

Boston Architectural and Community History Workshop FRANKLIN PARK PROJECT

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

CAS AM 555/AH 554/HI 569. Fall 2017. Wed. 14:30-15:15. HIS 110, 226 Bay State

Prof. Daniel Bluestone

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Franklin Park is the “emerald” in Boston’s Emerald Necklace, the system of parks, parkways, and landscape boulevards that runs throughout the city. As population congregates in cities one of the most important decisions for city builders relates to the location, form, and amount of land that will be held apart from the ordinary urban development of land for private buildings and public streets. In Boston the process started in the 17th century with the establishment of the Boston Common. Franklin Park was founded in the 1880s and designed by Frederick Law Olmsted as the largest unit of Boston’s 19th century park system, “the lungs of the city.” It covers about 1.7 % of the landmass of Boston. This course will explore the transformation of this 527-acre tract of agricultural fields and country estates, into a major public park. How did the earlier forms of farming and rural life influence the design of the park? Over time, Franklin Park accommodated a series of divergent cultural and social uses that will be studied in the course. Once established, Franklin Park provided a significant magnet for transportation improvements and residential and urban development. The course will closely analyze the architectural and urban character of the neighborhoods immediately adjacent to Franklin Park. This area has blocks of single-family houses and large apartment buildings. Rich demographic changes in the neighborhoods around Franklin Park from native-born Protestants to Irish and Jewish immigrants to African Americans attracted a broad range of civic, religious, and commercial buildings. The project will explore the changing forms of buildings and settlements, density and culture in and around Franklin Park.

This hands-on course will include visits to the neighborhood and to research archives and institutions as we develop the skills to assess and narrate site-specific histories. The requirements in the course include course readings and four research papers and presentations, including both group and individual projects.

REQUIREMENTS: Fieldwork, Readings, Group and Individual Reports

The sessions of the course are a combination of seminar lectures, reading discussions, fieldwork, individual and group work sessions and reviews. Attendance is required.

The projects to be completed are:

One: The Park Landscape. September 6th–October 4th. In this project members of the class will select a major element of the Franklin Park landscape. They will analyze its form and design intention and how it has changed through time. The final product will be an illustrated historical presentation and an accompanying written narrative.

Two: Country Houses and Farm Fields: Franklin Park's Pre-History. October 4th to October 25th. This is a group project that will explore the pre-history of the Franklin Park site—of particular interest will be the country houses and agricultural operations that occupied the area now covered by Franklin Park. We will also explore what happened to these places once the park construction was initiated. The final product will be an illustrated presentation and an accompanying written narrative.

Three: Neighborhood Residential Landscape. October 25th to November 29th. Once established Franklin Park became a magnet for increasingly dense residential development. This group project will explore the architecture and social history of these neighborhoods, focusing on a handful of single-family homes, triple-deckers, and larger apartment buildings. We will explore both architectural form and who lived in these buildings as well as the relationship between these residential buildings and the nearby park landscape. The final product will be an illustrated historical presentation and an accompanying written narrative.

Four: Individual research project and class presentations. December 6th. Workshop Participants will analyze some salient aspects of the landscape, architectural, urban, and social Franklin Park or its surrounding neighborhood. The subject will be settled upon in consultation with Daniel Bluestone. A one page written outline of the project is due October 25th. The session of the class will be given over to class presentations of the individual research and analysis. The final individual written papers will be due on December 13th by 5 PM.

Attendance and participation, in all seminar meetings and scheduled site sessions, as well as the completion of the course reading, is required. Please inform the instructor ahead of time of any conflicts with attendance. In determining the final course grades attendance and active participation will count for 15% of the grade. The first three projects will each count for 15% of the grade. The final individual research project and presentation will count for 40% of the final grade.

Boston University /Bluestone CAS AM 555/AH 554/HI 569

FRANKLIN PARK PROJECT/ FALL 2017

SCHEDULE (09.06.17)

Week ONE Wednesday 6 September

Course Introduction and Outline

Introduction to the Franklin Park Landscape, People, and Images

Week TWO Wednesday 13 September

Visit to Franklin Park

**Class meets at 2:45 PM at the Giraffe Entrance to the Franklin Park Zoo, in Franklin Park at the corner of Pierpont Road and Playstead Road, closest Boston cross street is Seaver Street and Elm Hill Avenue.

Frederick Law Olmsted, *Notes on the Plan of Franklin Park and Related Matters*, (Boston: City of Boston Parks Department, 1886).

Julie Arrison, *Franklin Park*, (Charleston SC, Arcadia Publishing, 2009).

Week THREE Wednesday 20 September

Discussion of assigned reading for 13 *and* 20 September.

Individual meetings on Park Landscape research, which should be well advanced by this class meeting so that we can refine the research strategy.

Cynthia Zaitzevsky, *Frederick Law Olmsted and the Boston Park System* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 33-47, 65-94.

Week FOUR Wednesday 27 September

Visit to the Suffolk County Recorder of Deeds Office working with Grantee and Grantor indexes and land plats for sale of country house and agricultural land to Boston Parks Department.

Meet at 24 New Chardon St, Boston, MA 02114 3:00 PM.

Michael Rawson, *Eden on the Charles: The Making of Boston* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), "Enclosing the Common," chapter, 22-74.

Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), chapter three "Private to Public Property," 59-91.

Week FIVE Wednesday 4 October

Final Presentation Park Landscape Project. Introduction of the Franklin Park Pre-History Project.

Tamara Plakins Thornton, *Cultivating Gentlemen: The Meaning of Country Life Among the Boston Elite, 1785-1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 1-56, 106-172, 201-212.

"Vandalism, Excusable or Inexcusable?" *American Architect and Building News*, 17 (18 April 1885), 190.

Frederick Law Olmsted, "On Points of View and Methods of Criticism of Public Works of Landscape Architecture, Parts 1 and 2," *American Architect and Building News*, 17 (20 June 1885, 27 June 1885), 295-296, 307-307.

Week SIX Wednesday 11 October

Visit to the Leventhal Map Center and Architectural Collections, Boston Public Library, Meet at Copley Square entrance at 3:00 PM; first stop will be Map Center.

Week SEVEN Wednesday 18 October

Final Presentation Franklin Park Pre-History. Introduction to the Neighborhood Residential Landscape Project. **Class start and end time may need to be adjusted on this day.

Week EIGHT Wednesday 25 October

Residential Walking Tour of Franklin Park Neighborhoods, Meet at the Corner of Park Lane and Walnut Avenue at 3:00 PM.

One Page outline of individual research papers to be handed in. Workshop participants need to consult on topic with Professor Bluestone prior to submitting the outline.

Douglass Shand-Tucci, *Built in Boston: City and Suburb 1800-1950* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1978), 73-130.

James Borchert, "Visual Landscapes of a Streetcar Suburb," in Paul Groth and Todd W. Bressi, editors, *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 25-43.

Week NINE Wednesday 1 November

Boston Suburban Domestic Architecture of the Late 19th century. Lecture and Discussion.

Melissa McCloud, "Craftsmen and Entrepreneurs: Builders of the Red Brick City, 1880-1900," in Richard Longstreth, editor, *Housing Washington: Two Centuries of Residential Development and Planning in the National Capitol Area*, (Chicago: Center for American Places, 2010), 23-39.

Week TEN Wednesday 8 November

Apartment House Living and the Residential Landscape. Lecture and Discussion.

[Ralph Adams Cram], *The Richmond Court Apartments*, undated rental brochure, c. 1898; brochure text is reproduced in part in: "The Richmond Court Apartments, Beacon Street, Boston [sic], Mass. Messrs. Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson, Architects, Boston, Mass.," *American Architect and Building News*, 63 (March 18, 1899), 88.

Daniel Bluestone, "Framing Landscape While Building Density: Chicago Courtyard Apartments, 1891-1929," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 76 (December 2017), *forthcoming*.

Week ELEVEN **Wednesday 15 November

Residential Landscape Work Session.

This class meeting will tentatively be rescheduled for Tuesday Evening November 14th from 6:30-9:15 PM.

Week TWELVE Wednesday 29 November

Final Presentation of Neighborhood Residential Landscape Project; Meetings on Individual Research Presentations.

Week THIRTEEN Wednesday 6 December

Presentation of Individual Research Project

Individual research papers will be due Wednesday December 13th at 5 PM.

N.B. The readings listed here are preliminary and will, at the margins, be complemented in the course of the semester. The schedule is also subject to modification depending on the availability of outside resources and the progress of the work.

Key Web Site Links

Excellent local history and historic lithograph, photograph, and map can be found with links below. Most course readings are at:

<http://www.bu.edu/av/ah/fall2017/ah554/>

The drawing and photographic collections of the Olmsted Archives at the Frederick Law Olmsted Historic Site are available on Flickr. The Franklin Park Job Number is #918, there are several albums of material which begin on page six of the Flickr site:

https://www.flickr.com/photos/olmsted_archives/sets/

For link to neighborhood Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps:

http://www.pittsfieldlibrary.org/online_databases_classified.html#DSM

In the “Digital Sanborn Maps” section of the splash page, click “home access.” In the drop down menu click Massachusetts, then Boston; most relevant volumes for Franklin Park neighborhoods are volumes, 3, 7, and 8.

Hopkins and Bromley Real Estate Atlases for the Franklin Park area have been digitized by the State Library and are available for the Franklin Park area, unfortunately they are divided into several different volumes—early view of the Park Site 1874 West Roxbury Atlas, vol. 5, Map F:

<http://www.mass.gov/anf/research-and-tech/oversight-agencies/lib/massachusetts-real-estate-atlases.html>

Boston Building Permits are scanned and on line at:

<http://www.cityofboston.gov/isd/permitsearch/default.aspx>

<http://sceris.cityofboston.gov/scerisweb/client/SimpleSearch.aspx>

Put in the address and the street name—do not include “street, avenue, lane” etc. simply the name of the street. Search. Select all and the permits on file will all come up. Look through them looking for the relevant permit (like the original permit) for your project.

For federal manuscript census returns and city directories use:

<http://ancestrylibrary.com/> This is a subscriber service so it works on campus and through vpn connection. Splash page for Ancestry.com get you to separate links to census and directories. Ancestry has a browse function that lets you look through enumeration districts. In order to find the proper enumeration district number after 1900 it will be helpful to use:

<http://stevemorse.org/census/unified.html>

At the top of this page be sure to click the appropriate census year in the drop down menu. Be aware that the 1890 census was destroyed by fire and is thus not available for analysis.

Boston City Directories are also available

<http://search.ancestrylibrary.com/search/category.aspx?cat=135>

For survey and historical forms related to some buildings in Brighton consult the Massachusetts Historical Commission’s MACRIS system (Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System): <http://mhc-macris.net/>

For Assessment Information including lot and interior space dimension see:

<http://www.cityofboston.gov/assessing/search/>

Early Boston Real Estate Tax Books on-line and at the City of Boston Archives

<https://familysearch.org/search/image/index#uri=https://familysearch.org/recapi/sord/col/lection/2125599/waypoints>

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THE PARK LANDSCAPE ASSIGNMENT: September 6 to October 4.

Each member of the class will select a major landscape feature of Franklin Park—suggestions are listed below. You should develop a comprehensive narrative that seamlessly analyzes this element of the park design with a close reading of social purpose and context: Why was this design a suitable response to the problem presented by the parks department and in the original Frederick Law Olmsted design? What was the guiding logic that informed the design? How did it relate spatially and culturally to other parts of the park design? Had this element of the landscape and its associated activities been accommodated previously in other parts of the city? How did Franklin Park's version of this landscape compare to the earlier forms—dimension, design, and location in the overall city? How did this form contrast with similar spaces and forms in the city? Were there regulations on the use of this part of the park landscape that changed over time? Did the social uses of these forms and spaces change over time?

Produce a written report of your findings including illustrations. Your findings should include careful footnotes that document where your information came from, so a reader would be able to follow up on your sources.

You should search the annual reports of the parks department to get information on your landscape feature. You should read Olmsted's *Notes of Franklin Park* and analyze his plan closely to see how he shaped this feature. Analyze historic photographs and make contemporary observations to see how the landscape has changed over time. Search in Boston guidebooks and newspapers for information on uses and perceptions of the park. ProQuest has searchable scans of the Boston Globe that should be useful.

Produce a powerpoint presentation that will be presented to the class on 4 October.

The following are possible landscape features that individuals could usefully explore for this part of the project—other ideas and suggestions are welcome:

The “Country Park” section of Franklin Park

The “Wilderness” section of Franklin Park, including 99 steps

Franklin Park's road, parkway, and pedestrian network, including Ellicott Arch

Franklin's Park's water bodies, ponds and streams

Points of outlook in Franklin Park, including the Outlook, Schoolmaster's Hill, Sargent's Tower

Franklin Park buildings, including Outlook Shelter, the Refectory, Gardeners Cottage

Franklin Park Zoo and the Ante-Park section

The Franklin Park “Playstead” and White Stadium