Frederick Law Olmsted
Father of American Landscape Architecture

Presented by: “Not the Smith’s”
Maria Abbamont, Karen Gaudioso,
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Frederick Law Olmsted

“I have all my life sacrificed... immediate success and applause to that of the future”
19th Century Renaissance Man

- Born in Hartford, Conn., on April 26, 1822
- His travels to China and England as a young man helped shape his future career

Circa 1860
Scientific Farmer

- His first two farms were cultivated not to produce crops, but for its physical beauty and to investigated tree species, drainage systems and land conservation.
Visionary

- Architecture always took second place in parks and communities Olmsted planned

Montreal’s Mt. Royal Park
Jefferson’s Beloved Monticello in the Fall

- Our third president, Thomas Jefferson was one of America’s leading horticulturists of the late 18th and early 19th centuries.
- He was a plantation and slave owner, something Olmsted was strongly against.
Olmsted studied and wrote about the plantation system. He already had strong political views against slavery before he began traveling to the Deep South in 1852.
Oak Alley Plantation

- One of many plantations Olmsted visited while traveling and writing about slavery in the Deep South

The Antebellum South
Olmsted took the position of superintendent, and later, chief architect of Central Park in 1857.

It was the largest public works project to date.
General Secretary of the Sanitary Commission during the Civil War

- Olmsted took a leave from Central Park in 1861 to run this private organization.
- Its mission was to provide aid and comfort to Northern soldiers during the Civil War.
Olmsted connected a string of nine parks he had designed in Boston via a parkway system called the Emerald Necklace.
Riverside, Illinois

- First Planned Urban Development
- No right angle intersections and parkways followed the natural curvature of the land
- By avoiding right angles more public spaces were created

Note: No “right-angle” intersections.
Frederick Law Olmsted

Jackson Park, Illinois

His home in Mass.

Postage stamp in his honor
Frederick Law Olmsted

- Olmsted died on August 28, 1903.
- His sons and their successors continued the landscape architecture firm he founded until 1980.
- His home and office were purchased by the National Park Service and are now a museum.
Frederick Law Olmsted’s Legacy

- Traveler
- Writer
- Farmer
- Social Reformer
- Sought to design with nature
- Friend of the common man
- Teacher

Olmsted at Biltmore Estate, 1895