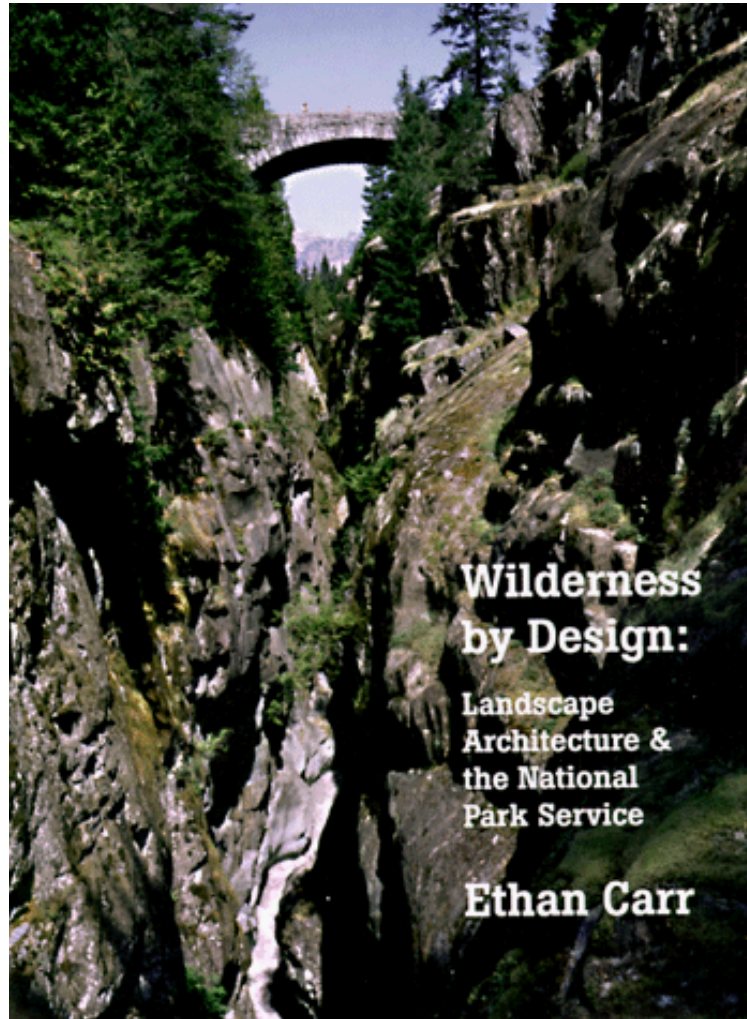


(Download pdf) Wilderness by Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service

Wilderness by Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service

Ethan Carr

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Ethan Carr : Wilderness by Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Wilderness by Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Good National Park History but with Some Flaws By W. White Wilderness by Design: Landscape Architecture the National Park Service by Ethan Carr is an examination of the National Park Services management and design of some of Americas scenic western national parks. Carr uses four national parks as case studies through which to view the National Park Service: Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Glacier, and Mount Rainier. The first chapter is a forty-three page history of picturesque park design, which can largely be skipped

for those well acquainted with Frederick Law Olmsted's work and philosophy and the later City Beautiful park movement and Beaux Arts landscape architecture. This is followed by another chapter concerning Yosemite during the Theodore Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson administrations, with information about the National Park Service's formation included. Finally, there are the four chapters that make up the meat of the book. The first three focus on three National Park historic districts: Grand Canyon Village Historic District, Going-to-the-Sun Road Historic District, and Mount Rainier National Park Historic District. The final chapter covers Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) work for the National Park Service, but the chapter is a rather amorphous chapter touching on various issues for national parks and landscape architecture. There are a few flaws with *Wilderness by Design*. The title is far too broad and somewhat misleading. The book is far more concerned with how the National Park Service managed parks than how they were designed. The book would have benefited from a different arrangement. Instead of a few loosely connected, somewhat isolated case studies of various national parks, I believe a single narrative with all (or certainly more) parks included would have been more effective. Of course, this book is largely based on work Carr performed as a landscape historian for the National Park Service on these selected parks, so Carr's editorial choice may have been influenced more by what research and writing he had already done than by any other factor. *Wilderness by Design* is quite text heavy for a book which purports to be about landscape architecture; there are only about fifty photographs or illustrations in 310 pages of text (a page total that does not include end notes or index pages). There are no color illustrations. This leads to the flaw of the book's size. It measures 9 by 11, which is unnecessarily large for a text-heavy, mostly management-based history book. Another flaw is that the title and description give no indication of the period covered in the book, which with the exception of the first two chapters, is the interwar decades of the 1920s and 30s. Mission 66 is thankfully chronicled in other books, since there is nary a mention of it in this one. Carr was the author of one of those Mission 66 books, *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma*, which I am somewhat loathe to read after *Wilderness by Design*. Since *Mission 66 Visitor Centers: The History of a Building Type* is an excellent look at architecture and design in our National Parks at mid-century, thankfully I am not limited just to Carr's writings. Those flaws excepted, *Wilderness by Design* is a well-written history of the interwar National Park Service. Any reader interested in the history of the National Park Service and a few of America's most iconic national parks will need this book on their reading list. Readers should just know that the book has a much narrower and different focus than its title and publisher's description would lead one to believe.

Tracing the history of landscape park design from British gardens up through the city park designs of Frederick Law Olmsted, Ethan Carr places national park landscape architecture within a larger historical context. Despite the difficulties now confronting the parks, their continued ability to attract millions of visitors suggests that their creators succeeded in presenting a captivating vision of a once-wild America.

"Ethan Carr's *Wilderness by Design* is a fundamental study of American landscape architecture, from the beginnings in the nineteenth century until its climax during the years of the New Deal. Moreover, it is thus a detailed account of the forming years of the American conservation movement...[This] well-researched, insightful study introduces the key figures in American landscape architecture until World War Two, and documents their importance for the establishment and conservation of the national parks. [It] will prove invaluable for anyone interested in environmental studies."--*European Journal of American Culture*, Vol 19, issue 1
About the Author: Ethan Carr is a landscape architect and is currently working for the National Park Service. He has taught landscape architecture at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design and the University of Virginia School of Architecture.