



Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England

Frederick Law Olmsted

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Before he ever dreamed of becoming a landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted (1822–1903) visited southern England and Wales during a month-long walking tour. A gifted writer, he recorded his impressions of the trip in this richly detailed volume, which has long been out of print. "In *Walks and Talks*," writes Charles C. McLaughlin, author of the book's new introduction, "Olmsted is reporter, social analyst, narrator, dramatist, scene-painter, and humorist, employing a wide range of modes and styles to give us the sights, sounds, and mental impressions of rural England in 1850."


Olmsted's narrative—at turns poetic, funny, critical, and meticulous—is a delight to read. It is also an important historical document, revealing the extent to which England permeated almost every aspect of Olmsted's emerging worldview, soon to find expression in his various careers as scientific farmer, author and publisher, social critic, reformer, administrator, and landscape architect of major parks and park systems throughout the United States.

The introduction clarifies the links between Olmsted's developing picturesque aesthetic, social conscience, and reformer's passion for change. McLaughlin offers a persuasive argument that Olmsted would come to adapt many of the features of the cultivated English countryside—first seen on this trip—in designed landscapes such as New York's Central Park.

This edition provides extensive annotations to the original text, furnishing background and context to the people and places Olmsted encountered during his journey. McLaughlin's notes are based on his own trips through England, undertaken over the past two decades to retrace the author's original route.

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