

some of the recommendations have been tempered.

The changes in Central Park over the past five years have been dramatic. While many plans are merely prescriptive, significant portions of this plan have already been implemented, demonstrating that this is not a theoretical document but an approach that is already becoming a practical reality.

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AMERICAN GARDENS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: "FOR COMFORT AND AFFLUENCE," by Ann Leighton. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987. xviii + 395 pages, illustrations, plans, notes, appendix, bibliography, index, \$35.00, clothbound.

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Reviewed by Rudy J. Favretti

The printing of this book completes Ann Leighton's much awaited trilogy on American gardens from the early seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries. (Her earlier works were: *Early American Gardens: For Meate and Medicine* (Houghton Mifflin, 1970) and *American Gardens in the Eighteenth Century: For Use and Delight* (Houghton Mifflin, 1976).

Ann Leighton, pseudonym for Isadore Leighton Luce Smith (Mrs. A.W.), was a 1923 graduate of Smith College. She had no formal training as a landscape architect, though she used that title as a garden consultant, for which she was widely sought in the New England region. She was better known for her writings, the first author to record the evolution of American gardens from the settlement of this country to the start of the present century. She died in the fall of 1985, one month before her eighty-fourth birthday.

Ann Leighton's books are known for their clear and precise organization. They are written well in her own witty style, so they give the reader much pleasure. This one is no exception.

The body of the book consists of three parts, the first consisting of seven chapters. It is entitled "Unfamiliar Territory" and deals with Americans discovering their country's botanical potential and the events that led to the advancement of gardening in the nineteenth century. Leighton reaches back into her earlier writing to restate the travels of early botanists and plant explorers. But she also presents an exciting review of the explorations of Lewis and Clark, as well as others, and the distribution of the plants they found, through the McMahan Nursery in Philadelphia. She also includes a section on independent plant explorers such as Poinsett, Nuttall, and Cushing.

Her discussion of the observations by foreign travelers is a bit disappointing because it deals primarily with just two—Harriet Martineau and Frances Trollope—both generally negative and highly critical observers. Because of the biased and often distorted nature of travelers' accounts it is surprising that Leighton did not also present some positive accounts, of which there are many, as well as observations by native Americans such as Timothy Dwight.

The importance of plant societies is acknowledged with an entire chapter devoted to the establishment of both the Massachusetts and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Societies, two of the earliest. There is also a chapter on the emergence of seed houses and nurseries through the century. Leighton has chosen only a few of the important societies and nurseries as prototypes for the whole. One feels, however, that the treatment is too detailed for those mentioned at the expense of presenting a broader picture of the total effect of these nurseries and plant societies. This treatment is in marked contrast to the three chapters on plant explorers, which are quite detailed and obviously were of greater interest to the author.

It is exciting to read "Enter Ladies," which intends to record the

emergence of women in the gardening field. However, the reader is soon disappointed that none of the well known American lady gardeners and writers—Anna Warner, Theodosia Burr Shepard, Anna Page King, for example—are mentioned. Most of the chapter is devoted to Jane Loudon's *Gardening for Ladies and Ladies Companion to the Flower Garden* (A.J. Downing, ed. John Wiley, 1843), a work that did have a strong effect upon women gardeners, but by no means the only work of that type.

"Laying On the Hands," the second part of the book, consists of six chapters rather than the seven devoted to each of the other two sections. It is concisely organized with accounts of some of the major landscape gardeners of the century—David Hosack, André Parmentier, Andrew Jackson Downing, Calvert Vaux, Frederick Law Olmsted, and Charles Eliot—and then proceeds in subsequent chapters to describe their major works, including a full reproduction of Parmentier's rare and hard to locate essay entitled "Landscapes and Picturesque Gardens," and a description of David Hosack's Elgin Botanical Garden in New York. This section goes on to describe the influence of Loudon and others on Andrew Jackson Downing, and then Leighton goes on to disclose Downing's ideas, as set forth in his book (*A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, 1842), as well as the development of Central Park. The later emergence of national parks and landscape preservation are also included. Leighton's ability to read and assimilate lengthy and wordy treatises, such as Loudon's and Downing's works, and then present them clearly and succinctly, is at its best in this section.

The last part of the book is where Ann Leighton really shines. This is where her own expertise as a gardener shows through, for it is here, in "Domestic Pleasures," in which she discusses the home garden, how it looked in the early nineteenth century, and how it evolved later. She has selected prototypes from various regions of the country: Mountain

Shoals Plantation in Enoree, South Carolina; Andrew and Rachel Jackson's "The Hermitage" in Nashville; and Longfellow's garden at the Craigie House, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, as well as a few other examples.

Subsequent chapters on furnishings and fences used in these home gardens, the practice of bedding out, the totally American concept of the front lawn running from one yard to the neighbors, are very well covered. But the most unique chapter in this section is entitled "Northern Lights" and is entirely devoted to home gardens in Canada.

It is interesting that Leighton's discussion of Biltmore as an eclectic country estate is included in the chapter on specialty gardens, along with rock works and the oriental gardens, rather than in the chapter on country estates that she uses to refer to small country places, rather than the great country houses that were part of the country house and estate movement.

One of the most useful sections of this book is the Appendix, consisting of eighty pages of listings of the "Plants Most Commonly Used" and separated into annuals, herbs, perennials, roses, and trees and shrubs. These lists are valuable because Leighton presents both the name in the period and the correct botanical name for today. For most of the plants she includes comments.

If one is to judge a book by how well the author meets her goals, then this book is an astounding success. In a well organized manner, Leighton presents a series of selected vignettes of landscapes and gardens of the nineteenth century. In her "Preview From the Summerhouse," she states "We are taking for our model from which to view the century as a whole . . . [an] American summerhouse, not the later gazebo from which one was supposed

to see all around . . . Observing the outside world from these shelters, constructed primarily for seclusion and retirement, took serious effort. Distant views were miniscule. Nearby prospects were much broken up by the tangled timber of the structure, not to mention the hanging vines." (p. 00) Her book does just that, presenting a series of restricted and selected vignettes of landscapes and gardens in the nineteenth century.

The reader who is looking for a history of landscapes and gardens in the nineteenth century will be disappointed in this book. In presenting her views "from the summer house," much valuable information is left out, thus misleading the reader. A strong sense of a golden era of horticulture—which the nineteenth century was, and is so ably presented in Tom Clark's *The Victorian Garden* (Salem House, 1985)—does not exist in this work. Also, the reader gets little feeling for the cause and effect of what is presented. For example, the effect of the Civil War, or the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876, on American landscapes, to name but two events, are totally absent from this book.

The reader is also frustrated by the many quotes in the book that are not footnoted. In addition, the bibliography, though extensive, does not begin to include many major works that would have been useful in fleshing out some of the chapters that give a very narrow approach to what was actually occurring. The reader who is familiar with Leighton's earlier works is also impressed by the fact that they were printed on finer paper and that the plans were not reduced to such a small size that they are hardly legible without a magnifying glass, such as the plan of Parmentier's garden on page 126.

In summary, the book achieves the goals of the author quite successfully, but as a history of gardens and landscapes in the nineteenth century it is but a beginning. The serious landscape architect or scholar of landscape history will do well to continue to consult primary sources and earlier specific works on each topic.

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### Books Received

- Brown, Jane. *Lanning Roper and his Gardens*. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1987. \$35.00, clothbound.
- Cantor, Leonard. *The Changing English Countryside 1400 - 1700*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987. \$45.00, clothbound.
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