Andrew Jackson Downing
“Father of American Parks”

“When smiling lawns and tasteful cottages begin to embellish a country, we know that order and culture are established” - Downing
Agenda

- Biography - Paul Herrera
- Literature - Courtney Ferrell
- Place (Springside) - Kate Giglio
- Impact - Amy Durant
- Lesson Plan - Amy Durant
- Web Page - Courtney Ferrell
- Guidebook - Kate Giglio
- Itinerary - Paul Herrera
- Slide Show - Amy Durant
**Thesis**

Although his life was cut short at the peak of his fame, Andrew Jackson Downing had a profound effect on the landscaping and architecture of the Hudson River Valley because of his powerful and innovative writings, designs, and public opinions.
- Biography -
Downing, Andrew Jackson
(October 31, 1815 - July 28, 1852)

- Downing began writing books in 1841

- Downing traveled to England during the summer of 1850
  - Series of eight letters, published in the *Horticulturist*

- Established a "Bureau of Architecture"
  - Matthew Vassar estate, Springside, Poughkeepsie, NY
  - Daniel Parish house, Newport, Rhode Island
  - Dodge Houses, Washington, D.C.
Early advocate of public agricultural education

Commissioned to landscape Washington, D.C. (1850)

Proponent of creating suburbs

Died July 28th in the burning of the Hudson River steamboat *Henry Clay*
  “a truly national loss” – Asa Gray

New York’s Central Park & Andrew Jackson Downing Memorial Park
A.J. Downing’s Literary Contributions

*Cottage Residences* (1842) and
*The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850)

- Provided lists of necessary materials, ideas for decorations, furniture
- Understood financial limitations
- Combined many styles for his designs of farms and villas
  - Gothic
  - Tuscan
  - Rhine
  - English
A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening (1841) and The Fruits and Fruit Trees of America (1845)

- Served to enhance the practice of landscape gardening in America.
- Includes methods adjusted to American, rather than original British tastes.
Downing’s Philosophy

- People’s pride in their country is connected to pride in their home.
- If they can decorate and build their homes to symbolize the values they hope to embody, such as prosperity, education and patriotism, they will be happier people and better citizens.

Downing wrote in *Architecture*:

- A good house will lead to a good civilization
- The “individual home has a great value to a people.”
- “There is a moral influence in a country home.”
- A good home will encourage its inhabitants to pursue a moral existence.
Springside Logo
Springside

- Historic landscape in Poughkeepsie, New York
- Designed in 1850
- Picturesque building and landscape styles

Sketches signed by Downing
Springside ...

- **1868**: Vassar dies.
- **1969**: Declared a National Historic Landmark
- **1984**: Springside Landscape Restoration
- **Hardships encountered before 1984...**
Original Springside

Paintings by Henry Gritten

Gatehouse
Springside – aerial map
Influence on America and the Hudson River Valley

- Springside (Home of Matthew Vassar)
- Profession of landscape architecture
- Tourism and Recognition
- All Social Classes

Springside
Beautiful

The beautiful was characterized by smooth flowing lines, curves and soft surfaces and a house of classical style.

1. Downing, A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening (1841)
The picturesque was characterized by irregular lines with a wild and broken pattern and a house of rustic Old English or Swiss cottage style.

1. Downing, A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening (1841)
Continuing Effects After Death

- Central Park
- Washington Mall
- Articles and Books
- Springside became a public park
- American Pomological Society

Plans for Washington Mall
Monuments to A.J. Downing

- Urn in Enid A. Haupt Garden
- Springside
- Downing Park- Newburgh
- Central Park

Urn in Enid A. Haupt Garden dedicated by American Pomological Society
"Downing is dead! But the principles of artistic beauty and propriety, of rural economy and domestic comfort, which he revealed, await a more full and perfect development; and as they advance towards a more glorious consummation, grateful millions will honor and cherish his name. His memory shall live forever."

- Marshall Wilder -
Lesson Plan

- Teach about Downing’s life and works
- Show pictures of places Downing visited
- Have students design a diorama of a landscape in Downing’s style
Itinerary

- Central Park - NYC
- Springside - Poughkeepsie
- Downing Park - Newburgh

* Other sites of interest:
  - Urn in Enid A. Haupt Garden (Washington D.C.)
Conclusion

Andrew Jackson Downing had a profound effect on the Hudson River Valley and the rest of the nation through his landscape and architectural designs, writings, and public opinions. He rejected the classical styles prevalent during his time period and introduced readers to the beautiful and picturesque, using his own unique American style. Despite his early death, his impact resonates throughout history.
“The great attraction is not in the beauty of a site but in the tasteful and harmonious embellishment of the site by art.” - Downing
References

References (continued)


