

BOOKS

Beatrix Farrand: Private Gardens, Public Landscapes, by Judith B. Tankard; New York: Monacelli Press, 2009; 240 pages, \$60.
The Collected Writings of Beatrix Farrand: American Landscape Gardener, 1872–1959, edited by Carmen Pearson; Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 2009; 226 pages, \$55.

Reviewed by Lake Douglas, ASLA

BEATRIX JONES FARRAND (1872–1959) was a pioneer “landscape gardener” who had largely faded into professional obscurity until the 1980s, when the spotlight expanded from Frederick Law Olmsted to illuminate those who followed him. Inspired somewhat by feminist perspectives, early Farrand scholarship drew attention to her long and remarkable career (1890s–1950s) of residential and campus projects and their masterful designs, planting schemes, and maintenance plans.

Judith Tankard’s authoritative biography and Carmen Pearson’s *Collected Writings* allow a reexamination of Farrand’s life and career.

Growing up in a family of wealth and privilege, Beatrix Jones was exposed to ideas, European travel, and culture. She studied in the 1890s at Harvard’s Arnold Arboretum with Charles Sargent, one of the country’s most influential horticulturists, and under his influence she traveled and developed a lifelong interest in plants and planting design that led her to meet England’s William Robinson and Gertrude Jeckyll and explore their works firsthand (Farrand later acquired Jeckyll’s archive). Plant knowledge and planting design became cornerstones of her reputation.

Early projects were estate gardens—inspired by European precedents—for wealthy family friends of her social set who had large estates in exurban areas of the East Coast. With her natural affinity for plants, Jones was well suited for such work. Her practice for prestigious clients grew, and in 1913 she married Yale historian Max Farrand and settled in New Haven, Connecticut. Notable projects included a garden at the Wilson White House (1913) and large estate gardens such as Dumbarton Oaks (1921) in Washington, D.C., and the Eyrie (1926) in Maine. She also advanced from advising small private schools in the late 1890s to designing for Princeton (1912), Yale (1922), and the University of Chicago (1929), among others.

Tankard’s writing is well researched but refreshingly spare, and she efficiently describes Farrand’s life and career with insight and without sentimentality. While chapters are not strictly chronological, they flow logically and effectively, creating a descriptive trajectory of Farrand’s lengthy and substantial career. Few of Farrand’s gardens remain intact; notable are Dumbarton Oaks and the Eyrie, and each gets a chapter. Nevertheless, there are contemporary tri-

umphs to celebrate: Several gardens discussed here have recently been renovated, and there is ongoing interest in rejuvenating others. More than 200 current and archival plans and images illustrate this work. They are well chosen and informative, though I wished for more full-page archival images. Sometimes archival images are effectively paired with current images, but missing are present-day plans (the Dumbarton Oaks plan, for instance, is from 1935). Showing both *then* and *now* demonstrates changes over time, underscoring what Farrand knew: Gardens evolve and designers must factor that inevitability into their designs. Overall, text and images combine for a beautiful presentation.

Tankard’s work certainly stands on its own; having Farrand’s words in *Collected Writings* and *Unbounded Practice* by Thaisa Way, ASLA, nearby, however, gives a deeper understanding of Farrand and the professional challenges of her times.

Collected Writings contains four sections that roughly correspond to Farrand’s career: the young professional, the professional landscape gardener, the campus landscape consultant, and the Maine gardener. Noteworthy is her early journal on plants and European travel (1893–1895), and the short essays given are as engaging today as they must have been when they first appeared. Particularly poignant are Farrand’s Reef Point “reports” (1946–1954). Writing in the third person, she describes the vision for the facility, and then, in her final installment, the decision to dismantle it. To the end, Farrand was straightforward, pragmatic, and unsentimental, qualities that come through in both her writing and in Tankard’s biography.

These books will appeal to garden historians, academics, garden designers, and amateur gardeners. Together, they add to our understanding of

the beginning of landscape architecture in America and reveal what the profession might lose if we forget our heritage of planting design, attention to detail, and historical reference.

Lake Douglas, ASLA, is associate professor at Louisiana State University’s Robert Reich School of Landscape Architecture.

.....
21st Century Land Development Code, by Robert H. Freilich and S. Mark White with Kate F. Murray; Chicago: APA Planners Press, 2008; 456 pages, \$139.95.

Reviewed by Kim Sorvig

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS HAVE a love-hate relationship with building codes. Out of necessity, we become experts on locally applicable regulations; we occasionally have a hand in writing them. Codes are supposed to create good places and prevent rogue developments and substandard construction.

