

Frederick Law Olmsted

Journalist, landscape architect (1822 – 1903)

Olmsted was born in Hartford and was prevented from attending Yale fulltime because of poor eyesight. In 1844, he embarked on a farming career on Staten Island and, following an extended trip to England, he published the popular *Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England*. In 1852, he traveled the Atlantic coast and wrote *A Journey In The Seaboard Slave States*. Olmsted believed that slavery was not only morally wrong, but expensive and economically inefficient.

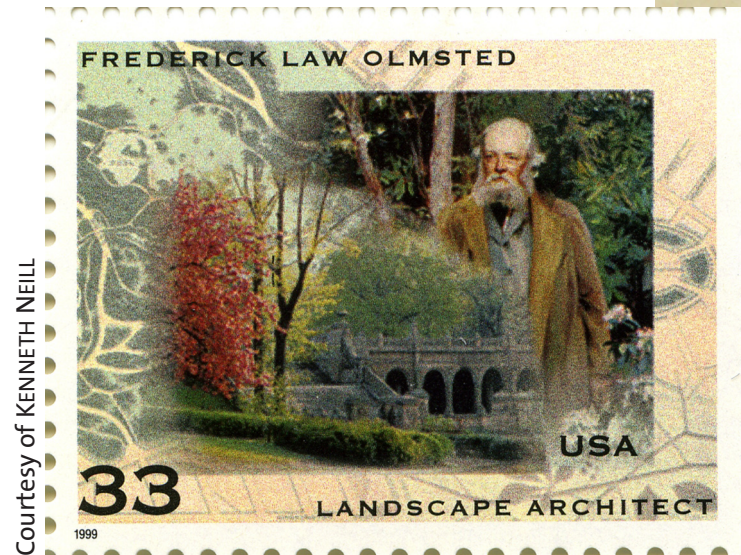
His dispatches to *The New York Times* were collected into multiple volumes, the last of these, *Journeys and Explorations in the Cotton Kingdom*, was published during the first six months of the Civil War.

In 1859, Olmsted married Mary Cleveland (Perkins) Olmsted, the widow of his brother John, who died two years earlier. He adopted her three sons (his nephews), among them JOHN CHARLES OLMSTED. Frederick and Mary had two children who survived infancy: a daughter and a son FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED, JR.

Olmsted was introduced to the English-born architect CALVERT VAUX, and the two entered the Central Park design competition together, against EGBERT LUDOVICUS VIELE among others. They emerged the winners in 1858. For the next four years Olmsted worked assiduously to create a park that would be both a work of art and a functional part of the city.

From 1863 to 1865, Olmsted was in California, where he secured the establishment of the magnificent Yosemite Park and served as the first president of the park's commission. Returning to New York, Olmsted and Vaux designed Brooklyn's Prospect Park; Chicago's Riverside; the park systems of Buffalo and Milwaukee; and the Niagara Reservation at Niagara Falls. Olmsted designed works for dozens of colleges including Auburn, University of Chicago, Cornell, Stanford, Yale and Wellesley. Somehow he found time, in 1865, to cofound the magazine *The Nation*.

Olmsted was a frequent collaborator with HENRY HOBSON RICHARDSON, for whom he devised the landscaping schemes for six projects. He retired in 1895 and died in 1903.



Courtesy of KENNETH NEILL

The stamp shows Central Park and a portrait of Olmsted painted by JOHN SINGER SARGENT.

