

The Olmstedes in Pittsburgh: (Part II) Shaping the Progressive City

by John F. Bauman and Edward K. Muller



WITH the help of the prominent Boston landscaping firm of Olmsted Brothers, Pittsburgh's wealthiest citizens fashioned a beautiful and orderly private world in the suburban East End and the Sewickley area. With the same verve, they undertook to redesign and to order the public universe outside the stone portals guarding their landscaped estates. George Nicola's visionary civic center in Oakland, and Edward Bigelow's Schenley Park mirrored some of that reformist energy. But, as this second of two articles on "The Olmstedes in Pittsburgh" argues, the crusade to make over the urban-industrial environment went deeper than the quest for beauty for beauty's sake.¹

The reform-minded among the region's rich ascribed the appalling state of the urban landscape — the teeming, moldering slums, the narrow unlit courts and alleys, the traffic-congested streets, and the tangle of railroad yards — to the irrational greed and competition of nineteenth century industrial capitalism. Now, in the enlightened 20th century, they believed reason prevailed. Guided by scientific and bureaucratic-minded experts, order could be restored to the urban environment, making it safer, healthier, more efficient, more humane, more socially harmonious, and, of equal importance, more profitable for business.

Between 1906 and 1911, Pittsburgh reformers fully embraced the gospel of urban progressivism, especially the belief in the need to control rationally the use of urban space. At last, when these progressive political forces had sufficiently coalesced in 1909, they sponsored the city's first urban plan, and

for their planner they chose Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., a familiar and trusted figure, best known among the elite for his firm's private landscaping in Pittsburgh. Olmsted, in 1909, stood at the center of the young urban planning movement. His work as a professional consultant on Pittsburgh planning looms as a benchmark in both Pittsburgh and planning history. Olmsted bequeathed a significant legacy; in addition to his impact on the Pittsburgh landscape, he instilled an ethos of city planning, which survived despite early falterings.

At the turn of the century, reform-minded Pittsburghers struggled in their battle for urban-environmental change. In 1901, when John C. Olmsted and the younger Frederick Law Olmsted were still carving their reputation in the world of private and public landscaping, Pittsburgh appeared environmentally debased and hopelessly politically corrupt. Despite Nicola's Oakland and Bigelow's Schenley Park, the City Beautiful movement in Pittsburgh progressed haltingly and in piecemeal fashion; it hardly addressed the larger issue of urban squalor and decay.² Reform-minded groups such as the Civic Club of Allegheny County, the Chamber of Commerce and the Voter's League blamed much of this urban blight on corrupt machine politics. Significantly, in his recent book *Making Iron and Steel*, John Ingham attributed the "great ferment of progressivism" in Pittsburgh to the social and political anxieties of the city's major iron and steel families, especially their concern that the city's Republican political machine blocked members of the elite community from exerting moral control over working class behavior. Ingham identified the East End's Calvary Episcopal Church and its minister, the Rev. George Hodges, as a hive of late 19th century and early 20th century reform. Inspired by the English clergyman Charles Kingsley, founder of London's Toynbee Hall, the home of the settlement house movement, Hodges beseeched his elite East End parishioners to bridge the chasm separating them from the denizens of Soho and the lower Hill District. Hodge's message ignited the social conscience of the elite, including George Guthrie, Henry D.W. English, a board member of several large city corpo-

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rations including United States Glass, locomotive manufacturer H. Kirke Porter, and Joseph Buffington.³

Moreover, when mass markets and bureaucratic rationalization engendered the restructuring of industry and commerce, business elites regarded their traditional costly "arrangements" with boss politicians such as Pittsburgh's Christopher Magee and William Flinn as increasingly intolerable. Elite and upper middle class civic leaders excoriated not only the corrupt and expensive "ring" control of city contracts, but also the decentralized ward-based politics that validated immigrant working class values over what they perceived as the enlightened "normal" interest of the "commonweal." By restructuring urban politics, they sought to regain control of an urban environment that they saw in disarray.⁴

In 1906 Pittsburgh elected a Democratic reform mayor, George W. Guthrie. A socially prominent lawyer, a communicant at Calvary Episcopal, and a longstanding member of the Civil Service Reform Association, Guthrie perfectly fit the mold of a 19th century Pittsburgh reformer. A typical "Gilded Age" good government crusader, Guthrie believed the panacea for urban ills was installing the "best men" in office. In his own words, he had been "counted out" by the Flinn-Magee machine as the Municipal League's 1896 anti-ring mayoral candidate. Undaunted, between 1896 and 1905, in alliance with CCAC president and Municipal League founder Oliver McClintock and A. Leo Weil of the Voter's League, Guthrie battled the ring over such reform issues as clean water, smoke abatement and the annexation of peripheral communities to form a Greater Pittsburgh. Lincoln Steffens's 1903 broadside "Pittsburgh: A City Ashamed" fueled Guthrie's anti-ring campaign, which finally succeeded in February 1906.⁵

As a Democratic mayor tilting against machine-controlled Republican legislative councils, Guthrie faced almost insurmountable political odds. The 1907 annexation of adjoining Allegheny City merely buttressed machine domination. Accordingly, few of Guthrie's reforms happened. However, he introduced "economic" management of city departments, scrupulously awarded city contracts, and successfully persuaded the Pennsylvania Railroad to vacate Liberty Avenue for an elevated right-of-way adjoining Duquesne Way.

Nevertheless, if Progressivism can be defined at least in part as the upheaval of civic outrage against the physical ugliness and social injustice wrought by industrialism, and as a moral crusade against the axis of corporate greed and boss politics, then the years 1906-1910 mark a shining moment in Pittsburgh history. Reformers hailed Guthrie's election as the "People's Victory" and "the passing of the old individualism." A blend of civic consciousness, civic

outrage, and millenarian optimism energized the progressive "search for order" that informed the social and moral environmentalism of the era.⁶ That passion aside, apparently the defining moment in Pittsburgh's reform history unfolded less dramatically. In March 1906, several months before Guthrie took office, Alice B. Montgomery, chief probation officer of the Allegheny County Juvenile Court — inspired by an article in the social work journal *Charities and Commons* reporting a study of social problems in Washington, D.C. — wrote the journal editors, Edward Devine and Paul Underwood Kellogg, requesting a similar study in Pittsburgh. Kellogg accepted. Montgomery won endorsements for the survey from Pittsburgh's small but growing band of upper class reformers including William Matthews, headworker at the Kingsley settlement house, and Judge Joseph Buffington of the U.S. Circuit Court. Pittsburgh's new reform-oriented Chamber of Commerce, headed by Calvary Episcopal's Henry D.W. English, sponsored the survey, and the CCAC pledged financial support which was rendered unnecessary when the Russell Sage Foundation allocated \$7,000 to underwrite the whole study.⁷

A sociological tour de force carried out by such expert social surveyors as Elizabeth Butler, Margaret Byington and John Fitch, the study exposed the dichotomy between the efficient industrial production in the Pittsburgh district and the resulting social and environmental degradation. By blaming the worst social injustice on Morgan interests and other "outside" owners of Pittsburgh capital, historian John Ingham contends, the survey "deliberately" served the interest of Pittsburgh elites in their effort to maintain corporate as well as social control over the destiny of the city. Nevertheless, Kellogg's exposures, serialized in *Charities and Commons* and reported regularly in the local and national press, stung the pride and sensibilities of Pittsburgh's wealthy leaders.⁸ They also fueled crusading passions and excited a vision of an environmentally purified city. In 1907 the Carnegie Institute and the Pittsburgh Chapter of the American Institute of Architects hosted a graphic presentation of Pittsburgh as "The City Beautiful." The imagined city featured not only Nicola's Oakland, but also a redesigned modern downtown replete with a dazzling Beaux Arts civic center, graced by a baroque plaza and wide tree-lined boulevard.⁹

A year later Pittsburgh's Municipal League, the American Civic Association, the Tuberculosis League and the CCAC combined forces to hold the first Civic Exhibit. Guthrie chaired the event whose organizers included Voter's League head Weil, the Municipal League's McClintock, as well as the architects T. E. Billiquist and Benno Jannsen. In addition to displaying slum photographs and other graphic documentary materials from the ongoing Pittsburgh Survey, the show featured Benjamin

Marsh's exhibit on the congested population of New York City and a presentation of Pittsburgh's new water filtration works near Aspinwall. Almost simultaneously, in 1908, the Voter's League launched an investigation into political graft which in 1910 produced the convictions and imprisonment of over a dozen Pittsburgh bankers and city councilmen. To celebrate the city's great "victory for civic righteousness" and the success of the Pittsburgh Survey, city reformers in 1910 staged a giant rally at Exposition Hall at the Point, where before an audience of over 4,500 people the nation's No. 1 Progressive, Col. Theodore Roosevelt, praised the city's "fight for the right," its "battle for the cause of decency and righteousness."¹⁰

The Pittsburgh Survey treated the urban-industrial environment as a complex comprising numerous sectors: iron- and steel-making, the ethnic household, housing, traffic, education and social welfare. By rooting urban problems in complex regional-economic causes unresponsive to piecemeal reform, the survey both posited and begged a comprehensive planning perspective. Charles Mulford Robinson, the leading exponent of "Civic Improvement," and founder of the American Civic Association, stated this succinctly in his brief report for the survey, "Civic Improvement Possibilities of Pittsburgh." Robinson noted the "curious mingling of antagonistic conditions" in Pittsburgh, the "great wealth and squalor... side by side," and "the royal munificence and public benefaction [which] goes with a niggardliness that as yet denies to many children a decent place to play...." "What Pittsburgh wants," wrote Robinson in February 1909, "what she has done and dreamed, what she must do as a community for her improvement, — these are the questions for the citizens of Greater Pittsburgh, if 'greater' is to have all its true significance *Surely, if ever a city needed the definite plan that an outside commission could make for it, it is Pittsburgh.*"¹¹ (authors' emphasis)

Guthrie in 1909 seized Robinson's advice and created the Pittsburgh Civic Commission, comprised of prominent "public spirited citizens" who were charged "to achieve as brilliantly in municipal affairs as in private undertakings." The commission was "to plan and promote improvements in civic and industrial conditions which affect the health, convenience, education, and general welfare of the Pittsburgh industrial district, [and] to create public opinion in favor of such improvements."¹² Presided over by Henry English, past president of the Chamber of Commerce, and with officers such as industrialist H.J. Heinz and Allen T. Burns of the Chicago Commons — next to Hull House, it was one of the Windy City's most respected settlements — the commission boasted over 100 members organized into 14 committees. The responsibilities of those committees seemed lifted directly from the Pittsburgh Survey:

Rapid Transit, Charitable Institutions, Industrial Accidents, Public Hygiene and Sanitation, Municipal Research and Efficiency, Ward Organization, and City Planning. Unlike the CCAC, no women sat on the commission. The charge impelling these committees — "to study the progressive policies of other cities, to grasp ... actual local conditions ... [and] formulate plans by which evils can be removed and necessary improvements made" — epitomized the progressive spirit. But, no less important in that vein was the commission's assurance that the execution of its plans would be "secured through creating an effective and persistent public opinion in their favor."¹³

Despite its avowed purpose, the commission mainly ignored the social side of the progressive equation, favoring instead "practical" or physical solutions.¹⁴ Burns, like his upper class/professional colleagues on the commission, attributed the city's abysmal social record to the chaos of 19th century competitive capitalism which had bequeathed a mottled, unplanned, inefficient twentieth century form. Historian Richard Fogelson has observed that although American corporate leaders dreaded the anti-capitalist implications of planning, by 1909 they conceded the rational necessity of imposing some social or public control over the use of urban space.¹⁵ A bevy of proposals for environmental reform in American cities existed at the time for flood control, sewerage improvements, subways, and water purification. What Pittsburgh needed, civic commission secretary Burns told the first meeting of the National Conference on City Planning and the Problems of Congestion, was "a city plan comprehending as many, in fact more, of all the fundamental features in city life than any plan yet made in America."¹⁶

Burns participated in the May 1909 national conference in Washington because Benjamin Marsh had advertised the conference as an opportunity to move city planning away from City Beautiful aesthetics toward the weightier sphere of social, hygienic, and economic concerns. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. spoke at the first session. The peripatetic Olmsted had just returned from "some months of hurried travel in Europe devoted to the study of urban planning." His speech praised Europe's "conscious and organized public effort at city planning," which he found

Many of
Olmsted's urban
beautification
ideas were
inspired in part
by travels to
European cities in
the years right
before his public
work in
Pittsburgh.

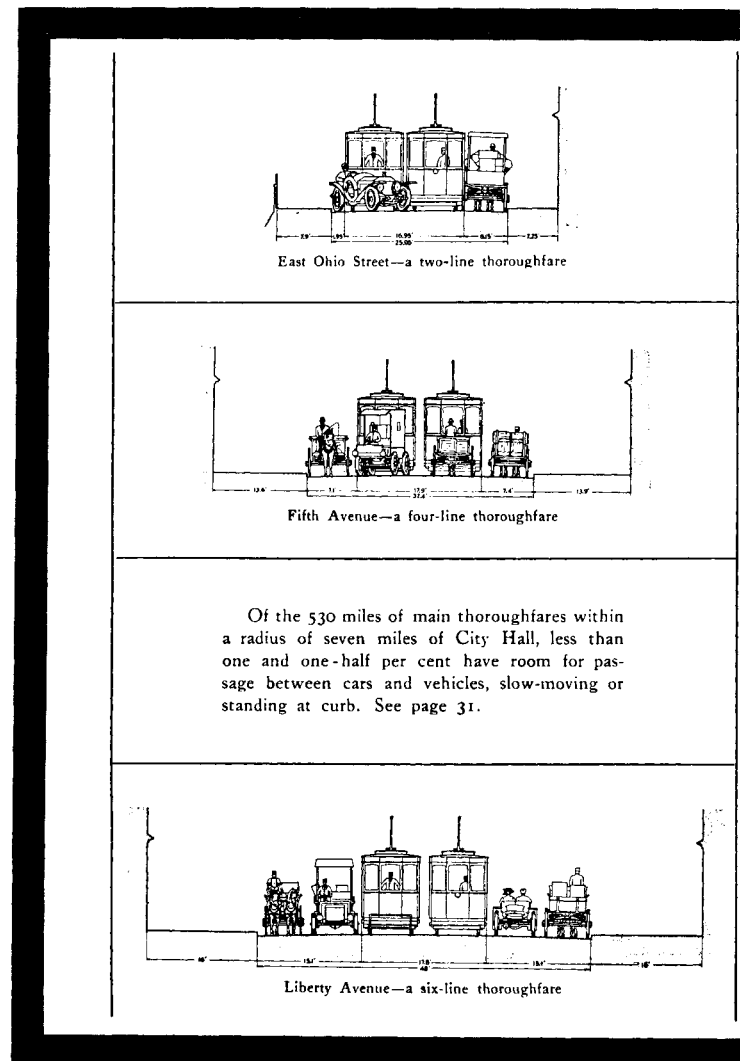
particularly evident in its design of wide streets and main thoroughfares.

As Olmsted spoke in 1909, America's embryonic city planning profession existed in a twilight realm somewhere between the architectural world visible in the building of urban parks, tree-lined Haussmannesque boulevards, and Beaux Arts civic centers, and the civic engineering sphere responsible for sewers, waterworks and street design. Olmsted's European tour compelled him to rethink the future development of American cities. Americans, he noted, had long recognized the "deficiency in their main thoroughfares, whether resulting from a wholly unregulated natural growth of local streets, or from... a mechanical standardizing plan such as has so often prevailed both in English and American towns." He espied the advent of "a far broader, deeper, wiser attitude than that which merely set as an arbitrary minimum of street widths and establishes a mechanical method of agglomerating block after block..." This new attitude, asserted Olmsted, recognizes that "the ultimate purpose of city planning is not to provide facilities for certain kinds of transportation or to obtain certain architectural effects, but is to direct the physical development of the city by every means of control within the power of the municipality in such a manner that the ordinary citizen will be able to live and labor under conditions as favorable to health, happiness and productive efficiency as his means will permit."¹⁷

In his speech, studded with references to French, Swiss, and German land use practice and law, Olmsted elevated the nascent art of city planning to a new scientific level, and himself to the deanship of the young profession. He proposed a process whereby cities might escape the "hapless fatalism" that perpetuated social and physical ugliness, and leap beyond the dabbling with beauty. Planning must integrate beauty with practicality. Burns and the Pittsburgh Civic Commission had found their planner. Pittsburgh's practical-minded elites had first embraced the Olmsteds as private landscapers and engaged the firm for some civic projects such as the Schenley Hotel and Allegheny Cemetery; they were comfortable with the Olmsteds and trusted their aesthetic judgement in private landscaping matters. Now they discovered another forte of the Olmsted firm: planning the "City Useful."

On behalf of the Pittsburgh Civic Commission, on June 9, 1909 Burns invited Olmsted to visit the city and consider devising "a complete plan for the whole Pittsburgh industrial district." Forthwith, Olmsted agreed to assemble a team of experts who would undertake "a preliminary examination of the situation" and prepare a report on the "means of bringing about a more orderly and systematically planned development of the controllable physical features of the Pittsburgh Industrial District."¹⁸

Olmsted enlisted the noted traffic expert Bion J. Arnold and hydraulics engineer John R. Freeman, and by Christmas submitted a preliminary report that treated the issues of thoroughfares, mass transportation, sewers and water supply from the viewpoint of the whole industrial district. The report outlined as well the need for a more thorough study of, among other things, the city's freight-handling facilities, parks and playgrounds, local passenger railways, flood and pure water problems, public markets and main thoroughfares. These detailed studies were to follow; and therefore, for the final report the PCC ordered Olmsted to narrow his focus to the downtown district, including the "design of a thoroughfare system for the outlying suburban district... where open country is being converted into streets and lots."¹⁹ Olmsted contracted with the civic commission to spend at least six days a month in the city, and assigned Edward Whiting from his Brookline office to oversee daily operations in Pittsburgh. Whiting



collected reams of demographic, economic, traffic, engineering and other data from both European and American sources. Basic questions about the form and use of urban space drove Whiting's international search for information: How are streets used? How are rivers used? How do street grades and widths affect the intensity of street use? Can we relate street size and design to property values?²⁰

The Plan

For an architect-planner aspiring to position the youthful planning profession in the vanguard of modern progressivism, Pittsburgh presented an ideal venue. Olmsted's invitation itself stemmed from the Pittsburgh Survey, in which Robinson pleaded for an urban plan. Indeed, Paul U. Kellogg, together with such prominent urban progressives as Robert A. Woods, Graham Taylor, and Robert de Forest, comprised the civic commission's advisory board. However, Olmsted's vision of planning transcended

the "municipal housekeeping" agenda of many commission members. With Woods and Taylor, Olmsted viewed the modern city as "a mosaic" of functioning parts, "a complex of interrelated systems."²¹ Social and economic efficiency derived from the rational integration of streets, thoroughfares, sewers, water systems, housing, markets, and public buildings into an organic unity that encompassed the urban core as well as the expanding suburban periphery. These progressives viewed tortuous, ill-paved streets, and typhoid-laden water supplies, as well as boss-ruled government, as a costly burden for consumers, manufacturers, and retail businessmen. According to Harold F. Howland, the "practical" steel-and-money-making men of Pittsburgh embraced scientific "City Useful" planning. Efficient arterial highways facilitated commerce and communications and enriched the city. Unfortunately, bemoaned Olmsted, planners "had not always made it clear that... in a well ordered municipal life, civic beauty should be as clearly the by-product of utility as individuals' happiness should be a by-product of healthy living. Civic beauty in its most healthy and normal development is the nearly inevitable by-product of the most absolute civic utility, of efficiency and fitness."²²

Olmsted's completed plan, entitled *Pittsburgh, Main Thoroughfares and the Down Town District: Improvements Necessary to Meet the City's Present and Future Needs*, dealt narrowly as the title implied with "remodeling in the downtown district and improvement of main traffic between the heart of the city and the outlying districts." He defined his planning task as being "to rearrange and improve what had been unwisely done [in the past, and to] wisely and economically layout what still remained to be done." Nevertheless, Olmsted's recommendations for widened streets, tunnels, and broad boulevards linking the East End and South Hills suburbs to the downtown for functional, accessible waterfronts, and for the systematization of keeping and updating municipal maps and other vital planning data, embodied the essence of the new "City Practical."²³

Many of the ideas contained in Olmsted's report had simmered for years on various city back burners. These included a plan to reduce the steep grades of the Grant's Hill hump, which impeded wagon traffic and other commerce approaching Grant Street at the key intersections of Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh avenues and, in Olmsted's words, prevented the area from becoming "a first class commercial district." Guthrie in 1906 had ranked the "hump cut" project a priority. Three years later, in 1909, the next mayor, William Magee, who had built his mayoral campaign on a pro-development platform, immediately pressed the councils to approve cutting the hump, widening Diamond Street, building a new city hall, and modernizing the city's waterfronts. Magee asked Olmsted

PITTSBURGH CIVIC COMMISSION

PITTSBURGH MAIN THOROUGHFARES AND THE DOWN TOWN DISTRICT

IMPROVEMENTS NECESSARY TO
MEET THE CITY'S PRESENT AND
FUTURE NEEDS

A Report

BY

FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED

Prepared under the direction of The Committee on City Planning

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to submit his hump cut recommendations in July, five months before his report deadline. The Boston architect urged the city to lower the hump by 15 to 16 feet, to widen radically what he considered as the three main downtown thoroughfares— Fifth and Sixth avenues and Diamond Street — and to extend Grant Street through to Webster. Olmsted viewed Fifth, Sixth and Diamond as “natural arteries” leading to the city’s four main east-west thoroughfares of Fifth, Forbes, Penn and Liberty avenues, and stressed the importance of increased traffic flow from the downtown to “the great areas lying between Bellefield, East Liberty and Homestead.” In his plan a fifth “high-level” artery (later to be called the Boulevard of the Allies) should extend along the Monongahela hillside from Forbes Street to the Glenwood Bridge in Hazelwood. Significant action was ultimately taken on all of these projects. Indeed, work began on the hump cut within months of Olmsted’s report.²⁴

The South Hills tunnel project had been brewing since 1908. Indeed, two proposals for such a tunnel faced Olmsted in 1910. Highway Commissioner Edward Bigelow, allied with a group of South Hills residential land developers, favored a low-tunnel approach. Frank Gosser of the South Hills Board of Trade backed the high-tunnel route. Persuaded by Gosser, Olmsted adopted the shorter 2,000-foot-long, higher tunnel, believing as Gosser did that it

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afforded greater and easier access to the already settled South Hills region, including the suburbs of Dormont, Beechview and Mount Lebanon. Ultimately Bigelow and the South Hills real estate developers triumphed. Work finally began in 1920 on a lower, 6,000 foot-long-tunnel whose southern portal emptied traffic into the Liberty Avenue valley near Bell Tavern. Although the city spurned Olmsted’s triangulations for the tunnel

project, his bridge site recommendations were followed, and his emphasis on the crucial significance of the project for regional growth helped spur action.²⁵

Olmsted’s *Main Thoroughfares* plan highlighted the South Hills Bridge (now the Liberty Bridge) as the eastern gateway to a proposed Pittsburgh Civic Center, the planner’s nod to the enduring vitality of the City Beautiful idea. This idea, too, did not originate with Olmsted; nor would it disappear after his departure. No matter how “practical” they imagined themselves, civic leaders in 1910 demanded a magnificent civic center. Boosterism infused urban

progressivism, and in urban ichnographic terms cathedral-like civic centers visually proclaimed the victory of civic virtue over the demons of political corruption, typhoid fever, smoke, and traffic congestion.

Olmsted treated the Civic Center as a necessary, albeit not indispensable, part of the downtown urban fabric. It fit as much into his scheme for traffic articulation as into his plans for a new city hall. Keenly sensitive to landscape considerations, Olmsted quickly identified the site for the center: a dreary, billboard-defiled freight yard located at the foot of the bluff occupied by the Holy Ghost College, now Duquesne University. According to Whiting, Olmsted found the rugged site “eminently characteristic” of the hilly city. The site, wrote Olmsted in the report, is serendipitously “flanked on the northwest by the noble and distinguished architecture of the court house and the jail — masterpieces of Richardson, priceless examples of the work of one of the few great artists America has yet produced.”²⁶ There, in imitation of Princes Street in Edinburgh, Scotland, and also Park Avenue in New York, Olmsted proposed that “the central area of low ground, occupied by the railroad, be decked over at about the level of Fifth Avenue, and that a great public square with gardens be laid out” modeled after the celebrated public gardens of Europe. About this great square Olmsted would assemble the city’s proposed new public buildings. On the east side of the grand square, “as though terraced on the hillside,” explained Olmsted, “would be the principal municipal building culminating in a tower which would spring from the highest level at Bluff Street, where the playground of the Holy Ghost College could be utilized as a park. The ground enclosing the square would be completed by another building at the north with frontage on Forbes Street, Fifth Avenue, and Sixth Avenue, and by a low building on the south serving to screen the factories and freight yards south of Second Avenue but leaving open the view of the opposite hills.”²⁷ Likewise along the east side of the square with its imperial formal gardens and “ascending gently from Forbes Street,” would run the grand approach to the new South Hills bridge across the Monongahela River.²⁸

Recommending a design for the new city hall proved harder. After rejecting Edward Bennett, of Daniel Burnham and Bennett, as “too high [priced],” and finding that another authority, Cass Gilbert, wasn’t available, Olmsted and PCC Planning Committee Chairman T.E. Billiquist settled upon Wilhelm Bernhard, an architect on Olmsted’s Brookline staff. Already at work on a Pittsburgh waterfront plan, Bernhard was assigned the city hall job as an addition to his workload.²⁹ In mulling over a style for Pittsburgh’s Civic Center, Olmsted, Whiting and Bernhard shunned the Baroque architectural motif

fashionable nationally for civic center design. Bernhard explained to Olmsted that "the disgusting atmosphere of Pittsburgh which annihilates all smaller form details must be considered."³⁰ Olmsted and Whiting unquestionably concurred, urging Bernhard that "a picturesque and happy arrangement of building masses with a faithful adherence to any well defined classical style will lead to the most appropriate and harmonious result. The [site] certainly does not call for any nicely balanced, refined beaux arts architecture."³¹ Pittsburgh, as Olmsted so clearly implied in his report, was not, after all, Paris.

At the Civic Center site, Olmsted promised to transform the mottle of railroad yards, industrial sheds, and billboards plastering the hillside into something functional and beautiful. And he would do the same for Pittsburgh's equally defiled riverfronts. Olmsted assailed as "ineffective and primitive" Pittsburgh's Monongahela wharf, where in 1910 draymen still hauled goods up and down muddy embankments. He contrasted Pittsburgh's antiquated port facilities with the "useful and attractive" riverfront facilities of Paris, Lyon, Frankfurt, and Berlin. In his discussion of Pittsburgh's waterfronts, Olmsted lashed out most vituperatively at the "shortsightedness and wasteful commercialism of the late nineteenth century" America. Europeans were aesthetically more sensitive, charged Olmsted, and combined their working quays with parks and promenades. On the other hand, Americans, believing falsely that economic and useful things were normally ugly, "disregard[ed] what might have been the aesthetic by-product of economic improvement."³²

Working with the Flood Commission, Olmsted proposed to widen Water Street and Duquesne Way into tree-lined riverfront parkways useful for traffic but also "for pedestrians to walk and sit under pleasant conditions, where they can watch the water and the life upon it, where they can enjoy the breadth of outlook and the sight of the open sky and the opposite bank and the reflections in the stream." Olmsted contended that such tree-shaded walks along the commercial streets in Paris, Lyon and hundreds of lesser cities of Europe added greatly to the "comeliness of the city itself, the health and happiness of the people and their loyalty and local pride." He added that "Pittsburgh has an unusual opportunity to secure this incidental value for recreation in the treatment of its riverfront... [because] immediately across the Monongahela are the high and rugged hillsides of Mt. Washington and Duquesne Heights, and below these are the lesser but still striking hills along the Ohio from the West End to McKees Rocks. The outlook over the river with its various activities to these hills immediately beyond, would be notable in any part of the world."³³

Citing Europe again, but ignoring the reality that by 1900 railroad transportation in Pittsburgh had

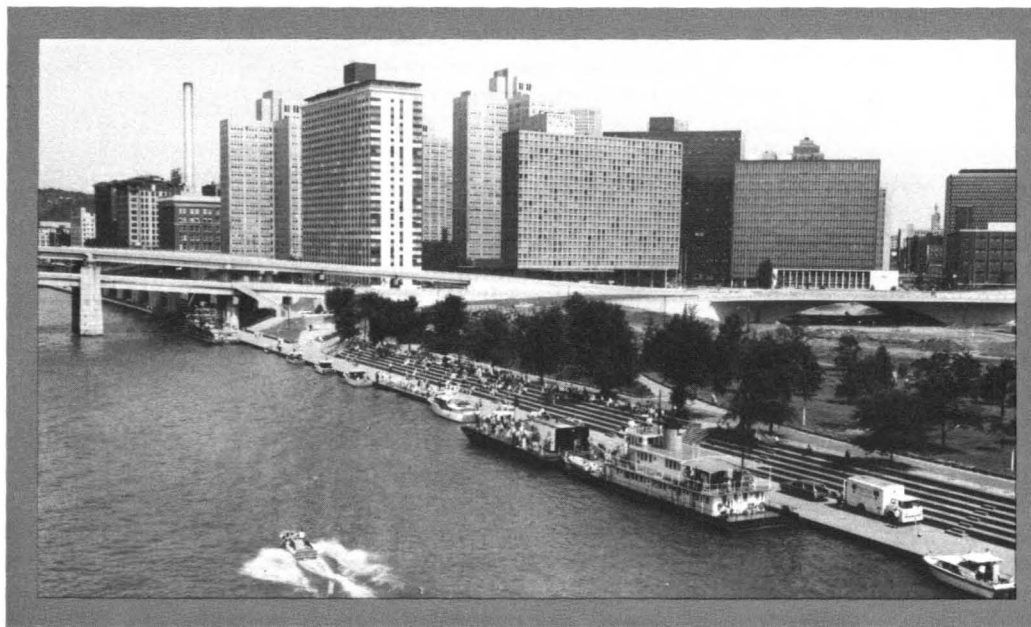
already rendered the city's wharves obsolete for commercial purposes, Olmsted pressed the city to lavishly redesign its waterfront to accommodate both commerce and recreation. In addition to widening Water Street and Duquesne Way, Olmsted recommended a masonry commercial quay, accessible, as in Berlin, from the street by inclined ramps "of reasonable gradient, parallel with the river... and equipped with power cranes for direct loading and unloading between steamers or barges, tied up at the quay, and wagons upon it." Floating landing stages reached by gangplanks and bridges would aid the movement of cargo from ship to shore.³⁴

While in the years after 1911 Pittsburgh decision-makers prudently balked at Olmsted's elaborate plans for a commercially revitalized waterfront (the promenade idea reemerged in the 1970s), the city took seriously another of Olmsted's recommendations for the waterfront. Traffic congestion already jammed Pittsburgh's downtown streets in 1909. According to Olmsted, "an isolated and limited business district like that of Pittsburgh, made up almost wholly of narrow streets and connected with the rest of the city by a series of bridges and of bridge-like gaps in the hills which wall it in... [demands] a wide circuit street connecting these outlets together, so that not all the travel is forced to filter through the midst of the business district." He proposed to utilize Water Street and Duquesne Way not only as part of a waterfront promenade, but as part of an inner loop that would circulate traffic off downtown streets. Olmsted's loop idea long resonated in Pittsburgh planning circles. During the 1920s the Citizens Committee on City Planning pressed the city for what became touted as an Inter-District Traffic Circuit. Although the City Planning Commission adopted the plan in 1925, no action followed. However, the spectacle of downtown streets chronically clogged with traffic kept the idea brewing through the 1930s until parts of it were actually implemented in the 1940s and 1950s.³⁵

Olmsted's imagination soared to almost mystical heights as he pondered the significance of the Pittsburgh waterfront, especially the Point itself. At one level, the Point merely joined the two lines of his waterfront improvement — following the Allegheny and the Monongahela shores. At another, he seized

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upon the historical significance of the Point, although in 1910 the tangle of rail yards, warehouses, and tenements all but obscured the remnants of Fort Pitt



and the blockhouse. As early as August 17, 1910, Olmsted wrote to Whiting that "I think the end of the point ought to have a pointed form projecting beyond and below whatever high level concourse may be designed for the bridge."³⁶ His report affirmed his belief that here the city's "most inspiring associations... are chiefly concentrated, that politically this spot, at the meeting of the rivers, stands for Pittsburgh." Olmsted hoped "that the city [would] rise to its opportunity and nobly form The Point into a great monument." In *Main Thoroughfares*, Olmsted wrote that it was

essential that the whole Point be regarded as one single monument, that no pains be spared in bringing the best artistic skill to bear in working out the details of the plan, and that the general plan, when thus worked out, shall really determine the construction of all the parts. At any time conditions may arise, as in regard to one of the bridges, for which the general plan does not exactly provide; but, if so, the plan should be adapted as a whole to meet the new conditions, so that work may still proceed in accordance with the complete plan. Never can a single feature of The Point safely be designed independent of the rest, if worthy results are to be obtained. And what is true of this great monumental feature is true in large measure of all public improvements in relation to a comprehensive city plan.³⁷

Although purporting to discuss only the "downtown" and "main thoroughfares," Olmsted's report covered much more. Dozens of pages discussed

improvements to intersections and thoroughfares throughout the city. Others were more specific proposals. One, not carried out, called for moving the

city's farmers' market at the historic Market Square nearer to rail connections at Fourth Avenue and Penn Street. Another given more attention urged that the city plan its new suburban streets to conform to the beauty of its naturally hilly terrain, and that it develop a system of parks and recreational facilities.³⁸

In seeking information on parks, streets, property descriptions, assessed valuations, and other planning data, Olmsted and Whiting encountered one

obstacle after another. As early as April 1910 the chief engineer of the Pittsburgh Flood Commission warned Olmsted about the dearth of city survey data available for planning. George Lehman apprised Olmsted "that the city does not even possess reliable ordinary street maps." Replying to Lehman, Olmsted suggested that a exhibit be prepared for Magee detailing the "inaccurate, inconsistent and incomplete" state of current survey data. His 1911 report exhorted Pittsburghers that there was nothing of greater consequence or of "more vital import to every taxpaying citizen of the present and future city... [than] making comprehensive and accurate topographical maps. It is only on the basis of such maps that all municipal engineering, and indeed much other work directly managed by the City, can be planned and carried out with proper economy and efficiency." Such maps, concluded Olmsted, "are absolutely essential to an intelligent planning or control which will avoid the heavy penalties that follow haphazard city growth, especially in such a hilly region."³⁹

Magee, Olmsted, Politics and the *Main Thoroughfares* Report

Clearly Olmsted's report had an impact on the shaping of twentieth century Pittsburgh. As the dean of American city planning, Olmsted affirmed the legitimacy and priority status of long-debated city projects such as the hump cut, the South Hills bridge and tunnel, and the widening of such main arteries as Fifth Avenue and Diamond Street. We have observed earlier that his plan for downtown traffic circulation

remained a fixture of the city planning agenda until implemented after World War II. Likewise, between 1911 and 1916, guided by Olmsted's plan, the city undertook to improve such major thoroughfares as Fifth and Forbes avenues, aiding downtown traffic flow to and from the East End. It also eliminated dangerous grade crossings and reduced steep roadway grades. This work continued into the 1920s, when the city also acted on Olmsted's Boulevard of the Allies recommendation. The city adhered in the short run to Olmsted's appeal to leave Market Square an open space, but from 1914 to 1915 it erected the Diamond Market there. In 1962 that market was torn down, ultimately vindicating Olmsted. And, although it took 40 years, Pittsburgh also heeded Olmsted's injunction to make the Point a shrine to the city's heroic past.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, Olmsted's plan failed to be "municipal conservation," the basis for a comprehensive improvement program for the next 25 years. Olmsted completed his *Main Thoroughfares* report in December 1910. The civic commission published it in March 1911. Articles about the report appeared in Pittsburgh newspapers as well as in *The Outlook*

magazine and *Survey*. But, given the great progressive expectations attending its birth, the report should have attracted greater attention. Its tepid reception forecast the report's failure to become the beacon for Pittsburgh's future development.⁴¹

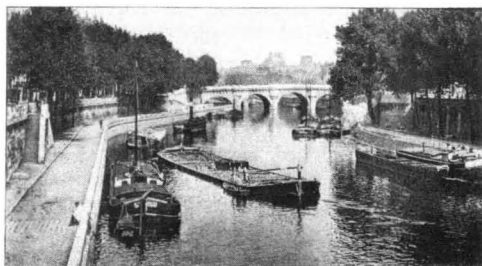
From the outset, Olmsted's plan became embroiled in Progressive Era political battle between the Pittsburgh Civic Commission and William A. Magee, nephew of political boss William Magee. The young Magee had served out his uncle's term in the state Senate. But by 1909 then 36-year-old Magee had emerged as an anti-state political machine reformer who was pro-business and "pro-growth." Unlike his Democratic predecessor, Guthrie, the Republican Magee relished "practical" politics. Moreover, his sizeable 1909 mayoral victory presented him not only with politically compatible city councils, but a stage to carry out his own ambitious pro-growth program of city development.⁴²

The Guthrie-appointed Pittsburgh Civic Commission viscerally opposed Magee, viewing him as a political opportunist whose extravagant development schemes pandered to civic boosterism rather than rationally restructuring the chaotic urban environ-

22 PITTSBURGH—THE DOWN TOWN DISTRICT

ports, and it is along such lines that Pittsburgh still has opportunity for redeeming the sordid aspect of its business center.

Wherever in the world, as an incident of the highways and wharves along its riverbanks, a city has provided opportunity for the people to walk and sit under pleasant conditions where they can watch the water and the life upon it, where they can enjoy the breadth of outlook and the sight of the open sky and the opposite bank and the reflections in the stream, the result has added to the comeliness of the city itself, the health and happiness of the people and their loyalty and local pride. This has been true in the case of a bare, paved promenade, running along like an elevated railroad over the sheds and tracks and derricks of a busy ocean port, as at Antwerp; in the case



How Paris appreciates the value of its river frontage

of a tree-shaded sidewalk along a commercial street with the river quays below it, as at Paris and Lyons and hundreds of lesser cities; and in the case of a broad embankment garden won from the mud-banks by dredging and filling, as at London. Pittsburgh has an unusual opportunity to secure this incidental value for recreation in the treatment of its river front. Immediately across the Monongahela are the high and rugged hillsides of Mt. Washington and Duquesne Heights, and below these are the lesser but still striking hills along the Ohio River from the West End to McKees Rocks. The outlook over the river

THE WATER FRONT

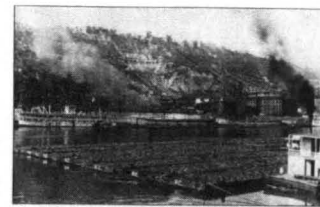
23

with its varied activities to these hills immediately beyond, would be notable in any part of the world. Furthermore, the rivers and the hills are the two big fundamental natural elements characteristic of the Pittsburgh District.



The outlook from The Point, Pittsburgh

Thus, any provision close to the heart of the city, whereby the people can have the enjoyment of these mighty landscapes, is of peculiar importance. It does not diminish the essential grandeur of the situation that the river swarms with barges and steamers; that it is spanned by busy bridges; that the flat lands along the rivers are crowded with railroads, buildings and smoking factories; and that the hillsides are crowned with houses. It is a spacious and impressive landscape in any case. But for the people to get the good of it two things are needful. A locally agreeable place must be provided from which the scene can be enjoyed; and the landscape must be treated with the respect which it deserves, by the elimination of certain features which are merely indicative of neglect, waste, and abuse, and which have no economic justification. Especially is it desirable that the precipitous hillside rising to Mt. Washington, now largely an unfruitful waste, a place of raw gulleys and slides min-



Mt. Washington hillside from the Monongahela water front

Olmsted poured much of his energy into proposing redesigns of downtown Pittsburgh's river fronts — calling them "ineffective and primitive" — and in the pages of his report he contrasts them with the quays in Paris. The French capital's turn-of-the-century shore line treatments resemble those finally built in Pittsburgh in the 1950s. (Photograph top left is from the early 1970s.)

ment. Naturally the commission fought Magee's 1910 \$10 million bond issue proposal for street-widening, a new city hall, waterfront improvements and the hump cut, and heralded Olmsted's report as the authentic blueprint for Pittsburgh's future, not Magee's uncoordinated hodgepodge of projects.⁴³

Campaigning to defeat Magee's bond issue in the fall referendum, the PCC's A.T. Burns pressured Olmsted to quickly finish his *Main Thoroughfares* report. Delaying the report, Burns wrote Olmsted, "is losing for us the opportunity to secure funds and influence improvements."⁴⁴ Lacking Olmsted's recommendations, the PCC engaged two civil engineers to debunk Magee's list of improvements. Magee, however, launched his own flanking movements. He created his own Committee of One Hundred elite citizens, then hosted a gala luncheon where he touted his devotion to comprehensive planning while unveiling his own pro-growth vision of the city's future. Magee won. On November 8 Pittsburgh voters approved the mayor's bond issue 7 to 1.⁴⁵

The bond issue affair left Olmsted's reputation unscathed, but not his plan, which had been tarnished by the PCC's seeming apostasy. Rather than a key event in Pittsburgh's planning history, the publication of Olmsted's plan in March 1911 attracted, as noted, relatively little notice. City newspapers reviewed the plan more as a contribution to the

Olmsted's delays allowed Mayor Magee to pursue his own civic agenda. Press reports praised Olmsted's imagination but said his ideas were 'fit for a capital city, not Pittsburgh.'

literature than as a guide for the city's future development. Press reports praised Olmsted's talent and imagination, while dismissing his plan as "too costly" and "fit for a capital city not Pittsburgh."

But, all the same, Olmsted's influence in Pittsburgh endured. Olmsted and Magee enjoyed friendly relations and mutual respect. Magee actually liked the *Main Thoroughfares* plan, extolling it as a guide for the city's future. In truth, Olmsted's plan only differed with Magee's by a few inches on the mayor's favorite project, the hump cut. Both championed the

South Hills bridge and tunnel, and they concurred as well on the need for a topographical survey and the creation of a Bureau of Surveys.⁴⁶

Esteemed in Pittsburgh as both a talented landscape architect and a brilliant planner, chair of the 1911 National Conference on City Planning, teacher

of Harvard University's first course on urban planning, and putatively the founder of the modern profession of city planning, Olmsted in 1911 bestrode the world of urban planning, despite his fate in Pittsburgh. Just as in the years preceding 1909, after 1911 the Olmsted firm toiled in both the public, quasi-public, and the private sector. As noted in the first article about the Olmsteds' influence in the Pittsburgh region, much of the firm's work in the area from 1911 to 1919 flowed directly from Olmsted's sojourn in Pittsburgh for the *Main Thoroughfares* report. For example, in 1911, at the urging of the civic commission, Pittsburgh created a Department of City Planning overseen by a nine member planning commission. Heavily weighted with civil engineers, nonetheless, the commission also included the notorious contractor-financier William Flinn. Like the Municipal Art Commission, created the same year, the planning commission possessed advisory powers only and was described by critics as "an administrative eunuch."⁴⁷ Nevertheless, from 1912 to 1913, as "someone particularly knowledgeable about Pittsburgh's development needs," Olmsted was periodically consulted by the commission about the role and mission of city planning.

The city of Johnstown also solicited Olmsted's ideas about city planning. Olmsted gave turgid advice to both Pittsburgh and Johnstown, emphasizing to the latter that the goal of planning must be to establish a process, not a plan. He denied that a city plan can ever be complete, and that there could be such a thing as *the* city plan. Ideally, in Olmsted's eyes, planning departments functioned as a clearing house, a knowledge base, and an agency for the collection and maintenance of critical planning data.⁴⁸

Olmsted, in fact, regarded himself as a storehouse of planning knowledge ripe for dispensing. When the art commission in 1913 retained Edward H. Bennett to revise the plans for the bridge approaches to the Point, Bennett directly contacted Olmsted, who, of course, directed the Chicago planner to his now two-year-old report.⁴⁹ On several occasions Olmsted was asked to jury design competitions, including one for the Schenley Park entrance which he brusquely refused.⁵⁰

A 1919 letter to Olmsted from the Water Street District and Lower Downtown Triangle Improvement Association conveyed best the architect's importance to Pittsburgh planning. Seeking advice on planning the Sawmill Run Parkway, the Triangle Association addressed Olmsted in Washington, D.C., where he now headed the United States Housing Corporation, the World War I federal agency charged with building modern housing for war workers. The Downtown Improvement Association, including Franklin Nicola and planning commission member Albert J. Logan, informed Olmsted that his *Main Thoroughfares* report "has been used quiet (sic)

extensively... [and that] one of the subjects under discussion is the Saw Mill Run thoroughfare, which you recommended.... I know that you are always anxious to see your projects come into being, and I thought you would write me a word recommending this improvement." Olmsted's lengthy favor stressed the importance of acquiring land as soon as possible.⁵¹ Similarly, a few years later officials of the Henry Clay Frick estate importuned Olmsted for advice on implementing the planner's ideas for improving and enlarging Frick Park. Olmsted responded with a full-blown park development strategy. Although the Frick people balked at undertaking such an ambitious plan, by 1930 action on his recommendations was under-way.⁵²

Conclusion

Bursting late upon the Pittsburgh stage in the 1890s, the Olmsteds by 1930 had left a significant mark on this region. They initially secured their reputations in Pittsburgh as town planners and landscapers for the elite. At Vandergrift and in estate landscaping work for the Thaws, Heinzes, Mellons, and other families, the Olmsteds demonstrated their ability to architecturally mold the environment and shape a moral ethos compatible with elite and upper middle-class sensibilities.

But in 1900 the manicured, verdant, gracefully contoured private domains of the Pittsburgh haute bourgeois clashed with the welter and impoverishment of the old immigrant city. Motivated by a complex set of beliefs, including a sincere conviction that the ferocious individualism and pell mell industrialism of the 19th century had created a chaotic, dangerous, and socially and physically degraded urban environment, wealthy civic leaders set out to rebuild an orderly moral and more humane Pittsburgh. Viewing the city as organic, and seeking to heal its battered and fragmented parts, reform organizations such as the Civic Club of Allegheny County and the Voter's League espoused not only political reform, better schools, public baths, and control of smoke and billboard pollution, but also the City Beautiful, to uplift the souls of the working class and provide an aesthetic footing for heightened civic consciousness. From 1906 to 1910 the tide of urban reform in Pittsburgh crested, as evidenced by Guthrie's election, the graft investigations and trials, and the *Pittsburgh Survey*. It was at the height of this reform intensity that Mayor Guthrie appointed the Pittsburgh Civic Commission that in turn enlisted Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.

Olmsted's appearance as a planner in Pittsburgh, however, proclaimed not only the ascendancy of progressive environmentalism, but also the triumph of the gospel of efficiency, which increasingly equated beauty with well-ordered urban space, especially a carefully articulated system of thoroughfares. Never

dimming was their faith in moral environmentalism, — that good housing, public baths, and an end to eyesore billboards would help create better people under the influence of a growing army of university trained experts. But the same reformers increasingly substituted the positivistic/scientific language of the engineer for the earlier plaintive appeals of the social-minded aesthete. Like the elite businessmen and industrialists who frequently retained Olmsted to landscape their private estates, Olmsted in 1909 decried the tattered urban fabric bequeathed by root, hog or die capitalism. Indeed, in Olmsted's eyes, as in those of progressive-minded but more pragmatic politicians including William Magee, who succeeded Guthrie in 1909, public planning — once decried in the 19th century as antithetical to democracy and free enterprise — promised measurable rewards. Not only did planning bring positive social benefits by lessening traffic congestion and providing more space for parks, but equally important, it conserved threatened downtown land values and assured an economically strong, profitable city.

In addition to disclosing the Olmsted connection to progressivism and environmental reform, this article considers Olmsted's public work in Pittsburgh, particularly his *Pittsburgh: Main Thoroughfares and the Down Town District*, as having significance on several other important planes. First, because of Olmsted's stature as a distinguished landscape architect and nationally renowned urban park planner, he lent credence to several long-standing Pittsburgh development ideas, namely the hump cut and the South Hills bridge and tunnel. His recommendations for widening key downtown arteries such as Diamond Street and Forbes, Fifth and Sixth avenues, as well as his proposal for a new artery, the future Boulevard of the Allies, were ultimately acted upon in ways that still affect the Pittsburgh landscape.

However, Olmsted's physical imprint on Pittsburgh derived less from the *Main Thoroughfares* recommendations than from his apostleship of the gospel of planning. Olmsted arrived in Pittsburgh not only at the height of his national influence as a planner, but at the defining moment in the history of the young planning profession — a moment he helped create. Although the younger Olmsted never abjured the faith of his father, Frederick Olmsted, Sr.

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it did almost a
century ago.

in the socially redeeming power of the romantic landscape, contoured hillsides, tastefully arranged shrubbery, delightful vistas, and well designed public gardens, he had emerged in 1910-1911 as the apostle of both planning professionalism and the "City Efficient."⁵³ Olmsted's *Main Thoroughfares*, while focusing on Pittsburgh's downtown district and the city's principal arteries, nevertheless eloquently stated his philosophy of planning as a highly complex and continuous process — the efficient husbandry and management of urban space to accommodate the evolving social and economic needs of a growing city. In concert with Bion J. Arnold and John Freeman, Olmsted in 1910 fully examined the dynamic physical form of the city — its topography, its residential and industrial land uses, its parks, its waterways and streetways. Using that information, Olmsted constructed not a blueprint or master plan, but a permanent mechanism or system for rationally planning the continuous development of the city that emphasized above all the importance of collecting and maintaining an extensive archive of planning data as a scientific foundation for future planning decision making.

The planning euphoria of 1911 nurtured the private more than the public sector. The Department of City Planning, newly created in 1911, was soon emasculated, and the City Planning Commission proved impotent. However, the voluntary planning sector thrived. In any case, as a sometime consultant before and after World War I to the fledgling Pittsburgh Planning Commission and the Citizen's Committee on City Planning, successor to the PCC, Olmsted helped to instill an ethos of planning in Pittsburgh that, despite political obstacles, endured.

The ethos that the Olmsteds articulated in their private and public work flowed, as we have seen, from a concern for environmental beauty and order embedded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century urban elite and upper middle-class mentality. True to the Olmsted vision, between 1920 and 1950 Pittsburgh endeavored to impose order upon the industrial landscape. And the planning methodology differed little from the 1909-1911 era. Indeed, we see strong elements of continuity linking the planning of the Olmsted years and the post-World War II era. Consultants were employed, and park and riverfront development, smoke control, and of course transportation planning, especially the unsnarling of the city's worsening downtown traffic congestion, continually topped the agenda.

Furthermore, notwithstanding the vitality of the city's planning tradition, political problems consistently vexed planning efforts. As Lubove, Hancock, Schultz, Boyer, and other planning historians have observed, planning has historically presented a paradox for the American private city. Rooted in the desire of American business and professional elites to rationally tame the exuberant forces of capitalistic

growth, planning perforce challenged the most sacred tenets of Lockean individualism, namely the sovereignty of private property. And, at every point where the public planning impetus — exercised avowedly in the name of the commonweal — confronted individual property rights, the politics arbitrated the outcome. Between 1911 and 1948 the process obscured much of the vision of orderly environmental change embodied in the Olmsted plan.⁵⁴

Still, as this article has asserted, the Olmsteds' presence in Pittsburgh had implications that transcended the vagaries of political power. The Boston firm's role reflected, as historians Francis Couvares and John Ingham have suggested, the flowering of a cosmopolitan culture of consumption among Pittsburgh's notoriously parsimonious urban elite. This cosmopolitanism manifested itself in both the vogue for landscaped estates and in the campaign for civic art and improvement. Indeed, it was these same Pittsburgh social elites — the Thaws, Heinzes, and Mellons, whose estates the Olmsted's landscaped — that sought to impose order and beauty upon the industrially degraded urban environment.

The Olmsteds in the early twentieth century were at the forefront of both the private and public world of environmental change. As landscape consultants for some of Pittsburgh's most socially and economically distinguished families, the Olmsteds helped shape the character of both the suburban East End and the more remote Sewickley area. Their influence on the private landscape was broader than their work on individual estates. Through their expansive network of Pittsburgh contacts, the Olmsteds engaged in planning both upper middle-class suburbs and industrial towns such as Vandergrift.

Likewise, the Olmsteds inscribed their mark on Pittsburgh's public landscape. Evidence of the Brookline firm's handiwork appears in the Oakland Civic Center, in Frick Park, and in the Allegheny Cemetery. Politics aside, enough of what Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. recommended in his *Main Thoroughfares* plan happened to make the 1911 report an historic document. Olmsted's designation of the Point as the key to Pittsburgh redesign, his ideas for the Boulevard of the Allies, a wider Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth avenues, and his institution of planning as an ongoing process, all underscore his importance.

Finally, there may be a peculiar irony to the Olmsted planning legacy in Pittsburgh stemming from Frederick Olmsted, Jr.'s reputation as the apostle of the "City Practical." While in his plan he emphasized efficiency and practicality, his devotion to the ideal of beauty infused the language of the report. Indeed, in the firm's private and public Pittsburgh work, in landscape reports and public plans, the Bostonian beseeched Pittsburgh to appreciate and exploit the special natural beauty of its

river-bounded site. Frederick Olmsted, Jr., in particular, saw Pittsburgh endowed with spectacular natural advantages comparable to Edinburgh, Paris, and Lyon. His *Main Thoroughfares*, a paean to Pittsburgh's beauty, is an exhortation worth reading and re-reading. Indeed, the Olmsteds' appeal that early 20th century Pittsburghers should realize the city's extraordinary potential as a place of beauty still resonates at the end of the century as a significant goal for the future. ■

¹ In research for this two-part series on the Olmsteds' influence in Pittsburgh, the authors wish to gratefully acknowledge the generous assistance of: Frederick W. Bauman, Jr. and Jeffrey M. Flannery, senior manuscript librarians of the Library of Congress; Joyce Connolly, reference archivist at the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, Brookline, Mass.; Audrey Iacone, librarian at the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania; Prof. Roy Lubove of the University of Pittsburgh; Mary Beth Pastorius of the Sewickley Valley Historical Society; and the staffs of the Pennsylvania Room of the Carnegie Library and the University of Pittsburgh's Archives of Industrial Society. This project was supported by a grant from the Faculty Professional Development Council of the State System of Higher Education of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

² In his *The City Beautiful Movement* (Johns Hopkins Press, 1989), William H. Wilson argues that the City Beautiful plans were far more comprehensive and "scientific" than critics allowed. Moreover, the plans Wilson examines in his book — Harrisburg, Seattle, Kansas City, Denver, and Dallas — did address social problems. Pittsburgh's City Beautiful plans, however, more nearly fit the older model scorned by critics.

³ See John Ingham, *Making Iron and Steel: Independent Mills in Pittsburgh, 1820-1920* (Ohio State Univ. Press, 1991), 159-240; Francis Couvares makes a similar point in his *The Remaking of Pittsburgh: Class and Culture in an Industrializing City, 1877-1919* (State Univ. of N.Y. Press, 1984), passim.

⁴ See Samuel P. Hays, "Politics of Reform in Municipal Government in the Progressive Era," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 55 (Oct. 1964), 166-82; and Roy Lubove, *Twentieth Century Pittsburgh: Government, Business and Environmental Change* (John Wiley, 1969), 20-40; Joel A. Tarr discusses the Magee-Flinn machine in Samuel P. Hays, *City at the Point: Essays on the Social History of Pittsburgh* (Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), 232-235; Richard Fogelson, *Planning the Capitalist City: The Colonial Era to the 1920s* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1986), 199-201; for a convincingly argued different view see Christine Meisner Rosen, "Business, Democracy, and Progressive Reform in the Redevelopment of Baltimore after the Great Fire of 1904," *Business History Review* 63 (Summer 1988), 283-328.

⁵ Allen Humphrey Kerr, "George W. Guthrie 40th Mayor, April 2, 1906-April 5, 1909," in Kerr, "The Mayors and Records of Pittsburgh, 1816-1951," (mimeographed, 1952) in Pennsylvania Room of Carnegie Library, Pittsburgh; "Mayor Elect George W. Guthrie," *Pittsburgh Post*, Feb. 25, 1906, in Guthrie News Clip File, Pennsylvania Room; Paul U. Kellogg, "Pittsburgh: An Interpretation," in *The Pittsburgh District: Civic Frontage* (Russell Sage Foundation, 1914); Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities* (Hill and Wang, 1960, 101-133 [rep., orig. pub. McClure, Phillips & Co., 1904]). Note that in addition to being a successful Pittsburgh businessman, Oliver McClintock, founder of the Municipal League, was also president of the Western Theological Seminary.

⁶ Arthur S. Link and Richard L. McCormick, *Progressivism* (Arlington Heights, Ill., 1983); for Kellogg on "People's Victory," see Paul U. Kellogg, "Pittsburgh: An Interpretation," 21-23; Rosen, "Business, Democracy, and Progressive Reform;" on moral environmentalism, see Mel Scot, *American*

City Planning Since 1890 (Univ. of California Press, 1969), 68; and Lubove, *Twentieth Century Pittsburgh*, 20.

⁷ On origins of survey, see Clark A. Chambers, *Paul U. Kellogg and the Survey: Voices for Social Welfare and Social Justice* (Univ. of Minn. Press, 1971); and Lubove, *Twentieth Century Pittsburgh*, 6-7.

⁸ See Charles Hill and Steven Cohen, "John A. Fitch and the Pittsburgh Survey," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* (Jan. 1984), 17-19; also, for an insight into the Pittsburgh Survey and the survey movement of the era, especially on the critical role of women, see Linda Gordon's article "Social Insurance and Public Assistance: The Influence of Gender in Welfare Thought in the United States, 1890-1935," *American Historical Review* 97 (Feb. 1992), 38-40; see also Ingham, *Making Iron and Steel*, 157-182.

⁹ "Giant Group Plans, Wide Thoroughfares in a New Pittsburgh," *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, Nov. 17, 1907, 6, found in City Planning News Clipping File, Archives of Industrial Society, Univ. of Pittsburgh, (hereafter AIS).

¹⁰ Theodore Roosevelt, "Civic Responsibility," *Survey* XXIV (Sept. 17, 1910), 853, 856-57; Kellogg, "Pittsburgh: An Interpretation," 59; on the exhibit, also see Lubove's footnote 11, in *Twentieth Century Pittsburgh*, 7.

¹¹ Robinson's Feb. 6, 1909 "report" for the Pittsburgh Survey, "Civic Improvement Possibilities of Pittsburgh," was reprinted in Kellogg, "Coalition of Civic Forces," in *Pittsburgh Civic Frontage*, 53.

¹² "The Trend of Things," *Survey* XXIII (Oct. 1910), 130.

¹³ See "Pittsburgh Civic Commission," n.d. (c. 1910), a pamphlet found in the Pittsburgh Dept. of City Planning library, 200 Ross St., Pittsburgh.

¹⁴ See Harold F. Howland, "The City Practical: A City Plan to Relieve and Prevent Congestion and to Regulate the Cost of Living," in *The Outlook* (March 1911), 394, found in Box 242, file 10, papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (hereafter, OAP).

¹⁵ On upper middle class motives for planning, see Fogelson, *Planning the Capitalist City*, 199-201; see also John L. Hancock, "Planners in the Changing American City, 1900-1940," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 33 (Sept. 1967), 291.

¹⁶ A.T. Burns, "City Planning in Pittsburgh," *Proceedings of the First National Conference on City Planning, Washington, D.C., May 21-22, 1909* (National Conference on City Planning, 1909), 92. In his *The Rise of the Community Builders: The American Real Estate Industry and Urban Land Planning* (Columbia Univ. Press, 1987), Marc Weiss traces (p. 19) a significant portion of the turn-of-century enthusiasm for urban planning to large scale real estate developers (Pittsburgh's Nicola would be a local example), who were in Weiss's words, "committed to improving the pattern of land-use and the quality of development," and saw planning as a way to control the small time operators or "curbstoners," whose individualism thwarted the developers' goal of orderly suburban growth.

¹⁷ Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., "The Scope and Results of City Planning in Europe," *Proceedings of First National Conference*, 63-66.

¹⁸ Burns to Frederick Law Olmsted, June 9, 1909, and FLO to Bion J. Arnold, June 23, 1909, both in Box 241, file 3462, OAP.

¹⁹ Burns to Olmsted, Jr., Dec. 22, 1909, Box 241, file 1, OAP; also Olmsted, Jr., to Burns, Aug. 16, 1909, Box 241, file 1, OAP; on putting together a team, see Olmsted to Burns, Aug. 2, 1909, Box 241, file 1, OAP.

²⁰ On Olmsted procedure for conducting study, see Olmsted to Burns, Dec. 24, 1909, Box 241, file 1, OAP; also see Whiting to Olmsted Jr., March 1, 1910, and Olmsted, Jr., to Whiting, March 2, 1910, in Box 241, file 3, OAP.

²¹ Scott, *American Urban Planning*, 72.

²² Frederick Law Olmsted, "Draft of Report [on Pittsburgh

Main Thoroughfares],” circa. Nov. 1910, in Box 241, file 5, OAP; Olmsted suggested his understanding of the complexity of the “urban problem” in a letter to Burns, June 29, 1909, Box 241, file 1, OAP; in another letter to Graham Taylor, June 30, 1909, Olmsted talked about the importance of mastering the “controllable features on the physical plan of the city.” In the same letter he spoke of the “uncontrolled competitive development of the railroad lines and the frequent lack of proper correlation between the several systems and between the railroads and the street plan ...,” in Box 241, file 1, OAP.

²³ Frederick Law Olmsted, *Pittsburgh Main Thoroughfares and the Down Town District: Improvements Necessary to Meet the City's Present and Future Needs, A Report* (Pittsburgh Civic Commission, 1911), 1.

²⁴ Edward Whiting wrote Olmsted, July 8, 1910, that “Mayor Magee is very anxious that we reach definite conclusions in regard to our hump cut and street widening recommendations as he is obliged to prepare new ordinances for the same. Certain portions of the Hump work and some of the street widening schemes depend largely upon our decision in regard to the Civic Center,” in Box 241, file 5, OAP; Olmsted had presented his “preliminary report” on the hump cut to the Pittsburgh Civic Commission, Jan. 17, 1910, Box 241, file 2, OAP; also see Olmsted to Magee, Jan. 7, 1910, Box 241, file 2, OAP; and “Plans for Hump’s Cut Are Suggested,” *Pittsburgh Gazette*, Jan. 16, 1911, in Box 242, file 10, OAP; Olmsted discussed the hump cut in his *Main Thoroughfares*, 10, 11, 128.

²⁵ On the South Hills bridge and tunnel, see Olmsted to Edward Bigelow, July 20, 1910; Frank Gosser to Olmsted, July 25, 1910; Olmsted to Bigelow, October 5, 1910, where Olmsted stresses, “This tunnel will be, of course, a very important link in the city’s thoroughfare system;” Olmsted, *Pittsburgh Main Thoroughfares*, 49-54; news clip on “South Hollows Tunnel,” *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, July 15, 1910, all in Box 242, file 10, OAP. Also see Stephen J. Hoffman, “A Plan of Quality: The Development of Mt. Lebanon, a 1920s Automobile Suburb,” in *Journal of Urban History* 18 (Feb. 1992), 148-154; the South Hills tunnel and artery are discussed in Olmsted’s *Main Thoroughfares*, 49-56.

²⁶ Olmsted, *Main Thoroughfares*, 13.

²⁷ *Main Thoroughfares*, 14.

²⁸ *Main Thoroughfares*, 11-17.

²⁹ On Bennett and Gilbert, see Olmsted to Whiting, March 15, 1910, Box 241, file 3, OAP; also Bernhard to Whiting, June 28, 1910, Box 241, file 5, OAP; also Whiting to Olmsted, March 11, 1910, Box 241, file 3, OAP.

³⁰ Bernhard to Whiting, May 28, 1910, Box 241, file 5, OAP.

³¹ Whiting to Bernhard, July 6, 1910, Box 241, file 5, OAP.

³² Olmsted, *Main Thoroughfares*, 21.

³³ *Main Thoroughfares*, 22-23.

³⁴ *Main Thoroughfares*, 25-26.

³⁵ *Main Thoroughfares*, 21.

³⁶ Olmsted to Whiting, Aug. 17, 1910, Box 242, file 6, OAP.

³⁷ Olmsted, *Main Thoroughfares*, 29.

³⁸ On market, see Diamond Market: Conference with Mr. Haines, Market Clerk, Jan. 2, 1910; also notes on Philadelphia’s Reading Terminal Market, Feb. 8, 1910, both in Box 241, file 2, OAP; on parks, Whiting to Olmsted, February 10, 1910, Box 241, file 2, OAP.

³⁹ See Olmsted, *Main Thoroughfares*, 3-4; George W. Lehman to Olmsted, April 19, 1910; and Olmsted to Lehman, April 25, 1910, both in Box 241, File 4, OAP; see also N.S. Sprague, Department of Public Works, to Pittsburgh Civic Commission, July 5, 1910, Box 241, File 5, OAP; and “Final Outline of Report on Surveys for Pittsburgh,” circa. Oct. 1910, Box 242, file 8, OAP.

⁴⁰ See Tarr, “Infrastructure and City Building,” in Hays, ed., *City at The Point*, 243.

⁴¹ Charles Mulford Robinson, “The Pittsburgh Street Plan,”

Survey (Feb. 4, 1911), 728-730; Harold F. Howland, “The City Practical: A Plan to Relieve and Prevent Congestion and to Regulate the Cost of Living,” *The Outlook* (March 1911), 393-402, in Box 242, file 10, OAP. Joel Tarr, in “Infrastructure and City Building,” (242-243) argues that the Olmsted report was not more fully implemented because of “unwillingness of those who controlled City Council and county government to surrender control of development.”

⁴² Allen Humphrey Kerr, “William Magee, First Term, April 5, 1909-January 15, 1914,” mimeographed, in Pennsylvania Room, Carnegie Library, Oakland.

⁴³ On Magee’s bond issue, see William Magee, “Annual Report of the Mayor,” in *Annual Report of the Executive Departments of the City of Pittsburgh for the Year Ending January 31, 1912* (City of Pittsburgh, 1912); on Civic Commission opposition, see Allen T. Burns, “What the Civic Commission Engineers Found,” unidentified newspaper clipping, Nov. 4, 1910, in Box 242, file 10, OAP; also two unidentified news clippings, “Mayor Jolts the Civic Commission,” and “Answer is Made by Commission,” in Box 242, file 10, OAP.

⁴⁴ Burns to Olmsted, Nov. 14, 1910, Box 242, file 7, OAP.

⁴⁵ “Greater and Better City is to be the Aim of Pittsburgh Men,” news clipping, circa. Oct. 1910, in City Planning Commission Papers, AIS, University of Pittsburgh; and John P. Fox to Whiting, Nov. 11, 1910, explaining failure of Civic Commission. Fox wrote to Whiting that “it seems to me that the influence of the Commission is just about ended, as far as public improvements go,” in Box 242, file 7, OAP.

⁴⁶ See William A. Magee to Olmsted, March 18, 1911, where Magee wrote: “The Report is a great work and it will, not doubt, be the basis of all future public improvements in this vicinity of that nature.” Box 242, file 9, OAP; note that Olmsted invited Magee to be his guest at the Third National Conference on City Planning held in Philadelphia, May 15 and 16, 1911. Olmsted chaired the conference, and Magee did attend. See Olmsted to Hon. William A. Magee, March 22, 1911, Box 242, file 9, OAP.

⁴⁷ See Tarr, “Infrastructure and City Building,” 243.

⁴⁸ Tarr observes in “Infrastructure and City Building,” 243-244, that planning commissions of the era, like bureaus of engineering and divisions of inspection, were often ineffectual, staffed with political appointments and used by politicians for partisan purposes.” On Pittsburgh’s Dept. of City Planning and Planning Commission seeking Olmsted’s advice, see news clipping “Planning Board is Selected,” Sept. 19, 1911; and J. D. Hailman, Secretary of the Dept. of City Planning, to Olmsted, July 29, 1912; and Olmsted to Mr. Joseph Winslow, City Planning Commission, Nov. 4, 1912; Olmsted to Hailman, Dec. 10, 1913, all in Box 243, job file 3463, OAP; on Johnstown, see Olmsted to Leo J. Buettner, Secretary of Johnstown City Planning Commission, Feb. 25, 1916; and Olmsted to Buettner, March 20, 1916, in Box 290, OAP.

⁴⁹ Olmsted to Edward H. Bennett, December 3, 1913, Box 242, file 10, OAP.

⁵⁰ Folder announcing “The Beaux Arts Salon Architectural Competition for a Municipal Improvement,” in Box 353, OAP.

⁵¹ G. Garrick O’Bryan, Secretary of Water Street District and Lower Downtown Improvement Association, to Olmsted, Jan. 28, 1919; and Olmsted to O’Bryan, March 14, 1919, both in Box 242, file 10, OAP.

⁵² On Frick Park, see correspondence between Frederick Bigger of the Citizens Committee on City Planning of Pittsburgh, which acted for Frick Trust on the park matter, and James Frederick Dawson of Olmsted Brothers, June 24, 1924; and Olmsted and Bigger, June 9, 1924; and Olmsted to C.D. Armstrong, president of the CCCP, June 28, 1924, in Box 243, job file 3464, OAP.

⁵³ See Howland’s, “The City Practical,” in *The Outlook*, 393-394.

⁵⁴ Lubove, *Twentieth Century Pittsburgh*; Hancock, "Planners in the Changing American City;" Christine M. Boyer, *Dreaming the Rational City: The Myth of American City*

Planning (MIT Press, 1983); Stanley K. Schultz, *Constructing Urban Culture: American Cities and City Planning, 1800-1920* (Temple Univ. Press, 1989).

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Some A-B-Cs of Local Aviation

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Remembrances of Bettis Field

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Cambridge Springs Chess Congress

Photographs courtesy of author

The Olmsteds in Pittsburgh (Part II)

Illustrations and period photos from Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., *Pittsburgh, Main Thoroughfares and the Down Town District: Improvements Necessary to Meet the City's Present and Future Needs* (1911); photograph page 198 from Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, Robert C. Alberts Papers, courtesy Allegheny Conference on Community Development.

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