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Gail Spilsbury

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Gail Spilsbury : Rock Creek Park before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Rock Creek Park:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Could have been betterBy Lauren CarterLots of indepth history from the creation and a brief overview of the sections and old bridges but no really modern maps, uses, tips or anything really useful.2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Beautiful Book Tribute To DC's Most Amazing ParkBy GBThis is a pleasant, attractively produced book on DC's extraordinary Rock Creek Park. This enormous meandering creekside forest of mostly pristine Virginia countryside that has miraculously escaped the clutches of ruthless developers --thanks to the unlikely twin blessings of intelligent and farsighted 19 Century planning, and a grasping Federal Government that greedily seized and retained complete control over the District's public real estate throughout most of the 20th Century--thereby keeping Rock Creek Park's priceless prime real estate out of the corrupt hands of an endless succession of bottom-feeder DC Mayors who would by now have sold off every inch of parkland to every developer who came knocking with an envelope of 'campaign' cash.So ironically, when we who live in DC go out every day and enjoy this fantastic rocky forest of trails and wildlife literally in our backyard, we can thank nature-loving Teddy Roosevelt and some Victorian gentlemen on one hand, and on the other hand we can thank a century of 'Taxation Without Representation' and a Congress that realized the Capitol's parks could not be entrusted to transient Mayors and their transient cronies.Any way you look at it, Rock Creek Park is an amazing miracle in the middle of America's Capitol.This is a beautifully produced, visually luscious book. Anyone who loves DC will enjoy and

appreciate it. The photos are fascinating and remind us that although the people and faces change, the Park does not. Vintage photos, drawings and paintings of the Park, with vintage maps as well. It's surprising that so few books have been published about Rock Creek Park, considering how prominent it is. This book is a welcome find. Kudos to author Gail Spilsbury and the book's design team. I wish there were more like it. And I'd love to see the author do a sequel. I'd buy it sight unseen.

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. More Please! By A. Ross I have to admit, although beautifully produced, this slim book about one of America's greatest urban parks left me a little disappointed. It consists of four main sections followed by four appendices, interwoven with photographs, paintings, sketches, and a few maps. The first section presents a brief, broad overview of the park's history. The second section focuses on the highly influential 1902 McMillan Plan, and discusses some of the backroom politicking surrounding it. The third section is a brief overview landscape architecture pioneer Frederick Law Olmsted and his family firm. The fourth main section consists almost entirely of excerpts from the Olmsted's 1918 report on the park. The appendices include a brief chronology of park administration (buried in here is a lovely little anecdote about Teddy Roosevelt skinny-dipping!), a brief overview of the park flora, a little on bridges across and within the park, and some basic visitor information. The material isn't bad, it's just somewhat dry, and reads somewhat like an official history or publication. It would have been nice to get a little of the social history of the park, more on how people actually used it, possibly culled from newspaper archives and the like. It also would have been nice to hear a little more on some of the problems faced by the park, such as homeless squatters, pollution, and safety and crime (the most famous example being the discovery of Chandra Levy's corpse). Another area not touched upon is the fauna, for example, there's a huge deer problem in the park, as well as numerous red foxes, and recently, confirmed coyote sightings. There's definitely room for a more comprehensive book on the park, for example, the section on bridges was great -- but there are plenty more interesting examples that could have been included. Similarly, while the photos and illustrations were all very nice (most were drawn from collections at the Library of Congress and DC Public Library), there wasn't a whole lot of variety to them -- they tend to show similar sun-dappled views of the creek surrounded by foliage. It would have also been nice to get an orienting map at the very front of the book, instead of toward the end. In sum, it's not a bad book, just a little thin for such an important part of Washington's cultural and geographic history.

Beautifully illustrated with fifty paintings and archival and contemporary photographs, Rock Creek Park celebrates Washington, D.C.'s, resplendent wilderness retreat through the riveting story of its formation and preservation. More than one hundred years after its authorization by Congress, in a city that has become a world capital, Rock Creek Park continues to offer Washingtonians and millions of visitors a peaceful sanctuary in the heart of an urban environment. Rock Creek Park explores the original vision for the park as conceived in the 1902 McMillan Plan for Washington's beautification, which was followed by the 1918 Rock Creek Park Report, by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., son of the eminent nineteenth-century landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted. The younger Olmsted's report warned managers and future generations of park users that "the dominant consideration, never to be subordinated to any other purpose in dealing with Rock Creek Park, is the permanent preservation of its wonderful beauty, and the making of that beauty accessible to the people without spoiling the scenery in the process." This landscape philosophy deeply influenced Rock Creek Park's remarkable degree of historic integrity over the past century. Rock Creek Park pays tribute to the Olmsted family for their contribution to urban and park planning throughout the United States. From Rock Creek Park in Washington, D.C., to Central and Prospect parks in New York City, to the Emerald Necklace of linked parks in Boston, the Olmsteds helped to establish a national attitude toward public spaces which has endured. Visitors to Rock Creek Park will find in this volume practical information on the park's recreational resources such as biking, horseback riding, tennis, and nature programs. The pictures and historic account of the park also will inspire park lovers and travelers to appreciate the natural wonders preserved in this extraordinary national treasure.

This testament to the rustic splendors of Rock Creek Park's woodlands and trails, meadows and streams serves as an eloquent tribute to the great urban wilderness that lies at the heart of the nation's capital. (Smithsonian Magazine) This is a beautifully made book, a collector's item. (Carol Niedzialek Potomac Appalachian) How a slice of the wild came to be saved in the middle of Northwest Washington, D.C. is a complex subject, but Spilsbury explains it succinctly in her illustrated book. (Dennis Drabelle Washington Post Book World) A 'pleasurable glimpse' into the complex planning history of Washington DC, underpinning the development of Rock Creek Park. (William B. Bushong CRM: Journal of Heritage Stewardship) Rock Creek Park is an oasis of quiet and natural beauty treasured by all who live in Washington, D.C. Gail Spilsbury's timely book tells how Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and other visionaries laid down precedents for the preservation of this unique national park in the middle of our nation's capital. This handsome book, laced with dramatic photographs, reminds us that our open spaces must never be taken for granted. As the pressures of urban life continue to encroach upon Rock Creek Park, will we have the wisdom to protect this urban gem for future generations? (Rick Morgan, People's Alliance for Rock Creek) About the Author Gail Spilsbury is an editor at the Smithsonian Institution's Freer and Sackler galleries. During the 1980s and '90s she lived in Italy, Poland, and Guyana, where she taught writing and worked as a freelance journalist and newspaper editor. She studied fiction under novelist

John Gardner and writes screenplays in her spare time. Gail lives near Rock Creek Park, where she walks, bikes, and enjoys the scenery.