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Central Park, An American Masterpiece: A Comprehensive History Of The Nation's First Urban Park



Synopsis

Marking Central Park's 150th anniversary, this is a history of America's first public park and a paragon of 19th-century landscape design. Sara Cedar Miller, the official historian and photographer for the Central Park Conservancy, draws on extensive research to tell the story of the park's creation, placing it in the context of 19th-century American art and social history, and illuminating the roles of its designers Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux and their associate Jacob Wrey Mould. Period views and original plans and drawings are complemented by Miller's photographs, which show the restored park's glory.

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Customer Reviews

Miller is the park's official historian and photographer, and her authority shows, revealing some new facets to this most overexposed of urban spaces. Original plans and drawings (many published for the first time) sit alongside modern-day photographs among the more than 200 color illustrations, creating a sense of the history that underlies this man-made urban landscape. Frederick Law Olmsted, one of the park's designers (the other was Calvert Vaux), saw his plan as a balm to soothe the roiling city's ills. Miller finds him remarking that the park "exercises a distinctly harmonizing and refining influence upon the most lawless classes of the city—an influence favorable to courtesy, self-control, and temperance." Bethesda Terrace was Vaux's ideological baby and, according to Miller, was influenced by the work of John Ruskin, Alexander von Humboldt and Thomas Cole. Kenneth T. Jackson, president of the New-York Historical Society, writes in his preface that Central

Park is not the oldest public open space in either the world or the United States, nor is it the largest, nor even the most beautiful, yet it has the most contrast to its surroundings, an expression of a city's life and exuberance, and is properly celebrated as such by Miller. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

There is more to Central Park than meets the eye or is seen at the movies: 843 acres of prime, green land in the middle of one of the most important cities of the world. And man-made too, the landscape sculpted by thousands of men over twenty years to create a haven in the midst of a bustling city. Originally designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, it has continued to evolve for 150 years and this superb book has been produced to celebrate this great piece of art, this American earthwork, in all its glory. Author and photographer Sara Cedar Miller, the official historian and photographer for the Central Park Conservancy, expertly leads the reader through its labyrinthine walkways, exploring the avenues, terraces, meadows and ravines, all beautifully encapsulated within her stunning photographs. Little known hideaways and gardens are revealed, accompanied by their history and examinations of their wildlife and flora. It is a marvel that this can survive in the midst of New York City and is a testament to the Conservancy of their care and management. Archival footage reveals the evolution of this great garden over the last century and a half and this work will no doubt become a valuable reference for future generations in its continuing development of this American masterpiece. - Lucy Watson

I initially bought this book for the photos and to help me with little known facts about Central Park for my company's annual scavenger hunt (which I've won both years!). This book is chock full of history and trivia that is amazingly dense as well as beautiful photos of CP. I really found it all in this book. I am learning so much that I am taking my time getting into it. I found out that my favorite part (the mall) was meant to be the center 'crown jewel' of the Park and funny I always sensed it was! If you are at all interested in the park, this is a great educational tool.

Beautiful photography

Overall, this book met all of my expectations. Beautifully illustrated. The only aspects I would have liked to see more of were more pictures of Central Park during its ongoing phases of landscaping and lists of trees and shrubbery planted. Other than that it was a great read and a wonderful learning experience.

If there is any interest at all in Central Park, this is the definitive book about it. I became interested after reading a mystery that took place in the Park and had many descriptions of parts of the Park. When I received this book, I placed myself in the park to a much greater extent than was possible without it. Enjoy it as I have.

I was spurred to purchase this descriptive and pictorial history of Central Park after reading the much-enjoyed detective novels by Linda Fairstein. The book looks like it could be just another beautiful coffee table decoration but it is a fascinating read cover to cover. I guarantee you will devour it, especially if you read Death Angel by Ms Fairstein.

A beautiful picture book with loads of information about the great park in the Big Apple. Highly recommended.

If you love Central Park buy this book. The photos are great and it tells you a little bit about all the different features of Central Park. I really love this book.

I am thrilled to have this book in my library because I enjoy the park every time I go to NYC. The shipment was fast & easy. Thanks.

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