

SECAC Affiliated Society ATSAH 2020 Richmond, Virginia
(May 19, 2020)

Monuments and Landscapes: Public Symbols and Planning

This session aims to explore the formation of historical sites and natural scenery as commemorative symbols, such as edifices, fountains, memorials, statues, forests, parks, and valleys. Also considers the importance of design and planning for the beautification of private and public spaces.

Chair/Organizer, Liana De Girolami Cheney, President of ATSAH

Speakers:

Agnieszka Whelan, Old Dominion University

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Title: (tentative) Eighteen-century Gardens

Abstract: Many eighteenth-century gardens presented an explicit commemorative content. These gardens were carefully constructed visions of the historical past that memorialized selectively chosen heroes. To those who walked the gardens and experienced them personally, the process of remembering may have been entirely dependent on the physical connection and emotional engagement. However, only some would make a journey and experience the gardens in person. For most, the only way of engaging with the program of remembrance was through small scale watercolors and prints. This presentation looks at minor, unknown works from personal archives of several influential families in central Europe and asks the question how these representations shaped the understanding of the gardens as enduring sites of memory.

Alan Wallach, College of William and Mary
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Title: Esthetic pioneering: painting, tourism, and tourist iconographies in nineteenth-century American landscape

Abstract: In 1835, Thomas Cole observed: "the painter of American scenery has indeed privileges superior to any other; all nature here is new to Art. No Tivoli's[,] Terni's[,] Mount Blanc's, Plinlimmons, hackneyed & worn by the daily pencils of hundreds, but virgin forests, lakes & waterfalls feast his eye with new delights, fill his portfolio with their features of beauty & magnificence and hallowed to his soul because they had been preserved untouched from the time of creation for his heaven-favoured pencil." Confronting a nature "new to Art," Cole and other nineteenth-century landscapists engaged in what might be usefully thought of as esthetic

pioneering. This metaphor underscores the parallels between a historical and a cultural process. To depict a nature “new to Art” constituted an act of appropriation. Nature had to be seized, tamed, brought under the dominion of artistic law. Stripped of its unfamiliarity and otherness, the land became "ours," the material out of which artist or writer shaped a cultural artifact. Esthetic pioneering thus designates an ensemble of cultural practices whereby unfamiliar terrain came to form a repertory of landscape painting, landscape literature, and landscape tourism.

Charles Burroughs, New York University, GENESEO
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Title: Frederick Law Olmsted and the Landscape of Industry

Abstract: With reference to Frederick Law Olmsted’s creation of a park system for Rochester, NY (1888-9), I argue that, toward the end of his career, Olmsted’s approach to park design went through a major change. Earlier parks, like Central Park in New York, were conceived as idealized rural landscapes of meadows (complete with sheep), lakes, and woodland, offering respite from the tensions and pollution, and even the inequality, of city life. Consistently, Olmsted fought to rid Niagara Falls of intrusive commercial development. But in Rochester, Olmsted made a park out of the dramatic natural landscape, the gorge of the Genesee River, included in a park an industrial area of smoking chimneys, accepting it as a picturesque accent in a preserved for public enjoyment.

Olmsted’s famous urban parks were carefully composed to offer city residents respite from the tensions and pollution, and even the inequality, of city life. They represented an 1888-9, toward the end of his career (he retired in 1895), Olmsted designed a park system for the then boom town of Rochester, NY, controversially making a park around the gorge of the Genesee River some miles north of town. The design for the park included, at its south end, an industrial area around a falls, effectively where the gorge began.

Lynette Bosch, New York University, GENESO
Lynette Bosch <lmfbosch@gmail.com>

Title: Emmeline Wadsworth's Fountain in Geneseo, New York: A World of Bears

Abstract: The Emmeline fountain on Main Street, Geneseo was commissioned as a memorial for the family matriarch, Emmeline Austin Wadsworth (?-1855) by her sons, to serve as the main drinking fountain for the town's horses. The statue was commissioned from a New York City foundry and the design of the fountain was the work of Richard Morris Hunt. The style of the fountain's bronze bear has been identified as being that of Antoine-Louis Barye, a sculptor, whose work is represented in the collection of the Geneseo Wadsworths. The bear's mythological history, its totemic associations for Native Americans and its links to European towns, where bears are used as civic symbols, all play a role in understanding the meaning of Emmeline's bear fountain, which has become one of Geneseo's most distinctive civic symbols.