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Learning from the Landscape: The European Tours of Charles A. Platt and Charles Eliot

by KEITH N. MORGAN

ABSTRACT

Study and travel in Europe provided a foundation for the establishment of artists and architects in the United States, including landscape architects and urban planners. In the closing decades of the nineteenth century, Charles A. Platt (1859–1933) and Charles Eliot (1861–97), men from privileged backgrounds in New York and Boston respectively, spent years in Europe seeking training and direct knowledge of historic patterns in garden, park and city making. Both shared their observations in influential articles for professional and popular journals and in publications that discussed what they had observed abroad and showed how it could be applied to American needs. Separate publications about their work and ideas further reinforced their influence. Platt, originally trained as an etcher and painter, approached first landscape design and then architecture from the perspective of an artist. He became one of the earliest and most influential figures in the formal garden revival in the United States, especially in landscapes for country houses, for which he also became one of the country's most admired designers. In contrast, Eliot studied European patterns as a landscape architect who was also interested in both land preservation and regional planning. He led in establishing the Trustees of Public Reservations (1891), America's first private-sector state-wide landscape trust, and the Boston Metropolitan Park Commission (1893), the country's earliest regional landscape-planning state agency. The two men and their work represent contrasting methods and objectives, yet their interlocking careers sketch a broader panorama of the European precedents for American conditions at the turn of the twentieth century and beyond.

During the American Renaissance, Europe provided inspiration not only for artists, but also for architects, landscape architects and city planners. Many of them sought European models to emulate and adapt, and some crossed the Atlantic to broaden their education and experience. Here the focus is on two such men, born about 1860, whose privileged backgrounds allowed them to follow this course during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. They went to study the landscape traditions of Europe and, after they returned home, became influential as writers and landscape architects, but in sharply contrasting ways. One sought to engage with Europe's patterns of land-use and stewardship and apply them to American conditions, while the other consciously approached the landscape from the perspective of the artist before beginning to apply

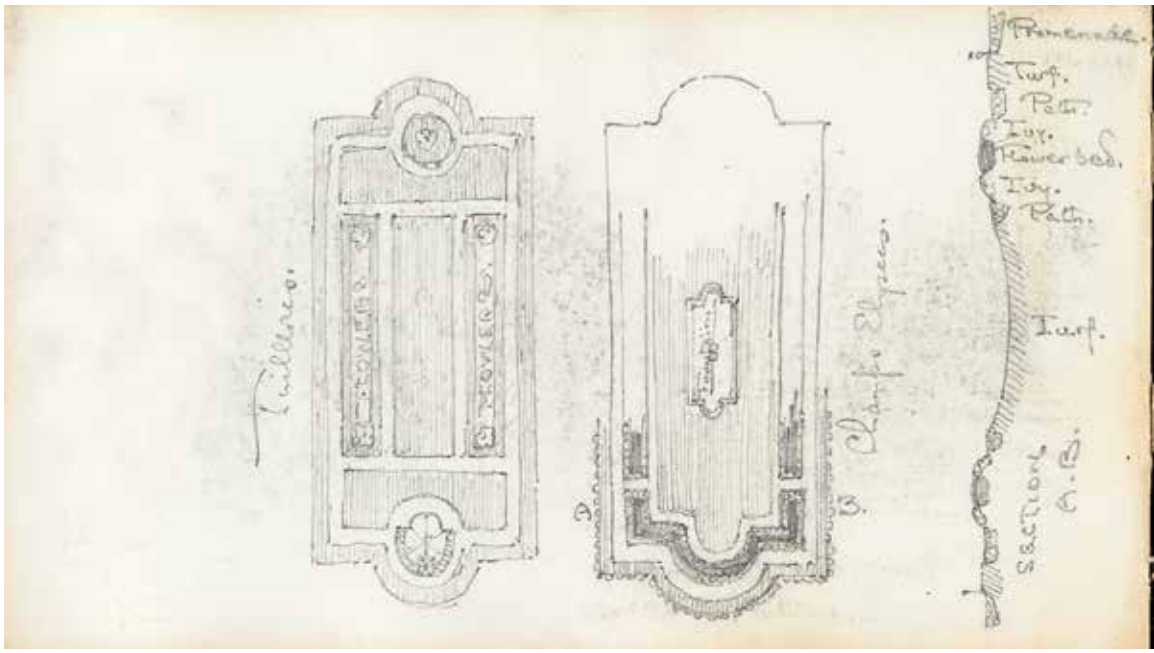

Fig. 1. *Charles Eliot, pages from European sketchbook showing (left) plans and profile of terraces in the Tuileries Garden and (right) a sketch of the Lac Dausmenil in the Bois de Vincennes, Paris, 1886, pencil drawing (Charles Eliot Collection, Loeb Library, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University)*

what he had seen. This article will examine both the European experiences and the professional results of these two dominant figures in American landscape history.[1]

Charles Eliot (1859–97), a Boston-based landscape architect and from 1893 a partner in the firm of Olmsted, Olmsted and Eliot, undertook an eleven-month, carefully prepared pilgrimage in 1885–86, visiting parks and gardens ranging from England to Russia and Italy. After his return, he initially set up in independent practice and wrote extensively on ideas harvested during his travels, especially in the journal *Garden and Forest*, the first American periodical devoted to such fields.[2] He applied concepts of land conservation, regional planning and historic preservation to create innovative models in Massachusetts — the Trustees of Public Reservations (1891) and the Boston Metropolitan Park System (1893) — that were influential across the United States and also in England, notably in the foundation of the National Trust in 1895.

Charles A. Platt (1861–1933) was a New York-based etcher, painter, landscape designer and architect. Between 1882 and 1887 he trained as an artist in Paris, and in the spring of 1892 he travelled to Italy with his younger brother William, then an intern in the Olmsted office (where Eliot would soon become a partner). The brothers recorded twenty-four gardens and, after returning to the US, Charles published two articles on 'The Formal Garden in Italy' in *Harper's Magazine* in 1893 and then, in 1894, *Italian Gardens*, the first book in English on the subject.[3] This pioneering work, anticipating others in the US and England, inspired a generation of American

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landscape designers.[4] Platt applied what he had learned to create a new model of Italian Renaissance-informed landscapes and architecture for American country houses and academic campuses.

These two men characterise two dominant, and contrasting, American traditions in landscape design at the turn of the twentieth century. Throughout much of their careers, they functioned as autodidacts, teaching themselves the necessary skills and practices of the new profession of landscape architecture. For both, their time abroad was transformative and provided an essential foundation for their work. At that time, beyond an apprenticeship with an established designer — of which there were relatively few — no professional preparation for a career in landscape architecture existed in the US, nor were there formalised training paths in Europe. Both men, of necessity, needed to craft their own education for what was still a loosely defined field. Since the 1830s, many Americans had chosen to spend time abroad preparing for various professions from medicine and science to all spheres of the arts, as well as for health, enjoyment and refinement. Similarly, both Eliot and Platt regarded a substantial period of European travel and study as essential for their careers and came from families that could provide financial support and personal connections abroad. In choosing such a path, they were following in the steps of predecessors from both families.[5]

This tale of two men can also be seen as a tale of two cities — New York and Boston — vying to influence the concept and practice of landscape architecture in the US. Eliot represented the educational environment of his father, the president of Harvard University, as well as the mercantile world of his mother's ancestors. Platt emerged from a family of comfort based on the corporate law career of his father in New York

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City and his mother's inherited wealth from the Cheney silk mills in Connecticut. While Boston had been culturally dominant throughout much of the nineteenth century, New York had risen to challenge that prominence in business and the arts following the civil war. At the end of the century, Boston came to dominate the field of landscape architecture, especially with the move of Frederick Law Olmsted senior (1822–1903), the country's leading practitioner, from New York City to the Boston suburb of Brookline in 1883, and then by the creation of an academic programme in landscape architecture at Harvard in 1900.

FAMILY PATTERNS OF EUROPEAN TRAVEL AND TRAINING

Charles Eliot benefited from early and repeated exposure to Europe that made his eventual tour of self-education a continuation of childhood experiences.[6] In 1863 his father, after being denied the appointment to the Rumford chair in chemistry at Harvard, took his family to Europe for two years so that he could study the scientific advances of Europe and the pedagogy of foreign universities, especially in Germany, then the most advanced in many fields. Young Eliot, frequently suffering from health problems, thus travelled along with his brother and parents to various sites in England, France, Germany and elsewhere. Because of his mother's continuing poor health, the family returned to Europe for a year in 1867. Before he turned ten, these two trips had thus exposed Eliot to many of the principal cities and natural landscapes of England and continental Europe. These family excursions were followed in 1869 by the appointment of his father to the presidency of Harvard College. During his adolescence and college years, Eliot educated himself about natural history, tramping around the suburbs of Boston from 1875 while still a teenager, and forming with fellow undergraduates at Harvard the Champlain Society to study the flora and fauna of Mount Desert Island in Maine, where his parents had purchased a summer house in 1871.

Family influences also underpin Charles Platt's early interest in art. His mother's uncles John (1801–85) and Seth Wells Cheney (1810–56) — two of eight brothers who had founded the Cheney silk mill in South Manchester, Connecticut — were both known as artist engravers. In 1833, the two brothers went to Paris and studied with Jean-Baptiste Isabey (1767–1855), a painter of portraits and miniatures, and Paul Delaroche (1797–1856), a history painter. In the following decades, both brothers continued to produce engravings — portraits and landscapes — for income and travelled to Europe for long periods.[7] John Cheney lived until 1885 and knew his great-nephew Charles well, frequently visiting the Platt family at their home in New York City. Thus, by family tradition, Charles Platt inherited an outlook that included a career as an artist with an education both in the US and in Europe, specifically in England, France and Italy.[8] Contact with the contemporary art scene in New York, and the influence exerted by European travel and study on its participants, continued when in 1847 John Platt, Charles's father, became one of the founding members of the Century Association, a club of men in New York City interested in the arts and literature, which was itself an outgrowth of the Sketch Club. Charles Platt would eventually become the president of the Century Association and knew many of the original artist members who visited his father and family in their Manhattan home.

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Fig. 2. *Charles Eliot, sketches of landforms of natural topography, 1886, pencil drawing (Charles Eliot Collection, Loeb Library, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University)*

ELIOT'S EDUCATION AT HOME AND ABROAD

Having graduated in 1880 from Harvard College, where his father remained president until 1909, Eliot began his professional path with a series of courses from 1881 to 1883 at the Bussey Institute, a component of Harvard with an agriculture-focused curriculum and its own site in Jamaica Plain, near Boston. Through an introduction in 1883 from his uncle, the architect Robert Swain Peabody (1845–1917), Eliot became the first (unpaid) intern in the office of Frederick Law Olmsted. This was shortly after the latter relocated his landscape architecture practice from New York City to suburban Brookline to oversee the planning of the Boston Municipal Park System. Eliot assisted Olmsted and his stepson, John Charles Olmsted, on projects both in Boston and more widely across the US, including early plans for the Arnold Arboretum in Jamaica Plain and Belle Isle Park in Detroit.

Always the eager traveller, Eliot left the Olmsted office in 1885 when he felt he had learned all he could and began a two-phase pilgrimage to inspect landscape forms. The first was a three-month excursion along the east coast of the US, focused more on natural environments than on formally designed landscapes. He then began to prepare for a longer investigation of European sites, poring over guidebooks and histories to determine the most instructive ones to visit. He also armed himself with letters of introduction from both his father and his former employer, which would open doors to academics and practitioners.

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He set sail for England on 5 November 1885 — just as Platt was planning his first trip to Italy — and returned to Boston almost a year later, on 7 October 1886. He made contact with family and professional friends and settled into a concerted period of reading at the British Museum.[9] By the time he returned home, he had read more of the literature on his chosen profession in English, French and German than any previous American and had travelled widely from the English Lake District to Russia, northern Italy and many sites in between. He corresponded with his family, friends and his former colleagues in the Olmsted office about the details of the trip and kept a diary to record his observations. He made drawings of the cities, landscapes and sites that he visited, including ground plans of gardens and boulevard formations (Fig. 1) and topographic views (Fig. 2). These quite intimate sketches were often made with an eye to future use as a landscape architect. He acquired postcards and commercial photographs of towns, gardens and landscapes, although he frequently complained to his family that these images rarely showed the characteristics or specific sites he wanted for a record. As his father reported in his 1902 biography of his son: 'Throughout all of Europe he found it very difficult to get pleasing and instructive photographs of scenery […] He came to the conclusion that one who wanted to bring away from Europe photographic memoranda of landscape which had interested him must be his own photographer.'[10] Nevertheless, Eliot brought back a substantial photographic archive to Boston and used it as an active resource, organised by landscape forms such as woodland views, riverscapes, private gardens and public squares, to guide his work. In the surviving photographic collection, he interfiled photographs of his own landscape projects with those of Europe, indicating how he saw them as related.[11]

In England, Eliot met some of the leading figures in the nascent movement for land conservation and access. In London and Oxford, he was greeted by his father's friend James Bryce (1838–1922), the Liberal MP and Regius professor of civil law at Oxford. A leading figure in the land movement, Bryce introduced him to other reformers and shared with him his own efforts, such as the Access to Mountains (Scottish) Bill, which he had introduced to parliament the previous year. Eliot also met George Shaw Lefevre (1831–1928), another Liberal politician and one of the founders in 1865 of the Commons Preservation Society. Other leaders of the emerging landscape conservation community in England included Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley (1851–1920) — one of the future founders of the National Trust — whom Eliot visited at Crosthwaite in the Lake District, comparing experiences of American efforts in the Adirondack Mountains and Niagara Falls with the challenges faced by the Lake District.[12] Eliot's introduction to Rawnsley may have come from his second cousin, his former professor of fine arts at Harvard, Charles Eliot Norton (1827–1908), who was one of the two earliest American members of the Lakeland Defence Society, and Norton's close friend (and Rawnsley's fellow Lakeland resident) John Ruskin (1819–1900).

Eliot's many hours in the British Museum Library and his letters about this research became the foundation for articles that helped establish him as a serious, pioneer historian of the American landscape and its foreign influences.[13] When he could no longer endure the London weather, he embarked on the first of a series of months-long excursions to carefully chosen destinations, recording their landscapes through drawing, collecting

photographs and making notes on the horticultural material growing naturally or introduced into planned landscapes. He greatly admired the Scandinavian countryside, but was contemptuous of French landscape fashion. He frequently compared sites across Europe to the character of the New England landscape that he knew well.

Among European sites, none had a more profound effect on his evolving sense of the purpose of the designed landscape than the estate of Prince Hermann von Pückler-Muskau (1785–1851) at Bad Muskau on what is now the German-Polish border. He later wrote about the comprehensively improved landscape, noting that the prince had been deeply influenced by his English travels in the early nineteenth century. In 1834, Pückler-Muskau published *Andeutungen über Landschaftsgärtnerei* [*Remarks on Landscape Gardening*], which Eliot read at the British Library.[14] He especially admired Pückler-Muskau's attempt to apply the English picturesque aesthetic to all elements of his property, from the formal gardens near the Schloss to the agricultural parts, the surrounding woodlands and even the alum factory. The estate at Bad Muskau became Eliot's model for a totally designed landscape, achieving what he later described as the essence of landscape, 'meaning […] the visible surroundings of men's lives on the surface of the earth'.[15] In one of his final letters home, Eliot enthused about Pückler-Muskau's work: 'His park is probably the finest work of real landscape gardening on a large scale that this century has seen carried out in Europe.'[16] He purchased an estate plan (Fig. 3) and six postcards (Fig. 4) as a record and would write about Muskau in one of his early articles for *Garden and Forest*.[17]

PLATT'S EDUCATION AT HOME AND ABROAD

Three years before Eliot, Platt had made his first study visit to Europe. Platt did not attend college, but in 1878, aged seventeen, began training as an artist in New York. There he registered for the antique school of the National Academy of Design and also joined the Art Students League for training in painting.[18] The following summer, while on vacation on Lake George in the Adirondack Mountains, Platt met the Philadelphia artist Stephen Parrish (1846–1938), who introduced him to the recently revived fine art of etching in which Platt soon established a successful artistic and commercial reputation.[19] Nevertheless, Platt recognised that New York offered inadequate education and training, so in May 1882 he set off for France, first stopping in London to meet the leading British etcher Francis Seymour Haden (1818–1910) and to attend the second exhibition of the Society of Painter-Etchers, to which Platt had submitted a series of etchings.[20]

Once in Paris, Platt worked alone for two years, attending exhibitions, visiting museum collections and preparing annual submissions to the spring Salon, where he had only modest success. His first two summers were spent sketching and painting, first in Normandy and Brittany and then on the coast of Holland. In 1884, his lack of success in the Salon exhibitions led him to seek a more formal education at the Académie Julian, which was popular with foreign students, especially Americans. Platt was supervised by Jules Lefebvre (1836–1911), who helped him achieve success with a figure study at the 1885 Salon, although an American reviewer preferred Platt's landscape paintings produced the previous summer.[21] Platt began to define his own aesthetic, reporting to his family: 'I find that I carry with me longer & with constantly recurring charm the impression of

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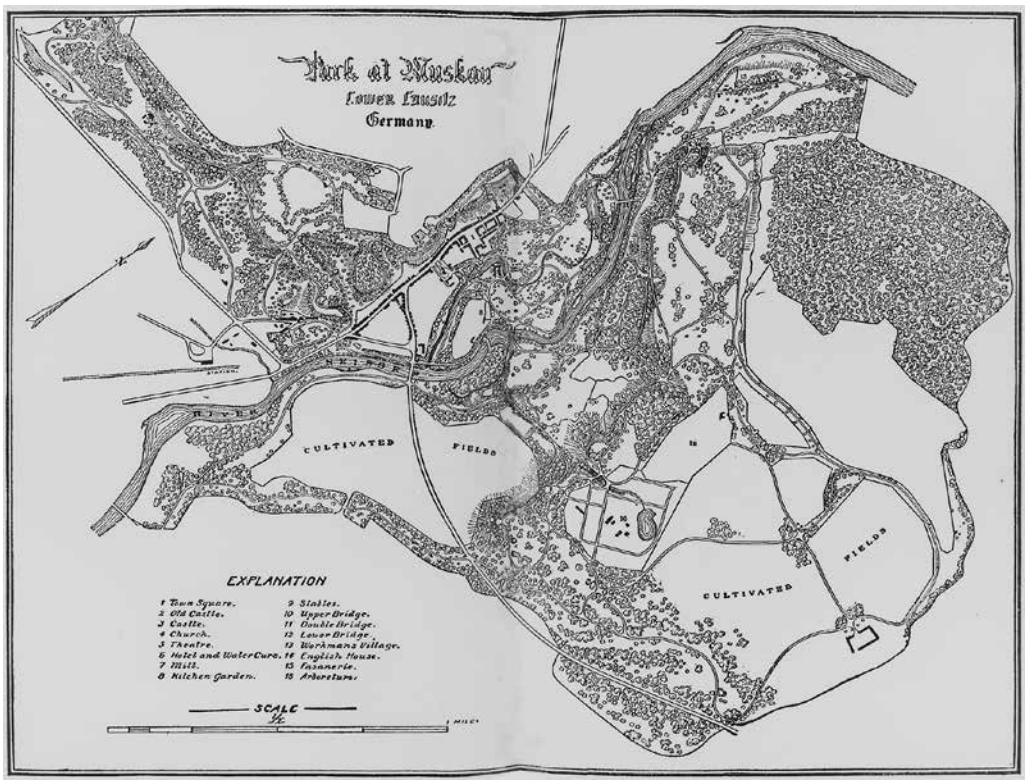

Fig. 3. *Plan of the park at Bad Muskau, Germany, 1886 (Charles Eliot Collection, Loeb Library, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University)*

something beautiful, while the effect of the wonderful & curious & seemingly picturesque may be remembered as long but never with the same pleasure'.[22]

Platt had begun to desert the pursuit of the picturesque found in his etchings, and in much of his previous work as a landscape painter, in an effort to achieve what he called his personal 'sense of the beautiful'.[23] This shift was partly influenced by his period as a student in Paris, and still more so by his visits to Italy in the early 1890s. He continued to work as an etcher and a landscape painter for the rest of his life, although his career as a self-taught architect and landscape architect came to dominate his activity in the 1890s.

After four years of study in Paris, at the urging of his family and friends Platt began to socialise more. In November 1885, he told his parents he had become acquainted with a New York family living in Paris, Colonel and Mrs Richard March Hoe and their daughter, Annie Corbin Hoe. In the spring of 1886, he joined them on a tour to the Riviera, from where they proceeded at a leisurely pace through Florence, Pisa and Siena, and on to Rome. There Charles and Annie became engaged and planned to return to New York in June to marry; but while crossing Campania, Charles developed 'Roman Fever' (typhoid) and, after his recovery, the couple married in Florence. However,

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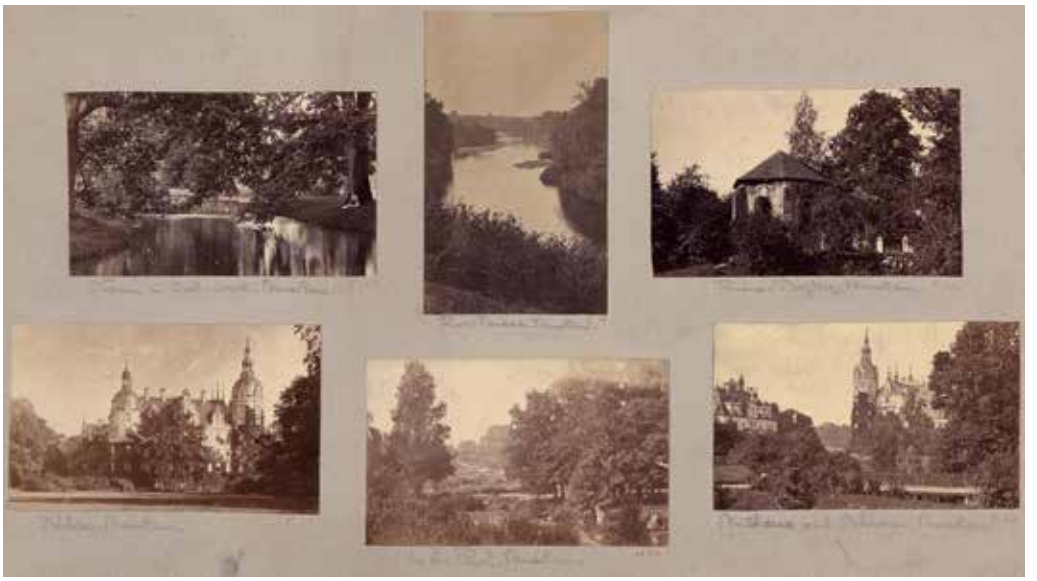

Fig. 4. *Page from the album assembled by Charles Eliot showing the photographs he collected of Bad Muskau, 1886 (Charles Eliot Collection, Loeb Library, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University)*

tragedy then ensued with the deaths of the fathers of both bride and groom, bringing about a return to New York for the summer. In October the couple went back to Paris, but the grim string of family deaths continued when Annie died in childbirth in March 1887, losing twin daughters. Charles was devastated and returned to New York to be comforted by family and friends. Two years later, in the summer of 1889, one of Platt's American friends from Paris, the painter Henry Oliver Walker (1843–1929), suggested he join him at the fledgling artists' colony that had formed in Cornish, New Hampshire, around the studio of the sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens (1848–1907). Platt purchased property there the following year and spent his summers in Cornish for the remainder of his life, designing landscapes and houses for himself and fellow colonists.

At this point, the careers of the two Charleses, Eliot and Platt, began to intertwine. On 8 July 1890, Eliot visited South Manchester, Connecticut, to discuss a possible development of parkland around a new reservoir for the Cheney family compound and mills.[24] There he met William Platt, Charles's younger brother, who accompanied him back to Boston to begin his training at the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University and as an intern in the office of F. L. and J. C. Olmsted, the internship previously held by Eliot.

William Platt remained with the Olmsted firm for two years until spring 1892, when his brother Charles invited him to join in a trip to record the villa gardens of Italy, a trip intended to assist him both as landscape painter and fledgling landscape architect. Before departing, F. L. Olmsted insisted that William Platt meet Charles Eliot Norton, the professor at Harvard College and author of *Notes of Travel and Study in Italy* (1860). Olmsted sent a note to Norton stating of Platt: 'His brother, who is a painter and etcher, is going to Italy with the intention of obtaining material by sketching and photography for

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a volume of […] illustrations of gardens and garden furniture, seats, fountains, terraces, staircases, pergolas, rustic paths and other amorettes of Italian out of door life.'[25]

Olmsted was no admirer of Italianate gardening; as he told William Platt, 'I am afraid that I do not think much of the fine and costly gardening of Italy, and yet I am enthusiastic in my enjoyment of much roadside foreground scenery there in which nature contends with and is gaining upon the art of man.'[26] Notwithstanding these misgivings, he provided William with a letter of introduction to Édouard-François André (1840–1911), the leading French landscape architect, whom the Platts visited in Paris on their return from Italy. They inspected twenty-four gardens of the Renaissance and Baroque periods in Italy, primarily in and around Rome and the surroundings of the northern cities of Florence, Siena and Verona.[27] Although there is some suggestion that they made measured drawings of the gardens, none from this 1892 trip survives.[28] More importantly, Charles travelled with a large-format glass-plate camera to take photographs of the gardens, one of the great products of the trip and something Charles Eliot would have loved to have had on his own European excursion six years before. More tragedy unfolded after their return when, in July 1892, William died in a sailing accident in Maine. Charles was determined to honour his brother by publishing the results of their trip, first in the two articles in *Harper's Magazine* and then in the book *Italian Gardens*.

Platt's *Italian Gardens* (1894) comprises an introduction and brief discussions of nineteen of the villas he had visited. He relied primarily on his own drawings and photographs, stating that the 'main object of the present writer has been […] to illustrate, as far as possible, the existing state of the more important gardens of Italy, leaving out the matter of research altogether'.[29] He retouched some plates to make the images more painterly.[30] As a frontispiece he used a watercolour of the Hedge Walk in the Quirinal Gardens in Rome, modelled on one of his photographs, and created other etchings and line drawings as occasional ornaments for the text, as well as including some historic prints. He emphasised that he used 'the word "villa" in the Italian sense, implying all the formal parts of the grounds arranged in direct relation to the house'. He continued: 'The evident harmony of arrangement between the house and surrounding landscape is what strikes one in Italian landscape architecture […] the architect of the house being the architect of the garden and the rest of the villa', thus stating a core principle of the American Renaissance.[31] At first reading, this description might sound like Eliot's commentary on the estate at Bad Muskau, but the important words in Platt's text are 'formal' and 'architecture'. As the first book on this topic in English, Platt's modest volume introduced a wide audience to sites previously unknown or unappreciated in the US. Its success helped launch a new phase of Platt's career as a landscape architect.

Appropriately, it was Eliot who wrote a review of *Italian Gardens* for *The Nation*: 'Rightly thinking that these villas of Italy may teach lessons of value to the America of to-day, Mr Platt has published in this book before us forty full-page pictures of their buildings, pavilions, terraces, water basins, and gardens, with many smaller drawings and photographs of architectural details.'[32] He praised the project, but also expressed concern about the suitability of such landscapes for America. Always an advocate for the naturalistic influence in garden-making, Eliot feared these formal landscapes were too artificial and not appropriate to American conditions. He also took Platt to task for not providing longer notes and for being unaware of Tuckermann's *Die Gartenkunst*

der Italienischen Renaissance-Zeit, published in 1884. This was a work that Eliot had consulted at the British Library, encompassing ground plans and cross-sections which he felt Platt should have included.[33]

THE RESULTS OF EUROPEAN TRAINING FOR AMERICA

While still in Europe, Eliot had received a letter from F. L. Olmsted offering him a position in his office. He decided not to accept, however, preferring to set up in his own practice, which he opened in December 1886 at 9 Park Street, Boston, diagonally opposite the Massachusetts State House. Over the next five years, he established a reputation as a landscape architect, landscape historian and critic, and advocate for land conservation. He did, however, eventually join the Olmsted firm as a partner in 1893. Even as a partner in the firm of Olmsted, Olmsted and Eliot, he focused much of his attention on the Boston Metropolitan Park Commission, which he envisioned for his native Boston and its surrounding thirty-six smaller cities and towns.[34]

With the conversations he had held with various landscape conservation pioneers in England still ringing in his ears, Eliot wrote to the editors of *Garden and Forest* in February 1890 drawing attention to the plight of the Waverley Oaks, a stand of aboriginal trees on the border of the Boston suburbs of Belmont and Waltham, and proposing 'a plan for their preservation for the people'. To save 'the finest bits of natural scenery near Boston', he suggested creating a state commission 'to hold small and well-distributed parcels of land, free of taxes, just as the Public Library holds books and the Art Museum pictures'.[35] A public meeting at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, attended by leading political, cultural and educational figures from across the Commonwealth, generated enthusiasm for a proposal to be put to the state legislature. Because of the state-wide response, the idea morphed from a Boston-focused agency into a state-wide private corporation, established in 1891, that could acquire by gift or purchase land of scenic and historic significance to be 'held in trust' for the people. Originally called the Trustees of Public Reservations, it anticipated by four years the founding in Britain of the National Trust for Places of National Interest or Natural Beauty. Today, the Trustees hold more than 120 properties covering more than 27,000 acres across Massachusetts.

Having not achieved his original goal, and with the example of Bad Muskau in mind, Eliot next used the platform of the Trustees of Public Reservation to launch a new effort to create a Metropolitan Park Commission for Greater Boston. In December 1891, the Trustees called a meeting of the park commissioners for Boston and the surrounding towns to discuss the creation of a regional commission. Eliot presented a plan of parkland within an eleven-mile radius from the Massachusetts State House, comparing it adversely with the much more substantial amount of parkland in the metropolitan areas of London and Paris, and calling for immediate action. A temporary commission was established by the state legislature in 1892 with Eliot as its secretary, and he produced a report that outlined his ideas.[36] As he wrote later that year:

> As I conceive it, the scientific 'Park system' for a district such as ours would include (1) Spaces on the ocean front. (2) As much as possible the shores of the islands in the Bay. (3) The courses of the larger tidal estuaries (above their commercial usefulness), because of

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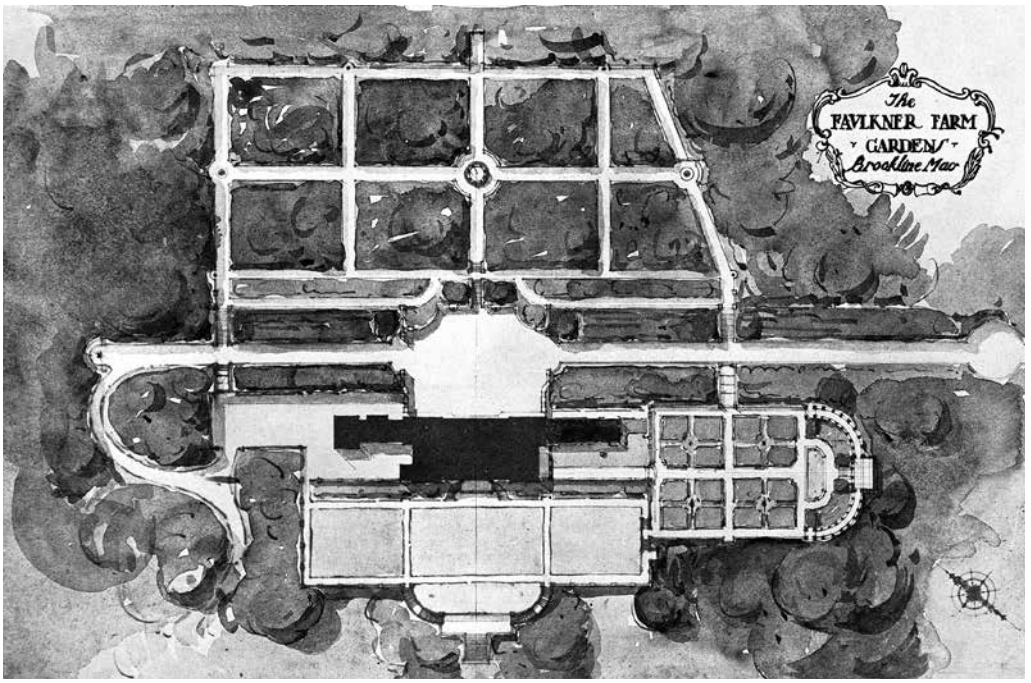

Fig. 5. *Charles A. Platt, Faulkner Farm, Brookline, MA, site plan, 1897–98, from Charles A. Platt,* A Monograph of the Work of Charles A. Platt, *1913*

> the value of these courses as pleasant routes to the heart of the city and to the sea. (4) Two or three large areas of wild forest on the outer rim of the inhabited area. (5) Numerous small squares, playgrounds, and parks in the midst of the dense population.[37]

On this basis, the permanent commission began its work in August 1893. With his clear focus and great energy, Eliot was able to achieve substantial land acquisition and establish management guidelines before his death in March 1897.

Meanwhile Platt, even before the publication of *Italian Gardens* in 1894, had begun to undertake modest houses and gardens at the artists' colony of Cornish. He designed a small house and garden for himself in 1890 and then undertook a larger project, High Court (1891), for his immediate neighbour Annie Lazarus, where he demonstrated Italian ideas even in advance of his trip to Italy. After his return from that tour and the publication of the two articles and book, Platt received commissions first from some of his Cornish neighbours and later for projects in the Boston area, where he was competing against Olmsted, Olmsted and Eliot.

In 1893, Charles Sprague and his wife Mary Bryant Pratt Sprague began to develop a country estate, Faulkner Farm, on land in Brookline inherited from her grandfather, the shipping magnate William Weld, one of Boston's richest citizens.[38] While Mary was the wealthier member of the couple, both had substantial fortunes and social and political ambitions. As a member of the Boston Park Commission, Charles Sprague

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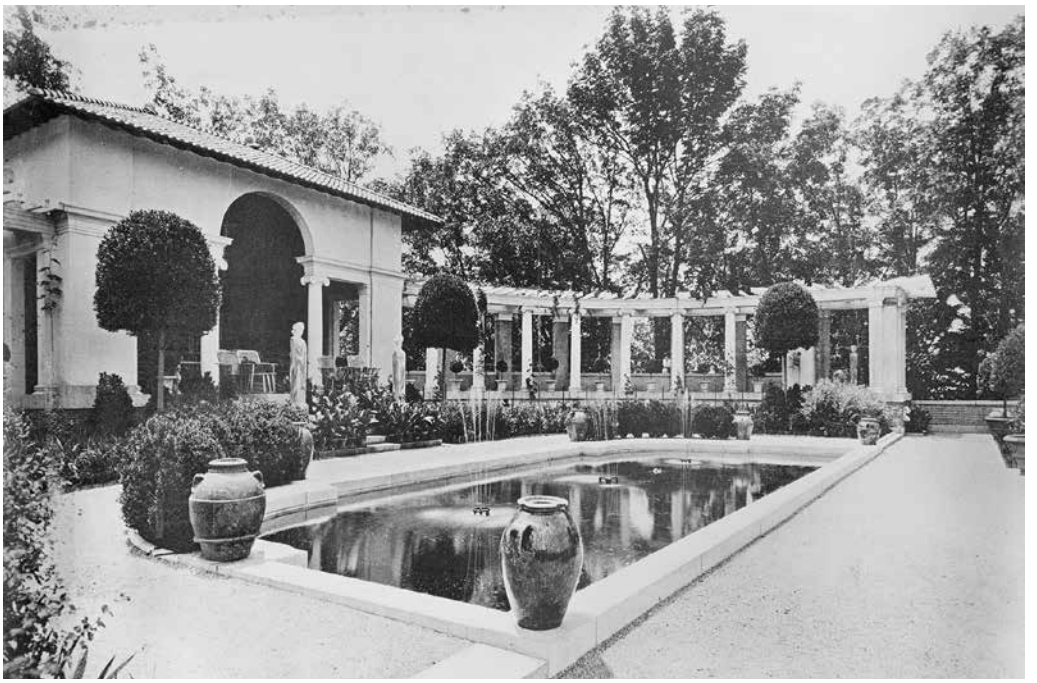

Fig. 6. *Charles A. Platt, Faulkner Farm, Brookline, MA, loggia in formal garden, 1897–98, from Charles A. Platt,* A Monograph of the Work of Charles A. Platt, *1913*

knew the Olmsted, Olmsted and Eliot firm well and turned to them for assistance with the development of the grounds, which surrounded the substantial three-storey, clapboarded colonial revival residence designed by Little, Browne and Moore. The relationship between the client and his landscape architects did not proceed smoothly, however. The entrance to the property from nearby Allandale Road was the first component of the project commissioned from the Olmsted office. In keeping with the long-standing design philosophy of the firm, reinforced by Eliot's time in Europe, a meandering entrance drive snaked through the site, following the contours of the hill. Along both the public and the service elements of the driveway, Eliot proposed natural landscape planting, but Charles Sprague considered this inappropriate.[39] After reviewing multiple proposals for roads and adjacent planting, Sprague ended the relationship, telling Eliot in October 1895 that 'if your plan contemplated the treatment of the bank after the fashion of banks in public parks, with bushes along I should not want to adopt it'.[40] Sprague, who soon afterwards became a member of the US Congress, clearly wanted to have a showplace that did not remind him of a public park. He fired Eliot and the Olmsted office and began to investigate another possibility.

That year Sprague's doctor, John Elliot, had commissioned Platt to design a house and garden in suburban Needham, Massachusetts — Platt's first commission outside of the Cornish colony. As Platt later reported to the art critic Royal Cortissoz: 'Dr

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Fig. 7. *Pavilion, Villa Lante, photograph of 1892 from Charles A. Platt,* Italian Gardens, *1894*

Elliot was so enthusiastic over my plans for him that he recommended me to a rich client of his named Sprague, and I got my first chance at a really important piece of landscape work in the Sprague Garden, Faulkner Farm, Brookline.'[41] Platt proposed a straight entrance drive from Allandale Road into a walled courtyard on the entrance side of the house and continuing to a monumental Roman statue on axis (Fig. 5). To the right of the drive near the house, Platt created a woodland garden on an adjacent hilltop, centred on a tempietto. To the left of the drive before entering the courtyard and concealed by a brick wall and plantings, he located the formally organised flower garden. On the view side of the house, Platt proposed a broad grass terrace. All these components of the design were derived from his observations of Italian villas.

The formal flower garden claimed pride of place on the property, soon being published widely and influencing many of Platt's contemporaries.[42] At the far end of the rectangular space, filled with flower beds and crossed by crisp gravel paths focused on pieces of sculpture or architectural fragments collected in Europe, Platt designed a concave, colonnaded loggia with a central pavilion (Fig. 6) that could be used for afternoon tea. Platt based its form on his photograph of twin pavilions with Serliana arches at the top of the Villa Lante in Bagnaia, published in *Italian Gardens* (Fig. 7).

With the completion of Faulkner Farm in 1898, Platt was recognised as a leading architect of the new movement in formal garden design. Regular articles about his work started to appear in the *Architectural Record*, where one of his early Cornish clients, Herbert Croly (1869–1930), was an editor.[43] In 1913, the Architectural Book Publishing Company released *A Monograph of the Work of Charles A. Platt*, the first of a new type of folio-sized, commercially produced monographs on contemporary

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Fig. 8. *Composite image showing (below) Charles A. Platt's* Italian Gardens, *1894, and (above)* A Monograph of the Work of Charles A. Platt, *1913*

American architects (Fig. 8).[44] By this time, Platt had a national reputation. His continuing reliance on Italian villas can be seen by comparing his photograph of the central axis at the Villa d'Este in Tivoli for *Italian Gardens* (Fig. 9) with a view published in the *Architectural Record* of the water staircase at Villa Turicum, the massive country estate on a bluff overlooking Lake Michigan at Lake Forest, Illinois, which Platt designed for Harold and Edith Rockefeller McCormick between 1908 and 1918 (Fig. 10). By then Platt was a central practitioner of what has become known as the American Renaissance, practising successfully until his death in 1933 and specialising in museums and academic campuses as well as country houses.

By the time Platt completed Faulkner Farm, Eliot was already dead, having succumbed to spinal meningitis on 25 March 1897. His career had lasted only one decade, divided between private practice and partnership with Olmsted, Olmsted and Eliot. His last year had been partially devoted to leading an intensive study of the lands being acquired by the new Boston Metropolitan Park Commission. His *Vegetation and Scenery in the Metropolitan Reservations of Boston*, published posthumously by Lamson Wolffe and Company in 1898, provided management guidelines and a master plan for the development of the Metropolitan Park System (Fig. 11). In addition to maps and photographs of existing conditions in the parklands, the volume contains before and

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Fig. 9. *Villa d'Este at Tivoli, gardens, 1892, from Charles A. Platt,* Italian Gardens, *1894*

after watercolour drawings by Eliot's protégé Arthur Shurcliff (1870–1957), modelled on the fold-down presentations by the English landscape designer Humphry Repton (1752–1818) which Eliot had consulted in London (Figs 12 and 13). In 1902, Eliot's father published an anonymous anthology of his son's writings and biographical material entitled *Charles Eliot, Landscape Architect*, which proved to be one of the most influential

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Fig. 10. *Villa Turicum, Lake Forest, Illinois, the avenue from the lake, 1908–18, from* Architectural Record, *March 1912*

books in American landscape design and regional planning, explaining in detail Eliot's broad vision for landscape conservation within the private, institutional and public domains. The father's devotion to the career and legacy of his son also included his support, as president of Harvard University in 1900, for the creation of the earliest continuous academic programme in landscape architecture in the US, if not the world.

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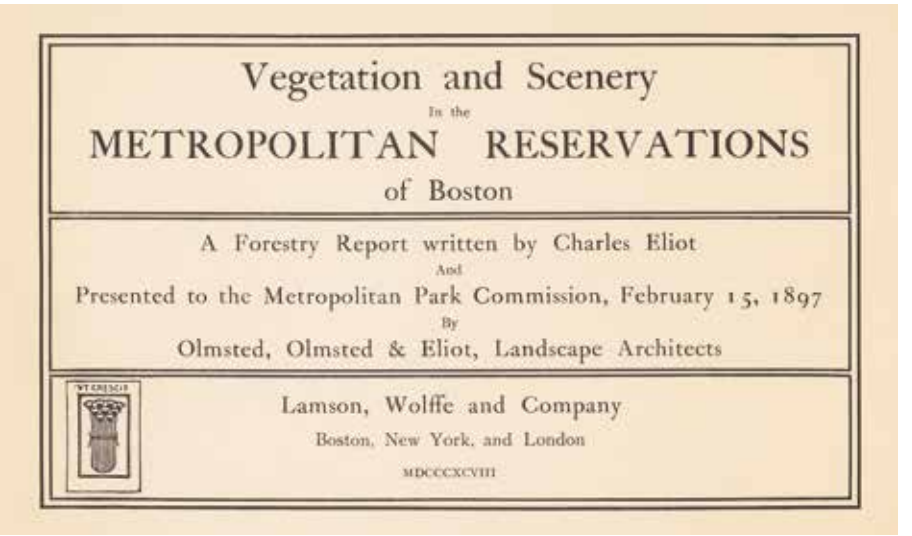

Fig. 11. *Charles Eliot,* Vegetation and Scenery in the Metropolitan Reservations of Boston, *title page, 1898*

CONCLUSION

What can be learned from these two individuals about the role of European study for American landscape architecture in the closing decades of the nineteenth century? European traditions and landscape history were essential components for forging personal and national patterns for landscape architecture during the American Renaissance. Both Platt and Eliot visited aristocratic and princely estates, recording what they saw for use in their future projects. While the comprehensive design philosophy of Prince Pückler's estate at Muskau seized Eliot's imagination, the interlocking formal components of garden elements at the Villa Lante at Bagnaia fascinated Platt, who chose it for the first and longest entry in his *Italian Gardens*. From his period of reading and from examining properties across Europe, Eliot understood the importance of these landscape types and wrote landscape histories of estates in the Hudson Valley of New York and the Boston region dating from the colonial and early federal periods (eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries), which he published in *Garden and Forest*.[45] While Eliot executed commissions for substantial country properties, these were a minor component of his output during his single-decade career, which was dominated by his role in creating the Trustees of Public Reservations and the Boston Metropolitan Park System.

Platt, in contrast, saw in European architecture and landscape architecture, and especially Italian villas, models that could be used in creating American 'power-houses', which he did from the mid-1890s until the early 1930s. Indeed, his ability to create a comprehensive environment of landscape, architecture and interiors (and occasionally art collections) made him a popular choice for wealthy Americans — the American equivalent of the English architect Edwin Lutyens (1869–1944), as he was described in 1914.[46]

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Fig. 12 *(top) and* Fig. 13 *(above). Sepia drawings produced by Arthur A. Shurcliff in 1897 to illustrate Charles Eliot's* Vegetation and Scenery in the Metropolitan Reservations of Boston, *1898. Top: 'Tree-clogged notch, near the southeastern escarpment of the Fells, which might command the Malden-Melrose valley and the Saugus hills'. Above: 'View of a notch in the Middlesex Fells after removal of trees'*

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Eliot's legacy remained in the more public sphere of landscapes 'held in trust' and valued for their natural beauty or historical consequence. Platt's influence emerged in the domain of private residential commissions, usually for individuals of substantial wealth. For Eliot, the lessons of nature guided his life and work; for Platt, art and beauty were the ultimate goals. They both understood the value of studying European landscape and using it, albeit in very different ways, for the improvement of the American environment.

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BIOGRAPHY

Keith N. Morgan is a professor emeritus of history of art and architecture and of American and New England studies at Boston University, where he taught from 1980 until 2016. He served as the director of preservation studies, the director of American and New England Studies, and the chairman of the art history department. He is a former national president and fellow of the Society of Architectural Historians. His publications include *Charles A. Platt: The Artist as Architect* (Architectural History Foundation, 1985); *Boston Architecture, 1975–1990*, written with Naomi Miller (Te Neues, 1990); *Shaping an American Landscape: The Art and Architecture of Charles A. Platt* (Hood Museum of Art, 1995); the introduction for the new edition of *Italian Gardens* by Charles A. Platt (Sagapress/Timber Press, 1993); and an introduction to a new edition of *Charles Eliot, Landscape Architect* (University of Massachusetts Press, 1999). He was the editor and one of the lead authors of *Buildings of Massachusetts: Metropolitan Boston* (University of Virginia Press, 2009). With Elizabeth Hope Cushing and Roger Reed, he published *Community by Design: The Olmsted Office and the Development of Brookline, Massachusetts, 1880–1936* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), which received the Ruth Emery Award of the Victorian Society in America. Email: knmorgan@bu.edu

NOTES

1 Context for the issues presented in this article is provided by Raffaella Fabiani Giannetto, ed., *Foreign Trends in American Gardens: A History of Exchange, Adaptation, and Reception* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2016), especially the essays by Rebecca Warren Davidson, pp. 140–61, and by Sara Butler, pp. 257–87. See also the review by Keith N. Morgan in *Winterthur Portfolio*, 52, no. 4 (2018), pp. 256–57.

2 *Garden and Forest: A Journal of Horticulture, Landscape Art and Forestry* (New York, 1888–97).
3 Charles A. Platt, 'Italian Gardens', *Harper's Monthly*, 87 (July 1893), pp. 165–80; (August 1893), pp. 393–406; Charles A. Platt, *Italian Gardens* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1894).
4 Among the early books that followed Platt's, see Janet Ross, *Florentine Villas; With Reproductions in Photogravure from Zocchi's Etchings and with Line Drawings of Many Villas by Nelly Erichsen* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1901); A. Holland Forbes, *Architectural Gardens in Italy: A Series of Photogravure Plates Made from Photographs Taken for and Selected by A. Holland Forbes*, 3 vols (New York: Forbes and Company, 1902); and Edith Wharton, *Italian Villas and their Gardens* (New York: Century Company, 1904). Publishing interest in Italian villas and gardens remained strong through the 1920s.
5 On the European education of nineteenth-century Americans, see David McCullough, *The Greater Journey: Americans in Paris* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011), *passim*. For Italy, see William Vance, *America's Rome*, 2 vols (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), especially volume one, 'Classical Rome'. Also Irma B. Jaffe, ed., *The Italian Presence in American Art, 1860–1920* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1989), especially chapter 17 by Margherita Azzi Visentini, 'The Italian Garden in America, 1890–1920', pp. 240–57.
6 For this period of Eliot's European travels, see chapters 4–10 of [Charles W. Eliot], *Charles Eliot, Landscape Architect* (Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1902), pp. 50–203; also the 1999 reprint with introduction by Keith N. Morgan (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), pp. xxii–xxvi.
7 From the 1830s through the 1850s, John and Seth alternated between periods of study in Paris, England, Germany and Italy and work as crayon portrait artists in South Manchester and Boston.
8 Keith N. Morgan, *Charles A. Platt: The Artist as Architect* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), p. 6.
9 The call slips from Eliot's period of study in the British Library, recording which books he consulted on which day, are now held in the Charles Eliot Collection at the Loeb Library in the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University.
10 *Charles Eliot* (1902), p. 103.
11 These European and later photographs are held in the Charles Eliot Collection at Harvard University.
12 For the Anglo-American dialogue on landscape conservation and historic preservation, see Melanie Hall, 'Niagara Falls: Preservation and the Spectacle of Anglo-American Accord', in *Towards World Heritage: International Origins of the Preservation Movement, 1870–1930*, ed. by Melanie Hall (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 23–43.
13 For example, Charles Eliot, 'A List of Books on Landscape Gardening', *Garden and Forest* (18 April 1888), pp. 94–95.
14 Fürsten von Pückler-Muskau, *Andeutungen über Landschaftsgärtnerei, verbuden mit der Beschreibung ihrer praktischen Anwendung in Muskau* (Stuttgart: Hallsberger, 1834).
15 This definition was given by Charles Eliot in a speech to the New York Farmers Association on 18 January 1892: *Charles Eliot* (1902), p. 367.
16 *Charles Eliot* (1902), p. 103. The transcript of all Eliot's letters from Europe to family, friends and professional colleagues, prepared by his father for the 1902 publication, is in the Charles Eliot Collection at Harvard University. On Muskau, see Keith N. Morgan, 'Muskau and America: Prince Pückler's Influence on Charles Eliot and Regional Landscape Planning in the United States', *German Historical Institute Bulletin*, Supplement 4 (2007), pp. 68–87.
17 Charles Eliot, 'Muskau – A German Country Park', *Garden and Forest*, 28 January 1891, pp. 38–39, 41; reprinted in *Charles Eliot* (1902), pp. 358–63.
18 For Platt's career as a painter, see Erica E. Hirschler, 'The Paintings of Charles A. Platt', in *Shaping an American Landscape: The Art and Architecture of Charles A. Platt*, ed. by Keith N. Morgan, exhibition catalogue, Hood Museum of Art (Hanover, NH, 1995), pp. 50–74.
19 For Platt's etching career, see Maureen C. O'Brien, 'The Etchings of Charles A. Platt', in *Shaping an American Landscape*, ed. by Morgan, pp. 24–49.
20 All the etchings that Platt submitted to the exhibition sold, except for one selected by the Society of Painter-Etchers: Morgan, *Artist as Architect*, p. 13.
21 'The Prize Fund Exhibition', *Art Amateur* (June 1885), pp. 5, 30.
22 New York, Columbia University, Avery Architectural Library, Drawings and Archive Department [hereafter Avery Library], Charles A. Platt Collection, correspondence file, box 8: folder 19, letter from Platt to his family, 23 February 1885.
23 Avery Library, Charles A. Platt Collection, correspondence file, box 8: folder 17, letter from Platt to his family, 19 April 1884.
24 Cambridge, MA, Harvard University, Graduate School of Design, Loeb Library, Charles Eliot Collection, letter from Charles Eliot to Mary Pitkin Eliot, 8 July 1890.

25 Washington DC, Library of Congress [hereafter LOC], Olmsted Collection, letterpress, letter from Frederick Law Olmsted to Charles Eliot Norton, 30 January 1892.
26 LOC, Olmsted Collection, letterpress, letter from Olmsted to William Platt, 1 February 1892.
27 *Italian Gardens* was originally published in 1894 by Harper and Brothers. A new edition with an introduction by Keith N. Morgan includes twenty additional images printed from Platt's original glass-plate negatives: Charles A. Platt, *Italian Gardens* (Portland, OR: Sagapress/Timber Press, 1993). Those glass plates are now part of the Charles A. Platt Collection at the Avery Library, Columbia University, where the architectural and landscape drawings, correspondence and other papers from the Platt office are also housed.
28 A drawing of the floor plan of the Villa Costanzi, near Rome, made by Charles Platt in 1913 and reproduced in *Shaping an American Landscape*, ed. by Morgan, p. 150, might be representative of their earlier efforts.
29 Platt, *Italian Gardens* (1894), p. 15.
30 See Rebecca Warren Davidson, 'Camera Bella: The Printed Photograph and the Perception of the Italian Garden', in *Foreign Trends*, ed. by Giannetto, pp. 140–61, and her essay 'Charles A. Platt and the Fine Art of Landscape Design', in *Shaping an American Landscape*, ed. by Morgan, pp. 75–95.
31 Platt, *Italian Gardens* (1894), pp. 15–16.
32 Charles Eliot, review of *Italian Gardens* in *The Nation*, 57 (December 1893), p. 491.
33 Platt had stated Percier and Fontaine's book on Italian gardens was the only source 'of importance' on the topic. See Charles Percier and Pierre Fontaine, *Choix des plus célèbres maisons de plaisance de Rome et de ses environs, mesurées et dessinées par Percier et Fontaine*, 2nd edn (Paris, Imprimerie de P. Didot L'Aîné, 1824); W. P. Tuckermann, *Die Gartenkunst der italienischen Renaissance-Zeit* (Berlin: Verlag von Paul Parey, 1884).
34 Eliot's scrapbook of articles, held in the archives of The Trustees (the recently adopted name for the Trustees of Public Reservations), includes an article from the *London Standard* (26 December 1895) on 'Public Parks and Reservations in the State of Massachusetts': Sharon, MA, Trustees Archives and Research Center, TTOR10. COLL.1, Charles Eliot Scrapbook (1888–1901), p. 129. See also Hall, 'Niagara Falls', p. 42.
35 Charles Eliot, 'The Waverley Oaks', *Garden and Forest*, 5 March 1890, pp. 137–38, and also *Charles Eliot, Landscape Architect*, pp. 316–35.
36 *Charles Eliot, Landscape Architect*, p. 380.
37 This statement of his intentions appeared in a letter to Charles Francis Adams, chairman of the temporary park commission, of 6 October 1892. See *Charles Eliot, Landscape Architect*, p. 381.
38 For the Sprague estate, see 'The Italian Inspiration: The Garden of Faulkner Farm, Brookline, Massachusetts', in Alan Emmet, *So Fine a Prospect: Historic New England Gardens* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1996), pp. 191–205.
39 The Sprague commission was originally handled by John Charles Olmsted, but by 1895 Charles Eliot had taken it over. Herbert Browne, the principal architect, also worked as a landscape designer and wanted to be involved.
40 LOC, letter from Charles Sprague to Olmsted, Olmsted and Eliot, 13 October 1895.
41 New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Library, Royal Cortissoz Collection, Platt letter file, letter from Charles Platt to Cortissoz, 24 July 1913. At the time, Cortissoz was preparing the foreword for *A Monograph of the Work of Charles A. Platt*.
42 In addition to periodicals, the house and gardens were published in Guy Lowell, *American Gardens* (Boston, MA: Bates and Guild Company, 1902); Barr Ferree, *American Estates and Gardens* (New York: Munn and Company, 1904); John Cordis Baker, *American Country Houses and their Gardens* (Philadelphia, PA: John C. Winston Company, 1906); and Louis Valcon Le Moyne, *Country Residences in Europe and America* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1908).
43 Particularly important was Croly's review of Platt's work in the *Architectural Record* (March 1904), pp. 230–34. Croly would soon become famous as a progressive political thinker, author of *The Promise of American Life* (1909) and founder of the *New Republic*.
44 Charles A. Platt, *A Monograph of the Work of Charles A. Platt* (New York: Architectural Book Publishing Company, 1913).
45 All six essays were reprinted in *Charles Eliot* (1902), chapter 14.
46 See 'Two Eminent Domestic Architects: A Comparison', *Architectural Review*, 35 (March 1914), pp. 61–63.