of an event. Looking not just at the names but the order in which
the names appear, she imagines the line that formed while people
waited to sign the petition. The reader can almost see this line, hear
the conversations, and picture the camaraderie and commitment of
the people standing there. Moulton digs into the signers’ histories
and writes about them as more than names on a historical document.
They become real people with a passion for equality, working on
multiple fronts to achieve that equality. This is microhistory at its
best, allowing one an intimate view into the past.

A few places needed further work or editing to make it clearer to
anyone unfamiliar with the intricacies of the civil rights fights during
the antebellum era. For example, in chapter 2, Moulton mentioned
that black activists “cheered the success of the ‘Great Latimer Pe-
tition’” (p. 77), but did not explain the petition or provide further
information about the case surrounding the escape and recapture of
George Latimer. Without material provided later in chapter 4, readers
newly introduced to this field will not understand the full story.

This is one of only a few minor lapses. The Fight for Interracial
Marriage Rights in Antebellum Massachusetts is an important, timely
book. Readers will gain a better understanding of the struggle over
rights in a “free,” Northern state. But Moulton also tells a story of a
past that still resonates with current debates surrounding marriage.
Readers will hear the arguments used by those who fought for inter-
racial marriage rights in antebellum Massachusetts continue through
the generations.

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Frederick Law Olmsted: Plans and Views of Public Parks. Edited by
Charles E. Beveridge, Lauren Meier, and Irene Mills. (Baltimore:

The multi-volume Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted has proved
an invaluable resource for understanding this major figure of the
nineteenth century, best known for his design of New York’s Cen-
tral Park. Given that Olmsted’s vision and work were primarily vi-
sual, this handsome companion volume, issued as part of the Papers’
Supplementary Series, is a welcome addition. The editors have in-
cluded a wide variety of plans, elevations, sketches, and presentation
drawings, along with contemporary photographs, paintings, and illustrations, that document the range and variety of both the visual materials and landscape elements produced by the Olmsted firm. It is remarkably comprehensive. Though the lion’s share is devoted to Olmsted’s most significant and extensive park commissions—in New York (including Brooklyn), Boston, Buffalo, and Chicago—also included are little-known designs, even those never actually realized, in places like Fall River, Massachusetts, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Nor do the editors overlook Olmsted’s interest in such detailed matters as drainage and vegetation type; they include technical drawings and plant lists. And along with well-known aspects of Olmsted’s designs come such wonderful surprises as an alcove in Central Park habitually used by visitors as a backdrop for photographs, wheelchair-oriented and season-themed designs, and a downright strange Civil War “memorial cairn” in North Easton, Massachusetts.

Given the purpose of this volume, the text is appropriately spare and pointed. A brief introduction outlines Olmsted’s social philosophy and its implementation in landscape forms. Here we learn that Olmsted regarded parks as primarily restorative in function, a psychological and medical antidote to the stresses and dangers of urban life. He believed in addition that parks could create a sense of what he termed “communitiveness” (p. xiv), a counterweight to the social tensions of the class-divided, multi-ethnic city. Marshalled toward these social ends, Olmsted’s use of aesthetic elements associated with eighteenth-century British theories of the “Beautiful” and “Picturesque”—serpentine lines, indefinite edges, broad expanses, rugged ground—was therefore anything but imitative. Similarly, his inclusion of space for such communal activities as outdoor concerts was as much a social as a design decision. In conjunction with the more focused chapter introductions and captions, the introduction helps readers interpret the landscapes depicted in the illustrations, drawing attention to particular landscape elements while indicating how those elements worked toward desired ends. A photograph of Boston’s Franklin Park, for example—sheep grazing in a meadow, tree-lined stream in the background—is made legible to the reader by Olmsted’s discussion of how a “Country Park” eschews “urban elegance” in featuring grazed rather than mown turf, native rather than exotic trees, and wildflowers in preference to “high-bred marvels” (p. 272).

Any book of this sort must make choices, with inevitable advantages and drawbacks. Many plans of entire parks and park systems are
included, for example, providing a literal “big picture.” But despite the oversized dimensions of the volume, many of these illustrations require magnification to make out important visual details and text. Perhaps a selection of accompanying close-ups might have been in order. To avoid crowding of the page, full identification of the illustrations is provided only at the end of the volume. Where the illustrations were produced by Olmsted’s firm, there is little confusion, but where they had a different provenance—a jarring illustration of mayhem labeled only “Artist’s conception of cross-town traffic on Transverse Road No. 2” (p. 14), for example—that information, supplemented by who generated the images and where they appeared, would have provided important context. An equally critical choice was made to organize the book geographically rather than chronologically. The reader is therefore able to grasp how Olmsted developed plans for a single city over a span of years, sometimes, as in his plan for a “South Park” in Buffalo, in response to the physical growth of the city itself. And the unfolding story of Boston’s “Emerald Necklace” documents Olmsted’s growing interest in a rustic aesthetic. On the other hand, it is easy to miss trends that transcended particular locations, for example, what the editors describe as Olmsted’s developing sense that working-class park-goers needed active stimulation, not passive restoration, to counter the dulling effects of industrial labor.

Perhaps more important, there are significant themes to which the editors do not draw explicit attention, though these themes emerge piecemeal from the illustrations and text. One is Olmsted’s increasing tendency to separate recreational spaces by gender. Another is his interest in controlling the behavior of park-goers. That aspect of his work emerges in, for example, a hillside parade ground viewing area designed to prevent “pushing,” “crowding,” and other forms of “disorder” (p. 110), and in another park, the decision to reverse his usual approach—dense plantings along the perimeter, open space in the interior—in favor of an arrangement more conducive to external surveillance. In their study of Central Park, Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar noted Olmsted’s interest in just such disciplining of working-class park-goers, a more complex response to class tensions than is suggested by the ideal of “communitiveness.” Acknowledging this complexity could have further illuminated many of the design elements on vivid display in this volume. Olmsted’s attention to separating modes of transportation in his parks and parkways, for example, kept the well-heeled in their carriages immersed in a tranquil landscape to be sure, but it also separated them from the
riffraff in workaday wagons and on foot. In this context, that image of “Transverse Road No. 2” takes on additional meanings. By sinking the road below park visitors’ line of sight, the editors point out, Olmsted prevented traffic collisions and preserved the long vistas and broad views so critical to his restorative mission. True enough, but the wall of trees lining the overhead bridge also shielded genteel park visitors from the road’s delivery carts, working-class roughs, and boys running wild depicted in the illustration. Like the written documents collected in the Olmsted Papers volumes, then, these visual documents will generate historical evidence and interpretive questions alike, surely the mark of an important contribution.


James Blachowicz’s From Slate to Marble is a monumental contribution to the literature on early American grave markers. The book is beautifully produced, well written, and contains some of the most exquisite photographs of gravestones ever published. It is a must-have volume for anyone interested in New England’s early grave markers and will be the go-to reference for scholars interested in this topic. Blachowicz is to be commended on a job well done.

From Slate to Marble builds upon but does not duplicate Blachowicz’s similarly named earlier volume From Slate to Marble 1770–1870: Gravestone Carving Traditions in Eastern Massachusetts. Readers are encouraged to use the two volumes as a set. While Blachowicz’s previous volume focused on Eastern Massachusetts, and some later Boston carvers, volume 2 is more comprehensive. The focus is on the period from 1750 to 1850, and earlier carvers are not discussed in detail.