

2017 Members Book Debuts September 27

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Newsletter

September 2017

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New Book and Talk to Rekindle a Reputation

Should you know who Warren H. Manning is?

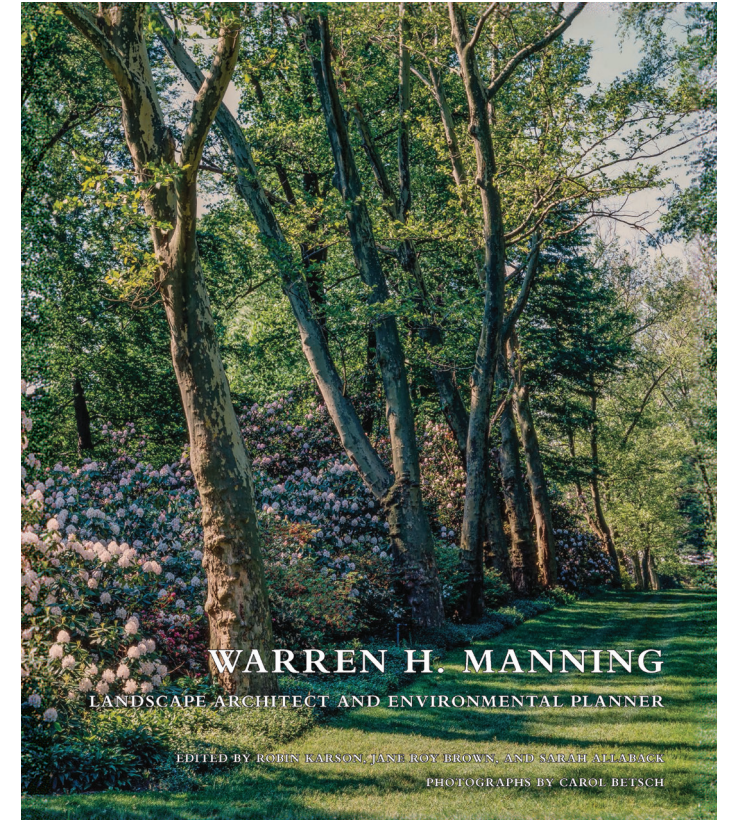
Should his name bring to mind the landscapes he envisioned, then enabled for the grand estates of Gustave Pabst of Milwaukee, Adolphus and August Busch of St. Louis, and Cyrus and Harriet McCormick of Lake Forest, Illinois? Should you realize that Manning created vistas and made visual contributions for our very own Birmingham—early landscapes and beautification projects for the street railway system and its parks and, later, the planning for Mountain Brook itself (in the employ of Robert Jemison Jr.)?

You *should* know him. We all should, considering Manning's 1,600 projects across the country. Yet no one really does. At least not until the debut of a newly released book, *Warren H. Manning: Landscape Architect and Environmental Planner*, which rediscovers and celebrates the huge body of work by the man who literally changed landscapes and transformed visual America between 1896 and 1938.

"We are honored that Birmingham and Mountain Brook are represented in this important recognition of a man who began his career working under the noted landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted," explains Marjorie White, Director, Birmingham Historical Society (BHS), who penned the book's essays on the Birmingham District Plan and Mountain Brook. "The book is truly a genuine celebration of a glowing reputation which slid into obscurity following Manning's death in 1938 and is now being appreciated anew. To own this book is to invest in Manning's return to prominence."

The Manning volume will be available at a September 27 event at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens hosted by Birmingham Historical Society and the Friends of Jemison Park. Events begin with a 5:30 p.m. reception followed by a 6 p.m. talk by Robin Karson, the book's editor, here from Amherst, Massachusetts, to discuss "Warren H. Manning: America's First Environmental Planner." Admission is free.

"It is Birmingham's privilege to meet and hear Ms. Karson, who is founder/director of the Library of American Landscape History (LALH)," says White. "In all, the Manning Project under LALH's watch spanned more than a decade, with 25 authors researching and writing about 50 of Manning's notable projects." At \$40, the hardback runs 398 pages and features 346 historic drawings and treatments of Manning projects from Alabama to Wisconsin.



WARREN H. MANNING: *Landscape Architect and Environmental Planner*. A volume from the Library of American Landscape History and the University of Georgia Press and the BHS 2017 MEMBERS BOOK

Sim Johnson, president of the Friends of Jemison Park, is particularly invested in Manning's return to recognition. "It was Manning who actually designed Jemison Park, turning an empty flood plain into a wonderful park. The Old Mill on Mountain Brook Parkway was patterned after Manning's family home dating to 1640. His vision set the stage and the tone for the positive decisions that made Mountain Brook what it is today."

White agrees. "The man could—and did—design everything large and small, from small gardens to city and national plans," she says. "This book is a joyous occasion which serves—at long last—to shine a spotlight on this icon who deserves our interest and appreciation.

"Happily, his name is once again among us." CR

About Our Speaker

Robin Karson is an editor of the book *Warren H. Manning: Landscape Architect and Environmental Planner* and director of the Library of American Landscape History, co-publisher of the volume with the University of Georgia Press.

Robin, a landscape historian, is founder and director of the Library of American Landscape History (LALH) in Amherst, Massachusetts. LALH is a nonprofit publisher of books that advance the study and practice of American landscape architecture. Karson has written several books and scores of articles about American landscape history and has organized

touring exhibitions and documentary films. Her written work has been recognized by many national awards. A graduate of the University of Michigan in museum studies, she has been made an honorary member of the American Society of Landscape Architects.

Karson's talk will make a persuasive case for Warren Manning's historical and national importance. She will provide insights into Manning's background and work and will speak to the broad strokes of both his 1919 *City Plan of Birmingham* and the design of Mountain Brook in the 1920s, with lots of interesting visuals.



Who Was Warren Manning?

In his introduction to *Warren H. Manning's City Plan of Birmingham*, published by subscription in Birmingham in 1919, the Birmingham artist and landscape architect Frank Hartley Anderson (1891–1947) described Warren Manning as “acknowledged, by all men fitted to know, to be one of the foremost city planners of the present century.”

Warren Henry Manning (1860–1938) was an American landscape designer and planner. Raised at his family's Massachusetts nursery, the brilliant and inquisitive youth served as a horticulturalist for eight years in the office of landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. (1822–1903), participating in 125 projects in 22 states. In 1896, Manning began his own nationwide practice that would encompass more than 1,600 projects, including estates, park and city plans, college grounds and golf courses, subdivisions and company towns, and private, corporate, and governmental commissions in 36 states and the District of Columbia.

An advocate for conservation of America's vast native lands, Manning wrote prolifically in reports for his clients and in articles on diverse subjects in popular and professional periodicals. He

ABOVE: Warren H. Manning, n.d. Photograph courtesy of University of Massachusetts at Lowell, Center for Lowell History.

was constantly on the train writing and drawing and thinking. He was instrumental in the founding of the American Society of Landscape Architects in 1899 and of the National Park Service in 1916.

After Manning's death, most of his office records were destroyed, and his reputation slipped into obscurity. Over the past decade, a network of 25 research volunteers contributed to the Warren H. Manning Research Project at the Library of American Landscape History (LALH) in Amherst, Massachusetts, working to assess current conditions of Manning's built projects and to compile a richly illustrated compendium of site essays that illustrate the range, scope, and significance of Manning's notable career. LALH and the University of Georgia Press released *Warren H. Manning: Landscape Architect and Environmental Planner* in 2017.

During a visit to Birmingham in 1986, Professor Albert Fein (1931–1989), a historian and authority on the work of Frederick Law Olmsted, noted that Warren Manning was “THE landscape architect of the twentieth century.” (Fein's 1972 publication, *Fredrick Law Olmsted and the American Environmental Tradition*, had helped establish Olmsted as THE landscape architect of the nineteenth century.)

Manning Projects In and Near Birmingham

- College grounds for Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, 1901–1908
- Training in 1908 of a young associate, George Miller, who later designed the city of Fairfield and Birmingham's Altamont Parkway for Robert Jemison Jr., as well as the Birmingham estates of John Kaul and A. H. Woodward, 1909–1914

- Beautification projects along the tracks of Birmingham's streetcar railway lines for Birmingham Railway, Light & Power Company, owned by American Cities Company and Isadore Newman of New Orleans, 1914–1915
- An amusement park at East Lake in Birmingham, then owned by the street railway company, 1914
- A plan for the “Great City of the Future” for Commission President George Ward, text and drawings completed in December 1916, published as *Warren H. Manning's City Plan of Birmingham*, 1919
- Plans for the Forest Park residential development for Robert Jemison Jr., 1917–1919, not realized
- Recreational facilities planning at Fairfield and Wenonah for the Tennessee Coal, Iron & Railroad Company, President George Gordon Crawford, 1925–1926
- A country estate for Robert Jemison Jr. at Spring Lake Farms, today's Reed-Riddle-Jemison House in the Huffman neighborhood, 1926
- Planning for roads and subdivision of the Irondale Furnace property of George Gordon Crawford, 1925–1929, subsequently subdivided as the Cherokee Bend neighborhood of Mountain Brook
- “The General Plan for Mountain Brook” for Robert Jemison Jr., including the location of estates, roads, parks, and other community amenities, 1926–1929
- The Riding Academy and 28 miles of bridle trails in Mountain Brook for Robert Jemison Jr., 1926–1928
- A country estate for Forney Johnston, now subdivided as the Lockerbie neighborhood of Mountain Brook, c. 1929.
- Fairyland Estates on Lookout Mountain, Chattanooga, 1925–1929

Society Calendar

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, NOON

Heritage Society Gathering at the Crawford Johnson Residence, the home of Maye and Bernard Frei on Cherokee Road. Deadline for reservations is Wednesday, September 20.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

“*Warren H. Manning: America's First Environmental Planner*,” a talk by Robin Karson, LALH. Reception at 5:30 p.m.; talk at 6:00 p.m. Auditorium, Birmingham Botanical Gardens, 2612 Lane Park Road.

Hosted by BHS and the Friends of Jemison Park.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14, 10:30 A.M.

Walk and Talk in “Grandmother's Garden at Sloss Quarters.” Alabama Plein Air Artists will be painting. See GG at SQ Facebook page for more details.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 3 P.M.

Birmingham Historical Society's 75th Anniversary Celebration at the former Birmingham Printing Company, today's ArchitectureWorks, 130 19th Street South.

BHS Members paid for 2017 may pick up their complimentary copy of the Manning book at the September meetings. Additional copies will be available for sale for \$40.

Robin Karson on the Career of Warren H. Manning

“His aim in new developments was to use existing resources to create park-like environs that would provide open space for outdoor recreation as well as scenic distinction.”



The Future Greater Birmingham District, *The City Plan of Birmingham*, Warren H. Manning. Courtesy Birmingham Public Library. Southern History Department.