



Frederick Law Olmstead: The Passion of a Public Artist: 018 (The American Social Experience)

Melvin Kalfus

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Frederick Law Olmsted is famous for his urban landscape designs: Central Park in Manhattan, Prospect Park in Brooklyn, and Franklin Park in Boston. Olmsted devoted much of his later life to this work. What was the source of this creative energy and imagination in his fascinating years?

Melvin Kalfus is the first author to examine Olmsted's troubled, sometimes tragic childhood and adolescence in a search for the inner sources of his creative imagination. Kalfus argues that Olmsted's distressing early experiences fired his ambition and led him so obsessively to seek the world's esteem through his works. Kalfus also looks at Olmsted's varied early career during which he worked as an apprentice merchant, a seaman, a farmer, a manager of a mining plantation in California, a journalist, and author of three historically important books on slavery, and as the General Secretary of the Civil War's Sanitary Commission, and enormous project organized to provide medical aid to Union soldiers.

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