



A Modern Arcadia: Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and the Plan for Forest Hills Gardens

Susan Klaus

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"Bright, cheerful houses, well arranged, well trimmed lawns, hedging carefully cut . . . distinctly joyous," wrote architectural critic Herbert Croly in 1914 about the Forest Hills Gardens community in Queens, New York. The New York Tribune agreed, reporting that the place was a "modern Garden of Eden, a fairy tale too good to be true."

Conceived as an experiment that would apply the new "science" of city planning to a suburban setting, Forest Hills Gardens was created by the Russell Sage Foundation to provide housing for middle-class commuters as an alternative to cramped flats in New York City. Although it has long been recognized as one of the most influential planned communities in the United States, this is the first time Forest Hills Gardens has been the subject of a book.

Susan L. Klaus's fully illustrated history chronicles the creation of the 142-acre development from its inception in 1909 through its first two decades, offering critical insights into American planning history, landscape architecture, and the social and economic forces that shaped housing in the Progressive Era. Klaus focuses particularly on the creative genius of Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., who served as planner and landscape architect for the project. Drawing on his father's visionary ideas but developing his own perspective, the younger Olmsted redefined planning for the modern era and became one of the founders of the profession of city planning in the United States.

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