

serve the needs of the disadvantaged. The memorial notice published in the October 13, 1897, issue of *Garden and Forest*, unsigned but undoubtedly written by Charles Sargent, underscored Stiles' "inflexible purpose":

He has been more, however, than a brilliant and successful editor of a technical journal; keen love of nature and sympathy with the cravings of the poor shut within city walls from the sight and enjoyment of the country made him fully understand the value and true meaning of urban parks, and for twenty years, always with that modesty which was one of his strongest characteristics, but with inflexible purpose, he has stood between the parks of this city and men who at different times and under different pretenses have tried to deface them. . . . His death is a serious loss to the readers of *Garden and Forest* and to every one in the United States interested in landscape-gardening, horticulture and the care and protection of our national and state forests.

*Garden and Forest* ceased publication in 1898. Despite the high quality of its writing, its appeal to practitioners in many fields, its international interests and noted contributors, the magazine had always run at a loss; Sargent had been covering its deficit for years. But it may have been the loss of Stiles that decided the issue, for Sargent's major responsibility at that time was building the scientific credibility of the Arnold Arboretum. The magazine had been in many ways Sargent's experiment. In addition to reporting on "all progress in science and practice"—horticulture, "garden botany," dendrology, scientific and practical forestry—it deliberately linked these fields with landscape gardening. It even stretched its mission to link landscape gardening with architecture. Stiles' appointment as editor of *Garden and Forest* gave it a lively, stylish prose comparable to that of

## NEW DANGERS TO PUBLIC PARKS.

IN praising the man whose recent death means a heavy loss to the readers of this journal, and in noting his long usefulness as the most keen-eyed and devoted defender of the public parks of New York, the daily papers have dwelt forcibly upon the dangers which threaten these parks from the "assaults of the ignorant and vicious." But the parks are threatened by other dangers, newer than these, more subtle and insidious, less easily recognized as dangers, and therefore less likely to be frankly and forcibly resisted. And the consciousness of this fact greatly augments, among those who keep close watch upon our parks, the regret which every intelligent American must have felt when he heard of the death of Mr. Stiles.

The ignorant and the vicious have long been enemies of the parks—persons who deny their utility because it cannot be translated into terms of dollars and cents; those who are eager to injure them for the sake of giving to the city something, advantageous, perhaps, in its own way, which they think of more "practical benefit"; who wish to exploit them for their own profit or who plan to fill them with ugly objects; who barbarously injure their grass, trees, flowers or monuments for their own mischievous pleasure; or who think they know more about caring for them than their professional superintendents, and therefore try to "arouse the public" whenever a dying tree is cut or any other needful and desirable work proposed.

These people represent the unintelligent, uncultivated and unconscientious elements of the population. They are now recognized as enemies of the public, which in some degree is on its guard against them. Teachers, champions and leaders are still needed to defend the parks from their possible attacks. But the public is now easily roused to oppose their worst efforts; and it is probable that no such bold assault upon Central Park will again be attempted as the effort made a few years ago to run a speedway through it, or the equally horrible one to turn part of it into a barren parade-ground. And the public may likewise be counted upon, although not so confidently, to forbid the attempts of individuals to dot it with penny-in-the-slot

machines or newspaper kiosks, or otherwise to disfigure it and to pervert it from its true service for the profit of personal greed under the pretense of supplying special “conveniences” or “pleasures” to its frequenters.

The danger to our pleasure-grounds from engineers necessarily employed upon them, but devoid of the right artistic feeling and unwilling to abide by the counsels of landscape-gardeners, has recently been dwelt upon in these pages and may for the moment be passed by. What we wish now to point out is that it seems probable that more and more schemes to further definitely intellectual or aesthetic ends will be prosecuted without due regard to the integrity and beauty of our parks as works of landscape-art, and that the patrons of science and literature and of art of other kinds are likely to try to injure our great artistic creations like Central and Prospect Parks. And this is, of course, a very insidious danger, as the schemes may be worthy in themselves, and the people who urge them are those whom the public has been told it should trust most implicitly in intellectual and artistic matters.

It is at least a question whether the new Public Library should have been allowed to claim the site of the old reservoir on Fifth Avenue, which otherwise would have been added to the area of Bryant Park. The Metropolitan Museum should not have been given a site within Central Park, but placed beyond its limits, as the Museum of Natural History was upon its western borders. And the stand which Mr. Stiles took, as Park Commissioner, in opposing the desires of the Botanical Society—which, if carried out, will seriously impair the peculiar beauty of Bronx Park and its utility as a public pleasure-ground—must convince all the readers of this journal, who know of his devotion to botany and horticulture and to the task of spreading an interest in them among the people at large, that here, too, a great mistake has been made, and by just the kind of persons who ought to be trustworthy guides with regard to the right conservation of the public’s park-lands. . . .

[*Garden and Forest* 10 (1897): 439]

journals of a more general nature: *Century Magazine*, *Putnam’s Magazine*, *North American Review*. While there were other magazines devoted to horticulture and garden-making, they were written and edited by horticulturists and nurserymen and lacked the international scope and literary style of *Garden and Forest*. “His mastery of a felicitous English style and his profound and sympathetic knowledge of floral and arboreal life made him one of the most instructive and charming of contemporary writers; with refined taste and sturdy integrity . . .”<sup>8</sup>

#### Endnotes

*Note on sources* The basic facts of Stiles’ life were constructed from the extensive obituary notices published at his death: *New York Tribune*, 7 October 1897; *New York Times*, 7 October 1897; *Garden and Forest*, 13 October 1897. M. S. Coulston’s biographical entry on William Stiles in Liberty Hyde Bailey’s *Cyclopedia of American Horticulture*, 1902, was also consulted, as well as correspondence between Stiles and Frederick Law Olmsted from early 1888 (Frederick Law Olmsted Papers, Library of Congress).

<sup>1</sup> *Garden and Forest* was not the first publication to be “conducted”; John Claudius Loudon called himself the “conductor” of *The Gardener’s Magazine* (London, 1826–1844).

<sup>2</sup> Mabel Parsons, ed., *Memories of Samuel Parsons* (New York: Putnam’s, 1926), 127.

<sup>3</sup> Parsons, 128.

<sup>4</sup> *Forty Years of Landscape Architecture: Central Park* (New York: Putnam’s, 1928), 563.

<sup>5</sup> Frederick Law Olmsted Sr to Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., 5 September 1890.

<sup>6</sup> *Garden and Forest*, 9 March 1892, 109.

<sup>7</sup> C. Bowyer Vaux to John C. Olmsted, 8 December 1895, quoted in Francis R. Kowsky, *Country, Park, and City: The Architecture of Calvert Vaux* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 319.

<sup>8</sup> *New York Tribune*, 7 October 1897.

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