

## Vaux Gets His Credit For Park

By ROBERTA DE GRAY

Central and Prospect Parks were the joint effort of Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux pronounced with the "X," both London-trained architects. Nonetheless, in the more than 100 years since consolidation of the parks, Olmsted is usually the one given most credit. Yet, as Central Park curator and historian Henry Hope Reed has written, "in the case of Vaux and Olmsted it is hard to pinpoint where the work of one stopped and the other began."

Now the Museum of the City of New York has mounted a modest exhibit to celebrate the 150th year since the birth of Calvert-Vaux. Entitled "Central Park's Calvert Vaux," the show is not meant "to take credit away from Olmsted but to give more to Vaux," says A. K. Bhargwanath, the museum's senior curator who put the display together. "We're not changing history," he added, "we're just giving Vaux an extra pat on the back."

### 2 Maps

On view are two large maps. The first is the park, showing the utter desolation of the area with its squatter huts, hog farms and a bone-boiling works. Also recognizable is the reservoir which still exists and the then New York Arsenal on Fifth Av., which now houses the city's Parks Administration and sits at the entrance to the zoo.

The second map is of the "Greenward Plan" with all the finely-wrought creations of Vaux and Olmsted—from Bethesda Fountain, to the mall, to the sheep meadow, to the lakes, streams and hay bridges—all so appreciated and well used today.

Long an official national historic site, Central Park was recently designated the city's first scenic landmark by the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Vaux had been brought here by Andrew Jackson Downing who, until his death in 1852 probably was this country's most outstanding landscape architect. Downing was a prime mover in getting the city to purchase the land in 1851 for a park and probably would have been its designer.

In 1857, Vaux saw plans for Central Park and found them so dissatisfactory that he pressured for a design competition. "Vaux determined to show what could be done, promptly invited a Staten Island acquaintance, Frederick Law Olmsted, to join him," writes Reed in a brochure that accompanies the exhibit. In 1858, their plan was accepted.

Olmsted was about six years older than Vaux and "had the reputation," notes Bhargwanath, "but Vaux was the more intense, the driving force and more the artist of the two."