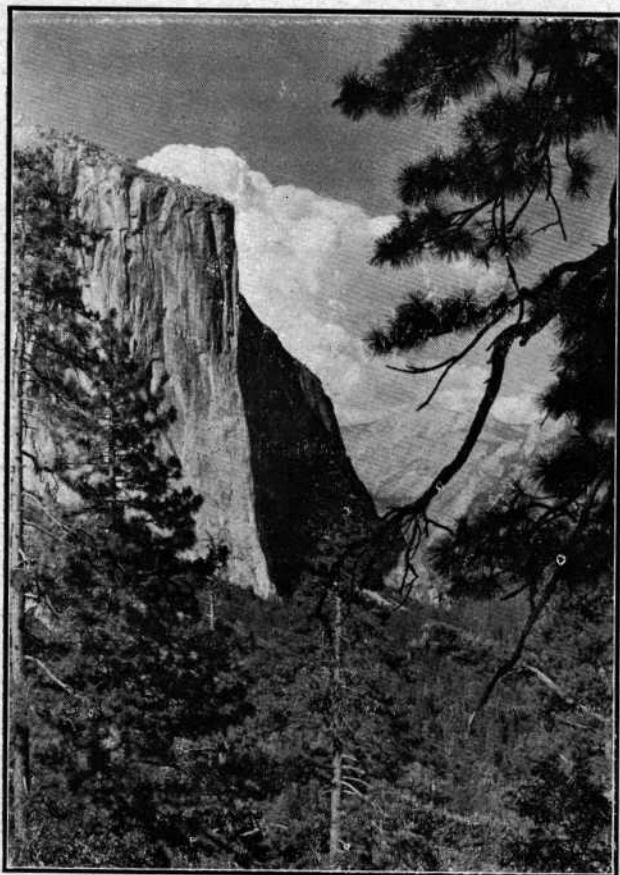


YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES

Vol. XXV

September, 1946

No. 9



Yosemite Nature Notes

THE MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF
THE YOSEMITE NATURALIST DEPARTMENT
AND THE YOSEMITE NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

F. A. Kittredge, Superintendent

M. V. Walker, Associate Park Naturalist

Harry C. Parker, Assistant Park Naturalist

VOL. XXV

SEPTEMBER, 1946

NO. 9

MOUNTAIN MEADOWS

By Elizabeth H. Godfrey

When in the vales and valleys
The grass is bleached and dry,
Its "May" time in the meadows
That grace the mountains high.
Exquisite, vivid tapestries
Before the eyes are spread,
And in this out-door weaving
Each blossom is a thread.
The shooting stars in lavender,
Forget-me nots in blue,
Blend with rusty columbine
And yarrow's creamy hue.
Queen Anne's lace is everywhere,
The cone flower, very tall;
The gentian modestly withholds
Its bloom until the fall.
And when their season's over,
We know they've blossomed there,
By tantalizing fragrance
That haunts the autumn air.



PRINCIPAL ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS OF YOSEMITE

By C. Frank Brockman

FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED

Chairman of the first Board of Commissioners to manage Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Big Tree Grove (The Yosemite Grant) and, as such, the first administrative officer of this area . . . September 28, 1864-May 21, 1886.

Born at Hartford, Connecticut, April 26, 1822.

Died at Waverly, Massachusetts, August 28, 1903.

Early records relative to the Yosemite Grant indicate that Frederick Law Olmsted, famed American landscape architect, was the first administrative officer of this area. (1). He acted in that capacity as Chairman of the Board of Commissioners during the initial years of the Yosemite Grant and until the appointment of a Guardian.

It was not until April 2, 1866, that the State Legislature formally accepted the grant made by Congress

in an act passed on that date. This act also provided that none of the Commissioners should receive any compensation for their services, as such, and also gave them the power to appoint a guardian "either of their own number or not . . . to perform such duties as they may prescribe, and to receive such compensation as they may fix, not to exceed five hundred dollars per annum." The Commission met for the first time on May 21, 1866, and presumably, although

(1) Several months after the bill establishing the Yosemite Grant was passed by Congress and signed by President Abraham Lincoln (June 30, 1864), Governor F. F. Low of California, in his proclamation of September 28, 1864, named the eight original commissioners. These men were Frederick Law Olmsted, Prof. J. D. Whitney, William Ashburner, I. W. Raymond, E. S. Holden, Alexander Deering, Geo. W. Coulter, and Galer Clark. In his proclamation Governor Low stated that, "All propositions for the improvement of the aforesaid tracts of land, or for leases, should be made to the Commissioners, through Frederick Law Olmsted, Bear Valley, Mariposa County." By this statement Mr. Olmsted was recognized as the principal member of the Board of Commissioners and was thus, in effect, the chief administrative officer for the Yosemite Grant during the initial period of its existence.

To further substantiate this fact we have Mr. Olmsted's own statement, included in an article, "Government Preservation of Natural Scenery," which he wrote and published under date of March 8, 1890. In this article he states, "In the year 1864 . . . I had the honor to be made chairman of the first Yosemite Commission, and in that capacity to take possession of the Valley for the State, to organize and direct the survey of it and to be the executive of various measures taken to guard the elements of its scenery from fires, trespassers and abuse. In the performance of these duties I visited the Valley frequently, established a permanent camp in it and virtually acted as its Superintendent."

no record of this act and its exact date seems to be available, appointed Galen Clark as Guardian for he was acting in that capacity shortly thereafter.

At the time of his appointment to the Board of Commissioners Frederick Law Olmsted was Superintendent of the Mariposa Grant (2). This position was a recognition of the important place which he had achieved in public and private life at that time.

His career gave early indication of his interest in the outdoors, in trees, in the aesthetic qualities of landscapes, and in the preservation of representative areas for public welfare. He is, in fact, credited with being the "father" of the profession of landscape architecture in America. He traveled widely to develop his knowledge and experience in this line. A prolific writer, his publications indicated a wide range of interests and a profound understanding of the basic principles of land management for public welfare, and he worked tirelessly in the development of public understanding and recognition of the need in this connection. These efforts naturally

brought him into contact with the management of significant land areas (3) during that period of American history which was characterized, not only by westward ex-



pansion, but also by the mounting crescendo of European emigration and of industrial and technological advancements that fostered a swing away from the land and toward the development of numerous urban centers in the east and midwest. It

(2) Ten square leagues (44,386 acres) purchased in 1847 by Col. John C. Fremont from Juan Alvarado, who had been granted this tract in 1844 by Manuel Micheltorena, then the Mexican Governor of California. The estate, which occupied a section of the foothill country about the town of Mariposa, had passed from the hands of Col. Fremont to a group of Wall Street capitalists when Olmsted was Superintendent of the area.

He accepted this position on August 10, 1863, and arrived in San Francisco from New York on October 11th. His connection with the Mariposa Grant continued until his resignation of that post on August 31, 1865, after which he returned to New York.

was decidedly the time when a far sighted leader, with ability to put his thoughts to work, was required in the establishment of the roots of American conservation.

It was fortunate then that this man, a dynamic leader in matters pertaining to conservation and land management, should be present in California at a time when America was first awakening to the needs of preserving and protecting examples of significant scenery for future public welfare. Yosemite Valley had early attracted the attention of scientists and scientific societies as a primary area of this type and it was natural that upon the establishment of the Yosemite Grant that Frederick Law Olmsted, who had already achieved a notable place in matters of this kind, should be named to take the primary responsibility in its initial management.

Frederick Law Olmsted was one of several children of Charlotte Law (Hull) and John Olmsted, a prosperous merchant of Hartford, Conn. His mother died when he was quite young so it was from his father—whose real enjoyment of landscape beauty was evident from his actions, although what little he said about

it was poorly expressed — that the son was unconsciously and gradually led to develop his extraordinary keenness of observation and enjoyment in regard to such matters, and his lifelong habit of clear, analytical thinking about the values people derive from the landscapes that surround them.

His early schooling, although more or less irregular, further developed his interest in the outdoors. Direct contact with nature was supplemented by the interest of a number of neighbors who not only possessed scholarly works in their small but carefully selected libraries but encouraged and aided the growing boy to use them and understand their meaning and significance. As a boy on travels with his father and others—all of whom had a more than average appreciation of natural beauty—he was further grounded in basic facts that were destined to play such a large part in his career.

Later he was to travel to Europe, southwestern United States, and along the Atlantic seaboard. When 21 years of age he sailed before the mast to Canton, China.

An illness at about 14 years of age affected his eyes and soon thereafter,

(3) One of his most noted connections in this line was his association with Central Park in New York City. On September 11, 1857, after land had been acquired for the park and preliminary work on it had begun, he was named its Superintendent. A short time later, at the request of and in collaboration with Calvert Vaux, and in competition with about thirty others, he submitted a design for the development of this area which was accepted. This was practically the first effort along this line in America and since the plan was so well devised and well executed it attracted wide attention and established him as a leader in this new profession.

although ready to enter college, he was advised to forego this activity. Consequently the high place which he later attained was largely "self made"—an attribute to his native ability. His lack of a college education was no deterrent to his capabilities and he received wide recognition for his talents (4).

On his return from the China voyage he abandoned seamanship as a vocation and settled down to farming, first in Connecticut and later on Staten Island, New York. It was in connection with his farming operations that the first tangible evidence appeared of practical or vocational activities connected with landscape architecture, as distinguished from an amateur's interest in the general subject. He established a small nursery business on his Staten Island

farm in 1849, became increasingly active in horticultural organizations, and made acquaintance with Andrew Jackson Downing and his young partner Calvert Vaux, the leading professional designers of country estates and grounds of public buildings in the United States at that time. These interests later broadened into his connection with the development of Central Park and widespread activities of a kindred nature elsewhere (5).

He was married in Central Park on June 13, 1859, to Mary Cleveland Olmsted, the widow of his brother. In addition to their three children—John Theodore (born June 14, 1860) who died in infancy, Marion (born October 28, 1861), and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. (born July 24, 1870), Mrs. Olmsted's four children (John,

(4) From 1861 to 1863 he served as Secretary of the United States Sanitary Commission, which he had helped to organize, receiving as recognition for his efforts in this connection an honorary degree of A. M. from Harvard University. Previous to this he was made an "honorary member" of the class of 1847 of Yale University, for he had attended lectures at that institution for a time. In 1867 he was given an honorary A. M. from Amherst. Later, when his career had crystallized, he was granted honorary degrees of L.L.D. from both Yale and Harvard Universities in 1893.

(5) Among the more important works of landscape architecture for the design of which Frederick Law Olmsted was primarily responsible, in addition to Central Park in New York City, were Prospect Park in Brooklyn; the South Parks in Chicago; Riverside and Morningside Parks in New York City; Mount Royal Park in Montreal; the grounds surrounding the Capitol, Washington, D. C.; and the general plan of buildings and grounds of Leland Stanford University, California. He developed the grounds along the lake front in Chicago for the World's Columbian Exposition (1892), and, being actively interested in the preservation of the area about Niagara Falls, was influential in the establishment of the park there by the State of New York. He also made plans for this park. He held directing appointments under the cities of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Wilmington, and San Francisco, the joint Committee on buildings and grounds of Congress, the Niagara Falls Reservation Commission, the trustees of Harvard, Yale, Amherst and many other colleges and public institutions. After 1876 he was largely occupied in laying out an extensive system of parks and parkways for the City of Boston and the town of Brookline, and on landscape improvement of Boston Harbor.

Charles, Charlotte, and Owen) of her previous marriage completed the family.

REFERENCES

- Brockman, C. Frank—"Administrative Officers of Yosemite." *Yosemite Nature Notes*, Volume XXIII, No. 6, June 1944, pages 53-57.
- Chamberlain, H. D.—"Call of Gold." *Mariposa, California, Gazette Press*, 1936, 183 p., illustrated.
- Olmsted, Frederick Law—"Governmental Preservation of Natural Scenery." *Brookline, Massachusetts*, March 8, 1890.
- Olmsted, Frederick Law, Jr., and Kimball, Theodora. "Frederick Law Olmsted—Landscape Architect," Volume I, *Early Years and Experiences*, New York, New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1922, 131 p., illustrated.
- Russell, C. P.—"100 Years in Yosemite." Palo Alto, *Stanford University Press*, 1931, 242 p., illustrated.
- Whitney, J. D.—"The Yosemite Book." Published by authority of the California State Legislature. New York, 1868. 133 p., illustrated, maps.
- Yosemite Valley Commissioners—"Biennial Reports of the Commission to Manage Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Big Tree Grove," 1867-1904.

* * *

C. FRANK BROCKMAN RETURNS TO ALMA MATER

By M. V. Walker, Acting Park Naturalist

On July 24, 1946, Mr. C. Frank Brockman left Yosemite National Park to take over his new position as Assistant Professor of Forestry in the College of Forestry, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington. In addition to offering special courses in dendrology, Mr. Brockman will plan and supervise an expanded visual education and extension service for the College of Forestry.

Mr. Brockman came to Yosemite National Park as Park Naturalist in March, 1941, being transferred from Mount Rainier National Park in Washington where he had served since 1929. Although greatly hampered by reduction in personnel and other wartime restrictions, Mr. Brockman worked tirelessly in an effort to modernize and improve museum exhibits and interpretive facilities. He



Photo by Ralph Anderson

prepared plans and supervised the revision and installation of exhibits in the history room, and partially completed an exhibit in the tree room of the Yosemite Museum. Exhibits in the Glacier Point Lookout were also revised. An interpretive development outline was prepared for inclusion in the Park master plan, and a new plan was prepared for development of the Glacier Point Lookout.

The entire Yosemite Museum office arrangement, workshop facilities, and storage space were reorganized under Mr. Brockman's direction. The research library was moved to the second floor, thereby providing library facilities adjacent to the research study collections. Furthermore, this made it possible for serious students of natural history to utilize the Yosemite Museum Nature Library. The naturalist offices were reestablished in better order; the open patio was permanently enclosed and made available for year around use; the attic was completely rehabilitated and partitioned off into separate rooms, and a large number of badly needed storage bins were constructed. This reorganization greatly improved the working facilities and efficiency of the interpretive division in Yosemite National Park.

His special aptitude for writing made it possible for Mr. Brockman to contribute a large number of documentary and special articles for Yo-

osemite Nature Notes, many of which will appear in future issues. He prepared the January, 1945, Special Issue "Principal Waterfalls of the World" which has been well received and very popular. He has prepared all copy and illustrations for the January, 1947, Special Number which will be entitled "Broad-leaved Trees of Yosemite National Park." As Director of the Yosemite Natural History Association and editor of Yosemite Nature Notes, Mr. Brockman has carried to completion an enormous number of projects which have resulted from the greatly expanded printing and publishing activities of the Association. The Board of Trustees and Officers of the Yosemite Natural History Association appreciate his many contributions and his keen interest in the affairs of the Association.

In returning to the Pacific Northwest, Mr. Brockman is realizing an ambition of several years standing. During his tour of duty in Mount Rainier National Park he became thoroughly imbued with the spirit and feeling of the Pacific Northwest — its mountains, forests, lakes, and streams—and for some time it has been his desire to return to that area.

The "Brockmans" — Carol, Frank, Bill and Jean—will be missed in Yosemite National Park, but all their many friends wish them the best of luck and much success in their new home.



YOSEMITE ANIMALS

BUTTERFLY MIGRATION ATTRACTS BIRDS

By Emerson A. Stoner

While driving from the Yosemite Valley to the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees on the afternoon of June 19, my family and I drove through a migration of butterflies. They were all flying in the same direction across the road from left to right in a northwesterly direction. The migration was first noted a short distance beyond the Wawona Tunnel and we drove through the flight for a distance of about fifteen miles, the migration being heaviest a little south of Chinquapin. It was impossible to even estimate the number of butterflies but there must have been a few million. The species was later identified at the Yosemite Museum as the California tortoise-shell (*Nymphalis californica*). Automobiles traveling over the road had killed or injured thousands of these beautiful insects and their presence on the highway had attracted the birds.

On two occasions I saw western robins (*Turdus migratorius propin-*



quus) catch maimed or broken-winged butterflies and fly up from the road with them. No doubt many birds collected their quota from this unusual migration.





Digitized by
Yosemite Online Library

<http://www.yosemite.ca.us/library>

Dan Anderson