



Yellowstone to Yosemite

A look at the Landscape Architect's Role

Article and photography by George Schmok

It is a scientific fact that the occasional contemplation of natural scenes of an impressive character, particularly if this contemplation occurs in connection with relief from ordinary cares, change of air and change of habits, is favorable to the health and vigor of men and especially to the health and vigor of their intellect beyond any other conditions which can be offered them, that it not only gives pleasure for the time being but increases the subsequent capacity for happiness and the means for securing happiness. (Frederick Law Olmsted, 1865)

such a thing as a Landscape Architect. The expansionists, and settlers were mostly concerned with development, mining, farming and making the environment safe for the human species. At that time, the human race was just

creating the world's first National Park called Yellowstone.

Today both Yellowstone and Yosemite have become icons around the world for their natural wonders and pristine

harvested. Instead, they are there to be protected and enjoyed.

Whether it's the massive granite fortress of Yosemite or the vast openness of the Yellowstone wilderness, these and a myriad of National Parks are designed to allow man the comforting and rehabilitative effects of (as Olmsted put it) "contemplating nature." And while there are many professions who can claim an impact on their development, it is the Landscape Architect who first recognized them as natural treasures, and who today leads the fight to maintain their pristine elements against the

onslaught of tourism and encroaching development.

"The challenge," said Yosemite Landscape Architect Don Fox as we cut a transect

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National Parks of the West



When Frederick Law Olmsted wrote these words in his 1865 report on the Yosemite Valley and the adjacent grove of "Big Trees" there was no National Park Service, nor was there

beginning to comprehend the value and finiteness of the precious resource called land. Indeed, it would take another seven years before, on March 1, 1872, Congress acted by

landscape. What were once valued for their minerals, wild game and lumber, are now national treasures. These treasures however, can't be mined, nor hunted, nor

