

Central Park, Landmark

For once New Yorkers agree about something: Politicians, architects, conservationists, citizens and other odd bedfellows came together at the latest Landmarks Preservation Commission public hearing to express unanimous approval of making Central Park the city's first scenic landmark.

This augurs well for the park's second century. The first century was marked by repeated incursions, invasions and violations of substance and style, from the buckeye to the monumental. The damage that has been done in erection of jarringly inappropriate buildings, in the loss of charming, original structures, and in the erosion and destruction of Olmsted and Vaux's grand landscape plan, ranges from such eyesores as the brick refreshment stand at the Sheep Meadow to the skating rink at the Harlem Meer and memorials scattered like shot through the shrubbery.

With scenic landmark designation, the mutilation may finally stop, after more than a hundred years of cumulative abuse. Designation makes it mandatory that restoration take priority over change, that facilities be judged for "appropriateness" and that the Olmsted plan be followed rather than sabotaged in the name of public benefaction.

Speaking of sabotage, this is the time of year when the flowering trees and shrubs that give so much beauty to the city's parks are in gravest danger—from the ignorant, the selfish and the malicious who cannot see a flower without plucking it or a branch without breaking it. A few arrests and severe fines would stop this arrant destruction that takes place under the eye of the police.