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Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome

David R. Coffin

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David R. Coffin : Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome:

From the late Middle Ages, when it embodied spirituality, through the end of the eighteenth century, when it offered pleasurable surroundings for banquets, poetry readings, and amorous pursuits, the garden figured prominently in everyday Roman life. In this lavishly illustrated history, David Coffin provides a wealth of information on how Italian gardeners worked with the elements of color, fragrance, sound, shade, architecture, sculpture, and wildlife to achieve a wide variety of sensual effects. In so doing he presents the stages of evolution in classic Italian gardening, which was replaced in the late eighteenth century by the more naturalistic English style. Coffin first considers the role of cloistered gardens in the Middle Ages and shows how they were later incorporated as private spaces within the larger Renaissance gardens. Describing the introduction of sculptural collections and waterworks into gardens during the sixteenth century, he explores some of the rich, often complicated, iconographical programs that emerged. The extension of garden parks in the seventeenth century marks the diminishment of architecture in landscaping and the advent of landscape design as a dominant factor. Throughout this book Coffin concentrates on the garden as a site for entertainment and on the development of design components that eventually permitted gardens to be freely open to the public.

From Library Journal With the tools of archaeologist, art historian, sociologist, and botanist, Martin re-creates town and plantation in 18th-century Virginia. Illustrations of gardens along with biographies of their designers and patrons focus on the relationship of culture and horticulture. Soil and terrain in Virginia, although in appearance much like that of England, presented new problems of botanical needs and societal uses. Dependence between town and plantation for sustenance, material and aesthetic, is examined in terms of the planning, experimentation, and execution of the vision of figures such as Washington, Curtis, and Jefferson. The pleasure gardens were (and some still are) a reflection of the essential life of the place and time. In the same century, in the very different setting of papal Rome, the influence of English-style gardens was also being felt. Coffin's work describes the development of Roman landscape gardening as an art in itself. The formal, carefully structured aspects of earlier gardens gave way to a new, freer, more natural approach much like the newly accepted styles of neoclassic and romantic architecture. Discussion of the earlier forms of gardens, statuary, waterworks, etc., are seen in a continuum, changes more evolutionary than revolutionary. This scholarly work, replete with footnotes, is as much a historical look at the society of those who planned and enjoyed these gardens as at the gardens themselves. These two works on the changing forms of gardens are an indication of the current interest in the sociological and political importance of garden history. Each is a welcome addition to the literature and provides a source for further study and insight. Both are for informed laypersons and specialists.- Paula Frosch, Metro politan Museum of Art Lib., New York Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc.