Frederick Law Olmsted was born on April 25, 1822 in Hartford, Connecticut. In his youth he worked as a journalist, which allowed him to travel to different parts of the country. Olmsted traveled extensively throughout the South and came to find slavery particularly offensive. He went on to publish his accounts of the South, which advanced antislavery sentiment in the North.

Olmsted is regarded as one of the first landscape architects and as one of the first people to emphasize the need for a National Park System in the United States. Olmsted is credited for the design of the United States Capitol grounds, the University of California, Berkeley, Stanford University, Vassar College and Central Park in New York City. From 1865 until 1872, Olmsted worked with architect Calvert Vaux to design Riverside, Illinois, which is known as the first suburb in the United States. Frederick Law Olmsted died on August 28, 1903.

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