

21. Apparently Mary Perkins Olmsted, who was spending the summer with the Knapp family in Sutton, Massachusetts, was uninjured. Only three weeks later Olmsted told Charles Eliot Norton that "my wife and children have decidedly gained health during the summer" (FLO to CEN, Sept. 18, 1868, Norton Papers).
22. Beside his signature, Olmsted wrote "Over" to direct Vaux to the postscript on the back of the page.

Preliminary Report upon the Proposed
Suburban Village at Riverside, Near Chicago,
by Olmsted, Vaux, & Co., Landscape Architects.

110 BROADWAY, New York, Sept 1, 1868.

TO THE RIVERSIDE IMPROVEMENT COMPANY.¹

Gentlemen:

You have requested a report from us, upon an enterprise which you desire to bring before the public, and which appears to rest on the following grounds:

First.—Owing partly to the low, flat, miry, and forlorn character of the greater part of the country immediately about Chicago, and the bleak surface, arid soil, and exposure of the remainder to occasional harsh and frigid gusts of wind off the lake, and partly to the fact that the rapidity with which the town is being enlarged, causes all the available environs to be laid out with a view to a future demand solely for town purposes, and with no regard to the satisfaction of rural tastes, the city, as yet, has no true suburbs or quarters in which urban and rural advantages are agreeably combined with any prospect of long continuance.

Second.—If, under these circumstances, sites offering any very decided and permanent advantages for suburban residences could be put in the market, there would at once be a demand for them, which would continue and increase with the enlargement and progress in wealth and taste of the population of the city.

Third.—You have secured a large body of land, which, much beyond any other, has natural advantages for this purpose.

Fourth.—If, by a large outlay, these advantages could be developed to the utmost, and could be supplemented by abundant artificial conveniences of a high order,² and the locality could thus be rendered not only very greatly superior to any other near Chicago, but could be made to compare

satisfactorily, on the whole, with the most favored suburbs to be found anywhere else, a good return for such outlay might reasonably be expected.

We propose to review these grounds so far as they are not matters of fact easily put to the test of observation by those interested.

To understand the character of the probable demand for semi-rural residences near Chicago, it must be considered that the most prominent characteristic of the present period of civilization has been the strong tendency of people to flock together in great towns. This tendency unquestionably is concurrent, and probably identical, with an equally unprecedented movement of invention, energy, and skill, toward the production of certain classes of conveniences and luxuries, which, even yet, can generally be fully enjoyed by great numbers of people only in large towns.³ Arrangements for the easy gratification of certain tastes, which, until recently, were possessed by but a very few, even of the most wealthy class of any country, have consequently, of late, become common to thousands in every civilized land, while numerous luxuries, that the largest fortunes in the old world could not have commanded even half a century since, are enjoyed by families of comparatively moderate means, in towns which have sprung up from the wilderness, within the memory of some still living in them.

Progress in this way was never more rapid than at the present moment, yet in respect to the corresponding movement of populations, there are symptoms of a change; a counter-tide of migration, especially affecting the more intelligent and more fortunate classes, although as yet of but moderate strength, is clearly perceptible, and almost equally so, in Paris, London, Vienna, Berlin, New York, Boston and Philadelphia. The most substantial manifestation of it perhaps, is to be found in the vast increase in value of eligible sites for dwellings near public parks, and in all localities of much natural beauty within several hours' journey of every great town. Another evidence of the same tendency, not less conclusive because it indicates an impulse as yet undecided and incomplete, is found in the constant modification which has occurred in the manner of laying out all growing towns, and which is invariably in the direction of a separation of business and dwelling streets, and toward rural spaciousness in the latter. The broader the streets are made, provided they are well prepared in respect to what are significantly designated "the modern conveniences," and especially if some slight rural element is connected with them, as by rows of trees or little enclosures of turf and foliage, the greater is the demand for dwelling-places upon them.

There is no evidence that the large class of conveniences, comforts and luxuries, which have been heretofore gained by close congregation, is beginning to have less positive attractiveness or commercial value, but it is very clear that the conviction is becoming established in the minds of great numbers of people that the advance in this respect, which has occurred in towns, has been made at too great a sacrifice of certain advantages which can

at present be only enjoyed by going out of them. That this is a sound conviction, and not a mere whim, caprice, or reaction of fancy, temporarily affecting the rich, fashionable and frivolous, appears from the fact that it is universally held as the result of careful study by philanthropists, physicians and men of science. It is an established conclusion, for instance, as explained by Dr. Ramsay, in his recent annual address before the British Association for the Advancement of Social Science, that the mere proximity of dwellings which characterizes all strictly urban neighborhoods, is a prolific source of morbid conditions of the body and mind, manifesting themselves chiefly in nervous feebleness or irritability and various functional derangements, relief or exemption from which can be obtained in no way without great sacrifices of convenience and social advantages, except by removal to suburban districts.⁴

It thus becomes evident that the present outward tendency of town populations is not so much an ebb as a higher rise of the same flood, the end of which must be, not a sacrifice of urban conveniences, but their combination with the special charms and substantial advantages of rural conditions of life. Hence a series of neighborhoods of a peculiar character is already growing up in close relation with all large towns, and though many of these are as yet little better than rude over-dressed villages, or fragmentary half-made towns, it can hardly be questioned that, already, there are to be found among them the most attractive, the most refined and the most soundly wholesome forms of domestic life, and the best application of the arts of civilization to which mankind has yet attained.

It would appear then, that the demands of suburban life, with reference to civilized refinement, are not to be a retrogression from, but an advance upon, those which are characteristic of town life, and that no great town can long exist without great suburbs. It would also appear that whatever element of convenient residence is demanded in a town will soon be demanded in a suburb, so far as is possible for it to be associated with the conditions which are the peculiar advantage of the country, such as purity of air, umbrageousness, facilities for quiet out-of-door recreation and distance from the jar, noise, confusion, and bustle of commercial thoroughfares.

There need then be no fear that a happy combination of these conditions would ever fail to be exceedingly attractive to the people of Chicago, or that a demand for residences where it is found, would be liable to decline; on the contrary, it would be as sure to increase, as the city is sure to increase in population and in wealth, and for the same reason.

We proceed to consider the intrinsic value of your property for the purpose in view.

The question of access first demands attention. The centre of the proposed suburb is nine miles from the business centre of Chicago, the nearer points being about six miles apart. There is a double-track railroad from Chicago of remarkably good construction, with its first out-of-town station, at

which every train is required to stop in the midst of your property.⁵ The advantages of the locality, in this respect, are already superior to those of many thriving suburbs.

A railroad, however, at the best affords a very inadequate and unsatisfactory means of communication between a rural habitation and a town, either for a family or for a man of business: as, moreover, one of the chief advantages of a suburban home, is the opportunity which it gives of taking air and exercise in driving, riding, and walking, it is a great desideratum, especially where time is so valuable as it is generally in Chicago, that a business man should be able to enjoy such an opportunity incidentally to his necessary communication with his store or office.

We find that the surface of the country over which a drive must be taken to reach your property, examined with reference to this requirement, is like the country generally about Chicago, not merely uninteresting, but, during much of the year, positively dreary. Driving across it, at present, so far from being a diversion or matter of pleasure, is a tedious task. Being nearly a dead flat, its natural drainage is very bad, parts of it are marshy, and the whole, after storms, is miry, and remains for a long time half covered with broad mud-puddles. Since railroads were established, the intercourse between the town and country, in this direction, by ordinary-wheeled vehicles, has been so slight that the old roads, which were never tolerably well-made, are scarcely kept in sufficiently good order to be traveled safely, even by very strong and heavy wagons. In their best condition they are extremely rough, and require slow and cautious driving, while in the Spring they are sometimes quite impassible.

It is obvious that no ordinary arrangement will suffice to make a rapid drive in a light carriage, or a canter on horseback, over this region, one that can be daily taken with pleasure throughout the year, or to prevent the attempt to secure exercise and recreation in this way from becoming an intolerably tedious effort on the part of any suburban resident who wishes to attend to business in town.

It is clearly essential to your success that these objections should be removed; we, therefore, take the first serious problem of your enterprise to be—

How can the present difficulties of carriage access be overcome?

We find that drainage, not only for a road, but for the whole district through which it would pass, can be obtained by forming a series of large conduits a few miles in length, and that the neighboring land-owners are fully prepared to cooperate with you in thus removing the chief obstacle to a good road.

We find, that in such small portions of the land, through which a direct road would pass, as have already been artificially drained, trees, several years planted, of the most valuable species for suburban purposes, are growing with great vigor and beauty.

We also find that upon the property which you have already secured at the end of the route, there are ledges of rock which will afford the means of forming a substantial foundation for frost-proof and water-proof wheel-ways, and beds of gravel for their superstructure.

On reviewing these conditions we conclude that the formation of an approach road, much better adapted to the requirements of pleasure-driving than any other leading out of Chicago, and with varied and agreeable accessories and appurtenances, is perfectly practicable.

We should advise you, in the first place, to obtain possession, if possible, of a strip of ground from two hundred to six hundred feet wide, extending from the city to the nearest border of your property, to secure its thorough drainage, to plant it with trees, and to carry through it a series of separate, but adjoining ways, especially adapted in construction—first for walking, second for riding, third for pleasure-driving, and fourth to give convenient access to houses to be built on the route and accommodate heavy freighting, without inconvenience to the through pleasure travel.⁶

The main drive should be constructed in a very thorough and finished manner, so that, without perfect rigidity of surface, it will be storm and frost-proof.

The ride should adjoin the drive, so that equestrians can at pleasure turn from it to converse with friends in carriages; it should have a soft and slightly yielding surface, that the great jar and danger of slipping, which occurs in a paved road, may be avoided.

The grateful influences of the grove extending through the prairie, with the amelioration of climate and soil which would result from thorough drainage and wind-breaks, and the advantages which would be found in the several proposed means of communication at all seasons of the year, would be such that continuous lines of villas and gardens would undoubtedly soon be established adjoining it, and the hour's drive through it, necessary to reach your property, would be neither tedious nor fatiguing.

At certain intervals upon the route, it would be desirable to provide openings with some special decorations, and here should be sheltered seats and watering places.

We see no reason why, if this suggestion is carried out liberally, it should not provide, or, at least, begin to provide, another pressing desideratum of the city of Chicago, namely, a general promenade ground. The promenade is a social custom of great importance in all the large towns of Europe. It is an open-air gathering for the purpose of easy, friendly, unceremonious greetings, for the enjoyment of change of scene, of cheerful and exhilarating sights and sounds, and of various good cheer, to which the people of a town, of all classes, harmoniously resort on equal terms, as to a common property. There is probably no custom which so manifestly displays the advantages of a Christian, civilized and democratic community, in contra-distinction from an aggregation of families, clans, sects, or castes. There is none more favor-

able to a healthy civic pride, civic virtue, and civic prosperity. As yet, the promenade has hardly begun to be recognised as an institution in Chicago,⁷ but there is no doubt that it soon must be, and it is evident from the present habits and manners of the people, that when once established, the custom will nowhere else be more popular or beneficent in its influence. Even now, with no tolerable accommodations for a general out-of-door pleasure gathering, nor any drives adapted for pleasure vehicles, which are not crowded when a few hundred carriages come together, there are probably more horses, in proportion to the population, kept for pleasure use, than in any city of the old, if not of the new world. There is understood to be no ground about the city possessing natural advantages for the formation of a public pleasure-ground of the character of the great parks in which the promenades of other metropolitan cities are generally held.⁸ By making the accommodations of your approach sufficiently large and sufficiently attractive, by associating with it several turning-points and resting-places in the midst of pleasure-grounds of moderate extent, your enterprise would, therefore, not merely supply Chicago, as you propose that it shall do, with a suburb, as well adapted as any of the suburbs of other cities, both for permanent habitations and country seats, and for occasional rural fetes and holiday recreations of families living in the town, but, in all probability, would provide it also with a permanent promenade-ground, having a character peculiar to itself, and not without special advantages. This result would be greatly enhanced if, as would probably be the case, certain entirely practicable improvements of the plan of the city should be made in connection with the construction of your approach.

The benefit which would result from this to your original enterprise is evident. Having means of communication with the city through the midst of such a ground, made gay and interesting by the movement of fine horses and carriages, and of numbers of well-dressed people, mainly cheerful with the enjoyment of recreation and the common entertainment, the distance would not be too great for the interchange of friendly visits, for the exercise of hospitality to a large circle of acquaintance, or for the enjoyment of the essential, intellectual, artistic, and social privileges which specially pertain to a metropolitan condition of society; and yet it would be sufficient to justify a neglect, on the part of a suburban resident, of most of those ceremonial social duties which custom seems to require, and in which so much time is necessarily spent in all great towns.

Turning next to your present property, we find that it extends for a distance of two miles upon the banks of the Aux Plaines River. Upon the river side, the land has a somewhat higher elevation than at any point nearer Chicago; the unctuous character of the prairie soil is also somewhat modified, and for considerable spaces wholly disappears. Sandy ridges extend along the river border, but from the richer vegetation which is indigenous to them, it would appear that they are not of the same character as the barren wastes nearer the lake. We were informed that there were deep beds of clay upon the

property; but wherever we happened to test the subsoil, as we did at several points, we found a porous stratum at no very great distance from the surface. We observed that the ground dried more rapidly, and that there was less chill from evaporation on the surface toward nightfall, near the river, than on any part of the prairies at a considerable distance from it. We nowhere found, even among the bushes near the water, on a warm August evening, any mosquitoes or lake flies, though both were at the time annoying the people of Chicago. We were assured by residents of the neighborhood that they were never annoyed by them, and also that no fever and ague, or other malarial disease had been known for years in the vicinity. We have since seen an old physician of the neighborhood who states, that among the earlier settlers, fever and ague was not uncommon, but gradually became so, and latterly has been very rare.

The more elevated parts of the ground, and the banks of the river everywhere, are occupied by groves of trees consisting of oaks, elms, hickories, walnuts, limes and ashes, with a scattered undergrowth of hazels, and various shrubs; most of the trees are young, but there are many specimens of large size and umbrageous form. In a private garden, planted apparently eight or ten years since, there are a number of transplanted shrubs, evergreens, and choice herbaceous plants in perfect health, and growing with such luxuriance as to indicate satisfactory conditions of soil and climate.

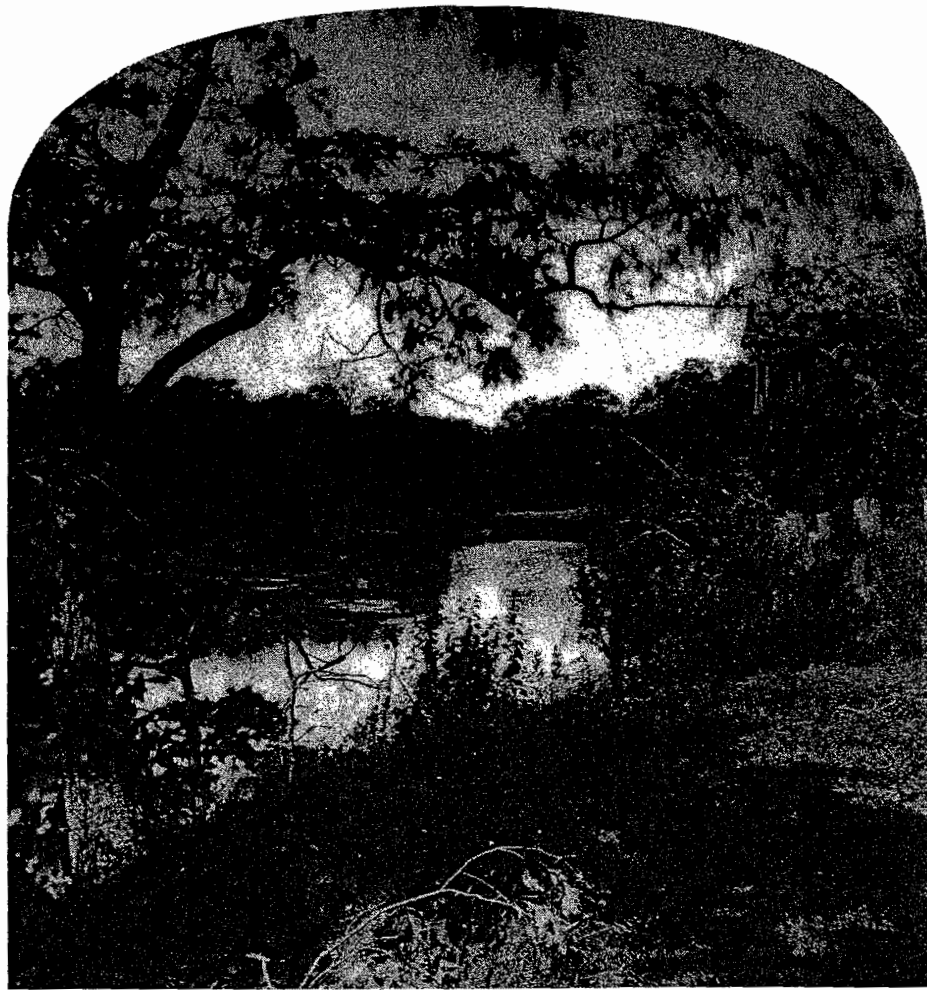
The water of the river is said to be ordinarily very clear, and we found it tolerably so after a heavy rain, which is remarkable in a prairie stream. It abounds with fish and wild fowl, is adapted to pleasure-boating, and can be improved in this respect. In parts, it already presents much beauty, and is everywhere susceptible of being refined and enriched by art to a degree which will render it altogether charming.

It appears to us, on the whole, as the result of our survey, that no essential natural requirement of an attractive and healthful suburb is here wanting.

We proceed to consider the artificial requirements.

The chief advantages which a suburb can possess over a town on the one hand, and over a wilderness on the other, will consist in those which favor open-air recreation beyond the limits which economy and convenience prescribe for private grounds and gardens. The main artificial requirements of a suburb then, are good roads and walks, pleasant to the eye within themselves, and having at intervals pleasant openings and outlooks, with suggestions of refined domestic life, secluded, but not far removed from the life of the community.

The misfortune of most existing suburbs is, that in such parts of them as have been built up little by little, without any general plan, the highways are usually adapted only to serve the bare irresistible requirements of agriculture, and that in such other parts as have been laid out more methodically, no intelligent design has been pursued to secure any distinctly rural attractive-



DES PLAINES RIVER SCENERY AT RIVERSIDE

ness, the only aim apparently being to have a plan, which, seen on paper, shall suggest the possibility of an extension of the town-streets over the suburb, and of thus giving a town value to the lots upon them.

Exactly the opposite of this should be aimed at in your case, and, in regard to those special features whereby the town is distinguished from the country, there should be the greatest possible contrast which is compatible with the convenient communication and pleasant abode of a community; economy of room, and facilities for business, being minor considerations.

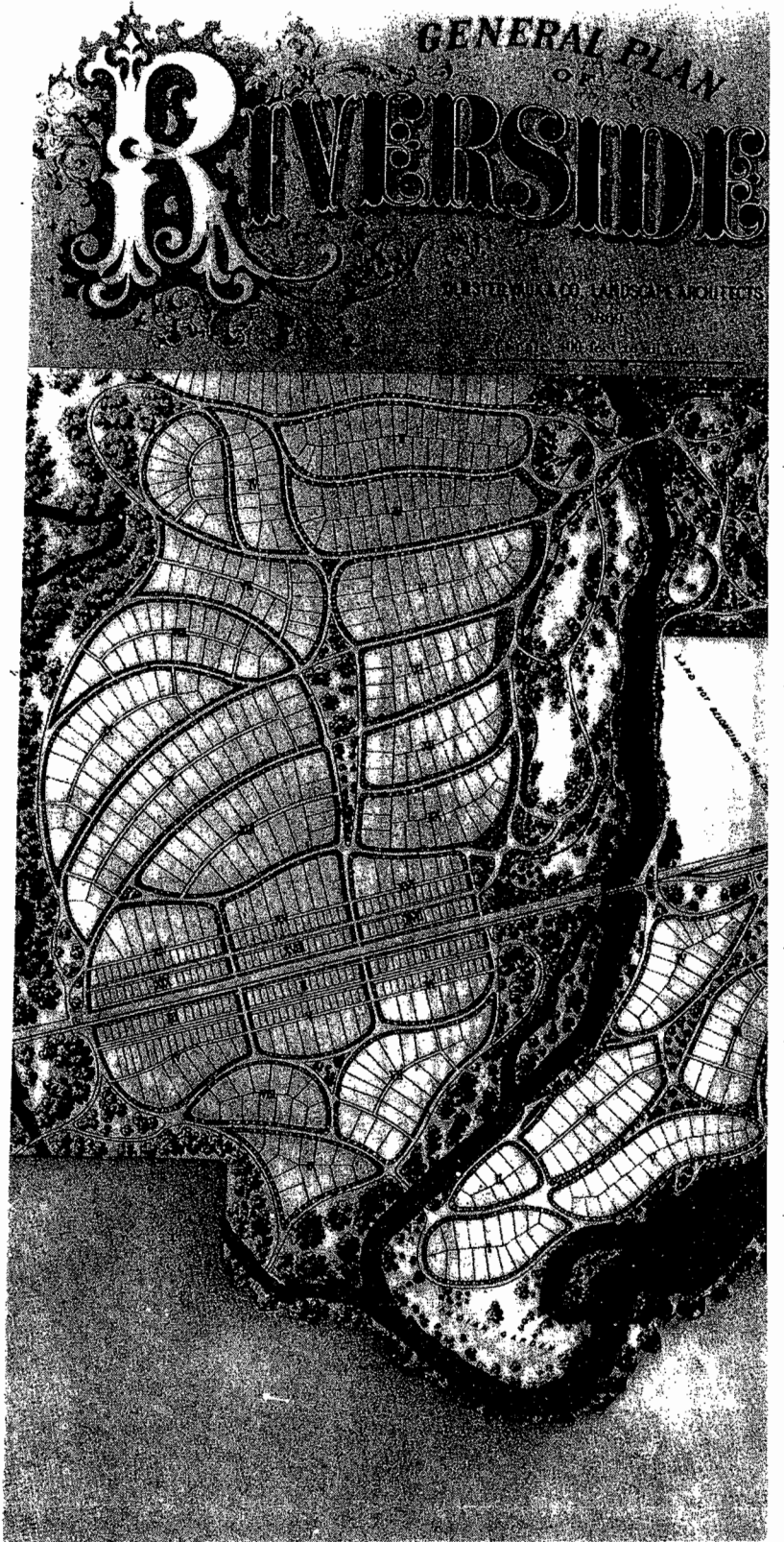
In the highways, celerity will be of less importance than comfort and convenience of movement, and as the ordinary directness of line in town-streets, with its resultant regularity of plan, would suggest eagerness to press forward, without looking to the right hand or the left, we should recommend the general adoption, in the design of your roads, of gracefully-curved lines, generous spaces, and the absence of sharp corners, the idea being to suggest and imply leisure, contemplativeness and happy tranquility.

Without turf, and foliage, and birds, the character of the highways, whatever their ground plan, would differ from those of the town chiefly in the quality of desolation and dreariness. Turf and trees should abound then, and this implies much space in the highways, besides that which is requisite for the passage of vehicles and people on foot.

The first requirement of convenience in a wheel-way or footway is the absence from it of whatever would serve no clearly good purpose in it, because whatever serves no good purpose will obviously interfere with its primary object of offering a route of easy locomotion. In other words, the first requirement is cleanliness and smoothness of surface. The fact that this primary requirement is found in American suburban highways, much less frequently, even, than in towns, notwithstanding the apparent disadvantages of towns growing out of the greater amount of travel which their highways have to sustain, shows how difficult it must be to secure, and makes it our business to enquire in what the difficulty consists:

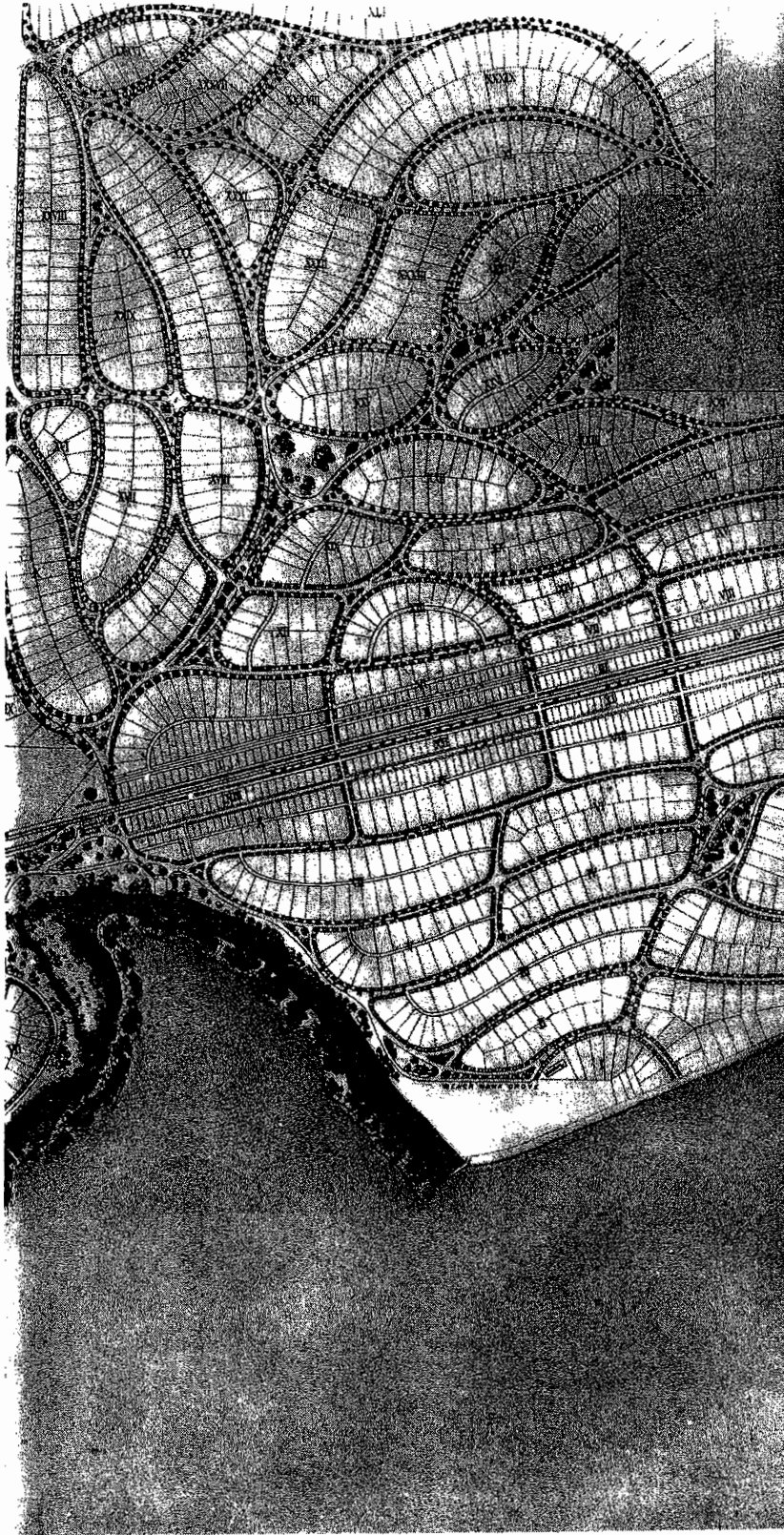
The chief essential difference between town and suburban highway arrangements comes from the fact that in the suburb there is much greater space on an average between the houses fronting upon the roadways than in the town. This condition involves that of a larger frontage for each lot, and this again the condition that the cost of making a given length of the highways, and keeping them in order, must be distributed among a smaller number of persons; consequently, the assessments upon each lot owner must either be much heavier, or the highways must be of less expensive character, than those of the town. Invariably, the latter alternative is taken, not merely because a complete town-street arrangement would be to each man enormously expensive, but because it seems apparent that it would be unnecessarily expensive. A suburban village road, bordered by villas and cottages and their appropriate grounds, and not a thoroughfare of general commerce, is required to sustain not a tenth part of the wear and tear from travel of an ordinary town street. This being obvious to everyone, a proposition that each house should pay more than one-tenth as much for street expenses as is paid by each house for good town streets, would be generally thought preposterous. It might be so but for the fact that the chief wear and tear to be provided against in the construction of a good wheel-way is not that of travel, either light or heavy, pleasure or commercial, but that of water and frost, the amount of which to be resisted in a suburb is not materially less than in the densest part of a town. If sufficient arrangements are not made to guard against the action of these destructive agencies, country roads and village streets become sometimes quite impassible and useless, sometimes merely very inconvenient and uncomfortable to use, and most of them are, in fact, throughout the whole of the year, untidy, shabby, uninviting, and completely contradictory to the ideal which most townspeople have in view when they seek to find a pleasant site for a suburban home.

Worse than this, they not only go far to destroy the charm of the



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country to the eye, but they really nullify that which is its greatest value to people seeking to escape the confinement of the town. Our country-women and girls, instead of taking more exercise in the open air, educating their perceptive faculties by a variety of observation of natural objects, and cultivating a true taste for the beautiful by familiar converse with the greatest and best of masters, are far more confined in their habits by the walls of their dwelling, than their town sisters, and mainly because they have been obliged to train and adapt themselves during a large part of the year to an avoidance of the annoyances and fatigue of going out.

These facts are perfectly familiar to every intelligent man, and yet, as we have already intimated, it is extremely rare to find an American village or suburb in which the highways can be driven through in the spring or early summer with light-pleasure vehicles, or walked through by women and children at any time, without absolute discomfort.

We find, then, that frost-proof, rain-proof wheelways and footways, let them cost what they will, should, in selecting the site of a suburban residence, be the first consideration; in planning a suburb, the first requirement to provide for. The important question then is—What is the least expensive way of providing for it?

The destructive power of storms can only be guarded against by means which will take the water away from the surface of the highways before it can form streams by which they will be worn and gullied. In most of our villages, the only means commonly employed for this purpose is that of open ditches with outlets at distant points upon natural water courses. These open ditches, at frequent intervals, become obstructed, and overflow upon the wheelway and roadsides, or they are washed into ugly gullies which must often be leaped over or waded through by people walking out, or must be bridged. They must be bridged in any case whenever it is desired to approach any nearer to a house with a carriage than the roadway itself. The covered channels thus formed are generally so small and so easily obstructed, that pools, mire-holes or gullies, across the wheelway, are usually found near them.

Pleasing exceptions to the general rule may undoubtedly be found; they usually occur in villages which are either situated on a ridge from which the water, even of heavy storms, escapes by a multitude of slight lateral depressions, so easily as not to injure the turf which has overgrown them, or upon very open sandy soils and subsoils which, except on very rare occasions, drink up the rain nearly as fast as it falls, or where both these conditions are found together.

In every such case, the water of storms is quickly and quietly removed from the surface before it has had time to form streams of strength sufficient, even when their force is increased by the concentration caused by obstructions, to form the slightest gullies.

Under ordinary circumstances, however, this can only happen upon a highway when essentially the same means are used as in well-constructed city streets, that is to say, when there are frequent outlets provided for water, connecting with underground channels, secured against the accumulation of drift-stuff by subterranean silt-basins and surface-gratings.

However expensive it is, in nearly all cases an arrangement of this kind must be considered absolutely indispensable to the maintenance of a decent and convenient country road. It must simply be a chief object, if we desire it to have a quiet rural character, to avoid anything like the ordinary high curb of the town streets, and to make the gutter as shallow and inconspicuous as, with frequent gratings, it can be, and yet be safe to accomplish the required duty.

The turf of the road-side will be cut up and destroyed if driven over when water-soaked by loaded wagons, and this it certainly will be if the proper wheelway is allowed to become miry or excessively rough. It is sure to be so when the frost comes out in the spring, if at no other time, if it is either an ordinary earth road, or a road formed by a deposit of six or eight inches in depth of gravel, or of Macadam metal,⁹ upon a substratum of earth liable to be surcharged with water. Frost, in fact, is the chief enemy of convenience and of comfort, as well as of neatness and rural prettiness in all our high roads, and the only way by which, after ceaseless experiments, it has been found possible to offer any effectual resistance to its attack, is by means of a firm, deep, solid pavement, placed upon a thoroughly-drained foundation.

A structure of this kind, as ordinarily seen, however, encounters two very strong objections. First, it is decidedly expensive; second, it is rigid, hard, jarring, noisy, hot, and fatiguing to man and horse, and discordant with the rural sentiment which should rule in a suburb. The latter class of objections can be in a great degree overcome by placing the pavement itself at a sufficient depth, and forming a surface wheelway of several layers of finely broken stone, or what amounts to the same thing, of good gravel, made so compact by heavy pressure as to be essentially waterproof. The first objection cannot be removed. A road suitable for pleasure-driving is one of the greatest common luxuries a civilized community can possess, but it is, when compared with our common, pioneer, earth teaming-ways, unavoidably an expensive luxury.

Reviewing what we have said of suburban roads, it will be evident that the two following conditions, among others, are required in their surface plan: first, they must have considerably greater breadth than is necessary merely for wheeling and walking-ways; second, wheels must be kept to the wheelways. It follows that the front line of lots, and consequently that the roadside houses, must be placed at much greater distance from the wheelways than is usual or necessary in our city streets. This, as far both as general rural effect and domestic seclusion is concerned, gives a clear advantage, against

which, experience will simply place the greater inconvenience of communication between the carriage-way and the house-door.

There is but one remedy for this inconvenience which will not be destructive of neatness and good order in the road, and that is the adoption of private roads leading into the house lots.

It should here be considered that there is nothing in all the expensive constructions which have been prescribed as the necessary foundation work of a satisfactory suburban highway, that would attract as much attention as the rude and inefficient appointments ordinarily seen. There is nothing town-like about them, narrow strips of clean gravel, with other strips of undulating turf from the higher parts of which trees would spring, are all that would appear of them above ground. But all that can be said of this arrangement is that it is inoffensive; it is convenient and tidy, nothing more. Line a highway, so formed, with coal-yards, breweries, forges, warehouses, soap-works, shambles, and shanties, and there certainly would be nothing charming about it. Line it with ill-proportioned, vilely-colored, shabby-genteel dwelling-houses, pushing their gables or eaveboards impertinently over the sidewalk as if for the advertising of domestic infelicity and eagerness for public sympathy, and it would be anything but attractive to people of taste and refinement. Line it again with high dead-walls, as of a series of private mad houses, as is done in some English suburbs, and it will be more repulsive to many than the window-lighted walls of the town blocks. Nothing of this kind is wanted in a suburb or a rural village. Nothing of this kind must be permitted if we would have it wholly satisfactory. On the contrary, we must secure something very different.

We cannot judiciously attempt to control the form of the houses which men shall build, we can only, at most, take care that if they build very ugly and inappropriate houses, they shall not be allowed to force them disagreeably upon our attention when we desire to pass along the road upon which they stand. We can require that no house shall be built within a certain number of feet of the highway, and we can insist that each house-holder shall maintain one or two living trees between his house and his highway-line.

A few simple precautions of this kind, added to a tasteful and convenient disposition of shade trees, and other planting along the road-sides and public places, will, in a few years, cause the whole locality, no matter how far the plan may be extended, to possess, not only the attraction of neatness and convenience, and the charm of refined sylvan beauty and grateful umbrageousness, but an aspect of secluded peacefulness and tranquility more general and pervading than can possibly be found in suburbs which have grown up in a desultory hap-hazard way. If the general plan of such a suburb is properly designed on the principles which have been suggested, its character will inevitably also, notwithstanding its tidiness, be not only informal, but, in a moderate way, positively picturesque, and when contrasted with the con-

stantly repeated right angles, straight lines, and flat surfaces which characterize our large modern towns, thoroughly refreshing.

We have thus far addressed ourselves mainly to questions of construction, because in them the difficulties of your undertaking will be chiefly found. If you can afford to construct wheelways and drainage-ways, such as we have described, there is but little more difficulty or expense in laying them out, and decorating them in such a manner as will increase the more important natural attractions which we have shown the site to possess, than in making straight streets in the ordinary way without the slightest respect for nature.

The suggestion that your property might be formed into a "park," most of the land within which might be divided by lines, mainly imaginary, into building lots, and sold as demand should require, has been publicly made with apparent confidence in its feasibility and advantage, and as it seems to have attractions, we shall endeavor to show why we cannot advise you to adopt it.

The landscape character of a park, or of any ground to which that term is applied with strict propriety, is that of an idealized, broad stretch of pasture, offering in its fair, sloping surfaces, dressed with fine, close herbage, its ready alternatives of shade with sunny spaces, and its still waters of easy approach, attractive promises in every direction, and, consequently, invitations to movement on all sides, go through it where one may. Thus the essential qualification of a park is *range*, and to the emphasizing of the idea of range in a park, buildings and all artificial constructions should be subordinated.

But the essential qualification of a suburb is domesticity, and to the emphasizing of the idea of habitation, all that favors movement should be subordinated. Thus the two ideals are not likely to be successfully followed on the same ground. One or the other should be abandoned wholly. The greater part of your Riverside property has hardly any specially good conditions for a park, while it has many for a suburb.

There are two aspects of suburban habitation that need to be considered to ensure success; first, that of the domiciliation of men by families, each family being well provided for in regard to its domestic in-door and out-door private life; second, that of the harmonious association and co-operation of men in a community, and the intimate relationship and constant intercourse, and inter-dependence between families. Each has its charm, and the charm of both should be aided and acknowledged by all means in the general plan of every suburb.

As, however, it can be no part of a general plan to provide for the interior arrangements of ground which is to be private, the domestic advantages which a suburb will possess can be little more than suggested through the arrangement of the means of division, and of passage between private and public ground. It is especially desirable, therefore, that these means of divi-

sion and of passage should be carefully studied. They should be enjoyable in themselves; they should on no account be imaginary lines; nor should they be obscured or concealed, as it would be better that they should be if such divisions or means of restraint were unfortunately required for any reason in a park.

On the public side of all such dividing lines, the fact that the families dwelling within a suburb enjoy much in common, and all the more enjoy it because it is in common, the grand fact, in short, that they are christians, loving one another, and not Pagans, fearing one another, should be everywhere manifest in the completeness, and choiceness, and beauty of the means they possess of coming together, of being together, and especially of recreating and enjoying them together on common ground, and under common shades.

We should recommend the appropriation of some of the best of your property for public grounds, and that most of these should have the character of informal village-greens, commons and play-grounds, rather than of enclosed and defended parks or gardens. We would have, indeed, at frequent intervals in every road, an opening large enough for a natural group of trees, and often provide at such points croquet or ball grounds, sheltered seats and drinking fountains, or some other objects which would be of general interest or convenience to passers-by.

It will probably be best to increase the height of the mill-dam so as to enlarge the area of the public water suitable for boating and skating, and so as to completely cover some low, flat ground now exposed in low stages of the river. At the same time, a larger outlet should be provided to prevent floods above the dam from injuring the shore. A public drive and walk should be carried near the edge of the bank in such a way as to avoid destroying the more valuable trees growing upon it, and there should be pretty boat-landings, terraces, balconies overhanging the water, and pavilions at points desirable for observing regattas, mainly of rustic character, and to be half overgrown with vines.

All desirable improvements of this character, more and better than can be found in any existing suburb in the United States, can be easily supplied at comparatively small cost. That which it is of far more consequence to secure at the outset, and which cannot be obtained at small cost, unfortunately, is a system of public ways of thoroughly good construction.

As we have already shown, in speaking upon the question of approach, your property is not without special advantages for this purpose, and, on the whole, we feel warranted in expressing the opinion that your scheme, though it will necessarily require a large outlay of capital, is a perfectly practicable one, and if carried out would give Chicago a suburb of highly attractive and substantially excellent character.

It should be well understood that this is a preliminary report, and that our observations have been necessarily of a somewhat superficial char-

acter. A complete topographical survey, and a much more deliberate study of the conditions to be dealt with, must precede the preparation of a definite plan, if it is to have any assured value.

Respectfully,

OLMSTED, VAUX & CO.,
Landscape Architects.

The original was published as *Preliminary Report upon the Proposed Suburban Village at Riverside, Near Chicago* (New York, 1868). Surviving evidence indicates that Olmsted wrote this report in its entirety. Vaux had sailed for Europe on August 5, 1868, and Olmsted did not visit the Riverside site until about August 20, 1868. This printed Riverside report is dated September 1, 1868. Later correspondence also indicates that Olmsted not only wrote this document without collaboration but also prepared site plans while Vaux was in England. In a letter to Edwin C. Larned of November 10, 1868, Olmsted claimed to have delivered a plat for more than three hundred Riverside lots before October 20, as well as another large plat early in November. Vaux did not return to the United States until about November 16.

Vaux may have had a hand in preparing the final Riverside plan, but it is unlikely that he could have changed the basic scheme Olmsted had determined. Childs wanted the plats quickly, to allow him to begin selling lots—a factor that would have made any major alteration virtually impossible (FLO to MPO, Aug. 23 and 25, 1868, both above; FLO to Edwin C. Larned, Nov. 10, 1868, below; Frederick C. Withers to FLO, Nov. 16, 1868; FLO to CV, Aug. 29, 1868, n. 3, above).

1. In July 1868 Emery E. Childs had purchased the 1,600-acre tract on both sides of the Des Plaines River west of Chicago, ten miles from Lake Michigan. Most of this property was the "Riverside Farm" owned by David A. Gage. Childs presumably made this purchase on behalf of a group of investors, but the Riverside Improvement Company was not officially incorporated until March 11, 1869. The act of incorporation created a stockholding corporation and gave it authority to lay out and develop the Riverside property, as well as to build a parkway between Riverside and Chicago and construct a railway along it. A supplemental act of incorporation passed at the same time mentioned only Childs in its description of the history of the Riverside development scheme up to that point. The founding stockholders listed in the act of incorporation were Emery E. Childs, Leverett W. Murray, Henry E. Seelye, David A. Gage, Alpheus C. Badger, George M. Kimbark, and William T. Allen (Herbert J. Bassman, ed., *Riverside Then & Now; A History of Riverside, Illinois, Illustrated with Photographs, Maps, and Old Etchings* [Riverside, Ill., 1936], pp. 72–73; *Charter and By-Laws of the Riverside Improvement Company* [Chicago, 1869], pp. 7–15; see also *Riverside Evidence*, 3 vols. [Chicago, 1876], in Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Ill.; Riverside Improvement Company, *Riverside in 1871, With a Description of its Improvements* [Chicago, 1871], p. 5; Alfred Theodore Andreas, *History of Cook County Illinois. From the Earliest Period to the Present Time* [Chicago, 1884], p. 876).
2. Internal evidence suggests that by this phrase Olmsted is referring to utilities such as gas, sewerage, and water, as well as to well-constructed and well-drained drives and walks.
3. Although Olmsted did not identify these conveniences and luxuries in this report, he enumerated them in *Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns*, his 1870 address

delivered at the Lowell Institute at the request of the American Social Science Association. Olmsted explained that a "strong drift toward" was a result of the increasing advantage of urban over rural life. "Compare advantages in respect simply to schools, libraries, music, and the fine arts," he wrote. "People of the greatest wealth can hardly command as much of these in the country as the poorest work-girl is offered here in Boston." He also cited the division of labor, which made available important services to households, and numerous inventions that were enhancing the quality of urban life, among them new transportation technologies and improved sewer systems (Frederick Law Olmsted, *Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns* [1870; rpt. ed., New York, 1970], pp. 4-8).

4. Olmsted is undoubtedly referring to Henry Wyldbore Rumsey (1809-1876), an English physician and sanitary reformer. Rumsey published two articles in the *Journal of Social Science* (London), which included papers presented at meetings of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science. Rumsey asserted that "*prima facie*" evidence proved "that moral and physical evil does almost invariably accompany the undue aggregation of inhabitants upon a limited area; and this, independently of the overcrowding of persons in single rooms or houses." He concluded that "mere density of population" was a threat to public health, especially among the working classes (H. W. Rumsey, "Homes for the Labouring Classes," *Journal of Social Science* 1 [May 1866]: 355-57; idem, "Comments on the Sanitary Act, 1866 . . .," *ibid.* 1 [Oct. 1866]: 668-69; Victor Gustave Plarr, *Plarr's Lives of the Fellows of the Royal College of Surgeons of England*, 2 vols. [London, 1930], 2: 252-54).
5. This was the first station of the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad (Riverside Improvement Company, *Riverside in 1871*, pp. 13-14).
6. A promotional brochure for Riverside of 1871 described the parkway being constructed as 150 feet wide, with a central roadway for carriages 40 feet wide, a bridle path 10 feet wide on one side of the roadway and a walk on the other, flanked by two roads for heavy traffic 25 feet wide, with strips of turf and trees separating some of these elements. Contemporary historian A. T. Andreas reported that construction of the parkway cost \$480,000 (*ibid.*, p. 19; A. T. Andreas, *History of Cook County*, p. 877).
7. The 1869 law establishing the west and south park systems of Chicago mandated construction of a series of boulevards linking the individual parks (H. W. S. Cleveland, *The Public Grounds of Chicago. How to Give Them Character and Expression* [Chicago, 1869], p. 13).
8. That is, because of the flatness of the prairie, it would be impossible to create the diversity of surfaces characteristic of New York's Central Park or Brooklyn's Prospect Park, as well as most European parks. Landscape architect H. W. S. Cleveland concurred. In a pamphlet offering advice on the design of Chicago's parks he explained, "Nature has denied us many of the features which have been commonly considered indispensable to the full development of her charms, and [landscape] art can only supply their want to a limited extent" (*ibid.*, p. 15).
9. Broken stone used in macadam road beds (*OED*).