health and safety, deplorable and overpriced housing, the length of the work day, low wages, and high unemployment (Roper, 1973; Kelly, 1996; Dickason, 1983).

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<sup>12</sup>The leading landscape architects of the time were: Robert Morris Copeland, Horace W. S. Cleveland, Charles Follen, Alexander Jackson Davis, Egbert L. Viele (a civil engineer), Ignatz A. Pilat, Adolph Strauch, and G. M. Kern.

*The Rise of the Recreation Movement*

The need for parks (both as a source of employment and recreation) was strong and the continuing influx of immigrants intensified this need. Between 1860 and 1920 28.5 million immigrants came to the U.S. (Piven & Cloward, 1979). However, most cities found it difficult to fund the elaborate Olmsted/Vaux parks. A case in point, in 1867 Newark, New Jersey balked at paying more than a million dollars to build a city park (Olmsted, 1870b; Roper, 1973; Beveridge & Schuyler, 1983; *Seventh Annual Report*, 1864; Vaux, 1864; Chadwick, 1966; Cranz, 1982).<sup>13</sup>

It was also becoming clear that in addition to center-piece parks like Central Park, Prospect Park, Fairmount Park, and linked park systems like those Olmsted designed in Buffalo, there was a need for smaller neighborhood parks and playgrounds designed for more active recreational use. Consequently, a new breed of park advocates and designers arose in the 1880s to respond to this need. While the landscape architects and early park advocates made general claims about the therapeutic nature of parks, there were no direct interventions to change the actual health status of urban residents. Once the landscape architects built the parks, the health improvements heralded by the park builders were left to chance. But as living conditions in the cities went from bad to worse, middle class reformers sought to link the goals of the sanitary reform movement to the goals of the parks and recreation movement more deliberately. They combined their desire to provide park access to the poor with efforts to improve health and hygiene. They believed that, in addition to visiting parks, other steps had to be taken to improve the health of park users and other urban residents.

In effect, these reformers changed the social construction of urban parks to reflect a new focus on building small neighborhood parks and playgrounds. Instead of building parks that primarily catered to the needs of native-born, middle-class adults, the reformers focused on poor, immigrant children. They believed in direct interventions, consequently, children were given instructions as a part of the park or playground experience. These parks, built by elite, middle class women, were not intended for middle class use, instead, they were part of a package of charitable acts directed at working class clients. The socialization role of the parks were not left to chance either, they were taught. These newer parks were not built with an eye towards the picturesque or for the purpose of tranquilizing recreation, they built for active recreation. These reform-oriented activists formed the core of the recreation movement.

The recreation movement arose in response to rapid industrialization, urbanization and a need for improved outdoor recreational opportunities. Recreation movement activists augmented the work of the landscape archi-

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<sup>13</sup>It cost the city two-and-a-half times the Olmsted-Vaux estimate to build a smaller park (Branch Brook Park) on the same site 30 years later.

pects by encouraging cities and small towns to build both large and small parks and playgrounds. The movement activists were also responding to the spread of diseases, lack of public open space (and the popularity and overuse of existing parks), the sight of children being arrested for playing in the streets and swimming in city harbors, the massive influx of immigrants flowing into the cities, and severe overcrowding in working class communities. As the population increased, public concern grew when it became evident that city dwellers had no place to play, rest or relax. Therefore, the quest for recreation space became intimately connected to the campaign to improve public health, environmental conditions, and the rapid assimilation of new immigrants. Overcrowding, dilapidated housing stock, inadequate sewage and drinking water systems, and rampant disease outbreaks underscored the need for outdoor spaces to escape (Kelly, 1996; Dickason, 1983; Piven & Cloward, 1979).

### Child's Play, Sand Gardens, Playgrounds and the Recreation Movement

The middle- and upper-class reformers who got involved in the playground and parks movement were primarily Protestant, civic and religious leaders intent on restoring social order (Gans, 1993). Many of them were from women's clubs that were concerned with what children and adults did in their spare time. These reformers not only marked a change in the ideology of building urban parks, they represented a significant gender shift. As mentioned before, this group of reformers linked health improvement, morality and socialization into middle class norms with access to parks and playgrounds in a very deliberate way. While the landscape architects were all male working on grand designs which were supported by large allocations of public and private funds, the middle class, Progressive Era reformers were dominated by women undertaking smaller, underfunded local (neighborhood) projects. Their activities sought to link the home and work environments with that of the church and other social service agencies and the playgrounds. While the landscape architects made the parks and hoped that the outcome they sought (improved health, culture and civility) would accrue through the interaction between the user and the park environment, the Progressive Era activists sought more direct and deliberate intervention. Their activities were geared towards influencing the outcome. The Progressive Era reformers thought many of the leisure activities of the working class were unhealthy and immoral. Their aim was to see that "healthy recreation" replaced activities that reduced the efficiency and readiness of factory workers. They subscribed to the Downing-Olmsted-Vaux doctrine of the virtues of parks (as social control agents) and their health-giving character. They focused on the idea that healthy workers made better workers and that parks were the key to moral and physical health and cleanliness. Lee, one of the leading reformers, clearly articulated this perspective, "the battle with the slum is primarily a battle against the obvious evils of drink, overcrowding,

immorality, and bad sanitary arrangements” he argued (Dickason, 1983; Domhoff, 1970; Lee, 1929).

The social location of the female reformers also played an important role in their social construction of parks and how they developed their programs. Being middle and upper class women who managed their homes and social organizations, they brought the concerns of the family, youth education, and middle class socialization to the programs they developed. Because they did not have access to the funds the landscape architects had to develop gigantic park projects, the female reformers relied on their local power base to help establish their projects. Hence, they concentrated on using community organizations, churches and schools to locate and develop their playground projects.

The Massachusetts Emergency and Hygiene Association (MEHA), one group involved in the early phases of the development of playgrounds in the U.S., typifies the goals and posture of these groups as they tried to establish playgrounds and parks. Children were the favorite targets of the reformers because they were deemed more controllable and reformers believed that if they were converted in their youth, there would be no need to reform them in adulthood. Spearheaded by Dr. Marie Zakrzewska who had seen a “sand garden” in Berlin, MEHA placed the first pile of sand in the yard of the Parmenter Street Chapel, a mission in Boston’s North End in 1885. This upper class women’s reform group (all of whom were members of the New England Women’s Club) thought that if they could influence the development of poor immigrant children at an early age, then the children would grow to accept and respect the social order. The area around the chapel—the site of the nation’s first playground—was rough and dangerous. It attracted gamblers, pimps, prostitutes, sailors, paupers, the homeless, and unemployed. However, the MEHA volunteers used the structured environment of the sand garden to give the children lessons in morals, manners, hygiene, and social skills. Health and hygiene was a post-Civil War concern because the rapid industrialization and urbanization led to health problems. According to MEHA, good health and hygiene resulted from both cleanliness and preventative practice. People were healthy because they were both physically and mentally clean. The MEHA volunteers also provided instructions to adults to help them stay healthy (Dickason, 1983; Croly, 1898; Mann, 1954; Whyte, 1993; Cranz, 1982).<sup>14</sup> In this line of social work, many groups like MEHA did not seek input and advise from or attempt to collaborate with the people they were helping. Instead MEHA approached the establishment and management of sand gardens as a paternalistic act of charity for which the recipients were or ought to be grateful. The recipients of this aid were

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<sup>14</sup>See Whyte (1993), *Street Corner Society*, for in indepth study of this neighborhood in the late 1930s. There are also detailed descriptions (drawn from recollections of interviewees) of the way the neighborhood was and the lives of the neighborhood children at the turn of the century.

subjected to morality and etiquette lessons as a condition of receiving charity (Heywood & Heywood, 1886; MEHA, 1886). The following excerpts illustrate this attitude. The sand garden was:

Opened three mornings in the week for three months to the children of the neighborhood between four and ten years of age. About twenty-five little ones averaging an attendance of fourteen shared the privilege thus offered, under the care of a lady to exercise over them wholesome authority while at their play, and to teach them some useful lessons and morals and manners...No doubt much permanent good is done to the little ones thus gathered in from the street and placed for a few hours each alternative day of the week under influences calculated to develop and strengthen the better qualities and forces resident within them. (MEHA, 1886: 12)

As was common practice with many of the charitable, social service and volunteer organizations that started projects, they quickly discovered that they lacked the resources (money, personnel, and training) to implement their projects on a large scale. At this juncture, they tried to convince cities, states or the federal government to take over the projects. Activists in MEHA adopted this strategy. By 1888 they abandoned their practice of placing sand gardens and rudimentary playgrounds in missions and convinced the Boston city officials to place them public school yards. According to MEHA records, the children responded to these playgrounds with a mixture of delight and cynicism. For example, on the first day the Eliot School yard opened, "It required Mrs. Tobey, the superintendent, Miss Morley the Matron, three janitors, and a policeman to entertain and subdue the excitement of the one hundred children who rushed in wild with delight at the novelty offered them" (MEHA, 1889: 31). However, not all the children responded with unbridled enthusiasm. Some resisted the notion that they should be grateful to MEHA for identifying and catering to their needs. For instance, MEHA documents report that at the Baldwin School playground "The children . . . were of the most untameable material, and refused to be in the least appreciative when the matron spoke of the kindness of the women who had arranged the playgrounds. Pooh! They are paid for it, one boy remarked. Oh no, they do it to give you a good time.—Well, they are fools, then, was his comment." (MEHA, 1889: 29-30).

The following excerpt is from an adult born in 1908 reflecting on his childhood in Boston's North End playgrounds and at the Norton Street Settlement house. Doc recalls:

The only time anybody ever got hurt was when Charlie got that tin can in his eye. We were rallying [confronting] the King Streets [a gang] on the playground. We charged, and Charlie got ahead of us. When he got into King Street, somebody threw this can, and the open end caught him right in the eye. I used to go into the settlement when I was a small boy, but then I broke away. I went back on account of the Sunset Dramatic Club . . . [then] Tom Marino's crowd came in. They called themselves the "Corner Bums." There were a hundred of them. . . . They had it in for the Sunsets because the Sunsets were the pet club of the social workers. . . . When the Bums got in there, they

wanted to run the place. . . . The Bums were really out to tip the joint. They had no respect for the social workers . . . [who] were always calling up the police station and telling them, There is a riot in the Norton Street Settlement. Send the riot squad down right away." A couple of cops would come down and joke with the boys, because they were good friends, but it looked bad for the settlement... (Whyte, 1993: 6-7)

These excerpts show that even the children and the adolescents resisted the incessant preaching and moralizing of the reformers. They also show that despite the reformers' best efforts, they were not successful in breaking up street gangs. As a matter of fact, by providing sand gardens, playgrounds, and settlement houses, they inadvertently provided the meeting places where children and adolescents could solidify their identities and made it easier for them mark off their gang turf and stake claims to certain territories. The children and adolescents, rather than accepting the activities unquestioningly, exercised their right to pick and chose what suited them and were quite skillful at avoiding the sermonizing. Doc, in Whyte's *Street Corner Society* (1993), goes on to explain that the children knew they had the social workers in a bind. The children quickly figured out that the social workers needed them as much or even more than the children needed the social workers. Consequently, they would deliberately break equipment and furniture and watch in veiled amusement as flustered social workers threatened to throw them out of the settlement houses, only to turn around and provide new equipment in short order. Without children and adolescents in need of "charity" and "moral upliftment" the mission of these social worker would be non-existent

It is important to note that the reformers were not unidimensional. They were not completely obsessed with the social control of the poor urban masses. They were also attracted by the environmental message and the back-to-nature fad sweeping the country. However, still infatuated with the formal gardens and pastoral landscapes of Europe, they embarked on projects that imitated those vistas in America. In addition, they believed that the infectious diseases rampant in the urban slums posed a significant health risk, and they actually wanted to improve living conditions. Some reformers, like those at Hull House in Chicago, moved beyond the mere act of charity and the attempts at social control to work tirelessly to institute radical social changes. Similarly, one should resist the urge to stereotype the poor, urban dweller as the servile recipient of charity, morality and etiquette lessons, parks and playgrounds. The working class influenced the design and use of recreation spaces and actively resisted efforts to impose middle class constraints on their leisure time and practices. Building on the MEHA model, sand gardens, playgrounds and urban parks were quickly established in many cities. Table 3 contains a brief chronology of the playground and parks movement.

### Working Class Park Use and Competing Definitions of Leisure Behavior

Though the working class labored long hours for little pay to build public parks, they and their families did not have as much access to these

*TABLE 3*  
*Chronology of the Playground and Parks Movement*

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1811:	Union Park, New York City. New York Park Commissioners plan Manhattan demarcating space for seven squares and parade grounds.
1812:	Philadelphia acquire and layout the first section of Fairmount Park.
1820-1840:	Schools and colleges start providing outdoor gyms and sports areas.
1826:	Battery, New York designated a park.
1839:	Tompkins Square, Brooklyn, New York.
1844-1868:	Philadelphia acquired Lemon Hill. Sedgely purchased in 1857 and donated to city as parkland, land on the west bank of the Schuylkill acquired in 1868 for park.
1847:	Fort Greene (Washington) Park, Brooklyn, New York.
1853:	Land purchased for Central Park, New York City.
1853:	Work began on the Hartford park (renamed for Howard Bushnell in 1876).
1855:	The western edge of San Francisco laid out; seven large squares set aside for recreation.
1857:	Frederick Law Olmsted begins work on Central Park.
1858:	Olmsted and Calvert Vaux's design for Central Park (Greensward Plan) approved.
1859:	Boston secured land for its Public Garden.
1860:	Baltimore acquired Druid Hill and opened it as a public park.
1861:	Chicago's first park laid out in the southern section of Lincoln Park.
1863:	Park just outside New Haven, Connecticut.
1863:	Missouri Botanical Gardens and Tower Grove Park.
1868:	Boston school yard devoted to play.
1865:	Prospect Park in Brooklyn designed and built by Olmsted and Vaux.
1871:	City of Brookline authorize the acquisition of land for city parks.
1876:	Playground constructed in Chicago's Washington Park.
1877:	Olmsted plans the Boston park system.
1882:	Survey of play opportunities for children conducted in Boston.
1885:	First sand garden open at Parmenter Street Chapel in Boston.
1886:	Worcester (Massachusetts) Park Act and city-wide park plan approved.
1887:	Golden Gate Park completed in San Francisco.
1892:	A model playground open at Hull House in Chicago.
1892:	Seward Park (New York City) opened.
1896:	Jackson Park, Chicago planned.
1898:	New York's Small Parks Commission appointed
1903:	Cleveland park system planned. City Beautiful Movement.
1904:	San Francisco park system planned.
1905:	Opening of ten South Park centers in Chicago.
1906:	Playground Association of America organized.
1908:	Massachusetts Playground Act passed.
1910:	Comprehensive Park Plan for New Haven, Connecticut approved.
1924:	<i>Conference on Outdoor Recreation</i> called by President Calvin Coolidge.
1930:	National Recreation Association formed
1932:	First National Recreation Congress held
1933:	Expansion of recreation of facilities and services through national work programs.

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Sources: Kelly, 1996; Beveridge & Schuyler, 1983; Ranney, Rauluk, & Hoffman, 1990; Schuyler & Censer, 1992; Rosensweig, 1987; 1983; Gilbert & Olmsted, 1910; Chadwick, 1966; Cranz, 1982; Schuyler, 1986.

parks as the middle class. For instance, as Central Park gained popularity in the 1860s, it became clear that the middle class had greater access to it than the working class. Olmsted recognized the distance and cost of getting to Central Park made it difficult or impossible for some people to visit and spoke out about it (Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997; Rosenzweig & Blackmar, 1992: 211-237). Notwithstanding, the park was popular among the working class (Peiss, 1986: 117). Because of its remote location, not many working class people could afford to visit more than once a week (on Sundays); the trip was costly and time consuming. As Peiss (p. 14) writes:

Parks, too, were a popular form of entertainment for working class families, particularly among the average wage-earners, who could ill afford excursions or theater tickets. An outing to Central Park on a Sunday was considered a special family treat, while the neighborhood parks, squares, and playgrounds were places for daily relaxation.

In addition, Sundays became the day of promenades; the day when some middle class park users rode through the park showing off their fine carriages and clothing. Watching the parade and being watched—seeing and being seen—was an integral part of the Sunday experience. This, of course, raised the ante for the working class. In addition to the fare to get to the park (which often consumed a good portion of a day's pay), new or fashionable clothing was also desirable. Peiss (p. 23) writes:

Maria Cichetti, for example recalls, that when her mother took the children to Central Park for a "treat," she was occupied with making certain they looked presentable and would not disgrace the family in their adopted country by picking the flowers or walking on the grass.

Of course, some middle class users avoided the Sunday din. The parks had attractions like fast carriage driving and musical events that were held on weekdays when few working class families could attend. Similar use patterns developed in other parks such as Golden Gate Park in San Francisco (Cranz, 1982; Gibson, 1901).

The working class was not free to use these parks as they pleased. For example, Rosenzweig's study of parks in Worcester, Massachusetts found that in the late 1800s, the city's working class was composed primarily of first and second generation immigrants; the parks, factories, and political machine were controlled by the city's American-born upper class. In 1870 the city had two parks: the first was an unkempt 8-acre Common and the second, the 28-acre Elm Park which was being used as the city dump. Influenced by European park building and Olmsted's elegant parks (many of which already adorned New York and New England towns), middle class horticulturalists and park advocates succeeded in building an attractive city park. As was common at the time, active leisure pursuits were banned in Elm Park (which was located in the exclusive West Side). In 1875 the circus that was usually staged in the Common was also banned from Elm Park. "Keep off the Grass" signs were posted, and though baseball was allowed, its days were numbered. Park advocates wanted to move baseball to other areas in the working-class

(East Side) section of town (Rosenzweig, 1987). Although Olmsted and Vaux, the leading proponents of passive park recreation, were already experimenting with active recreational design and greater use of grassy areas, the park authorities in Worcester continued to prohibit use of the grass and active recreation (Olmsted, Vaux, & Company, 1870b; *Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, 1868).

While Olmsted and Vaux recognized the need for recreational activities to compensate for brutal or dull work, and designed their parks in ways that forced people to walk, that was one of the few forms of "vigorous" exercise allowed in the early parks they designed. Other kinds of free spirited activities were not allowed, because, from their perspective, compensatory mental stimulation came from unconscious and tranquilizing recreation, i.e., the act of immersing oneself in the scenery rather than from boisterous excitable play and sports (Cranz, 1982). However, as earlier discussions have shown, they changed their perceptions of active recreation as time went on.

### *Class and Park Behavior*

As previous discussions have shown, though park advocates touted the parks as public spaces for all classes, it was never intended that the mixing of the classes would result in the lowering of middle class standards. Consequently, when the working class used parks in middle class communities, the middle class aggressively sought to teach the working class the "proper" rules of decorum, grace and charm. As far as the middle class was concerned, their values about open space and its usage were the only valid ones. Thus, correct park behavior was defined as quiet, orderly, peaceful and inoffensive. Inappropriate behavior was labeled immoral, rude, loud, raucous, disorderly, and obscene. Activities and behaviors like drinking and backyard fun and frolic that the middle class indulge in privately were disdained or banned if they occurred in public parks and other outdoor places. The middle class was not willing to make any concessions to the working class by recognizing the fact that the latter did not have the space or facilities to privatize certain kinds of leisure activities. In addition, middle class park users and advocates often disagreed amongst themselves about working class access to parks. For instance, Olmsted found himself defending the decision to make Central Park accessible to working class people. Middle class people who disagreed with him wrote scathing editorials condemning the practice. One such editorial argued that it would be difficult for Central Park to be like the great parks of England or France because of the mixing of the social classes, the blurring of class lines and the fact that middle class values were in danger of being overwhelmed in the park. The editorial lamented:

Here [in America], we order things differently. Here, we have no "lower orders," nobody has any "superiors," we know no "nobility and gentry:" nothing but a public which is all and everything, and in which Sam the Five Pointer.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup>This refers to the notorious, crime-ridden Five Points section of the Lower East Side of Manhattan (Beveridge and Hoffman, 1997; Lockwood, 1976).

is as good a man as William B. Astor or Edward Everett.<sup>16</sup> Further, whatever is done by or for the public aforesaid, is done by or for Sam as much as any one else, and he will have his full share of it. Therefore, when we open a public park, Sam will air himself in it. He will take his friends, whether from Church street or elsewhere. He will enjoy himself there, whether by having a muss, or a drink at the corner groggery opposite the great gate. He will run races with his new horse in the carriage way. He will knock any better dressed man down who remonstrates with him. He will talk and sing, and fill his share of the bench, and flirt with the nursery girls in his own coarse way. Now we ask what chance have William B. Astor and Edward Everett against this fellow-citizen of theirs? Can they and he enjoy the same place? Is it not obvious that he will turn them out, and that the great Central Park, which has cost so much money and is to cost so much more, will be nothing but a huge beer garden for the lowest denizens of the city . . . of which we shall yet pray litanies to be delivered? (*New York Herald*, 1857: 4).

Olmsted responded to editorials like this by attacking what he saw as the “fallacy of cowardly conservatism. The fallacy of cowardly conservatism refers to belief that any educational or recreational institution that was open to the public would become uncomfortable to the middle and upper classes because of the uncouth behavior the lower classes. Olmsted argued that

There has been much careless puffing of the park and so much ignorant and mistaken fault-finding. . . . If you determine upon it, I shall of course be glad to furnish the fullest information, if any should be wanted, both with regard to the design, & work, as well as the *working* of the park with the people—the phenomena of which already should explode much, somewhat popular, fallacy of cowardly conservatism. (Olmsted, 1860b; see also Olmsted 1870a; 1880)

It is important to understand the social location of the working class to understand their social construction of parks and why they responded the way they did to parks. While the working class visited the parks for their beauty, serenity and ambiance, they also visited and used the parks for a multitude of other purposes too. Having no counterpart of the backyard, the estate, the country cottage, or country club to privatize their fun and cavorting behavior, all these needs, emotions and activities are displayed in the public park. When such displays occurred, the working class were deemed disorderly and out of control for expressing themselves and fulfilling their needs.

This is not to say that working class people did not want to use the parks for strolling, lounging, resting; indeed they did. Peiss’s study of working women’s leisure in New York City found that strolling and relaxing in the parks were two of the most popular leisure activities among the working class (Peiss, 1986). The large numbers of visitors to Central Park—up 100,000 on some afternoons—showed the enormous popularity of such parks (Olmsted, 1861; *New York Herald*, 1860a, 1860b; *Seventh Annual Report*, 1864; Vaux, 1864). Rosenzweig found the same in Worcester too, but relaxation was coupled

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<sup>16</sup>William B. Astor was a New York capitalist and real estate investor; and Edward Everett was a Unitarian minister and orator (Beveridge and Hoffman, 1997).

with other kinds of active organized and spontaneous sports and games. Working class park use was characterized by mixed age, mixed gender, solitary individuals, and people recreating together in large groups. The following excerpt gives an indication of the complexity of the recreational experience.

Before the 12:05 whistle blows, the crowd begins to arrive from Washburn and Moen's, the envelope shops, electric light station, and many other establishments north of Lincoln Square. After eating, a good romp is indulged in by the girls, running and racing about, with now and then a scream of laughter when some mishap, a fall perhaps, occurs to one of their number. Some of them wander about in pairs or groups, exchanging girlish confidences, or indulging in good-natured banter with their masculine shop-mates. Occasionally a boat is secured by some gallant youth, who rows a load of laughing maidens about the pond, the envied of their less fortunate friends. The younger men try a game of base ball or a little general sport, jumping, running, etc., while their elders sit about in the more shaded spots, smoking their pipes. But when the whistles blow previous to 1 o'clock there is a general stampede to the shops and in a few minutes all of those remaining can be counted on one's fingers. (*Park Report*, 1840)

As the above excerpt demonstrates, in addition to passive recreation, the parks served a large range of social functions for the working class. After endless hours of brutal, mind-numbing work, some people wanted to engage in compensatory, active leisure pursuits. The working class had no place at home to exercise and no access to college gyms or country clubs. Therefore, the parks became the premier location for exercising, playing games and sports, organizing social gatherings, courting, and resting.

### *The Working Class and Commercial Leisure Pursuits*

Because of overcrowding, inadequate outdoor spaces, oppressive and intrusive middle class attitudes and rules, working class people started pursuing commercial recreational opportunities as a means of providing an inexpensive family outing. It is true that conditions remained miserable for most of the working class; as late as 1929, more than one fifth of American families lived in poverty, that is, with inadequate nutrition, overcrowding, and no resources to meet unexpected expenses. Despite this trend, average real wages for nonfarm employees increased by more than half between 1870 and 1900. Although laborers did not fare as well as other upwardly-mobile workers, their incomes increased along with the rest of the labor force. Nationwide manufacturing wages increased another 25 percent over the next two decades. The decline in the number of hours in the workweek and increased income resulted in more free time for the working class and some disposable income (albeit it a small amount) to spend on recreation (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1975).

However, public parks continued to exclude popular working class activities like gambling and folk games such as horse shoe pitching, tomato

hawk twirling, and wrestling. In addition, commercial activities like the circus and amusement park rides were also excluded because these were considered to be antithetical to rural, pastoral scenery and tranquilizing recreation. Elite park advocates and builders considered the enjoyment and entertainment derived from commercial recreational establishments to be superficial, providing excessive stimulation, and of questionable moral and cultural value. This opened the possibility of the working class pursuing commercial recreational opportunities outside of the parks. Thus family picnics at commercial lakefront parks became very popular. For example, as early as 1875 a crowd of 7,000 working class Worcesterites went to the lake for 4<sup>th</sup>-of-July picnics, clambakes, steamboat rides, billiards, bowling, and beer drinking. Other commercial recreation sites soon sprang up around the Worcester area. The Worcester experience was part of a nationwide trend whereby amusement parks and commercial recreational facilities grew popular among the working class. Peiss noted a similar phenomenon in New York where picnic grounds, beach resorts and amusement parks ringed Manhattan. Similarly, facilities like Woodward's Garden in San Francisco with its museum, art gallery, zoo, picnic areas, boating, library, refreshment stand, concerts, balloon rides, and aviary drew large crowds (Rosenzweig, 1983; Peiss, 1986; Cranz, 1982; Rosenzweig & Blackmar, 1992: 233-259).

Heavy drinking characterized the Worcester lakeside celebrations, despite regular police patrols and intermittent bans on liquor sales at the lake. Not surprisingly, drunken and rowdy working-class behavior at commercial lakeside resorts provoked middle-class complaints. Middle class commercial resort operators (who cared more about making money off the working class than abiding by middle class conventions) also angered their middle class compatriots. However, the intra-class hostility and ostracism was not enough to dissuade the commercial operators from pursuing this lucrative business. In 1896 several boat clubs petitioned for better police protection at the lake, complaining that "there are a certain class attracted [to the lake] . . . who care nothing for law and order and who conduct themselves in ways and manners as to terrorize, annoy and disgust the law abiding citizens and destroy and depreciate our property." Furthermore, those objecting to working class use of the lake claimed that, "the atmosphere reeks with rotteness and pollution, which is fast driving away respectable people and giving this beauty to the wicked, lawless, and ignorant" (Rosenzweig, 1983).

### *The Injustice Frame and Working Class Attempts to Gain Access to Parks*

The success of Central Park stimulated a desire in other cities to build large centerpiece parks as well as smaller neighborhood parks. As mentioned before, by the 1860s, many cities were commissioning parks. By the 1880s, when Progressive Era reformers began building sand gardens, the working class began to take a more active role in agitating for neighborhood parks. They also became more vocal about the design and use of that space. In the 1880s in Worcester, the two contrasting visions of park design and usage

discussed above clashed. While the industrialists were urging the city to acquire and develop parklands on the affluent West Side for the purposes of fire protection, health, civic pride, real estate development, and social control, the large and rapidly growing immigrant working class demanded leisure space for more active, play-oriented activities. The need for recreation space was so great in working class communities that children resorted to playing in the streets. By 1880—5 years before MEHA started the first sand garden, and 10 years after the well-to-do West Siders got their landscaped (Elm) park—East Siders began to demand their own parks plus better maintenance of the Common. In 1882, a petition drive netted the signatures of 140 workers (74% blue collar and 26% white collar workers) who were requesting a “few acres of land” for “the less favored children.” Petitioners declared that “There is no public ground in that vicinity [Fifth Ward—East Side] where children or young men can resort, either for health or amusement.” That same year children were arrested for playing in the streets and vacant lots (Rosenzweig, 1987; 1983).

Newspaper editorials repeatedly accused the city of siding with the well-to-do West Siders and neglecting the working-class residents of the East Side. The editorials noted that open sewers ran through the neighborhoods and that cholera and diphtheria were common in the cramped quarters of the East Side. The East Siders started demanding “every inch of space” the city “could afford them.” The lack of access to outdoor space spawned a movement of Irish working-class activists who demanded public playgrounds. Using an injustice frame, they embarked on a letter writing campaign in the *Worcester Evening Star* where they complained about Elm Park (pejoratively renamed “Lincoln’s Patch” after the most ardent middle-class park elite in the city). The disparities between Elm park and the Common became a hot cognition. It was the rallying cry that fueled the movement for a more equitable distribution and maintenance of parks. Working class Worcesterites charged that they had to stand when they visited the Common because the “people’s seats” had been removed from the Common (located closer to the working-class neighborhood) and placed in Elm Park which they described as a “desolate spot where nobody will use them excepting the crows.” Letters also satirized Lincoln as “the Earle of the frog ponds” and the “grandiloquent Earle of model pools.” Exasperated by the stalling tactics of the city government, in 1884 the East Side representatives on the City Council decided to oppose the acquisition of a 60-acre parcel adjacent to Elm Park on the West Side (*Worcester Evening Star*, 1879a, 1879b; Gamson, 1992; 1997; Zajonc, 1980; Rosenzweig, 1987, 1983). Letters to the *Worcester Sunday Telegram* summed up the people’s frustrations. Simmering resentment over environmental inequalities and the way in which the city’s actions exacerbated conditions led to letters like this one that linked the struggle for access to parks with environmental health and social and economic inequality. The letter stated:

Our wealthy citizens live in elegant homes on all the hills of Worcester, they have unrestricted fresh air and perfect sewage, their streets are well cleaned

and lighted, the sidewalks are everywhere, and Elm Park, that little dream of beauty, is conveniently near. The toilers live on the lowlands, their houses are close together, the hills restrict the fresh air, huge chimneys pour out volumes of smoke, the marshy places give out offensiveness and poison the air, the canal remains uncovered, the streets are different, the little ones are many. While the families of the rich can go to the mountains or to the sea during the hot months of the summer, the families of the workers must remain at home. (*Worcester Sunday Telegram*, 1884)

Some elite park advocates in other parts of the country shared the sentiments expressed in the above letter. For Instance, in 1855, George Curtis (p. 125), a Downing biographer described the parks as follows:

A Park is not for those who can go to the country, but for those who can not. It is a civic Newport, and Berkshire, and White Hills. It is fresh air for those who can not go to the seaside; and green leaves, and silence, and the singing of birds, for those who can not fly to the mountains. It is a fountain of health for the whole city."

Park elites in several cities shared this view of the park. In 1861 Egbert Viele defined the role of the park in his report to the Brooklyn Park Commission as a "rural resort, where the people of all classes, escaping from the glare, and glitter, and turmoil of the city, might find relief of the mind, and physical relaxation." Similarly, Baltimore's Druid Hill Park was promoted at the "resort of thousands," and the pastoral resort of Baltimore's "swarming multitudes," a scene of rural beauty where the masses could escape "the noise of the hammer and the smoke of the furnace and the workshop." Park advocates in cities like Albany, New York and Providence, Rhode Island use Druid Hill as their example of an elegant city park serving the needs of working people (Schuyler, 1986; Daniels, 1862; Murray, 1863; Providence Public Park Association, 1887; Viele, 1861). However, these sentiments were not widely shared among the Worcester park building elite.

As a result of the intransigence of the park elites, the working class grew bolder over the course of the campaign for increased access to parks. They grew more sophisticated in the way they framed the issues and in their use of the media. The tone of their requests shifted from that of a servile, pliant group asking for a "few acres of land" for "the less favored children," to forceful, confident citizens demanding "every inch of space" the city "could afford them." They supported these demands with surveys, radical newspaper editorials, use of their city council votes. They appropriated the Olmsted-Vaux arguments (and the arguments of their local middle class park advocates) and used these to support their claims and help them frame the issues. The working class activists argued that they needed parks in their neighborhoods because they wanted to get the health-giving benefits of the parks also. Working class Worcesterites also made skillful use of injustice framing to make the issues salient to their supporters. They identified and campaigned against class inequality and access to parks. They pointed to the inequitable distribution and maintenance of parks in the city, unequal delivery of city services, and the increased health risks for the working class. In addition, recognizing that the working class was less able to afford pay for recreational

experiences outside the city, they had no ability to escape the city. Activists further argued that confinement to the city increased the urgency of working class demands for relief. As the above discussion shows, the working class activists became increasingly efficacious and recognized and used advocacy channels quite effectively.

The threat to block the purchase of additional park land for the well-to-do West Siders worked. That same year, a Park Act was passed and a comprehensive park plan was developed in 1886. This was one of the earliest park plans in the U.S. to attempt a comprehensive city-wide park planning. It sanctioned a scheme of dual-tract recreational development. The park plan was heavily influenced by Olmsted's notion of parks as instruments of social control, health and moral upliftment. The plan argued that parks would be settings of "healthful recreation" designed to elevate and refine the workers and improve their intelligence, thereby making them better workers (Rosenzweig, 1987, 1983. See also, Beveridge & Schuyler, 1983, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, Creating Central Park* for similar arguments about the virtues of urban parks).

Similar language can be found in other city's park plans. As late as 1910, the New Haven (Connecticut) civic improvement plan argued that:

If the people of the city, if in particular the women and children, are to have the benefit of a place where they may habitually get a little healthful recreation out of doors under agreeable and refreshing surroundings, as a part of the ordinary routine of life; if the children are able to make such use of a playground; if their elders are to get with tolerable frequency even a little walk in a park or square for air and for refreshment from the dulling routine of life in factory, store, office, and cramped dwelling house or flat; if the mothers are to get out occasionally to a pleasant park bench with their sewing or what not, while the children play about them. . . . (Gilbert & Olmsted, 1910: 35)

### *Working Class Redefine Park Use*

In less than 30 years the tide had shifted in favor of the working class. No longer did they have to engage in a pitch battle to get a scrap of land for recreation. Most cities across the country, believing in the health-giving, restorative nature of parks, and in their capacity for social control, acquired parkland in many locations and sought to build parks for active and passive uses. Take, for example, the rationale given for proceeding with comprehensive park development in New Haven, Connecticut in 1910. The plan, written by Frederick Law Olmsted's son and Cass Gilbert echoed familiar Olmsted themes. It called for active recreation—something that park builders were now including in their designs (*Buffalo Commercial Advertiser*, 1868; Olmsted, Vaux, & Company, 1870).

. . . Facilities for . . . recreation must be provided within easy walking distance of every home in the city. Any plan that deliberately stops short of such provision and leaves any considerable neighborhoods permanently without the benefit of accessible parks and playground for local use, while providing other districts with such facilities at the general expense, is in so far illogical, unjust,

undemocratic and unwise. We may say, then, that in a reasonably well-planned city there should be, within easy reach of every family of citizens, local or neighborhood grounds; places for active games and exercises, for public concerts and other similar passive pleasures, and for the enjoyment of spaciousness, of refreshing beauty, of the freshness of verdure and especially of airiness, in so far as such enjoyment may be attainable under the controlling conditions. The city of Chicago is now proceeding upon the principle that no dwelling should be more than half a mile from grounds adapted to serve the local purposes. . . . Indeed, since mothers and babies in need of recreation grounds and young boys and girls in want of playgrounds cannot be induced to walk more than a very short distance, such neighborhood grounds ought if possible to be brought within a quarter of a mile of every dwelling (Gilbert & Olmsted, 1910: 35. See also *Report of the Special Park Commission Upon a Metropolitan Park System*, 1904).

The continuing concern over the nature of working class recreation combined with a general realization that active sports did not necessarily mean idleness, immorality and depravity, slowly changed the way the middle class viewed playgrounds and the activities that occurred in them. In fact, the growing sentiment at the turn of the century was that exercise and activity was healthy (see Fine, 1987; Guttman, 1988). Despite their relentless drive to produce better workers and more responsible citizens through structured passive recreation, the reformers realized that they no longer controlled or defined working class recreation. Far from throwing in the towel, the reformers turned their attention to setting the standards for, and choosing and laying out the equipment in working class playgrounds. The social construction of the park changed from a place of undirected activity to a place where activities should be supervised and monitored. They focused on designing parks wherein the activities and the participants could be easily regulated and monitored. In addition, the social service organizations like the Boy's Clubs started to offer supervised recreation and companies began to sponsor sports teams. Reformers formed the Playground Association of America in 1906; the organization concentrated on children and playgrounds. Their logic being that by working with children they could accomplish two ends: reduce juvenile delinquency and the second, socialize children into their roles as workers and citizens (Rosenzweig, 1983). They also embarked on the project of specifying the number of playgrounds cities should have, redesigning the playgrounds by choosing and laying out the equipment in ways that maximized control over the user; i.e., the type, range, and execution of the activities were dictated by the equipment. Playgrounds were fenced to further constrain spontaneity. They also started supervising the playgrounds. As one user noted, "on the vacant lot we can do as we please, when we have a fenced playground it becomes an institution" (Lee, 1929; Gans, 1993; Rosenzweig, 1983).

Park supervision was not left to chance. Over time the job became more professionalized and park supervisors (also called park leaders) underwent intensive training. For instance, a textbook (*The Normal Course of Play*) for

professional park leaders was published in 1909 and in 1913 cities like Chicago began holding training institutes (Cranz, 1982).

Nonetheless, the working class rejected the middle class model of park behavior, and recreational activities and defined a vibrant recreational alternative for themselves. Conceding the trend was irreversible, reformers adopted a similar strategy to the one they used when they realized that they were losing control over working class women's leisure (see Peiss, 1986). They abandoned attempts to confront and influence groups directly, instead they sought to exercise control through the policy arena, by setting standards, controlling the physical environment in which play occurs, and by increasing the level of direct supervision. Even with this more oblique approach, working class children still rebelled against the intrusion into their lives.

The new social control efforts did not go unnoticed. For instance, in 1912, the *Worcester Telegram* ran a series of articles criticizing what they perceived to be excessive scrutiny and supervision of the working class. The articles contained excerpts of interviews with twenty children, all of whom expressed animosity and disdain for the level of adult supervision and attempts to control their activities in the playgrounds. Many claimed they stopped paying attention to the supervisors or had stopped visiting the playgrounds. An eleven year-old stated, "I can't go to the playgrounds now, they get on me nerves with so many men and women around telling us what to do." Another 14 year-old interviewee said, "I can't see any fun playing as school ma'ams say we must play." One group of boys resisted this authority by forming their own baseball team outside the domain of the playground league. Children claimed they found the playground stories silly but applauded the renditions because they were told to do so (Rosenzweig, 1983; *Worcester Sunday Telegram*, 1912).

The efforts of the working class to reshape the goals of park reformers and influence designs of the urban parks were not confined to Worcester. Similar conflicts occurred in other cities. For example, soon after Olmsted designed the Buffalo park system, large numbers of immigrants settled near these parks. There were complaints of rowdiness, vandalism, and improper use of public parks, so the parks were redesigned in line with working-class usage (Rosenzweig, 1987).

Peiss' study of working-class women's leisure in New York City also support the findings in Worcester. Working-class people continued to define their leisure in opposition to middle-class perspectives and took control of local park space. Peiss found that the most common form of recreation, especially among very poor families were free. Therefore, the streets and the parks were popular among working-class families. She wrote, "On hot summer nights in Jackson Park, close to the East River, the men were in their undershirts. The women, more fully dressed, carried newspapers for fans. Hordes of barefoot children played games, weaving in and out of the always thick mass of promenaders" (Peiss, 1986).

*The Emergence of Multiple-Use Parks*

So, while the Worcester working class residents were defining the kinds of playground they wanted—calling for public multiple-use recreation space—less than 50 miles away in Boston, MEHA was making unilateral decisions about the recreational needs of working class children and their families. The MEHA activists were laying out sterile sand gardens in fenced yards. One can see the sharp distinctions between working class notions of a playground and the middle class perceptions what kinds of playgrounds should be constructed for the working class. Even in Worcester where the working class was quite active in park decisions, middle and working class neighborhoods got different kinds of parks. Worcester park plans called for the development of scenic parks on the West Side and two playgrounds on the East Side. Despite this, struggles continued over the maintenance and use of park space. Most money was spent on the parks in middle class neighborhoods and people soon noted that Worcester had created a separate and unequal system of “class parks” (Rosenzweig, 1987). Two playgrounds did little to ease the overcrowding in working class neighborhoods. Demand for park space was so great that people wanting to use the baseball diamond in Crompton Park (one of the East Side playgrounds) had to camp on the field the night before to secure it. An 1887 letter to the *Worcester Daily Times* raised the issue of the continued inadequacy of parks and playgrounds in working class neighborhoods, “Our suburban retreats are dotted all over with notices to “Keep off under Penalty of Law”. [Only the rich can afford excursions to the] seashore and mountain. Where then are the masses of people to seek for rest and recreation, sunshine and the refreshing breezes of summertime?” (*Worcester Daily Times*, 1887)

In 1877, a working-class local, seemingly steeped in pastoral Transcendentalism and describing himself as a “Liberty Loving Citizen,” questioned the prerogative of the middle class to prescribe working-class behavior and monopolize the lakes and other recreational resources. He also argued that the reason why the middle-class were being unreasonable in expecting the working-class to spend Sundays in church rather than relaxing in the parks and playgrounds. Linking class inequality with recreational inequality, he wrote:

I question very much the right of one class of people to dictate to another class the manner in which they shall worship God or spend the Sabbath. It may indeed be very well for people of ample means, who have plenty of leisure on week days to ride around and enjoy the country air and scenery, to attend church and worship God there on Sunday, but these gentlemen must bear in mind that all the good people of Worcester are not thus favored. A very large majority of all who visit the Lake on Sunday are people who are confined to shops ten hours in a day, six days in the week, myself among that number. Now, if the gentlemen were to have their way, when should we ever see our beautiful Lake Jewel, to bathe in its limpid waters, to glide over its glassy surface, or ramble in its groves or upon its verdant shores? Do these gentlemen think that

working people have no love of the beautiful, have no admiration for God made manifest in the flowers, grass, or trees? Must my appetite be satiated by church ceremonies when it craves the broad open fields, the waving trees, the fragrant flowers and God's pure air and azure sky, filled with its myriad warblers who know no Sunday, but praise Him as loudly at one time as at another? (*Worcester Evening Gazette*, 1877, May 1).

Because of the limited dialogue between the middle and working class, the middle class again misunderstood the concept of the multiple-use park (the precursor of today's urban parks), that the working class was trying to develop. They also failed to understand the demographics of their clientele—mixed age groups and both genders wanting to recreate in the same space at the same time. Such groupings desire a variety of recreational opportunities in the same park space. So the middle class went from designing contemplative pastoral recreation spaces for tranquilizing recreation to sterile playgrounds oriented to active, male-dominated sports. They did not recognize that though the working class rebelled against some park rules and advocated active recreation spaces, the working class was attracted to pastoral and picturesque landscapes also. The working class did not necessarily see these two recreational spaces (areas of pastoral scenery and spaces for active recreation) as mutually exclusive areas. The middle class park builders did not did not conceive of the multiple-use play space needed and desired by the working class. In addition to space dedicated to playing sports and games, there was a severe need for children's play areas, paths to stroll and promenade, trees for shade and benches to sit on, flowers and shrubbery to admire, rural vistas to emerge one's self in.

As the following discussion shows, by the time the second wave of ethnic groups started to demand parks in Worcester, they were rewarded with stripped-down, minimalist, barely-adequate ball fields. It wasn't long before other ethnic groups copied the model of activism of the Irish East Siders in their quest for park space. In the late 1890s, the Swedish wireworkers of Quinsigamond Village campaigned for a playground in the center of their village. The city finally acquiesced and purchased Greenwood Park in 1905; it was proclaimed a "park for sport" in which no special attention was paid to flowers or shrubbery. Soon other Worcester ethnic working class neighborhoods launched campaigns for park acquisition. In 1901, the English carpet weavers petitioned for a park on College Hill (Rosenzweig, 1983).

Ironically, the discriminatory approach to park development, whereby the working class had access to fewer, poorly equipped and maintained parks, increased the level of discontent and ensured that working class people continued to seek out and use parks in middle class neighborhoods. Consequently, when Worcester's East Siders chose to use parks outside of their neighborhoods, the battle over proper park behavior raged unabated. In the East Side parks, working-class park behavior was, for the most part, understood, condoned or ignored (Rosenzweig, 1987). Because of the cramped living conditions in the East Side, many activities like lounging around, sleeping, drinking, courtship, and sexual activities, that can be privatized when

one has ample living quarters, were conducted in public because people had no choice. In addition, high unemployment rates contributed to the number of people hanging around the parks. For example, during the 1893 recession more than 400 jobless men were counted on the Common in one afternoon (Rosenzweig, 1983). The middle class sought to criminalize or label these activities (and those partaking in them) as immoral and inappropriate. Thus conflicts were frequent and tensions were high.

Because of continuing class conflicts, the workers' fight for parks and the obvious need for more open space in the city, by 1907 the Worcester park commissioners gradually began to endorse the petitions for more public recreation space throughout the city. That same year, the newly-elected mayor of Worcester declared in his inaugural address, "modern industry and commerce should bear its share of the cost in providing a suitable place, conveniently located near the home of the workman, where, after the day's toil is ended, he can with his wife and children breathe a little of God's pure air." In 1908, voters helped to pass the Massachusetts Playground Act, which mandated that cities provide at least one playground for every 20,000 residents (Rosenzweig, 1983).

It should be noted also that the Worcester working class was not alone in its park advocacy in the 1890s. In New York, labor unions and other working class activists stood in defense of Central Park when a group of wealthy entrepreneurs tried to build a speedway in the park.<sup>17</sup> The unions argued against ruining the character of the park because it had special value to working class families who couldn't afford to go to the mountains or sea shore for the summer (Cranz, 1982; Sargent, 1892; Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997; *New-York Daily Tribune*, 1886). In addition, efforts were underway in many cities to build parks in working class neighborhoods. For instance, in 1897 activists lobbied for a park in the Mission District of San Francisco. A year later, a grand jury investigation of the city's Parks Department opposed further acquisition of land unless it was on the city's crowded East Side. In 1901 a playground was established in a working class neighborhood and three years later bonds were issued to finance the building of two more playgrounds. Similar efforts were underway in New York City where five small parks were built in 1898. Four of these parks were located on the lower East Side in the midst of the immigrant districts. A special commission was established on Chicago's South Side to establish parks close to working class neighborhoods (Cranz, 1982; Beveridge & Hoffman, 1997). The Worcester decision to build sport-oriented fields was another aspect of a nationwide trend seen in the 1890s to accommodate vigorous athletic activities. Parks were built with less concern for picturesque landscapes. Instead they were filled with ball fields and bicycle paths, etc. Older parks in New York, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco also began making room for these activities.

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<sup>17</sup>Despite the fact that there were horse trotting races in Central Park, the Greensward design avoided long straight lines in order to discourage trotting matches (Cranz, 1982).

## Conclusion

Throughout the nineteenth century, the social construction of urban parks changed as working class park users and middle class elites sought to define, manage and use these parks in ways that reinforced their tastes. The leading landscape architects and park advocates believed that parks were important instruments of enlightenment and social control. Consequently, they praised and promoted parks for their health-giving characteristics and character-molding capabilities. Landscape architects used these arguments to convince city governments to invest in elaborate urban parks. Many of these parks soon became the focal points of labor and social justice unrest. As the middle and working class mingled in these spaces, conflicts arose over appropriate park use and behavior. The escalating tensions between the middle and working class led to working class activism for increased access to park space and for greater latitude in defining working class leisure behavior. These struggles laid the foundation for the recreation movement and were pivotal in the emergence of urban, multiple-use parks designed for both active and passive recreation.

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