

Unconscious Influence:

Olmsted's Hartford



Frederick Law Olmsted, 1850 (Source: *Connecticuthistory.org*)

Manuscript

October 7, 2020

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For the Amistad Committee, New Haven, Connecticut

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Chapter I. Introduction

*"We must answer not only for what we do with purpose, but for the influence
we exert insensibly."*

Horace Bushnell, Hartford, 1842

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to situate Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. (1822-1903) in his native Hartford, recognizing his influence and accomplishments, and to show how Hartford influenced Olmsted by documenting an early *suburban milieu*¹ that formed in Hartford during the first half of the nineteenth century. Olmsted is one of the most influential Americans of the nineteenth century. Regarding our American cultural landscape,² it is hard to think of anyone whose life and work made a more significant and lasting impression than Olmsted. As a landscape architect, Olmsted designed urban parks, university and institutional campuses, private estates, suburban communities, and influenced the preservation of scenic landscapes that would later become state and national parks.³ His influence and designs spanned our country from Maine to California over nearly a half century.⁴ In addition, his designs and methods continue to impress their affect upon our landscape and society today.

Olmsted was a native of Hartford, Connecticut and one of many influential figures who called Hartford home in the nineteenth century. Olmsted's influence on our nation and collective consciousness can rival that of other influential Hartford luminaries', including Mark Twain, Harriet Beecher Stowe,

¹ Milieu is the social setting in which something develops or occurs. The phrase suburban milieu is used as a means describing the emergent and self-organizing quality of picturesque landscape, domesticity, self-governance, rural architecture, ornamental lawns, and the romantic suburb that occurred in Hartford during Olmsted's formative years in Hartford. These qualities create the framework of what would become known as the suburban.

² The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a culture group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape is the result. Under the influence of a given culture, itself changing through time, the landscape undergoes development, passing through phases, and probably reaching ultimately, the end of its cycle of development. With the introduction of a different—that is, alien—culture, a rejuvenation of the cultural landscape sets in, or anew landscape is superimposed on remnants of an older one. This definition of the cultural landscape can be found in R.J. Johnston, Derek Gregory, and David Smith, *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, Third Edition. Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1994).

³ James Gardner. *Report of the New York State Survey – The Niagara Falls Reservation* (Albany: Charles Van Bathuysen & Son, 1879). Victoria Post Ranney, Gerard Rauluk, and Carolyn Hoffman, *The Paper of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume V. The California Frontier 1863 – 1865*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

⁴ This claim does not include the continued work of the Olmsted firm for several decades after Olmsted's death.

Samuel Colt, and Horace Bushnell. Unfortunately, Olmsted's status and influence as a Connecticut native son is not well known.

Olmsted is best known for his design of New York's Central Park and being the Father of American Landscape Architecture.⁵ It was through his work as a landscape architect that Olmsted most influenced our American culture and society. However, before finding his career in landscape architecture, Olmsted worked in a dry goods store, apprenticed as an engineer, was an experimental farmer, travel writer and journalist, a publisher, and successful manager of the United States Sanitary Commission and Mariposa estate and mine. His career as a journalist, while short lived and overshadowed by his landscape architecture, is his first influential career. Olmsted's travels, writings, and publications in the 1850s on slavery and the South were influential at the time and had a profound effect in galvanizing anti-slavery support in the North.⁶

While much has been written about Olmsted's life, career, accomplishments, and his influence from approximately 1850 on—when he was 28 years old—much less has been written about Olmsted's life from his birth in 1822 until his famous trip to England in 1850. This is evidenced by the first volume of The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, *The Formative Years* being the shortest of the extensive set. That said, *The Formative Years* provides a detailed account of Olmsted's youth and young adult years.

Accounts of Olmsted's youth are often based on his own recollections from later in life when he wrote autobiographical sketches of his past. The most notable and often cited recollections are of him laying in the grass under a tree looking up at his biological mother, riding through a meadow with his father at dusk, his walks with his brother to relatives in Cheshire and Collinsville, and the Olmsted family outings and vacations in search of the picturesque.⁷ While Olmsted's personal recollections provide important insight into his formative years in Hartford, there is still much to discover.

Unfortunately, few artifacts remain of Olmsted's youth and his personal accounts are incomplete.⁸ To gain a more complete picture of his *formative years*, this paper explores Olmsted as a cultural product of his native Hartford by unfolding a narrative of the social environment of the time.

⁵ Olmsted co-designed Central Park in partnership with Calvert Vaux in 1857 and 1858.

⁶ Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume II. Slavery and the South 1852 – 1857*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981).

⁷ Laura Wood Roper. *FLO: A Biography of Fredrick Law Olmsted* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973). Witol, Rybczynski. *A Clearing in the Distance: Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Scribner, 1999).

⁸ Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume I. The Formative Years 1822 – 1852*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

While Olmsted biographers⁹ have discussed the influence of books on English picturesque landscape design that Olmsted read in Hartford, the topic of why these books were available in the *public library* is intriguing.¹⁰ The general influence of Horace Bushnell on Olmsted and the influence of his sermon, “*Unconscious Influence*”¹¹ is also well documented.¹² However, further examination of Bushnell’s writings revealed more evidence of the direct influence of Bushnell on Olmsted, including Olmsted’s practice of landscape design and theories of city planning.

Another means to better understanding Olmsted is to better understand Hartford’s urban history.¹³ For example, Bender provides detailed accounts of Horace Bushnell’s early efforts in the 1850s to create an urban park.¹⁴ In addition, Baldwin’s *Domesticating the Street* offers an in-depth look at social reforms in the second half of the nineteenth century when Hartford worked at domesticating public spaces, beginning with Bushnell’s park.¹⁵ Unfortunately, these insightful accounts start shortly after Olmsted leaves Hartford, missing what was occurring during Olmsted’s time in Hartford. By recognizing that ideas, such as a need for a public park or *domesticating the streets*, don’t originate out of thin air, and by recognizing the relationship between Olmsted’s work and public parks and domesticating public space, we begin to see the possibility that something interesting was happening earlier in Hartford. That Hartford, during Olmsted’s formative years, was developing theories and practices that would influence is landscape architecture and his view of cities and the planning of cities.

⁹ Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume I. The Formative Years 1822 – 1852*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 97. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., Theodora Hubbard, *Frederick Law Olmsted: Landscape Architect 1822-1903*, (New York, G.P. Putnam’s Sons, The Knickerbocker Press, 1922), 74.

¹⁰ Public library is a questionable term that will be discussed and defined later. However, it is important to note that the local public library during Olmsted’s time in Hartford was a membership organization.

¹¹ Horace Bushnell, “*Unconscious Influence*,” in *Sermons for The New Life*, Horace Bushnell. (New York: Charles Scribner, 1858).

¹² Thomas Bender. *Toward an Urban Vision: Ideas and Institutions in Nineteenth Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975). Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Paper of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume I. The Formative Years 1822 – 1852*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977). Peter Baldwin. *Domesticating the Street: The Reform of Public Space in Hartford 1850-1930*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999).

¹³ For accounts of Hartford’s urban history and Olmsted, see John Jackson. *American Space: The Centennial Years, 1865-1876* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1972), Thomas Bender. *Toward an Urban Vision: Ideas and Institutions in Nineteenth Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975). David Schuyler. *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City Form in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), and Peter Baldwin. *Domesticating the Street: The Reform of Public Space in Hartford 1850-1930*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999).

¹⁴ Thomas Bender. *Toward an Urban Vision: Ideas and Institutions in Nineteenth Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975).

¹⁵ Peter Baldwin. *Domesticating the Street: The Reform of Public Space in Hartford 1850-1930*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999).

Sir Peter Hall, in his treatise “*Cities in Civilization*”,¹⁶ provides insights into how both creative and innovative milieus emerged in the great cities of western civilization. Hall explored creative cities such as Athens, Florence, London, Vienna, and Paris and innovative cities such as Manchester, Glasgow, Berlin, Detroit, and San Francisco—all during their respective periods of prominence. By studying these cities during their periods of creativity and innovation, Hall revealed the various conditions that were important and contributed to the emergence of these cities as centers of art, literature, and manufacturing. While there is risk in conflating creativity and innovation, the cultural milieu that emerged in Hartford contained attributes of both creative and innovative activities. Therefore, Hall’s findings, when applied to Hartford, point to some of the preconditions for such a milieu to have form in Hartford. For example, Hall explains, “it becomes increasingly hard to find any single satisfactory explanation”¹⁷ to creativity. However, Hall proceeds to explain, these cities were places in transition, places where wealth in the form of patronage was important, places of high culture and tastes, places that were bourgeois and cosmopolitan, and places of social and intellectual turbulence. While Hartford was not a great metropolis like many of Hall’s cities, Hartford was a place in transition, had wealth in the form of patronage, tastes, bourgeois, and was cosmopolitan.¹⁸

Innovation, Hall explains, is most often linked to individual entrepreneurs, from the serried ranks of the middle class, and few of whom followed regular career paths, but whose path taught them what they needed to know in their respective careers. These entrepreneurial qualities are evident in Olmsted. He was from Hartford’s merchant-middle class, his career path did not move along a predictable trajectory, but his experience as an apprentice engineer, experimental farmer, journalist, and manager provide the skills and expertise needed to become America’s preeminent landscape architect.

Spinosa, et al. teaches us that new ideas emerge and evolve out of “marginal, neighboring, or occluded practices.”¹⁹ That entrepreneurs, Spinosa explains, often notice the relationship and value of such marginal, and neighboring, or occluded practices, combining them into new and novel forms and innovations. From this perspective, our suburban history—the emergence of the suburban—is a case study in *marginal, neighboring, and occluded practices*. For example, the suburban emerges out of the marginal, neighboring, or occluded practices—distinctly different practices, yet related—of picturesque

¹⁶ Peter Hall. *Cities in Civilization*. (New York: Fromm International, 1998).

¹⁷ Peter Hall. *Cities in Civilization*. (New York: Fromm International, 1998), 282.

¹⁸ See Richard Saunders, with Helen Raye, Helen, *Daniel Wadsworth: Patron of the Arts* (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum. 1981) and Witol, Rybczynski. *A Clearing in the Distance: Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Scribner, 1999).

¹⁹ Charles Spinosa, Frenando Flores, Hubert Dryfus, *Disclosing New Worlds: Entrepreneurship, Democratic Action, and the Cultivation of Solidarity* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997), 30.

landscape design, rural architecture (the country cottage), ornamental lawns, and Evangelical religious ideals of holy domesticity coalescing into something greater, into the suburban. Most interesting, is that many of the influential social reformers who helped create our “suburban vision of community,”²⁰ were residents of or intimately connected to Hartford. Such influential reformers included Timothy Dwight, Catharine Beecher, Horace Bushnell, Charles Loring Brace, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Jacob Weidenmenn,²¹ and Fredrick Law Olmsted. Recognizing that so many of these influential social and suburban reformers were present in Hartford and heeding Spinoza’s advice to pay *special sensitivity to marginal, neighboring, or occluded practices* allows us to further explore what was occurring in Olmsted’s Hartford.²²

In doing so, we can ask, why did Hartford develop the ethos of social reform and domesticity that was documented by Baldwin? Why was Hartford early to the urban park movement, approving an urban park at the same time as Central Park? Is it coincidence that Olmsted came from this place where many other influential social and suburban reformers resided?

Unconscious Influence

The influence of Horace Bushnell’s 1842 sermon, *Unconscious Influence*,²³ is significant. For example, “Olmsted’s eventual formulation of his philosophy of public parks as instruments of moral influence and reform and of value of passive recreation and unconscious mental and spiritual refreshment are thoroughly Bushnellian ideas.”²⁴ Also, “Olmsted learned from Bushnell’s sermons ‘the importance of

²⁰ Kenneth Jackson, Kenneth. *Crabgrass Frontier. The Suburbanization of the United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 61.

²¹ Jacob Weidenmenn is not discussed in detail in this book. However, his influence in Hartford is notable regarding the design of Bushnell Park and Cedar Hill Cemetery, and the national influence of the ornamental lawns. For more about Weidenmenn see Rudy Favretti. *Jacob Weidenmann: pioneer landscape architect* (Hartford: Cedar Hill Cemetery Foundation, 2007) and for the influence of ornamental lawns see Kenneth Jackson, Kenneth. *Crabgrass Frontier. The Suburbanization of the United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 60. Also see Jacob Weidenmann. *Beautifying Country Homes: A Handbook of Landscape Gardening*. (New York: Orange Judd and Company, 1870).

²² The phrase Olmsted’s Hartford, as used throughout this document, is used intentionally and with efficacy to refer to Hartford during the period of Olmsted’s life when he lived and was a part of Hartford (1822-1849). *Olmsted’s Hartford* is intended to mean specifically the community that influenced and produced Olmsted.

²³ Horace Bushnell, “*Unconscious Influence*,” in *Sermons for The New Life*, Horace Bushnell. (New York: Charles Scribner, 1858).

²⁴ George Scheper, “The Reformist Vision of Fredrick Law Olmsted and the Poetics of Park Design,” *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 62, No. 3, (1989), 378.

nonverbal influence in the development of character,' and he professed an organic social theory."²⁵

Moreover:

Olmsted not only incorporated Bushnell's idea of 'unconscious influence' into his thoughts on social reform but also made it the basis for his theory of the effect of landscape design. In addition, he used it in his autobiographical writings to show why his youthful wanderings through rural scenery had prepared him to be a landscape architect. Bushnell's concern for the civilizing value of domesticity appeared in Olmsted's landscape design...²⁶

What exactly was Bushnell preaching and teaching the Hartford community, including Olmsted, in *Unconscious Influence*? Bushnell explains:

Thus it is that men are ever touching unconsciously the spring of motion in each other; thus it is that one man, without thought or intention, or ever a consciousness of the fact, is ever leading some other after him [...] And just so, unawares to himself, is every man, the whole race through laying hold of his fellow-man, to lead him where otherwise he would not go. We overrun the boundaries of personality—we flow together [...] And thus our life and conduct are ever propagating themselves, by a law of social contagion, throughout the circles and time in which we live.²⁷

The idea of *unconscious influence* and Bushnell's law of *social contagion* provide a framework for thinking about Olmsted's Hartford, the community and place where Olmsted was raised. For example, in Hartford we discover—before, during, and even after Olmsted's time in Hartford—a community ethos that placed great value on personal, moral, and social behavior, duty to community, and the belief that natural beauty and the aesthetics of design positively influence both personal and community character., This will allow us to ask, *how was Olmsted's life and conduct propagated by the law of social contagion, through the Hartford circles and time in which he lived?* In simpler terms, how did Hartford *unconsciously* and *consciously influence* Olmsted and his career and influence later in life? Bushnell further explains *unconscious influence*:

But the influences we exert unconsciously will scarcely ever disagree with our real character as the shadow follows the sun; and, therefore, we are much more certainly responsible for them and their effects on the world. They go streaming from us in all directions, through in channels that we do not see, poisoning or healing around the roots of society and among the hidden wells of character. If good ourselves, they are good; if bad, they are bad. And, since they reflect so exactly our character, it is impossible to doubt our responsibility for their effects on the world. We must answer not only for what we do with the purpose, but for the influence we exert insensibly ... the

²⁵ Daniel Howe, "The Social Science of Horace Bushnell," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 70, No. 2, (1983), 320.

²⁶ Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume I. The Formative Years 1822 – 1852*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 74.

²⁷ Horace Bushnell, *Unconscious Influence: A Sermon Preached by Horace Bushnell, D.D., of the United States*. (London: Partridge and Oakey, 1852), 3-4.

vast extent and movement of those influences which are flowing out unbidden upon society, from your life and character.²⁸

Kalfus quoting Olmsted, in his autobiographical sketches explains, it “is difficult to realize how largely we owe most of our cherished opinions to circumstances of our personal history of action in [which] respect we have been unconscious.”²⁹ Olmsted recognized the unconscious influence of his own personal history. Knowing that Bushnell's *Unconscious Influence* impacted Olmsted's theories social reform and landscape design and recognizing Olmsted's self-awareness of his *cherished opinions* and *personal history*, begs to question, how was Olmsted influenced by his Hartford community?

²⁸ Horace Bushnell, *Unconscious Influence: A Sermon Preached by Horace Bushell, D.D., of the United States*. (London: Partridge and Oakey, 1852), 6-7.

²⁹ Melvin Kalfus. *Frederick Law Olmsted: The Passion of a Public Artist*. (New York: University Press, 1990), 110.

Chapter II. Hartford's Urban and Suburban History

"Thus we boast that we have made solemn proof to the world of the great principle, that civil government has its foundation in a social compact—that it originates only in the consent of the governed—that self-government is the inalienable right of every people—that true liberty is the exercise and secure possession of this prerogative—that majorities of wills have an inherent right to determine the laws—and that government by divine right is only a solemn imposture."

Horace Bushnell, Hartford 1849

Hartford's Urban & Suburban History

Hartford, in the context of American urban and suburban history, provides a somewhat contrarian experience of suburbanization. This contrarian experience is founded in a community ethos of democracy, self-governance, duty to community, and social reform aimed at creating a civil society. Olmsted provides a glimpse of Hartford's community ethos when he writes, "I want to make myself useful in the world, to make others happy, to help advance the condition of Society, and hasten the preparation for the Millennium, as well as other things too numerous to mention."³⁰

Hartford was settled in 1636 by the Reverend Thomas Hooker and his congregation. Olmsted's ancestors were part of Hooker's original settlement.³¹ From the start, Hartford was an experiment in constitutional democracy and self-governance founded on Hooker's vision for a society where "the foundation of authority is laid, firstly, in the free consent of the people"³² Hooker's view of *authority being in the free consent of the people* inspired Hartford's governmental framework that was codified by the Hartford Court of Common Council in 1639 with the adoption of *The Fundamental Orders* that established Hartford a constitutional democracy.³³

³⁰ Olmsted in "A Letter to Frederick Kingsbury, June 1846," cited in Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., Theodora Hubbard, *Frederick Law Olmsted: Landscape Architect 1822-1903*, (New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, The Knickerbocker Press, 1922), 77.

³¹ Witol, Rybczynski. *A Clearing in the Distance: Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Scribner, 1999).

³² George Walker. *Thomas Hooker: Preacher, Founder, Democrat*. (Hartford: Walker, 1891), 125. See also Deryck Collingwood. *Thomas Hooker 1586 – 1647: Father of American Democracy*. (Interlaken, NY: Heart of the Lakes Publishing, 1895).

³³ Horace Bushnell. "Historical Estimate of Connecticut," in Horace Bushnell. *Work and Play: Or Literary Varieties*, (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864), George Walker. *Thomas Hooker: Preacher, Founder, Democrat*.

Hartford was also a planned settlement, in the sense that streets were plotted and land was allocated “to individuals who were admitted to citizenship and given scattered parcels of meadow, field and woodlot land in quantities that reflected their social status.”³⁴ Together the *Fundamental Orders* and the planned settlement establish an early ethos of law, order, and property rights in Hartford.

Timothy Dwight, in the generations before Olmsted's birth, was Connecticut's leading proponent of self-governance. Boynton writes, “in a community in which local government was distributed through several counties, scores of towns, and hundreds of subordinate units, Dwight estimated that three-quarters of the male voters held some office or other in the course of a normal lifetime. The town meetings were local legislatures filled with literate voters closely concerned with the common welfare.”³⁵ In “rounding up his account of the Nutmeg State as a body politic, Dwight concluded that it was as near a pure democracy as could be reached in a state with a representative legislature.”³⁶ Dwight's belief in self-governance and democracy was the ethos of Olmsted's Hartford. Horace Bushnell explains:

Thus we boast that we have made solemn proof to the world of the great principle, that civil government has its foundation in a social compact—that it originates only in the consent of the governed—that self-government is the inalienable right of every people—that true liberty is the exercise and secure possession of this prerogative—that majorities of wills have an inherent right to determine the laws—and that government by divine right is only a solemn imposture.³⁷

In addition to Hartford's early innovations with constitutional democracy and self-governance, Hartford was early to enter into our American Industrial Revolution with small mills and later innovated with the manufacturing of firearms, bicycles, electric automobiles, and aviation.³⁸ New England and the Connecticut River Valley was a cradle of experiments with interchangeable parts³⁹ that provided the foundation to Ford's assembly line production.⁴⁰

(Hartford: Walker, 1891), 125. See also Deryck Collingwood. *Thomas Hooker 1586 – 1647: Father of American Democracy*. (Interlaken, NY: Heart of the Lakes Publishing, 1895). William Love. *The Colonial History of Hartford*, (Hartford: Love, 1914). Also, see Harlow Unger. *Noah Webster: The Life and Times of an American Patriot*. (New York, John Wiley & Sons, 1998) for a discussion on the influence of Webster and Hartford's Fundamental Orders in the drafting of the United States Constitution.

³⁴ Andrew Walsh, “Hartford: A Global History,” in Xiangming Chen and Nick Bacon, *Confronting Urban Legacy: Rediscovering Hartford and New England's Forgotten Cities*. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), 24. Also see John Reps. *The Making of Urban America: A History of City Planning in the United States*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965).

³⁵ Percy Boynton, “Timothy Dwight and His Connecticut,” *Modern Philology*, Vol. 38, No. 2, (1940) 196-197.

³⁶ Percy Boynton, “Timothy Dwight and His Connecticut,” *Modern Philology*, Vol. 38, No. 2, (1940) 195.

³⁷ Horace Bushnell, *The Founders Great in Their Unconsciousness*, in Horace Bushnell. *Work and Play: Or Literary Varieties*. (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864), 140.

³⁸ Robert Arnold. *Hartford: Yesterday and Today: 350 Years*. (Hartford: Farmcliff Press, 1985).

³⁹ William Hosley. *Colt: The Making of an American Legend*. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996).

⁴⁰ Peter Hall. *Cities in Civilization*. (New York: Fromm International, 1998).

As Hall explained, the “places in which [innovation] happened...were located at the fringe... They were not leading industrial cities of their day, but neither did they exist in outer darkness.”⁴¹ Hartford was at the fringe, in the shadows of New York and Boston—two cities continually under the historical urban microscope. Hartford has existed mostly in the outer darkness of our urban and suburban histories.

When first established, Hartford was not the first settlement in the Connecticut River Valley. Windsor and Wethersfield (today Hartford's northern and southern suburbs) were settled a year prior.⁴² In addition, the settlers of Windsor, Wethersfield, and Hartford did not stay put. The “three river towns subsequently sent out new groups in the vicinity which led to the founding of ten additional towns”⁴³ in the first two-decades following the original settlements. From the start, Hartford was a poly-centric or metropolitan settlement pattern—a pattern later to be promoted by Olmsted.⁴⁴

According to population records, by 1756 two dozen settlements existed in what is today metropolitan Hartford.⁴⁵ The smallest being Winchester with 24 persons and 20 miles west of Hartford and the largest being Middletown with 5,564 persons, 15 miles south of Hartford. Unlike a New York, Boston, or Chicago, Hartford was not the first or largest settlement. In 1756, the four largest settlements were Windsor with 4,220 persons, Farmington with 3,307 persons, Hartford with 3,027 persons, and Wethersfield with 2,483 persons. It would not be until 1800 that Hartford became the largest settlement. In 1820, two years before Olmsted's birth, Hartford had grown to approximately 7,000 persons and nearly doubled over Olmsted's time in Hartford, reaching 13,555 persons in 1850. In 1850, Hartford's metropolitan⁴⁶ population was 125,032 persons—Hartford accounted for only 10.8% of the metropolitan population.

⁴¹ Peter Hall. *Cities in Civilization*. (New York: Fromm International, 1998), 411.

⁴² William Love. *The Colonial History of Hartford*, (Hartford: Love, 1914). Horace Bushnell, 1849, *The Founders Great in Their Unconsciousness*, in in Horace Bushnell. *Work and Play: Or Literary Varieties*. (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864).

⁴³ John Reys. *The Making of Urban America: A History of City Planning in the United States*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 122.

⁴⁴ Hartford's development pattern was more like Los Angeles than a Chicago, New York, or Boston. Essential Hartford predated the poly-centric pattern of the L.A. School. See Michael Dear. *From Chicago to L.A.: Making Sense of Urban Theory*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002) and Edward Soja. *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions*, (Melden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1996).

⁴⁵ State of Connecticut, Department of Economic and Community Development, Historic Population.

⁴⁶ Metropolitan be defined by the U.S. Census designation of the Metropolitan Statistical Area for the Hartford Region in 2010. The author also analyzed other means of defining the past region. This include Hartford County, the 21-community streetcar network, and the Capital Regional Council of Governments planning regions.

It is after Olmsted's departure, the second half of the nineteenth century, that Hartford would grow to approximately 100,000 persons⁴⁷ and become the region's central place, organized around the development of a *suburban streetcar system* (1863-1941). Baldwin explains:

...the trolley system was actually beginning to create a new spatial order. In the 1890s the trolley system made central Hartford the hub of a metropolitan region. Rails radiated from downtown to surrounding towns and villages, drawing them more fully into Hartford's orbit. Trolleys to Unionville and Manchester did a booming business in summer and fall, taking thousands of city people on excursions to commercial picnic grounds where they could relax in the shade, feel the cool breezes, and listen to band music. More important, the trolleys brought people from outlying towns into Hartford to shop and to work.⁴⁸

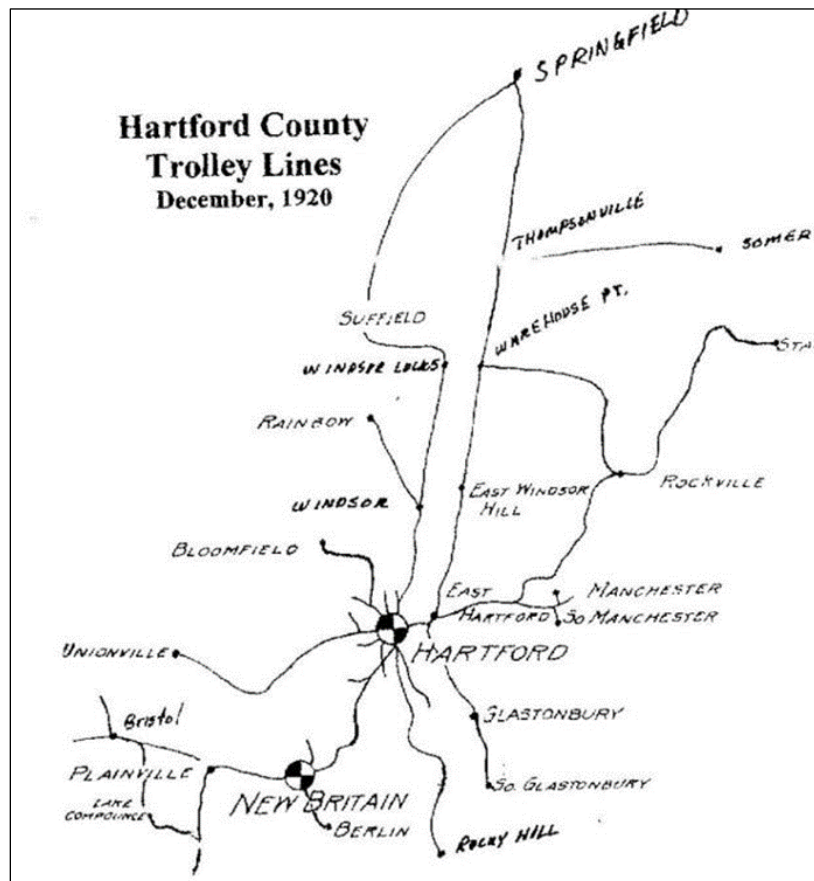


Figure 1. The Hartford suburban streetcar system with 200 miles of track connecting 21 communities.

(Source: Connecticut Trolley Museum)

⁴⁷ Hartford would continue to grow to nearly 160,000 persons by the 1950s, before it would then contract to 125,000 persons today. Hartford's population never exceed 32% of the metropolitan population and if population is a measure of urban centrality, then at 31.6% of metropolitan population in 1920, Hartford was the central place, but never a mono-centric city.

⁴⁸ Peter Baldwin. *Domesticating the Street: The Reform of Public Space in Hartford 1850-1930*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 44-45.

By the 1870s, suburbanization within Hartford and into the neighboring communities was fully realized. For example, Olmsted himself noted the expansion within Hartford:

There is every indication of a rapid, healthy and steady enlargement of the City of Hartford, and a large increase in the demand for its real estate for actual occupation, especially in the suburbs [...] The sylvan beauty to be enjoyed in Hartford and its immediate suburbs has hitherto been of its main charms, and has helped most materially to strengthen its position as a competitor with other cities for the residence of people of wealth.⁴⁹

Evidence of suburbanization outside of Hartford's boundaries is found in a newspaper article, '*The Suburbs of Hartford—The Ancient Town of Windsor—A New Depot, etc.*':

Hartford, with its fire limit restrictions, preventing the erection of comfortable frame dwellings on most of the accessible city streets, with its high-priced real estate, and its extravagant rents, is fortunately favored with attractive suburbs, than which none have a more delightful situation than old Windsor, only six miles distant on the line of the Springfield road, with six passenger trains passing up and down—twelve in all—daily. Here the laboring man or the man of wealth may select building sites and have country homes within fifteen minutes ride of the city...⁵⁰

The above 1870 article notes code restrictions and property value as the drivers of suburbanization outside the city, a narrative that is not discussed in American suburban history. In addition, the article highlights the socio-economic structure and spatial organization of *laboring man or men of wealth* having access to Hartford's suburbs. Another article in 1874 discusses the suburbanization of West Hartford:

Among the beautiful locations which abound in the suburbs of Hartford, none commends itself more favorably to the casual observer than the region of the west of the city, just within the borders of West Hartford, which is known as Vanderbilt hill⁵¹ ... three magnificent avenues here, running north and south, and rising above the other. Prospect Avenue lies at the base of the eminence, yet at such a height as to command a wide view to the north, east and south ... Above it Highland Avenue runs parallel, and on the crown of the hill Hamilton Avenue extends. The first and most striking feature of these avenues is the broad and beautiful views which they command. A more prosaic but not the less commendable feature about them is the fact that they lie in West Hartford, outside of city taxation, but still having the city benefits of water and gas, it cannot be a matter of wonderment that these avenues have become favorite sites for residences. The rapidity, however, with which fine, even palatial houses, have sprung up in this locality within the past

⁴⁹ Frederick Law Olmsted, "A Report on Park Site for the city of Hartford," addressed to C. M. Pond, Esq. June 1871, in David Schuyler, Jane Censer, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume VI. The Years of Olmsted, Vaux, & Company 1865 - 1874*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 445-446.

⁵⁰ *Hartford Daily Courant*, Sep 7, 1870.

⁵¹ The area called Vanderbilt Hill is the result of Cornelius (the Commodore) Vanderbilt who purchased approximately 16 acres of land in 1857 for his son. His son lived there into the 1870s and later in 1882 built the Vanderbilt Mansion on the site. The stone wall of the mansion still exists along Farmington Avenue. See National Register of Historic Places application for the *West Hill Historic District*, West Hartford, 1996.

five years, is marvelous. A great number of wealthy citizens, doing business in this city, have chosen building lots in this locality, and have in many instances erected dwellings.⁵²

This article highlights scenic beauty, lower taxes, access to infrastructure, and maintaining proximity to businesses and jobs as the drivers of this suburban community. In both articles, it is evident that Hartford has suburbanized, within its city boundaries and into its neighboring communities by the 1870s.



Figure 2. The Vanderbilt Mansion on Vanderbilt Hill. Today this is the West Hill area of Farmington Avenue and the original stone wall still exists. (Source: Connecticut Historical Society, 1889)

⁵² *Hartford Daily Courant*, 'The City's Western Suburbs: The Improvements of Hamilton and Highland Avenues, Some Magnificent Residences on Magnificent Sites' (Nov 13, 1874. Pg.2.). Originally the *Western District of Hartford*, West Hartford was incorporated into a separate municipal jurisdiction in 1856. In Olmsted's letter above, his discussion of Hartford's suburbs included the Prospect Hill area that is located less than a mile north of the Vanderbilt Hill area discussed in this article.

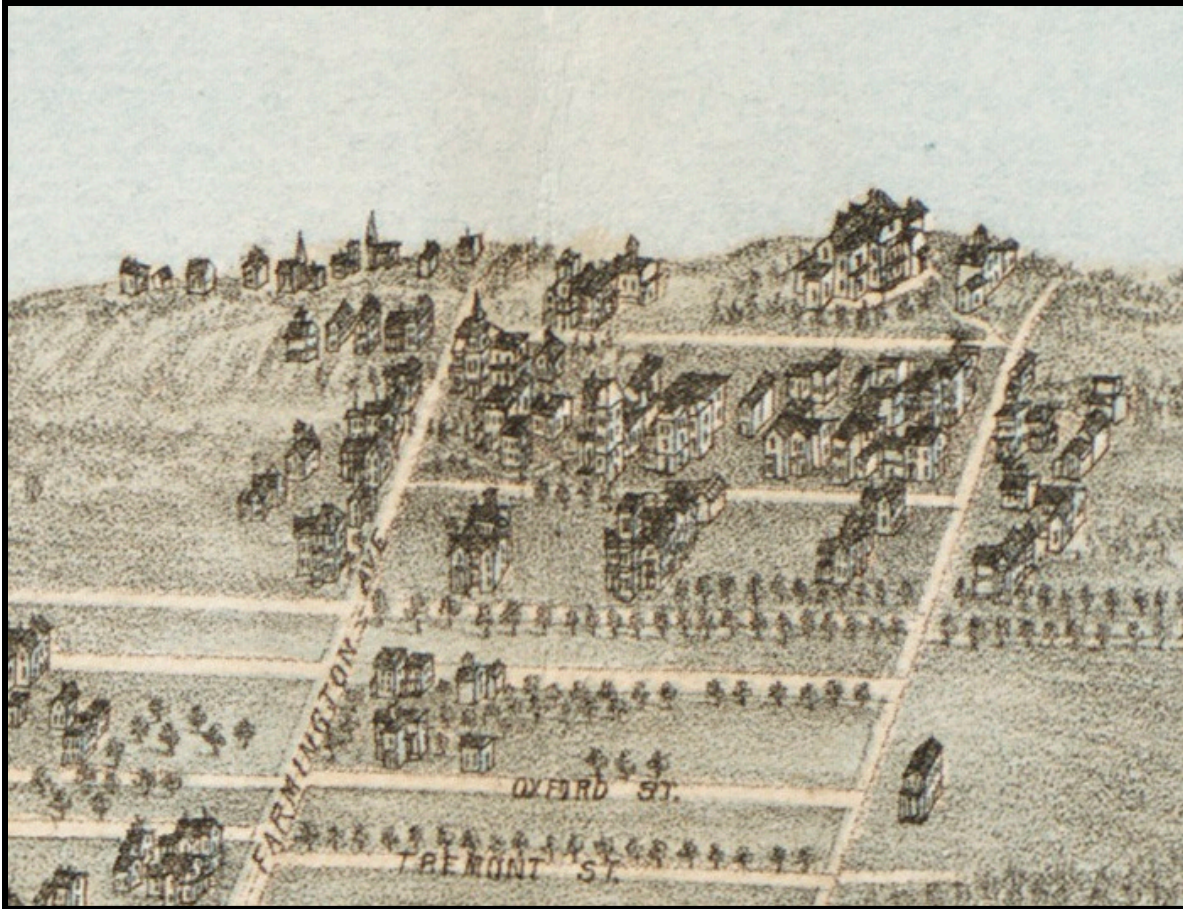


Figure 3. Vanderbilt Hill in the 1870s.

(Source: Connecticut Historical Society, 1877)

Early Social Reform & Community Ethos in Hartford

Even though Hartford was a small village with less than 5,000 persons in 1800, its history of social reform and civic improvement began in the eighteenth century. For example, the efforts of Noah Webster, an early social reformer most known for his *American Dictionary*, “threw himself into the task of solving Hartford’s public health problems, proposing such projects as the paving of Hartford streets”⁵³ while serving on Hartford’s Common Council. In 1792, Webster expanded the street paving program, “adding sidewalk pavements for pedestrians, with gutters to drain rainfall into the river and prevent flooding.”⁵⁴ Webster’s efforts reveal Hartford’s early efforts of civic improvement.⁵⁵

⁵³ Harlow Unger. *Noah Webster: The Life and Times of an American Patriot*. (New York, John Wiley & Sons, 1998), 171.

⁵⁴ Harlow Unger. *Noah Webster: The Life and Times of an American Patriot*. (New York, John Wiley & Sons, 1998), 173.

⁵⁵ The start of city planning in America has typically been tied to the public health movement in the late 1800s, the city plans produced as part of the City Beautiful Movement (Daniel Burnham’s plans for Cincinnati, San Francisco,

Unger further explains that Webster was “a Calvinist and a defender of Federalism,”⁵⁶ as were most of the residents of Connecticut and Hartford. Webster:

was the nation's first great social reformer. He was one of the first American leaders to campaign for universal public education, women's education, unemployment and workman's compensation insurance, social welfare for the poor and homeless, child care, city planning, public sanitation, public health, advanced methods of agriculture, free commerce and trade, dredging of rivers and canal construction, copyright protection for authors, and historical preservation. He was one of the early champions of emancipation and fought for everyone whose rights were unprotected. And all of this before he turned forty.⁵⁷

In Hartford, as shown through Webster, a half century to a century before the social reforms of the social gospel, public health, and City Beautiful movements emerged, Hartford was engaged in civic improvements aimed at the betterment of the city.⁵⁸

While Unger may be overly enthusiastic about Webster's accomplishments, Webster's social reforms are important. In the context of Hartford, Webster provides an early hitching post to explore social reforms and the many social reformers who emerge in Hartford during the nineteenth century. In addition, in Webster we see that his social reforms are cast in his religion and politics, the foundations to Hartford's social reforms.⁵⁹

and Chicago) in the early 1900s, and the more formal comprehensive plans of the progressive era. See Jon Peterson. *The Birth of City Planning in the United States, 1840-1917*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), Mary Sies, Christopher Silver, *Planning the Twentieth-Century American City*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), Robert Fishman. *The American Planning Tradition*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

⁵⁶ Harlow Unger. *Noah Webster: The Life and Times of an American Patriot*. (New York, John Wiley & Sons, 1998), 227.

⁵⁷ Harlow Unger. *Noah Webster: The Life and Times of an American Patriot*. (New York, John Wiley & Sons, 1998), xii.

⁵⁸ For planning history and public health movements see Jon Peterson. *The Birth of City Planning in the United States, 1840-1917*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003). For Hartford specific social reform efforts starting in the 1850s see Peter Baldwin. *Domesticating the Street: The Reform of Public Space in Hartford 1850-1930*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999). For the social gospel movement see Walter Rauchenbusch. *A Theology for the Social Gospel*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1945 (1997)). Ronald White and Howard Hopkins. *The Social Gospel: Religion and Reform in Changing America*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976).

⁵⁹ Suburban history typically focuses on the agrarian political economy of Jefferson (see Kenneth Jackson, Kenneth. *Crabgrass Frontier. The Suburbanization of the United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). Robert Fishman. *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia*, (New York: Basic Books, 1987) and the New England Village as settlement ideal (see Joseph Wood, “Build, Therefore, Your Own World: The New England Village as Settlement Ideal.” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 81, No. 1, (1991), 32-50. Joseph Wood. *The New England Village*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997)) and how the agrarian ethos melded with the village ideal. Hartford, to some extent, contradicts this perspective in that it was a Federalist stronghold, fiercely opposed to Jefferson and later was Whig strong hold (see Daniel Howe. *The Political Culture of the American Whigs*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979).

Webster also draws our attention to efforts aimed at creating a civilized American society, an important theme that runs through all of Hartford's social reforms. Unger explains that Webster "assumed a place among the nation's founding fathers as the father of cultural independence"⁶⁰ and "spent the second half of his life weaving the fabric of American cultural linguistic unity... Webster's books did more than teach children to read, write, and speak American. They taught children to live, breath, and think American."⁶¹ The idea of cultural independence is important to the creation of our cultural landscape. Like Webster, Dwight, the Beechers, Bushnell, and others, including Olmsted, were each working through their specific disciplines of social reforms to create a civil American society. It is the coalescence of these social reforms that result in our *suburban view of community* and our distinct cultural landscape—a suburban landscape.

This greater view of creating a civil American society is mostly missed or minimized in our suburban history—a history that focuses mostly on spatial location and physical forms. However, for the social reformers of Hartford, creating a civil society is at the core of their reforms. Their reform efforts are aimed at forwarding our uniquely American experiment in constitutional democracy, self-governance, property rights, and individual freedom. It is through their want of a civil American society and the efficacy of their ideologies, social reforms, and the physical forms that coalesce into the creation of our unique landscape, a cultural landscape that is defined and understood as suburban—our American urban form.

By widening the lens of suburban history to better recognize the social reform movements of the 1800s (i.e. temperance, domesticity, horticulture, language, abolition, common schools, suffrage, orphans, civic improvement, rural cemeteries, urban parks, etc.) as influential on our cultural landscape, we discover the same cast of social reformers involved in many of these reform movements. Most notable and at the center of many social reform movements are the Beechers. Starting with Lyman Beecher and temperance; Catharine Beecher and education and domesticity; Harriet Beecher Stowe and anti-slavery abolition, domesticity, and consumer behavior; Henry Ward Beecher and abolition, Isabella Beecher Hooker and women's suffrage, and the work of their siblings as educators and preachers.⁶²

⁶⁰ Harlow Unger. *Noah Webster: The Life and Times of an American Patriot*. (New York, John Wiley & Sons, 1998), xi.

⁶¹ Harlow Unger. *Noah Webster: The Life and Times of an American Patriot*. (New York, John Wiley & Sons, 1998), xii. For a discussion of Olmsted and the society he was part of. She explains, "American talk defined itself in Noah Webster's dictionary in 1828" see Elizabeth Stevenson. *Park Maker: A Life of Frederick Law Olmsted*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, [1977] (2000), 7-8.

⁶² William Henry Beecher (1802–1889) was a preacher, early advocate of abolition, and a promoter of temperance. Edward Beecher (1803 – 1895) was a teacher, social reformer, writer, and abolitionist. George Beecher (1809-1843) was a minister and abolitionist. Charles Beecher (1815 –1900) also a preacher, educator, and scholar. Thomas

Olmsted was born into and part of this Hartford community. Most important, he shared in the community ethos of social reform and the aim of creating a civil society. This Hartford community of social reformers began decades before Olmsted's birth and continued throughout the nineteenth century. This community of reformers included Noah Webster (a civil American language), Timothy Dwight (self-governance and domesticity), the Beecher family (temperance, domesticity, anti-slavery, abolition, consumer behavior, and women's suffrage), Horace Bushnell (domesticity, prosperity, civic improvement, and urban parks) and others who were engaged in reforms such as horticulture, landscape design, art, philanthropy, travel writing, and theology.

It is in the early 1800s when the formalization of social reforms appears in Hartford. For example, the Hartford Female Beneficent Society was founded in 1809 to nurture poor and neglected children.⁶³ The Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb, today the American School for the Deaf, was founded 1817 and land was purchased in 1818 on Hartford's Lords Hill to construct the Asylum.⁶⁴ In 1823, the year after Olmsted's birth, Catherine Beecher arrived and opened her Hartford Female Seminary, an institution dedicated to the education of young women. In 1831, the Hartford Orphan Asylum was founded. Witold Rybczynski, in his Olmsted biography, explains:

Hartford society was enriched by prominent public figures such as Catharine E. Beecher, educational reformer and principal of the Hartford Female Seminary, the Reverend Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, founder of the American Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb, the country's first free public school of this kind, as well as Horace Bushnell, theologian and celebrate divine. The town's literary tradition was an old one. During the late eighteenth century, Hartford had been the home of a group of Federalist poets who came to be widely known as the Hartford Wits.⁶⁵

Growing up in Hartford, Olmsted was not a casual observer of these social reforms. His father, John Olmsted was personally involved in Hartford's social reforms. The Olmsteds were friends of the Beechers and Olmsted's father served on the board of Catherine Beecher's Hartford Female Seminary, the Hartford Retreat for the Insane, and John Olmsted was a 'Life Trustee' of the Wadsworth

Beecher (1824-1900) was a minister, Union Army Chaplain, and educator. James Beecher (1828-1886) was also minister. See Milton Rugoff. *The Beechers: An American Family in the Nineteenth Century*. (Philadelphia: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1981).

⁶³ Gene Leach, "Connecticut's Philanthropic Impulse," *Connecticut Explored*, Fall 2015. (<https://www.ctexplored.org/connecticuts-philanthropic-impulse>)

⁶⁴ Today, the original campus of the Asylum is the corporate campus headquarters of The Hartford insurance company.

⁶⁵ Witold Rybczynski. *A Clearing in the Distance: Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Scribner, 1999), 31. The Hartford or Connecticut Wits included John Trumbull, Timothy Dwight, Theodor Dwight, Oliver Wolcott, and others. See Karl Harrington. *Richard Alsop: 'A Hartford Wit.'* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1969). Francis Parson. *The Hartford Wits: An Address Before the Beta of Connecticut Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa at Trinity College, Hartford Dec. 4 1934*. (Hartford: Privately Printed, 1936). Annie Marble: *The Hartford Wits*. Tercentenary Commission of the State of Connecticut, Committee on Historical Publication. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936).

Athenaeum.⁶⁶ The involvement of Olmsted's father in this community and in these specific social reforms is important to understanding Frederick Law Olmsted. Olmsted was raised in and part of the social reform ethos of Hartford, and Hartford's ethos of social reform was Olmsted's worldview. While, landscape architecture is Olmsted's most influential and recognized social reform, his ethos of social reform is evident in Olmsted's earlier career as a journalist writing about slavery and as the general secretary of U.S. Sanitary Commission providing medical aid to the Union Army during the Civil War. Olmsted was a product of his native Hartford.

⁶⁶ Hartford Daily Courant, 1842, *Wadsworth Athenaeum: Trustees*, July 2. Rybczynski, explains, Olmsted's father "served in the Hartford militia, was a director of the Hartford Retreat for the Insane and the Hartford Female Seminary, and became a trustee of the local athenaeum." Witol, Rybczynski. *A Clearing in the Distance: Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Scribner, 1999), 25.

Chapter III. Frederick Law Olmsted – A Biographical Sketch

“It is folly to endeavor to make ourselves shine before we are luminous. If the sun without his beams should talk to the planets, and argue with them till the final day, it would not make them shine; there must be light in the sun itself, and then they will shine, of course.”
Horace Bushnell, Hartford 1842

Olmsted's Birth in Hartford

Frederick Law Olmsted was born in Hartford on April 4, 1822, nearly 200 years after Hartford's settlement and two generations after the founding of our country. This period is important to understanding Olmsted and his early life in Hartford. Olmsted was born at a time when America was young. Olmsted was born into a community that had a long tradition of constitutional democracy, self-governance, and strongly valued these ideals.⁶⁷

Born on College Street, or what is today Capitol Avenue, near the corner of West Street, Olmsted's birthplace was the Dodd House.⁶⁸ College Street, in 1822, was the southern extent of Hartford's continuous development—the then rural/urban fringe—and beyond Olmsted's back yard were agricultural fields and rolling hills.⁶⁹ The Dodd House, a colonial era single-family home, was the first of three Olmsted family homes.⁷⁰ The second, mentioned by Stevenson, remains unknown as to location, and the third Olmsted home on Ann Street was purchased by Olmsted's father in 1836. Ann Street, along with High Street, was in an emerging merchant-middle-class neighborhood. The properties were single-family detached homes with small yards (or gardens as they were called). The neighborhood was organically designed in the density and character of the New England Village—a compact and nucleated

⁶⁷ Horace Bushnell, “The Growth of Law,” “The Founders Great in their Unconsciousness,” *The Age of the Homespun*, and “Historical Estimate of Connecticut.” in Horace Bushnell. *Work and Play: Or Literary Varieties*. (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864).

⁶⁸ The Marcus Smith map is a property map of Hartford in 1850. For whatever reason, the year 1902 was added to the title block, however the map is clearly 1850, not 1902.

⁶⁹ Even in 1850, as shown on the Marcus Smith map, little development existed south of College Street and the Dodd House.

⁷⁰ The photo of the Dodd House is provided by the Connecticut Historical Society and the meta data for the photo claims it is on Afflack Street. However, Afflack Street was not established until 1862 and the architecture of the home is much older. The likelihood of two Dodd Houses is slim, it is assumed that this is the Dodd House on College Street (Capitol Avenue). Municipal Art Society, “History of Hartford Streets: Their Names, with Origin and Dates of Use.” (Hartford: Published by the Society, 1911).

settlement. The Reverend Horace Bushnell purchased a home on Ann Street in 1834 and was the Olmsted's neighbor for approximately six years.

Olmsted's father, John Olmsted (1791-1873), was born in East Hartford, where many Olmsteds had settled after the original settlement of Hartford. John Olmsted returned to Hartford and was a prosperous dry-goods merchant, the owner of Olmsted & King at the corner of Main Street and Pearl Street.⁷¹ As a merchant, John established his family as part of Hartford's wealthier class.⁷²

Olmsted's biological mother was Charlotte Hull Olmsted (1800-1826) who passed away from a medical related overdose before Olmsted was four-years old.⁷³ A little over a year after Charlotte's death, John Olmsted married Mary Ann Bull (1801-1894) who was a close friend of Charlotte Olmsted. Kalfus explains, Mary Ann Bull:

came from a prosperous Hartford family: her grandfather, Dr. Isaac D. Bull, was a druggist, apothecary, and deacon; her father, also named Isaac D. Bull, was a wholesale druggist; her oldest brother, E.W. Bull, operated a retail drug store 'under the sign of the Good Samaritan.' All three had real estate holdings. When Harriet Beecher Stowe was twelve years old, studying at her sister's Female Seminary in Hartford, she was sent to live in the well-to-do Bull household [...] She further recalled Mary Ann as 'a celebrated beauty of the day,' with 'long raven curls falling from the comb that held them up on the top of her head.'⁷⁴

In the social relationships in Hartford's close-knit community, we discover that Olmsted was directly connected to the Beechers from a young age. The Olmsteds (Bulls) and Beechers were part of the same social circles. Olmsted's stepmother, Mary Ann Bull was a childhood friend Harriett Beecher Stowe. In fact, before Harriett lived with the Bulls in Hartford, Mary Ann Bull lived with the Beechers "when she attended Miss Pierce's seminary in Litchfield."⁷⁵

⁷¹ Martin, 2011. Note, Main and Pearl, at that time was the commercial and administrative center of the city. Olmsted's shop was located diagonally across the intersection from Hartford's Old State House, the seat of Connecticut State government until 1877. Prior to 1877, Hartford was the co-capitol of the State, sharing the designation with New Haven. In 1877 a new State Capitol building opened on the edge of Bushnell Park and Frederick Law Olmsted assisted with the design of new Capitol site.

⁷² It is important note that the experience of Olmsted was one of wealth and privilege. The Olmsted's were part of Hartford's wealthier class. Therefore, the story of Olmsted's Hartford is not a representative experience of all of Hartford's residents of the time, especially the laboring class or the poor.

⁷³ Melvin Kalfus. *Frederick Law Olmsted: The Passion of a Public Artist*. (New York: University Press, 1990). Charlotte, John Olmsted's first wife, was the mother of "Frederick and his younger brother, John Hull Olmsted." (Melvin Kalfus. *Frederick Law Olmsted: The Passion of a Public Artist*. (New York: University Press, 1990), 4)

⁷⁴ Melvin Kalfus. *Frederick Law Olmsted: The Passion of a Public Artist*. (New York: University Press, 1990), 98-99.

⁷⁵ Milton Rugoff. *The Beechers: An American Family in the Nineteenth Century*. (Philadelphia: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1981), 102.



Figure 4. The Dodd House on College Street. The location of Olmsted's birth in 1822.

(Source: Connecticut Historical Society, *The 'Dodd House'*)

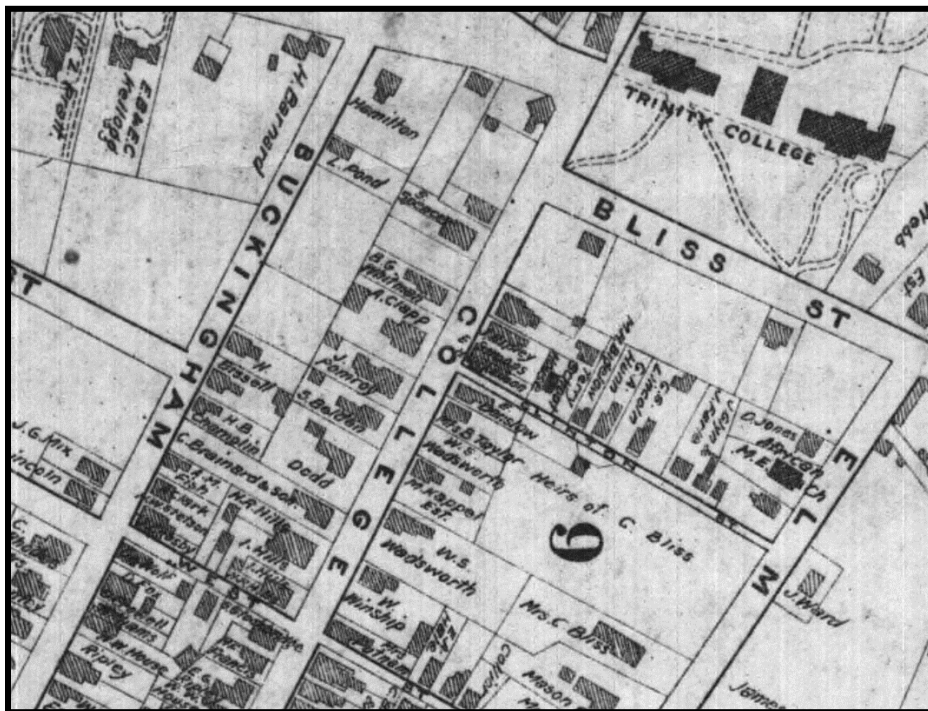


Figure 5. The Dodd House shown in 1850 on the Marcus Smith Map.

(Source: *UConn Magic*)

Frederick Law Olmsted, for much of his youth (between the age of 7 and 15), was educated outside of the city, in smaller and more rural communities such as North Guilford, Ellington, Newington, and East Hartford.⁷⁶ While spatially distanced, Ellington, Newington, and East Hartford were all part of the dispersed Hartford settlement and tethered to Hartford economically and socially.

Stevenson, while discussing Olmsted's family journeys through Connecticut, emphasizes the importance of situating Olmsted in native Connecticut:

One should step back and place this family, this child, in the time and scene through which they traveled. Connecticut in 1834, when Frederick was twelve and keenly enjoyed such a trip, was a relatively old and tradition-minded part of a youthful and bumptious land that was beginning to crow over its destiny. The state was one of rural fields and woods, in part deserted by people who had moved on to new areas further west. It was a state of small cities. Hartford was already old and dignified, and a member of the Olmsted clan could feel that he belonged there, his family having lived there for generations. Connecticut, Hartford particularly, was strongly etched into the character of its citizens.⁷⁷

Olmsted's Various Vocations

As a young man in the 1840s, Olmsted experimented with many vocations. His father "sent him off to study civil engineering with Frederick Augustus Barton, then teaching in Phillips Academy at Andover, Massachusetts".⁷⁸ Unknown at the time, his studies of civil engineering provided Olmsted basic knowledge and skills that would later serve him well in landscape architecture. Olmsted also experimented with "clerking at the store of James Benkard and Benjamin H. Hutton...on Beaver Street in New York."⁷⁹ This mundane experience is interesting in that it places Olmsted in the *first commuter suburb* document by Jackson in "*Crabgrass Frontier*,"⁸⁰ a comprehensive account of American suburban history. Roper explains, "From Brooklyn Heights, where he lived, he had a splendid view of the harbor over which swarmed all sorts of craft, from the wallowing ferries that connected Brooklyn, Manhattan,

⁷⁶ Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume I. The Formative Years 1822 – 1852*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977)

⁷⁷ Elizabeth Stevenson. *Park Maker: A Life of Frederick Law Olmsted*. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, [1977] 2000), 6.

⁷⁸ Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume I. The Formative Years 1822 – 1852*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 5.

⁷⁹ Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume I. The Formative Years 1822 – 1852*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 5.

⁸⁰ Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier. The Suburbanization of the United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

and Staten Island..."⁸¹ Olmsted living in Brooklyn Heights was commuting to Manhattan on ferry boats that facilitated this early form of suburbanization.

On "April 24, 1843, Olmsted left New York...as an apprentice seaman bound for Canton, China."⁸² After returning from China in April of 1844, Olmsted tried his hand at scientific farming. He spent time on a farm near Oswego, New York and a few months on his uncle David Brook's farm in Cheshire.⁸³ Olmsted also worked on another farm, the Joseph Welton's farm near Waterbury.⁸⁴ During this time, Olmsted audited classes at Yale. Olmsted's closest friends included his brother John Olmsted and Charles Loring Brace. Roper explains, "John's roommate [at Yale] was Charles Loring Brace, son of John P. Brace, principal of the Hartford Female Seminary."⁸⁵ It is during this time that Olmsted attended classes of Professor Silliman, whom he had been reading since his childhood.⁸⁶ Stevenson explains the influence of Silliman on Olmsted:

He was the only instructor at Yale to touch...Olmsted deeply. He related science to general culture. He implied that God worked in nature [...] It was the example of his person they remembered and his attitude. He was a commanding presence who had routed the old theology-bound guardians of a narrow curriculum and had enlarged education to include knowledge beyond the classical languages and mathematics. Even a small experience of such a man as Silliman was important to the person Fred Olmsted became. Olmsted was to have a large, experimenting mind, working outward from facts, anchored in them, but unafraid of large results and effects reaching in unimagined ways beyond what other men might see.⁸⁷

Silliman's influence is important and will return in later chapters. It is around this time that Olmsted's father purchased his son the first of two farms. McLaughlin and Beveridge explain, "Bolstered by Carlyle's Message⁸⁸ that work and sacrifice would lead to salvation, Olmsted flung all of his energy

⁸¹ Laura Wood Roper. *FLO: A Biography of Fredrick Law Olmsted* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973), 18.

⁸² Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume I. The Formative Years 1822 – 1852*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 6.

⁸³ Elizabeth Stevenson. *Park Maker: A Life of Frederick Law Olmsted*. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, [1977] 2000). Witol, Rybczynski. *A Clearing in the Distance: Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Scribner, 1999).

⁸⁴ Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume I. The Formative Years 1822 – 1852*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 6.

⁸⁵ Laura Wood Roper. *FLO: A Biography of Fredrick Law Olmsted* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973), 18.

⁸⁶ Elizabeth Stevenson. *Park Maker: A Life of Frederick Law Olmsted*. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, [1977] 2000). Witol, Rybczynski. *A Clearing in the Distance: Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Scribner, 1999).

⁸⁷ Elizabeth Stevenson. *Park Maker: A Life of Frederick Law Olmsted*. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, [1977] 2000), 29.

⁸⁸ Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) was a Scottish philosopher.

into his farming at Sachem's Head in 1847."⁸⁹ While *Carlyle's message* may have influenced Olmsted, his childhood neighbor and family minister, Horace Bushnell was also promoting work, sacrifice, and farming, as a noble profession. For example, in 1846, at the same time Olmsted was making his decision to become a farmer, Bushnell lectured at Hartford County Agricultural Society on October 2, 1846.⁹⁰ In this lecture, *Agriculture at the East*, Bushnell argued for farmers and young men to remain in Connecticut, as opposed to migrating west. Bushnell argued that farming was a noble career and Connecticut provided better prospects for farmers than the west:

But the young man who has a mind awake, a sound practical judgement in a sound practical body, can do better. If he has slender means to begin with, it does not follow that he must go where land is cheapest; certainly not if that is the hardest, most uncertain way to increase his means, as in many cases it unquestionably is⁹¹ [...] let the young man who would emigrate, consider whether it is not better to begin with a small farm here, and expect, by bringing it into the very highest cultivation, thus to extend or enlarge his property. In ordinary cases, I am quite certain, provided he goes to work skillfully, that he will advance in property more rapidly than he will to emigrate⁹² [...] To realize this picture of physical and moral improvement, ought, meantime, to be an attractive hope to our sons and daughters, detaining them here among us, stimulating their inquiries after scientific principles and promoting their invention of new modes of improvement, such as will enrich both them and the great respectable class to which they belong.⁹³

It is hard to imagine that Olmsted's decision to take up scientific farming in Connecticut was not inspired, at least in part, by Bushnell.⁹⁴

The Sachem's Head farm was a struggle for Olmsted and in 1848, Olmsted's father purchased his son his second farm, this one on Staten Island, New York. For some, Olmsted's arrival in New York marks the start of his career,⁹⁵ as it is the period when Olmsted first meets and is influenced by Andrew

⁸⁹ Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume I. The Formative Years 1822 – 1852*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 282.

⁹⁰ Horace Bushnell, "Agriculture at the East," in Horace Bushnell. *Work and Play: Or Literary Varieties*, (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864).

⁹¹ Horace Bushnell, "Agriculture at the East," in Horace Bushnell. *Work and Play: Or Literary Varieties*, (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864), 240-241.

⁹² Horace Bushnell, "Agriculture at the East," in Horace Bushnell. *Work and Play: Or Literary Varieties*, (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864), 244-245.

⁹³ Horace Bushnell, "Agriculture at the East," in Horace Bushnell. *Work and Play: Or Literary Varieties*, (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864), 256-257.

⁹⁴ In 1847 Bushnell visited Olmsted at his farm in Sachem's Head. Elizabeth Stevenson. *Park Maker: A Life of Frederick Law Olmsted*. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, [1977] 2000). Witol, Rybczynski. *A Clearing in the Distance: Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Scribner, 1999). 296.

⁹⁵ Kenneth Jackson. *Crabgrass Frontier. The Suburbanization of the United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). Robert Fishman. *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia*, (New York: Basic Books, 1987).

Jackson Downing.⁹⁶ It is also during the Staten Island period that Olmsted becomes a journalist, publisher, and editor—his first influential career, before finding his calling in landscape architecture.⁹⁷

In 1850, Olmsted along with his brother, John, and friend, Charles Loring Brace, traveled to England and Europe. On this trip, in the Liverpool suburb of Birkenhead, Olmsted is inspired by the People's Garden, a picturesque landscaped public park. In 1852, Olmsted published his first travel book, *Walks, and Talks of an American Farmer in England* that detailed his trip. The book was well received and “very cordially reviewed in the *Horticulturist*, the *American Whig Review*, the *Philadelphia Bulletin*, and a few other publications.”⁹⁸

On the introduction and recommendation of his friend Charles Loring Brace, in 1852, Olmsted is hired by the *New York Daily Times* to travel through the south and provide firsthand observations of slavery and the plantation economy. Beveridge, et.al. explains:

During the years 1852-1857 he was primarily a literary man, a traveler and writer. In the short span of time he became the most prolific and influential of those travelers who published accounts of their visits to the South. He spent a total of fourteen months on two journeys through the South, and wrote seventy-five long letters of description for the *New- York Daily Times* and the *New York Daily Tribune*.⁹⁹

Olmsted's writings on slavery and the South were also well received and played an important role in galvanizing anti-slavery support in the North—this will be discussed in detail in Chapter VIII.

In 1855, Olmsted became a partner in a New York publishing firm, and he would work as a publisher and editor. “In the spring of 1855, John A Dix, a young friend of Charles Loring Brace, asked Olmsted to become a partner in Dix and Edwards, a firm which published the American edition of Charles Dicken's magazine, *Household Words*, and *Putnam's Monthly Magazine*.”¹⁰⁰ “*Putnam's Monthly* would give him influence in cultivated circles.”¹⁰¹ This furthered Olmsted's literary career, while broadening his social circles of many notable authors.

⁹⁶ Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume I. The Formative Years 1822 – 1852*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 296.

⁹⁷ It is also during this time that Olmsted is engaged to Emily Perkins, the daughter of Mary Beecher Perkins and niece of Harriett Beecher Stowe. See Laura Wood Roper. *FLO: A Biography of Fredrick Law Olmsted* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973).

⁹⁸ Laura Wood Roper. *FLO: A Biography of Fredrick Law Olmsted* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973), 83.

⁹⁹ Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume II. Slavery and the South 1852 – 1857*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 1.

¹⁰⁰ Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume II. Slavery and the South 1852 – 1857*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981) 16.

¹⁰¹ Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume II. Slavery and the South 1852 – 1857*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 16.

In 1857 Olmsted took his first step toward his career in landscape architecture when he accepted the position of superintendent for Central Park. The park was approved in 1854 and work was progressing to develop the park. Unlike Hartford's newly approved park that was in the center of the city, Central Park laid beyond the area of New York's continuous development. "The land cried out for much improving. It was either rocky and barren or malodorous swamp. At best, it was adorned with a few scrubby bushes. The only touches of civilization were those provided by the local squatters living in shacks and engaged in slaughtering cows and pig, bone boiling, and goat farming."¹⁰² The park's design was put out to a competitive bid contest and in October of 1857, Olmsted was approached by Calvert Vaux, who he had met through Andrew Jackson Downing, to partner in a proposed design for the park. In the spring of 1858, their proposal, the *Greensward Plan* was approved, and they were awarded the contract to design and develop Central Park. The *Greensward Plan* and Olmsted's oversight of the development of Central Park launched his career in landscape architecture.

While designing Central Park, with Vaux, is one of Olmsted's greatest accomplishments and his first venture into landscape architecture, he accepted two other job offers before becoming a landscape architect. However, during this time, Olmsted dabbled in the work of landscape design. From 1861 to 1863 Olmsted worked as the General Secretary of U.S. Sanitary Commission. This was a newly commissioned organization, established by Congress, whose mission was to "aid in the care of the large volunteer Union army until the army's small, antiquated Medical Bureau could better do so on its own."¹⁰³ As secretary of the Sanitary Commission, Olmsted proved himself as an effective manager. His work for the Sanitary Commission ended in 1863 and he was officially dismissed from the role in 1864.

In 1863 Olmsted accepted a new role and position with the Mariposa Company as manager of the large Mariposa mine in California. Olmsted "tried to justify his decision by arguing that he would be grasping his only definite opportunity to advance civilization. His presence on the mining frontier of California would be an 'influence favorable to religion, good order and civilization.'"¹⁰⁴ While managing the Mariposa mine was a challenge and a bit of a personal disaster for Olmsted, his time on the Western frontier confirmed his views and concerns of barbarism and the importance of a civil society. During this time, Olmsted had a few opportunities to engage in the work of landscape architecture.

¹⁰² Charles Beveridge, David Schuyler, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume III. Creating Central Park 1857 - 1861*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 19.

¹⁰³ Jane Censer, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume IV. Defending the Union: The Civil War and the U.S. Sanitary Commission 1861 - 1863*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 1.

¹⁰⁴ Victoria Ranney, Gerard Rauluk, Carolyn Hoffman, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume V. The California Frontier 1863 - 1865*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 1.



Figure 6. Central Park, designed by Olmsted and Vaux 1858.

(Source: nycgovparks.org)

Even in California, Olmsted could not escape the influence of Hartford and Bushnell.¹⁰⁵ His perspectives to advance civilization on the western frontier are Bushnellian and founded in *Barbarism the First Danger*,¹⁰⁶ a sermon written by Bushnell after his own trip to California and San Francisco in the mid-1850s. In 1864 Olmsted was appointed to the first Yosemite Valley Commission:

Olmsted was far more aware of the national importance of the Yosemite as a scenic reserve than most Californians were. In his report to the state legislature he pointed out that this magnificent scenery was so valuable a resource for the health of everyone that it should belong to all the people and never be parceled out to private owners. Setting aside and caring for large public

¹⁰⁵ Connecticut was always present in Olmsted's life. Benjamin Silliman, Jr., the renowned geologist and son of Benjamin Silliman was hired to study the Mariposa mine and issued a report on the mine in May of 1864. Victoria Ranney, Gerard Rauluk, Carolyn Hoffman, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume V. The California Frontier 1863 - 1865*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

¹⁰⁶ For a better understanding of Olmsted's views of barbarism, see Horace Bushnell, *Barbarism the first Danger: A Discourse for Home Missions*. (New York: The American Missionary Society, 1847).

reservations of natural scenery was one way, he suggested, that government could protect the pursuit of happiness of all against the selfish aims of a few.¹⁰⁷

Olmsted's recognition of the importance of Yosemite and his recommendation to protect this magnificent scenery, draws on the influence of Hartford, specifically Benjamin Silliman who wrote about the importance of *natural scenery and its influence on national character*. Olmsted's childhood experiences of reading Silliman and his family trips in search of the picturesque are foundational to his recognition of the importance of Yosemite and how its *natural scenery* contributed to our *national character*.¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately for Olmsted, his report was not directly influential in the creation and preservation of Yosemite. However, Olmsted's report "anticipated...the argument used later in establishing Yellowstone Park in 1872 and in the National Park Act of 1916: the federal government has a duty to set aside natural areas of extraordinary beauty and significance and manage them for the benefit and free use of the people."¹⁰⁹

Olmsted was also engaged to design a cemetery in Oakland and a park in San Francisco. In addition, Olmsted was retained by the "trustees of the College of California...in March of 1864 to supply them with a plan for a village and college campus on land they held a few miles north of the town of Oakland, across the bay from San Francisco."¹¹⁰ The College of California project tethers Olmsted, yet again, to his native Hartford. Horace Bushnell, who visited San Francisco a decade earlier, worked with Henry Durant, then head of the College of California, to find a site for the college.¹¹¹ When the college was officially incorporated, Bushnell was asked by "the governors of the college...to accept the presidency of the institution and help it to become a true university."¹¹² Bushnell considered the offer but ultimately rejected it. Frederick Billing, a trustee of the Mariposa Company that hired Olmsted to manage the Mariposa mine, was a member of the board of trustees for the College of California College from its incorporation in 1855 and part of the board that offered Bushnell the presidency. He also retained

¹⁰⁷ Victoria Ranney, Gerard Rauluk, Carolyn Hoffman, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume V. The California Frontier 1863 - 1865*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 31.

¹⁰⁸ Olmsted, in the report explain "the main duty of government, if it is not the sole duty of government, to provide means of protection for all its citizens in the pursuit of happiness against the obstacles, otherwise insurmountable, which the selfishness of individuals or combination of individuals is liable to interpose to that pursuit." Victoria Ranney, Gerard Rauluk, Carolyn Hoffman, *The Paper of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume V. The California Frontier 1863 - 1865*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 502.

¹⁰⁹ Victoria Ranney, Gerard Rauluk, Carolyn Hoffman, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume V. The California Frontier 1863 - 1865*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 31.

¹¹⁰ Victoria Ranney, Gerard Rauluk, Carolyn Hoffman, *The Paper of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume V. The California Frontier 1863 - 1865*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 33.

¹¹¹ Robert Mullin. *The Puritan as Yankee: A Life of Horace Bushnell*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002).

¹¹² Robert Mullin. *The Puritan as Yankee: A Life of Horace Bushnell*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 187.

Olmsted to design the college campus. Olmsted's work for the Board of the College is explained as follows:

The fate of Olmsted's plan for the Berkeley campus and neighborhood was bound up with that of the College of California [...] Ample public funds were available, however, for agricultural and mining education... In March 1866 the state of California established an agricultural, mining, and mechanical arts college to take advantage of this source of funds. When Gov. Frederick Low proposed the two institutions merge, the trustees of the College of California regretfully agreed [...] The University of California was established in March 1868..."¹¹³

Olmsted's design recommendations, most of which were never realized at Berkley, are similar to recommendations Olmsted later made for the new Trinity College campus in Hartford.¹¹⁴

Returning to New York in 1865, Olmsted formalized his working relationship with Calvert Vaux, officially creating Olmsted, Vaux, & Company.¹¹⁵ At this point Olmsted had been working on and off in landscape architecture since 1857. But now, with the Sanitary Commission and Mariposa Company behind him, Olmsted's professional life and career from this point forward, was to be landscape architecture. Olmsted would soon become America's preeminent landscape architect.

In addition to their notable early design of Central Park (1858), Olmsted and Vaux designed Brooklyn's Prospect Park (1867-1870)—recognized as Olmsted's greatest park design.¹¹⁶ Over the next 30 years, with Vaux, others, and on his own, Olmsted designed numerous parks, the United States Capitol Grounds (1874-75), the Stanford University Campus (1886-1890), extensive park systems in Buffalo (1868-1874) and Boston (1876-1895), the 1893 Columbia Exposition grounds, among hundreds of other commissions. Together, with Vaux in 1868, Olmsted also designed the early romantic suburb of Riverside, Illinois—possibly the greatest and most complete suburban design of the time. Olmsted's design of Riverside utilized and highlighted many of his signature design elements. For example, the curvilinear street network, an extensive park system along the river, and the prominent central boulevards. Together, these and other design elements coalesced to create a comprehensive and picturesque suburban community.

¹¹³ Victoria Ranney, Gerard Rauluk, Carolyn Hoffman, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume V. The California Frontier 1863 - 1865*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 35.

¹¹⁴ Charles Beveridge, Carolyn Hoffman, Kenneth Hawkins, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume VII. Parks, Politics, and Patronage 1874 - 1882*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

¹¹⁵ For a detailed account of Olmsted's work and achievements with Vaux, see David Schuyler, Jane Censer, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume VI. The Years of Olmsted, Vaux, & Company 1865 - 1874*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

¹¹⁶ David Schuyler, Jane Censer, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume VI. The Years of Olmsted, Vaux, & Company 1865 - 1874*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

Hartford: Commissions in his Native Valley

Olmsted's 30-plus year career in landscape architecture spanned the nation. However, Olmsted had very few commissions in his native Hartford. That said, Olmsted did complete a few noteworthy projects in Connecticut. These include, Walnut Hill Park in New Britain and Seaside Park and Beardsley Park, both in Bridgeport. Olmsted's son's and firm would later design Keney, Goodwin, Pope, and Riverside parks in Hartford during Hartford's 'Rain of Parks.'¹¹⁷ Olmsted himself would work on just three commissions in Hartford. The first and largest project was the design of the grounds for Hartford Retreat for the Insane, today the Institute of the Living. Olmsted, with Vaux, designed the Retreat campus, and Jacob Weidenmann, who was at the time Hartford's Superintendent of Parks and the designer of Hartford's Bushnell Park and Cedar Hill Cemetery, provided oversight of construction.¹¹⁸

As explained, "In 1861 Olmsted has the opportunity to design two residential institutions. Both were insane asylums—The Bloomingdale Asylum in New York City and the Retreat for the Insane in Hartford, Connecticut."¹¹⁹ The Hartford Retreat for the Insane is further explained:

correspondence concerning the Hartford institution reveals how much of Olmsted's design theory for such as setting was already evident at this time. In 1872 the retiring director of the institution wrote Olmsted a remarkable letter of reminiscence and thanks—in order, as he said, 'to render honor to whom honor is due.' His recollections show that already in 1860 Olmsted wished to use his designs of institutional grounds to promote a feeling of domesticity and to counteract the depersonalizing effects of institutional life. In his letter, John S. Butler recalled how Olmsted had walked with him to the 'common field' near the Retreat, 'with somewhat rude abundance of trees and shrubbery,' and how pleased he had been when Olmsted expressed admiration of the site and gave his opinion of its 'rare capacity.' 'Those words of yours were the 'punctum saliens,' the starting point of the advancement of the Retreat.'¹²⁰

Today the Retreat for the Insane, now the Institute of the Living, campus remains and much of Olmsted's original design elements are still evident in the naturalist campus setting. A bust commemorating Olmsted was installed on the site in 2005.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ John Alexopoulos, John. *The Nineteenth Century Parks of Hartford: A Legacy to the Nation*. (Hartford: Hartford Architecture Conservancy, 1983).

¹¹⁸ Jacob Weidenmann. *Beautifying Country Homes: A Handbook of Landscape Gardening*. (New York: Orange Judd and Company, 1870). Rudy Favretti. *Jacob Weidenmann: pioneer landscape architect* (Hartford: Cedar Hill Cemetery Foundation, 2007).

¹¹⁹ Charles Beveridge, David Schuyler, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume III. Creating Central Park 1857 - 1861*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 19.

¹²⁰ Charles Beveridge, David Schuyler, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume III. Creating Central Park 1857 - 1861*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 19.

¹²¹ The bust of Olmsted on the Institute of the Living campus is the only monument commemorating Olmsted in Hartford.

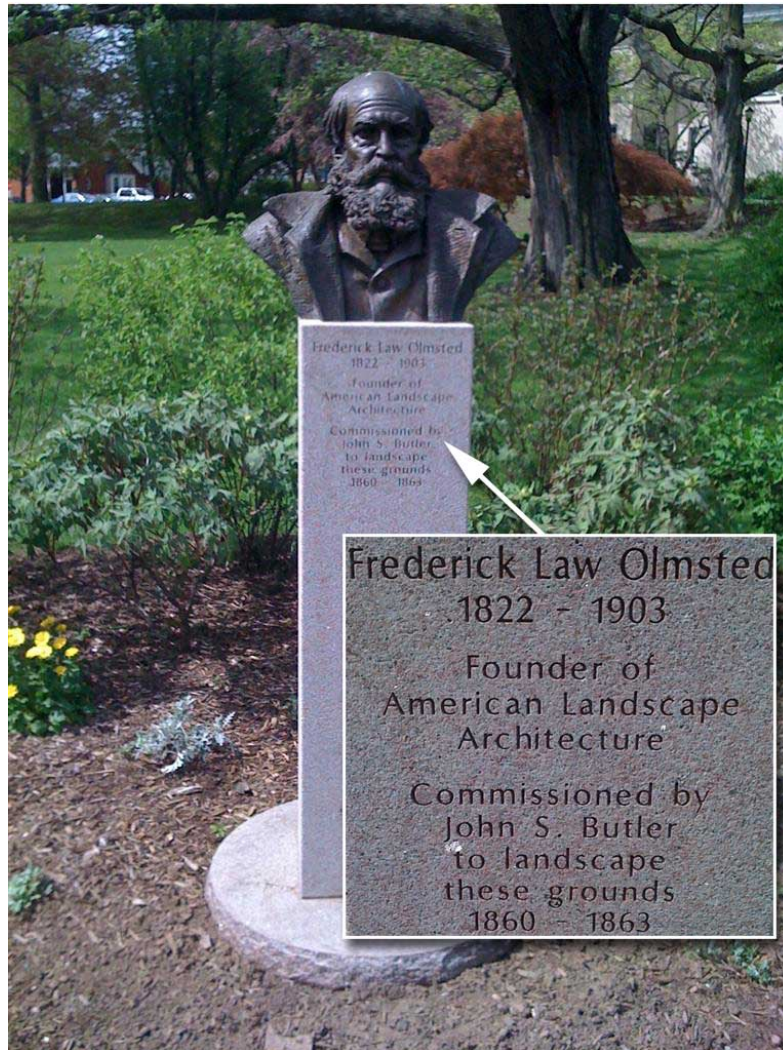


Figure 7. Institute of Living Olmsted memorial.

(Source: <https://instituteofliving.org/about-us/frederick-law-olmsted>)

In 1870 Olmsted was asked to provide Hartford advice for a street plan and parks in the western part of Hartford. This engagement is explained as follows:

In 1870 a private citizen of Olmsted's home town of Hartford, Connecticut, asked him to recommend a plan for streets and parks for the expanding city [...] Olmsted urged preservation of Park River, which ran through the city, as a pleasant thoroughfare and public pleasure ground, proposing a concept that he would not see realized until his improvement of the Muddy River in Boston and Brookline in the 1880s. He envisioned constructing streets along each side of the river and make a public open space of the stream valley. He also called for creation of new parks, one next to the Park River near the eventual site of Elizabeth Park, and another in the low land along the river later selected for Pope Park. He also proposed a parkway along the ridge running south to Cedar Hill Cemetery. The city took no action on his proposal, and it was 1895, the year after his retirement, before the city of Olmsted's birth turned to him to plan a park system. That project

was carried out by his partners and resulted in the creation of four major recreation grounds—Pope Park, Goodwin Park, Riverside Park, and Keney Park.¹²²

The private citizen who contacted Olmsted was C. M. Pond, Esq., a prominent Hartford businessman and politician. Mr. Pond owned land in the western part of the city, known as the Prospect Hill area, today the area of Scarborough Street, Terry Road, and Prospect Street. After his death in the 1890s, Pond willed 90-acres of land in Hartford and West Hartford to the City of Hartford for the creation of what is today, Elizabeth Park. The parkway, noted in the narrative above, *along the ridge running south to Cedar Hill Cemetery*, would be the only portion of Olmsted's recommendations to be realized, but not till decades later when a portion of this ridge was developed as Rocky Ridge Park running between Summit and Zion Streets.

In 1872 Olmsted was consulted again to assist with finding Trinity College a new campus site. Located on the southwest edge of Bushnell Park, then called City Park, the Trinity College site was to become the site of a new State Capitol building. In May 1872, Olmsted visited Hartford to study 10 potential sites for the college and in a letter to Abner Jackson, President of Trinity College, dated May 25th 1872 Olmsted explains: "The three sites which would be admissible to consideration under this rule may be distinguished as the Blue Hills site, the Rocky Hill site and the Thrall site."¹²³

The Rocky Hill site, east of the ridge, would later become Rocky Ridge Park. It was also selected as the site for Trinity College and today is the location of Trinity College. In his letter, Olmsted described his beliefs as to the desirable character for the college campus, as with the Berkley campus in California, Olmsted proposed a suburban residential neighborhood adjacent to the campus:

A neighborhood might soon be established about it in which suburban character could be permanently maintained at the same time that the advantages of the city would be within convenient reach. I advise the purchase of not less than sixty acres of land of which about half should be reserved permanently for the college common and building sites; the remainder to be laid out in a manner adapted to be inconvenient for commercial purposes but suitable for villa residences, and to be sold with stipulations intended as far as possible to prevent the construction upon it of building in blocks, the maintenance of precautions against the spread of fires and other desiderata.¹²⁴

¹²² Charles Beveridge, Carolyn Hoffman, Kenneth Hawkins, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume VII. Parks, Politics, and Patronage 1874 - 1882*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 169.

¹²³ Charles Beveridge, David Schuyler, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume III. Creating Central Park 1857 - 1861*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 563.

¹²⁴ Frederick Law Olmsted, a letter to The Reverend Doctor Jackson; President of Trinity College, May 25th 1872, in Charles Beveridge, David Schuyler, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume III. Creating Central Park 1857 - 1861*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 564.

Olmsted's work selecting a site for the college campus was part of a larger assignment to help with the design of the new State Capitol site. "In this period of patriotic construction of capitol buildings, Olmsted planned the grounds of a second state capitol, in his home town of Hartford, Connecticut. This was part of a twofold process, since the new capitol was sited on the edge of Bushnell Park, on what was previously the campus of...Trinity College. Unfortunately, no extensive description by Olmsted of his plans for the capitol has survived..."¹²⁵ However, Olmsted "did secure alternations to the section of the park near the building and worked diligently to provide convenient access between the capitol and park."¹²⁶

For his third Hartford project, Olmsted assisted with the design of the new Trinity College campus. "Letters describe his plans for partial implementation of a quadrangle design by the English architect William Burgess."¹²⁷ However, details of those designs are not available.



Figure 8. Trinity College William Burgess design, 1870s. The image depicts the quads and portions that were never built. In addition, the landscape design in the foreground is assumed to be Olmsted's design. (Source: Connecticut Historical Society)

¹²⁵ Charles Beveridge, Carolyn Hoffman, Kenneth Hawkins, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume VII. Parks, Politics, and Patronage 1874 - 1882*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 16-17.

¹²⁶ Charles Beveridge, Carolyn Hoffman, Kenneth Hawkins, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume VII. Parks, Politics, and Patronage 1874 - 1882*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 16-17.

¹²⁷ Charles Beveridge, Carolyn Hoffman, Kenneth Hawkins, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume VII. Parks, Politics, and Patronage 1874 - 1882*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 16-17.

In 1891, not long before his retirement, Olmsted was again contacted by his native Hartford, but this time to simply provide his voice to a debate on the need for a park. Olmsted's opinion appears as *Parks for the People: A Letter from Frederick Law Olmsted* in the *Hartford Courant* and he explains:

I have been asked for a contribution to the public discussion of the question of a park for the people of my old home. The form in which the question immediately presents itself I suppose to be: can Hartford afford not have a park? I invite those who wish to give this question fair consideration to glance with me at the history of parks in this country.¹²⁸

Olmsted proceeds to provide a brief history of parks, beginning with his work on Central Park and other parks and the experiences of others who design parks, such as H.W.S. Cleveland, another leading landscape architect of the mid-1800s. In recounting the history of American parks, Olmsted notes their benefits, successes, and the political and financial challenges of creating parks. Most interesting, Olmsted returns to the advice he provided Hartford in 1870, advice that was never taken:

I was once asked to examine a body of land which a commission of citizens had selected as the site for a park. I reported favorably, but the property was thought to be too costly, and the project fell through. This was nearly twenty years ago. The town is yet without a park. There is not another in the country that is in more need of one. But the tract of land formerly rejected is no longer to be thought of, while to secure any site that would tolerably answer the purpose, it would now be necessary to go far out of town and pay a much higher price for it than the rejected site was offered for. The difficulties of the case increase every year, but the town cannot be brought to face them. No doubt it will do so by-and-by, and will pay hardly for its earlier lack of courage.¹²⁹

As evidenced above, Olmsted was not pleased with his hometown for not taking his prior advice. Also interesting is Olmsted's discussion of rising land cost and the need to secure land for the future—common themes in his holistic planning approach to parks. Most interesting, is that his holistic approach is similar to Bushnell's approach. Bushnell explains the need to secure land for future parks: "as it can not be known, at the founding of a city, how large it is going to be, it would be well if a considerable section of ground were held in reserve, for a time, to be sold off finally, in part, if it shall appear that all of it will not be wanted."¹³⁰ Even though Bushnell's influence is ever present in Olmsted, it is interesting that Olmsted never mentioned Bushnell Park, developed at the same time as Central Park, in his discussion of the history of American parks.

¹²⁸ The Hartford Courant, 'Parks for the People: A Letter from Frederick Law Olmsted,' August 22, 1891, pg. 2.

¹²⁹ The Hartford Courant, 'Parks for the People: A Letter from Frederick Law Olmsted,' August 22, 1891, pg. 2.

¹³⁰ Horace Bushnell, (1854), *Planning of Cities*, in Horace Bushnell. *Work and Play: Or Literary Varieties*, (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864), as *City Plans*, 334.

Bushnell Park, Not an Olmsted Park

John Alexopoulos explains, “Hartford was at the forefront of the American park movement with the establishment of Bushnell Park in 1853, instituted at the same time as Central Park in New York—often considered the first public park in America.”¹³¹ The recognition that Olmsted was from Hartford, a friend of Horace Bushnell, and that that he worked with Jacob Weidenmann, the superintendent of Hartford’s Bushnell Park, has resulted in speculation and intrigue as to the role Olmsted played in the creation of Bushnell Park. The speculation includes Olmsted having no role in park, that he designed the park, and that he recommended Jacob Weidenmann to design the park.¹³² After much research, it is still not possible to make a definitive statement as to Olmsted’s role. The only definitively statement that can be made is that Olmsted did not design Bushnell Park. However, that still leaves open the question of what role, if any, he may have played in the creation of the park. Therefore, to provide context and clarity, the follow is a summary of what is known of Olmsted and the creation of Bushnell Park.

Prior to Bushnell’s park proposal in 1853, Hartford had two privately owned properties that were highly designed picturesque landscapes and held open to the public as quasi-public parks.¹³³ In addition, prior to 1853, there were two early efforts to create a public park in Hartford, both of which failed.¹³⁴ All four of these accounts will be discussed in later chapters, but for context at this point, knowing that such sites and efforts predated Bushnell’s 1853 proposal for a public park is important.

In 1853, when Bushnell proposed Hartford’s park, Olmsted was a journalist and had yet to find his calling in landscape architecture.¹³⁵ However, as Alexopouls point out, Bushnell’s “rationale for ‘The Park’ (as Bushnell Park was called for years) was similar to that for England’s Birkenhead Park” that Olmsted had written about during his 1852 book, *Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England*. Olmsted explained that Birkenhead’s “all magnificent pleasure ground is entirely, unreservedly, and for ever, the people’s own. The poorest British peasant is as free to enjoy it in all it parts as the British

¹³¹ John Alexopoulos, John. *The Nineteenth Century Parks of Hartford: A Legacy to the Nation*. (Hartford: Hartford Architecture Conservancy, 1983), 5.

¹³² For a detailed discussion of Olmsted’s role in the park, see Wilson Faude. *The Story of Bushnell Park*. (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, 2004).

¹³³ The first was Monte Video, discussed later in Chapter V and the second is the High Street Garden, discussed later in Chapter VII.

¹³⁴ The first attempt at a *public square or promenade* was in 1828 (see Rudy Favretti. *Jacob Weidenmann: pioneer landscape architect* (Hartford: Cedar Hill Cemetery Foundation, 2007)). The second attempt at a park was the High Street Garden in 1846 (see Hartford Daily Courant, (1846), April 14, Pg.2: ‘*The High Street Garden*.’

¹³⁵ Olmsted did not engage in the work of landscape architecture until the design of New York’s Central Park in 1857-1858.

Queen.”¹³⁶ As explained by Alexopoulos, Bushnell, in pitching the park, would explain it as a place “where high and low, rich and poor, will exchange looks and make acquaintance through the eyes; an outdoor parlor, opened for the cultivation of good manners and a right social feeling. It must be a place of life and motion that will make us more completely conscious of being one people.”¹³⁷



Figure 9. Jacob Weidenmann design of Bushnell Park in 1859.

(Source: *Beautifying Country Gardens*, Jacob Weidenmann, 1870)

The words of Bushnell above are Bushnellian in that they espouse his ideas of *Unconscious Influence*. However, based on the timing of his park proposal, Bushnell may have been compelled to act by Olmsted's writing on the publicness of the Birkenhead park, recognizing the need and want for such a public ground in Hartford. That said, keep in mind that Bushnell's sermon, *Unconscious Influence* also had profound influence on Olmsted, raises the question, was Olmsted influencing Bushnell or was

¹³⁶ John Alexopoulos, John. *The Nineteenth Century Parks of Hartford: A Legacy to the Nation*. (Hartford: Hartford Architecture Conservancy, 1983), 11.

¹³⁷ John Alexopoulos, John. *The Nineteenth Century Parks of Hartford: A Legacy to the Nation*. (Hartford: Hartford Architecture Conservancy, 1983), 13.

Bushnell influencing Olmsted? Regardless, it is plausible that Olmsted's writings on the Birkenhead park had some influence on Bushnell's proposal.

Moving on to the second question, what was Olmsted's role in Weidenmann being hired as park superintendent and designing Bushnell Park? Faude, cites an article date June 3, 1858 in the *Hartford Daily Courant*, noting the Park Committee wrote Olmsted for assistance with the park. The article, states, the Park Committee "suggested that Frederick Law Olmsted, a native of this city, who had lately been chosen to superintend the laying out of the large park in New York, would be a proper person to give shape to the result of our more modest enterprise. We presume Mr. O if he would consent to undertake it, would do so as well as anyone...and we are glad to hear that the committee has written to him for this purpose."¹³⁸ Faude, explains there is no evidence that the Committee ever wrote Olmsted or that Olmsted ever replied, and therefore dismisses an Olmsted involvement.¹³⁹ Faude continues to explain that Rudy Favretti, the author *Jacob Weidenmann, Pioneer Landscape Architect*, has long believed that Olmsted and Weidenmann worked together before he arrived in Hartford, but Faude is doubtful, since Olmsted's biographer [Laura Roper] says they met in 1862."¹⁴⁰

Favretti subsequently explains that "many years later, on April 8, 1901, John Olmsted, the adopted son and actual nephew of...Olmsted, wrote that it was his father who recommended Jacob Weidenmann to the Park Board" [and Favretti has] "no doubt Olmsted had met Weidenmann in New York, especially if Weidenmann assisted Ignatz Pilat on the plant inventory for New York's Central Park."¹⁴¹ Favretti's assertion is very plausible and likely. However, it is also plausible that Olmsted and Weidenmann met around that same time on Staten Island.

Olmsted's reputation as a farmer on Staten Island has been explained as: "His neighbors were impressed with his accomplishments, and one, William Henry Vanderbuilt...asked Olmsted to make similar improvements to his farm at New Dorp, Staten Island"¹⁴² Vanderbuilt and New Dorp create a

¹³⁸ Wilson Faude. *The Story of Bushnell Park*. (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, 2004), 2.

¹³⁹ In the late fall of 1863, Olmsted's "personal property and professional library burned while in storage at Staten Island Farm." Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., Theodora Hubbard, *Frederick Law Olmsted: Landscape Architect 1822-1903*, (New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, The Knickerbocker Press, 1922), 74). Therefore, it is possible that the letter from the Park Committee to Olmsted was lost in this fire.

¹⁴⁰ Wilson Faude. *The Story of Bushnell Park*. (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, 2004). Laura Wood Roper. *FLO: A Biography of Fredrick Law Olmsted* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973).

¹⁴¹ Rudy Favretti. *Jacob Weidenmann: pioneer landscape architect* (Hartford: Cedar Hill Cemetery Foundation, 2007), 30.

¹⁴² Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume I. The Formative Years 1822 – 1852*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977). 8.

potential connection between Olmsted and Weidenmann, placing them in close proximity. Favretti explains:

One important commission that was certainly turned over to Weidenmann by Eugene Baumann was the design of a seventeen-lot residential park on 103 acres on Staten Island, New York. The project known as Hill Park Estate and was 'situated on the Richmond Plank Road, four-and-one-half miles from Vanderbilt's Landing, and within a short distance from the principal station of New Drop, on the now constructing Staten Island Railroad.'¹⁴³

With Olmsted on Staten Island, friends with Vanderbuilt, and Weidenmann working on a design for Vanderbuilt, it is plausible that Olmsted and Weidenmann had met. After Weidenmann's arrival in Hartford, Olmsted did work with Weidenmann. Olmsted and Vaux¹⁴⁴ designed the grounds for the Hartford Retreat for the insane in 1860 and 1861 and Weidenmann superintended the execution of the design.¹⁴⁵ Therefore, in contrast to biographical accounts noted by Faude, it is documented that Olmsted knew Weidenmann before 1862 and it is very likely the two had met earlier in New York. Add to this John Olmsted's claim that his father recommended Weidenmann for the park position, and it is reasonable to assume this is the case.¹⁴⁶

As discussed in the first chapter, Peter Hall explained that innovation is most often linked to individual entrepreneurs who came from the serried ranks of the middle class, and few of whom followed regular career paths, but whose in-direct path taught them what they needed to know in their respective careers. Olmsted floundered in his young adult years and was late to start his professional career. He does not start farming until he is 25 years old. Olmsted does not become a journalist until 29 years old. He is 35 when he designs Central Park, but it is not until he is 43 years old that he finally discovers his calling of landscape architecture. Over the next 30 plus years and four decades, Olmsted would establish himself

¹⁴³ Rudy Favretti. *Jacob Weidenmann: pioneer landscape architect* (Hartford: Cedar Hill Cemetery Foundation, 2007), 22.

¹⁴⁴ Olmsted and Vaux on March 29, 1860 were "at Hartford to look at the ground of the Hartford Retreat for the Insane, for which advice and plan subsequently give." Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., Theodora Hubbard, *Frederick Law Olmsted: Landscape Architect 1822-1903*, (New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, The Knickerbocker Press, 1922), 8).

¹⁴⁵ Jacob Weidenmann. *Beautifying Country Homes: A Handbook of Landscape Gardening*. (New York: Orange Judd and Company, 1870).

¹⁴⁶ The plausibility of Olmsted recommending Weidenmann to Hartford is further supported by Olmsted's high regard of Weidenmann. Olmsted claimed in 1861 that Weidenmann was "among all the men who with no dishonest intention take the name landscape gardeners (or architects) there are very few who have shown or are likely to possess any respectable power of dealing with problems of the class that properly come before the Park Commissioners of a large and growing city." Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., Theodora Hubbard, *Frederick Law Olmsted: Landscape Architect 1822-1903*, (New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, The Knickerbocker Press, 1922), 130). Olmsted goes on to name Calvert Vaux, H.W.S. Cleveland, and J. Weidenmann, noting his design of the public park at Hartford.

as the Father of American Landscape Architecture and his designs would forever change our American landscape.

Chapter IV.

The American Suburban Vision

*"There spreads a new modern city, with broad, straight avenues and ample house- lots,
fronted with trees, in the manner of a new American city."
Horace Bushnell, Hartford 1854*

The American Suburban Vision and the Hartford Actors

Much attention has been given to American suburban history and the creation of our suburban vision. Many suburban historians¹⁴⁷ explain the numerous individuals who promoted the ideals and forms that influenced the creation of our suburban vision and the emergence of early suburban communities. Most notable, Kenneth Jackson's *Crabgrass Frontier* and Robert Fishman's *Bourgeois Utopias*,¹⁴⁸ provide a comprehensive framework for identifying the influential social reformers, ideals, and physical forms that coalesced into our suburban vision.¹⁴⁹

In addition, John Stilgoe and Henry Binford document the emergence of borderland development between 1815 and 1840.¹⁵⁰ Collectively, the primary ideologies and physical forms that coalesced into our suburban vision are: borderland development (the country estate), picturesque landscapes (natural scenery and beauty), domesticity (the role and elevated status of women, children, and the family unit), rural architecture (the country cottage and Gothic architecture), the ornamental lawn (taste, status, and conspicuous consumption), and the early suburban community (the romantic suburbs) beyond the edge of the city that married the benefits of rural and the urban life.

¹⁴⁷ The following is a partial list of notable works related to our suburban histories that are being referencing when the phrases suburban historians, suburban histories, or suburban history are used. (They appear in the Bibliography as Bass, 1963; Beauregard, 2006; Clark, 1976; Archer, 1983; Binford, 1985; Jackson, 1985; Fishman, 1987; Stilgoe, 1988; Marsh, 1990; Martinson, 2000; Hayden, 2003; Fogelson, 2005; Nicolaides, 2006; McManus, 2007; Teaford, 2008).

¹⁴⁸ Kenneth Jackson. *Crabgrass Frontier. The Suburbanization of the United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). Robert Fishman. *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia*, (New York: Basic Books, 1987).

¹⁴⁹ The use of the phrase suburban vision throughout this document is citing to and recognizing the substantial work and contributions of both Jackson and Fishman to our suburban histories. Kenneth Jackson. *Crabgrass Frontier. The Suburbanization of the United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). Robert Fishman. *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia*, (New York: Basic Books, 1987).

¹⁵⁰ Henry Binford. *The First Suburbs: Residential Communities on The Boston Periphery 1815-1860*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985). John Stilgoe. *Borderland: Origins of the American Suburb, 1820-1939*. (New Haven: Yale University, 1988).

Jackson explained that a “new suburban vision of community”¹⁵¹ was formed between 1840 and 1870 and resulted from a mostly emergent and self-organizing phenomenon:

The new ideas about the house and the yard did not enter the nation's consciousness through the efforts of any person or group of individuals. Dozens of people, including the park planner Fredrick Law Olmsted, the social reformer Charles Loring Brace, and the Transcendental thinker Ralph Waldo Emerson, helped create a new suburban vision of community between 1840 and 1870. But three authors whose productive lives spanned the years between 1840 and 1875—Catharine Beecher, Andrew Jackson Downing, and Calvert Vaux—were the most important voices in shaping new American attitudes toward housing and residential space.¹⁵²

Fishman further claimed the “success of the suburban ideal in mid nineteenth century America came from a group of publicists who successfully presented—one might say marketed—the English suburban villa as the ideal American dwelling.”¹⁵³ While no one individual, formal group, or reform movement created the suburban, many social reformers influenced our suburban vision. The comingling of and collective influence of these reformers who sought to create a civil American society contributed to the creation of our suburban landscape.

Many of the influential social reformers who contributed to the creation of our suburban vision were part of a close-knit community connected to Hartford. For example, of the six influential reformers noted by Jackson above, Olmsted, Brace, and Beecher were all part of the Hartford community—living in Hartford during the first half of the nineteenth century. In addition, Emerson lectured at Hartford's Young Men's Institute,¹⁵⁴ Downing likely visited Hartford, since he noted an estate in the borderland of Hartford in his influential 1841 treatise,¹⁵⁵ and Vaux visited Hartford with Olmsted.¹⁵⁶ Such a clustering of influential suburban reformers, especially in the first half of the nineteenth century, has not been documented in any other city of this time.

Jackson was right to claim that no individual or formal group created our suburban vision. However, from the perspective of spatial location and social relationship, a group of reformers did exist in Hartford who influenced our suburban vision. The group included Timothy Dwight, Catharine Beecher, Horace Bushnell, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Charles Loring Brace, Jacob Weidenmenn, among others, and

¹⁵¹ Kenneth Jackson. *Crabgrass Frontier. The Suburbanization of the United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 61.

¹⁵² Kenneth Jackson. *Crabgrass Frontier. The Suburbanization of the United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 61.

¹⁵³ Robert Fishman. *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia*, (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 121.

¹⁵⁴ Olmsted, with his father “attended the lectures at the Young Men's Institute,” including Emerson's lecture. Laura Wood Roper. *FLO: A Biography of Fredrick Law Olmsted* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973), 11).

¹⁵⁵ The Hartford borderland estate noted by Downing is Monte Video, the estate of Daniel Wadsworth that will be discussed in Chapter V. See Andrew Downing. *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*. (New York: George P. Putnam, 1841).

¹⁵⁶ Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., Theodora Hubbard, *Frederick Law Olmsted: Landscape Architect 1822-1903*, (New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, The Knickerbocker Press, 1922), Biographical Notes, 8).

most important, Fredrick Law Olmsted. In addition, the Hartford reformers were intimately connected to other influential reformers such as, Calvert Vaux, Andrew Jackson Davis, and Thomas Cole.

Furthermore, there were many other reformers associated with Hartford, including John Trumbull, Daniel Wadsworth, Benjamin Silliman, Lydia Sigourney, Sarah Pierce, Frederic Church, Francis Gillette, John Hooker, Ebenezer Watson Bull, and Charles Dudley Warner who are lesser known actors in our suburban history—in fact, some are unknown until now.

These Hartford reformers were bounded by education (Yale), religion (Evangelical Calvinism), and politics (mostly Federalist and later Whigs). Most important, there were few, if any, degrees of separation, between these families and individuals—forming a complex web of relationships that socially tethered the reformers together and Olmsted was entangled in this web. For example, growing up in Litchfield, Catharine and Harriet Beecher attended Sarah Pierce's Litchfield Female Academy,¹⁵⁷ a well-known school for girls and influential in the early teachings of domesticity.¹⁵⁸ John Pierce Brace, Sarah's nephew, who later married Lyman Beecher's sister-in-law,¹⁵⁹ took over the Litchfield Female Seminary in 1825 and became a prominent figure in the education of women.¹⁶⁰

In 1823 Catharine, Mary, and Harriet Beecher moved to Hartford, where Catharine and Mary founded the Hartford Female Seminary.¹⁶¹ In 1832 when Catharine and Harriet left Hartford, John Pierce Brace from the Litchfield Academy was hired to run Catharine's Hartford Female Seminary.¹⁶² Growing up in Hartford, Fredrick Law Olmsted was close friends with Charles Loring Brace, the son of John Pierce Brace.¹⁶³ Olmsted was also friends with Thomas Beecher, who came to Hartford to run the

¹⁵⁷ Dolores Hayden. *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820-2000*. (New York: Vintage Books, 2003).

¹⁵⁸ Kathryn Sklar. *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity*. (New Haven: Yale University, 1973). Barbara White. *The Beecher Sisters*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). Litchfield Historical Society. (www.litchfieldhistoricalsociety.org. Litchfield, CT, 2011).

¹⁵⁹ Stephen O'Connor, Stephen. *Orphan Trains: The Story of Charles Loring Brace and the Children he Saved and Failed*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001).

¹⁶⁰ Stephen O'Connor, Stephen. *Orphan Trains: The Story of Charles Loring Brace and the Children he Saved and Failed*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001). Barbara White. *The Beecher Sisters*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). Litchfield Historical Society. (www.litchfieldhistoricalsociety.org. Litchfield, CT, 2011).

¹⁶¹ Kathryn Sklar. *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity*. (New Haven: Yale University, 1973). Milton Rugoff. *The Beechers: An American Family in the Nineteenth Century*. (Philadelphia: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1981).

¹⁶² Kathryn Sklar. *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity*. (New Haven: Yale University, 1973). Stephen O'Connor, Stephen. *Orphan Trains: The Story of Charles Loring Brace and the Children he Saved and Failed*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001).

¹⁶³ Laura Wood Roper. *FLO: A Biography of Fredrick Law Olmsted* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973).

Hartford Grammar School.¹⁶⁴ The first Beecher, Edward arrived in Hartford in 1822 and the last living Beecher, Isabella, died in Hartford in 1907. During this 85-year period there was always at least one Beecher in Hartford and, at times, as many as five Beechers living in Hartford.

The complexity of this network of relationships cannot be overstated or underestimated. For example, Olmsted was engaged to Emily Perkins, the daughter of Thomas and Mary (Beecher) Perkins. When Emily called off the engagement, Olmsted turned to Emily's aunt, Harriet Beecher Stowe for advice.¹⁶⁵ In addition, as noted earlier, Olmsted's step-mother, Mary Ann Bull, who was attending Sarah Pierce's Academy and resided with the Beecher family in Litchfield,¹⁶⁶ returned the favor when Harriet moved to Hartford in 1823, Harriet resided with Mary Bull's family.¹⁶⁷

This was Olmsted's Hartford, a small close-knit community of like-minded families. Olmsted, just like the rest of the Hartford community, was raised on the teachings of Timothy Dwight—domesticity, constitutional democracy, and self-governance. Olmsted was raised in a place where domesticity was first taught by Catherine Beecher and preached by Olmsted's next-door neighbor, Horace Bushnell. Born two generations after the birth of our nation, Olmsted was part of a community and a generation of reformers who sought to advance our American experiment by creating a civil society through their respective social and civic reforms.

This vision for a new America, the foundation to social reform, is clear in Bushnell's rebuttal of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776). Bushnell's sermon, *The True Wealth or Weal of Nations*, provides a glimpse of a community ethos of social reform and the progress and prophecy of a great new nation:

I see the dawn of a new and illustrious vision ... I see education beginning to awake, a spirit of sobriety ruling in business and in manners, religion animated in her heavenly works, a higher self-respect invigorating our institutions, and the bonds of our country strengthened by a holier attachment. Our eagle ascends and spreads his wings abroad from the eastern to the western ocean. A hundred millions of intelligent and just people dwell in his shadow. Churches are sprinkled throughout the whole field. The sabbath sends up its holy voice. The seats of philosophers and poets are distinguished in every part, and hallowed by the affections of the people. The fields smile with agriculture. The streams, and lakes, and all the waters of the world, bear the riches of their commerce. The people are elevated in stature, both mental and bodily;

¹⁶⁴ Laura Wood Roper. *FLO: A Biography of Fredrick Law Olmsted* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973). Barbara White.: *The Beecher Sisters*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

¹⁶⁵ Laura Wood Roper. *FLO: A Biography of Fredrick Law Olmsted* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973). Barbara White. *The Beecher Sisters*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

¹⁶⁶ Melvin Kalfus. *Frederick Law Olmsted: The Passion of a Public Artist*. (New York: University Press, 1990).

¹⁶⁷ Milton Rugoff. *The Beechers: An American Family in the Nineteenth Century*. (Philadelphia: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1981).

they are happy, orderly, brave, and just, and the world admires one true example of greatness in a people.¹⁶⁸

In another sermon, Bushnell praises the settlement of New England, specifically Thomas Hooker and the founders of the three river towns (Windsor, Wethersfield, and Hartford), for their creation of a constitutional democracy and republic. In doing so, Bushnell perpetuates the teachings of Dwight, and the social-political ethos of Connecticut and Hartford. Furthermore, Bushnell, in his address at Litchfield, mourns the passing of a simpler time, while embraces the transition to the age of industry, and a more advance future to come. Here Bushnell explains how we have evolved, including the changing domestic role of women:

Let no women imagine that she is without consequence, or motive to excellence, because she is not conspicuous. Oh, it is the greatness of women that she is so much like the great powers of nature, back of the noise and clatter of the world's affairs, tempting all things with her benign influence only the more certainly because of her silence, greatest in her beneficence because most remote from ambition, most forgetful of herself and fame; a better nature in the world that only waits to bless it, and refuses to be known save in the successes of others, whom she makes conspicuous; satisfied most, in the honors that come not to her—that 'Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.'¹⁶⁹

Bushnell's ethos is also Hartford's ethos. It is this ethos, through *unconscious influence*, that shaped Olmsted's worldview. A worldview of constitutional democracy, self-governance, social reform, and holy domesticity. It was a social contract with God, country, and community that propelled these social reformers and their social reforms aimed at achieving our pre-ordained greatness—America, Connecticut, and Hartford as *A City upon a Hill* or Dwight's *Conquest of Canaan*.¹⁷⁰

As seen in the narratives above, the Hartford reformers did not set out to create the suburban. They were simply working to create a civil American society. The suburban is the collective result of their social reforms, which included the spatial organization and physical design of our built environment and cultural landscape.

¹⁶⁸ Horace Bushnell, "The True Wealth or Well of Nations," in Horace Bushnell. *Work and Play: Or Literary Varieties*, (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864), 76-77.

¹⁶⁹ Horace Bushnell, "Age of Homespun," in Horace Bushnell. *Work and Play: Or Literary Varieties*, (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864), 398-399.

¹⁷⁰ Timothy Dwight. *The Conquest of Canaan*, (Hartford: Elisha Babcock, 1785) is the first American epic poem. Dwight wrote the poem, in part, to demonstrate our greatness while affirming our new society as the chosen followers of God.

Chapter V.

Monte Video: The Estate of Daniel Wadsworth

"National character often receives its peculiar cast from natural scenery"
Benjamin Silliman, Hartford 1819

Wadsworth Monte Video – An Early and Influential Borderland Estate

Ideas typically don't appear out of thin air. They evolve gradually over time out of related material. As discussed above, the history of American suburbanization is defined by various ideals and forms that emerged, evolved, and coalesced into our *suburban vision of community*.¹⁷¹ In the borderland of Hartford, an early estate is found that was influential in the creation of the American suburban vision. More important, this estate is the embryo of the early suburban milieu that formed in Hartford in the first half of the nineteenth century. Most interesting, this estate intersects with the lives of many influential social reformers who helped create our suburban vision.

Olmsted himself mentions this estate in a letter written March 20, 1841 to his stepmother while he was working in New York and thinking of his past days in Hartford:

Oh, how I long to be where I was a year ago: midst two lofty mountains, pursuing the uneven course of the purely brook, gliding among the fir granite rocks, and lipping over the pebbles; meandering through the lowly valley, under the sweeping willows, & the waving elms, where nought is heard save the indistinct clink of anvils & the distant roaring of water as it passes gracefully over the half natural dam of the beautiful Farmington when the declining Phoebus gilds the snow cap hills & enlightens the venerable tower of Montevideo, then & there to be—"up to knees in mud & sand" chasing mush-squash!¹⁷²

It is the *tower at Montevideo* that draws us to Hartford's borderland. The borderland is "a place where prosperous families...set up housekeeping, lured by the scenic charm of living near farmers' fields and woods."¹⁷³ Monte Video was such an estate, developed in the early 1800s, seven miles west of Hartford. Wallach explains:

Monte Video...was not the first gentleman's summer residence to be built in the United States...but it was surely one of the first to occupy the top of a mountain ... At Monte Video

¹⁷¹ Kenneth Jackson. *Crabgrass Frontier. The Suburbanization of the United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 61.

¹⁷² Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume I. The Formative Years 1822 – 1852*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 128.

¹⁷³ Dolores Hayden. *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820-2000*. (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 21-22.

Wadsworth paid his respects to tradition—his estate had its gardens, its boathouse, its icehouse, its tenant farmer and working farm—but his conception was anything but traditional. There was, first of all, the fifty-five-foot wooden viewing tower, which he completed around 1810.¹⁷⁴

Monte Video, the estate of Daniel Wadsworth that was then located in the unincorporated *Western District* of Hartford, is interesting because it has been mostly missed in suburban history, even though it was discussed in the two seminal works that mark the start of when our suburban vision was crafted. These two works are Catharine Beecher's influential 1841, *A Treatise on Domestic Economy* and Andrew Jackson Downing's influential 1841 *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*.



Figure 10. Daniel Wadsworth sketch of Monte Video in 1819. Note the house, ornamental landscape, and the tower. (Source: Silliman, *Remarks on a walk from Hartford to Quebec* .– *Daniel Wadsworth Painting of Monte Video*)

¹⁷⁴ Alan Wallach, "An Episode, in the History of American Landscape Vision." *American Art*, The University of Chicago Press, Vol. 10, No.3 (1996) 9.

McNulty explains that Wadsworth's house may be "the earliest Gothic revival house in New England"¹⁷⁵ and Clark explains that gothic architecture "was the ultimate symbol of the 'Christian home.'"¹⁷⁶ For Beecher, the Gothic was the ultimate Christian home as evidenced by her use of Wadsworth's Gothic house. In Beecher's image of Monte Video's Gothic home, we see the origins of Hartford's suburban milieu. Catherine Beecher, a resident of Hartford from 1823 to 1832, visited Monte Video and utilized it as a location for an outing with her students from the Hartford Female Seminary. Sklar writes, the "outing was then more than a trip to the countryside. It was an exercise in the cultivation of the aesthetic emotions."¹⁷⁷ Wallach further explains that the owner, Daniel Wadsworth, was the son of:

Jeremiah [Wadsworth], [a] leading capitalist of the Connecticut Valley...and "one of the most important commercial figures of the North American continent" [...] Jeremiah was a compulsive money-maker. Commissary-general to the American forces and commissary to the French during the Revolution, merchant, entrepreneur, financier, speculator in western lands, and gentleman farmer, he was ever on the lookout for ways to increase his fortune. An ardent Federalist...and a close associate of Alexander Hamilton (he was second president of Hamilton's Bank of New York), Jeremiah played a conspicuous role in local and national politics, representing Connecticut at the Constitutional Convention and serving in Congress from 1787 to 1795.¹⁷⁸

Jeremiah Wadsworth was also gentlemen farmer and recognized promoter of new agricultural techniques.¹⁷⁹ Daniel Wadsworth inherited his family's wealth and land, not having to work other than managing the family assets. As a result of his wealth and privilege, Wadsworth was an early philanthropist, patron of the arts, amateur artist and architect, and one of the most influential persons in Hartford.¹⁸⁰ Through his philanthropy and social reform, Wadsworth helped found the American Asylum for the Deaf in 1815, the Hartford Evangelical Tract (missionary) Society in 1816, and the Hartford Orphan Asylum in 1833.¹⁸¹ In addition, Wadsworth served on the board of trustees for Catharine Beecher's Hartford Female Seminary.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁵ Brad McNulty. *The Correspondence of Thomas Cole and Daniel Wadsworth*. (Hartford: Connecticut Historical Society, 1983), 12.

¹⁷⁶ Clifford Clark, "Domestic Architecture as an Index to Social History: The Romantic Revival and the Cult of Domesticity in America, 1840-1870." *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 7, No. 1. (1976), 40.

¹⁷⁷ Kathryn Sklar. *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity*. (New Haven: Yale University, 1973), 100.

¹⁷⁸ Alan Wallach, "An Episode, in the History of American Landscape Vision." *American Art*, The University of Chicago Press, Vol. 10, No.3 (1996), 10.

¹⁷⁹ Chester Destler, "The Gentleman Farmer and the New Agriculture: Jeremiah Wadsworth." *Agricultural History*, Vol. 46. No. 1 American Agriculture (1972), 135-153.

¹⁸⁰ Wadsworth, in the context of Peter Hall (1998) findings on creative and innovative milieus, is the cosmopolitan persona, wealth, and patronage that drives much of Hartford's creativity that was driving this early suburban milieu.

¹⁸¹ Richard Saunders, with Helen Raye, *Daniel Wadsworth: Patron of the Arts*. (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum, 1981).

¹⁸² *Hartford Daily Courant*, March 5, 1827, p. 3.

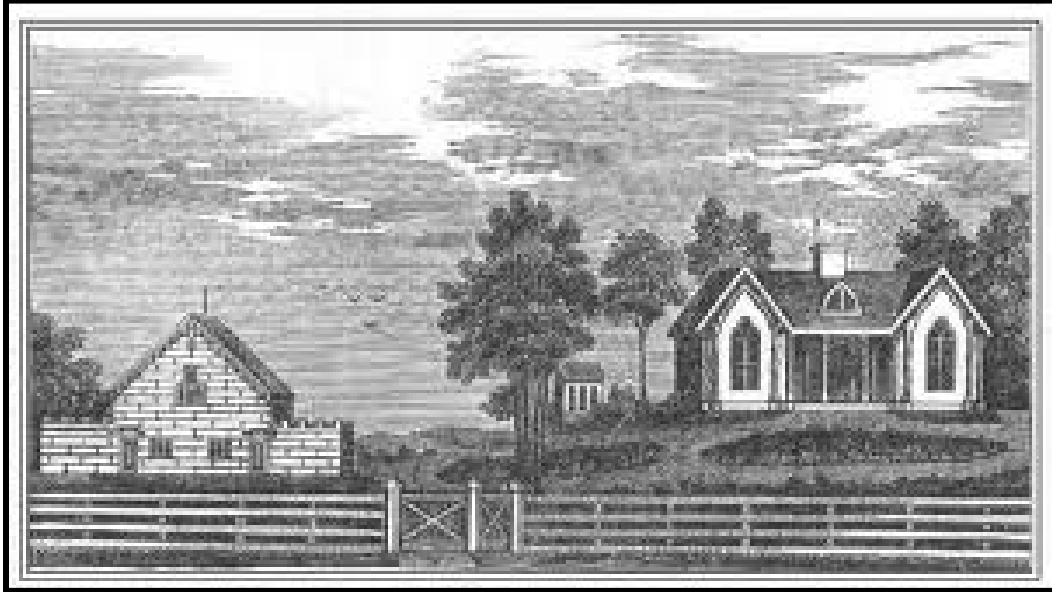


Figure 11. Catherine Beecher sketch of Monte Video Gothic cottage as it appears in her 1841 *Treatise on the Domestic Economy*. (Source: Catharine Beecher, *A Treatise on Domestic Economy* (1841) – Figure 33, page 274)



Figure 12. An 1830 painting of the Monte Video cottage by Mosel I. Danforth ca. 1830 (Hartford Wadsworth Archives – Connecticut Historical Society)

Downing's mention of Monte Video and Beecher's use of Wadsworth's Gothic home are not Wadsworth's only connections to our suburban history. Wadsworth and Monte Video are intimately linked to other suburban narratives and actors in the creation of our suburban vision. For example:

By 1840, as humankind was removed from the real troubles of nature, an idealized view of the outdoors was emerging. Historians have often focused attention on the new appreciation for grandeur and natural beauty...the Hudson River School...[and] Thomas Cole...revealed in the landscape—the breathtaking views, the virgin hemlocks, the black locust trees, the stupendous river—and in so doing offered a more lyrical view of nature than had previously been typical of artists [...] The lyrical view of nature, supplemented by the dread of epidemics, was transferred to residential experience with the introduction of the villa and the bungalow.¹⁸³

Martinson explains the importance of Cole and the Hudson River School. “The two decades of Cole's career, from the mid-1820s through the mid-1840s, coincided with one of the most vibrant periods in American intellectual history. Cole was a central artistic figure during this time, especially in identifying what he saw as the sublime potential of the American experience.”¹⁸⁴ Wadsworth was an early and influential patron of Cole and the Hudson River School¹⁸⁵ and commissioned a dozen paintings by Cole, based on Wadsworth's own travels. He even helped plan Cole's trips to paint specific landscapes in New England and New York.¹⁸⁶

Monte Video was designed and completed early in the borderland period in our suburban history. Kornhauser explains the development of Monte Video:

In 1805, in partnership with [John] Trumbull, Wadsworth began transforming the wilderness tract of land on the summit of Talcott Mountain, west of Hartford, into a carefully cultivated summer retreat with a neo-Gothic house, surrounding gardens, a boathouse for the nearby mountain lake, and a working farm. He named the estate Monte Video, completing it by about 1810 with the construction of its most distinctive feature, a seventeen-meter (fifty-five-foot) viewing tower that commanded a spectacular, sweeping view.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ Kenneth Jackson. *Crabgrass Frontier. The Suburbanization of the United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 58.

¹⁸⁴ Tom Martinson. *American Dreamscapes: The Pursuit of Happiness in Postwar Suburbia*. (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2000), 14. For more detailed accounts of Cole and his influence, see William Truettner and Alan Wallach, *Thomas Cole: Landscape into History*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994) and Ellwood Parry. *Acts of God, Acts of Men: Geological Ideas and the Imaginary Landscapes of Thomas Cole*. (Hartford: University Press of New England, 1979).

¹⁸⁵ Brad McNulty. *The Correspondence of Thomas Cole and Daniel Wadsworth*. (Hartford: Connecticut Historical Society, 1983), 12. Elizabeth Kornhauser, *Hudson River School: Masterworks from the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003)

¹⁸⁶ Richard Saunders, with Helen Raye, *Daniel Wadsworth: Patron of the Arts*. (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum, 1981). Also see Brad McNulty. *The Correspondence of Thomas Cole and Daniel Wadsworth*. (Hartford: Connecticut Historical Society, 1983), 12.

¹⁸⁷ Elizabeth Kornhauser, *Hudson River School: Masterworks from the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 6.

In 1783 Daniel Wadsworth traveled to France and England with his father, Jeremiah. On this trip Daniel was introduced to and inspired by English estates. In addition, during this trip “Daniel’s father purchased over one hundred books from a London dealer.”¹⁸⁸ Wadsworth’s father was a founder of the Hartford Library Company 1795 and decades later, in 1842, Daniel founded Hartford’s Wadsworth Atheneum, a museum building that housed the Hartford Young Men’s Institute, the Connecticut Historical Society, the Natural History Society, and an art gallery.¹⁸⁹

Wadsworth’s brother-in-law John Trumbull, along with Asher Durand and William Dunlap, discovered Thomas Cole in New York City. Trumbull introduced Wadsworth to Cole and Kornhauser explains Wadsworth’s influence on the Hudson River School.

The rise of the Hudson River school... while it has traditionally been identified as beginning with the 1825 arrival of Thomas Cole (1801-1848) in New York City, this native school did not form itself out of thin air, but was, in fact, decades in the making. At the turn of the 18th century, Daniel Wadsworth...was one of a handful of enlightened patrons who played critical roles in laying the groundwork for the development of the Hudson River school.¹⁹⁰

It was also Wadsworth who would later introduce Cole to Hartford native, Frederic Church and Church would become Cole’s only student. One of the many Cole paintings commissioned by Wadsworth, is a *View of Monte Video, the Seat of Daniel Wadsworth, Esq* (1828). The painting is explained as “an effort to convey the visual mastery that this mountaintop locale afforded the viewer in the grand panoramic sweep of the scenery.”¹⁹¹ Kornhauser also explains, to “elevate the taste of American citizens, Wadsworth opened the property to the public, encouraging visitors to enjoy his wilderness estate.”¹⁹² Wadsworth’s desire to *elevate the taste* of American citizens is an important part of Hartford’s social reforms to create a civil society, especial regarding Olmsted who worked tirelessly to elevate American taste. In addition, while outside the city and privately owned, opening Monte Video to the public created an early quasi-public park and resort that attracted thousands of visitors.

Benjamin Silliman, a Yale professor, and brother-in-law of both Trumbull and Wadsworth, wrote a vivid account of *Monte Video* in 1819, published as chapter one of his popular book, *Remarks Made*,

¹⁸⁸ Richard Saunders, with Helen Raye, *Daniel Wadsworth: Patron of the Arts*. (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum, 1981), 12.

¹⁸⁹ Richard Saunders, with Helen Raye, *Daniel Wadsworth: Patron of the Arts*. (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum, 1981).

¹⁹⁰ Elizabeth Kornhauser, “Daniel Wadsworth and the Hudson River School,” *Hog River Journal*, (Hartford: Winter 2004/2005).

¹⁹¹ Elizabeth Kornhauser, “Daniel Wadsworth and the Hudson River School,” *Hog River Journal*, (Hartford: Winter 2004/2005). Also see Ellwood Parry. *Acts of God, Acts of Men: Geological Ideas and the Imaginary Landscapes of Thomas Cole*. (Hartford: University Press of New England, 1979).

¹⁹² Elizabeth Kornhauser, “Daniel Wadsworth and the Hudson River School,” *Hog River Journal*, Winter 2004/2005.

On A Short Tour, Between Hartford to Quebec in the autumn of 1819 in 1820. The following is an excerpt of Silliman's description of Monte Video:

It enables us to understand the peculiarities of the beautiful and grand scenery of Monte Video, which makes this villa, with its surrounding objects, quite without a parallel in America, and probably with few in the world.

It stands upon the very top of one of the highest...ridges of Connecticut.... The villa is almost upon the brow of the precipice; and a traveler in the Farmington valley sees it, a solitary tenement, and in a place apparently both comfortless and inaccessible, standing upon the giddy summit, ready, he would almost imagine, to be swept away by the first blast from the mountain. The beautiful crystal lake is...within a few yards of the house; it pours its superfluous waters in a limpid stream, down the mountain's side, and affords in winter the most pellucid ice that can be imagined. Arrive on the top of the mountain, and confining his attention to the scene at his feet, the traveler scarcely realizes that he is elevated above the common surface. The lake, the Gothic villa, farmhouse and offices, the gardens, orchards, and serpentine walks, conducting the stranger through all the varieties of mountain shade, and to the most interesting points of view, indicate a beautiful peaceful scene; but, if he lifts his eyes, he sees still above him, on the north bold precipices of naked rock, frowning like ancient battlements, and on one of the highest peaks, the tall tower, rising above the trees, and bidding defiance to the storms. If he ascend to its top, he contemplates an extent of country that might constitute a kingdom—populous and beautiful, with villages, turrets and towns; at one time, he sees the massy magnificence of condensed vapour, which repose, in a vast extent of fog and mist, on the Farmington and Connecticut rivers, and defines, with perfect exactness, all their windings; at another, the clouds roll below him, in wild grandeur, through the contiguous valley...¹⁹³

In this essay, Silliman explains that “National character often receives its peculiar cast from natural scenery...[and that]...Natural scenery is therefore, always worthy of observation, and it will be a never-failing source of delight.”¹⁹⁴ Silliman further states that “natural scenery is intimately connected with taste, moral feeling, utility, and instruction.”¹⁹⁵ Silliman's linking of national character to natural scenery is important in these early efforts to create a civil society. In addition, Silliman's statement may be the origin of Hartford's widely held belief that nature has a positive influence on our character—a powerful theme for the social reformers of Hartford.

Olmsted read Silliman from a young age and was influenced by Silliman's ‘*Remarks on a walk from Hartford to Quebec*.’ For example, “the Olmsted's were fond of taking long family trips, sometimes by public coach or canal boat, and often in the family carriage, to the White Mountains, the Maine coast, and into upper New York State. They stayed at the local inns along the way and searched out the

¹⁹³ Benjamin Silliman. *Remarks Made on a Short Tour Between Hartford and Quebec in the Autumn of 1819*. (New Haven: S. Converse, 1920), 25-26.

¹⁹⁴ Benjamin Silliman. *Remarks Made on a Short Tour Between Hartford and Quebec in the Autumn of 1819*. (New Haven: S. Converse, 1920), 18.

¹⁹⁵ Benjamin Silliman. *Remarks Made on a Short Tour Between Hartford and Quebec in the Autumn of 1819*. (New Haven: S. Converse, 1920), 19.

picturesque views described in the travel books of such writers as Timothy Dwight and Benjamin Silliman.”¹⁹⁶ Olmsted was intimately aware of Silliman's words and personally familiar with Monte Video. The accounts of Olmsted family outings and vacations in search of the picturesque and their reading Dwight and Silliman firmly situate Olmsted within the Hartford community and this cultural milieu. Even though much of Olmsted's youth, as discussed earlier, was spent at boarding schools away from his family home in Hartford, his limited time with his family was immersed in the ethos of this community and Silliman's natural scenery and national character. More important, Olmsted's father was part of this Hartford community and had a strong influence on Frederick Law Olmsted. Olmsted, speaking of his father, explains, “I see that the unpremeditated and insensible influence which came to me from him was probably the strongest element in my training”¹⁹⁷



Figure 13. Another Daniel Wadsworth sketch of Monte Video in 1819. (Source: Silliman, *Remarks on a walk from Hartford to Quebec – Daniel Wadsworth Painting of Monte Video*)

¹⁹⁶ Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume I. The Formative Years 1822 – 1852*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 4.

¹⁹⁷ Frederick Law Olmsted “Autobiographical Passage” cited in Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., Theodora Hubbard, *Frederick Law Olmsted: Landscape Architect 1822-1903*, (New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, The Knickerbocker Press, 1922), 47.

In addition to Catherine Beecher, Andrew Jackson Downing, Thomas Cole, and Olmsted, Wadsworth intersects with other influential individuals who helped create our American suburban vision. “Daniel Wadsworth...was responsible for the local introduction of Gothic Revival architecture and brought to Hartford its main practitioners, Ithiel Town and Alexander Jackson Davis.”¹⁹⁸ He retained Town to design Hartford's Gothic Christ Church Cathedral (1828) and the Atheneum:

In addition to creating a prototypical Gothic Revival estate [Monte Video] decades before Alexander Jackson Davis (1803-1892) and Andrew Jackson Downing (1815-1852) promulgated the concept to an American audience in their influential books, the visionary Daniel Wadsworth also endowed Hartford with a Gothic-style cultural center... The Wadsworth Atheneum was constructed in 1842... For this major civic commission Wadsworth turned to his friend Ithiel Town...senior partner in the New York firm of Town and Davis...and Alexander Jackson Davis was primarily responsible for the design...¹⁹⁹

Wadsworth's hiring of A.J. Davis, who also published influential books on rural architecture and would later design Llewellyn Park, New Jersey, an early romantic suburb, establishes another connection between Hartford and the individuals who crafted our suburban vision.²⁰⁰ In addition, this means that both Town and Davis were in Hartford during Olmsted's *formative years*.²⁰¹ Most important, Olmsted's father was a founder and 'Life Trustee' of the Atheneum. As such a stakeholder, it is possible Olmsted's father had direct contact with Davis. Knowing the popularity of Monte Video, it is likely that Town and Davis visited the estate.

The entanglement of relationships in Olmsted's Hartford is extensive. For example, John Trumbull, Wadsworth's brother-in-law, who assisted in the creation of Monte Video, also painted landscapes of it. Trumbull first painted the property in the 1790s and as late as 1805, when he painted, *View on the West Mountain near Hartford* and “captured the picturesque possibilities of the property that Wadsworth later turned into his country estate.”²⁰² Trumbull, later was president of the American

¹⁹⁸ Nancy Finlay. *Picturing Victorian America: Prints by the Kellogg Brothers of Hartford, Connecticut, 1830-1880*. (Hartford, Connecticut Historical Society, 2009), 50.

¹⁹⁹ Nancy Finlay. *Picturing Victorian America: Prints by the Kellogg Brothers of Hartford, Connecticut, 1830-1880*. (Hartford, Connecticut Historical Society, 2009), 50-52. Also see Richard Saunders, with Helen Raye, *Daniel Wadsworth: Patron of the Arts*. (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum, 1981).

²⁰⁰ Davis's also published an early book on rural architecture. See Alexander Davis. *Rural Residences*. (New York: Da Capo Press, (1980) 1835).

²⁰¹ Regarding the web of relationships among these influential individuals, Rybczynski explains, “Olmsted, who had known Davis since the time he had asked him to design a house for Sachem's Head...” Witold Rybczynski. *A Clearing in the Distance: Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Scribner, 1999), 292. See Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume I. The Formative Years 1822 – 1852*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 282 for discussion of Olmsted and Davis.

²⁰² Elizabeth Kornhauser, *Hudson River School: Masterworks from the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 5.



Figure 14. Christ Church Cathedral designed by Ithiel Town in 1828. (Source: Connecticut Historical Society)

Academy of the Fine Arts in New York and “presided over the [Academy] board until 1836.”²⁰³ Davis, a member and secretary of the Academy, along with his partner Town “orchestrated the sale of the academy’s paintings to a group of art patrons led by Trumbull’s nephew-in-law, Daniel Wadsworth, who commissioned the architects for a new gallery in Hartford.”²⁰⁴

²⁰³ Carrie Rebora, “Alexander Jackson Davis and the Arts of Design,” in Amelia Peck. *Alexander Jackson Davis: American Architect 1803-1892*. (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1992), 34-35.

²⁰⁴ Amelia Peck. *Alexander Jackson Davis: American Architect 1803-1892*. (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1992), 37.

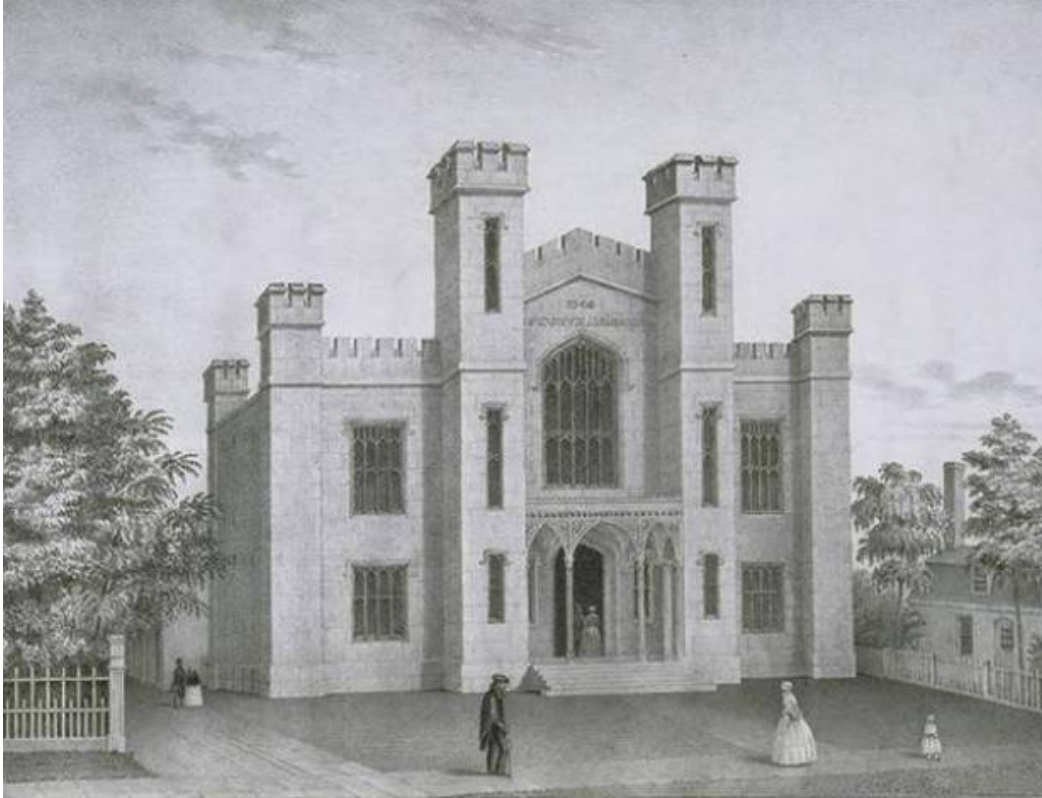


Figure 15. The Wadsworth Atheneum, Designed by Ithiel Town and Alexander Jackson Davis in 1842. (Source: connecticuthistory.org)

It is evident that Wadsworth's patronage was driving a creative force²⁰⁵ in Hartford, which involved art, architecture, and landscape design; organized around elevating "the taste of American citizens."²⁰⁶ As a life trustee of the Atheneum and member of various civic institution boards, Olmsted's father was a part of this creative environment in Hartford, during Frederick Law Olmsted's *formative years*

Hartford's Young Men's Institute, housed in the Atheneum, is where Olmsted heard lectures by Bushnell and Emerson,²⁰⁷ and was where Fishman explains, Olmsted found and read books on English picturesque design:

²⁰⁵ Peter Hall. *Cities in Civilization*. (New York: Fromm International, 1998).

²⁰⁶ Elizabeth Kornhauser, "Daniel Wadsworth and the Hudson River School," *Hog River Journal*, Winter 2004/2005.

²⁰⁷ Roper explains, "They attended lectures at the Young Men's Institute, where they heard some of the most prominent figures of the day, including Leonard Bacon, Horace Bushnell, Alonzo Potter, and Charles Upham, ministers; The Benjamin Sillimans, father and son, and John Olmsted's cousin, Denison Olmsted, scientists from the Yale community; Horace Mann, Henry Barnard, and Mark Hopkins, educators; George Bancroft, historian; Samuel G. Goodrich, the elder Richard Henry Dana, and Park Benjamin, literary men; John Quincy Adams, George P.

Even before Olmsted visited England and Birkenhead Park in 1850, he had already studied with great care the major works of English picturesque design. While still a student in his native Hartford, Connecticut, he found and read in the public library²⁰⁸ the most important works of the English picturesque: Uvedale Price's *An Essay on the Picturesque*, the source of the idea of the 'picturesque village'; and William Gilpin's *Picturesque Tours*, which described admiringly the early suburban development around London [...] and the pastoral poet William Shenstone, a contemporary of Cowper and an advocate of the picturesque aesthetic.²⁰⁹

McLaughlin and Beveridge, while understating the influence of Price and Gilpin, explain, it "seems no accident that the boy who was to become a great landscape architect had read such eighteenth-century writers on the picturesque as Uvedale Price and William Gilpin. They instructed the British gentry on how to lay out their country estates and how to appreciate scenery on their travels."²¹⁰ Another related account, Wallach, who is explaining the significance and sophistication of the Monte Video landscape, mentions the same landscape writers, while possibly unaware that these books were available at the Atheneum:

...while Monte Video was accessible as landscape to anyone even slightly conversant with contemporary landscape aesthetics, the number of people in the United States with the capacity to make some sort of sense of it was in the early 1800s probably quite small. A taste for landscape required familiarity with landscape prints and paintings, with travel books, and with the ideas (if not necessarily the writings) of such thinkers as William Gilpin, Uvedale Price, and Richard Payne Knight, a familiarity with landscape culture.²¹¹

In the landscape of Wadsworth's Monte Video and in his Atheneum, a convergence of English picturesque landscape design occurred with the Hudson River School, the architecture of Town and Davis, and the books and lectures of the Young Men's Institute, during Frederick Law Olmsted's youth. Even though Hartford was a small city on the fringe, it was also cosmopolitan, with strong connections to England, New York, Boston, and of course Yale. For example, Jeremiah Wadsworth, on a trip to England with his son Daniel in 1783 purchased 100 books that included notable works on horticulture and

Marsh, and Caleb Cushing, diplomats and politicians; and of course the unique Ralph Waldo Emerson. Laura Wood Roper. *FLO: A Biography of Fredrick Law Olmsted* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973), 11.

²⁰⁸ As explained earlier, the use of 'public library' is misleading, even though it was a phrase used by Olmsted himself. See Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., Theodora Hubbard, *Frederick Law Olmsted: Landscape Architect 1822-1903*, (New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, The Knickerbocker Press, 1922), 70. The Young Men's Institute was a membership organization founded in 1838. In that year, the Institute acquired the 3,000 books of the Hartford Library Company, also a membership organization, that was established in the 1790s. In 1892, the Young Men's Institute became taxpayer funded and that is the start of the Hartford Public Library.

²⁰⁹ Robert Fishman. *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia*, (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 126.

²¹⁰ Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume I. The Formative Years 1822 – 1852*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 5.

²¹¹ Alan Wallach, "An Episode, in the History of American Landscape Vision." *American Art*, The University of Chicago Press, Vol. 10, No.3 (1996), 19-20.

agriculture.²¹² It is likely that Jeremiah Wadsworth's books were donated to the Hartford Library Company that he helped found.

Olmsted, noting the *Hartford Public Library* in his autobiographical sketches from later in his life may be conflating where he accessed the many notable authors and their books.²¹³ For example, in addition to the public library, he notes his cousin Charles Hyde Olmsted's "notable small library."²¹⁴ Rybczynski explains, "Charles shared his interest in nature with the boy [Olmsted], whom he later introduced into the Hartford Natural History Society," also housed in the Atheneum with the Young Men's Institute. Charles was tied as the second largest donator of books to the Young Men's Institute, contributing 100 books.²¹⁵ Charles Olmsted's 'notable small library,' involvement in the Natural History Society, and his donation of books to the Young Men's Institute draws another Olmsted family member into Hartford's cultural milieu. All this relating to Wadsworth and centered around his Atheneum, a civic institution that Olmsted's father helped create.

Wadsworth, known for his contributions to art, architecture, and philanthropy, is a central figure in Hartford's suburban history. Wadsworth also engaged other figures in the network of influencers in Hartford, such as Downing, Cole, Town, and Davis. In the social orbit of Wadsworth, we also find Catherine Beecher, Benjamin Silliman, John Trumbull, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Frederic Church, and of course, Fredrick Law Olmsted. This is the Hartford of Olmsted, the place where Silliman taught us that "national character often receives its peculiar cast from natural scenery [and that] natural scenery is intimately connected with taste, moral feeling, utility, and instruction."²¹⁶

Situating Olmsted in this close-knit Hartford community unfolds a deeper and more sophisticated understanding of Olmsted and who he would later become. While it has been common (and understandable) for Olmsted to be described as a "protégé of Andrew Jackson Downing" and to situate

²¹² Chester Destler, "The Gentleman Farmer and the New Agriculture: Jeremiah Wadsworth." *Agricultural History*, Vol. 46. No. 1 American Agriculture (1972), 138. A complete list of the books purchased by Wadsworth can be found in the papers of Jeremiah Wadsworth at the Connecticut Historical Society, Box 11, Folder 5, in an invoice dated 3 July 1784 from Thomas Longman.

²¹³ Many, but not all, of the notable books read and mentioned by Olmsted appear in the 1844 "*Catalogue of the Library and Reading Room of the Young Men's Institute*." However, the *Catalogue* may be incomplete, it notes approximately 9,000 volume, but the *Catalogue* only contains an estimated 6,500 entries.

²¹⁴ Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume I. The Formative Years 1822 – 1852*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 115.

²¹⁵ Hartford Young Men's Institute, *Catalogue of the Library and Reading Room of the Young Men's Institute*. (Hartford: Case, Tiffany, and Brunham, 1844), 12.

²¹⁶ Benjamin Silliman. *Remarks Made on a Short Tour Between Hartford and Quebec in the Autumn of 1819*. (New Haven: S. Converse, 1920), 19.

Olmsted as an “experimental farmer on Staten Island,”²¹⁷ such accounts miss the significance of Olmsted’s formative years in Hartford. Yes, Downing influenced Olmsted. However, Olmsted being drawn to and making a meaningful intellectual connection with Downing is because Downing was speaking a language and promoting a vision for America—a vision of elevating our taste²¹⁸ through horticulture, rural architecture, and landscape design—that Olmsted already understood and shared as a result of his early life and upbringing in Hartford.²¹⁹

Fishman claims Olmsted’s 1850 trip to England as a bridge between English and American landscape design, suburban forms, and further claiming that our American suburbanization flowed from England and the Anglo-Evangelical ideals and forms.²²⁰ In addition, Olmsted’s firsthand experiences with the Birkenhead suburb of Liverpool and its public park is claimed to have inspired and influenced Olmsted’s work as a landscape architect. For example, Olmsted himself explains “in the better part of the town, some most charming public ground. I have never seen anything in America to compare with them.”²²¹ While true that the public park was new to Olmsted, his remarks on the suburban are more nuanced. He explains, “it may seem an uninteresting landscape, but I gazed upon it with great emotion, so great I wondered at it. Such a scene I had never looked upon before, and yet it was *in all its parts as familiar to me as my native valley*”²²² [emphasis added]. For Olmsted, this English suburb was *in all its parts as familiar* to Olmsted as his *native valley* of Hartford—the Connecticut River Valley. In Birkenhead, Olmsted already knew and understood the landscape he was viewing, not simply from the books he read in Hartford, but because this landscape was similar to the landscape of his native Hartford.

The influence of Monte Video in the first half of the nineteenth century spread well beyond Hartford. For starters, Silliman opened his popular travel book with the chapter on Monte Video in 1820. Downing and Beecher included Monte Video in their popular and influential 1841 books. Monte Video, however, was publicized through many other sources. For example, the English firm of Enoch Wood & Sons produced, for sale in the United States, Staffordshire china called the Wadsworth Tower with

²¹⁷ Kenneth Jackson. *Crabgrass Frontier. The Suburbanization of the United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 79.

²¹⁸ David Schuyler, *Apostle of Taste: Andrew Jackson Downing 1815-1852*. (Amherst: Library of American Landscape History, (1996) 2015).

²¹⁹ For a detailed account and understand of Andrew Jackson Downing’s views see, David Schuyler, *Apostle of Taste: Andrew Jackson Downing 1815-1852*. (Amherst: Library of American Landscape History, (1996) 2015). *Apostle of Taste*.

²²⁰ Robert Fishman. *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia*, (New York: Basic Books, 1987).

²²¹ Frederick Law Olmsted. *Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England*. (New York: George P. Putnam, 1852), 57.

²²² Frederick Law Olmsted. *Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England*. (New York: George P. Putnam, 1852), 99.

images of Monte Video during the 1820s and 1830s. In 1834, a Thomas Cole painting of Monte Video appeared in John Howard Hinton's popular *History and Topography of the United States*.²²³ Lydia H. Sigourney, in her popular 1844 book, *Scenes in my Native Land* included a chapter on Monte Video, along with chapters on other site of national significance such as Niagara Falls, the First Church at Jamestown, and the Bunker-Hill Monument.²²⁴ Sigourney provides a dramatic description of Monte Video's picturesque setting:

Those who have tasted the heart-felt hospitality of Monte Video, when every summer it was tenanted by its proprietor, his excellent lady, and their delighted guests, have a sense of enchantment, connected with this lovely spot, which no description can convey, and no casual visitant realize. Blessings are still breathed on that benevolence which though prevented by ill health, and declining years, from a permanent residence in this delightful domain, is still prompted to keep it in perfect order for the benefit of strangers, and gratification of the community.²²⁵

The influence of Monte Video on American culture during its time is also captured by Wallach in his discussion of the openness and publicness of Monte Video:

Wadsworth did not conceive of his estate as a private reserve. In an unprecedented move, he freely admitted visitors to Monte Video's grounds and tower. Monte Video became a resort for tourists and 'parties of pleasure,' and as its fame spread, Wadsworth and his wife, Faith Trumbull Wadsworth, were obliged to endure a more-or-less constant stream of visitors during the summer months tramping about the property, climbing the tower, and behaving pretty much as they pleased [...] Harriet Trumbull Silliman, Wadsworth's sister-in-law, reported to her daughter in September 1835, "There are many visitors to this place, but we only see them from the windows[;] some days the children counted 50 people."²²⁶

Monte Video's popularity in Hartford continued after Wadsworth's death 1848. For example, articles about Monte Video continued to appear in the *Hartford Daily Courant* for decades. An undated publication titled *Talcott Mountain Towers* includes a reprint of an article titled *Talcott Mountain Tower* that appeared in the *Philadelphia Daily Press*, probably in the 1860s.²²⁷ An 1887 article titled *Talcott Mountain*²²⁸ discusses recent visitors to Monte Video named in a registry of guests. However, the article

²²³ Ellwood Parry. *Acts of God, Acts of Men: Geological Ideas and the Imaginary Landscapes of Thomas Cole*. (Hartford: University Press of New England, 1979).

²²⁴ Lydia Sigourney. *Scenes in my Native Land*. (Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1844). Also see Lydia Sigourney. *Letters of Life*. D. (New York: Appleton and Company, 1866), as she was a friend and beneficiary of Wadsworth's patronage.

²²⁵ Lydia Sigourney. *Scenes in my Native Land*. (Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1844), 58-59.

²²⁶ Alan Wallach, "An Episode, in the History of American Landscape Vision." *American Art*, The University of Chicago Press, Vol. 10, No.3 (1996) 9-10. Note, at 50 visitors a day and assuming seasonal visitation, could yield estimates of 5,000 persons a year. Also see Ellwood Parry. *Acts of God, Acts of Men: Geological Ideas and the Imaginary Landscapes of Thomas Cole*. (Hartford: University Press of New England, 1979).

²²⁷ This undated publication can be found the Daniel Wadsworth archives of the Connecticut Historical Society.

²²⁸ Hartford Daily Courant, *Talcott Mountain*, October 4, 1887: p. 1.

laments that Wadsworth did not keep a registry of guests²²⁹ in the early years of the tower but notes some of the notables who visited the site. Such notables included Daniel Webster, General Lafayette, Catharine Beecher, Harriett Beecher Stowe, Professor Silliman, Frederic Church, and others. In addition, Mark Twain, when living in Hartford, regularly hiked to the tower with Reverend Twitchell and Charles Dudley Warner.²³⁰

Monte Video being open to the public as a quasi-park and hosting so many visitors, reveals the popularity of the site and its influence as an early retreat and pleasure ground, predating the rural cemetery and urban park movements.²³¹ Monte Video was privately owned, but open to the public for nearly 50-years before Hartford and New York create public parks. In fact, Monte Video was the first of two privately owned picturesque landscaped properties in Hartford that were open to the public during Olmsted's *formative years*. The second, known as the High Street Garden, was in the center of the city and will be discussed in a later chapter.

The conscious and *unconscious influence* of Monte Video on Hartford, the Nation, and most importantly, Olmsted is evident in the above accounts. The fact is that Daniel Wadsworth succeeded in his aim of *elevating our tastes* through the design of his Monte Video estate and opening his private property to the public. In Olmsted's Hartford, Monte Video realized picturesque English landscape design and introduced Gothic architecture in the early nineteenth century. In addition, Monte Video marks the start of an early cultural milieu forming in Hartford that continued to evolve throughout Olmsted's time growing up in Hartford. At Monte Video, Olmsted would have experienced the picturesque English landscape design that he read about in books—well before his 1850 trip to England and Birkenhead. At Monte Video, the borderland, picturesque landscape design, Gothic architecture, domesticity, natural scenery and national character all collided and coalesced into an early suburban milieu that entangles Olmsted and many of the influential reformers who helped create our American suburban vision of community.

²²⁹ No record or copy of this registry can be found at this time.

²³⁰ Kenneth Andrews. *Nook Farm: Mark Twain's Hartford Circle*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1950).

²³¹ Thomas Bender. *Toward an Urban Vision: Ideas and Institutions in Nineteenth Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975).

Chapter VI. Domesticating Hartford: Dwight, Beecher & Bushnell

"The love of property to a certain degree seems indispensable to the existence of sound morals ... The secure possession of property demands, every moment, the hedge of law; and reconciles a man, originally lawless, to the restraints of government ... Ambition forces him to aim at it; and compels him to a life of sobriety, and decency."

Timothy Dwight, Travels 1825

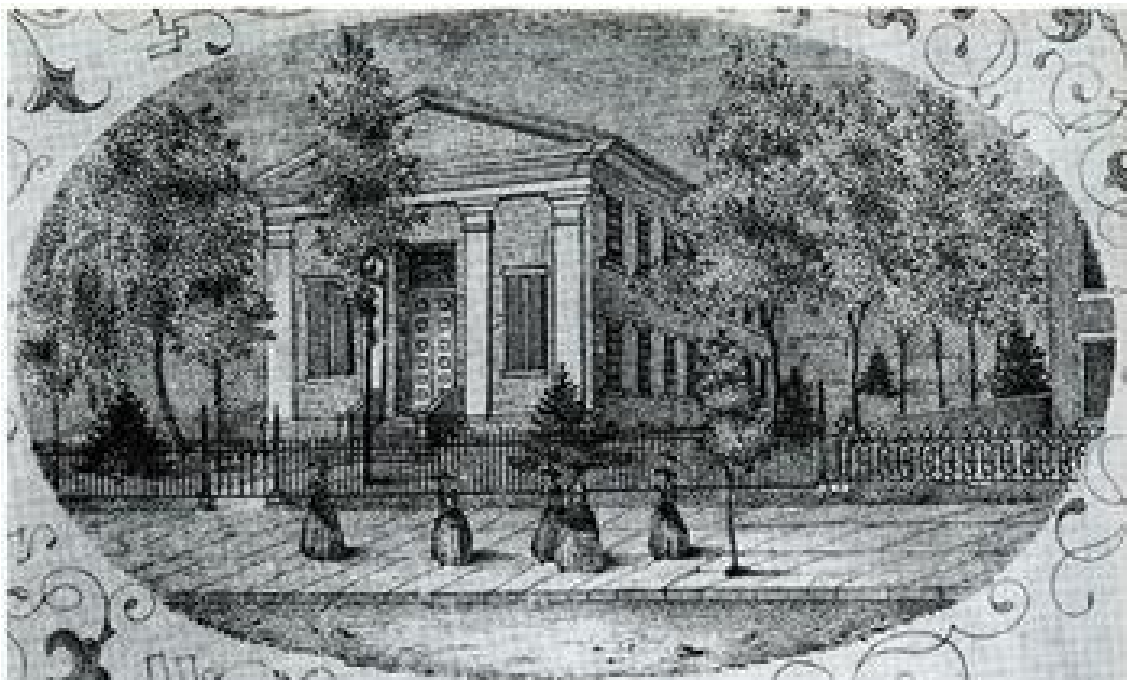


Figure 16. Catherine Beecher's Hartford Female Seminary in 1830s. The façade was designed by Daniel Wadsworth. (Source: Connecticut Historical Society)

Domesticity and Self-Governance – Dwight, Beecher, and Bushnell

Domesticity, as a religious and social ideal, not a physical suburban form, shifts our focus from the spatial location of Hartford's borderland, physical design of picturesque landscape, and Gothic architecture to the ideology of holy domesticity. However, to better understand domesticity, especially in Hartford and in the context of Timothy Dwight and the Christian home, a wider lens is used to explore domesticity as a governance structure, drawing in the ideals of self-governance.

The influence of the '*cult of domesticity*' includes some its most prominent and influential members, Timothy Dwight, Catharine Beecher, Horace Bushnell, and to a lesser degree, Harriet Beecher

Stowe.²³² Placing these four individuals in Hartford, spanning the decades before, during, and after Olmsted's *formative years* in Hartford, is enough to demonstrate the early existence of ideals of domesticity in Hartford. However, in the context of Connecticut and specifically Hartford, it is important to show how domesticity is entangled in the ideal of self-governance and a civil society.

It is also important to recognize that these individuals and the thoughts and teachings of domesticity in Hartford span many generations and therefore, the ideals of domesticity were not static, but evolving. In addition, Calvinism is evolving from the fire and brimstone of Timothy Dwight and Lyman Beecher to the more sympathetic Protestantism of Horace Bushnell—a gentler form of religion that would later influence the liberal Social Gospel.²³³ In this evolution of domesticity and religion, Horace Bushnell is a central and transitional figure.²³⁴ In addition, this transition and evolution to a more liberal religion and society is occurring as our economy is transitioning from agrarian to industrial.

Domesticity was not solely a religious ideology of the role of educated, intelligent, and virtuous women managing the family and household. Domesticity was presented as part of our democratic, civil, and political institutions.²³⁵ Domesticity is a governance structure,²³⁶ that was codified in the private, civic, and religious life of the Hartford community. Discussing Webster, Unger provides context:

In the west part of Hartford, as in other Connecticut towns, the Puritan Congregational Church was the foundation of government as well as religion, with Sunday services blending into late-afternoon town meetings. [...] 'New England,' [Noah Webster] wrote later, 'is certainly a phenomenon in civil and political establishments, and in my opinion not only young gentlemen from our sister states, but from every quarter of the globe would do well to pass a few years of their life among us, and acquire our habits of thinking and living.'²³⁷

Religion and governance were woven together in Connecticut and Hartford. Timothy Dwight's, beliefs as Connecticut's most fervent promoter of domesticity and in self-governance as was discussed earlier. Most important, Dwight's self-governance was the ethos of Connecticut and Olmsted's Hartford. Therefore, in Dwight, we see not only the interconnectedness of religion and government, but also the

²³² Clifford Clark, "Domestic Architecture as an Index to Social History: The Romantic Revival and the Cult of Domesticity in America, 1840-1870." *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 7, No. 1. (1976).

²³³ David Torbett. *Theology and Slavery: Charles Hodge and Horace Bushnell*. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006).

²³⁴ Howard Barns. *Horace Bushnell and the Virtuous Republic*. (Metuchen, NJ: American Theological Library and The Scarecrow Press, 1991).

²³⁵ Catharine Beecher. *A Treatise on Domestic Economy: For Use of Young Ladies at Home and at School*. (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1841).

²³⁶ Peter Baldwin. *Domesticating the Street: The Reform of Public Space in Hartford 1850-1930*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999).

²³⁷ Harlow Unger. *Noah Webster: The Life and Times of an American Patriot*. (New York, John Wiley & Sons, 1998), 11.

aspirations of a new nation, the promised land or ‘*Conquest of Canaan*.’²³⁸ However, Dwight’s democracy was limited, not universally available to all. In “Connecticut, the right to vote was taken seriously; it was a gift that was not bestowed lightly and that could be withdrawn upon evidence of scandalous behavior. Universal suffrage was considered detrimental to good government because it allowed unproven people to help make decisions, so a property qualification was imposed to weed out lazy or wasteful citizens from the electorate.”²³⁹ It is in this property qualification that domesticity and self-governance become intertwined in Connecticut.

Dwight’s contribution to our suburban vision of community was a system of self-governance woven into the moral domesticity of home and family—a vision of who he believed we should be as Americans. In the following passage, Dwight’s blending of religion, morality, democracy, domesticity, and property ownership into a structure of self-governance is unmistakable:

The love of property to a certain degree seems indispensable to the existence of sound morals.... The secure possession of property demands, every moment, the hedge of law; and reconciles a man, originally lawless, to the restraints of government. Thus situated he sees that reputation, also is within his reach. Ambition forces him to aim at it; and compels him to a life of sobriety, and decency. That his children may obtain this benefit, he is obliged to send them to school, and unite with those around him in supporting a schoolmaster. His neighbors are disposed to build a church, and settle a minister. A regard to his character, the character and feelings of his own family, and very often to the solicitations of his wife, prompts him to contribute to both these objects; to attend, when they are compassed, upon the public worship of God; and perhaps to become in the end a religious man.²⁴⁰

Dwight’s beliefs were perpetuated by his student, Lyman Beecher. His daughter, Catherine Beecher, who arrived in Hartford in 1823, co-founded her influential Hartford Female Seminary with her sister Mary Beecher.²⁴¹ 1823, the year after Olmsted’s birth, was the start of Catherine’s influential career in the education of young women and elevating the role of women in American society.²⁴² Her nine years in Hartford, as explained by her sister, were critical to the development of her career and forging her ideologies of education, women, and domesticity. White explains, Harriet Beecher Stowe’s account of her older sister’s life in *Our Famous Women* (1883), “emphasized the early period; she devotes five-sixths of

²³⁸ Timothy Dwight. *The Conquest of Canaan*, (Hartford: Elisha Babcock, 1785).

²³⁹ Snyder, K. Alan, “Foundations of Liberty: The Christain Republicanism of Timothy Dwight and Jedidiah Mores,” *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 56, No. 3, (1983), 390.

²⁴⁰ Timothy Dwight. *Travels in New England and New York*. (Edinburgh: William Baynes and Company, 1825), Vol. II, 462-463.

²⁴¹ Kathryn Sklar. *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity*. (New Haven: Yale University, 1973). Milton Rugoff. *The Beechers: An American Family in the Nineteenth Century*. (Philadelphia: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1981). Barbara White. *The Beecher Sisters*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

²⁴² Harriet Beecher came to Hartford with her two sisters, first as a student and later as a teacher at the Hartford Female Seminary.

her sketch to the years before Catharine left the Hartford Female Seminary.”²⁴³ Catharine Beecher was a tour de force in Hartford, befriending the wealthy and social elites, eliciting support for her Female Seminary, leading a Calvinist revival, and developing her ideologies of the women's sphere.²⁴⁴

Sklar explains Catharine's teachings in contrast to Lydia Sigourney, who ran a fashionable girl's school in Hartford. “Catharine added a new dimension to this traditional goal by insisting that young women should not be educated to be genteel ornaments. Their refinement has a larger purpose. ‘A lady should study not to *shine*, but to *act*’ ...this transformation was critical to Catharine's later attitude toward women and the cultural role they play.”²⁴⁵ Catharine's early beliefs are evident in her first book, *The Elements of Mental and Moral Philosophy: Founded Upon Experience, Reason and the Bible* (1831) and published while she was still in Hartford. In this book, she “argued for the moral superiority of women, based upon women's dedication to self-sacrifice.”²⁴⁶

Daniel Wadsworth, who served on the board of Beecher's Hartford Female Seminary, also designed the front elevation for the new Seminary building in the neoclassical style.²⁴⁷ Another example, when Catherine leaves Hartford,²⁴⁸ her childhood teacher in Litchfield, John Pierce Brace is hired to run her Hartford Seminary. Furthermore, Olmsted's father, John, also served on the board of the Hartford Female Seminary.²⁴⁹

Horace Bushnell had a profound influence on Protestantism, American society, the Hartford community, and Olmsted. Recognized as member of the *cult of domesticity*,²⁵⁰ Bushnell's “*Christian*

²⁴³ Barbara White. *The Beecher Sisters*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 261.

²⁴⁴ Kathryn Sklar. *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity*. (New Haven: Yale University, 1973).

²⁴⁵ Kathryn Sklar. *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity*. (New Haven: Yale University, 1973), 76.

²⁴⁶ Dolores Hayden. *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820-2000*. (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 38.

²⁴⁷ Kathryn Sklar. *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity*. (New Haven: Yale University, 1973). Saunders with Raye, 1981.

²⁴⁸ Catherine and Harriet Beecher leave Hartford in 1832 to follow Lyman Beecher to Ohio. In Ohio, Catherine established the Western Female Seminary in Cincinnati. Lyman's mission and Catherine efforts were aimed at ensuring civil society spread with western expansion—that expansion on the frontier did not result in barbarism. See Milton Rugoff. *The Beechers: An American Family in the Nineteenth Century*. (Philadelphia: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1981).

²⁴⁹ Witold Rybczynski. *A Clearing in the Distance: Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Scribner, 1999).

²⁵⁰ Clifford Clark, “Domestic Architecture as an Index to Social History: The Romantic Revival and the Cult of Domesticity in America, 1840-1870.” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 7, No. 1. (1976).

Nurture, first published in 1847, described how home and family life fostered ‘*virtuous habits*’ and thereby help assure the blessed eternal peace of ‘*home comforts*’ in heaven.”²⁵¹

Born in 1802, Bushnell attended Yale for degrees in law and theology. At Yale he was trained in the teachings of Dwight and in 1834 Bushnell became the minister of Hartford’s congregational North Church. Mullin, in his biography, explains that Bushnell was a radical within the church—questioning of the validity of the Holy Trinity and Atonement, but mainstream in his Evangelical ideals of domesticity.²⁵² Bushnell was not simply a theological reformer, he was prominent social reformer, and the “popularity of Bushnell as a subject may in part stem from the breadth of his interests. Ranging far beyond narrow theological questions, he offered opinions on race, language, the Civil War, immigration, city planning and many other topics.”²⁵³ Mead explains, “Dr. Munger, speaking especially of Bushnell’s political essays, says, ‘Many of these essays, reveal Bushnell as a publicist of the first order. No man of his day handled those questions of state that involved the moral-sense of the people with such breadth of view and such fidelity, both to the nation and to conscience.’”²⁵⁴

Baldwin explains, for Bushnell, the “Christian home was in fact a microcosm of the organic society, the mustard seed from which harmony could grow even in the rough world created by Jefferson and Jackson.”²⁵⁵ Bushnell spread his domesticity from the home into the city and Hartford’s civic life. For example, when he proposed Hartford’s first public park in 1853, Bushnell employed the metaphor of a house when describing the park as a ‘parlor’ to the city. “The park was to be ‘an outdoor parlor,’ a specialized room in a city that (he would write a year later) should be viewed as a house.”²⁵⁶

The following passage by Mullin sheds light Bushnell’s perspectives and his social reforms, including urban and possibly suburban reform:

There are reasons to believe, however, that Bushnell’s relation to nature was more complex. His daughter noted that he did not simply commune with nature but labored to classify and organize it

²⁵¹ Kenneth Jackson. *Crabgrass Frontier. The Suburbanization of the United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 49. Also see Howard Barns. *Horace Bushnell and the Virtuous Republic*. (Metuchen, NJ: American Theological Library and The Scarecrow Press, 1991).

²⁵² Robert Mullin. *The Puritan as Yankee: A Life of Horace Bushnell*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002).

²⁵³ Robert Mullin. *The Puritan as Yankee: A Life of Horace Bushnell*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 2.

²⁵⁴ Edwin Mead. *Horace Bushnell, The Citizen*. (Boston: 1900), 4. Mead was citing Theodore Munger. *Horace Bushnell, Preacher and Theologian [1899]*. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1899).

²⁵⁵ Peter Baldwin. *Domesticating the Street: The Reform of Public Space in Hartford 1850-1930*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 16.

²⁵⁶ Peter Baldwin. *Domesticating the Street: The Reform of Public Space in Hartford 1850-1930*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 25. Also note, Olmsted would come to view the city as a house with different rooms and uses and use similar metaphors to explain his theories of cities, the metropolis, and design.

as well. 'It was not only the picture which filled his eye and kindled his imagination, but recesses of nature....It was his habit to survey by his eye the lines of the hills and valleys and to print thus upon his mind a map of the surfaces.' He took great interests in figuring out the most efficient path a road or railroad might take. There was always a touch of the practical Yankee in Bushnell's approach to nature. Nature was inspiring, but a nature with roads through it was even better. Roads helped domesticate nature and were the mark of civilization, and domesticated nature was to be preferred over wild nature.²⁵⁷

Bushnell was very much a part of Hartford's close-knit community of social reformers. For example, Olmsted was Bushnell's neighbor from the age of 12 to 19 and Olmsted and his father "attended the lectures at the Young Men's Institute, where they heard some of the prominent public figures of the day, including...Horace Bushnell."²⁵⁸ Olmsted and Bushnell, in fact, were friends and they shared a passion for civic improvement.²⁵⁹

Dwight, Beecher, and Bushnell conceptualized domesticity in nuanced ways that include property ownership, the elevated role and status of women and children within the family home, and the domestication of parks, public space, and civic life. Regardless of the nuances, their democratic and domestic ideals permeated the community. Another prominent Hartford figure, preacher, and religious combatant of Bushnell, the influential Reverend Joel Hawes (1789-1867) who was the pastor of Hartford's First Congregational Church, also contributed to the Hartford ethos through his influence on the young men of Hartford.²⁶⁰ Hawes's treatise, *Lectures to Young Men: On the Formation of Character*, first published in 1828, and republished for decades, may as well have been required reading for all young men in Hartford and likely read by a young Olmsted. Hawes's writing provides another glimpse into Hartford's ethos:

With tastes for the beautiful and sublime, whether in nature or art, with a noble relish for the knowledge of God in his word and work, with a strong outflow of affection to whatever bears his image, with reverence for the sanctuary and the grandeur of revealed truth, with glowing gratitude for a land, a generation, and a world so enriched by the treasures of goodness, and with a heart pure and loving as every human heart ought to be, no young man or old, can be poor or friendless.

²⁵⁷ Robert Mullin. *The Puritan as Yankee: A Life of Horace Bushnell*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 25.

²⁵⁸ Laura Wood Roper. *FLO: A Biography of Fredrick Law Olmsted* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973) 11.

²⁵⁹ In 1853, six years after Olmsted moves from Hartford and four years before Olmsted's involvement in the creation and design of Central Park, Bushnell proposed a public park in Hartford. Bushnell "began labor on...the establishment of a great central park in Hartford... The park project reflected his long-standing interest in urban improvement." Robert Mullin. *The Puritan as Yankee: A Life of Horace Bushnell*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 182. Discussed further in Chapter VIII.

²⁶⁰ The Olmsted's family attended Hawes church. Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume I. The Formative Years 1822 – 1852*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

The highway of intelligence and holiness, as distinctly marked out in this volume, is open and inviting to every youth who reads it.²⁶¹

In Hawes, an appreciation for nature, tastes, and beauty is revealed—an appreciation like that which Wadsworth and Silliman introduced to community. Hawes's use of *imitation*, in striking similarity to Bushnell's later writing on *unconscious influence*. Hawes explains, "we are creatures of imitation, and by a necessary influence, our temper and habits are very much formed on the model of those with whom we familiarly associate."²⁶²

In the following passage, it is almost as if Hawes could be speaking directly to a young Olmsted. A "young man who has a fondness for books, or a taste for the works of nature and art, in not only preparing to appear with honor and usefulness as a member of society, but is secured from a thousand temptations and evils to which he would otherwise be exposed."²⁶³ While Hawes does not draw specifically on domesticity, his is a message of character, duty, and self-improvement.

Dwight's ideals of domesticity bounded in self-governance were well established in Connecticut and Hartford by the time of Olmsted's birth in 1822 and Dwight's influence would continue through Olmsted's generation.²⁶⁴ The arrival of Catherine Beecher and the founding of her Hartford Female Seminary in the 1820s further worked to embed domesticity in Olmsted's Hartford through her influence on the community and her teaching of Olmsted's generation of young Hartford women. The arrival of Bushnell in Hartford in 1834 continues the teachings of domesticity in Hartford and draws domesticity out of the schoolhouse and private home and into Hartford's public spaces and civic life.²⁶⁵ This clearly demonstrates that Olmsted was born into a Connecticut and Hartford community emersed in holy domesticity and raised in the social circles of those who were part a of *cult of domesticity*.²⁶⁶ Using the words of Bushnell and Hawes, Hartford's *unconscious influence* is revealing Olmsted as a *creature of imitation formed on the model of those with whom he familiarly associates*. That is to say that Olmsted's world view and his philosophical approach to his later work as a landscape architect and social reformer was cast in youth, his *formative years* in Hartford community.

²⁶¹ Joel Hawes. *Lectures to Young Men: On the Formation of Character*. (Boston: Congregational Board of Publications, (1828) 1856), Xii.

²⁶² Joel Hawes. *Lectures to Young Men: On the Formation of Character*. (Boston: Congregational Board of Publications, (1828) 1856), 97.

²⁶³ Joel Hawes. *Lectures to Young Men: On the Formation of Character*. (Boston: Congregational Board of Publications, (1828) 1856), 11.

²⁶⁴ Dwight's multi-volume and popular book *Travels* was not published until 1825, after his death, and continuing his influence from the grave.

²⁶⁵ Peter Baldwin. *Domesticating the Street: The Reform of Public Space in Hartford 1850-1930*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999).

²⁶⁶ Clifford Clark, "Domestic Architecture as an Index to Social History: The Romantic Revival and the Cult of Domesticity in America, 1840-1870." *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 7, No. 1. (1976).

Chapter VII. Hartford: A Suburban City

“Every new village, town, city, ought to be contrived as a work of art, and prepared for the new age of ornament to come.”
Horace Bushnell, Hartford, 1854

Hartford's Private Gardens and Ornamental Lawns

This chapter traces the emergence of private gardens, ornamental lawns, and picturesque landscape design within the city limits of Olmsted's Hartford. In doing so, it will show how the ideals of natural scenery, picturesque landscape design, taste, character, domesticity and civilizing society coalesced in Hartford during Olmsted's *formative years* in Hartford. This coalescence of early social reforms aimed at elevating taste and character were already evident in the social-cultural landscape of Hartford by 1820. For example, the recognition of the positive influence nature and design can have on the individual is evident in this newspaper article about the new Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb in 1818:

The prospect of the surrounding country is unrivalled, both in beauty and extent, (a great advantage to the deaf who learn only or mostly by what they see)—the grounds (7 acres) are tastefully laid out in gardens, with many pleasant walks, and mostly covered with every kind of fruit trees to be found in the New England states, to the number of about 400.²⁶⁷

This account demonstrates an early attention to landscape design, natural setting, and the infancy of beliefs that natural (landscape design) can have positive influence on the individual. This belief continues to evolve and intensify in Hartford over the next 30 years. Olmsted was born on College Street in 1822. Washington College (today Trinity College), was constructed two blocks west of Olmsted's home in 1823. Designed in a classical architectural style, the buildings stood in the middle of large ornamental lawns, set back far from streets.

By the time Horace Bushnell moved to Hartford in 1833 and purchased his first home, a new merchant-middle-class neighborhood was emerging north of the city center. Bushnell's home was on Ann Street and is described by his daughter, Mary Bushnell Cheney:

The Ann Street house was a simple square, two story building, with a small yard, graced by a noble oak in the rear. In the spring it was a positive pleasure to the minister [Bushnell], with his farming habits...to find himself out-of-doors digging in his little garden or grading the door-yard.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁷ Hartford Daily Courant, *Deaf and Dumb*, August 4, 1818.

²⁶⁸ Mary Cheney. *Life and Letters of Horace Bushnell*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), 74.



Figure 17. Painting of Trinity College with gentlemen in foreground tending to an ornamental lawn on College Street in 1845. This property is approximately four houses away from the Dodd House where Olmsted was born in 1822.

(Source: Connecticut Historical Society. *Trinity College, College Street 1845*)

While the neighborhood is a village-like setting, the small yard, noble oak, and Bushnell engaging in gardening paints a modest and dense suburban image. In 1836, when Olmsted is 14 years old, his father purchased a house and lot on Ann Street,²⁶⁹ next door to the Bushnell's. The Olmsted's, previously renters, are now homeowners, and moving into Hartford's newest merchant-middle-class neighborhood. Bushnell moved in 1841, when he built a new home for his family, further out and on the undeveloped fringe of city. His daughter, Mary Bushnell Cheney, explains:

He was ridiculed for his choice of a site 'in the fields,' as people said, and on a street as yet unopened, and which he himself christened Winthrop Street. The situation commanded a fine view of the Connecticut River and valley; and the fields, unbroken in their verdure by the presence of a single building, made a delightful playground for the children.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁹ Laura Wood Roper. *FLO: A Biography of Fredrick Law Olmsted* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973).

²⁷⁰ Mary Cheney. *Life and Letters of Horace Bushnell*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), 97.

Bushnell's "house at Hartford was built from his own plans" and "in selecting the lot he provided for two things, a garden and an open view of the country, ending in distant hills. Each was a necessity to him—the manifold life of growing things and the distant horizon."²⁷¹

A property ownership map of Hartford in 1850 shows the Dodd House on College Street, Washington (Trinity) College site, the two Olmsted properties on Ann Street (one of which was Bushnell's first house that Olmsted's father purchased when Bushnell moved), and Bushnell's Winthrop Street home. These accounts of the Olmsted and Bushnell begin to frame the forms and practices of the suburban. For example, single-family lots and home, homeownership, upward mobility, gardening, outward expansion, an appreciation for natural scenery, and the influence of domesticity—the *delightful playground for the children*. It is also interesting that Bushnell was *ridiculed* for his move to a site *in the fields*, a criticism of suburbanites that is still common today.

The early physical character of Hartford is further evidenced in several editorials. The first example, is written by a visitor²⁷² to Hartford in 1845, who explains:

There is more taste displayed in building here, than has been formerly in Boston and that vicinity, nor are the people quite so careful about room. There are very great advantages for building here, and they have been improved by gentlemen of taste and property. Almost every house has what may be properly called a garden; room enough for flower, shrubbery, &c.²⁷³

The vocabularies above of *gentlemen of taste and property*, *gardens*, and *room enough for flowers* are as interesting as the description of Hartford. Another writer in 1846 (a reprinted letter to the *N.Y. Tribune*) further explains:

I can conceive of nothing to surpass the environs of Hartford in beauty, richness, variety and extent of natural scenery.... Among the most tasteful and elegant private residences with which the city abounds, are those situated on Lords Hill and on Washington street, in the vicinity of the College buildings: in passing through the latter street, the writer found it very difficult to refrain from violation of the tenth commandment, as the exquisitely beautiful cottage of an ex-Mayor and not less elegant and spacious mansion...of ex-Governor Ellsworth, were pointed out to me. There is an air of ease and comfort, combined with elegance and simplicity so striking and its ornamental grounds, that the good people of Hartford cannot deem it invidious in me to mention by name its distinguished and universally respected occupant.²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ Edwin Mead. *Horace Bushnell, The Citizen*. (Boston: 1900), 12.

²⁷² The fact that this letter to the editor, and other letters that will follow, are written by visitors to Hartford possibly point to the uniqueness of Hartford, or at the very least, the letters from visitors indicate something interesting and worth of writing about was occurring in Hartford.

²⁷³ *Hartford Daily Courant*, 'A Walk About Hartford,' 1845.

²⁷⁴ *Hartford Daily Courant*, 'Attractions-Scenery-Public Institutions,' June 10, 1846.

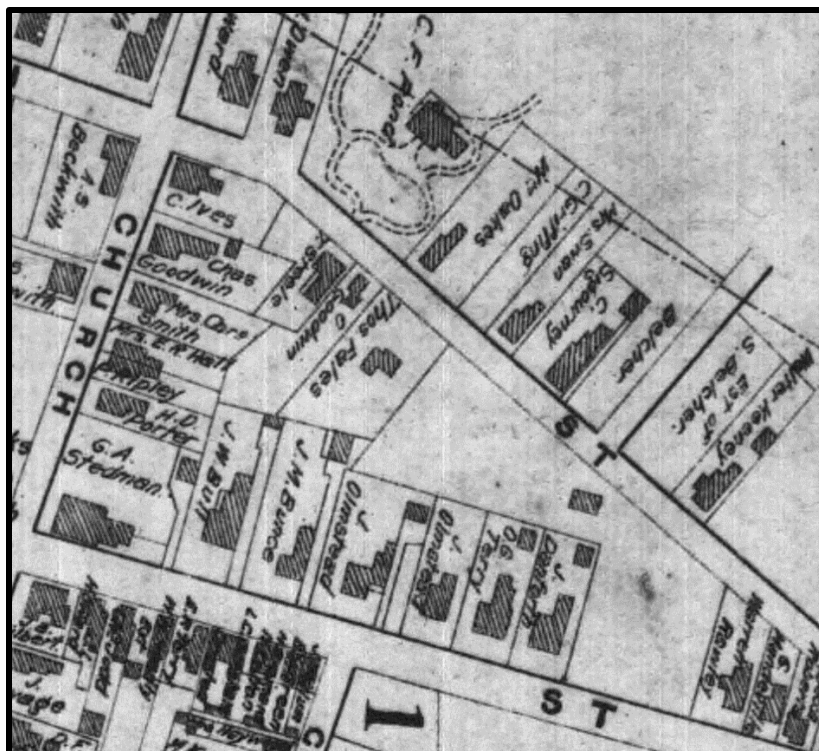


Figure 18. Olmsted properties on Ann Street in the lower center. These two properties are the Olmsted's house and the Bushnell house before Bushnell moved. Also note the C. Sigourney property above, this is the High Street home of Lydia Sigourney.

(Source: UConn Magic – Marcus Smith Map 1850)

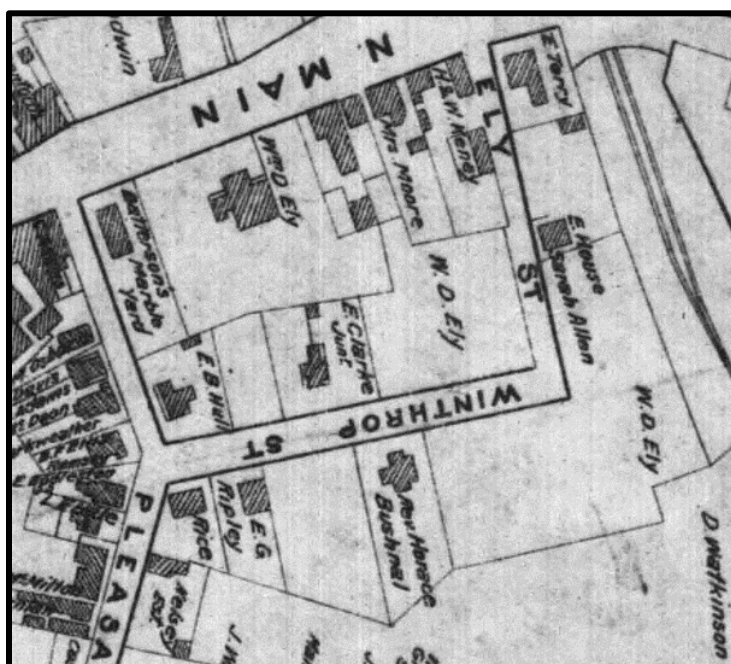


Figure 19. The Bushnell property of Winthrop Street.

(Source: UConn Magic – Marcus Smith Map 1850)



Figure 20. The J.W. Bull property was built in 1841 and is near the corner of Ann Street and Church Street. The Bull property is two houses away from the Olmsted's house and provides context as to the suburban character of Ann Street.
(Source: Connecticut Historical Society. J.W. Bull House 1841)



Figure 21. The Lydia Sigourney house on High Street in the 1860s. Also provides context as to the character of the Olmsted neighborhood.
(Source: Connecticut Historical Society)

In the remarks above, Hartford's newest *suburban* neighborhood along Washington Street—just two blocks away from Olmsted's birthplace on College Street—is noted. In the vocabularies of this writer we notice *beauty, richness, natural scenery, tasteful, cottage, and ornamental grounds* as the writer covets these homes.



Figure 22. Image of a suburban home on Washington Street in the 1870s.
(Source: Connecticut Historical Society)

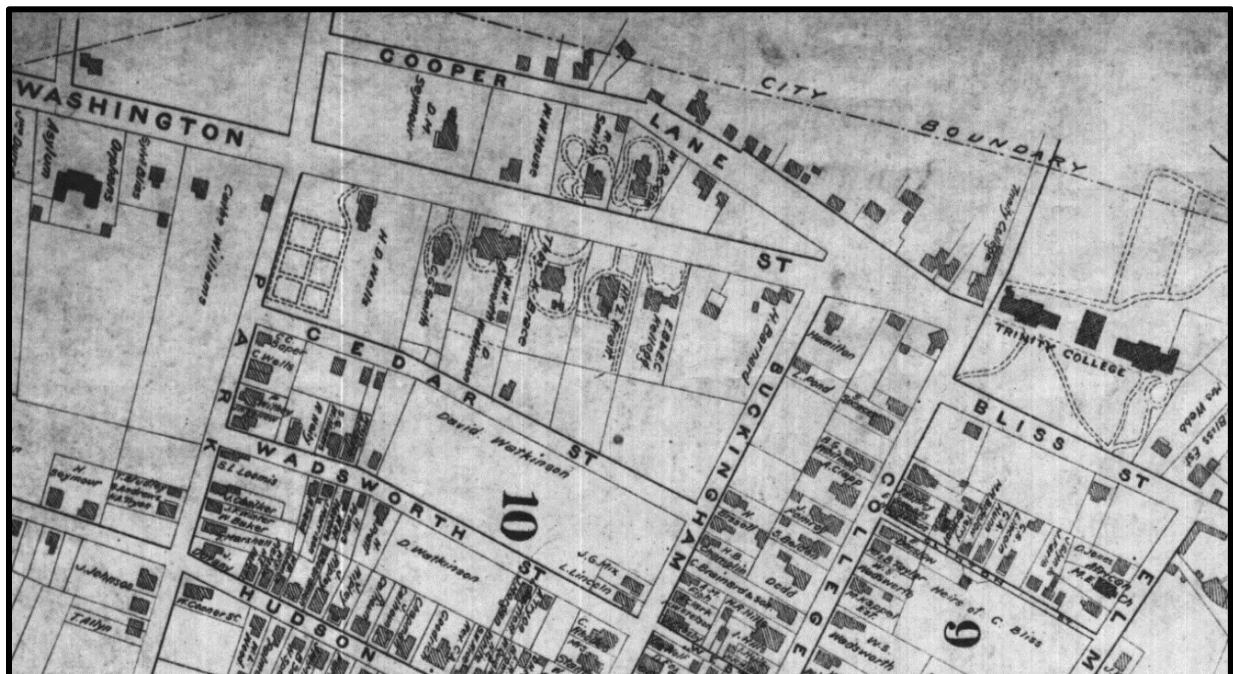


Figure 23. This map shows the large-lot and large single-family homes with ornamental gardens on Washington Street. Note the Dodd House on College Street, the location Olmsted's birth in 1822.
(Source: UConn Magic)

An 1850 article, '*The Growth of the City*,' provides context to Hartford's growth and suburban character. In doing so, the article unfolds a suburban imagery that conflicts with common historical suburban narratives, the suburban as an exodus from the urban condition. In this Hartford narrative, the wealthy give way for commerce and the need of centrally located commercial land as the reason for outward movement:

But the cry still is for more house room and more accommodations. The wealthy must retreat still further into the country and give up their present residences to those whose business demands but a short walk to their meals. The spare ground of many an ornamental garden, near the public square, must be devoted to the accommodation of the artificer who brings us our prosperity; and beauty and ornament and horticultural delight be sought on some of the contiguous eminences ... And so, on Washington street and on Lord's Hill; those, whom the expansion of the business part of the city have driven from its crowded lower streets, have erected here their ornamental residences, that make those beautiful hills, seem like one continued garden.²⁷⁵

The same article also mentions Bushnell's Winthrope Street as evidence of Hartford's growth. "In the north part of the city, the same expansion goes on; the same indications of prosperity exist. Who would have thought, a few years ago, of the...very existence of Pleasant and Winthrope and Ely streets with all their elegant and convenient residences?"²⁷⁶ Again, another article is filled with suburban vocabularies of *ornamental gardens*, *beauty*, *horticultural delight*, and the *ornamental residences* in the *expanding* western neighborhoods of the city *that make those beautiful hills, seem like one continued garden*.²⁷⁷

An articulate anonymous 1840 editorial, likely written by Lydia Sigourney, under the title '*Horticulture*' offers a vivid account of Hartford's early suburban milieu. To provide context, 1840 is the starting point for when Jackson claims our American suburban vision of community started to be crafted.²⁷⁸ However, in 1840 Hartford, it appears that the suburban vision has been achieved:²⁷⁹

If the admiration of the beautiful things of Nature, has a tendency of soften and refine the character, the culture of them has a still more powerful and abiding influence. It takes the form of an affection. The seed which we have down—the bud which we have nursed—the tree of our planting, under whose shade we sit with delight—are to us as living and loving friends. [...]
The lessons learned among the works of Nature, are of peculiar value in the present age. The restlessness and din of the rail-road principle, which pervades it operations, and the spirit of accumulation which threatens to corrode every generous sensibility, are modified by the sweet friendship of the quiet plants. [...]

²⁷⁵ *Hartford Daily Courant*, 'The Growth of the City,' October 21, 1850.

²⁷⁶ *Hartford Daily Courant*, 'The Growth of the City,' October 21, 1850.

²⁷⁷ *Hartford Daily Courant*, 'The Growth of the City,' October 21, 1850.

²⁷⁸ Kenneth Jackson. *Crabgrass Frontier. The Suburbanization of the United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

²⁷⁹ Note, the context of the overall editorial is the writer's displeasure with the recent *taking* (eminent domain) of land from a property owner for the extension of the rail line:

Horticulture has been pronounced by medical men, salutary to health, and to cheerfulness of spirits and it would seem that the theory might be sustained, by the placid and happy countenances of those who use it as a relaxation from the excitement of business, or the exhaustion of study. And if he who devotes his leisure in culture of the works of nature, benefits himself, he who beautifies a garden for the eye of the community is surely a public benefactor. He instils into the bosom of the man of world, panting with the gold-fever, gentle thoughts, which do good, like a medicine. He cheers the desponding invalid, and makes the eye of the child brighten with a more intense happiness. He furnishes pure aliment for that taste which refines character and multiplies simple pleasures. Such a man should be regarded as a benefactor.

...Do they not state that the beautiful spot long known as the 'High Street Garden,' and which without precedent in our city, has diffused its favors with an unsparing liberality, has been invaded—robbed—defined? Is this a fitting payment to the worthy proprietor, who by a personal industry almost without parallel, has embellished it, not solely for himself, or for his family, but for the community at large, and for strangers?

The varied and elegant flowers which decorate his grounds, should call forth the protection and pride of all who are admitted to share their fragrance, or admire their beauty. On the contrary, his enclosures are invaded, and the rare plants from foreign climates, which with toil and expense he has naturalized, are broken down and uprooted...²⁸⁰

The description, vocabularies, and insightful material in this editorial are profound. For example, Silliman's influence of *natural scenery on character* and *taste which refines character* is evident.

Published two years before Bushnell's *Unconscious Influence*, the editorial emphasizes the reciprocal influence of the individual on community and community on the individual with "*he who devotes his leisure in culture of the works of nature, benefits himself, he who beautifies a garden for the eye of the community is surely a public benefactor.*"

Most interesting, the author introduces a property known as the High Street Garden. High Street Garden is open to the public, the author notes that he "has embellished it, not solely for himself, or for his family, but for the community at large, and for a stranger," just as Wadsworth opened his Monte Video estate.

Another article in 1843 highlights Hartford's suburban forms, also introduces the proprietor of the High Street Garden and further describes the property:

We called on our friend Dr. E.W. Bull, whose beautiful garden is situated on High street... It comprises a beautiful spot of ground containing about 15 acres, varied in its outline, with great undulations of the surface, forming a deep valley on one side, through which a stream winds its way. The grounds are laid out in a picturesque style, with curved walks and grassy slopes [...]

The garden fronts on High street.... Extending down the hill the grounds widen...across the valley to a private road on the other side. It is at the farthest point in this valley that a picturesque cottage has been erected, which forms a pleasing scene viewed from almost any part of the

²⁸⁰ *Hartford Daily Courant*, 'Horticulture,' 1840.

garden. Looking from the ground toward...the west, several beautiful dwellings with rural gardens, catch the eye...²⁸¹

This description of the High Street Garden, a nursery by today's terminology, reveals a designed and cultivated picturesque landscape in the center of the city. The owner, a local horticulturalist, is Dr. Bull, who is also well-connected in Hartford. Dr. Bull is the brother of Mary Ann (Bull) Olmsted, Fredrick Law Olmsted's stepmother and the High Street Garden is located one street over from Olmsted's Ann Street home.²⁸²

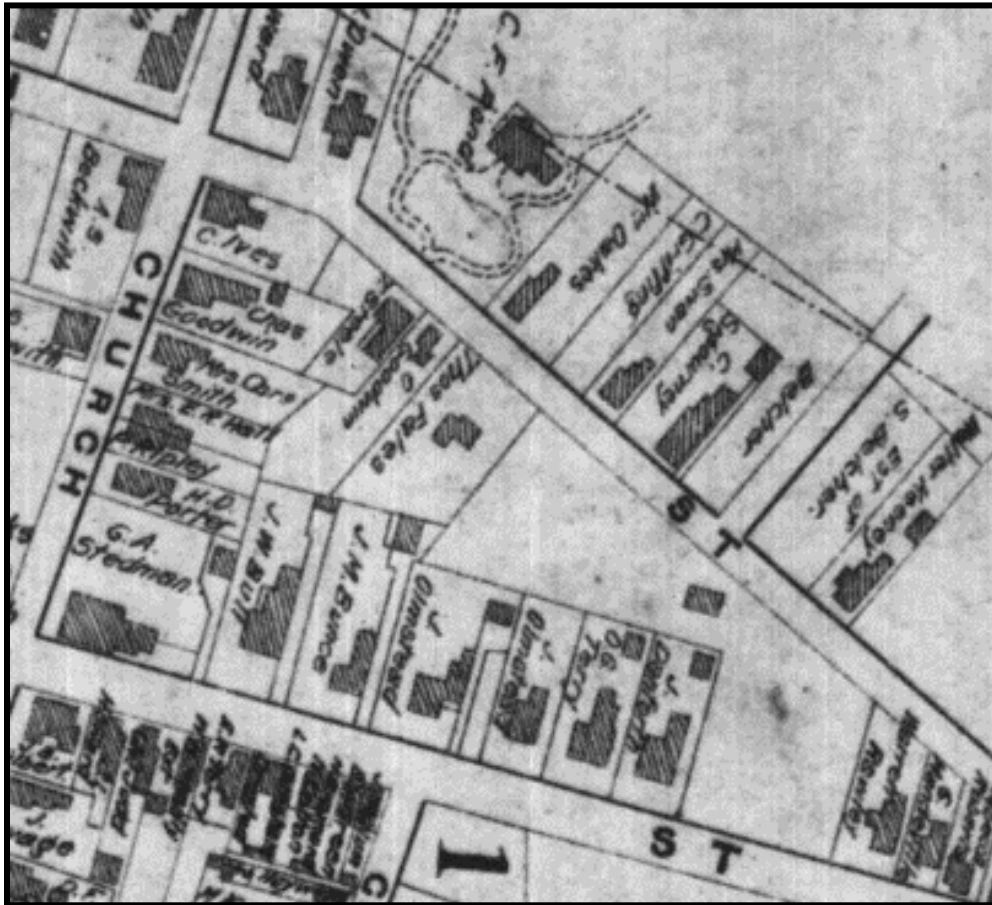


Figure 24. The C.F. Pond property in the top center is the front E.W. Bull's High Street Garden property. Mr. Pond would later move out to the Prospect Hill area in the West end of the city and would seek advice from Olmsted in 1870 for a park system and street layout. He would also donate his estate for the creation of Elizabeth Park.
(Source: UConn Magic – Marcus Smith Map 1850)

²⁸¹ *Hartford Daily Courant*; 'Private Gardens in Hartford'. Dec. 18, 1843. This article was published as a reprint of 'Notes and Recollections', by O.M. Horey, editor of the *Magazine of Horticulture*

²⁸² Marcus Smith, 1850 Property Map. Note, the final resting place of Frederick Law Olmsted is in Hartford's Old North Cemetery. The Olmsted grave is a joint burial site, shared by the Olmsted's and Bull's.

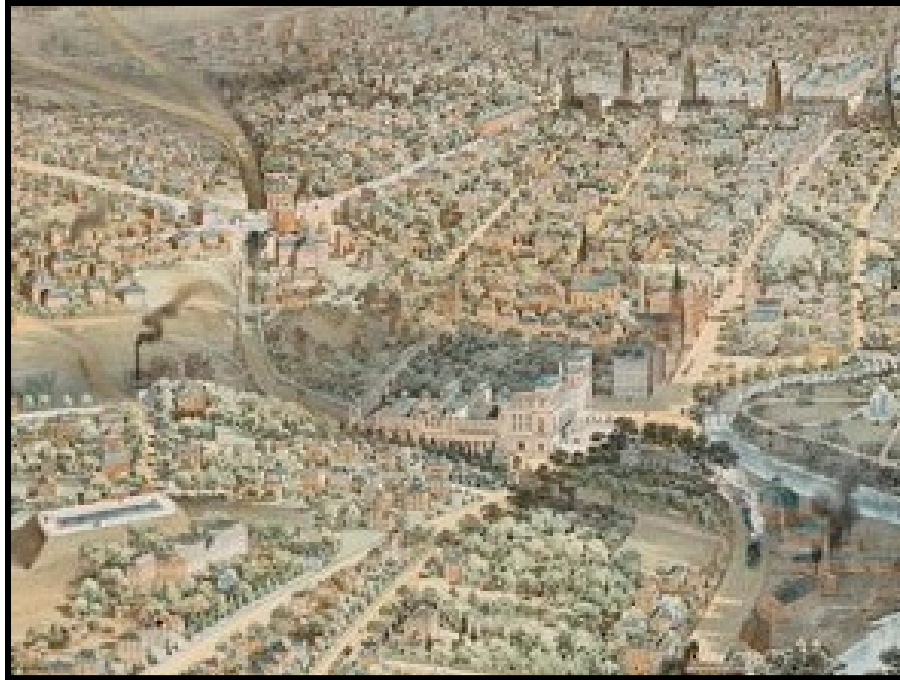


Figure 25. This 1864 lithograph shows the High Street Garden in the center left of the image—the undeveloped green space next to Union Station and the rail line. (Source: *UConn Magic – Marcus Smith Map 1850*)

Situating Olmsted in Hartford's early suburban milieu, further helps us to understand Olmsted, including his remark of suburban Birkenhead, England in 1850 when Olmsted wrote, "a scene I had never looked upon before, and yet it was in all its parts as familiar to me as my native valley."²⁸³ Hartford, Olmsted's native valley, already evolved an English picturesque landscape by the 1840s. To corroborate Olmsted's words, Charles Dickens, who visited Hartford in 1842, noted that the "town is beautifully situated in a basin of green hills; the soil is rich, well-wooded, and carefully improved"²⁸⁴ and Anthony Trollope in 1861 describes Hartford as "a pleasant little town, with English-looking houses, and an English-looking country around it."²⁸⁵ These phrases of *carefully improved*, *English-looking houses*, and *English-looking country* substantiate that Olmsted recognizing similarities between Hartford and Birkenhead.

²⁸³ Frederick Law Olmsted. *Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England*. (New York: George P. Putnam, 1852), 99.

²⁸⁴ Peter Baldwin. *Domesticating the Street: The Reform of Public Space in Hartford 1850-1930*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 20. Note, Stevenson explain that Olmsted's father was present with Dicken's in Hartford: "After dining in Hartford with a group of local worthies—among them, John Olmsted—Charles Dickens in February, 1842, visited Yale College." Elizabeth Stevenson. *Park Maker: A Life of Frederick Law Olmsted*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, [1977] (2000), 14.

²⁸⁵ Peter Baldwin. *Domesticating the Street: The Reform of Public Space in Hartford 1850-1930*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 20.

Olmsted's step-uncle, Dr. Bull died in 1845, when Olmsted was 23 years old. An editorial in December 1845 expressed Hartford's grief over the loss of Dr. Bull and Hartford's high regard for Bull, while highlighting Bull's influence and publicness of his High Street Garden:

The proprietor of the High Street Garden, his taste, and activity in horticultural pursuits, have long made that a spot of delightful resort to very many of our fellow citizens, and to many strangers, to whom he extended the courtesies so grateful to those who visit our city, for a season. Any plan for the ornamenting and beautifying of Hartford always found in him, a warm, native, and constant friend.²⁸⁶

Another article in 1846, '*The High Street Garden*,'²⁸⁷ discusses efforts underway to purchase and preserve the High Street Garden as a public ground—a park:

It is unnecessary for us to speak of the pleasure and advantage of preserving this, as a place of delightful resort its beauties have been too long known to need praise. It has been accessible to citizens and strangers, while under the care of its proprietor, and the plan of continuing it, as a beautiful public promenade, is creditable to the taste of those who have the design of securing it [...]

The beautiful highly cultivated spot, known by the name of the 'High Street Garden,' has long been the pride of our city, and the admiration of strangers. Thrown open by its late lamented proprietor, with an unexampled liberality to the whole community [...] There were seen, on a bright summer morning, the babe drawn by its nurse, gazing from its little carriage with a wondering gladness—and the invalid, reclining on its pleasant coats, and inhaling health from the breath of flowers.

It has been suggested by patriotic and discriminating minds, that this lovely domain should be secured as a permanent possession of our city. They have felt that so excellent an opportunity ought promptly to be embraced, of supplying the deficiency of an attractive promenade for our inhabitants, and for the many travelers and visitants, who during the pleasant portions of the year, resort to this region.

The High-street Garden combines in a remarkable degree, the charms of nature and of art, which in the distinguished cities of Europe, as well as in some of our own land, are found to have a refining effect upon national character [...] The commanding situation of this spacious Garden, and its easiness of access to every section of our city, are among its advantages, as well as the circumstance of its being traversed by the Eastern railroad, thus imparting to the passing travel a transient pleasure, and a bright remembrance.²⁸⁸

Once again, the sentiment of Silliman appears in "*the charms of nature and of art...are found to have a refining effect upon national character*" as Silliman's notion of "national character often receives its peculiar cast from natural scenery." This belief, Silliman's words, have become embedded in Hartford's ethos more than two decades after he first wrote those words about Monte Video. In addition,

²⁸⁶ *Hartford Daily Courant*, 1845. 'Editorial Article 1 – No Title'.

²⁸⁷ It is likely that this editorial is also written by Lydia Sigourney. Just as she wrote about Monte Video in her 1844 book, *Scenes in my Native Land*, she included a chapter titled the High Street Garden in that book. See Lydia Sigourney. *Scenes in my Native Land*. (Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1844).

²⁸⁸ *Hartford Daily Courant*, 'The High Street Garden,' 1846. Note, this article was published as a reprint from the *Review*.

the attempt to secure the property as a public promenade in 1846, pre-dates efforts in New York City to create a park, showing that Hartford's want of an urban park originated organically and separate from Central Park and the resultant start of the urban park movement.

Remarkably, the influence Bull had on Hartford's *tastes* and character were still being discussed eight years after his death:

We published an article yesterday, from the New York *Agricultor*, entitled '*Hartford in June*,' which spoke in commendatory tones...of the taste of our citizens in flowers. This taste exhibits itself in almost every suburban garden...in the city.... This taste in flowers owes its origin to many circumstances, but more than any other, to the efforts made by our lamented townsman, the late E.W. [Dr.] Bull, to create this very love of vegetable beauty by the introduction of new flowers and shrubs.... We have but to reflect upon the influences which taste exerts, to say that such men as Bull and Downing were of benefit 'in their day and generation'.... Parents are but beginning to appreciate how powerfully the influences of *home* may be increased over their children, by the beauty and loveliness which art and taste, in flowers and trees.... The taste of Hartford has wonderfully improved within the last twenty years in both public and private architecture.... The spots where these new dwellings are erected have been well chosen, and the picturesque studied in their embellishment.²⁸⁹

This article dates Bull's influence back over twenty years to the early 1830s and places him in the same high regard as Downing. The phrase, *this taste exhibits itself in almost every suburban garden...in the city* reveals the suburban being realized within Hartford. More important, the article demonstrates the coalescence of suburban forms with the ideology of domesticity, when the article explains "*parents are but beginning to appreciate how powerfully the influences of home may be increased over their children.*"

Similar suburban accounts of Hartford continued throughout the 1850s and into the 1870s. For example, the following 1858 editorial emphasizes the melding of ornamentation with the influence of nature on character and domesticity:

The enjoyment to be derived from highly ornamented and tastefully prepared grounds to the owner himself and his family, is very great and will fully repay the expense and the labor. A business man upon going home at the cool of the evening has something to please the eye, and to calm and soothe the minds. A beautiful enclosure will rest and refresh him—will banish care from his brain and smooth the wrinkles of his brow. It is a pleasing, quite relaxation to watch the progress of vegetation, to note how leaf after leaf unfolds itself; how the buds swell into flows; and how the fruit gradually perfects itself.

The effect of a beautiful enclosure—one so tastefully ornamented as to call an expression of delight from the passer by—upon the characters and taste, the feelings and habits, of children, is immense. They learn to love a home that even strangers admire. With the love of home, there comes into the heart a troop of homelike virtues and habits. They are content to remain among the

²⁸⁹ *Hartford Daily Courant*; 'Hartford: Its Tastes,' August 31, 1853.

beauties and to watch their development, rather than to roam after the doubtful society and hurtful pleasure of the street. They early acquire a knowledge and an appreciation of the beautiful, which acts reflectively upon both the intellect and the morals.²⁹⁰

By 1840, Hartford's suburban milieu was mostly formed, the moment when the *suburban vision of community* is claimed to have started to be forged. In Hartford, a small urban village and the home to many of the most influential social-suburban reformers, the suburban was first realized. Olmsted was born into and part of this community from 1822 through 1849.²⁹¹ With Olmsted removed from Hartford by 1850, only one piece remains for Hartford to fully realize the suburban vision of community. Fishman explains, a "true suburb, however, is more than the edge of a city inhabited largely by the middle class. It must embody in its design a 'marriage of town and country,' a distinct zone set apart both from the solid rows of city streets and from rural field."²⁹² In 1853, Hartford develops a romantic suburban community outside the city limits.

Nook Farm – Hartford's Romantic Suburb

Suburban historians often point to Llewellyn Park, New Jersey, designed by Andrew Jackson Davis in the mid-1850s, as the location where the Anglo-Evangelical influences of the picturesque landscape design, rural architecture, and domesticity coalesced into the romantic suburb.²⁹³ Hartford also achieved suburban separation in the 1850s. However, Hartford's romantic suburb was not designed, but developed organically. Most interesting, Hartford's early romantic suburban community was developed and settled by members of the Beecher family.

In 1853, John Hooker, husband of Isabella *Beecher* Hooker, "with his brother-in-law Francis Gillette...purchased Nook Farm...just outside the western city limits...an ideal residential site."²⁹⁴ On July 21, 1853, Gillette and Hooker placed their first advertisement in the *Hartford Daily Courant* for the

²⁹⁰ *Hartford Daily Courant*; Editorial I – No Title, August 7, 1858.

²⁹¹ "Olmsted had not really separated from Hartford until he moved to Staten Island in 1849..." Melvin Kalfus. *Frederick Law Olmsted: The Passion of a Public Artist*. (New York: University Press, 1990), 174.

²⁹² Robert Fishman. *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia*, (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 117.

²⁹³ John Archer. *Architecture and Suburbia: From English Villa to American Dream House, 1690-2000*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005). John Archer, John. "Country and City in the American Romantic Suburb." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 42, No. 2. (1983). Kenneth Jackson. *Crabgrass Frontier. The Suburbanization of the United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

²⁹⁴ Kenneth Andrews. *Nook Farm: Mark Twain's Hartford Circle*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1950), 3.

sale of lots on Nook Farm.²⁹⁵ A deed dated September 30, 1854 documents the sale of a lot and referenced a prior deed that Hooker and Gillette conveyed on February 1, 1854, likely the first lot sold.²⁹⁶

Fishman's true suburb as '*marriage of town and country*' is founded in Olmsted ideals. Olmsted explained in his design of Riverside, Illinois, "the demands of suburban life, with reference to civilized life, are to be a retrogression from, but an advance upon, those which are characteristic of town, and that no great town can long exist without great suburbs."²⁹⁷ The marriage of town and country is captured in a letter written by Francis Gillette, on October 27, 1852, when he explains his decision to purchase Nook Farm. He states, "that I might have an occupation and home conveniently near to city privileges, while I residence in the garden."²⁹⁸ A notable aspect of Hookers and Gillettes settlement of Nook Farm is their inward movement to Nook Farm. The Hooker's moved from Farmington and the Gillette's from Bloomfield, two agricultural villages outside of Hartford. Therefore, the early romantic suburb of Nook Farm originates as a move toward *city privileges*, not out and away from urban disorder.



Figure 26. The Nook Farm community in the 'nook' of the river 1877.
(Source: Connecticut Historical Society)

²⁹⁵ *Hartford Daily Courant*, Classified Ad 2, 1853.

²⁹⁶ Katharine Day Collection, 1854.

²⁹⁷ Frederick Law Olmsted, Letter to the "Riverside Improvement Company" in S.B. Sutton. *Civilizing American Cities: Writings on City Landscapes* (Fredrick Law Olmsted). (New York: Da Capo Press, (1997) 1971), 295.

²⁹⁸ Letter by Francis Gillette, October 27, 1852, Gillette Collection.

In 1855, a letter to the editor, '*Nook Farm—Beautiful Scenery in the Environs of Hartford—Love in a Cottage*,' explains:

We took a drive though...and found it delightful; a broad, graveled roadway leads from Forest Street, and winds its way through the grove.... We were not aware...that, Nook Farm had so many desirable locations for buildings.... John Hooker, Esq., has a beautiful cottage on Forest Street, also Thomas C. [and Mary Beecher] Perkins, Esq., the grounds are laid out in a neat and tasteful manner...Nook Farm can't be beat for desirable locations; and all those that like love in a cottage...²⁹⁹

Nook Farm was settled by a very close-knit group of families and friends of the Hooker's (Beecher's) and Gillette's. This group included, Thomas and Mary (*Beecher*) Perkins (the parents Emily Perkins, who Olmsted was engaged to), George H. Warner (brother of the author Charles Dudley Warner who would later move to Nook Farm), Joseph R. Hawley (married to Harriet W. Foot, Lyman Beecher's cousin), and Rev. Nathaniel J. Burton (who would later marry John Hooker's sister).³⁰⁰ Harriett Beecher Stowe moved to the Nook Farm community in 1862 and remained for the rest of her life. Catherine Beecher returned to Hartford many times to live with her sister Harriet on Nook Farm. Mark Twain, Hartford's most famous resident, built his elaborate 19-room Victorian house on Nook Farm.³⁰¹

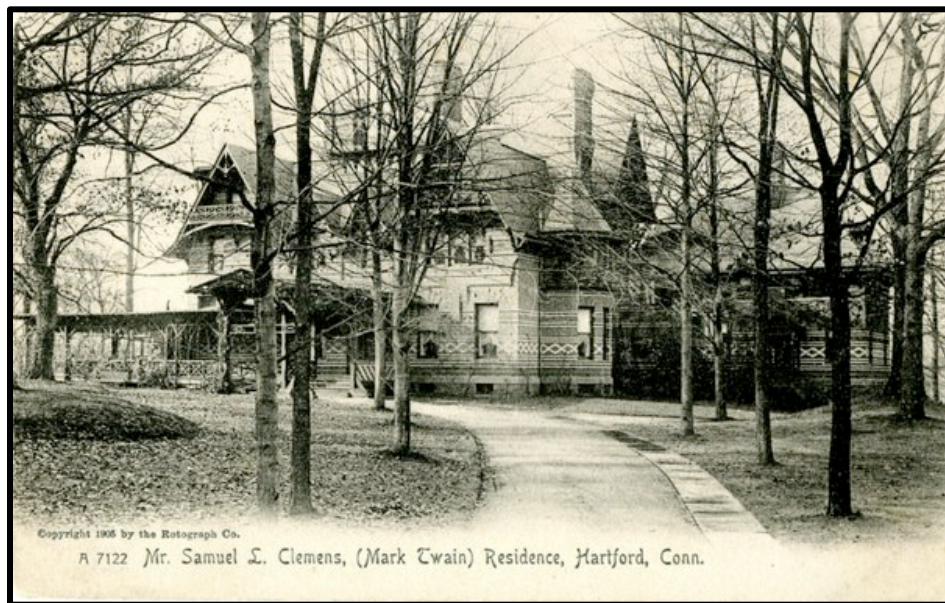


Figure 27. The Mark Twain House on Nook Farm.
(Source: Connecticut Historical Society)

²⁹⁹ *Hartford Daily Courant*, '*Nook Farm—Beautiful Scenery in the Environs of Hartford—Love in a Cottage*', 1855.

³⁰⁰ John Hooker. *Some Reminiscences of a Long Life: with a few Articles on Moral and Social Subjects of Present Interest*. (Hartford: Belknap & Warfield, 1899). Kenneth Andrews. *Nook Farm: Mark Twain's Hartford Circle*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1950).

³⁰¹ Joseph Van Why. *Nook Farm*. (Hartford: Stowe-Day Foundation, [1962] 1975).

The book, *Nook Farm: Mark Twain's Hartford Circle*,³⁰² was written specifically about Mark Twain and the small literary community on Nook Farm that Twain called home for 20 years. The book's author Kenneth Andrews provides a profound account of this early suburban community. For example, Andrews explains, "the owners were able to subdivide desirable land among congenial persons whom they wished to have as neighbors...[and]...the Hookers looked upon Nook Farm as a small society of their very own."³⁰³ He further explains the community "as centered upon the Hooker house, which was distinguished by 'an atmosphere of holy domesticity'...and Christian kindness."³⁰⁴ The phrases, *a small society of their very own* and *an atmosphere of holy domesticity* resemble Fishman's accounts of the Wilberforce Evangelicals who settled Clapham outside of London and Fishman used as a link to the Evangelical influences of the Beecher's.³⁰⁵ The romantic suburb of Nook Farm was, in fact, an Evangelical community: "all the families...indeed come from Calvinist homes."³⁰⁶

Harriet Beecher Stowe, while building her first of two homes on Nook Farm, published her *House and Home Papers* (1863) in the *Atlantic*, "recording her ideas about construction, decoration, and management of house for sensible living."³⁰⁷ Jackson also explains:

Catharine Beecher published...a compendious volume she co-authored with sister Harriet Beecher on *The American Woman's Home or the Principles of Domestic Science* (1869), Catharine Beecher acknowledged that her ideas were 'chiefly applicable to the wants and habits of those living either in the country or in suburban vicinities.'³⁰⁸

This co-authored book by the Beecher sisters was likely written in part, possibly in whole, on Nook Farm. The Beecher sisters were living and practicing the lifestyle they were preaching from their very own domesticated suburban community in Hartford.

Charles Dudley Warner moved to Nook Farm in 1860 and co-authored *The Gilded Age* with Mark Twain 1873. In 1870 Warner published, *My Summer in a Garden*.³⁰⁹ Andrews explains:

³⁰² Kenneth Andrews. *Nook Farm: Mark Twain's Hartford Circle*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1950).

³⁰³ Kenneth Andrews. *Nook Farm: Mark Twain's Hartford Circle*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1950), 4.

³⁰⁴ Kenneth Andrews. *Nook Farm: Mark Twain's Hartford Circle*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1950), 4

³⁰⁵ Robert Fishman. *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia*, (New York: Basic Books, 1987).

³⁰⁶ Milton Rugoff. *The Beechers: An American Family in the Nineteenth Century*. (Philadelphia: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1981), 568.

³⁰⁷ Kenneth Andrews. *Nook Farm: Mark Twain's Hartford Circle*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1950), 8.

³⁰⁸ Kenneth Jackson. *Crabgrass Frontier. The Suburbanization of the United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 63.

³⁰⁹ Charles Warner. *My Summer in a Garden*. (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, & Searle, 1871). Keeping with the web of relationships, it must be noted that *My Summer in a Garden* was published with a forward by Henry Ward Beecher.

The comparison of his contest with frost, fertilizers, birds, snakes, cows, chickens, and insects with the struggles of other amateur horticulturists.... Warner's record was an almost literal account of his season's gardening.... He made gardening a mock allegory of Calvinism. The principal value of a private garden is not to provide vegetables and fruit, but to teach the higher virtues, hope deferred, and expectations blighted.³¹⁰

Warner, like his neighbors, was promoting the suburban lifestyle he was living on Nook Farm. Warner's "work was not only his most popular, but his best. *My Summer in a Garden* was a tremendous success. Its popularity lay in the attractiveness of the life he was living...the charm of leisurely and satisfying living."³¹¹ Warner was living a suburban lifestyle.

Fishman, when introducing suburbia coming to America explains, "although, as Mark Twain claimed, good Americans when they die go to Paris, living Americans have sought a very different kind of city."³¹² Ironically, Mark Twain was living a romantic suburban life as a member of Nook Farm community. Twain himself, when writing about his second visit to Hartford in 1868, skillfully captured Hartford's suburban character, while juxtaposing Hartford's suburban character against the denser urban forms of other cities:

Of all the beautiful towns it has been my fortune to see this is the chief. It is a city of 40,000 inhabitants, composed almost entirely of dwelling houses—no shingled-shaped affairs, stood on end and packed together like a 'deck' of cards, but massive private hotels, scattered along the broad straight streets, from fifty all the way up to two hundred yards apart.³¹³ Each house sits in the midst of about an acre of green grass, or flower beds, or ornamental shrubbery, guarded on all sides by the trimmest hedges of arbor-vitae, and by files of huge forest trees that cast a shadow like a thunder-cloud. Some of these stately dwellings are almost buried from sight in parks and forests of these noble trees. Everywhere the eye turns it is blessed with a vision or refreshing green. You do not know what beauty is if you have not been here.³¹⁴

Another account of Hartford's suburban character is seen in Charles Edward Stowe's writing about and quoting his mother. He explains, "Harriet Beecher Stowe, who had settled permanently in Hartford in 1863, noted that while other cities developed 'dirty suburbs,' Hartford could boast 'elegantly kept country places, near enough to the city to enjoy all its pleasures, and yet far enough in the country to

³¹⁰ Kenneth Andrews. *Nook Farm: Mark Twain's Hartford Circle*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1950), 173.

³¹¹ Kenneth Andrews. *Nook Farm: Mark Twain's Hartford Circle*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1950), 174.

³¹² Robert Fishman. *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia*, (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 116.

³¹³ The similarity between Hartford and Olmsted statements in *Public Parks and The Enlargement of Towns* (1870) is interesting. Olmsted explains, "Probably the advantages of civilization can be found illustrated and demonstrated under no other circumstances so completely as in some suburban neighborhoods where each family abode stands fifty or a hundred feet or more apart from all others, and at some distance from the public road." Frederick Law Olmsted, "Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns" in S.B. Sutton. *Civilizing American Cities: Writings on City Landscapes* (Fredrick Law Olmsted). (New York: Da Capo Press, (1997) 1971), 62-63.

³¹⁴ *Hartford Daily Courant*, 'How Hartford Appears to 'Mark Twain.' Hartford—The 'Blue Laws.' Morality.' October 9, 1868. A Reprint of a Letter from Twain to the *Alta Californian*.

have all its quietude and repose.”³¹⁵ In Stowe's words, again we see the *marriage of town and country* and Gillette's sentiment of “conveniently near to city privileges, while I residence in the garden.”

Hartford's suburban transformation continues at Nook Farm as Hartford continues to innovate with suburban forms and practices. For example, on a portion of Nook Farm along Capitol Avenue (including the site of Harriett Beecher Stowe's first home), a suburban community for Hartford's laboring class is developed in 1871:

Mr. Porter Whiton and Mr. Edward H. Gillette have formed a co-partnership under the firm name of Whiton & Gillette, for the purpose of carrying forward an important improvement in the development of building property on what was formerly a part of the Nook farm [...] Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe erected a fine mansion on the eastern boundary of this property, bordering on the bank of the river, and held possession of it up to about two weeks ago, when she disposed of it to Whiton & Gillette for about \$20,000 and the house has been thoroughly remodeled to make it suitable for tenement purposes, and it will now accommodate seven families [...] It is the intention to beautify this place of meeting near the river by laying out a small park, which will be an attractive resort to people living on the new streets. On Laurel street three houses are already constructed—well built, conveniently arranged, and really pleasant houses—suited to the wants of men of small means, not at all stingy or cheap-looking in their appointments. And the best feature of this enterprise is that the proprietors hold out liberal inducements to worthy, industrious men to select a home in this locality, The land sold at \$20 per foot front, and 50 feet front and 150 deep—costing \$1,000—is given with each house completed for about \$2,600 on terms that any saving laboring man almost can comply with. The house will be built, the land furnished, and a complete home supplied by the proprietors to begin with, a reasonable advance only being demanded to put the purchaser in full passion of it. The houses are single, for one family, and have below a kitchen dining-room and sitting-room and parlor, and above good sleeping rooms, and a plenty of closet room. Altogether there are over 8,000 feet of building land to be offered liberally to the right class of men [...] We do not know any real estate or building enterprise started in this city, which presents to the laboring man so many advantages, and there can be no doubt that very many active, honest men will avail themselves of the generous proposals the proprietors make.³¹⁶

Through the efforts of Whiton and Gillette, this suburban subdivision opened Nook Farm to Hartford's laboring class by providing single-family homes, on individual lots, at affordable prices, and with financing available.³¹⁷ Starting with Wadsworth's borderland estate and picturesque landscape design in the early 1800s, the early teachings and adoption of domesticity, the spread of ornamental and suburban forms, the suburban separation of the organic romantic suburb of Nook Farm, and opening of Nook Farm to the laboring class, Hartford fully realized the suburban vision of community earlier than most places documented in suburban history. Nook Farm, settled by the Beechers, the leading social reformers who sought to civilize American society, were practicing what they preached from their very

³¹⁵ Charles Stowe. *The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe*. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Company, 1891), 269.

³¹⁶ *The Hartford Daily Courant*, ‘Of Interest to Laboring Men—A New and Important Enterprise,’ 1871.

³¹⁷ It is important to note that this suburban subdivision for the laboring class was over seventy years before Levittown, New York is developed as a suburban community with starter homes for the middle-class.

own civil suburban community—the ideal *marriage of town and country* in Olmsted's *native valley* of Hartford.



Figure 28. Harriet Beecher Stowe's first home on Nook Farm, Olkham, on Capitol Avenue.
(Source: Charles Edward Stowe 1891)

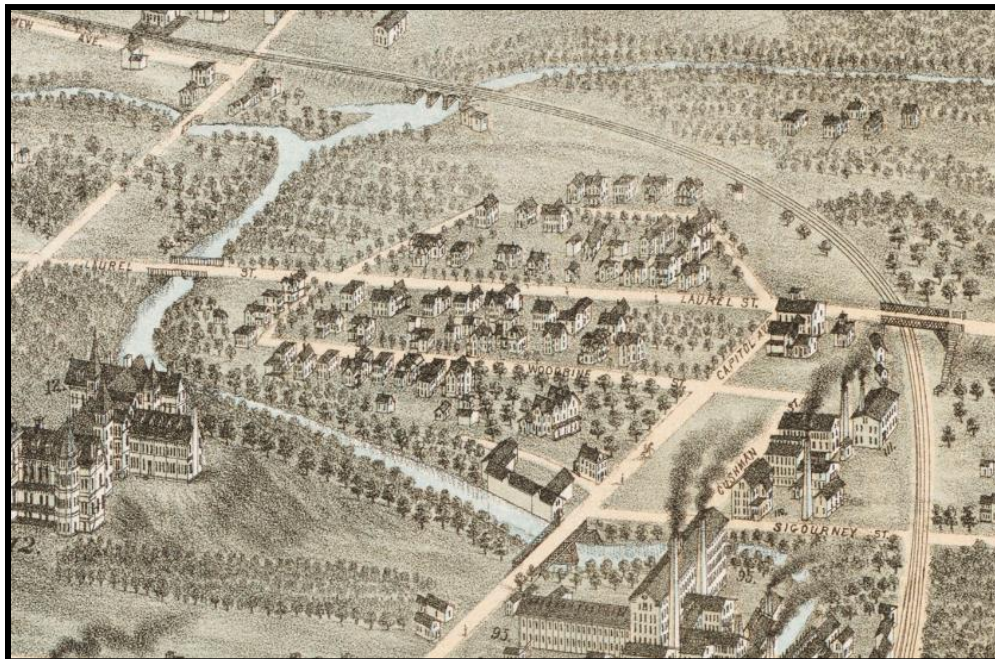


Figure 29. The Nook Farm subdivision in 1871 for laboring men on Capitol Avenue. Note the large Victorian home in the center and near street. This is Olkham, as it was turned into multi housing units as part of the suburban subdivision.
(Source: Connecticut Historical Society, 1877)



Figure 30. Harriet Beecher Stowe's second home on Nook Farm—the Forest Street home.
(Source: Charles Edward Stowe 1891 book)



Figure 31. Isabella Beecher Hooker and John Hooker enjoying their suburban garden on Forest Street in Nook Farm.
(Source: Connecticut Historical Society, Isabella Beecher Hooker and John Hooker 1897)

Chapter VIII. Horace Bushnell: *Unconscious Influence*

"...there spreads a new modern city, with broad, straight avenues and ample house-lots, fronted with trees, in the manner of a new American city"

"Every new village, town, city, ought to be contrived as a work of art, and prepared for the new age of ornament to come"

Horace Bushnell, Hartford, 1854

Horace Bushnell – Theories of Social and Civic Improvement

The influence of Horace Bushnell on Frederick Law Olmsted has been well documented. For example, "Olmsted's eventual formulation of his philosophy of public parks as instruments of moral influence and reform and of value of passive recreation and unconscious mental and spiritual refreshment are thoroughly Bushnellian ideas"³¹⁸ and that he "learned from Bushnell's sermons 'the importance of nonverbal influence in the development of character.'"³¹⁹ However, Bushnell's influence was not only *unconscious influence*, it was, at times, an overtly conscious influence.

In *Making the American Self*, Howe explains, "Among the most profound of all the thinkers who pondered the construction of the self in antebellum America was Horace Bushnell."³²⁰ Bushnell's influence on American society, Hartford, and Olmsted cannot be underestimated. The Reverend Joseph Twichell explained that "Bushnell lies back of all that is best in the city. He quickened the men who have made Hartford what it is"³²¹ and was a "true citizen of the little Litchfield county town, true citizen of Connecticut, true citizen of America, true citizen of the world...such was Horace Bushnell."³²² Bushnell was "a representative of the New England mind, as one of its greatest and truest representatives in this half century."³²³

³¹⁸ George Scheper, "The Reformist Vision of Frederick Law Olmsted and the Poetics of Park Design," *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 62, No. 3, (1989), 378.

³¹⁹ Daniel Howe, "The Social Science of Horace Bushnell," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 70, No. 2, (1983), 320.

³²⁰ Daniel Howe. *The Political Culture of the American Whigs*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 75.

³²¹ Edwin Mead. *Horace Bushnell, The Citizen*. (Boston: 1900), 13.

³²² Edwin Mead. *Horace Bushnell, The Citizen*. (Boston: 1900), 18.

³²³ Edwin Mead. *Horace Bushnell, The Citizen*. (Boston: 1900), 3.

Bushnell's influence went far beyond religion. His influence included politics, government, and social reform. For example, as Dr. Munger explained, Bushnell's political essays, "reveal Bushnell as a publicist of the first order. No man of his day handled those questions of state that involved the moral-sense of the people with such breadth of view and such fidelity, both to the nation and to conscience."³²⁴ Most notable regarding 'questions of the state', Bushnell provided the Whigs with the theological arguments for economic prosperity³²⁵ in his 1847 sermon '*Prosperity our Duty*.' Bushnell's arguments for prosperity, like Dwight, are founded in self-governance and duty to community. Baldwin explains:

Woman's new role was just part of the deep socioeconomic change produced by industrialization and free-market capitalism... Economic change had replaced the socially unifying struggle of man against nature with new class divisions and a host of social problems. But it was pointless to be hostile to industrial capitalism. The continued growth of manufacturing was essential for the prosperity of America's cities, and 'prosperity, great as its dangers are, is yet the condition of virtue... A decaying city became a place of decaying morality, when churches fell into disuse, and drinking, gambling, and whoring raged out of control. If instead people united for the good of their city, economic progress would go hand in hand with 'social warmth' and 'fellow spirit.' Locally funded public-works projects would stimulate local prosperity. Economic self-interest would thus discourage internal social strife in favor of intercity competition. Capitalism did not have to be socially divisive.³²⁶

In urban and suburban history, Bushnell's influence is often limited to domesticity and his sermon *Unconscious Influence*.³²⁷ However, Bushnell was rewriting Protestantism for a changing America with an emerging middle- and professional-class. Charles Loring Brace and Frederick Law Olmsted were part of this new professional class—young educated men who would make a living in new professions other than law and religion.

Moving Protestantism beyond the fire and brimstone of Dwight and Lyman Beecher, Bushnell crafted a kinder Protestantism for a new age.³²⁸ For Bushnell, as explained by Baldwin, the "Christian home was in fact a microcosm of the organic society, the mustard seed from which harmony could grow even in the rough world created by Jefferson and Jackson."³²⁹ It is this organic society where Bushnell

³²⁴ Edwin Mead. *Horace Bushnell, The Citizen*. (Boston: 1900), 4.

³²⁵ Daniel Howe. *The Political Culture of the American Whigs*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

³²⁶ Peter Baldwin. *Domesticating the Street: The Reform of Public Space in Hartford 1850-1930*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 15-16.

³²⁷ Thomas Bender. *Toward an Urban Vision: Ideas and Institutions in Nineteenth Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975). Clifford Clark, "Domestic Architecture as an Index to Social History: The Romantic Revival and the Cult of Domesticity in America, 1840-1870." *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 7, No. 1. (1976).

³²⁸ Daniel Howe, "The Social Science of Horace Bushnell," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 70, No. 2, (1983).

³²⁹ Peter Baldwin. *Domesticating the Street: The Reform of Public Space in Hartford 1850-1930*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 16.

was creating new forms of governance, not simply the holy domesticity of Dwight and Catharine Beecher internalized to home and family, but a domestication of civic life and public space as a means of creating a civil society.

Many of Hartford's social reformers have been branded as part of the *cult of domesticity* and the *cult of the past*.³³⁰ While such claims of a cult of domesticity are valid, placing Bushnell in the *cult of the past* misses his focus on the present and movement toward the future. This view to the future is evident in his 1846 sermon, *The Day of Roads*:

Let the North and the South, the East and the West, from Maine to Oregon, be connected with Roads of iron, as soon as possible. The greatest danger, which threatens us now, is not Romanism, but barbarism; that wildness, lawlessness and violence, which result from distance and isolation. Let distance, if possible, be annihilated, let speed have a race with emigration, and every straggler of the woods be held in close proximity with civilization, law and religion; and then the assimilating power, which resides in the better forms of society, will pervade and shape the whole mass into itself.³³¹

The Day of Roads does not focus on the past, but is grounded in the present, concerned with the threat of barbarism (real or perceived) to our civil society, while working toward a more civilized future. Bushnell's modernizing and moralizing metaphors of roads foreshadow his 1847 sermon *Prosperity our Duty* (to be discussed later in this chapter) on the virtues of community prosperity and civic improvement:

For if there is any motion in society, the Roads, which is the symbol of motion, will indicate the fact. When there is activity, or enlargement, or liberalizing spirit of any kind, then there is intercourse and travel, and these require Roads. So if there is any kind of advancement going on, if new ideas are abroad and new hopes rising, then you will see it by roads that are building. Nothing makes an inroad without making a Road. All creative action, whether in government, industry, thought, or religion, creates Roads.³³²

Olmsted, metaphorically and literally, through his *creative action* of landscape architecture was building roads—spreading taste, ornamentation, picturesque beauty, and creating a civil society through urban and suburban design. Olmsted made clear in his design of Riverside that a well-designed and maintained road—a civilized road—connecting Riverside to Chicago was required for Riverside to succeed.³³³

³³⁰ Clifford Clark, "Domestic Architecture as an Index to Social History: The Romantic Revival and the Cult of Domesticity in America, 1840-1870." *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 7, No. 1. (1976).

³³¹ Horace Bushnell. "Day of Roads," in Horace Bushnell. *Work and Play: Or Literary Varieties*, (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864), 436.

³³² Horace Bushnell. "Day of Roads," in Horace Bushnell. *Work and Play: Or Literary Varieties*, (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864), 404.

³³³ David Schuyler, Jane Censer, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume VI. The Years of Olmsted, Vaux, & Company 1865 - 1874*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

Bushnell's social reforms attempt to manage and adapt to change. "In the process of accommodating Christianity to the contemporary imagination, Bushnell had transformed New England Calvinism."³³⁴ In doing so, Bushnell paved the way for the next generation of social reformers, such as Brace and Olmsted. Howe explains:

Bushnell not only anticipated the ideas of modern social science; he helped bring them into existence. A number of prominent American social scientists of his day were strongly influenced by him. One of Bushnell's admiring parishioners, Charles Loring Brace, adapted his pastor's theory of the family and child nurture to the problems of slum children. Brace started the Children's Aid Society in New York City in 1853 and became the father of the movement to understand and combat juvenile delinquency in the United States.³³⁵

The influence of Bushnell on this next generation of social reforms is also evident in Charles Loring Brace's own words:

Those were the eager and powerful days of the great preacher, when his language has a pure and Saxon ring...still those early fiery days of his left an indelible mark on all the youth who came under his influence. We felt the divine beauty of Truth, and how sweet and easy it was to sacrifice all to her. We were withdrawn from the overpowering control of external formula and formal statements, and began to search for the realities as for hidden treasures. Our great teacher seemed to stand as a prophet, directing us to things unseen and eternal... Truth, independence, humanity, under an overpowering faith in God and Christ, were the principles stamped then into youthful mind by the preaching and life of Dr. Bushnell...a true leader of a man.³³⁶

When Brace uses the word 'we' regarding the youth or younger generation, it is safe to assume that he was including Olmsted, his close friend.³³⁷ Howe further discusses Olmsted:

The great landscape architect Fredrick Law Olmsted, a good friend of Brace, also attended Bushnell's church in Hartford. As much a social planner as an artist, Olmsted was one of the founders of the American Social Science Association. He shared the enthusiasm of Bushnell and Brace for the city, as well as their desire to shape it to human purposes. Olmsted learned from Bushnell's sermons 'the importance of nonverbal influence in the development of character,' and he professed an organic social theory.³³⁸

³³⁴ Barbara Cross. *Horace Bushnell: Minister to a Changing America*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 109.

³³⁵ Daniel Howe, "The Social Science of Horace Bushnell," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 70, No. 2, (1983), 319-322.

³³⁶ Theodore Munger. *Horace Bushnell, Preacher and Theologian*. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Company, 1899), 277-278.

³³⁷ For other parishioners of Bushnell's church who went on to become influential reformers, see Michiyo Morita. *Horace Bushnell on Women in Nineteenth-Century America*. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004).

³³⁸ Daniel Howe, "The Social Science of Horace Bushnell," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 70, No. 2, (1983), 320. See Thomas Bender. *Toward an Urban Vision: Ideas and Institutions in Nineteenth Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975) for a lengthy discussion of the influence of Horace Bushnell on both Charles Loring Brace (Chapter VI) and Frederick Law Olmsted (Chapter VII).

For Howe, Bushnell is the “bourgeois Victorian Protestant”³³⁹ or the theologian and minister to the middle- and upper-middle-class. Bushnell’s middle-class ethos helped shape Hartford and American society, as is explained by Kaestle in his discussion of the ethos of America’s native Protestant middle-class writers in the mid-nineteenth century:

The most forceful and influential variant of this ideology, a strain which I call ‘cosmopolitan,’ advocated government action to improve the economy, shape the morals, and unify the culture of mid nineteenth-century America. Recent historians have called its devotees the American Victorians. In the antebellum period this version of native, Protestant ideology found its most effective political expression in the Whig Party... From their belief in Protestantism, republicanism, and capitalism, cosmopolitan spokesmen deduced a need for government intervention at a time of rapid change, to regulate morals, develop institutions, and create more homogeneous population. [...] Their cosmopolitan perspective envisioned an integrated economy, more central public direction, improved communication, and a common moral and political culture based on Anglo-American Protestantism, republicanism, and capitalism.³⁴⁰

Olmsted’s Hartford was a Whig city and the “Whigs did not begin with a philosophy and then try to implement it; they built up their world view and put it to work, as people generally do, by interacting with the world.”³⁴¹ This is precisely the essence of Bushnell, and later Olmsted, as they *built up their world view and put it to work*.

Bushnell’s Park

Bushnell’s *cosmopolitanism* and putting his world view to work is most evident in his efforts to create a park. For example, Bushnell recognized a “want of some spacious ornamental ground had been the common regret of Hartford citizens for many years.”³⁴² In 1853, at the same time New York’s Central Park was proposed, Bushnell proposed Hartford’s first public park. The following excerpt is from the

³³⁹ Daniel Howe, “The Social Science of Horace Bushnell,” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 70, No. 2, (1983), 318.

³⁴⁰ Carl Kaestle. “Ideology and American Educational History,” *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 2, (1982), 128.

³⁴¹ Daniel Howe. *The Political Culture of the American Whigs*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 6.

³⁴² Mary Cheney. *Life and Letters of Horace Bushnell*. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1903), 312. Note, this statement from Bushnell as part of his pitch for the City to create a public park, is likely a reference to prior efforts to create a park in Hartford. Favretti explains, “the idea had emerged more than twenty years earlier when a group of Hartford’s citizens petitioned the Court of Common Council to ‘create a public square, or promenade,’ as public recreational spaces were called in 1827. People saw or heard about similar spaces in Europe where citizens flocked to walk and enjoy fresh air, and where children could roll hoops and toss balls. They wanted that for Hartford, but their request failed.” Rudy Favretti. *Jacob Weidenmann: pioneer landscape architect* (Hartford: Cedar Hill Cemetery Foundation, 2007), 26. More recent, as discussed in the prior chapter, Bushnell may also be referencing the efforts to secure the High Street Garden as a public promenade 1846.

report issued by the Hartford Park Committee formed to study Bushnell's proposal—the report is likely written by Bushnell:³⁴³

As our city has increased in wealth and population, the want of some public ground has been more deeply felt. Without any public movement, operating artificially to call forth such a sentiment, as common sentiment has been spontaneously formed, demanding, if possible, some remedy of this very deplorable defect in the arrangement or plan of the city [...] We want an open ground your Committee suppose, in the city, and nowhere else; a ground as centrally located as possible, where it will add an air of culture and ornament to the city [...] Nothing, we are sure, will serve the purpose demanded, but an opening in the heart of the city itself, to which the citizens will naturally flow in their walks and which they will naturally cross in passing on foot from one side or quarter to another; a place where the children will play and the poor invalid go to breathe the freshness of nature; a place for holiday scenes and celebrations; a green carpet of ground, on which living persons, in the picturesque and various colors of dress will be the moving figures; a social exchange, where friends will meet and to which they will naturally find their way in their strolls of pleasure and exercise; where high and low, rich and poor will exchange looks and make acquaintance through the eyes; an outdoor parlor, open for the cultivation of good manner and a right social feeling. It must be a place of life and motion, that will make us more completely conscious of being one people.³⁴⁴

In the park proposal, Bushnell is putting his world view into action, heeding his own advice from '*Prosperity our Duty*'³⁴⁵ and the need for civic improvement. Concerned with Hartford's physical and socio-economic decline, Bushnell called upon Hartford's citizens to arrest decline by creating prosperity:

Let our city...drop into a decline, let business of every kind become unprofitable, let capital withdraw itself, and the young men of enterprise go abroad to seek their fortune in other places, let those ominous words 'to let' be hung on many tenements, let the paint begin to wear off, and a dingy look of decay to appear on the shops and dwellings, then too will be found that religion and every good influence withers.³⁴⁶

Bushnell's solution is virtue, virtue being the "the appointed spring of prosperity—prosperity the badge and flower of virtue. [...] For virtue is itself a creative power.... It forbids idleness. It sets the power in action. It produces self-government, and keeps all the passions and capacities, both of body and mind, in a healthy, conservative order."³⁴⁷ He continues:

If industry and duty can make anything to prosper, it cannot be that a city possessed of so many advantages with so good a beginning, has a right to suffer any decline; or can, without some fault that is both dishonorable and criminal. [...] No real improvement is ever a source of permanent

³⁴³ Peter Baldwin. *Domesticating the Street: The Reform of Public Space in Hartford 1850-1930*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999). Baldwin believes that Bushnell either wrote or had a hand in writing the Park Committee report. Based on the language used in the report, I agree with Baldwin, Bushnell had a significant role in drafting the report.

³⁴⁴ *Hartford Daily Courant*, 1853, 'The Proposed Park.'

³⁴⁵ Horace Bushnell. *Prosperity our Duty*. (Hartford: Case, Tiffany & Burnham, 1847).

³⁴⁶ Horace Bushnell. *Prosperity our Duty*. (Hartford: Case, Tiffany & Burnham, 1847), 6-7.

³⁴⁷ Horace Bushnell. *Prosperity our Duty*. (Hartford: Case, Tiffany & Burnham, 1847), 12.

injury; for it is the fixed law of God that what advance the wealth and happiness of the whole, shall stand in final harmony with the food of every part.³⁴⁸

In conclusion, Bushnell exclaims:

If we of to-day are recreant to our duty, and allow this city...to go down in decline, then the cause of virtue and the church of God will suffer as deeply as the fortunes of business; and that by a ruin as much more deplorable as they are or sacred and closer to immortality. To avert any such possible evil, every man is called to lend his voice and his influence. Nor is there any office too sacred to be employed in blessing the hopes of industry, and sanctifying the bonds of public love [...] Take it as a fixed truth that Hartford can prosper; therefore, it ought; therefore, that it shall. Go then, every man to his own alter...and all together to the task of preserving the public virtue...³⁴⁹

Prosperity our Duty is more than a call to action, it is a theological theory to economic development and place-making. Unlike other early urban design movements aimed at ornamentation and bringing nature to the city,³⁵⁰ Bushnell's park proposal was an early attempt at urban redevelopment, and arresting decline and decay through civic improvement. Portions of the park area were characterized by blight³⁵¹ and the park would replace "a slum."³⁵²

In early 1853, Bushnell engaged the City Council and State Legislature to amend the City Charter and pass laws allowing eminent domain for the acquisition of land for a public park. In July 1853, after state eminent domain laws were changed, Hartford "voters overwhelmingly gave final approval"³⁵³ to amend the City Charter, granting the Council the power of eminent domain to take property for the creation of a public park.

It is important to note that Hartford's *want of a park* pre-dates New York's Central Park. As early as 1827, Hartford expressed the *want of a public ground* in the city³⁵⁴ and this want was expressed again in the 1846 efforts to acquire the High Street Garden as a *public promenade*.³⁵⁵ A.J. Downing's editorial

³⁴⁸ Horace Bushnell. *Prosperity our Duty*. (Hartford: Case, Tiffany & Burnham, 1847), 14-15.

³⁴⁹ Horace Bushnell. *Prosperity our Duty*. (Hartford: Case, Tiffany & Burnham, 1847), 24.

³⁵⁰ David Schuyler. *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City Form in Nineteenth-Century America*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

³⁵¹ Peter Baldwin. *Domesticating the Street: The Reform of Public Space in Hartford 1850-1930*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999). For a more nuanced discussion of the overall area of the proposed and the conditions, including blight, see Wilson Faude. *The Story of Bushnell Park*. (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, 2004).

³⁵² John Jackson. *American Space: The Centennial Years, 1865-1876* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1972), 216.

³⁵³ Peter Baldwin. *Domesticating the Street: The Reform of Public Space in Hartford 1850-1930*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 22.

³⁵⁴ Rudy Favretti. *Jacob Weidenmann: pioneer landscape architect* (Hartford: Cedar Hill Cemetery Foundation, 2007).

³⁵⁵ *Hartford Daily Courant*, 1845, 'Editorial Article 1 – No Title.'

calling for a park in New York City was not published until 1847.³⁵⁶ Also important, in the context of the urban park's movement, Central park was outside of the built-up city, on "barren and desolate [land], covered with squatters' shacks,"³⁵⁷ while Hartford's park was in the center of the city and the Council had to utilize eminent domain to take privately owned property that was developed and productive to make way for the park. Hartford's park was approved by the Council on December 22, 1853 and again, the question "put to a vote, by a general ballot of the people, January 5, 1854, and the plan was approved by a vote of nearly three to one."³⁵⁸

The influence of *Prosperity Our Duty* in Hartford is also evident in the industrious efforts of Samuel Colt. Hosley explains, *Prosperity Our Duty* "represented an endorsement of manufacturing... [and] this sermon unofficially launched an era of unprecedented growth and industrial achievement."³⁵⁹ Henry Barnard, Colt's biographer, explains, "Colonel Colt practically demonstrated the proposition, which an eloquent and sagacious divine of the city, Rev. Horace Bushnell, D. D., about the same time announced as the theme of a discourse, 'Prosperity—Our Duty'—that it was 'the duty of Hartford,' at least of that portion of the city built by him, 'to prosper.'"³⁶⁰

At the same time Bushnell's park was proposed and approved, Colt began developing his "industrial district known as Coltsville...an important example of a mid-19th-century planned urban industrial district."³⁶¹ The development of Coltsville, more specifically Colt's estate, was also part of Hartford's early suburban milieu. Colt's picturesque estate grounds were "designed by landscape architecture pioneers Robert Morris Copeland³⁶² and H.W.S. Cleveland³⁶³,"³⁶⁴ drawing the two notable

³⁵⁶ David Schuyler. *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City Form in Nineteenth-Century America*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

³⁵⁷ David Schuyler. *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City Form in Nineteenth-Century America*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 77.

³⁵⁸ Mary Cheney. *Life and Letters of Horace Bushnell*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), 316-317.

³⁵⁹ William Hosley. *Colt: The Making of an American Legend*. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 35.

³⁶⁰ Henry Barnard, *Armsmear: The Home, The Arm, and The Armory of Samuel Colt*. (New York: 1866), 19.

³⁶¹ United States, Department of Interior, National Park Service, *Coltsville Special Resource Study*. (Washington, DC, 2009), 26.

³⁶² Robert Morris Copeland (1830-1874) was a landscape architect in the nineteenth century, best known as the partner of H.W.S. Cleveland and for his designs of cemeteries.

³⁶³ Horace William Shaler Cleveland (1814-1900) was a leading landscape architect in the nineteenth century. He and Copeland were partners for many years and competed for the design of Central Park, losing to Olmsted and Vaux. Olmsted had great respect for Cleveland and some believe his to be the second best landscape architect, with Olmsted being the best.

³⁶⁴ United States, Department of Interior, National Park Service, *Coltsville Special Resource Study*. (Washington, DC, 2009), 29. Also see William Hosley. *Colt: The Making of an American Legend*. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996). Henry Barnard, *Armsmear: The Home, The Arm, and The Armory of Samuel Colt*. (New York: 1866).

and influential landscape designers who play a role in the creation of our suburban vision, into Hartford's early milieu.

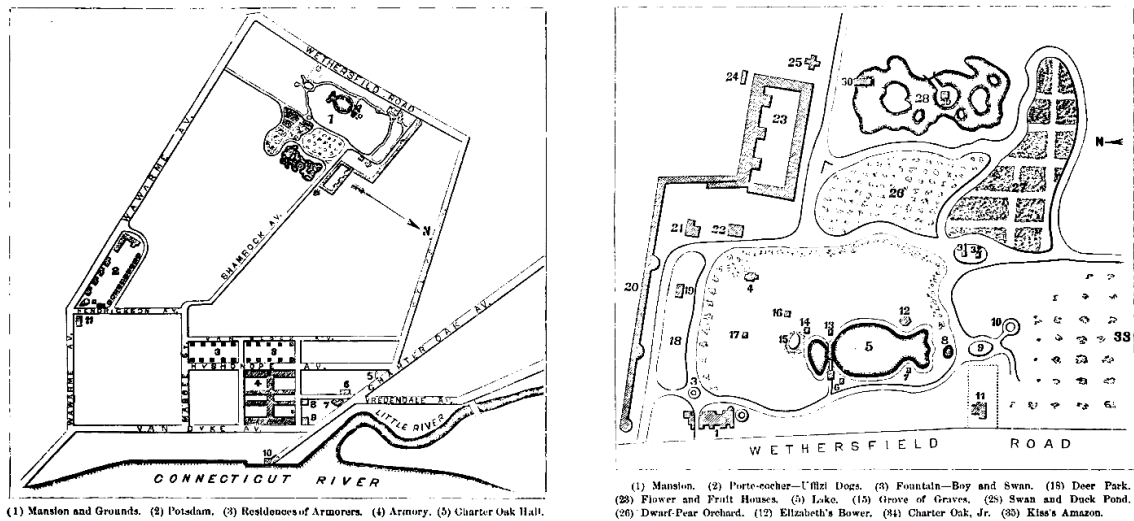


Figure 32. Cleveland's and Copeland's design of Colt's *Armsmear* in 1856.
(Source: Henry Barnard, *Armsmear*, 1867)

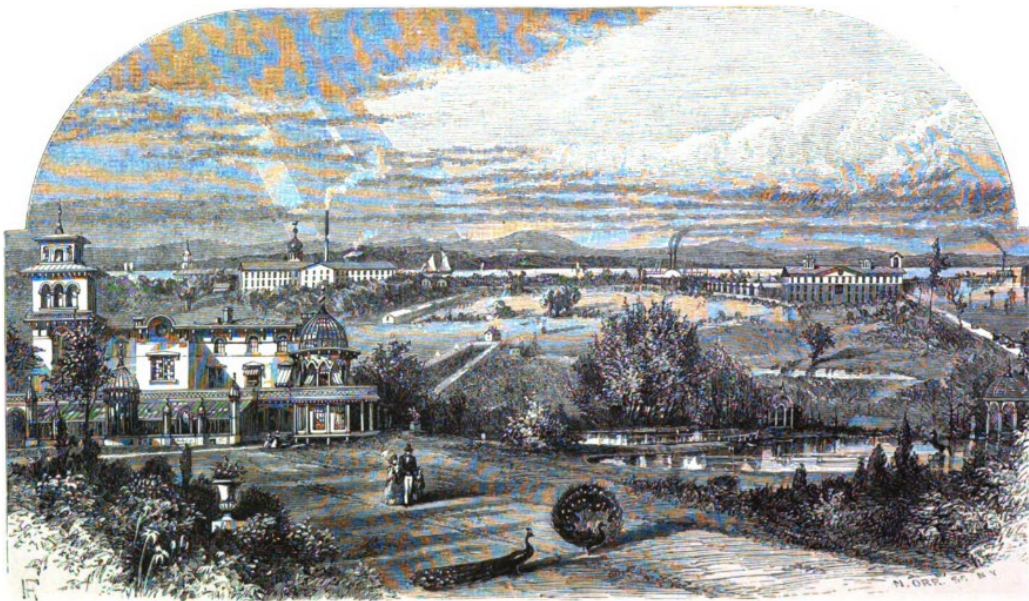


Figure 33. Image of the Armsmear estate look east to the factory and river.
(Source: Henry Barnard, *Armsmear*, 186)

Horace Bushnell - Planning of Cities

It is also during this time that Bushnell was formulating his theory of city planning. Howe explains, at a time when many American thinkers “disapproved of urban life as corrupting, Bushnell boldly celebrated the city...he published one of the first essays on city planning written by an American.”³⁶⁵ Bushnell's planning theory was published as *City Plans in Work and Play* (1864). However, *City Plans*, as explained by Baldwin, was first written in 1854 as *Planning of Cities*:

Bushnell began considering the questions of comprehensive urban design soon after winning voters' approval for the park in 1854, and he announced the formation of a local Society for Public Improvement that autumn. ‘The great and principal object of the society is to advance the public taste of our citizens in matters relating to the attractiveness and ornament of the city,’ he wrote in a letter to the *Courant*. The society planned to do this by inviting prominent citizens to present lectures on such topics as ‘Economy of Taste,’ ‘Public Parks,’ ‘Public Architecture,’ ‘Street Architecture,’ ‘Color,’ and ‘Trees and Shrubbery.’ Bushnell himself was scheduled to present a lecture on ‘Planning of Cities.’³⁶⁶

In *City Plans*, Bushnell provides highly developed thoughts on urban design, including the siting of cities, street design, parks, public health, functionality, and ornamentation. Most interesting, in conclusion, Bushnell claims *city planning* as a great opportunity for our new country and calls for a *city-planning profession*:

Most human errors are amended by repentance, but here there is no amendment--an advantage lost can never be recovered, an error begun can never be repaired. Nothing is more to be regretted, in this view, than that our American nation, having a new world to make, and a clean map on which to place it, should be sacrificing our advantage so cheaply, in the extempore planning of our towns and cities. The peoples of the old world have their cities built for times gone by, when railroads and gunpowder were unknown. We can have cities for the new age that has come, adapted to its better conditions of use and ornament. So great an advantage ought not to be thrown away. We want therefore a city-planning profession, as truly as an architectural, house-planning profession. Every new village, town, city, ought to be contrived as a work of art, and prepared for the new age of ornament to come.³⁶⁷

Bushnell's concern that our cities were sacrificing our advantage in the extempore planning of cities is a sentiment shared by Olmsted. In *Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns* (1870), Olmsted expresses concerns over a bad plan or what Bushnell explain as errors. Bushnell's influence is evident as Olmsted explains:

³⁶⁵ Daniel Howe, “The Social Science of Horace Bushnell,” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 70, No. 2, (1983), 309.

³⁶⁶ Peter Baldwin. *Domesticating the Street: The Reform of Public Space in Hartford 1850-1930*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 29-30.

³⁶⁷ Horace Bushnell. “Planning of Cities (1854),” in Horace Bushnell. *Work and Play: Or Literary Varieties*, as “City Plans.” (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864), 336.

Remedy for a bad plan, once built upon, being this impracticable, now that we understand the matter we are surely bound, wherever it is by any means in our power, to prevent mistakes in the construction of towns. Strange to say, however, here in the New World, where great towns by the hundred are springing into existence, no care at all given is taken to avoid bad plans. The most brutal pagans to whom we have sent our missionaries have never shown greater indifference to the sufferings of other than is exhibited in the plans of some of our most promising cities, for which men now living in them are responsible.³⁶⁸

Also in *City Plans*, while describing German cities he visited, Bushnell explains, “there spreads a new modern city, with broad, straight avenues and ample house-lots, fronted with trees, in the manner of a new American city.”³⁶⁹ The phrases, *there spreads*, *ample house-lots*, *fronted with trees*,³⁷⁰ sounds more suburban than urban and should cause pause when followed by *in the manner of a new American city*. Bushnell is projecting into the future, a future American city that is more suburban than urban. Add to this, the call for a *city-planning profession* and that *every new village, town, city, ought to be contrived as a work of art, and prepared for the new age of ornament to come* and Bushnell's *City Plans* is profound statement foreshadowing Olmsted's career and work as landscape architect and city planner.

However, Olmsted is not the only influential landscape designer influenced by Bushnell's *City Plans*. Cleveland and Copeland, the designers of Colt's Hartford estate, are recognized for publishing early city plans for Chicago³⁷¹ and Boston³⁷². In fact, J. B. Jackson credits Copeland with the first use of the phrase *city plan*:

Copeland...was the first to use the phrase ‘city plan’ and that consequently we indirectly owe him the phrases ‘city planner’ and ‘city planning.’ Even so, we need not presume that the expression came to him as a sudden inspiration: as a landscape architect he must have been familiar with the parallel phrase ‘garden planner,’ and for all we know ‘city plan’ may have been in current usage in the seventies.³⁷³

It is unlikely that J.B. Jackson was aware of *City Plans* and Bushnell's call for a *city-planning profession*. Peterson, who also recognizes Copeland's early ‘comprehensive’ plan for Boston, is aware of

³⁶⁸ Frederick Law Olmsted, “Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns,” in S.B. Sutton. *Civilizing American Cities: Writings on City Landscapes* (Fredrick Law Olmsted). (New York: Da Capo Press, (1997) 1971), 67.

³⁶⁹ Horace Bushnell, “Planning of Cities (1854),” in Horace Bushnell. *Work and Play: Or Literary Varieties*, as “City Plans.” (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864), 316.

³⁷⁰ Olmsted in his plan for Riverside explained “we can insist that each house-holder shall maintain one or two living trees between his house and his highway-line” Frederick Law Olmsted, letter to “The Riverside Improvement Company,” in S.B. Sutton. *Civilizing American Cities: Writings on City Landscapes* (Fredrick Law Olmsted). (New York: Da Capo Press, (1997) 1971), 302.

³⁷¹ Cleveland, H.W. S., *The Public Grounds of Chicago: How to Give Them Character and Expression*. (Chicago: Charles D. Lakey, Publisher, 1869).

³⁷² Copeland, Robert Morris, *The Most Beautiful City in America: Essay and Plan for the Improvement of the City of Boston*. (Boston: Lee & Shepard, 1872).

³⁷³ John Jackson. *American Space: The Centennial Years, 1865-1876* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1972), 134.

Bushnell's *City Plans*, but notes it as "a rare nineteenth-century use of 'city planning,'"³⁷⁴ essentially dismissing it as influential. It is easy to note *City Plans* as rare, when the greater context of Olmsted's Hartford and the broader influence of Bushnell on Olmsted have been missed or under conceptualized. While Bushnell did not produce a *city plan*, as Copeland and Cleveland did, Bushnell was the first American to introduce us to the *planning of cities* and to call for a *city planning profession*.

In *City Plans*, Bushnell states, "it would be a matter of no small interest now to go over the plan of our own city, showing, in the light of the general principles here advanced, how many excellences it has that are continually regretted as irreparable defects, and how many supposed excellences that are really deformities. But this you will easily do for yourselves and therefore I desist."³⁷⁵ Cleveland and Copeland went on to *do this for themselves* in their respective cities and their plans for Chicago and Boston. In Cleveland's 1869 plan for a Chicago park, it is evident that he is influenced by Bushnell in his juxtaposition of a city with natural steep contours, to Chicago's flat plane. In addition, Copeland's 1872 plan for Boston is truly Bushnellian, in that he provides detailed descriptions of where and how roads and railroads, public spaces, areas best suited for commerce and homes, and locations for parks and reserve lands for future parks, essentially mirroring Bushnell's discussions and recommendations in *City Plans*. In the *Planning of Cities* or *City Plans* of Bushnell, we discover the birth of American city planning.³⁷⁶

Horace Bushnell & Frederick Law Olmsted – The New Age of Ornament to Come

Baldwin, in writing about Hartford's efforts to domesticate public space and Bushnell's park, explains, "Bushnell...developed the ideas of environmental influence that guided the work of Fredrick Law Olmsted."³⁷⁷ Others also recognize Bushnell's influence on Olmsted. For example, "Olmsted's eventual formulation of his philosophy of public parks as instruments of moral influence and reform and of value of passive recreation and unconscious mental and spiritual refreshment are thoroughly

³⁷⁴ Jon Peterson. *The Birth of City Planning in the United States, 1840-1917*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 342.

³⁷⁵ Horace Bushnell. "Planning of Cities (1854)," in Horace Bushnell. *Work and Play: Or Literary Varieties*, as "City Plans." (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864), 335.

³⁷⁶ Note, there is no earlier American essay on city planning, nor is there an explicit call for a *city-planning profession*. The two earliest and notable city plans by Cleveland and later Copeland, are written after the publishing of Bushnell's *City Plans* in 1864

³⁷⁷ Peter Baldwin. *Domesticating the Street: The Reform of Public Space in Hartford 1850-1930*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 263.

Bushnellian ideas.”³⁷⁸ These accounts of Bushnell's influence on Olmsted focus mainly on Bushnell's sermon, *Unconscious Influence*. Little attention has been paid to the influence of Bushnell's *City Plans*.

By exploring *City Plans*, for example, Bushnell's profound and conscious influence on Olmsted is discovered. For example, Olmsted's use of the curvilinear street and designing with natural contours of the land, rather than imposing a rectangular grid against the natural lines of nature is Bushnellian. While such design techniques already existed in picturesque landscape design, Bushnell translates these practices into the practice of city planning. Bushnell explains:

Accepting, thus far, the lines of nature, which will commonly be curvilinear, and will make irregular angles with each other, the skeleton of the plan that is to be, is made out, and the filling up only remains. And this will be done to a considerable degree, at least, by a rectangular block-work, adjusted by some principal straight line, or lines, running up and along the natural summits, or ridges between the low grounds and their avenues. These principal, straight line streets, having position of dignity, will be the Broadways of the plan.³⁷⁹



Figure 34. Plan of art of Olmsted's 1868 design of Riverside, Illinois.
(Source: JSTOR)

³⁷⁸ George Scheper, "The Reformist Vision of Fredrick Law Olmsted and the Poetics of Park Design," *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 62, No. 3, (1989), 378.

³⁷⁹ Horace Bushnell. "Planning of Cities (1854)," in Horace Bushnell. *Work and Play: Or Literary Varieties*, as "City Plans." (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864), 329-330

Most important, Olmsted translated Bushnell's recommendations into the practice of city planning. For example, Bushnell's above words on designing a city with the curvilinear lines of nature are a near perfect description of Olmsted's 1868 design of Riverside, Illinois—the '*rectangular block-work, adjusted by some principal straight lines...straight line streets, having positions of dignity, will be the Broadways*'.

Olmsted explained “we should recommend the general adoption, in the design of your roads, of gracefully-curved lines, generous spaces, and the absence of sharp corners.”³⁸⁰ Bushnell's Broadways are Olmsted boulevards³⁸¹ and the curvilinear streets of Riverside are laid out in a *rectangular block-work*, a less ridged grid softened by the absence of right angles. What is even more profound regarding Riverside and Olmsted's work overall, is Bushnell's statement in *City Plans* that “Every new village, town, city, ought to be contrived as a work of art, and prepared for the new age of ornament to come.”³⁸² Written more than a decade before Olmsted's design of Riverside, Bushnell foreshadows (and influences) the work and career of Olmsted. In fact, Bushnell's statement may be the most succinct description of Olmsted's life work as a landscape architect—before Olmsted was a landscape architect.

Further exploring the influence of *City Plans* on Olmsted unfolds additional evidence of Bushnell's direct influence on Olmsted. When reading Bushnell's and Olmsted's writings together, an omnipotent presence of Bushnell is revealed. For example, it was Bushnell who *taught us to play*³⁸³ and the importance of recreation for the mind and body. Recreation is a continuous theme that runs through much of Olmsted's designs and work.³⁸⁴ Another example, ornamentation to Bushnell went beyond aesthetic beautification to include social respectability or personal and civic character—the *unconscious influence* of ornamentation and environmental design practiced by Olmsted. Bushnell's ornamentation and Olmsted's environmental design again returns us to Silliman's *National character often receives its peculiar cast from natural scenery* and the ethos of Hartford that influenced both Bushnell and Olmsted.

³⁸⁰ Frederick Law Olmsted, letter to “The Riverside Improvement Company,” in S.B. Sutton. *Civilizing American Cities: Writings on City Landscapes* (Fredrick Law Olmsted). (New York: Da Capo Press, (1997) 1971), 300.

³⁸¹ Frederick Law Olmsted, letter to “The Riverside Improvement Company,” in S.B. Sutton. *Civilizing American Cities: Writings on City Landscapes* (Fredrick Law Olmsted). (New York: Da Capo Press, (1997) 1971). William Wilson. *The City Beautiful Movement*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

³⁸² Horace Bushnell. “Planning of Cities (1854),” in Horace Bushnell. *Work and Play: Or Literary Varieties*, as “City Plans.” (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864), 336.

³⁸³ Daniel Howe, “The Social Science of Horace Bushnell,” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 70, No. 2, (1983).

³⁸⁴ See Olmsted, ‘*On Recreation and Common School Education*’, David Schuyler, Jane Censer, *The Paper of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume VI. The Years of Olmsted, Vaux, & Company 1865 - 1874*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

Turning briefly to another Bushnell essay, *Agriculture at the East*, delivered by Bushnell to the Hartford Agricultural Society in 1846,³⁸⁵ is it evident that Bushnell may have been directly influencing Olmsted a decade before Olmsted begins work as a landscape architect. Bushnell states:

Agricultural societies are useful, but they do not exhaust your duty. Do not overlook those expedients which dignify agriculture. A great deal more of attention to domestic and rural architecture is demanded. A house can as well be thrown into a form pleasing to a cultivated eye, as into any other. Study situation, material, plan, form, color, everything that belongs to picturesque effect. And if your country joiners will not know any thing better than to build you an oblong clapboarded box, with a gable to the street, either become your own architect, or go to one who has taste and experience to draft a plan and elevation for you. Put your styre and your barns where they belong. Try your hand at high ornamental cultivation upon, at least a small space of ground before and about your residences. Let it appear to the passer-by, when he looks upon your neat combination of architecture, shades, flowers and smoothly shaven turf, that a man lives here, who is something above a mere drudge and sloven; a man who has tastes and cultivated opinions, not a servant of barns and cornfields, who only grazes with his cattle, and is capable of no other enjoyment. Let your sons and daughters also have the benefit of these tasteful arrangements; for it will do more for their standing, character, and future happiness, than may at once appear.³⁸⁶

Bushnell's *put your styre and your barns where they belong* is aimed at personal character, respectability, and ornamentation, as he latter explains, *Let it appear to the passer-by, when he looks upon your neat combination of architecture, shades, flowers and smoothly shaven turf, that a man lives here... a man who has tastes and cultivated opinions*. These statements in the context of Olmsted, are very similar to McLaughlin and Beveridge explanation that to "please himself and to set an example for his farming neighbors, Olmsted transformed his Staten Island farm from a dirty and somewhat disagreeable spot into a gentleman's country seat. He moved the barns to a new location behind a knoll and changed the driveway so it approached the housing in a graceful curve."³⁸⁷

The start of Olmsted's career, as discussed earlier, has often been explained in the context of his arrival in New York, where he is cast as an *experimental*³⁸⁸ and *gentleman farmer on Staten Island*.³⁸⁹ However, by situating Olmsted in New York, the influence of Hartford and Bushnell are missed. For example, since it is in New York where Olmsted first meets Andrew Jackson Downing, it is assumed that

³⁸⁵ Regarding the web of Hartford relationships and close-knit community of social reformers, E.W. Bull was a member and John Pierce Brace was the secretary of the Hartford Committee on Horticulture (Hartford Daily Courant, 1843, 'The Report of the Committee on Horticulture.')

³⁸⁶ Horace Bushnell, "Agriculture at the East," in Horace Bushnell. *Work and Play: Or Literary Varieties*, (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864), 258.

³⁸⁷ Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume I. The Formative Years 1822 – 1852*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 8.

³⁸⁸ Kenneth Jackson. *Crabgrass Frontier. The Suburbanization of the United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

³⁸⁹ Robert Fishman. *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia*, (New York: Basic Books, 1987).

Olmsted's improvements to his farm are the result of Downing's influence on Olmsted.³⁹⁰ While Downing did influence Olmsted, it is as plausible, if not more plausible, that Olmsted's improvements to his farm resulted from Bushnell's *Agriculture at the East*.

The very fact Olmsted started his career as a farmer in Sachem's Head, likely resulted from Bushnell's *Agriculture at the East*. Aimed at concerns of the loss of young persons to Western expansion, Bushnell argues in favor of agriculture in Connecticut as a worthy pursuit. He explains, "the young man who has a mind awake, a sound practical body, can do better" at farming and "if he has slender means to begin with, it does not follow that he must go where land is cheapest [...] Let him select...some small farm...favorably situated for improvement [...] There are many such farms in the market."³⁹¹ Bushnell continues, "In view of facts like these, let the young man who would emigrate, consider whether it is not better to begin with a small farm here..."³⁹² Olmsted, securing the Sachem's Head farm, did exactly what Bushnell suggested, the year following Bushnell's delivery of *Agriculture at the East*.

Returning to *City Plans*, Bushnell describes the challenges of designing streets on steep slopes. To explain this challenge, Bushnell utilizes San Francisco, a city he had visited, as an example. While lengthy, the following passage shows how developed Bushnell's theories of city planning are:

Sometimes there will be round-sided hills in the background, rising, it may be, into rocky summits; such as would command a fine outlook over the city and harbor, if only the ascent could be made easy for the accommodation of residences. To lay a covering of squares, on the faces of such bluffs and rounded hills, would even be absurd; for the ascent of their heights can be made only by straight lines that are very oblique and cut each other diamond-wise, or by a spiraling in curve lines that cut each other in acute angles. By the neglecting of this very obvious expedient, the noble background of the fine city of San Francisco is sacrificed and forever lost. Lying in a capacious bowl or concave between the hills and the bay, the city is laid off, as it should be, in parallelograms, with only here and there a deviation from uniformity, and, as everything passing on the concave length of every street is visible of course in every part of it, there is a wonderful vivacity in the circulations. But as soon as the rectangular form, pushing up the steep hill-sides, reaches a point where the ascent for carriages is no longer possible, the whole space above, which ought to have been covered with residences of the highest character, loses value and is occupied only by cheap tenements, such as mules and footmen, climbing up as they best can are able to furnish with supplies [...] Had the engineers of San Francisco, when reaching a certain point, deflected their straight lines, running them into spirals that cut each other obliquely, the plan which now runs out, in the background, into a weak and crazy-looking conspicuity, would have

³⁹⁰ Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume I. The Formative Years 1822 – 1852*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

³⁹¹ Horace Bushnell, "Agriculture at the East," in Horace Bushnell. *Work and Play: Or Literary Varieties*, (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864), 240-241.

³⁹² Horace Bushnell, "Agriculture at the East," in Horace Bushnell. *Work and Play: Or Literary Varieties*, (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864), 244.

crowned itself in a summit of ornament ascended by easy drives, and looking down from its terraces on all the activity of a populous and beautiful city.³⁹³

McLaughlin and Beveridge explain that Olmsted's report for San Francisco "is one of his most interesting because it goes far beyond the immediate project of a park to discuss city planning."³⁹⁴ The fact that Olmsted's report *goes far beyond the immediate project of the park to discuss city planning* is interesting because it may signify that Olmsted was influenced by Bushnell's *City Plans*. Bushnell's influence is evident in Olmsted report for San Francisco:

To the present time the street plan of San Francisco has been contrived with scarcely any effort to adapt it to the peculiar topography of the situation. On a level plain, like the site of the city of Philadelphia, a series of streets at right-angles to each other is perfectly feasible, and the design is as simple in execution as it appears on paper; but even where the circumstances of site are favorable for this formal and repetitive arrangement, it presents a dull and inartistic appearance, and in such a hilly position as that of San Francisco, it is very inappropriate.³⁹⁵

Olmsted then continues:

If hills of considerable elevation occur within the boundary of a site marked out for a city, this salient difficulty should be met at the outset, and a series of main lines of road should be arranged that will ascend these hills diagonally, in such a way as to secure sufficiently easy grades. The Skeleton lines being thus determined on, a series of transverse and connecting streets should be provided that will divide the whole into sections of moderate size, and each of these intermediate districts should be planned separately, and with as much regularity as the circumstances of the case admit.³⁹⁶

Olmsted's San Francisco plan was issued in 1866, shortly after Bushnell's *City Plans* was published in *Work and Play* in 1864. What is interesting about Olmsted's recommendations for streets designed on steep hills in San Francisco is that his recommended designs are similar to Bushnell remarks discussed above in *City Plans*. Bushnell also discussed Philadelphia's street grid, stating, "If such a city for example as Philadelphia were to be extended by additional squares, till it was as large as Babylon; there would be no history in it."³⁹⁷ Olmsted utilized, as shown above, Philadelphia to juxtapose the design of streets on a level plain with San Francisco's hills.

The influence of Bushnell's *City Plans* is also evident in the early city plans produced by Cleveland and Copeland for Chicago and Boston. These two plans evoke similar discussions of planning

³⁹³ Horace Bushnell. "Planning of Cities (1854)," in Horace Bushnell. *Work and Play: Or Literary Varieties*, as "City Plans." (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864), 321-323.

³⁹⁴ Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume I. The Formative Years 1822 – 1852*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 34.

³⁹⁵ Frederick Law Olmsted, "San Francisco, 1866," in S.B. Sutton. *Civilizing American Cities: Writings on City Landscapes* (Frederick Law Olmsted). (New York: Da Capo Press, (1997) 1971), 128.

³⁹⁶ Frederick Law Olmsted, "San Francisco, 1866," in S.B. Sutton. *Civilizing American Cities: Writings on City Landscapes* (Frederick Law Olmsted). (New York: Da Capo Press, (1997) 1971), 128.

³⁹⁷ Horace Bushnell. "Planning of Cities (1854)," in Horace Bushnell. *Work and Play: Or Literary Varieties*, as "City Plans." (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864), 314-315.

on a level plain versus a location with natural contours, just as Olmsted's did with San Francisco and later Riverside. It is unlikely coincidental that the four earliest American attempts at the *planning of cities*—San Francisco (1866) and Riverside (1868), both by Olmsted, and Chicago (1869) by Cleveland, and Boston (1871) by Copeland, are all within less than a decade of the publishing of Bushnell's *City Plans*, all four plans utilizing similar concepts as discussed by Bushnell. These plans are Bushnellian inspired and there should be little, if any doubt, that the *Planning of Cities* (1854), published a decade later as *City Plans in Work and Play* (1864), is the start of American city planning.

Bushnell's influence on Olmsted does not end with *City Plans*. Much attention has been given to the influence of domesticity on suburban design and Olmsted's metaphor of the city as a house. For example, Jackson quoting Olmsted explains, "Olmsted argued that it was perfectly sensible that large towns should be marked by movement 'in two opposite directions—one to concentration for business and social purposes, the other to dispersion for domestic purposes.' Just as a house must have different rooms and passages for its various functions, so must 'a metropolis be specially adapted at different points to different ends.'"³⁹⁸

Olmsted's movement 'in two opposite directions, one to concentration for business and social purposes, the other to dispersion for domestic purposes' is very similar to the *Hartford Daily Courant* editorial 'Growth of City' discussed earlier. The editorial explains, "those, whom the expansion of the business part of the city have driven from its crowded lower streets, have erected here their ornamental residences, that make those beautiful hills, seem like one continued garden."³⁹⁹ This idea of movement was evident in Hartford more than a decade before Olmsted explained it. In addition, Olmsted's house metaphor is Bushnellian.

Bushnell, as Baldwin explains, used the house metaphor when proposing his Hartford park: "the park was to be 'an outdoor parlor,' a specialized room in a city that (he would write a year later) should be viewed as a house."⁴⁰⁰ In addition, Bushnell connects the work of city planning to the established profession residential architecture when he states, *we want a city-planning profession, as truly as an architectural, house-planning profession in City Plans*.

³⁹⁸ John Jackson. *American Space: The Centennial Years, 1865-1876* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1972), 181-182.

³⁹⁹ *Hartford Daily Courant*, 'The Growth of the City,' 1850.

⁴⁰⁰ Peter Baldwin. *Domesticating the Street: The Reform of Public Space in Hartford 1850-1930*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 25. Baldwin, in citing Bushnell view of the park as an 'outdoor parlor' is citing to the Park Committee report, 'The Proposed Park,' 16 November 1853, in the *Hartford Daily Courant*. Baldwin believes Bushnell greatly influenced or helped write the report for the Committee. I agree with Baldwin, the wording of the report feels Bushnell's writings and beliefs.

Bushnell's park as an 'outdoor parlor' and Olmsted's metropolis as a functionally organized house also demonstrate the ideologies of domesticity permeating our earliest efforts at city planning and urban design. The "parlor was a female-dominated space, the place where the values of domesticity reigned supreme and in which the true woman exerted her influence on society"⁴⁰¹ and the "park would be a feminized form of public space, a way of extending female values outside the home."⁴⁰² For Olmsted, the city would be segmented into feminine and masculine spaces. The feminized spaces being residential neighborhoods and parks and the masculine spaces being commercial and industrial areas. Domesticity was adopted as a suburban ideology and used as a metaphor of cities and parks. Domesticity was also adapted or codified into our earliest attempts at city planning—the domestication of planning. This resulted in our American urban experience being dominated by the suburban. Bushnell's theory and Olmsted's practice of city planning resulted in what could more suitably be called suburban planning.

Horace Bushnell and the Birth of City Planning

Bushnell's influence on our urban and suburban history has mostly been limited to his inclusion in the *cult of domesticity*, the *cult of the past*, and his *Unconscious Influence* being adopted as the theory of Olmsted's landscape architecture and environmental design—the positive moral and social effect of nature on the character of the individual and community. However, the middle-class ethos being developed by Bushnell's *new age of ornament to come* also laid the foundation for Olmsted as the practitioner landscape architect to design democracy⁴⁰³ and civility into our landscape.

The *unconscious influence* and ethos of Olmsted's Hartford, the social reformers and reforms, most notably the reform efforts and influence of Bushnell, provided Olmsted with the world view and theory he needed, to further develop and create his own theories, theories that framed his practice of landscape architecture and city planning. It is in the *unconscious influence* or ethos of Olmsted's Hartford and *conscious influence* of Horace Bushnell that the birthplace and Grandfather of American city planning are discovered. In Olmsted, as a disciple of Hartford and Bushnell, the Father, not only of American Landscape Architect, but also American City Planning is discovered. Olmsted was the practitioner who spread the Hartford-Bushnellian ethos of civilizing American society and cities through his vocation and social reform of landscape architecture and city planning. Daniel Burnham, the architect

⁴⁰¹ Peter Baldwin. *Domesticating the Street: The Reform of Public Space in Hartford 1850-1930*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 26.

⁴⁰² Peter Baldwin. *Domesticating the Street: The Reform of Public Space in Hartford 1850-1930*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 26.

⁴⁰³ Scott Roullet, Scott. 'Frederick Law Olmsted: Democracy by Design.' *New England Journal of Political Science*, Vol 4, No. 2, (2010).

of the Columbian Exposition (the 1893 Chicago World's Fair) whose name is synonymous with the City Beautiful Movement, said the following of Olmsted at a dinner that was intended to honor Burnham himself:

An artist, he paints with lakes and wooded slopes; with lawns and banks and forest-covered hills; with mountain sides and ocean views. He should stand where I do tonight, not for the deeds of later years alone, but for what his brain has wrought and his pen has taught for half a century.⁴⁰⁴

Olmsted, as *artist*, painted Bushnell's vision of the New World, where "*every new village, town, city, ought to be contrived as a work of art, and prepared for the new age of ornament to come.*"

Olmsted's ushering in of *the new age of ornament to come* is recognized for his legacy by Wilson who explains Olmsted as the "taproot of the City Beautiful movement that lies in nineteenth-century landscape architecture, personified by Frederick Law Olmsted."⁴⁰⁵ Wilson explains further, "Olmsted has been elevated to secular sainthood in the planning pantheon, where he deserves to be."⁴⁰⁶ The taproot of Olmsted landscape architecture and city planning is spawned from the soils of Hartford and Horace Bushnell's virtuous republic,⁴⁰⁷ and Bushnell's *the new age of ornament to come* through Olmsted's works as taproot, gives birth to the City Beautiful movement.

⁴⁰⁴ Justin Martin. *Genius of Place: The Life of Fredrick Law Olmsted*. (Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2011), 1.

⁴⁰⁵ William Wilson. *The City Beautiful Movement*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 9.

⁴⁰⁶ William Wilson. *The City Beautiful Movement*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 9.

⁴⁰⁷ Howard Barns. *Horace Bushnell and the Virtuous Republic*. (Metuchen, NJ: American Theological Library and The Scarecrow Press, 1991).

Chapter IX. Slavery: Hartford's Anti-Slavery Sentiment and Olmsted

"No man can well be expected to rise higher than his own standard of excellence. If this be low and faulty, such will be the character that is modelled by it. If this be noble and elevated, such will be the character which is formed under its influence."

Joel Hawes, Hartford, 1828

Olmsted, Slavery, and Hartford

Frederick Law Olmsted, understandably, is best known for his career and influence as a landscape architect. In this capacity, Olmsted designed and sculpted our cultural landscape for nearly half a century. The influence and impact of his designs on our cultural landscape persist today in the form of parks, universities, suburban communities, private estates, and other institutions. However, Olmsted's success as a landscape architect overshadowed his career as a journalist and travel writer, even though his contributions to American society on the matter of slavery are as important and significant as his later design work. The following summarizes Olmsted's journalistic career and writing on slavery and the South:

During the years 1852-1857 he was primarily a literary man, a traveler and writer. In the short span of time he became the most prolific and influential of those travelers who published accounts of their visits to the South. He spent a total of fourteen months on two journeys through the South, and wrote seventy-five long letters of description for the *New-York Daily Times* and the *New York Daily Tribune*. He also completed two large volumes on his Southern travels: *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States*, published in early 1856, and *A Journey Through Texas: Or, A Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier*, published in early 1857. In the latter year he published an American edition of *The Englishman in Kansas; Or, Squatter Life and Border Warfare*, by the English newspaper correspondent Thomas H. Gladstone, to which he added a long introduction and a supplement. By the fall of 1857 he had written most of his third volume on *The South, A Journey in the Back Country*.⁴⁰⁸

In 1861, an English version that was a compilation of his three volumes on slavery and the South was published under the title, *The Cotton Kingdom: A Traveller's Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American Slave States*. Olmsted's writings on slavery and the South, specifically his letters in the *New York Daily Times* and the *New York Daily Tribune* were published shortly after *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In

⁴⁰⁸ Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume II. Slavery and the South 1852 – 1857*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 1.

“June 1851, installments of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Life among the Lowly* began appearing in the antislavery paper, the *National Era*... In March 1852, the serialized novel was published in two volumes as *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and sold 300,000 copies throughout the United States by the end of the year.”⁴⁰⁹

Olmsted’s writing on slavery was very well received. For example, “such abolitionists as Theodore Parker and William Lloyd Garrison, who disliked his conciliatory and gradualist tone, praised his picture of southern society... Olmsted’s writings received special praise from readers such as Charles Darwin for being particularly informative.”⁴¹⁰ Rybczynski further explains that Harriet Beecher Stowe in a “long article on antislavery literature, in the *Independent*...gave Seaboard Slave States pride of place—‘the most complete and thorough work of this kind’ ... ‘The book is very thorough and accurate in its details, and is written in a style so lively and with so much dramatic incident as to hold the attention like a work of fiction.’”⁴¹¹

Slavery and the intensifying movement for abolition in the mid-nineteenth century were the dominant social cause and social reform during the first half of Olmsted’s life. Slavery and abolition consumed our national discourse and Olmsted’s Hartford was embroiled in the debate. As a northern, Evangelical, and Federalist and later Whig city, Hartford was a bastion of anti-slavery sentiment. Growing up in Hartford, Olmsted learned that in this land of freedom there “are no privileged orders, no hereditary honors, no power to caste to depress those who are determined to do well and to rise. The field of honorable enterprise is open to all, and the poorest and most obscure may enter the lists with the richest and most elevated, and compete with them for the rewards of intelligence and virtue, of respectability and influence in society.”⁴¹² However, in the South, and to lesser degrees in the North, this freedom did not apply equally to all, especially Africans. Olmsted also learned that the “slave-dealer, while he has custom on his side, justifies his guilty traffic, and thinks it no crime to make merchandise of the bodies and souls of men.”⁴¹³

Horace Bushnell, at Hartford’s North Church, delivered a powerful, yet controversial sermon titled *A Discourse on the Slavery Question* in 1839. In his sermon, Bushnell attacked the institution of

⁴⁰⁹ Melvin Kalfus. *Frederick Law Olmsted: The Passion of a Public Artist*. (New York: University Press, 1990), 160.

⁴¹⁰ Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Paper of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume I. The Formative Years 1822 – 1852*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 16.

⁴¹¹ Witol Rybczynski. *A Clearing in the Distance: Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Scribner, 1999), 141.

⁴¹² Joel Hawes. *Lectures to Young Men: On the Formation of Character*. (Boston: Congregational Board of Publications, (1828) 1856), 124.

⁴¹³ Joel Hawes. *Lectures to Young Men: On the Formation of Character*. (Boston: Congregational Board of Publications, (1828) 1856), 71.

slavery, calling for the abolishment of slavery. However, Bushnell was not an abolitionist, who sought the immediate end to slavery and freedom of slaves. Bushnell was an emancipationist, advocating “a policy of limited reforms that would ameliorate the cruelties of slavery and pave the way for its gradual abolition,”⁴¹⁴ In *Discourse on the Slavery Question*, Bushnell also attacked the abolitionists for their approach and their condemnation of the Southern slaveholders. He explained:

Here is the method in which the Anti-Slavery movement ought to have begun. Let one or two Christian gentlemen have gone South and conferred with the more candid and humane citizens, approaching them as gentlemen standing in a position of natural jealousy...[showing them the four wrongs]...In this way, beyond all question, a strong movement could have been begun, in which the South would have taken the lead themselves [...] But instead of beginning in this way, the first movement here at the North was a rank onset and explosion...The first sin of this organization was a sin of ill manners.”⁴¹⁵

While Hartford was firmly anti-slavery, the city was a mix of emancipationist and abolitionists, so divided by the slavery question that it was common for families to be split by the question. For example, Lyman Beecher, like Bushnell, was an emancipationist, believing “African-American slaves were not, as a whole, ready for freedom because they were of an inferior race.”⁴¹⁶ In addition, many of Beecher’s children, including Harriet Beecher Stowe, were also emancipationists.⁴¹⁷

Bushnell’s sermon stirred the Hartford community and drew a published attack from a local abolitionist, Francis Gillette. Gillette, rightfully claimed, that the “ostensible design of this Discourse, is no less than the utter overthrow and annihilation of modern abolitionism...he endeavors to show abolitionists themselves that they are a company of weak-minded, misguided, and ill-mannered men, whose measures correspond in these respects with the character given them.”⁴¹⁸ Gillette would further claim that abolitionists “believe the question must soon be decided, whether Liberty or Slavery shall prevail in this country, the struggle between these antagonists is fraught with our national destiny, and by all that is thrilling in the past, cheering in the present, and hopeful in the future, they cannot be indifferent spectators.”⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁴ David Torbett. *Theology and Slavery: Charles Hodge and Horace Bushnell*. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006), 42.

⁴¹⁵ Bushnell, 1839, *A Discourse on the Slavery Question*, p. 17.

⁴¹⁶ David Torbett. *Theology and Slavery: Charles Hodge and Horace Bushnell*. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006), 45.

⁴¹⁷ Milton Rugoff. *The Beechers: An American Family in the Nineteenth Century*. (Philadelphia: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1981).

⁴¹⁸ Francis Gillette. *A Review of the Rev. Horace Bushnell Discourse on The Slavery Question*, (Hartford: S.S. Cowles, 1839), 3-4.

⁴¹⁹ Francis Gillette. *A Review of the Rev. Horace Bushnell Discourse on The Slavery Question*, (Hartford: S.S. Cowles, 1839), 26.

Olmsted's beliefs on slavery and abolition—just as his beliefs in environmental design—were influenced by his *formative years* in Hartford. Most notably, Olmsted's beliefs followed the beliefs of Bushnell, although Olmsted was more tempered and less racist than Bushnell. Unfortunately, in 1839, Bushnell did not believe African American slaves, once freed, could survive in our society and would become all but extinct—a fringe and shameful view of the era.⁴²⁰ Torbett explains that in the “nineteenth-century United States, many of...Bushnell's ‘white’ peers showed (to varying degrees)...aspects of racial thinking, including the belief that the light-skinned European type was the normative or superior race.”⁴²¹ However, Bushnell's beliefs were extreme, founded in a belief of Anglo-Saxon superiority that allowed him to predict the extinction of most, if not all, Africans in the United States.⁴²²

Thankfully, Bushnell's views evolved. Fifteen years after his *Discourse on Slavery*, Bushnell's is more moderate, tempered, and less racist in his 1854 sermon *The Northern Iron*. However, Bushnell, still flawed, continued to doubt “that the black and white races could ever coexist freely as equals in the United States...[and]...supported a form of segregation: the American Colonization Society's plan of sending freed slaves to settle in the new colony of Liberia as a humanitarian solution to America's racial problems.”⁴²³ Bushnell, does to some degree, later further redeem himself, when he “had given up on the colonization scheme and called for the abolition of slavery. Though he criticized the tactics of Garrison and the abolitionists, and though his own political strategy was vague (as was Garrison's), Bushnell still stated that there was no good moral reason for delaying abolition [...] After the Civil War, Bushnell called for suffrage for adult male former slaves...and...was a proponent of radical reconstruction.”⁴²⁴

Olmsted, like Bushnell, was an emancipationist, not an abolitionist. For example, Olmsted exclaimed to a friend, “‘I am no red-hot Abolitionist like Charles [Brace], but am a moderate Free Soiler’...[and]...revealed his gradualist philosophy about slavery in *Walks and Talks*, insisting that ‘it was necessary to educate and civilize the still-barbaric slaves before freeing them’ and assigning to the North the role of encouraging the Southern slaveholders to discharge their responsibilities to educate and

⁴²⁰ Horace Bushnell. *A Discourse on the Slavery Question: Delivered in the North Church, Hartford*. (Hartford: Case, Tiffany & Company, 1839).

⁴²¹ David Torbett. *Theology and Slavery: Charles Hodge and Horace Bushnell*. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006), 20.

⁴²² Horace Bushnell. *A Discourse on the Slavery Question: Delivered in the North Church, Hartford*. (Hartford: Case, Tiffany & Company, 1839).

⁴²³ David Torbett. *Theology and Slavery: Charles Hodge and Horace Bushnell*. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006), 2.

⁴²⁴ David Torbett. *Theology and Slavery: Charles Hodge and Horace Bushnell*. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006), 143.

emancipate their slaves.”⁴²⁵ Olmsted “believed that the process of emancipation would be long and complex and could be carried out effectively only by carefully preparing the slaves for freedom. He saw social change as a slow process and believed that social reform should come about through an educational process that would change the habits as well as the beliefs of men.”⁴²⁶

The influence of Olmsted's writing on slavery and the South was the result of his pragmatic and detailed depiction of life in the slave states. In fact, his realistic accounting of life in the South is exactly what Olmsted set out to accomplish. “With an eye on the response to Uncle Tom's Cabin and the outpouring of imitations that followed, Olmsted wrote to Fred Kingsbury in October 1852 of his intention to produce ‘a valuable book of observations on Southern Agriculture & general economy as affected by Slavery,’ a book that would offer a ‘matter of fact’ contrast to ‘the deluge of spoony fancy pictures now at its height.’”⁴²⁷ The following passage, while lengthy, provides a vivid account of his writing and approach. The narrative demonstrates the understanding of Southern life Olmsted was providing his Northern readers:

I am struck with the close co-habitation and association of blacks and whites—negro women are carrying black and white babies together in their arms; black and white children are playing together (not going to school together); black and white faces are constantly thrust together out of the doors, to see the train go by.

A fine-looking, well-dressed, and well-behaved colored young man sat, together with a white man, on a seat in the cars. I suppose the man was his master; but he was much the less like a gentleman, of the two. The rail-road company advertise to take colored people only in second class trains; but servants seem to go with their masters everywhere. Once, to-day, seeing a lady entering the car at a way-station, with a family behind her, and that she was looking about to find a place where they could be seated together, I rose, and offered her my seat, which had several vacancies around it. She accepted it, without thanking me, and immediately installed in it a stout negro woman; took the adjoining seat herself, and seated the rest of her party before her. It consisted of a white girl, probably her daughter, and a bright and very pretty mulatto girl. They all talked and laughed together, and the girls munched confectionery out of the same paper, with a familiarity and closeness of intimacy that would have been noticed with astonishment, if not with manifest displeasure, in almost any chance company at the North. When the negro is definitely as

⁴²⁵ Melvin Kalfus. *Frederick Law Olmsted: The Passion of a Public Artist*. (New York: University Press, 1990), 161. For Olmsted perspectives on slavery, abolition, and emancipation, see Frederick Law Olmsted. *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States*. (Middletown, DE: Arcadia Press, [1856] 2017); Frederick Law Olmsted. *A Journey Through Texas: Or a Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier*. (New York: Dix, Edwards & Co, [1857] 2018); and Frederick Law Olmsted. *The Cotton Kingdom: A Traveler's Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American Slave States*. (Delhi: Facimile Publisher, [1862] 2019).

⁴²⁶ Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume II. Slavery and the South 1852 – 1857*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 3.

⁴²⁷ Melvin Kalfus. *Frederick Law Olmsted: The Passion of a Public Artist*. (New York: University Press, 1990), 160. See original letter from Olmsted to Frederick Kingsbury, dated October 27th, 1852 in Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume II. Slavery and the South 1852 – 1857*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 82-83.

slave, it would seem that the alleged natural antipathy of the white race to associate with him is lost [...] But the great mass, as they are seen at work, under the overseers, in the fields, appear very dull, idiotic, and brute-like; and it requires an effort to appreciate that they are, very much more than the beasts that drive, our brethren—a part of ourselves. They are very ragged, and the women especially, who work in the field with the men, with no apparent distinction in their labor, disgustingly dirty. They seem to move very awkwardly, slowly, and undecidedly, and almost invariably stop their work while the train is passing.⁴²⁸

Olmsted, in the above account, is carefully unpacking the complexity of slavery and southern life. He is showing the slave in both the somewhat civil life of the city and the barbaric conditions of the rural agricultural fields. He is juxtaposing the humanity of the slave population with the brutal conditions and treatment in the fields, while exposing the hypocrisy in southern society. In one moment the slave is caregiver for white children and in the next moment, a brute-like beast. Olmsted's views of slavery were complex and at times appear contradictory. However, Olmsted was clear to never justify "the enslavement of the black race, nor did he ever suggest that the slave population was content with its lot."⁴²⁹ Kalfus continues:

'One thing I am certain of--,' he wrote in a letter published June 30, 1853, 'if the slaves are satisfied with their present condition and prospects, they are more degraded and debased than I have described them to be.' Logical Southerners either had to admit that slavery was 'unjust, unnatural and cruel' or believe that 'the negro is naturally incapacitated for personal freedom.' Olmsted himself clearly believed that no one was thus 'naturally incapacitated.' But he also could not conceive of the efficacy of the abolitionist solution—immediate freedom for the blacks—without first providing them with the education and training with which to properly exercise that freedom. He thought that abolition, 'the direct sundering of the tie of master and dependent,' might be 'impracticable, fanatical, mischievous and unjust.' Rather, he sought 'Amelioration, the improvement and the elevation of the negro.'⁴³⁰

The following passage is part of a conversation Olmsted had with a plantation owner and slaveholder. The passage highlights the depth and intimacy of Olmsted's experiences in the South and his capabilities to decipher the South:

Discussing slave labor and speaking with a plantation owner, "'You see,' said he, smiling, as he came in the last time, 'a farmer's life, in this country, is no sinecure.' This turning the conversation to Slavery, he observed, in answer to a remark of mine, 'I only wish your philanthropists would contrive some satisfactory plan to relieve us of it; the trouble and the responsibility of properly taking care of our negros, you may judge, from what you see yourself here, is anything but enviable. But what can we do that is better? Our free negroes—and, I believe it is the same at the North as it is here—are a miserable set of vagabonds, drunken, vicious, worse

⁴²⁸ Frederick Law Olmsted. *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States*. (Middletown, DE: Arcadia Press, [1856] 2017), 18-19.

⁴²⁹ Melvin Kalfus. *Frederick Law Olmsted: The Passion of a Public Artist*. (New York: University Press, 1990), 161.

⁴³⁰ Melvin Kalfus. *Frederick Law Olmsted: The Passion of a Public Artist*. (New York: University Press, 1990), 161.

off, it is my honest opinion, then those who are retained in slavery. I am satisfied, too, that our slaves are better off, as they are, than the majority of your free laboring classes at the North.’⁴³¹

Olmsted concludes this passage by saying, “I expressed my doubts.” What is most interesting here, in addition to Olmsted providing a firsthand account of a plantation owner and slaveholder, is that Olmsted is appealing to relevant topics of the times in the North. The Southern slaveowner’s wish that Northern philanthropists would help to relieve slaveholders of their implied burden and inevitable circumstance is a concept that was being debated in the North. For example, Bushnell preached:

What a picture have we of the moral impotence of slavery, in the fact that some of our well meaning northern philanthropists have just now been called to organize a ‘Southern Aid Society,’ to assist the slaveholding people, with all the immense wealth they boast, in teaching their slaves the way of salvation; a picture yet more sad in the fact that they must be saved cautiously, in a small way and by rote, lest the full salvation of unrestricted knowledge in the word should jeopardy the life of their masters.⁴³²

The timing of Olmsted’s letters being published in New York newspapers and the later timing of Bushnell’s *The Northern Iron* sermon, unfolds the possibility that Olmsted may have been influencing Bushnell. For example, Bushnell discussed a “vast unmaking process going on for the last three years, and the silent discoveries the people have been making during that time.”⁴³³ Bushnell then proceeds to mention the population reading ‘Uncle Tom,’ a reference to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. These three years of *vast unmasking and silent discoveries* likely included Olmsted’s writings on the South.

Also, of importance is that in Olmsted’s writing on slavery and the South, his interest in the design, aesthetics, and ornamentation of cities is very evident. More specifically, the role cities play in the creation and facilitation of a civil society is also evident. Beveridge, McLaughlin, and Schuyler explain, “The most important means of moving people from barbarism to civilization was cultivation of taste— aesthetic sensibility, orderliness, and a knowledge of what was fitting, both in arrangement of physical objects and in conduct.”⁴³⁴ In *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States*, his earliest writings on the South, Olmsted provides descriptive accounts of Southern cities, providing both context and foundation for Northern readers. In doing so, Olmsted is essentially juxtaposing uncivil Southern cities and society against the civil cities and society of his Northern reader.

⁴³¹ Frederick Law Olmsted. *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States*. (Middletown, DE: Arcadia Press, [1856] 2017), 31.

⁴³² Horace Bushnell. *The Northern Iron: A Discourse Delivered in the North Church, Hartford*. (Hartford: Edwin Hunt and Son, 1854), 24.

⁴³³ Horace Bushnell. *The Northern Iron: A Discourse Delivered in the North Church, Hartford*. (Hartford: Edwin Hunt and Son, 1854), 23.

⁴³⁴ Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume II. Slavery and the South 1852 – 1857*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 8.

In a section titled, *Richmond, at a Glance*, Olmsted explains, a “considerable part of the town, which contains a population of 28,000, is compactly and somewhat substantially built, but is without any pretensions to architectural merit, except in a few modern private mansions. The streets are not paved, and but few of them are provided with side-walks other than of earth or gravel.”⁴³⁵ Later, Olmsted describes Norfolk as:

a dirty, low, ill-arranged town, nearly divided by a morass. It has a single creditable public building, a number of fine private residences, and the polite society is reputed to be agreeable, refined, and cultivated, receiving a character from the families of the resident naval officers. It has all the immoral and disagreeable characteristics of a large seaport, with very few of the advantages that we should expect to find as relief to them. No lyceum or public libraries, no public gardens, no galleries of art, and though there are two ‘BETHEL’S,’ no ‘home’ for its seamen; no public resorts of healthful and refining amusement, no place better than a filthy, tobacco-impregnated bar-room or a licentious dance-cellar...for the stranger of high or low degree to pass the hours unoccupied by business.⁴³⁶

Olmsted's descriptions of Richmond and Norfolk work as they are intended, to inform his Northern readers of how uncivilized Southern cities and society are. In his perspective, unlike the civil North, Southern cities lack taste, ornamentation, and the civic institutions required in a civil society. Olmsted, through these descriptions is framing his world view⁴³⁷ and unknowingly foreshadowing his future, working to civilize cities.

In *A Journey Through Texas*, after explaining the lack of commercial enterprise and civic institutions, Olmsted explains that the “prosperity of a young country or state is to be measured by the rapidity with which these deficiencies are supplied, and the completeness with which the opportunity for profitable labor is retained.”⁴³⁸ While Olmsted continued to distance himself from the abolitionists, he did not remain an active observer. Olmsted believed strongly in the free-soil movement and the need to ensure that the expanding territories of our nation remained free of slavery. McLaughlin and Beveridge explain Olmsted's activism:

To strengthen the antislavery sentiment among the Germans of West Texas, he secretly gathered funds to support Adolf Douai's German newspaper, the *San Antonio Zeitung*. He began working with the New England Emigrant Aid Society, which was building up a colony of free farmers in

⁴³⁵ Frederick Law Olmsted. *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States*. (Middletown, DE: Arcadia Press, [1856] 2017), 19.

⁴³⁶ Frederick Law Olmsted. *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States*. (Middletown, DE: Arcadia Press, [1856] 2017), 67.

⁴³⁷ Olmsted's worldview of both barbarism and civil society are undoubtedly framed by Bushnell's earlier thoughts in *The Day of Roads* (1846), *Barbarism the first Danger* (1847), and *Prosperity Our Duty* (1847).

⁴³⁸ Frederick Law Olmsted. *A Journey Through Texas: Or a Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier*. (New York: Dix, Edwards & Co, [1857] 2018), 7.

Lawrence, Kansas. He helped raise money to buy a howitzer to protect New Englanders and other free farmers emigrating to Kansas against the attacks of slave-owning southerners.⁴³⁹

Olmsted, in his writings about the South, approaches slavery from an economic perspective of the southern plantation and agrarian economy. In doing so, he explored topics such as the cost of free labor versus the cost of slave labor. He also explored the loss of profits resulting in illness, abuse, and lack of motivation or industry among slaves, and what he perceived as laziness among slaveholders. He sought to show that a free labor economy could work in the South—rendering the need for slavery obsolete—and that a free labor economy would bring about greater prosperity and a more civilized society. For example, Olmsted explains:

The Iowan next sends for the implements and machinery which will enable him to make the best use of the labor he has engaged. The Texan tries to get on another year without them, or employs such rude substitutes as his stupid, uninstructed, and uninterested slaves can readily make in his ill-furnished plantation workshop. The Iowan is able to contribute liberally to aid in the construction of the church, the school-house, the mill, and the railroad [...] The Texan, if solicited to assist in similar enterprises, answers truly, that cotton is yet too low to permit him to invest money where it does not promise to be immediately and directly productive.⁴⁴⁰

Olmsted's above description is very similar to Bushnell's claims in *The Northern Iron*.

Regardless of who is influencing who, it is evident that Olmsted and Bushnell share similar perspectives as to the economic dynamics of slavery and free labor. Bushnell, like Olmsted, claims:

Thus it will be seen that wealth is the natural fruit of free labor, poverty of slave labor. Freedom unites motives to industry. The slavery of labor is work without industry. One too contains the economic element, the other labor in a law of waste. One therefore is wealth, and the other poverty ... The towns, the buildings, the roads, the agriculture, the schools, the commerce,—in all these freedom will be a sign to the eye, showing that it leads the march of progress and development. With it go the rewards of energy and righteousness. And it will be equally conspicuous in the slovenly culture, the impoverished fields, the raw, rude looking towns, and the tasteless, ill kept structures of slavery, that the poverty of wrong is its heritage.⁴⁴¹

For Olmsted, as for Bushnell,⁴⁴² the foundation of the fight against slavery was forged in their beliefs in constitutional democracy, national character, and the want and need of a civil American society. These beliefs in who we are as Americans is evident in Olmsted when he states:

⁴³⁹ Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume I. The Formative Years 1822 – 1852*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 16.

⁴⁴⁰ Frederick Law Olmsted. *A Journey Through Texas: Or a Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier*. (New York: Dix, Edwards & Co, [1857] 2018), 8.

⁴⁴¹ Horace Bushnell. *The Northern Iron: A Discourse Delivered in the North Church, Hartford*. (Hartford: Edwin Hunt and Son, 1854), 20.

⁴⁴² See Horace Bushnell. *A Discourse on the Slavery Question: Delivered in the North Church, Hartford*. (Hartford: Case, Tiffany & Company, 1839). Horace Bushnell. *The Northern Iron: A Discourse Delivered in the North Church, Hartford*. (Hartford: Edwin Hunt and Son, 1854).

The unavoidable comminglings of the people in a land like this, upon the conditions which the slavery of a portion of the population impose, make it necessary to peace that we should all live under the same laws and respect the same flag. No government could long control its own people, no government could long exist, that would allow its citizens to be subject to such indignities under a foreign government as those to which the citizens of the United States heretofore have been required to submit under their own, for the sake of the tranquility of the South.⁴⁴³

In Olmsted, the Hartford ethos was strong. He was a product of Hartford and his fight against slavery and push for emancipation, Olmsted was following the well-worn path of his Hartford heritage. Olmsted “believed that the society of which he was a part was like a ‘city upon a hill.’ The free-labor society of the North had a historic mission whose outcome held great significance for the future of both the New World and the Old. Olmsted was firmly convinced that it was the responsibility of the North in the decade of the 1850s to vindicate two concepts: the viability of the republican form of government and the superiority of a society based on free labor to that based on slavery.”⁴⁴⁴

Even though Olmsted greatly influenced emancipation, he was a flawed character—just as Horace Bushnell, Harriett Beecher Stowe, and others of Hartford and their time were flawed. As discussed earlier, in “the nineteenth-century United States, many of...Bushnell’s ‘white’ peers showed (to varying degrees)...aspects of racial thinking, including the belief that the light-skinned European type was the normative or superior race.”⁴⁴⁵ Bushnell was, without a doubt the most flawed due to his shameful racist views, even though his religion and moral compass kept on the right side of history with his ultimate support for the abolishment of slavery. Harriett Beech Stowe, revered in her own time and still today, ended her influential novel with her beloved characters free, but bound for Liberia—a segregationist effort to remove slave populations from America and return them to Africa.

Olmsted was an emancipationist and anti-slavery to his core. However, as a product of Hartford and strongly influenced by Bushnell, “Olmsted saw the slave in the same light that his Puritan forebears had seen the small child. ‘The negroes came to us from barbarism as from a cradle,’ he wrote in an earlier letter. He saw them as subject to ‘strong and simple appetites and impulses,’ to ‘violent and uncontrollable passions, and altogether undisciplined, uneducated and unchristianized.’ Those who had taken on the burden of such a ‘child’ retained a responsibility for the upbringing of that ‘child’—and it was from this sense of slaveowner being duty-bound that Olmsted evolved his paternalistic concept of

⁴⁴³ Frederick Law Olmsted. *The Cotton Kingdom: A Traveler's Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American Slave States*. (Delhi: Facimile Publisher, [1862] 2019), 1.

⁴⁴⁴ Charles McLaughlin, Charles Beveridge, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume II. Slavery and the South 1852 – 1857*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 2.

⁴⁴⁵ David Torbett. *Theology and Slavery: Charles Hodge and Horace Bushnell*. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006), 20.

'amelioration' of the slave condition."⁴⁴⁶ Be it slavery, landscape design, or domesticity, the Hartford ethos contributed to Olmsted's world view.

Unfortunately, it was well over a hundred years from the start of American slavery until our Founding Fathers failed to abolish slavery as part of the creation of our Constitution. It would be another eighty years of shame and struggle before the Civil War is fought and Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. Unfortunately, again, another hundred years passed before the Civil Right Movement of the 1960s and the passage of the Civil Rights Act. Today, a half century after the Civil Rights Act, we continue to struggle and fail to confront and resolve the issue of race, discrimination, and inequity in our American society. This is especially true in the context of urban planning, the evolution of self-governing suburban communities, and access to affordable housing.⁴⁴⁷ The fact is that our experiment in Constitutional Democracy, is not easy and continues to be a struggle.

Regardless of their flaws, Frederick Law Olmsted, Horace Bushnell, Harriett Beecher Stowe, and many others of their time moved us toward a more equitable future. However, through their flaws and looking into the mirror of history, the sins of our Nation's past reveal the sins of our Nation's present. We are still flawed today, burdened by our continued pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness that was forged with the inclusion of slavery and inequality. Be it inequality, income disparity, property ownership, or voting rights, the sins and social reforms of our past are still evident in urban and suburban present.

It is Horace Bushnell who taught us that prosperity was our duty. In 1847, in his efforts to revitalize Hartford from decay and decline, he exclaimed:

Dismiss, then, every discouraged thought. Take it as a fixed truth that Hartford can prosper; therefore, that it ought; therefore, that it shall. Go then, every man to his own alter, and live a godly life; every man to his work, and do it manfully and well, and all together to the task of preserving the public virtue, and proving to mankind, in despite of all hinderance, the unalterable truth that growth and progress are the right, under God, of every people that will do their duty.⁴⁴⁸

Olmsted, along with Samuel Colt, Charles Loring Brace, and others in Hartford embraced these words. Olmsted's alter was also his work as a journalist and landscape architect. In his short career as literary man in antebellum America, Olmsted greatly influenced Northern sentiment, and moved us toward emancipation. He also fulfilled his duty to his country by serving as General Secretary of the U.S. Sanitary Commission from 1861-1863, providing aid and care to the injured of the Union army.

⁴⁴⁶ Melvin Kalfus. *Frederick Law Olmsted: The Passion of a Public Artist*. (New York: University Press, 1990), 161-162.

⁴⁴⁷ Alan Mallach. *The Divided City: Poverty and Prosperity in Urban America*. (Washington: Island Press, 2018).

⁴⁴⁸ Horace Bushnell. *Prosperity our Duty*. (Hartford: Case, Tiffany & Burnham, 1847), 24.

For Bushnell, prosperity was not simply wealth, because wealth included *weal* or well-being. He explained, “National wealth is personal, not material. It includes the natural capacity, the industry, the skill, the science, the bravery, the loyalty, the moral and religious worth of the people. The wealth of a nation is in the breast of its sons.”⁴⁴⁹

Bushnell's *wealth of a nation in the breast of its sons* is forward looking. His recognition that Nations future resting in the generations to come after him. A generation younger than Bushnell, Olmsted is part of this future. Olmsted, with his Puritan roots and the Hartford ethos as his world view and guiding principles, carried Bushnell's torch of *prosperity our duty* into the future. As a journalist, emancipationist, and his final and most influential career as a landscape architect and city planner, Olmsted lived his life in service to his community and country. He worked tirelessly to elevate tastes, to create prosperity—wealth and well-being—and to forward our experiment in constitutional democracy through the creation of a civil society. His world view was the Hartford ethos, an ethos forged in democracy, self-governance, domesticity, and a civil society. In the words of Hartford's Reverend Joel Hawes, “No man can well be expected to rise higher than his own standard of excellence. If this be low and faulty, such will be the character that is modelled by it. If this be noble and elevated, such will be the character which is formed under its influence.”⁴⁵⁰ Hartford's native son, Frederick Law Olmsted had a high *standard of excellence* and was a man of *noble and elevated character*—a personal *standard of excellence and elevated character* that he shared with our nation, leaving a lasting *unconscious influence* on our American cultural landscape.

⁴⁴⁹ Horace Bushnell. “The True Wealth or Weal of Nations,” in Horace Bushnell. *Work and Play: Or Literary Varieties*, (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864), 51-52.

⁴⁵⁰ Joel Hawes. *Lectures to Young Men: On the Formation of Character*. (Boston: Congregational Board of Publications, (1828) 1856), 11.



Figure 35. The Olmsted Family grave, a shared site with the Watson and Bull families, in Hartford's Old North Cemetery. This is the final resting place of Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903).

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