The Park that Never Was

A History of Brighton Park and the Chestnut Hill Reservoir

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Introduction

This project started with a hundred and thirty year old map showing an area that I know very well. It was clearly labeled as Brighton Park, dated 1876 and attributed to the Park Department of the City of Boston. The perplexing thing about the map was that it showed something that had never existed, a double park (Fig. 0.1). On the left is the Chestnut Hill Reservoir, at that time Boston's major holding reservoir, completed in 1870 but never a park. On the right, to the east of the reservoir, is what appears to be a large wooded park where there has never been such a thing.

Figure 0.1 Plan of Brighton Park published by the Park Department of the City of Boston in 1876. Note that this does not say that it is a plan of the park and hence appears to be the map of an actual park when it is seen out of context.

Source: Boston Public Library, Leventhal Map Collection

Following the trail of the park that "never was" turned out to be long, complex and fascinating. It is the story of a proposed park that instead became a dense urban landscape with only remains of the historic reservoir as a reminder of what was once picturesque countryside. The result of the research however was a rewarding affirmation of the social nature of park making.

What began as a single question about why the park was never built quickly became several related questions as the importance of the Chestnut Hill Reservoir emerged. How and why did the Chestnut Hill Reservoir become, if not a park, at least a public recreation area, and a metropolitan one at that, before Boston's parks were proposed? How did its success help to inspire the park movement in Boston? How did the growth of Boston by the annexation of its suburbs help and at the same time hinder park development? Lastly, why was this park never completed in any form and even the existence of a plan is largely forgotten?

The research questions that I posed to organize my search and findings were:

1. How was it that the Chestnut Hill Reservoir was built when and where it was as a *de facto* park that became not only a very successful recreation area but also influenced future park plans?
2. Why was Brighton Park never built when not only was it included on the park commission's plan, but some version of a park adjoining the reservoir was on all surviving park system proposals?

This is not a linear story, and in order to tell it effectively several different strands needed to be teased apart, analyzed, and reorganized into a single perspective. Chapter one sets the scene for this by looking at the topography of Boston and the importance of fresh water in

the nineteenth century. An interesting tale in itself, it is a vital ingredient in the creation of the Chestnut Hill Reservoir. Chapter two begins with the water supply in 1848, and then describes the creation of the Chestnut Hill Reservoir and its success as a place of recreation. Chapter three describes the development of the park movement in Boston, the progress of attempts to create a park or park system, and the part that Chestnut Hill Reservoir played in the park proposals. Chapter four takes a necessary step aside to look at Brighton and Brookline, two otherwise insignificant suburbs, whose history played a major part in the park proposals and the eventual park system for Boston. Chapter five details the first appearance of Brighton Park as a part of Boston's 1876 park proposal and the politics involved in attempting to fund its creation. Chapter six chronicles the trade that was made of parkways in place of Brighton Park and the eventual outcome for the area. The conclusion draws these strands together to throw light on the process of park making as a social enterprise.

Chapter 1

The Background: Topography and the Water Supply, 1630 to 1848

In order to understand the creation of the Chestnut Hill Reservoir one must begin with the history of the supply of fresh water to Boston. The first chapter in this story begins in the seventeenth century when Europeans first settled in the Boston area. This step back in time provides a background for understanding Boston two hundred years later, including the development of its park system. There is a stereotypical idea about the settlement and growth of towns from nuclear communities into major cities; a small unit gradually increases and spreads out from its center sometimes engulfing other small units as it grows. But that is only an idealized image, and Boston grew on a quite different model. As the table on the right shows, all of the settlements in the area were established at basically the same time. Boston was simply one among several, perhaps slightly more important than its neighbors by virtue of its harbor, but not the central player that it later became. Boston achieved its predominant position as the importance of its location caused it to develop into one of the major port cities on the Eastern Seaboard.

Town	First Settled	Incorporated as Town/City
Boston	1625	1630/1822
Brighton	1630	1806 annexed to Boston 1874
Brookline	1638	1705
Cambridge	1630	1630/1846
Charlestown	1630	1630/1847 annexed to Boston1873
Dorchester	1630	1630 annexed to Boston 1870
Roxbury	1630	1630 annexed to Boston1846
West Roxbury	1630	1851 annexed to Boston 1874

Source: http://www.sec.state.ma.us/cis/cisctlist/ctlistalph.htm

Figure 1.1. Map by C. P. Wayne showing Boston and environment in 1806. Boston and Charlestown are shown as being heavily populated while the other surrounding towns are quite rural.

Source: Boston Public Library, Leventhal Map Collection

The 1806 map of Boston and its environs in Figure 1.1 shows the area more than a century and a half after settlement. Boston was then still a small peninsula joined to the mainland by a narrow neck of land; almost an island surrounded by salt or brackish water. Across the narrow neck on the mainland the other settlements surrounded it closely, while Cambridge and Charlestown occupied the north bank of the estuary. Although it now seems odd that immigrants chose to live on that restricted peninsula, in 1630 when most people traveled on foot, the distances between the communities must have seemed vast. Only in the twentieth century do we see the area become one urban complex, with paved roads allowing travel from Boston's peninsula to the far side of the city in minutes. For the few settlers who lived

here in the seventeenth century the peninsula undoubtedly seemed spacious with springs of fresh water and land for building and farming. The most attractive aspect was its position as the best location for a sheltered deepwater port, easily accessible for trade. As was the case with most large coastal cities, Boston's growth was based on maritime commerce, while its inland neighbors remained farming communities well into the nineteenth century.

As the nineteenth century progressed a new manufacturing sector began to emerge and although Boston was still primarily a port city with much of its energy invested in its waterfront, industry gradually became a larger part of the economy. By 1865 Boston was the fourth largest manufacturing city in the United States.[1] Even as the number of factories increased, Boston remained a combination of commerce and manufacturing. The wealth that had been gained from maritime commerce was invested in the less risky manufacturing enterprises. Many members of the commercial family dynasties were consolidating the wealth gained by earlier generations and turning themselves into gentlemen. The old commercial elite were "transforming themselves from a maritime elite into a true ruling class."[2]

As industry grew in Boston so did migration into the city both from the surrounding countryside and from Europe. The Irish potato famine which began in 1845 and continued until 1852 brought many thousands looking for a new way of life. Over a million Irish emigrated and, in the first year of the famine 37,000 new immigrants entered Boston, often destitute. Since the majority came from the countryside they rarely had the skills to find work in the growing industrial sector. Some of these immigrants went into the surrounding

[1] Richard D. Brown and Jack Tager, *Massachusetts: A Concise History* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000).
[2] Ibid.

countryside where farming was still the main way of life, and some Bostonians also left the city, but not enough to prevent the population from continuing to grow. From 1830 to 1850 Boston's population grew by 123% and the unique topography that had once been an asset turned instead into a liability.[3] As time passed Boston's neighbors consolidated their boundaries, incorporated, and effectively sealed Boston onto its peninsula which became increasingly overcrowded both with people and buildings.

One ingenious method that Boston used to increase building space was to actually create land. The city was originally hilly and by leveling the hills and moving the debris to fill in the marshes and tidal flats not only was land increased but the city made money by its sale.[4] This however, was a limited strategy; there was only so much soil and rock available and a limited amount of easily filled marshes. Meanwhile the population continued to grow and land creation did not provide enough new space to accommodate it. The total transformation of greater Boston in the second half of the nineteenth century is described by Brown and Tager.

> Boston went from a tightly packed merchant city of 200 thousand in 1850 to an industrial metropolis in 1900, with over a million people in thirty one cities and towns within a ten mile radius of Boston Common. Industrial and commercial expansion increased demands on land use, and Bostonians responded by filling in the waters of the harbor and adjacent rivers to manufacture more land. From its original 780 acres, Boston by 1870 extended over 24,000 acres, thirty times its original size. Tons of gravel dumped into the waters between Boston and Roxbury created the South End; the landfill of the area south of Beacon Hill became Back Bay. The quest for land continued unabated, with the city annexing nearby towns and villages."[5]

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[3] Peter R. Knights, *The Plain People of Boston, 1830-1860:A Study in City Growth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971).
[4] For descriptions see Sam Bass Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston (1870-1900)* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University press, 1962); Nancy S Seasholes, *Gaining Ground: A History of Land Making in Boston* (Cambridgw, MA: The MIT Press, 2003).
[5] Brown and Tager, *Massachusetts*. 215

The extent of public open space and the history of the Boston Common will be covered in chapter four; it is enough to say here that the citizens jealously guarded the small amount of open space available. The Common, and the Public Garden, which had not yet been secured from development, were the only land based 'breathing room' left on the peninsula.

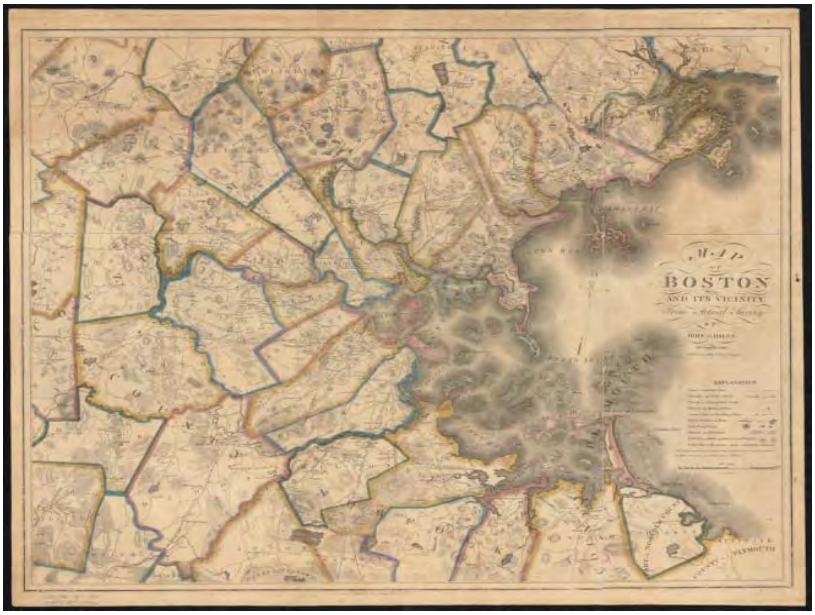

Figure 1.2 1858 map by Walling. Map shows Boston and environs with town boundaries. Boston has grown by filling marshes and annexing South Boston but cannot grow more.

Source: Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library

Although the lack of space in Boston was critical, problems with the supply of fresh water were even more urgent. From almost the first settlement, as Boston grew, access to fresh water was a constant challenge. Residents relied on cisterns, wells and a spring on Boston Common for their water, but supply was exceedingly limited.[6] The wealthy bathed in seawater while the poor probably rarely bathed.[7] Wells were few and private. They were also polluted since "[a]fter two centuries of settlement, Boston's small peninsula was shot

[6] The history of the water supply in Boston with its crises and long debate are covered in, Fern L. Nesson, *Great Waters: A History of Boston't Water Supply* (Hanover: University Presses of New England, 1983); Michael Rawson, *Eden on the Charles: The Making of Boston* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010). Facts are presented in great detail in, Nathaniel Bradlee, *History of the Introduction of Pure Water into the City of Boston with a Description of Its Cochituate Water Works* (Boston: Alfred Mudge & Son, 1868).
[7] Apparently the public baths used seawater in their facilities. Rawson, *Eden on the Charles*.

through with privies."[8] Some, who could afford it, put cisterns on rooftops but those tended to produce "sooty" tasting water. What water there was, was exceedingly hard, making it difficult to wash anything. "The quality of the water was awful: hard, highly colored, often odorous, saline, bad-tasting and sometimes polluted."[9] The real problem was that remedies were not obvious; Boston's geography yet again made any solution exceedingly complex.

The first attempt to provide an alternative came from the Aquaduct Corporation, a private supplier that, as early as 1796, began delivering water from Jamaica Pond through a system of wooden pipes. This supplier never served the whole city however, merely the south and western parts and the service fell far short of the need even in that area. In case of a fire people were required to stop drawing water so that there would, possibly, be enough pressure. In addition Jamaica Pond as a source was totally inadequate to supply a large population. [10]

There were three issues; the quality of the water, the availability of an adequate supply, and a method of obtaining and distributing it across the city. The water quality at the time appears by today's standards to be totally unacceptable, but in the mid nineteenth century expectations were much lower, and cities did not expect to have water that was as fresh as that in the country. Although there had been theories put forward, scientists had not yet validated the germ theory of disease or established a link between pollution and health.[11] The debate about quality was couched instead in terms of the taste of the water, the studies

[8] Ibid. 82
[9] Nesson, *Great Waters*.
[10] For a complete discussion of this issue see Bradlee, *Introduction of Pure Water*.
[11] For a good discussion of issue see Jon A. Peterson, "The Impact of Sanitary Reform Upon American Urban Planning, 1840-1890," *Journal of Social History* 13, no. 1 (1979).

that "proved" it was bad, and those who argued that they drank it and it was fine.[12] The early to mid nineteenth century was also a time of increased philanthropy and the beginning of the move for public health, and there was a theory that washing the streets to remove filth would decrease epidemics, particularly of cholera, among the poor. This, of course, was another drain on water and the medical and health professions became staunch supporters of a more adequate supply.

The inadequacy of the water supply resulted in an array of arguments. There were four basic needs: human consumption (drinking or cooking); cleanliness (bathing or laundering); industry; and fighting fires. While it was the quality that provoked the most concern for human consumption, the availability of an adequate easily accessible supply for fighting fires had the most impact in this densely packed wooden city. Fires were frequent in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when open hearths were used for heat and cooking, and the extent of damage they caused was considerable. There were significant fires in Boston in 1711, 1760, 1794, and 1826. As an example of destruction, the fire of 1760 destroyed 174 dwellings, 175 commercial premises such as shops and warehouses and made 220 families homeless.[13] There was a strong incentive to solve the water problem for this reason alone. By the eighteen twenties the situation was admitted by most to be critical and water was not readily available in ample supply or acceptable quality.[14]

Even when solutions were offered it was far from easy to get agreement. Some smaller towns in Massachusetts had created water systems using springs and collecting and distributing water, as had Providence, Rhode Island. Boston was very large by comparison

[12] Bradlee, *Introduction of Pure Water*; Nesson, *Great Waters*.
[13] Nesson, *Great Waters*.
[14] Bradlee, *Introduction of Pure Water*.

and it was unclear from what source they could obtain, and where they could store a sufficient water supply. Extending the Jamaica Pond system and the existing wooden pipes was certainly not going to be a solution as the population grew. Forced to look further west, the city must now face what would be a very large increase in the cost of water, and make a decision as to how the supply would be secured and distributed. The available options were a purely entrepreneurial approach with the situation left up to private developers, an enterprise funded and managed by the city itself, or some combination of the two. Philadelphia had built a public water system earlier in the nineteenth century and it was eventually deemed a success, but the idea was a new one for America, and Bostonians were by no means convinced that the city should undertake such a large public project. Despite the urgency of the need for a water supply, "Boston's mayors, city council and voters debated this issue for 20 years", from the 1820s to the 1840s, without agreement.[15] In Boston the commercial factions fought against a public supply, and many citizens considered the cost of a public system to bring water from the nearest adequate source in the western suburbs, far too high. The medical profession and the increasing faction who supported public improvements for the poor insisted that clean water should be a public right and not subject to profit making. There still appeared to be no resolution in sight at the beginning of the 1840s.[16]

[15] Nesson, *Great Waters*.
[16] Bradlee, *Introduction of Pure Water*.

There was an additional problem at the beginning of the water debate in the 1820s. There was no one readily available to offer advice since the country had a severe shortage of civil engineers, including those who were trained or experienced in building water systems. This period was the beginning of unprecedented growth and industrialization in America, and civil engineers were needed not only for creating water and sewer systems, but also building canals and railroads and the growing number of very large commercial buildings. As of 1816 there were only three known such engineers in United States and there was no training, either education or apprenticeship, in place for creating more. Any engineering advice came from Europe.[17] Demand on the other hand burgeoned. The State of New York developed a solution to the shortage when the builders of the Erie Canal put in place an apprentice system, rapidly copied by other states. When Boston finally

John Bloomfield Jervis 1795- 1885 Civil Engineer

John Jervis was born in Huntington, Long Island, but spent most of his younger life in Rome, New York, where his family moved when he was three. He attended public schools until he was 15 and then, being unable to afford college, worked for seven years on his father's farm before going on to become the greatest civil engineer practicing during the mid 19th century. It was almost certainly this freedom from formal training that allowed him to develop his undoubted gifts.

At a time before there was training available for civil engineers he began his career as an axeman for the Erie Canal project in 1817 and advanced rapidly so that six years later he was superintendent of a 50 mile stretch of the canal. Four years after that he was chief engineer of the Delaware Hudson Canal project. But canals were only the beginning of his contribution.

He suggested a railroad be incorporated into the Delaware Hudson Canal project because the grade was quite steep. The interesting thing about the suggestion is that there were no railroads in the United States at the time. but he got approval and designed the locomotive himself. It became the first to run in America. By 1830, at the age of 35, he was chief engineer of the Hudson and Mohawk Railway and again designed a locomotive.

In 1836 he moved on to water supply systems when he was given the job of constructing the 41 mile aqueduct for the New York water supply. During the six year project he designed bridges, dams, reservoirs and all other parts of the Croton Aqueduct. His drawings are now preserved in the Smithsonian. In 1846 Boston consulted him on the possibilities for creating a water system.

Jervis not only pioneered several areas but is considered responsible for training a generation of engineers, the first with thorough apprenticeship training. After retiring to Rome he turned his mind to writing and in 1877 at the age of 82 published a book of economics entitled "The Question of Labor and Capital". He died in Rome at the age of 90.

[17] Nesson, *Great Waters*.

decided to seek help in the 1840s there were many more trained professionals available. This appears to be a case where procrastination had a positive outcome and Boston probably got a better water supply system than would have been the case if they had made earlier decisions.

In a very astute move, Boston turned for advice to John Jervis, a New York engineer who had served his apprenticeship on the Erie Canal and become the foremost water supply engineer in the country. Although famous for work on canals and railroads, his expertise most relevant to Boston was that he designed and supervised the construction of New York City's Croton Aqueduct. Hired by the City of Boston as a consultant to advise them on a new

Figure 1.3 Map showing the relationship between Long Pond and Boston Ca. 1850. The route of the Boston Aqueduct is shown in blue.

Source: Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library

water supply system, Jervis studied the opposing plans, inspected the ground, and advised implementation of the plan which would take water from Long Pond in Framingham and bring it to Boston by a twenty mile aqueduct. The project was to be publicly funded. The city put this plan to a referendum which the voters passed in May 1846. The City Council

immediately created a water commission to supervise the project, appropriated $4,000,000 to pay for it and asked Jervis to continue as a consultant.[18]

This was a turning point for Boston in much more than the provision of water. Boston had elected to take the public route. This, according to Sarah Elkind, was not surprising because cities with strong traditions of public activism, which Boston had, were better able to see the benefits of the whole. "Public officials in Boston had a relatively high degree of discretion which engendered an expensive sense of public responsibility".[19] This was also the time when private philanthropy was strong and the various causes overlap. The public health and welfare and temperance crusades agreed on the need for a plentiful supply of water. With water readily available, people could be clean and healthy, and less likely to turn to alcohol.

Jervis continued to act as a consultant to the board during implementation of the project and the job was carried out superbly.[20] On October 25th, 1848 a hundred thousand people celebrated on Boston Common, witnessing the turning on of a giant "Old Faithful" type fountain in the Frog Pond. (Fig. 1.3) Boston finally had an efficient and usable supply of water.[21] The success of the project not only changed the city's outlook on water, but also, by introducing the idea of expert controlled departments, had a profound effect on the composition of city government.

Long Pond had reverted to its Native American name of Lake Cochituate, a name considered more in keeping with its new status. A new permanent body was also created, called the

[18] Bradlee, *Introduction of Pure Water*.
[19] Sarah S. Elkind, *Bay Cities and Water Politics: The Battle for Resources in Boston and Oakland* (Lawrence, Kansas: The University Press of Kansas, 1998).
[20] Nesson, *Great Waters*.
[21] For an excellent, almost foot by foot, description of the water leaving Long Pond and progressing through holding reservoirs to the Common, see Bradlee, *Introduction of Pure Water*.

"Cochituate Water Board."[22] It was to be comprised of qualified experts elected by the Boston City Council and given responsibility for running everything connected with Boston's water supply. "From this time forward, it was the experts who controlled the system, monitoring all questions of demand and supply."[23] Putting control in the hands of professionals was an unprecedented step, but the result was that for a while at least Boston

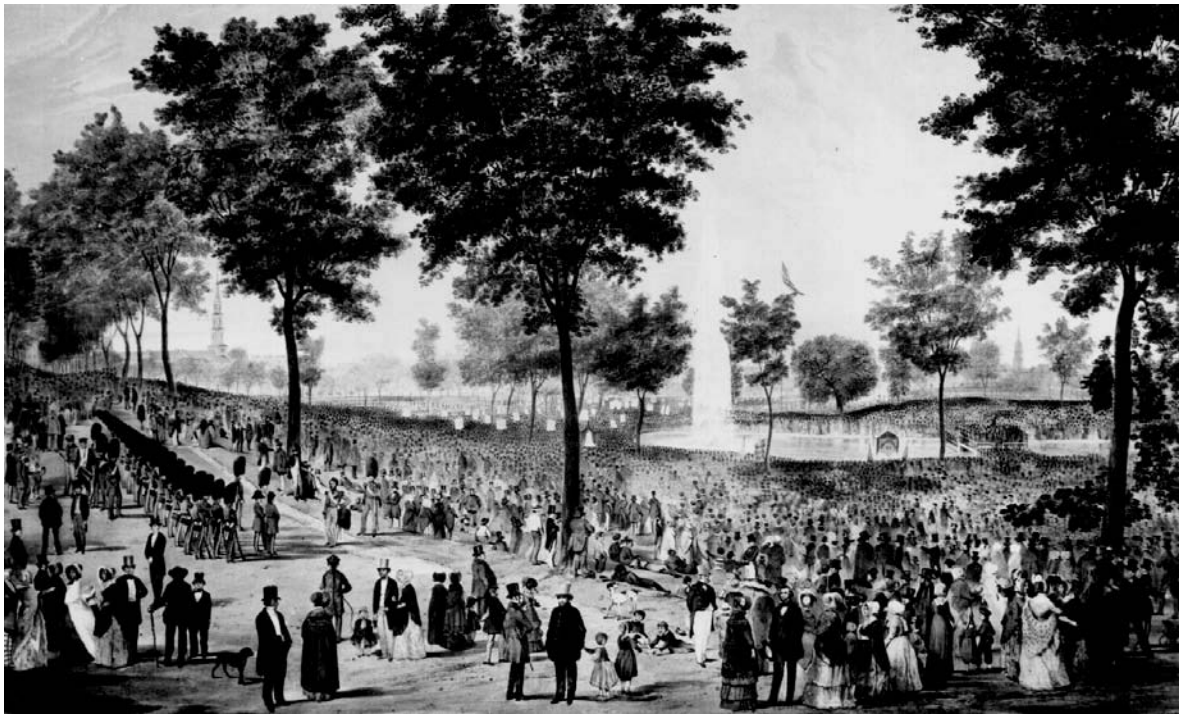

Figure 1.4 The Celebration of fresh water arriving in Boston. Boston Common 1848. A hundred thousand people attended the celebration in which the large fountain in the Frog Pond announced the arrival of the water.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Boston_common_1848.jpg

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had no more water shortages and no more large epidemics. Water went from a "mobilizing political position to an area of expertise for competent professionals." This attitude was helped by the respect granted to the new profession of engineer at this time; they became seen as saviors of Boston and "[a]long with the public's trust of engineers went its insistence

[22] From this point he Cochituate Water Board will be referred to, as it was by contemporaries, as the Water Board.
[23] Nesson, *Great Waters*. 8

that [water] be kept out of politics." The politicians in turn knew that the voters would not accept tampering with the "guardians of their health".[24] The issue of state backed municipal bonds ensured the funds to keep the water flowing. Public support and the availability of this inexpensive funding help to explain the attitude toward the Water Board for the next twenty five years. The public felt that the board should get what it asked for and be left alone to handle the situation. This attitude certainly throws light on why the Water Board could, when the need arose, get the money to build a new reservoir, build it with dispatch, and turn it into a showplace. They provided the city with both an adequate supply of water and an acclaimed public playground all without embroiling anyone in intercity/town politics.

[24] Ibid.

Chapter 2.

More than Just a Water Supply: Creating and Enjoying the Chestnut Hill Reservoir 1865-1900

In 1848 Boston celebrated the fact that they now had an adequate supply of water. Although water did not reach the poor until landlords could be coerced into installing it, and there were complaints about quality from time to time, people appear to have been content with the situation and with the operation of the Cochituate Water Board, which was given the power to monitor the situation and implement solutions.[1] As the nineteenth century progressed, cities all over America were growing at unprecedented rates and Boston was no exception. The expected growth from the birth rate of the residents was augmented by both immigration and the annexation of suburban towns eager for the services the city offered, not the least of which was the water supply. The water needs of the expanding population began to outstrip the delivery capacity of the system and the water supply that had created such excitement in 1848 soon showed signs of becoming inadequate. The Water Board had made projections of future need. They had factored in the possibility of the annexation of suburbs and included not only in the increase in the quantity of water that would be consumed but also the compatibility of systems and water pressure needed to provide service to new neighborhoods.

The deficiency was not yet in the source of water, the quantity available from Lake Cochituate was adequate, at least for a while. At issue was the amount that could be held in the local reservoirs which needed to contain enough water to provide for the city if there

[1] The work of the Cochituate Water Board (generally referred to as the "Water Board") is laid out in great detail in its annual reports, available at <http://www.bpl.org/online/govdocs/boston_water_works.htm> and also in the two histories of Boston's water supply, Bradlee, *Introduction of Pure Water*; *History of the Boston Water Works from 1868 to 1876*, (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1876).

were problems in the aqueduct.[2] In 1859 a disruption in the flow from Lake Cochituate brought home to those in charge that there was only capacity for four day's supply in Boston's current reservoirs. With population continuing to increase the situation could only get worse.[3] There was no room in the system for any problem in the aqueduct or conduits that would necessitate shutting them down for more than a day or two without the city running dry. There were at the time, three small reservoirs and the larger one in Brookline holding 120 million gallons[4]. The Water Board reported in 1864 that based on current and projected water use there was a need for a new, much larger, reservoir. The poor economic climate partially caused by the Civil War prevented an immediate response however. The Water Board was forced to impose strict water conservation on the city, closely monitoring water use, refusing to allow fountains to play and going so far as to ban the use of water closets. The chronicles of the Water Board reports and those of the "Water Registrar" show the real effort and amazing detail of prediction and enforced water conservation. [5]

With the war coming to an end in 1864, the Water Board urgently demanded that a reservoir be built. As the previous chapter made clear, the city had no land available for constructing such a facility within its boundaries. The new reservoir had very distinct specifications. To reduce construction costs for a city whose funds had been severely depleted by war, it must be as close as possible to Boston and the current aqueduct, and in a location where it could be created as inexpensively as possible. Mayors were wary of new taxes for any reason and

[2] The City had four holding reservoirs at this time. The Brookline Reservoir was the largest but there were smaller reservoirs closer to the city in East Boston, South Boston and under Beacon Hill.
[3] William P. Marchione, "Water for Greater Boston,"(1996), http://www.bahistory.org/HistoryWaterForBoston.html.
[4] This reservoir is still in existence, although not used as a water source, and is located just south of the Worcester Road (State Route 9)
[5] Bradlee, *Introduction of Pure Water*. See also the yearly reports of the Water Board at http://www.bpl.org/online/govdocs/boston_water_works.htm#Cochituate%20Water%20Board%20Annual%20Reports

although they were more willing to increase them for water than any other cause they still expected strict economy. The search for a suitable site, once permission was granted, was concluded so rapidly that one is led to the inescapable conclusion that the Water Board had completed their research well in advance, knowing that the reservoir must be built as soon as possible. All of the evidence points to the Water Board being an extremely efficient and conscientious body.

In 1864 the Boston City Engineer recommended the reservoir be constructed in Chestnut Hill, an area on the borders of the towns of Brighton, Brookline and Newton. Finally, in April 1865, Governor John Andrew signed a bill authorizing the Water Board to purchase land in that area. There were several factors to recommend this particular site. The Water Board and the City Engineer had done their research well. (Fig. 2.1) The land is about five miles from Boston, is in close proximity to the Brookline reservoir, and directly over the aqueduct from Lake Cochituate. The topography made the construction of a reservoir relatively simple.

Nathaniel Bradlee, President of the Water Board, described the area as a "natural basin, containing over 200 acres situated about 5 miles from city hall … lying in the towns of Brighton

Figure 2.1. Map showing area selected for the Chestnut Hill Reservoir. The area chosen is represented by the blue shape.

Source: Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library

and Newton."[6] At that time, it was a valley, relatively enclosed on the north, east and west. leaving only the southern aspect to be built up to contain the water. An additional positive aspect was that the land itself was not valuable, being either marsh or poor farmland. It was also easy to obtain without disruption since it was relatively unused if not unusable, and far enough away from the three surrounding town centers of Brighton, Brookline and Newton that it would not interfere with any of the populated areas.

In 1865 land was purchased in Newton and Brighton[7] and construction on the reservoir began in 1866. Since the aqueduct was already in place much of the engineering was already accomplished. The only debated decision was whether, in order to make the best use of the site, the aqueduct should be moved, or two basins should be created with the aqueduct running between them.[8] The final decision was in favor of two basins which had the advantage of allowing either to be closed for repairs while the other supplied the water. In retrospect, although this decision was based on practical engineering considerations, the result had an aesthetic advantage, giving a more natural and picturesque appearance to the area. The smaller Lawrence Basin which contained 180 million gallons was completed, filled and brought on line in 1868. This provided some extra time for the construction of the larger basin. That was completed in 1870, and named the Bradlee Basin after the President of the Water Board and held 550 million gallons. The facility was named the Chestnut Hill Reservoir. At its opening in 1870, Nathaniel Bradlee, widely credited with being the main architect of the project, told a distinguished audience that the cost, which was $2,400,000,

[6] Ibid.
[7] Although there are many references to the resulting reservoir being in Brookline, land in that town was not included. As already mentioned the Brookline Reservoir predates that in Chestnut Hill, but the confusion, which still exists is understandable.
[8] The term "basin" is used by those considering the engineering and water supply functions of the reservoir, but the general population, and those describing the appearance of the area tend to use the term "lake". I have tried to follow convention and refer to the bodies of water by the most appropriate term for the context.

had exceeded plans but "its value is in the security it gives to the life and health of the inhabitants."[9] As will become evident, much of that value, instigated by Bradlee, was in the provision of a *de facto* park, a public pleasure ground.

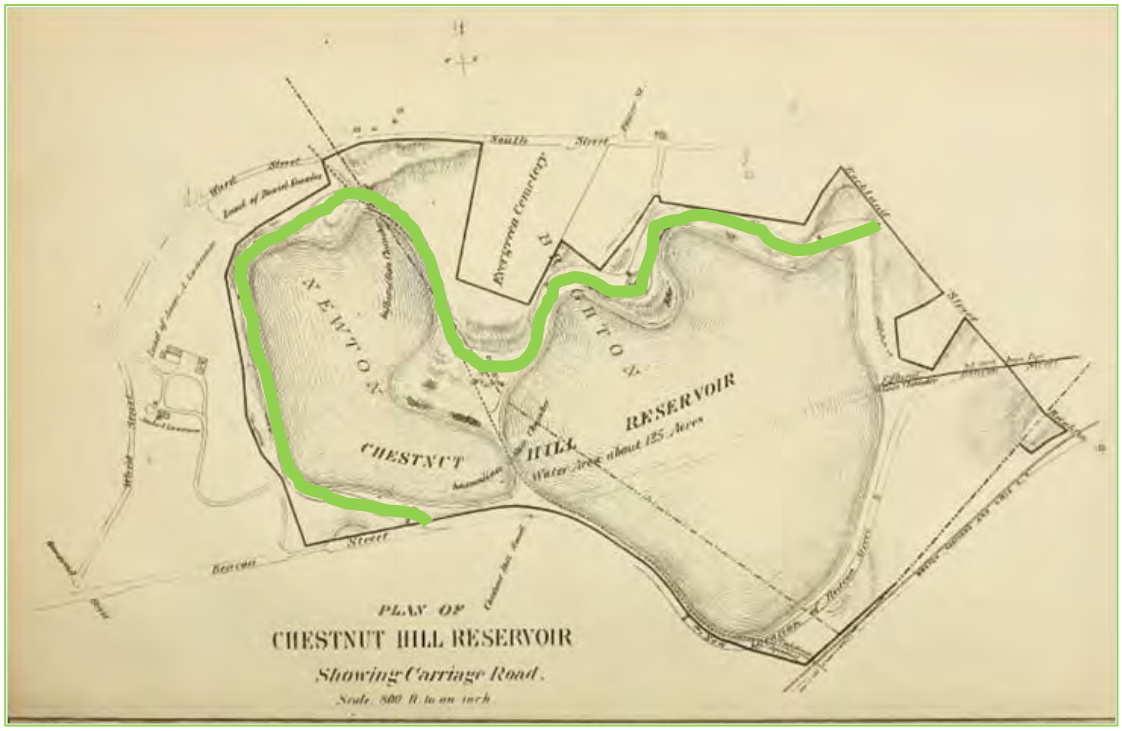


Figure 2.2 Plan of the Chestnut Hill Reservoir as presented in the Water Board report of 1887. The green line shows the location of the driveway.

Source: Cochituate Water Board report 1868

Although the creation of the Chestnut Hill Reservoir preceded the arguments for a Boston park, its history is so entwined with that of the park proposals of the 1860s and 1870s that the history of its creation is important to an understanding of the events that followed. First and perhaps most importantly, had the builders been content to create the reservoir as simply a water receptacle the later history of both the reservoir itself and the attempts to create a park

[9] Marchione, "Water for Greater Boston."

in the area would have been quite different. The point is that the Chestnut Hill Reservoir looked like a park and it felt like a park. This park aspect must surely have been planned at the outset, or at least very early in the process, although any reference to that is eerily absent from the Water Board's reports. The Chestnut Hill Reservoir's two basins became rural lakes with pathways and wooded hills that were the essence of picturesque scenery and attracted immediate acclaim. An early photograph (fig. 2.3), possibly from around 1870 shows it at its best.

Figure 2.3. View of Chestnut Hill reservoir circa 1870 looking east toward Boston. The orchard in the foreground is the current position of Boston College's upper campus. The granite entrance arch at Chestnut Hill Avenue is visible i n the upper left.

Source: *History of the Boston Water Works from 1868 to 1876*. Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1876.

People began to visit the site even before it was completed, and when only the smaller Lawrence Basin was filled. The plans for a formal carriage drive around the basins, designed

purely for recreation, was announced at the planning stage in 1866 and was reportedly received with great enthusiasm.[10] The records show that a great deal of money was invested in plantings and maintenance for years after completion and the postcards in figures 2.4, although printed some 30 years after the completion of the reservoir give some idea of the details of the grounds. In true Victorian style, in 1870 a magnificent entrance gate to the carriage road was constructed on the northwest side of the site at the Chestnut Hill Avenue entrance (Fig, 2.5)

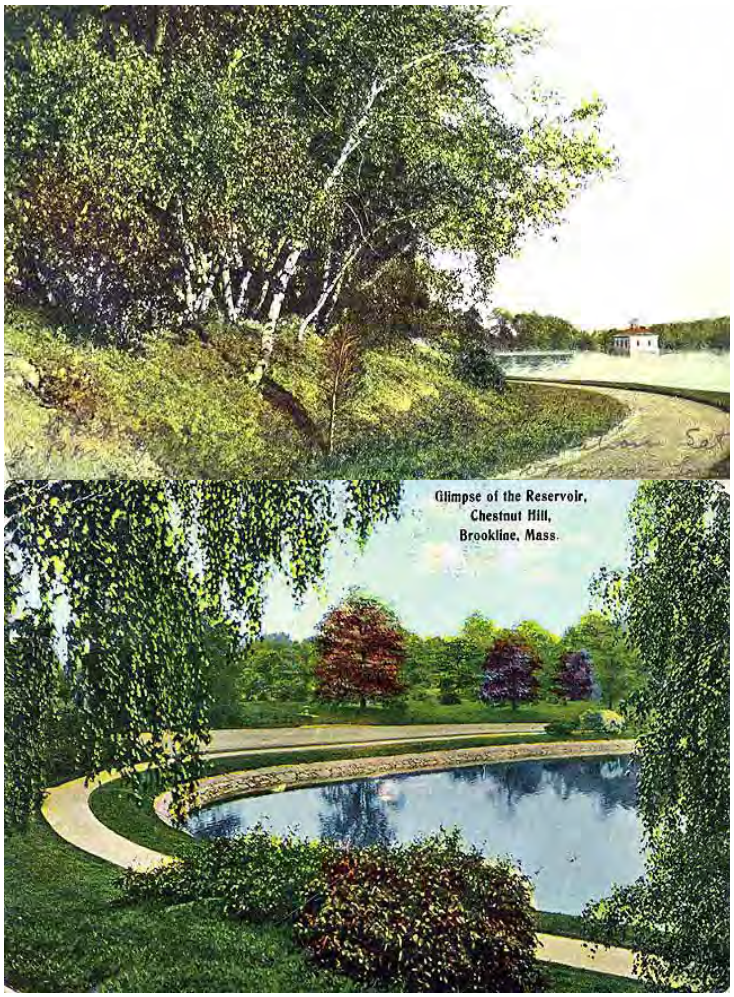


Figure 1.4 Early twentieth century postcards of Chestnut Hill Reservoir showing walkway and plantings. Note that although one of these postcards is labeled as Brookline the reservoir has never extended over the Brighton line into Brookline. All postcards are labeled this way and the reason may have been prestige.

Source: Brighton Allston Historical Society archives

There is no record of the architect of this arch in the Water Board reports, or of some of the other buildings, but it is possible that they were designed by Bradlee himself. He certainly designed the Roxbury Standpipe which is also part of the water system and was created at about the same time as the arch. When the pumping stations were added at a later date, they

[10] Boston Landmarks Commission, "Chestnut Hill Reservoir and Pump Stations," (Boston1989); DCR, "Chestnut Hill Reservation History," http://www.mass.gov/dcr/parks/metroboston/chesHistory.htm; Marchione, "Water for Greater Boston."

too were created with an eye to improving the scenery. The Richardsonian Romanesque high service pumping station designed by Arthur Vinal in 1897-98 and the beaux arts low service station, constructed by Shepley Rutan and Coolidge in 1898-99 resulted in an impressive and pleasantly varied, non-institutional appearance when viewed from the waterside (Fig. 2.6).[11]

Figure 2.5 Granite entrance arch. Entrance to the driveway on Chestnut Hill Avenue

Source: Report of the Cocituate Water Board 1867

On completion of the reservoir in 1870 water for Boston was assured, at least for a while, and the area had a 200 acre "playground" that was spectacularly beautiful and within fairly easy reach of the surrounding cities and towns. It rapidly became a recreational destination as can

[11] In 1899 the Water Board requested from the Olmsted firm a plan for the land between the front of the low service pumping station and Cleveland Circle. A plan was created (Olmsted Job #) but there is no record as to whether it was implemented and certainly no evidence remains on the ground. The postcard in figure ?? is consistent with the design but shows only a small fraction of the plan.

be seen by the illustrations in Lesley's *Illustrated News* and guidebooks such as *Boston Illustrated*. (Figs 2.8 and 2.9) Its appeal was still strong into the 20th century which is when most of the postcards were produced.

When Brighton was annexed by Boston in January 1874, the reservoir was considered so important to the city that Boston negotiated a land trade with Newton so that the whole of the reservoir lands were within the Boston boundary. This accounts for the somewhat puzzling bulge in the Boston map at the southwestern corner of Brighton. From that date on Chestnut Hill Reservoir comprised a large part of Boston's parkland although still never officially a park. The power and prestige of the Water Board remained such that even when a park department was created in 1875 it was never suggested that the reservoir area should be a part of Boston's park system, eventually to the cost of the reservoir itself.

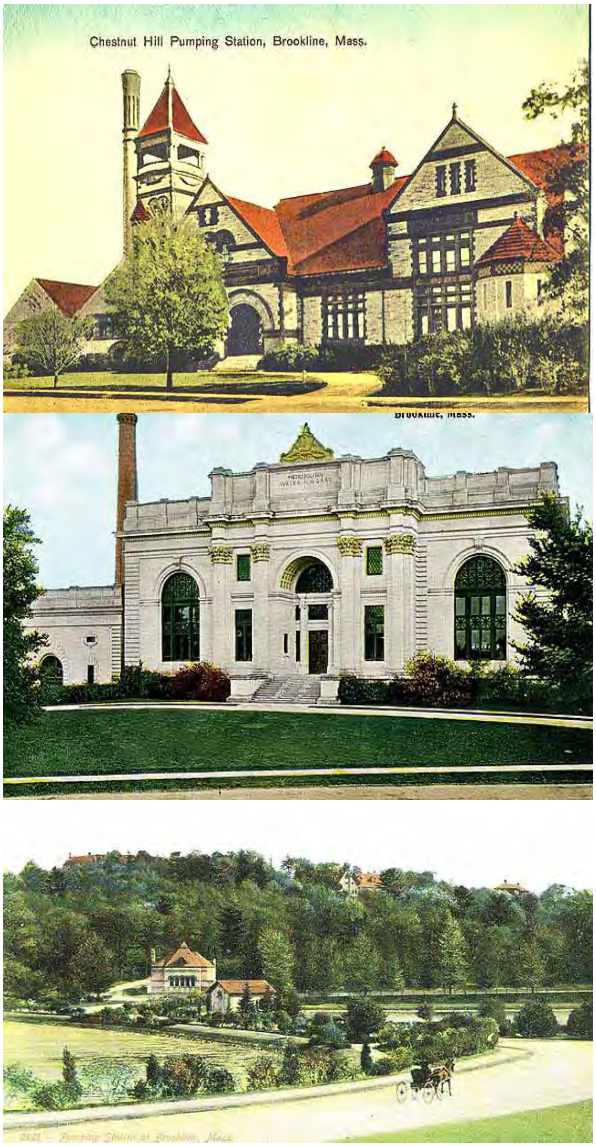


Figure 2.6 Pumping stations. Upper two postcards show the high service and the low service pumping station. In the third the high service station is seen in the landscape.

Source: Brighton Allston Historical Society Archives

Figure 2.7 Illustration from Frank Lesley's *Illustrated News* 1887 showing the popularity of the Reservoir and the various types of transport used to visit it.

Figure 2.8 Illustration from Edwin M. Bacon, *Boston Illustrated 1886* looking across the Bradlee Basin northeast toward Boston. The entrance arch is visible toward the right.

Source: Brighton Allston Historical Society Archives

The acclaim with which Chestnut Hill reservoir was received as a place of recreation can best be illustrated by quotes from differing sources and times. The Boston Landmarks Commission quotes two sources in their report on the reservoir. The first is from *Boston Illustrated* in1878[12]

> The Chestnut Hill Reservoir is not only of great benefit to the city in its practical use, it is also a great pleasure resort. A magnificent driveway, varying from sixty to eighty feet in width surrounds the entire work, and is one of the greatest attractions of the suburbs of Boston. It is in fact, the most popular drive in the vicinity.

The second from *A Guidebook to Boston* in 1916, more than 40 years after completion.

> All around the winding outlines of the basin runs a trim driveway, and beside it a smooth gravel footpath. On all sides of the lake are symmetrical knolls, covered with forest trees and the greenest of turf. The banks to the water's edge are sodded and bordered with flowering shrubs; and the stonework, which in one place carries the road across a natural chasm, and the great natural ledges, are mantled over with clinging vines, and in autumns are aflame with crimson of Ampelopsis and the Virginia creeper.

The last and most detailed comes from Samuel Smith's *History of Newton* published in 1880[13]

> The Chestnut Hill Reservoir of the Boston Water Works has for its site a natural basin, at a distance of about five and a half miles from Boston State House. The spot is a lovely one. There are cultivated hills around the basin, from which fine views may be had of its winding and graceful lines, and its sparkling sheets of water. The driveway, beginning at the imposing arch at the entrance, is some thirty feet above the surface of the water; but it gradually drops, as it winds around, until by the time the Lawrence Basin is reached, the roadway is nearly on a level with the reservoir. The scenery is pleasantly diversified with glimpses of the deep blue water, and groves of trees and plots of green grass. Should the Boston Public Park be extended in this direction, the Chestnut Hill Park will be a fitting culmination of a landscape, beautiful and tasteful in nature and art. And lying, as it ever will, on the borders of Newton, it will continue to be, as it has already become, for its proximity and its elegance, a perpetual benediction,— the favorite drive of the denizens of both Newton and Boston.

[12] Boston Landmarks Commission, "Chestnut Hill Reservoir and Pump Stations." The originals of these quotations are not available but the same citations are widely used.
[13] S. F. Smith, *History of Newton Massachusetts, Town and City, from Its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time 1630 -- 1880* (Boston: The American Logotype Company, 1880). 723

Boston's continued population growth quite soon made the reservoir capacity inadequate, and its role as pleasure ground lasted much longer than that of the savior of Boston's water supply.

Nathaniel Jeremiah Bradlee
1829-1888
Architect and Engineer

Nathaniel Bradlee was born and grew up in the city of Boston. He chose civil engineering and architecture as his career and began to work as a draftsman immediately on leaving school at age 17. His ability showed itself early and his employer, architect George Dexter, made him a full partner in 1856 when he was only 27.

During his early years he designed a number of buildings in Boston, most in the South End and Back Bay, but his most important early building was Harvard College's Grays Hall built in 1858 and still in use today. It had the distinction of being the first Harvard dormitory to have water taps in the basement and is still known as the "Harvard Hilton", the most luxurious dormitory.

Bradlee served on the Cochituate Water Board from 1865 until 1871 and was its president for the last three of these years. It was during his presidency that the Chestnut Hill Reservoir was completed and he is generally credited with being the aesthetic force behind the creation of not just a reservoir, but a place for public recreation. He also designed the Roxbury standpipe, an outstanding building which allowed the Roxbury residents to receive water from the system.

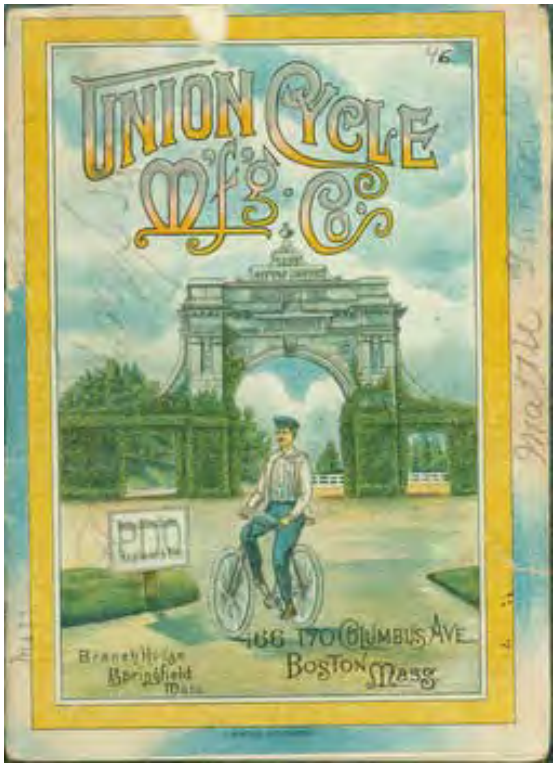
Although he designed many buildings, the task which appears to have caused most comment was the moving of the seven story Pelham Hotel back on its lot to allow the widening of the street. No building of this size and weight had ever before been moved, and it was confirmation that he was both an architect and an engineer. He attempted, unsuccessfully, to run for mayor but this was his only foray into public office beyond the water board. He returned to architecture and continued to design buildings in the Boston area until his early death from a stroke while he was riding the train to a meeting in Keene New Hampshire in 1888. In all he designed over 500 projects including stores and commercial buildings, houses, churches, factories, banks, government buildings, hospitals, hotels, libraries, schools, barns and railroad buildings.

The Water Board had warned the city that annexation would cause yet another water crisis but the actuality was greater than they expected. Dorchester's annexation in 1870 followed by Brighton, Charlestown and West Roxbury in 1873-74 at the same time that immigration was strong meant that the most conservative calculations of the Water Board's experts were inadequate and the need for water was even greater than they had anticipated. In fact not

only the holding capacity of Chestnut Hill Reservoir, but even the source of water soon became inadequate, resulting in the search that eventually ended with the creation of the Quabbin Reservoir. The Chestnut Hill Reservoir meanwhile lived a double life and whatever the water issues, the park advocates saw it as a vital part of any future park system for Boston. The Chestnut Hill Reservoir was designed as a reservoir for function but its designers were farsighted enough to create a public pleasure ground that achieved acclaim. The Water Board's past performance and resulting high esteem ensured that they could carry this out with little or no opposition. With the architects and engineers on the Water Board there is no reason to suppose they would not be infected with ideas of the growing national park movement, but none of the documents provided by the water board express this. There is evidence however that they were not alone in seeing the opportunity. Illustrations of the reservoirs in New York, Philadelphia and Cleveland show that they too were used as places to stroll, and at least to some extent designed to accommodate that. These men whom park commissioners were to call "farsighted" appear to have seen an ideal opportunity to create a park at minimal expense and simply taken advantage of it. Most sources cite Nathaniel Bradlee as the guiding light for the project, and this seems a good possibility in light of his other activities, but there is no definitive evidence of this.

Before leaving the Chestnut Hill Reservoir there are several things of note. Although the reservoir became a part of Boston in 1874 it was originally constructed on land that was outside Boston city limits. That land was purchased with no outcry and there was no vote required to authorize it, either in Boston or in the towns of Brighton or Newton. The people happily accepted that this *was* a park and would go on being one, and they used it as such for at least 50 years. The second issue is that the success of the Chestnut Hill Reservoir as a

destination for public recreation resulted in its inclusion in plans for a Boston park system as soon as the proposals began to appear in 1869. Those plans show how the reservoir was variously incorporated and that there was a clear expectation that it would be part of any park system for Boston.



Source: Historic New England

The Bicycle Craze

During the late nineteenth century bicycles became a new and important means of locomotion and also a pleasure vehicle. People who could not keep a horse could still afford a bicycle. Soon cycling clubs sprang up everywhere, particularly for young men who were enthusiastic about sport. In the Boston area, one of the favorite destinations for bicycle club "runs" was the Chestnut Hill Reservoir. Newspapers of the time are full of announcements of events taking place there, or with the reservoir as a destination. The picture on the left shows the cover of a trade publication with a cyclist posed against the entrance arch to reservoir carriage road.

Chapter 3.

Planning Boston's Park System: The Park Movement and the Part Played by the Chestnut Hill Reservoir, 1869-1876

The city of Boston boasts proudly that its Common is the oldest public park in America. The park image that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century America however differed greatly from Boston Common, both from its appearance and its original function, which was more akin to the English concept of common ground. There were virtually no trees on the Common except around the edge of the open field that Bostonians used for such varied non recreational activities as "shaking carpets, training militia and grazing cows." In fact, "[l]abor and leisure coexisted on Boston Common just as they did in nearby neighborhoods where journeymen and apprentices both worked and lived in a master's house." [1] In its earliest days the Common was a place of multiple functions rather than simply leisure, "a thoroughly miscellaneous urban public ground shaped in the years before American cities self-consciously built parks."[2]

During the early nineteenth century, as the nation began to move away from farms and into cities, the old definition of the role of the common ground started to change. Americans were beginning to separate work from home, and the natural environment became a recreational concept, a place of leisure, rather than a place of work. Local real estate, particularly on Beacon Hill, ceased to be a working and living environment and became instead residences where people lived, separated from their work environment in the city. The Common went

[1] Rawson, *Eden on the Charles*. 22

[2]Michael Holleran, *Boston's "Changeful Times": Origins of Preservation and Planning in America* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). For a wonderful pictorial history of the uses and appearance of Boston Common see M. A. DeWolfe Howe, *Boston Common: Scenes from Four Centuries* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1910).

from a backyard for working Bostonians to a front yard for those with the time and money for leisure. Cows on the Common became a "problem" emblematic of the old way. "The parks movement provided a coherent definition of urban open space, but its definition excluded many of the Common's past functions." [3] The function of the urban park, as it became defined in nineteenth century America, was to provide the country within the city, as "breathing room" to improve the physical and mental health of urban dwellers.

One of the criteria that define the location of parks is quite often that the land they sit on is not useful for other purposes. Describing Chicago's park system, Galen Cranz explains that, "When the choice of available land was made, considerations of landscape, cross ventilation, view, access, circulation and topography although not insignificant, were ultimately secondary to economic and political expediency."[4] Boston did not have waste land or unsightly development that could be turned into a park. They did however have beautiful countryside within fairly easy reach of the city and as opposed to New York, Boston residents were not yet seeing their "picturesque landscape erased by the urban grid as their city raced up its narrow island."[5] What Boston needed to do was to secure its Common and Public Garden which were exactly the right scale for the city itself and then turn its attention to *preserving* the beautiful countryside of its suburbs by whatever means, rather than create parks on land that was not usable for anything else. This is exactly what the first park

[3] Holleran, *Boston's "Changeful Times"*. 116
[4] Galen Cranz, *The Politics of Park Design: A History of Urban Parks in America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1982). 30
[5] Holleran, *Boston's "Changeful Times"*. 110-111

proposals were about; taking land that was often used as a park, such as Corey's Hill[6] in Brookline or Jamaica Pond, and securing it against the future by turning it into actual parks.

Park creation in nineteenth century Boston gradually moved outward from the Common. The Public Garden was finally secured in 1859 and George F. Meacham's plan for it accepted, although implemented with modifications.[7] But as Cynthia Zaitzevsky points out, Boston Public Garden is "best considered as a preamble to the much more ambitious plans for parks and park systems."[8] It is more akin to the small European urban parks than to the nineteenth century American definition of an escape from the urban environment. When the Back Bay was being filled there was a wave of proposals for a park and even a lake to be inserted, although finally there was no park included in the finished landscape.[9] The creation of the Commonwealth Avenue Mall did provide some green space stretching as far west as was possible at the time.

Boston in the 1860s was too small and too crowded a city to accommodate a large park such as New York City's Central Park. Any proposal for a large park or park system must involve cooperation between the city and some of its suburban neighbors. Holleran suggests that Boston park advocates were starting to think of "parks together with street and other infrastructure planning as just the most urgent phase of a comprehensive effort to knit a . . . territory together as a great city."[10] They were placing parks alongside street widening and other infrastructure issues as something that it was better to do before the city's buildings

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[6] The land known as Corey's Hill at this time, changed its name to Corey Hill sometime before the end of the nineteenth century. To avoid confusion, I have used the name as it appears on maps and plans I am discussing.
[7] Cynthia Zaitzevsky, *Frederick Law Olmsted and the Boston Park System* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard Un iversity Press, 1982).
[8] Ibid. 34
[9] Karl Haglund, *Inventing the Charles River* (Cambridge: The MIT Press in Cooperation with the Charles River Conservancy, 2003).
[10] Holleran, *Boston's "Changeful Times"*. 111

spread over them, something of which Frederick Law Olmsted would highly approve. This meant that the view of the future city was paramount in devising its parks. One can see from the park proposals and from the discussion of the issue before the various commissions that many people had such a view and were trying to place parks in relation to how they expected the city and the urban area to expand. That they were not always correct in their expectations does not detract from their viewpoints.

Boston reacted quickly to the creation of Central Park in New York City and in October 1869 the Boston City Council was presented with a petition from eminent citizens and corporations requesting parks or a park system become a priority for the city. The response of the City Council was the formation of a joint special committee of aldermen and councilors to listen to the public. [11] As a result of its hearings, the committee recommended that Mayor Nathaniel Shurtleff petition the General Court[12] to pass an act authorizing the city to purchase land for parks. This of course is the same technique by which the Water Board purchased land in Chestnut Hill for the reservoir. It was however much more evident to the voters in 1865 what they would get in return for the money spent on land for a reservoir, than it was to those in 1870 what they would get for spending on a park. Voters in 1865 trusted the Water Board engineers to produce what they said that they would, while in the case of a purchase of land for a park, there was no park department in existence, in fact there was no public body responsible for parks and the outcome of the process was by no means certain.

[11] Boston had a bicameral city government at that time, a Board of Aldermen elected at large, and a Common Council elected by city wards. Excerpts from the hearings held by this committee are collected in a 200 page public document published by the City. City of Boston, "Public Parks in the City of Boston: A Compilation of Papers, Reports and Arguments Relating to the Subject," (Boston1880).

[12] The correct title of the Massachusetts legislature is the General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, but it is most usually abbreviated in text as "General Court" or "legislature". These abbreviations will be used in this document.

Plans for a Boston Park submitted by Uriel H. Crocker

Figure 3.1 Map of proposed park. Uriel Crocker

Source: Boston City Document No. 123, 1869

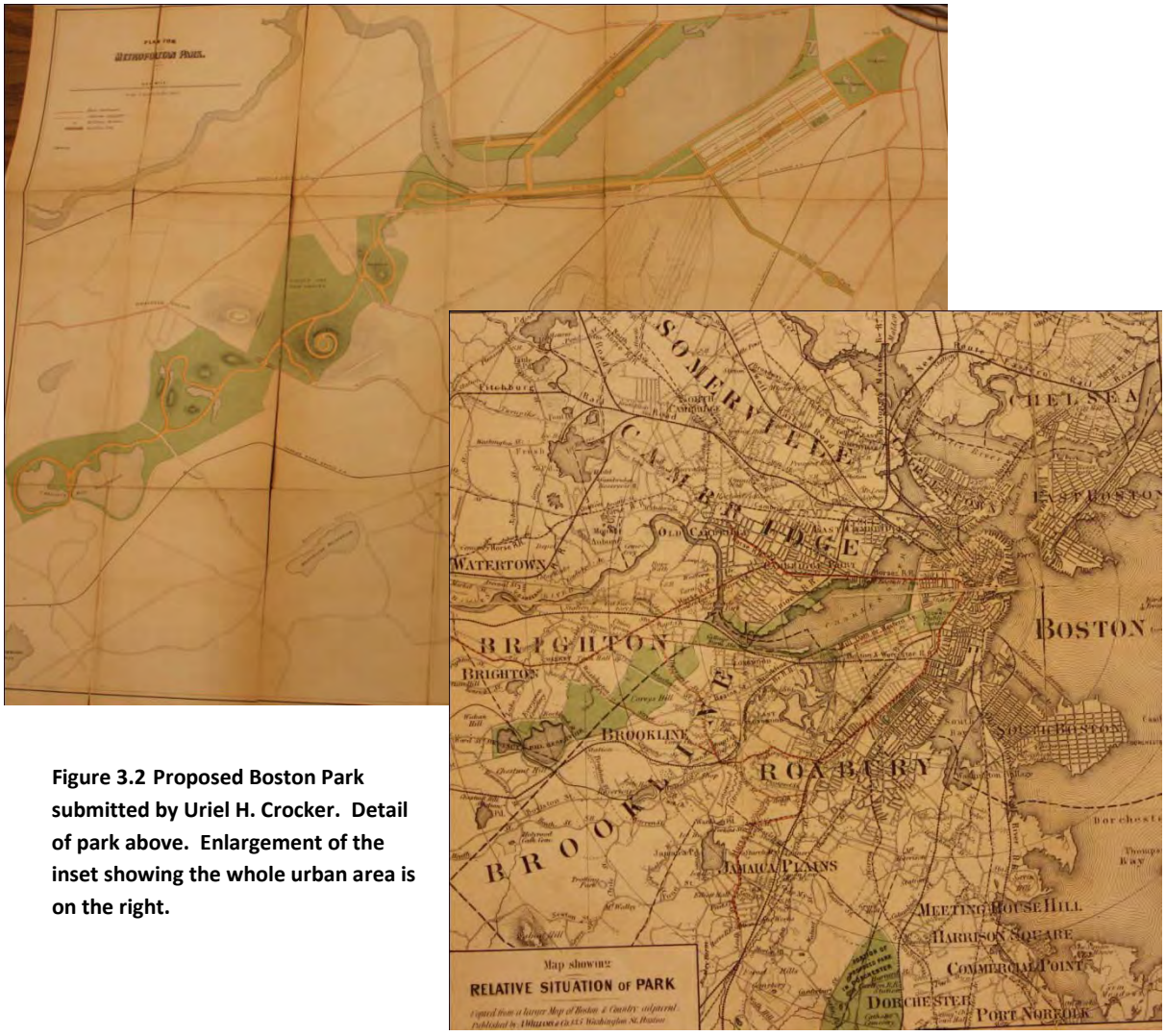

Figure 3.2 Proposed Boston Park submitted by Uriel H. Crocker. Detail of park above. Enlargement of the inset showing the whole urban area is on the right.

Source: *Map and Description of Proposed Metropolitan Park for Boston*. Boston: Avery and Frye, 1870.

Uriel Haskell Crocker 1832-1902 Lawyer and Mathematician

Uriel Crocker was born in Boston to a wealthy family. He showed great skill at mathematics while still in school, attended the Boston Latin School, graduated from Harvard College in 1853, and from Harvard Law School in 1855. He was admitted to the bar in 1856.

The one large departure from his very focused law publications was his interest in the creation of a park system for Boston. He was one of the park petitioners of 1869 and his was the first plan to be submitted. He continued to argue strongly for his plan and, with his legal background was charged with drafting the Park Act of 1870. By 1873 he had been elected to the City Council as a councilor at large, and continued to be active in that arena while still using his law training, becoming a member of the team that rewrote the Massachusetts statutes.

As the economy became more unstable his interest in the cause of recessions grew and he became embroiled in the controversial argument about the relationship between overproduction and recession. In 1878 he authored an order for the Savings Bank Commission that was largely responsible for reducing the runs on those banks.

Park advocates knew that land for parks must be outside city limits because of the increasing urban density. In effect they were proposing a *metropolitan* park, or a park system, the latter being more appropriate for Boston because of the shape of the land and the varying population density. This meant that in addition to any lack of trust, unlike with the water supply, there was the concern over where parks would be located. The outcome of the reservoir was that water *would come to the city* whereas of course parks stay where they are created. Anyone who had seen or heard about the plans for parks in the suburbs could be forgiven for thinking they were a long way away for people who used their own feet to reach their destination.

Starting with the 1869 petition, various park proposals had been submitted and some plans are still in existence. They are particularly important to this narrative because of their invariable inclusion of the Chestnut Hill Reservoir and parts of Brighton and Brookline. The earliest of these, and ultimately the most influential, is a plan put forward in 1869 by Uriel H. Crocker, an eminent Boston conveyance lawyer. It was submitted before the reservoir was even complete. There are two versions of

Crocker's plan, one is a simple black and white drawing (Fig3.1) submitted to the committee in 1869 and accompanied by Crocker's description. The second, basically the same plan, but a much more professionally drawn version in color, and was submitted to the Boston City Council and presented by Councilor George Shaw. It was bound with Crocker's description and rationale in 1870 and made available to the public. It is shown in figure 3.2.[13]

Figure 3.3 Engraving of Corey's Hill in Brookline 1864.

Source: Brookline Historical Society

Crocker's plan laid out a long, rather narrow, park that stretched from the Charles River to the Chestnut Hill Reservoir. Most of this park was to be in Brookline and Brighton. The latter being still at that time independent of Boston. Crocker argued that his plan was superior on five counts, some of which were controversial.

[13] City of Boston, "Report and Accompanying Stattements and Communications Relating to a Public Park for the City of Boston," (1869). And *Map and Description of Proposed Metropolitan Park for Boston*, (Boston: Avery and Frye, 1870).

1. *It would be centrally located*. The map of Greater Boston (fig??) makes clear why he claims that the park he proposes is central. The towns fan out from Boston. They range from Charlestown in the north to Dorchester in the south, and the park stretches from Boston west-south-west directly out of the city. It is certainly central, but it illustrated the difference between centrality and accessibility. It is a long way from Dorchester, for instance, a circumstance that was to become important.
2. *It incorporated natural features that already existed*. This is indisputable. Corey's Hill was already used extensively as a park (Fig. 3.3).
3. *It offered one of the most expansive views of the metropolitan area* (from Corey's Hill). Again indisputable as can be seen in figure 3.3.
4. *The reservoir was already a favorite resort*. Evidence points to the use of the reservoir as a pleasure resort before it was even complete.
5. *Back Bay offered space without cost in its exposure to open water*. This is a little less defensible since in order to make the area pleasant a great deal of work needed to be done. [14]

A look at the plan shows that the park is metropolitan. It would be located in Boston, Cambridge, Brighton, Brookline and Newton with the major areas being Brighton's reservoir and upland area, and Brookline's Corey's Hill. Crocker also added a suggestion for a possible parkway across Brookline to join the Chestnut Hill Reservoir with the future arboretum area.

Several other plans still exist and all of those that are metropolitan include the Chestnut Hill reservoir. Robert Morris Copeland wrote an editorial for the Boston daily Advertiser that was actually a verbal version of a park plan that included the reservoir.[15] Another plan that has been preserved was provided by Ernest Bowditch, an architect and engineer. It depicts a large metropolitan park system more extensive than anything else at that date. This plan differs greatly from Crocker's, with the inner parks forming a ring around Boston, rather than a spoke reaching outward, but the Chestnut Hill Reservoir is again included, This time it is part of a park which stretches across Brookline to include Brookline Reservoir and Jamaica Pond, much as Crocker suggested might be possible. (Fig. 3.4) The last plan included here is

[14] Haglund, *Inventing the Charles River*.
[15] Robert Morris Copeland, "The Park Question," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 12/2/ 1869. Copeland's second plan, laid out after the annexation of Roxbury and Dorchester lays out parks within Boston's borders and so does not include the reservoir.

that of Charles Davenport which mainly concerns the riverfront. Yet again it is a metropolitan plan, using both sides of the Charles River, The Chestnut Hill Reservoir is not included directly as a part of the proposed plan but is prominent on the map and appears to be a larger park than the grounds were at time.

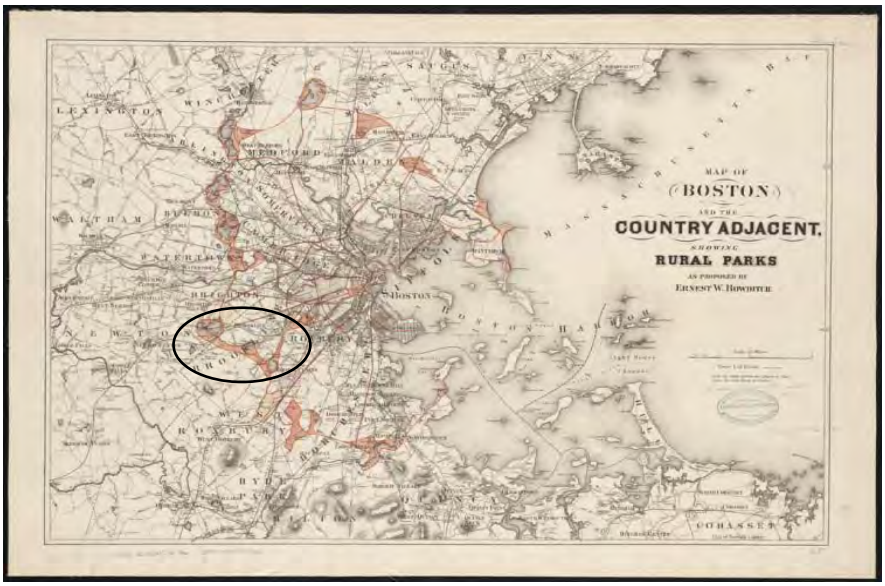

Figure 3.4 Plan for a proposed metropolitan park system by Ernest Bowditch. The Chestnut Hill Reservoir to Jamaica Pond park is circled.

Source: Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library

As a result of the hearings held in November 1869 the City Council passed an order requesting Mayor Nathaniel B. Shurtleff to petition the General Court to pass an act that would authorize Boston to purchase land for a park or parks. This land would of necessity be outside the boundaries of the city. The result was the Park Act of 1870, drafted by Uriel Crocker, that would create a metropolitan park commission consisting of the Mayor of Boston, 4 commissioners appointed by the Governor, and 4 members of the Boston Common Council and empowered to purchase land. The act was passed by the General Court in May of 1870 with the condition that it must be approved by two thirds of the voters of Boston.

The act was defeated, mainly due to voters in Dorchester, which had been annexed to Boston in January1870, and South Boston. The park that the voters expected was almost certainly that advocated by Crocker which had been widely publicized, and for them it appeared to be a great distance away. There was also some effort made to convince voters that they would be required to pay for the park through their taxes, while residents in towns where the parks were created would use them for free. This was erroneous.[16] At this point, although feeling about the need for a park did not die, there was a hiatus until late in 1873. This was not surprising given the chaos caused by the great fire in 1872 and the nation wide recession of 1873. People had other, more pressing, concerns.

In 1874 several thing happened that caused the subject of parks to reemerge with considerable force. The first was the final round in the annexation of Boston's suburbs, including two of the most rural, Brighton and West Roxbury.[17] Brookline decisively declined annexation. Boston had now grown both in population and in land area and the resulting rather unusual outline of the city is shown in figure 3.6. Despite its odd shape, the City of Boston now had the ability to create parks within its boundaries since both Brighton and West Roxbury were very sparsely

District.	Population.	Acres.	Pop. per Acre.
Old Boston,	141,000	1,570	89
South Boston,	54,000	900	60
Charlestown,	34,000	600	56
Roxbury,	50,000	2,100	24
East Boston,	29,000	1,585	18
Dorchester,	16,000	4,533	$3\frac{1}{2}$
Brighton,	6,000	3,000	2
West Roxbury,	12,000	8,000	$1\frac{1}{2}$
Population			342,000
Gross acreage			22,288
Average population per acre			$15\frac{1}{3}$

Figure 3.5 Table showing population and area of the neighborhoods of Boston at the time of the 1874 annexations.

Source: City of Boston. "Second Report of the Board of Commissioners of the Department of Parks for the City of Boston." 1876.

[16] Zaitzevsky, *Olmsted and the Boston Park System*.
[17] There appears to be confusion about whether this took place in 1873 or 1874. What actually happened is that the vote was in 1873 and the annexation happened in January 1874. Thus it is quite correct to say that Brighton decided on annexation in 1873, and equally that it was annexed in 1874.

populated. The second occurrence was the election of the strongly pro-park Samuel Cobb as Mayor of Boston. He was elected by a nearly unanimous vote, the first time such a thing had happened. He was also both experienced and reputedly courageous.[18] He included in his inaugural address his intention to see the creation of a park system for Boston.

Figure 3.6 Map of Boston after 1874 annexations. This very simple map shows both the extent of growth, from the small shaded peninsula, to the whole outline. It also shows the odd shape of the city and the effect of Brookline's decline of annexation.

Source: Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library

In 1874 Mayor Cobb appointed a special commission to look at the park issue. It consisted of himself as Mayor, two Aldermen, three members of the Common Council and three citizens. More hearings resulted in much the same information as had been collected previously. When the commission reported, they advocated a series of parks set within two circles, the inner in the more urban parts of Boston consisting of smaller parks, the outer of larger parks in the rural neighborhoods. The parks should be joined by parkways. They also advocated that the city should purchase the land immediately and hold it until it was ready to create parks.[19] Since land values were very low at the time due to the recession this was very reasonable advice.

[18] John Koren, *Boston 1822 to 1922: The Story of Its Government and Principal Activities During One Hundred Years*, vol. (Document 39-1922) (Boston: City of Boston Printing Department, 1922).
[19] Zaitzevsky, *Olmsted and the Boston Park System*; Koren, *Boston 1822 to 1922*.

In early 1875 an order was presented to the City Council again requesting the Mayor petition the General Court. The City Council amended the proposal to enable towns adjoining Boston to also acquire land for parks. The main advocate for this was Uriel Crocker now a member of the Common Council and in the light of his park plan, this was almost certainly aimed at including Brookline in any park proposal. In May 1875 this act was drafted and in June the electorate of Boston approved it by a simple majority at a special election.[20] The important difference between this act and the previous one was that this was a municipal not a metropolitan park act made possible by the growth of Boston, particularly by expansion into two of what were originally its outer suburbs. In 1875 Mayor Cobb appointed and charged a park commission with the ability to purchase land for parks subject to the approval of the Board of Aldermen and the Common Council. It consisted of Charles H. Dalton, chair, William Gray Jr. and T. Jefferson Coolidge. Before reporting, this committee engaged in considerable research including examining not only the submitted plans but any area seriously proposed for a park site. They engaged in informal consultations with Frederick Law Olmsted with whom Dalton was already acquainted but it should be emphasized that Olmsted's relationship with the committee at this time was not only unofficial, but exceedingly tenuous and his reactions to the plans are not known.[21]

The Park Commission report submitted in 1876 is impressively complete and concise containing rationale, descriptions, plans and costs for a complete park system in a total of 40

[20] Koren, *Boston 1822 to 1922*; Zaitzevsky, *Olmsted and the Boston Park System*.
[21] Zaitzevsky, *Olmsted and the Boston Park System*.

pages excluding plans.[22] The second largest park in the system was located in Brighton adjacent to Chestnut Hill Reservoir, this is the Brighton Park with which this narrative began.

[22] City of Boston, "Second Report of the Board of Commissioners of the Department of Parks for the City of Boston," (1876). The first report of the Commission was merely a progress report.

Chapter 4.

Brighton and Brookline: Diverging Suburban Patterns

There is good reason to devote a chapter to the history of these two small and rather insignificant suburbs of Boston, They are about the same size and both were settled in the 1630s as farming communities, but by the end of the 18th century their characters had begun to diverge. This history explains how they grew into examples of two very different types of suburb, one providing a variety of services to Boston through its industry and horticulture, the other becoming a place of country estates and later a bedroom community for the wealthiest Bostonians. It was the different paths that they took that led Brighton to accept annexation in 1873 and become a part of the City of Boston, and Bookline to decisively reject it. These decisions, by changing the map of Boston in a particular way, in turn influenced the shape of Boston's park system.

This chapter spends more time discussing Brighton than Brookline for two reasons. First, Brighton is the location of the Chestnut Hill Reservoir and was the site of the proposed Brighton Park, and so the fate of that park was directly tied to that of the town. Secondly Brighton has had a somewhat more eventful history than has Brookline.[1]

As discussed in Chapter 1, the major settlements of greater Boston occurred virtually simultaneously, and while this includes Brighton, its history differs slightly from that of most

[1] Major references for the history of Brighton include William P. Marchione, *The Bull in the Garden: A History of Allston-Brighton* (Boston: Trustees of the Public Library, 1986); Frederic A. Whitney, "Brighton," in *A History of Middlesex County, Massachusetts*, ed. Samuel Addams Drake (Boston: Estes and Lauriat, 1880); J. P. C. Winship, *Historical Brighton: An Illustrated History of Brighton and Its Citizens* (Boston: G. A. Warren, 1899). Also several articles originally written by Marchione for the local press and now made available by the Brighton Allston Historical Society at http://www.bahistory.org/bahfirst.html. The major source for the material on Brookline is John Gould Curtis, *History of the Town of Brookline Massachusetts* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1933). Material on its status as a suburb also from Rawson, *Eden on the Charles*.

of the other future suburbs. The land that became Brighton[2] was originally settled as a part of Watertown but reverted to Cambridge (then New Towne) in 1634. A look at the map of the area in the seventeenth century (Fig 4.1) shows the Charles River looping northward into Cambridge so that Brighton is directly west of Boston although cut off from it by the Back Bay. In the north Brighton is separated from Cambridge by that same loop of the river.

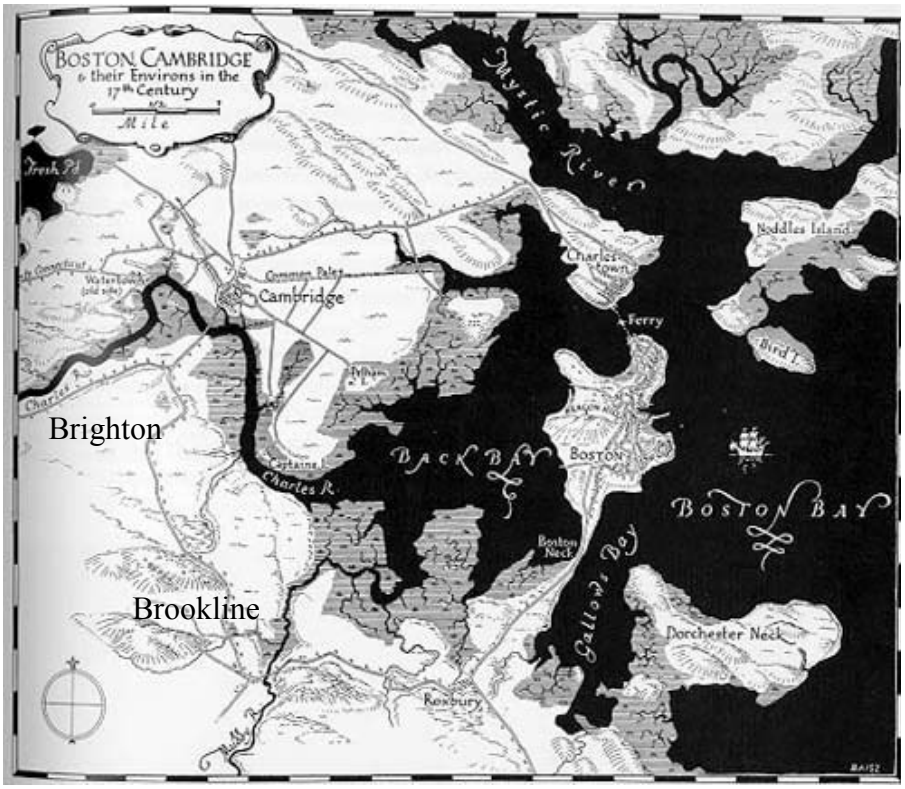

Figure 4.1 17th century map of Boston and environs

Source: Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library

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The result is that Brighton is prevented by these natural boundaries from being readily integrated in either direction. In the modern age when bridges span the Charles River in any

[2] Brighton began life as a farming settlement, became a town and later a neighborhood of Boston. I have tried as far as possible to refer to it by correct term for the particular time under discussion.

laces this is easy to forget, but in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when travel was slow and difficult these barriers had a crucial effect

Modern historians when writing about Brighton as a part of Cambridge usually refer to it as "Little Cambridge" or "South Cambridge" although it appears that there was no official name for it. The preachers who took services in Brighton's Congregational Church in 1779 before they installed their own pastor, apparently referred to the community by a bewildering variety of names which undoubtedly contributed to identity problems.[3] The land that comprises Brighton is a glaciated river valley, marshy near the river to the north and rocky and unproductive in the hills to the south, but the land between was good farming soil. There were seasonal settlers in Brighton by 1639, and permanent farms established in1647.[4]

In 1662 the Great Bridge was completed, linking Brighton to Cambridge,[5] changing the relationship of Brighton not only to Cambridge, but to the towns to its south and to Boston. The construction of the bridge was a convenience for the Little Cambridge settlers who need no longer use the ferry to cross for their school or church attendance.[6] In the longer run the influence on the community of this first bridge across the Charles River was much greater than simple convenience. The bridge put Brighton on a favorable trade route. The only way of moving goods or people between Cambridge and towns to the north, and Boston and towns south of the river, was across the bay by boat, or over this bridge through Brighton and Roxbury. The map (Fig. 4.1) shows the road heading south from what is now Harvard Square, over the bridge, through Brighton and Roxbury and finally across the neck to Boston.

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[3] Whitney, "Brighton."
[4] Marchione, *The Bull in the Garden*.
[5] The Great Bridge was on the site of the current Anderson Memorial Bridge linking Brighton with Harvard Square. See Fig. 4.1 for its position
[6] The settlements were originally religious entities and weekly church attendance was required. The river crossing must have made settlement on the land south of the river quite arduous.

While this was arduous, when moving livestock or heavy loads it was less expensive than a ferry crossing. A further effect of the building of the bridge was increased contact between Brighton and other communities; as more travelers passed through, the community became progressively less isolated.

As with most of the settlements in the area, Brighton remained a farming community well into the nineteenth century, but in 1775 a twist of fate, and the astute business sense of a father and son team, permanently changed the history of the town. Jonathan Winship I and his son Jonathan Winship II had fairly recently moved to Brighton when the Continental Army arrived. They conceived the idea of using Brighton as a staging area to feed the troops, just across the river. They put out the call to local farmers, purchased cattle and slaughtered them to provision the army. As a part of this enterprise they established the Cattle Market in what is now Brighton Center, it being much faster and cheaper to have the meat move *itself* into the area than to cart it in from remote farms. Willard M. Wallace in his military history of the revolution apparently credited this action as a major factor in the success of the siege of Boston. Well fed troops were crucial to lasting the winter.[7] In 1776 the Winships had 500 barrels of salted beef in their warehouses. With this one act they "Transformed Little Cambridge from a sleepy agricultural village to a thriving commercial center."[8]

If this project had lasted only while the army was in residence, the town's history would undoubtedly have been quite different, but the Winships, a family of superb entrepreneurs for several generations, kept it alive. Gradually the number of slaughter houses grew, the

[7] Marchione, *The Bull in the Garden*.
[8] Ibid. 22.

cattle market included other animals, and Brighton became one of the major staging areas for meat coming into the urban area. Hotels proliferated to accommodate those coming to buy or sell and cattle, sheep and pigs were continually driven into Brighton to the slaughterhouses. They created filth and havoc in the streets, while at the same time enriching the residents. The now wealthy Winships built a mansion in Brighton Center in 1780 (Fig. 4.2) and by 1790 were the largest meat packers in Massachusetts.

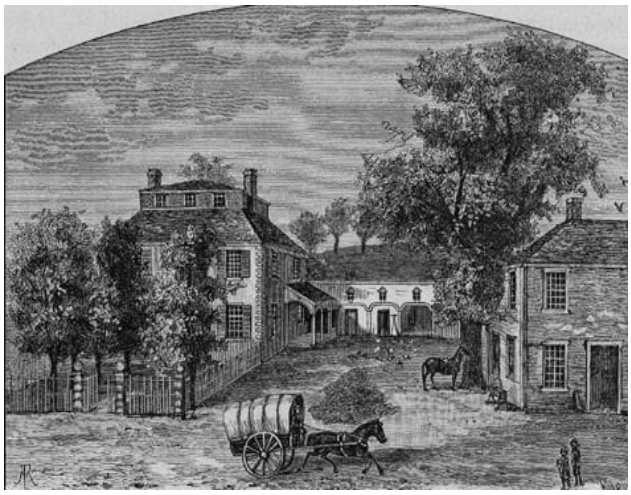

Figure 4.2 The Winship mansion Brighton Center. Built 1780. Note warehouses are on the right, close to the house. Location was where Brighton police station now stands.

Source: Brighton Allston Historical Society Archives

Brighton's independence from Cambridge came rather quietly in 1807. The motives were economic and political. In 1785 a new bridge had been built across the Charles River linking East Cambridge to Boston. This had two effects. First, Brighton was now no longer on the only land route from the north to Boston which meant that they lost traffic and the commerce that resulted from it. The Great Bridge began to fall into disrepair and there was not much incentive to repair it. But perhaps even more important was the growth in the population of East Cambridge which was now closely linked to Boston and on the new preferred trade route. This growth caused Brighton to become a progressively smaller proportion of Cambridge and have a smaller influence in town politics. The residents of Brighton preferred to chart their own course since what was good for East Cambridge was seen as not good for Brighton.

Little Cambridge was now a town in its own right and took the name of Brighton.[9] Although most of the land was used for farming, the meat industry continued to thrive as did the cattle market and by the 1850s there were 40 slaughterhouses in the area.(Fig 4.3) In addition a number of industries related to the slaughterhouses and meat market developed in North Brighton, from directly linked products, such as leather goods and tallow, to fertilizer. In 1818 the Massachusetts Society for Promotion of Agriculture also chose to erect its permanent agricultural hall in Brighton and hold its annual shows in the community.

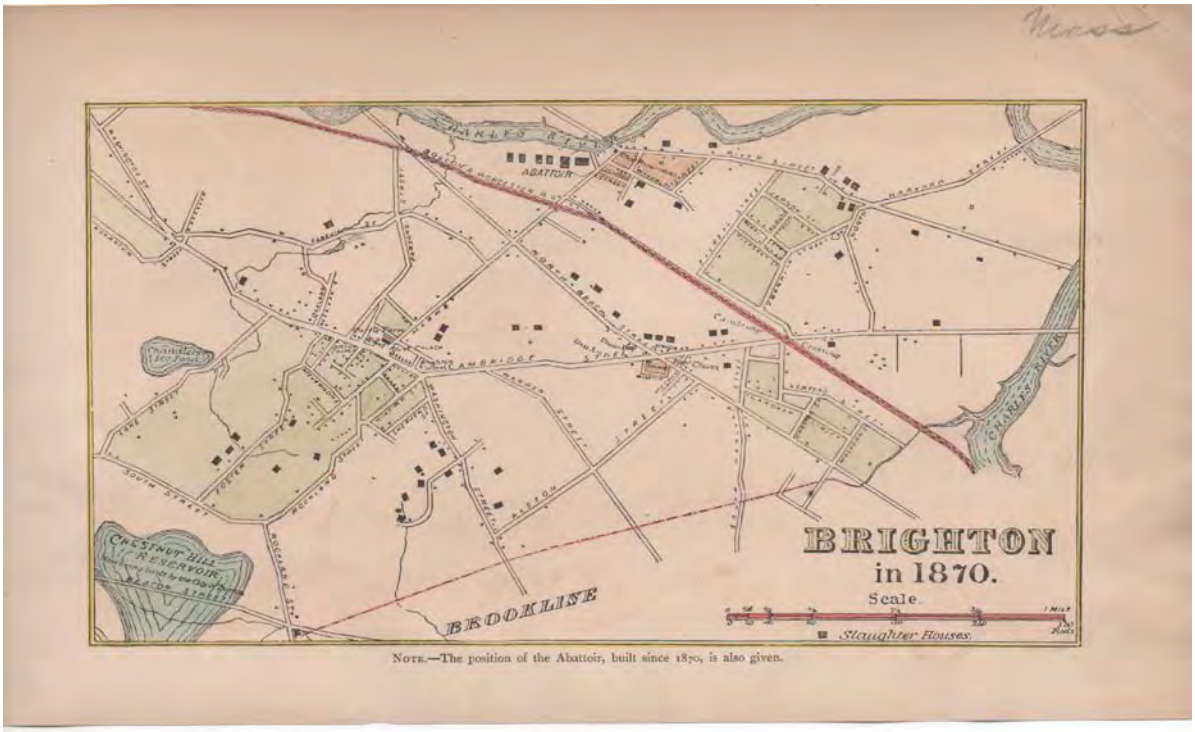

Figure 4.3 Map showing the position of the slaughterhouses in Brighton in 1870. Chestnut Hill reservoir is in the lower left

Source: Author's collection

[9] The name was settled upon by discussion and although most people assume that it was derived from the English town of Brighton, there is as good a reason to believe it came from the term "bright" which was used to denote a prize ox. Ibid.

In the early nineteenth century a second major industry began to grow, also related to the soil. The third generation of Winships produced a Jonathan III who spent his early adult years sailing the Pacific Ocean in the latest Winship family business, the Pacific fur trade. His knowledge and interest in horticulture, acquired while in China, led him to open a professional plant nursery in the north part of the town. He was followed by several other nurserymen, whose nurseries were concentrated in the hills of Nonantum to the southwest. Brighton became a major supplier of market garden produce, particularly flowers, to Boston and when the town decided on a seal it was the greenhouses of this new industry that it featured. (Fig. 4.4) While Winship and Joseph Breck, another important and successful nurseryman, became founding members and officers of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society it should be emphasized that they were very different from the *gentlemen* horticulturalists. For these men it was a business, they were professionals serving the area with both plants and produce.

Figure 4.4 Brighton Town Seal

Although there was a distinct industrial feel to parts of Brighton by the time of its independence in 1807, it was still a farming community and most commercial activities, from slaughterhouses to greenhouses or agricultural shows were connected to the farming roots. This was a trend for many suburban towns. The reorganization of agriculture during this time had resulted in a change in land use and the way that the food was supplied to cities. The outer areas supplied agricultural products such as wheat and corn and the cattle that came to Brighton's market. The inner suburbs, with less land, concentrated on the horticultural services such as fruit and

flowers which could be produced using more intensive methods. They also "furnished sites for agricultural marketing and processing facilities and in turn became centers for related pursuits."[10] Brighton was a typical example of such a suburb.

Figure 4.5 Watercolor view of Brighton looking west over the river, showing the rural nature of Brighton in 19th century

Source: Historic New England

By the mid nineteenth century Brighton was still mainly rural with beautiful hilly scenery (Fig 4.5) but with a distinct commercial and manufacturing sector that had its roots in agriculture and served the urban area, particularly Boston. It was predominantly a working and middle class town. Even the successful residents tended to still, in the English phrase,

[10] Henry C. Binford, *The First Suburbs: Residential Communities on the Boston Periphery 1815-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

"live over the shop" rather than separate their work from their residence. This is evident in the house of the earlier Winships which shows the warehouse to the right (Fig 4.2) and in those of both Jonathan Winship III and Joseph Breck (Figs 4.6 and 4.7) where the nursery is in effect the back yard of the house.

Brighton had an energetic approach, welcoming the changes that technology brought, such as improved transportation, when it increased trade. The town was proud of its progressive image and was early to invest in education. It was prevented until 1870s from becoming a bedroom community by the unpleasant environment resulting from its numerous slaughterhouses and by a lack of facilities such as good roads, water and especially sewers. These services had been considered not essential to a farming community. By 1873 the abattoir was constructed on the Charles River between Brighton and Watertown and the slaughterhouses closed, resulting in an economic decline due to loss of industry but at the same time a much more livable environment. Once it was clear that building suburban housing brought greater returns on the land than did agriculture, but only with a certain level of infrastructure, Brighton began rapidly building the roads and sewers it needed. Unfortunately it was also ill

Figure 4.6 House of Jonathan Winship III showing house sited in nursery.

Figure 4.7 House of Joseph Breck with nursery beside it.

Source: Brighton Allston Historical Society Archives

led and basically unable to pay for the infrastructure it had built.[11] In effect it was virtually bankrupt when annexation was offered. The only possible answer was to vote "yes" and become a neighborhood of Boston in return for having the city assume the debt and complete the infrastructure.

Jonathan Winship III
1780-1843
Adventurer and Entrepreneur

Jonathan Winship III was the fourth of five sons of Jonathan II, all of whom chose to leave the meat packing industry and put the family resources into maritime ventures. In the early 19th century the Winship enterprise had eight vessels engaged in the Pacific fur trade, a lucrative but chancy enterprise.

In 1803 Jonathan declared an interest in a more adventurous life and left as supercargo aboard the newly appointed 280 ton O'Cain with a plan to try a new approach to improve trade. This venture was successful, but by 1805 the captain had died and Jonathan, at age 25, was master of the ship.

After various adventures in the Pacific Jonathan spent his last two years in China where foreigners were confined to a small area but allowed free access to the Fati Gardens. Being a man of action and unable to stay idle he took full advantage of the opportunity and learned a great deal about horticulture, developing a lifelong love of trees in particular.

In 1816 he retired to Brighton at the grand old age of 36 and planted a garden to amuse his favorite niece. By 1824 the garden had grown into a nursery that eventually extended over 30 acres. He supplied trees for local estates as well as the City of Boston, where he introduced the city's first "jingko" tree. When the railroad wanted to cross his land he not only allowed it he exploited to its full potential. The station was built on his property and he provided seats and resting places where passengers could view his plants. Jonathan was involved in the creation of Mount Auburn Cemetery, and a founding member of Massachusetts Horticultural Society. On his death in 1843 he was still active in his business and as a vice president of the Horticultural Society.

Brookline presented a very different picture over the same time period. Even though its wealthier residents had made their money in trade or industry they practiced their occupations elsewhere and reserved Brookline for their pleasant rural retreat. The earliest of these leading citizens had large summer estates, but as time passed the town became home to an increasing number of wealthy business men from Boston or elsewhere who commuted to their business and kept home and office separate. Where Brighton was a middle and working

[11] William P. Marchione, "Annexation Embraced: Brighton's 1873 Acceptance of Boston,"(1998), http://www.bahistory.org/HistoryAnnexBrighton.html.

class suburb, Brookline had a tiny middle class. Its working class largely served the upper class. In the mid nineteenth century over a third of Brookline households were wealthy enough to have live-in servants.[12] Brookline had two strengths, it still had its farms serving the urban community and it had its wealthy residents, where Brighton had farms and service industries but no great wealth. One of the factors working against increasing suburbanization in most rural towns was lack of services, but Brookline could afford them, and it did. Of parks however it had little need. The wealthy had estates and the majority of the poorer class worked on those estates. For the wealthy who did not have a large estate they invented the idea of the country club.

Brookline in fact developed virtually no industry. John Gould Curtis explains that:

> There is not a great deal to be said about the industrial life of a community devoted primarily to homes. From the time of its pastoral beginnings, Brookline has had a minimum of industry and commerce within its limits, though its citizens have engaged, with more than normal good fortune, in those same pursuits in the wider world, and their success has accounted in large measure for the charm of Brookline as a place of residence. [13]
>
> Brookline was from every point of view a desirable place in which to live. And it was this very desirability in so many respects, this wealth and beauty and charm and modernity all in one, that presently compelled the town to fight for its existence.[14]

Neither did they welcome the railway. Where Brighton welcomed every mode of transport that increased commerce the official Brookline attitude was that it was a "dirty, noisy innovation".

> The underlying cause of this opposition as not far to seek. The town government was dominated by men of comfortable fortune, who for the most part had their own carriages and were quite independent of anything so vulgar as a common carrier. Spared the pressure of inconvenience in this respect, they were not disposed to impair

[12] Rawson, *Eden on the Charles*. 167
[13] Curtis, *History of Brookline*. Page 179
[14] Ibid. Page 254

> the charm of their village residence by acknowledging dependence on an unpleasant mechanism of unproved worth.[15]

When the 1873 bill was introduced proposing annexation of towns south of the river and within six miles of Boston, Brookine instructed its selectmen to oppose and in the 1873 vote rejected annexation by a two thirds majority.

The choices of these two towns resulted in a city with the rather peculiar shape discussed in chapter 3 (Fig. 3.6). What might have been a coherent city with its original peninsula as the hub that it claims to be, became one that was divided into a large southern section and a tiny northern section with no connection between them. Only land that Brookline ceded along the Charles River allowed Brighton to be connected to Boston and it had no land connection at all with southern neighborhoods. This configuration was of crucial importance in the creation of a park system for the city.

[15] Ibid. Page 203

Chapter 5.

From Plan to Action: the Politics of Implementation

In 1876 the Board of Commissioners of the Department of Parks for the City of Boston[1] delivered their plan for a park system for Boston in their second annual report.[2] The commissioners had, as far as possible, complied with the request that there be two circles of parks connected by parkways and that all neighborhoods of Boston have access to park space. At the same time they had attempted to adhere to the "considerations" that the Commission of 1874 had laid out for choosing the individual parks. They accomplished all this without locking the city into a fixed park outline. Karl Haglund stresses the importance of this aspect of the report. He believes that it goes far beyond its immediate purposes. "The commissioners 1876 report," he writes, "was a landmark not only for Boston but for the history of American park development. More than that, the report mirrors the vision and commitment of the park commissioners. . . [T]his commitment was critical in later allowing the Olmsted office the freedom to develop the park design."[3] Unfortunately it also allowed the city government to fund the system piece by piece. This chapter introduces the proposed system, describes the Brighton Park in detail and then discusses the politics of implementation as they affected the Brighton Park.

[1] They will hereafter be referred to as the Park Commissioners
[2] City of Boston, "Second Report of the Board of Commissioners of the Department of Parks for the City of Boston."
[3] Haglund, *Inventing the Charles River*. 93

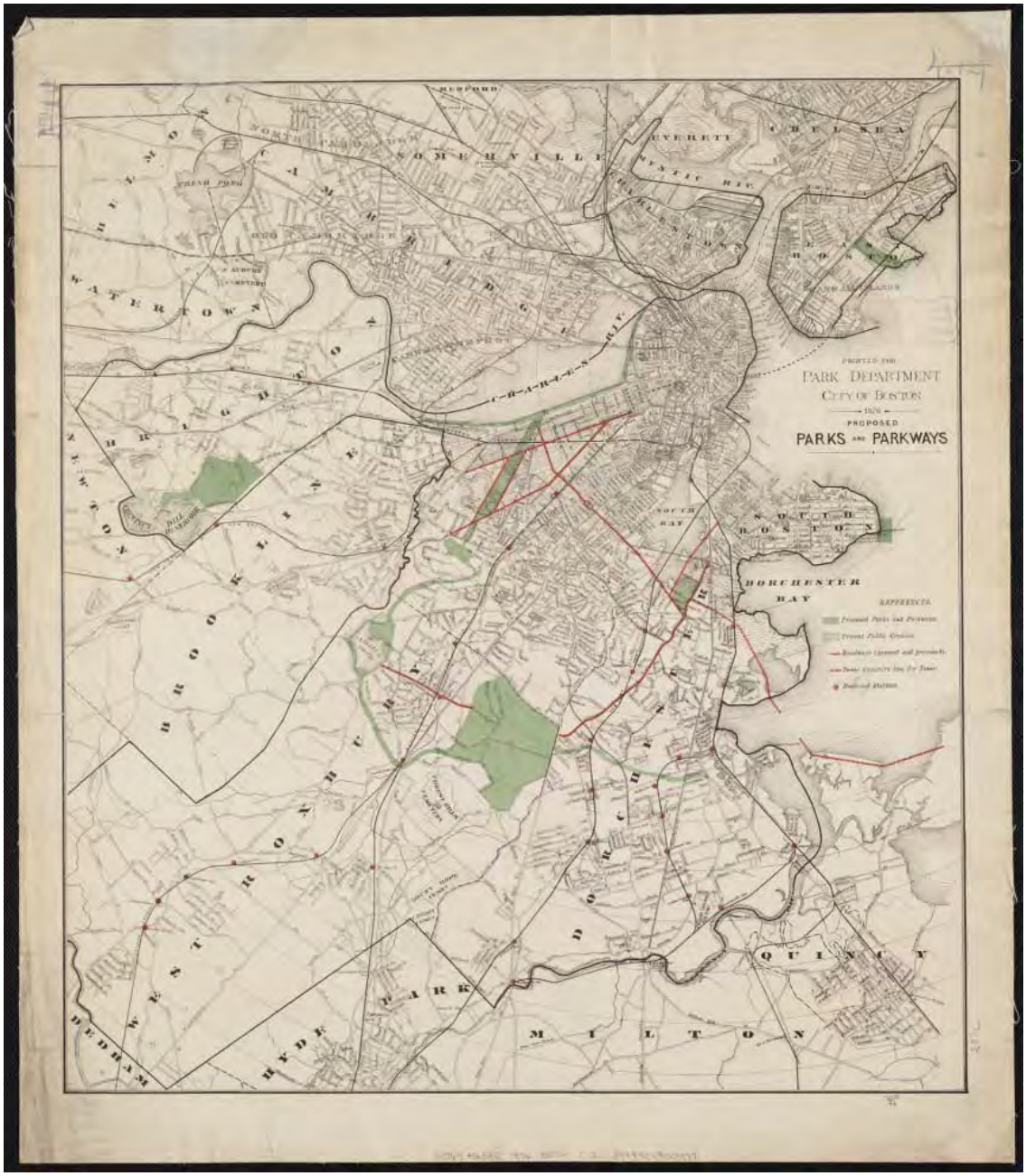

Figure 5.1 The master plan of the park system proposed for the city of Boston. It is labeled "Printed for the Park Department of the City of Boston 1876. Proposed Parks and Parkways" This makes clear, which the plans of the individual parks such as Brighton park did not, That this is a plan and not a map of an actual park.

Source: Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library

The plan of the proposed system (Fig. 5.1) shows several small parks in the densely populated areas, large parks in the lightly populated neighborhoods of West Roxbury and Brighton, and winding parkways joining them. A dashed line traces a tentative parkway joining the Charles River waterfront with the Brighton Park. The park system that later became known as the Emerald Necklace is easily traceable in the shape of the southeastern part of the system. Figure 5.2 compares the Olmsted plan of 1894 with the southeastern part of the 1876 plan. The outline of Franklin Park is clear in the West Roxbury Park, and the park at Jamaica Pond is virtually identical. Since negotiations with respect to Bussey Farm, which was to become the Arnold Arboretum, were still underway it is not shown on the plan

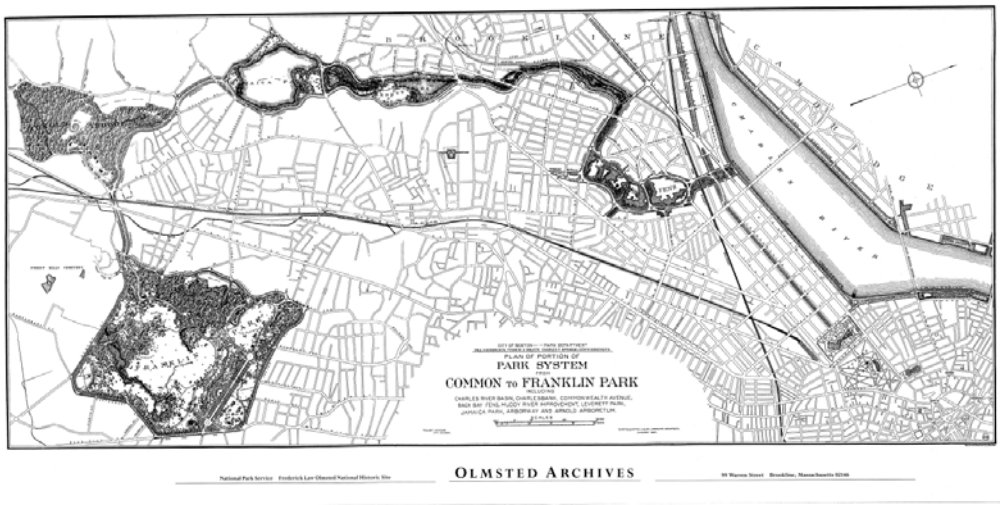

Figure 5.2 Comparison of the SE section of the proposed park system (upper plan) with the completed park system as shown in a map from the Olmsted Archives.

Source: Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston

although the parkway makes a loop where it is expected to be. The exact shape of the parks and parkways change but the foundation for the Boston Park System was laid in the plan of 1876.

The northwestern side of the system however presents a different picture. Brighton Park is indicated but the parkway is only tentatively drawn because it was unclear how it would connect Brighton Park to the Charles River without passing through Brookline. If one looks at this part of the system against the park proposed by Crocker it is possible to trace the relationship between them(Fig 5.3). The Chestnut Hill reservoir is depicted as it existed at the time. The new park area of Brighton Park is the land shown at the northeast of the reservoir in Crocker's plan, but it has been reduced slightly by loss of the triangle of land that would have been in Brookline. Where Corey's Hill would have continued the park farther to the northeast toward the Charles River, no park is possible because that too is in Brookline and there were by then other plans for Corey's Hill as we

Figure 5.3 The Upper map is the Brighton Park section of the overall park plan of 1876 (fig 5.1) and an enlargement of the urban area view in Crocker's plan of 1869. (Fig 3.2)

Source: Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston and *Map and Description of Proposed Metropolitan Park for Boston*. Boston: Avery and Frye, 1870.

shall see in the next chapter. The Park Commissioners had done the best that they could. They had created a park system for the city and stayed within the Boston boundaries, working around Brookline, which resulted in a smaller Brighton Park than Crocker's, which they must have been using as a guide. A plan that joined the Chestnut Hill Reservoir with Brookline Reservoir and Jamaica Pond as Bowditch suggested was equally impossible. Brighton Park had become isolated with only a proposed parkway running down toward the river.

Figure 5.4 Brighton Park. Detail from commissioners 1876 report

Source: Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library

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The land to be called Brighton Park appears from the plan (Fig 5.4) to include the reservoir, but that was not the intent of the designers. What the Commission proposed was that the

Chestnut Hill Reservoir and the new parkland should function as one park as far as visitors were concerned, but the reservoir would remain under control of the Water Board. The city would also purchase the lands that were essentially within the reservoir area but did not belong to Boston and give them to the Water Board to preserve the park outline.[4] This approach illustrates the still prominent image of the Water Board and recognizes the park function of the reservoir lands without making it a part of the proposed park system. Evergreen Cemetery which had been created by the then town of Brighton in 1850 as their own rural cemetery was excluded by law from being taken as a park or for any other purpose.

Figure 5.5 Shows a detail enlargement from plan of Brighton Park (Fig. 5.4)

Source: Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library

[4] These are the small areas outlined in the north and east sides of the reservoir land.

The lands to be turned into parkland comprised 160 acres of upland, rocky and already used for recreation, especially hunting. The whole park area including the reservoir would have been close to 400 acres of park land, with administration split between the two agencies. The enlargement of the park plan shown in figure 5.5 indicates woods, hills and streams. There are no known pictures of the area but we are left with three descriptions that indicate the nature of the landscape.

Uriel Crocker describes it in his 1869 plan as follows:

> [A] very large and beautiful tract of land, in great part covered with woods and containing several ponds and streams, as well as precipitous and imposing rocks and cliffs. After winding by several routes among these woods, ponds, hills, rocks, and streams, the main driveway would finally terminate opposite the gateway at the entrance to the new drive-way around the Chestnut-Hill reservoir.[5]

In the 1876 Park Commission Report, probably in the words of Charles Dalton, the land is described as:

> It is a picturesque tract with great variety of surface, ledges, abrupt and gently-sloping hill-sides, meadows and forests. Its highest elevation is over 200 feet above the sea, commanding views of Wachusett and Monadnock mountains, forty and seventy miles away, and of broad stretches of foreground, dotted with an almost continuous succession of towns and villages. While much of it is naturally impracticable for ordinary city or even village purposes, it is remarkably well disposed for the best park scenery, and is capable of improvement as such with a moderate expenditure.[6]

A third description comes from an 1881 memo from Frederick Law Olmsted:

> Having grandeur of rocks with extraordinary beauty of form and tinting, and such interest of forest wildness as might be looked for in the midst of unpeopled mountains." [7]

And the crucial part played in the whole park by the reservoir is also described in the 1876 plan:

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[5] *Map and Description of Proposed Metropolitan Park for Boston*. 8

[6] City of Boston, "Second Report of the Board of Commissioners of the Department of Parks for the City of Boston." 27

[7] Frederick Law Olmsted, "Memo to Charles H. Dalton, Esq., Chairman of the Park Commission," ed. Charles H. Dalton (Boston: City of Boston, 1881).

> The proximity of this park to the Chestnut Hill Reservoir is of mutual advantage, in their character of ornamental grounds, the one supplementing the other. The construction of this reservoir, the most important public work of its kind in New England, was fortunately in the hands of enlightened citizens, who, while building a magnificent waterworks, created at the same time a picturesque lake by preserving the natural lines of the valley and the rural features of the borders.

This without doubt was to be the picturesque counterpart to West Roxbury's pastoral country park. Where Central Park in New York was large enough to include both pastoral and picturesque, Boston's was a park system with different aspects in different parks adding up to the whole experience.

The set of four "considerations" used by the committee for making their recommendations for the actual parks are reprinted in the plan. Although the focus of this paper is on the Brighton Park, the general discussion that evolved around these considerations, especially in the City Council is exceedingly useful in that it provides a background that throws light on why the Council was more ready to fund some parks than others. The considerations are both clear and practical.[8]

> 1st—*Accessibility,* for all classes of citizens by walking, driving, riding, or by means of horse or steam cars.
>
> 2nd – *Economy,* or the selection, so far as practicable, of such lands as are not at present income producing property, and would least disturb the natural growth of the city in its business and domestic life, and of those which would become relatively nearer the center of population in future years.
>
> 3rd—*Adaptability*, or the selection of lands possessing in the greatest degree the natural physical characteristics necessary for park purposes, and requiring the least expenditure for subsequent development.
>
> 4th—*Sanitary advantages*, or the selection of such lands as would probably become unhealthy if neglected or built upon.

[8] City of Boston, "Second Report of the Board of Commissioners of the Department of Parks for the City of Boston."

In a simple paraphrase: Access should be easy for all citizens, not just the wealthy; taxable land should not be taken out of the tax base; the land used should already be as "park-like" as possible and need minimal work; and where appropriate the creation of parks should prevent what might otherwise become health hazards. These guidelines are both concise and practical, probably because debate on the possibilities for a park system had been active for several years and the mayor, the city government, and the commissioners themselves had the benefit of a great number of opinions.

The park discussions that occurred both before and after the publication of the Park Commissioners' plan are quite enlightening with respect to the changing attitudes toward the parks issue over time.[9] The points being made, whether by the public or by members of the city government, tend to fall under the four considerations used to guide parkland choices, but the emphasis gradually changes. As an example, in the early discussions, at a time when park creation is a *purely theoretical* concept, accessibility was a strong component, with arguments about whether working men should be able to reach a park on foot, or if ease of transportation should be a consideration. After 1876, when discussion was centered on *implementing* parks and the cost was directly before an economy minded council, it drove all other considerations into the background and access was rarely raised.

Not surprisingly given the fire of 1872, the national economic "panic" of 1873, and the subsequent depression, economy became the yardstick extended not only to the use of inexpensive, unused land, but also to the use of land that needs little work and therefore little expenditure such as Jamaica Pond. Health issues and the need to remove sources of possible

[9] _____, "Public Parks in the City of Boston: A Compilation of Papers, Reports and Arguments Relating to the Subject."

disease were also increasingly seen in economic terms; money to be spent for filling swamps fulfills at least two purposes and is therefore more wisely spent than that spent for parks that have recreation as their main focus. Some council members saw park building as a way to get funding for clearing up potential cholera sites and thought recreational parks were a luxury, while a few others were of the same mind as Olmsted, arguing for the need for recreational parks to improve health. This offers a classic example of "competing goods". The latter group weakened over time as land costs began to increase and it is no surprise that building the Fenway and Muddy River improvements to fight such problems as cholera took precedence over creating the larger parks.

Aldermen and Councilors also argued about whether the Commission had gone beyond their assigned task and created a more ambitious plan than they were asked for. Some of the originally staunch park supporters now admitted that yes, parks were a necessity, but other things were needed more. Others argued, with some validity, that times had changed and funds were scarcer. There were a few, most notably Alderman Hugh O'Brien, who argued that periods of economic hardship were exactly when one should create parks since land was still relatively inexpensive and would increase in value.

The major factor that drove increasing economies was that of balancing the cost of creating the parks against the possibilities of raising taxes. As parks began to be constructed, the “betterments” expected on the improved properties that were to help defray the cost of the parks, fell short of expectations and added to resistance against park creation. The Council members behaved like the true frugal Yankees they were, and with the Boston tax rate

standing at around $15 this is not surprising .[10] The public was still enthusiastic about parks but the City Council was not ready to support the $5 million appropriation that the Park Commission requested to buy the land for the system. There was a sewer bond pending and the parks were competing for funding.[11]

Charles Henry Dalton 1826-1908
Negotiator

Charles Dalton was born in Chelmsford, Massachusetts. He chose not to attend Harvard where he was loath to compete with his older brother who was considered brilliant, but instead went into the business world.
By 1848 he was in the sales office of a local cloth manufacturer and showed the first intimation of the skill that various governments and organizations would find invaluable; he was sent to prevent a strike and successfully negotiated a settlement.

He offered his services at the start of the Civil War and was eventually sent to Washington as an assistant quartermaster for the Massachusetts regiments. In that capacity no problem was too obscure or too large for him to attempt a solution. He intervened to get issues of pay and enlistment settled fairly, he got food and guns delivered and the wounded to treatment. The same skills that had led him to be an excellent settler of strikes and negotiator of trade agreements made him ideal for this task, much though he hated the job and Washington.

When he returned to Boston in 1862 he was one of the men who founded the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, an institution with which he maintained strong ties for the rest of his life. Another institution that owes much to his ability and dedication is Massachusetts General Hospital where he was first a trustee and later president of the corporation in which capacity he supervised the building of McLean Hospital in Belmont.

Some may have been surprised that he should be appointed to head the new park commission for Boston in 1875 since he had not been active in the park debate up to that point, but the choice was excellent. He had the right skills. He was a communicator of ideas, and an able negotiator for the acquisition of land, and money from the City Council. After a long service on the Park Commission, in 1884 he was again cast in the role of investigating a difficult problem for the city when he was one of three men asked to investigate the feasibility of a subway system to remedy the overcrowding and congestion of Boston trolleys at street level. He went on to become a member of the team who implemented the Boston Subway system and was mainly responsible for converting the opposition from those who wanted to take part of the Common and keep trolleys above ground. He apparently converted them one by one!

He died peacefully in his sleep in 1908. A man who believed in service to the community and carried out his beliefs.

[10] To put this in perspective, the 2011 Boston residential tax rate is $12.75 so their arguments had some validity. Boston eventually capped the tax rate below $13.
[11] Haglund, *Inventing the Charles River*.

The council decided on a method of funding for the parks that gave them maximum control. The Park Commissioners must obtain funds for purchasing the land for each park by submitting the request separately to the Board of Aldermen and the Common Council, and each body must vote on it. When they wanted funds to actually begin work they must go through the same process again. This gave each body what amounted to line item veto power. Charles Dalton, who remained chair of the Park Commissioners for ten years was the ideal person for this job; his major strength was as a tenacious negotiator. The Commissioners began the process of requesting finds and in 1877, just as they had given up hope, the council produced $450,000 for the Back Bay project ". . perhaps hoping that inadequate funding would kill the entire project."[12] The council had reckoned without the tenacity of Charles Dalton. Land was purchased and a competition held for a design. Olmsted refused either to enter the competition or to judge it, explaining that he believed his doing so would cause controversy. The competition did not result in a usable design and in 1878 Frederick Law Olmsted was hired as Landscape Architect Advisory and work began on the first stages of the Boston Park System.

How did Brighton Park fare in the funding debate? Alderman O'Brien, a strong park supporter, said in 1877 that Brighton park land was expected to cost only $400,000 and already functioned as a park so there would be no additional cost attached for years to come, an economic plus.[13] Others thought that this price was unrealistic, that sellers would want much more. It is true that there were still few buildings due to “the poor quality of the soil

[12] Ibid.
[13] There is evidence that the people of Brighton did use this, mostly wild, area as a park, including for hunting. Marchione, *The Bull in the Garden*.

there and the many ledge outcroppings [that had] retarded development".[14] While it is not known whether the city could have purchased this land cheaply when the park was first proposed in the 1870s and set it aside, it is certain that it did not. In the 1860s the land was relatively valueless, and stayed unused until the turn of the century. It may have been much cheaper to turn it into a park than build a road upon it, since it needed little change as Crocker had pointed out, but there would equally have been no returns on it. By the 1880s there was a building boom and businessmen were thinking in terms of the profit to be made out of streetcar suburbs. Meanwhile the funds for Brighton Park had still not been authorized.

The decisions about park building were occurring not just against a climate of recession but also one of stress in the political system of the city. One of the results of the rapid increase in the size of Boston was the expansion of city government and with it, as in many other cities, a level of incompetence and corruption.[15] Boston's corruption was petty compared to New York's and was temporary, but it occurred at a crucial time for the park system. At the time that funding for parks was being pursued in the late 1870s and early 1880s this situation was probably at its worst, with the Councilors from each ward acting solely in what they saw as their own or their neighborhood's interest. This was particularly problematic for Brighton since its size entitled it to only one member of the Common Council as opposed to the three for other wards. Its physical position, separated from the rest of the city by Brookline, also left it without neighbors who might have interest in its park. Towns had become neighborhoods but had not yet become accustomed to their new position, they still tended to think in a competitive, even adversarial way about their neighbors.

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[14] William P. Marchione, "Building Commonwealth Avenue,"(1998), <http://www.bahistory.org/HistoryCommAve.html>.

[15] John T. Galvin, "The Dark Ages of Boston City Politics," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Societ* Third Series, Vol. 89(1977), http://www.jstor.org/stable/25080811.

The council did not authorize the funds for the Brighton Park in 1880 and the next year the annual report of the Park Department included a strong reiteration of the need for the money and a rather tart memo from Olmsted.[16] He carefully explained his concern that the city, in the guise of its neighborhoods, had misunderstood the nature of the system to its possible detriment. He laid out the differences between neighborhood parks and a park system; the former containing what a neighborhood might want, the latter being an interdependent series of parks with each contributing a unique and complementary piece. He uses the West Roxbury Park and Brighton Park to illustrate his meaning.

> "The qualities of a park which the West Roxbury site offers in generous measure at very moderate cost, could not, for example, be gained in a tenth part of that measure at ten times the cost on the proposed park-site near Chestnut Hill, -- Brighton Park, -- or on any other which the city has under consideration. But the converse is equally true; the Brighton site offers features of great interest, ready made, which could not be as well provided in the West Roxbury tract by an outlay of millions. [17]

It was at this point evident to the reader of the debates, as it is to Olmsted, that people, including the Aldermen and particularly the members of the Common Council, had indeed begun to look at this project as "parks" rather than a park system and to forget the interdependence embedded in the design. This is an extremely important point for the Brighton Park. If the park was seen as something "for Brighton" rather than part of a citywide facility there was no incentive for the other neighborhoods to support it and to provide funding.

Olmsted was aware of what was happening and its probable negative impact on the park system. In his 1881 memo he wrote,

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[16] City of Boston, "Sixth Annual Report of the Board of Commissioners of the Department of Parks for the City of Boston," ed. Department of Parks (1880).
[17] Olmsted, "Memo to Charles H. Dalton, Esq., Chairman of the Park Commission." Included in City of Boston, "Seventh Annual Report of the Board of Commissioners of the Parks Department for the City of Boston," (Boston: Cityof Boston, 1881).

> "It is that the Boston of today is largely made up of what were formerly a number of distinct local communities, each habituated to regard its public affairs from an independent point of view, and sometimes in a spirit of competition and jealousy toward the others. The larger part of Boston, territorially considered, has until lately been so divided. Possibly, also, the marked topographical divisions of the old city induced separate local interests in an unusual degree.
>
> There is now a habit of looking upon the proposed parks of the city, each apart and independently of its relations to others of the system, as if it were of little value except to the people of the district adjoining it. . . . It presents a difficulty which should be contended with; for, unquestionably, if it is maintained and allowed influence in legislation, it will be likely to nullify half the value to the city of the properties now proposed to be acquired for parks."[18]

As indeed it did in the case of Brighton Park. With thinking being so partisan with respect to parks, Brighton Park had little chance of success. Not only was Brighton isolated from any possible neighbors but its population was tiny, a mere 6,000 when it was annexed to Boston. And on top of this, it already had the Chestnut Hill Reservoir, a far more celebrated a park than anything else in Boston.

The money to purchase the land for the Brighton Park was never authorized and the park was never built, or even designed. The Council simply continually postponed a vote on the funding until it was quite clear that it was dead. After 1881 the Park Department reports no longer mention the park's existence. While one can only speculate about whether Brighton Park, or perhaps even Crocker's version of the park would have been built if Brookline had voted for annexation, it is indisputable that the annexation of Brookline, or even its cooperation in park making on its borders with Brighton would have resulted in a different park system. The opportunity for a major act of land preservation as urged by the first park advocates was missed and the picturesque park that was intended to be a vital part of the Boston Park System was lost.

[18] Olmsted, "Memo to Charles H. Dalton, Esq., Chairman of the Park Commission."

Chapter 6.

Parkways for Parks: Creating the Chestnut Hill Circuit, 1884-1909

The Commonwealth Avenue Extension, as it runs up toward the Chestnut Hill Reservoir is not a park, or even technically a parkway, but its creation is the closing chapter in the story of Brighton Park. Both the extension of Commonwealth Avenue and the widening of Beacon Street were products of the Olmsted firm. Despite the projects having separate clients, once the sites are seen on the same map they inescapably form a system, one that Olmsted referred to as the Chestnut Hill Circuit.[1] In addition to forming a subsystem of their own they served to connect the Chestnut Hill Reservoir with the Boston Park System. In fact "of all the Olmsted Firm's metropolitan projects excluding the metropolitan park system itself, the one most closely connected with the Boston Park System is the Chestnut Hill Circuit."[2] A Boston Globe article in 1884 refers to the proposed Commonwealth Avenue Extension, initially called "Massachusetts Avenue", in its headline as "The Name of the Park for the Brighton District".[3] This indicates that the tie to the park system was acknowledged. It is, as Zaitzevsky reminds us, very reminiscent of Crocker's 1869 plan. In fact if one puts together the Crocker plan of 1869, the Brighton portion of the 1876 Park Commissioners' plan, and Olmsted's plan for the Commonwealth Avenue Extension one can clearly see the progression. The story of the completion of Commonwealth Avenue however is yet another complex saga interrupted by politics and economics.

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[1] See the maps in Figure 6.1
[2] Zaitzevsky, *Olmsted and the Boston Park System*. 110
[3] "Massachusetts Avenue Being the Name for the Park for the Brighton District," *The Boston Globe*, 9/22/ 1884.

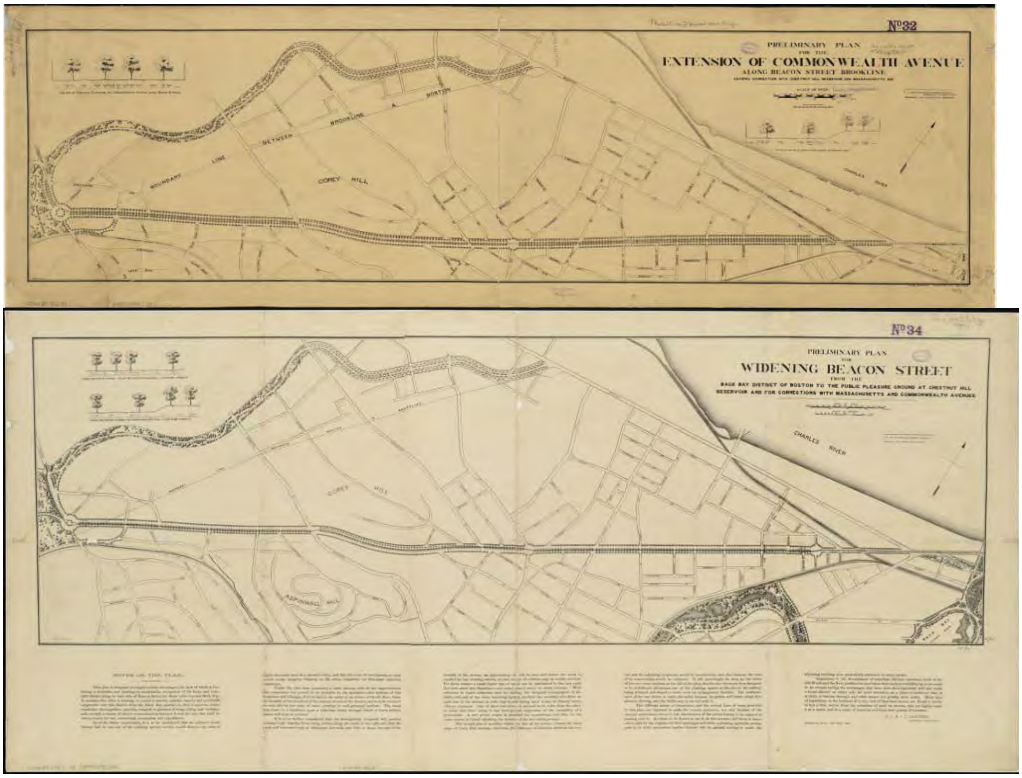

Figure 6.1 Olmsted's plans for the Commonwealth Avenue Extension (upper plan) and The Widening of Beacon Street (lower plan). The actual plans are identical, only the peripheral information varies. This is clear indication that Olmsted saw this as one system.

Source: Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library

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Several things had happened between 1876 and 1881, the first of which was that the relatively unusable land on which the park was proposed had become desirable for building. The pressure of population growth outward from Boston was continuing and better technology improved the ability to both build on difficult sites and get people to and from remote areas. As early as the 1860s businessmen had begun speculating by buying land along Beacon Street and in Brighton near the Chestnut Hill Reservoir.

This land speculation was fueled by a building boom in the 1880s and in 1882 several landowners were ready to give land to Boston for the extension of Commonwealth Avenue to the Chestnut Hill reservoir.[4] According to William Marchione "[t]he proposal for Commonwealth Avenue enjoyed the support of thirty-seven Boston-area businessmen and real estate owners, several of whom offered free land to the city for the construction of the roadway." [5] Meanwhile Henry Whitney, a Brookline businessman, entrepreneur and planning commissioner had been investing in property along Beacon Street since 1866. He created the West End Land Co. as the project grew and included other investors.[6] Land owners in both areas were well aware of each others' plans and the fact that to some extent they would be interdependent, while at the same time recognizing a competitive element[7]

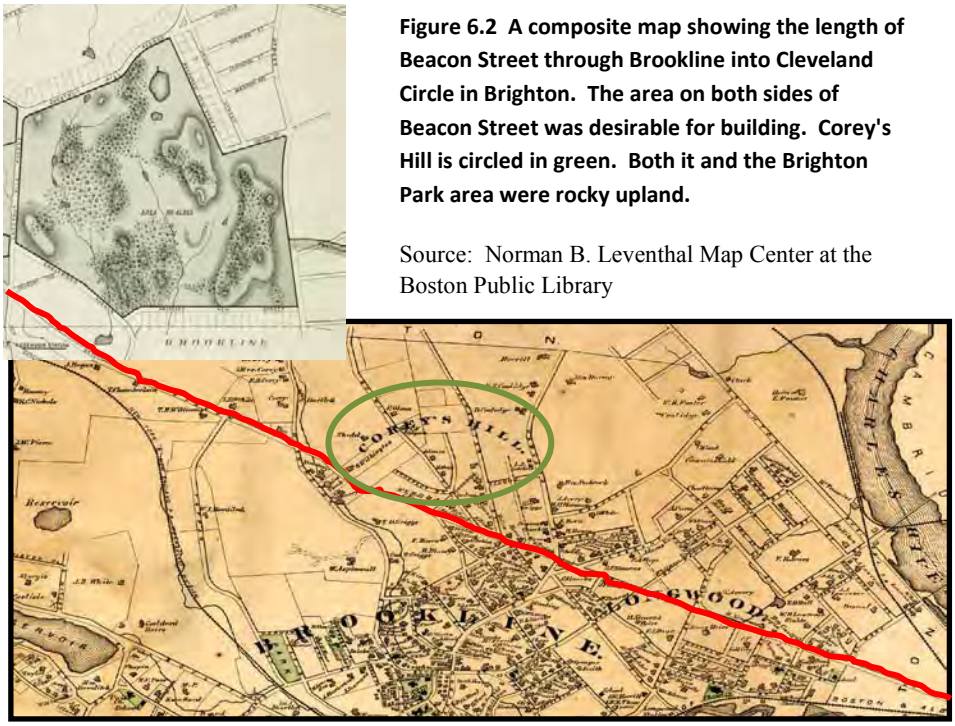

Figure 6.2 A composite map showing the length of Beacon Street through Brookline into Cleveland Circle in Brighton. The area on both sides of Beacon Street was desirable for building. Corey's Hill is circled in green. Both it and the Brighton Park area were rocky upland.

Source: Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library

[4] "Common Council," *The Boston Globe*, 12/15/ 1882.
[5] Marchione, "Building Commonwealth Avenue."
[6] Curtis, *History of Brookline*. and Zaitzevsky, *Olmsted and the Boston Park System*.
[7] Marchione, "Building Commonwealth Avenue."

In 1882 Brighton citizens decided to make the best of the situation by allying themselves with the investors to petition for the building of a parkway from Chestnut Hill Reservoir toward Boston. It was to be a grand entrance to the city from the west. The investors offered land to build the roadway and in return they expected to make a handsome profit. The City of Boston would also add to its tax returns from the increase in the valuation on the abutting land which was expected to become a wealthy suburban enclave. The citizens presumably expected to see a parkway somewhat like the illustration in the 1867 Park Commissioners Report.

Figure 6.3 Parkway detail from the Boston Park Commissioners 1876 report

Source: Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library

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The Commonwealth Avenue Extension was to be a situation where everyone would win. Frederick Law Olmsted was hired for the project and began studies for the avenue that was originally called Massachusetts Avenue, in 1884.[8] Two years later, in 1886, Henry Whitney as a Brookline Park Commissioner, asked Olmsted for plans to widen Beacon Street. Beacon Street had originally been laid out as a fifty foot wide country road in 1850-51 and Whitney

[8] The project was not completed until after Olmsted's death, but the original drawings are attributed to him.

wanted it transformed into a two hundred foot wide parkway. Since Beacon Street was a county rather than town road it was necessary to involve the legislature, but eventually an extension to one hundred and sixty feet rather than two hundred was agreed upon. There was concern among the traditional elite of Brookline who saw a change about to overtake their country town, but Whitney was persuasive. He pointed out that the investors would make money but so would everyone else including the town of Brookline, from increased tax revenues. The road was to be planned as an avenue with provision for streetcars, pleasure and business traffic, and a bridle path.

The Olmsted plan for the two roadways was a unified one. The firm had been hired by two different clients but the projects were conceived as a single entity and were tied into the park improvements. The Chestnut Hill Circuit would allow the traveler to drive out of Boston on either Beacon Street or the new avenue, circle the Chestnut Hill Reservoir and return again by either route. Beacon Street was to have provision for both business and pleasure traffic. The current configuration of two lanes in the same direction on each side was originally two two-way roads one for business and the other for pleasure. The center strip contained the streetcar tracks and a bridle path.

The investors on the Brighton avenue, believed that they had the edge over those investing in Beacon Street since that road must follow a route already laid out and somehow circumvent Corey Hill, while their road could be laid out on land that was a blank slate.[9] They were to be deeply disappointed. Once the Beacon Street project had been agreed upon it proceeded with dispatch and by 1889 had reached the stage where the new electric streetcars could run.

[9] Marchione, "Building Commonwealth Avenue."

Developers took immediate advantage and the area alongside the new roadway was rapidly built upon.

Figure 6.4 Left, Beacon Street at Washington Square before widening. Below the new road being graded just east of Washington Square at Brandon Hall. Note streetcar tracks already laid and trees planted.

Figure 6.5 Corey Hill from the south after development had begun

Source: BHA Archives

Improved building techniques and the fact that at least the initial houses built were for the wealthy allowed developers to create magnificent buildings on the slopes of Corey Hill turning it from the rural setting that had recommended it to Crocker as a park to a very wealthy suburban enclave. All facilities were available to the developers and new homeowners; roads were carefully graded on hillsides, water, sewers, gas and electricity were laid on and of course the means of rapid transport to and from the city was steps away.[10] While an economic downturn slowed the construction of the grand single family homes along Beacon Street, the resulting mixture of single homes, row townhouses, stores and rather elegant apartment buildings create an attractive eclectic mix along its length.

Figure 6.6 Examples of the elegant and fashionable apartment buildings erected along Beacon Street. On the left is Brandon Hall with its Greek portico photographed in the nineteenth century. Below is the large almost palace like structure of Reservoir Apartments close to the Chestnut Hill Reservoir in 1910 and still in use today.

Source BHA Archives

[10] An excellent article from the Boston Globe discusses the viewpoint of the real estate professionals on the development at the end of the century. "Where to Live Brookline, Newton and Brighton Sites," *The Boston Globe*, 5/8/ 1892.

Land values did increase as did taxes. The cost of the project to the town of Brookline was $465,000 but they saw an increase of $57,000 per year in taxes.[11] The result appears to have been exactly what the visionary Henry Whitney predicted. The two illustrations of Coolidge Corner before and after widening of Beacon Street (Fig. 6.7) exemplify the transformation from a rather rural atmosphere to that of an elegant urban boulevard.

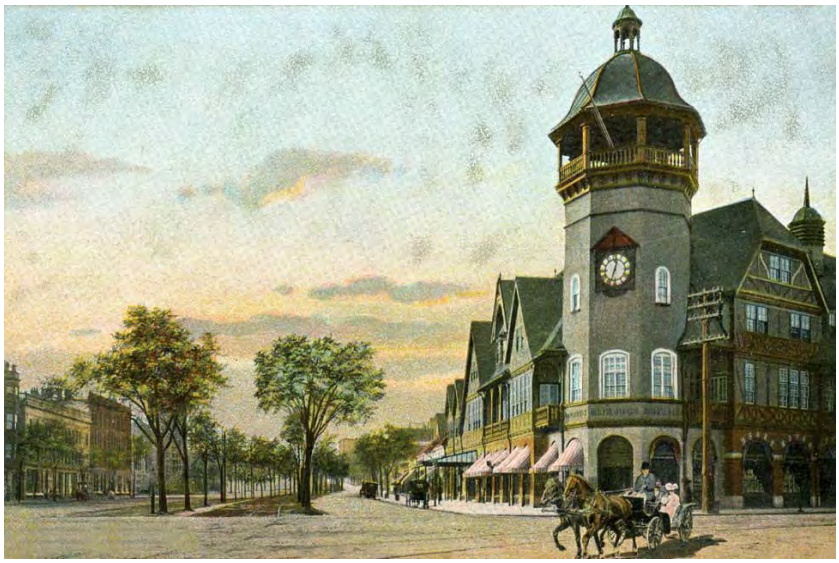

Figure 6.7 Coolidge Corner before and after the widening of Beacon Street. In both cases Harvard Avenue is to the right and Beacon St. to the left. The before picture presents a quiet rural or small town atmosphere, while the lower picture a postcard view taken after widening is of an elegant urban boulevard.

Source: Brookline Historical Society Archives

The Brighton project meanwhile languished. The first stage had begun in 1885, ahead of Beacon Street, and by 1888 a roadway was completed and renamed Commonwealth Avenue,

[11] Curtis, *History of Brookline*.

but it was well short of the promised parkway. At that point the city stalled until 1892 when a strong petition by the investing businessmen prompted a review of the situation. After 10 years and an investment of $900,000 the roadway was not close to completion. Through the building boom the investors had been left with no ability to build. The roadway itself had been put through and was described in various newspaper articles as being superb to drive along, but that was *all* that one could do.[12] The extreme difficulty of the terrain, swampy in some places and rocky ledge in others made road building difficult, in fact rather more suited to a park than to building a road. The roadway was often feet above or below grade allowing no entrance or egress, and the amenities of water, sewer and light were not available. Meanwhile the abutters' taxes were increased although they could not build on their land. Once the project restarted it was again slowed by a severe recession in 1893. It was not until 1898 that the city insisted that the road would be completed by 1900.

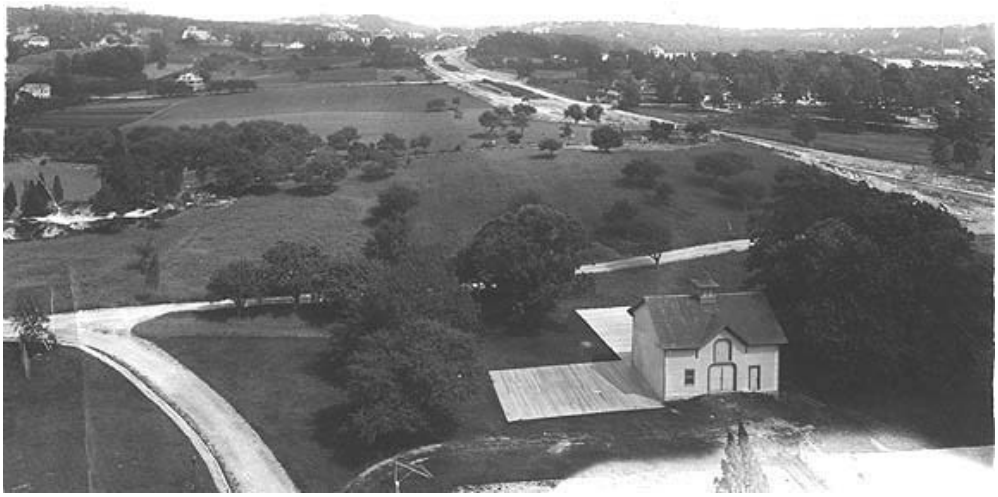

Figure 6.8 Commonwealth Avenue extension in 1896 looking east across the land that would have been Brighton Park toward Chestnut Hill Reservoir. This shows a roadway that had been built but nothing more. The only buildings visible are farmhouses.

Source: Brighton Allston Historical Society Archives

[12] "Tour of Inspection on Commonwealth Avenue," *The Boston Globe*, 9/25/ 1891; "Commonwealth Avenue What Has Been Done in the Last Ten Years," *The Boston Globe*, 5/19/ 1893.

Henry Melville Whitney 1839-1923 Entrepreneur

Henry Whitney was born in Conway, Massachusetts and lived his early life there and in Lowell. He followed his father into the steamship business becoming president on his father's death. From that time he continued to devise schemes and build partnerships both in New England and in the Maritime Provinces of Canada, but although these ventures always sounded good in theory they were rarely well implemented. The results were lackluster at best and although he was recognized as an entrepreneur in both the USA and Canada, his millionaire reputation turned out to be an illusion.

In 1886 he turned his attention to another entrepreneurial project with more success. He already owned the West End street railway in Boston, and was instrumental in promoting the consolidation of several lines. He began buying property along Beacon Street in Brookline in 1866 when it was a simple country lane, involving others and forming the West End Land Company as he realized he was over extended. In 1887 he was instrumental in the adoption by Boston of the electric street car system that had been installed in Raleigh North Carolina. As usual Henry was thinking in grand terms. He proposed to the town of Brookline the widening of Beacon Street, to which his company would donate land, and turning it into a boulevard with a street car line. He also persuaded Brookline to hire Frederick Law Olmsted to design the new road. Despite opposition from the wealthy conservative Brookline residents who complained, with justification, that this was the scheme of people trying to make money out of their town, the scheme was realized. Henry saw the result as a winning one for everyone with a building boom of houses, many people riding easily into Boston, the town increasing its revenues and himself making large profits. He was justified in all but the latter. Trolleys began to run on Beacon in 1889, the houses sold and Brookline's tax revenues increased but when he died in 1923 Henry Whitney's estate was virtually bankrupt.

When the avenue was finally completed, it was not the Olmsted parkway. The original plan had been park-like with winding secondary roads and many trees, but the streetcar company was one of the major lobbyists for the completion of the road and the new roadway necessitated a central median strip to accommodate the streetcars. While Boston had been progressing at what must have seemed an agonizingly slow pace, Newton had extended the road that was to be Commonwealth Avenue in Newton from Boston College to the Charles River in the west and in 1897 the streetcar company opened a very different park there called Norumbega. Eventually the Commonwealth Avenue Extension was completed and the streetcars began running in 1909, twenty years

after they ran on Beacon Street. Meanwhile much of the real estate development had been diverted to Brookline and the boom period was past. Brighton found the demand was for apartment buildings to accommodate middle and working class families, always the backbone of Brighton's economy, but not the wealthy who bought on Beacon Street.[13] Even that development took a long time to be realized. "Commonwealth Avenue in Allston-Brighton turned into something of a white elephant. While Beacon Street boomed, no development whatsoever occurred on Commonwealth Avenue in Allston-Brighton, leading to many bitter complaints. . . Six years after the improvements to the avenue had been made, a total of only four buildings stood on the avenue!"[14]

Figure 6.9 A study in contrasts. Left is Beacon Street in 1912, a boulevard with mature trees. Below is Commonwealth Avenue in 1909 with a lone streetcar and no buildings evident.

Source: Beacon Street from Brookline Historical Society Archives and Commonwealth Avenue from Brighton Allston Historical Society Archives

[13] Marchione, "Building Commonwealth Avenue."
[14] Ibid.

In summary, this is a situation where all the positive factors were on one side of the equation. Brookline was a small town with a simple government, there was one individual with drive heading the project, and the town had the effect of wealth and reputation on its side. Brookline was also able, by virtue of the speed of the project, to take advantage of the better economic climate and build and sell in a timely manner. The Brighton project on the other hand had to deal with the politics and complexities of a large city where there was a park department, a street department, an engineering department and various other agencies in the mix. The Commonwealth Avenue project had no strong committed leader, no services were laid on at the site to allow rapid development of housing, and certainly there was no wealthy reputation on the part of the neighborhood to draw suburban dwellers.

The result was that by the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth century there was a complete contrast between the situation of the two streets. In the end there was no park, but there was no parkway either and Chestnut Hill Reservoir was left to stand alone in an ever more closely encroaching urban environment. It survived very well for some time as is evidenced by the postcards shown in Chapter 2 all of which were sold in the twentieth century. It was a very popular destination even in face of the move toward pleasure parks such as Norumbega, but eventually, with no park department to protect it and a change in control of the water system for Boston it ceased to be usable for recreation.

Figure 6.10 Shows a view of the reservoir in the 1930s looking east across Boston College campus. The urban area has by this time closed in on the reservoir and the extension of Commonwealth Avenue through to Newton with streetcar lines can be seen in the lower left. There is no vestige of the park or the picturesque countryside seen in the 1870 view in figure 2.3.

Source: Brighton Allston Historical Society Archives

Conclusion

This story has played out against a background of rapid change that was much more visible than the technological revolution of the late twentieth century. In the Boston area the population expanded and the farming countryside was rapidly gobbled up by development. As industrialization and urbanization progressed, in a few short years farming ceased to be a way of life for the vast majority the way it had been since settlement in the seventeenth century. Instead more and more people were employed in the industrial and commercial sectors. Boston's population and land area increased out of all recognition so that by 1900 it was indeed a metropolis with very little to remind inhabitants of what it had looked like a hundred, or even fifty years before. In 1850 Boston was still a walking city, with life and business manageable by pedestrians, but by 1900 trains and streetcars moved people much more rapidly over larger distances.[1] In a Boston Globe article of 1892 a Brookline homeowner is quoted as saying, in praise of the new Beacon Street streetcar line, that "Brookline has been brought very near to Boston. . . by the opening up of the boulevard to Chestnut Hill. From the new Harvard Bridge to my residence [on Corey Hill] it is only 12 to 15 minutes ride, over one of the finest avenues in the world."[2] Those speeds compare favorably even with today's on a similar ride, and suburban living was by that time quite compatible with working in the city.

In addition to rapid change, the last half of the nineteenth century saw a number of large and disastrous events that had a significant impact on the life of Boston; a costly and debilitating

[1] For a good description of the change see Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs*.
[2] "Where to Live Brookline, Newton and Brighton Sites."

civil war, a major fire that destroyed a large part of the downtown business district in 1872, and an economy that moved from "panic" to "boom" in ways that were not understood well enough to be predicted. This in turn caused the city government to react in inconsistent ways to the need for repairs or improvements.[3] On one hand they had voters demanding, for instance, that the snarled traffic of downtown be remedied, a very costly operation. On the other hand were the cries of outrage at expenditures and accompanying taxes. This situation is of course still familiar, but during the late nineteenth century the expectation of revenues and prediction of costs were so unpredictable that all problems were amplified.

Boston's government had also grown with the city. It was still comprised of a Board of Aldermen elected at large and a Common Council elected by ward, but the number of wards had grown with the size of the electorate. Until the reforms of 1909 reduced its size, the council was too large to be workable, consisting of 12 aldermen and 73 members of the Common Council representing 25 wards. Many councilors being new to government saw their job as simply to be partisan representatives of their district, without consideration of the larger picture.[4] The research presented by John T. Galvin depicts the Council as a body that valued free meals and transportation over its job. Boston had become "vulnerable to the corruption that thrives on fast urban growth" and every mayor had to keep an eye on the way aldermen and councilors spent funds on wining and dining.[5] The city was bedeviled by both incompetence and corruption. The corruption was petty and the problems in Boston were mild compared with some cities, but there was a period, roughly from 1874 until the power

[3] For a detailed look at the Mayors and their policies during this period see Koren, *Boston 1822 to 1922*.
[4] Boston's neighborhoods, perhaps because of their origin in separate towns, have always been divisive which has created a problem for the city government. When councilors have been elected at large the larger wards have had control of resources, when elected by district each fought for his, or her, own. As a result the form of government has changed several times since 1900, today being composed of a combination of at large and ward based council members in one body.
[5] Galvin, "The Dark Ages of Boston City Politics." 89

of the mayor was increased in 1885, when the representatives of the newly amalgamated towns had not settled into the role they were expected to play. This period was crucial for the Park System. Galvin also points out that in addition to an unwieldy and ineffective council Boston had a growing number of departments charged with administering regulations and this added another layer of complexity.[6] When the Cochituate Water Board was formed in 1848 it was unique, but by the end of the century there was a department for each function, not only water, but streets, sewers, parks and etc., as well as departments of expertise such as engineering. This structure was a necessary organizational step as Boston grew, but made it more difficult for individuals to take initiative, and needed oversight to ensure smooth functioning.[7]

In the 1860s and early 1870s there were still those, like some of the actors in this tale, who believed strongly in public service and could single handedly effect change. Nathaniel Bradlee, Uriel Crocker and Charles Dalton all exemplify this and without these men the park system would be the poorer. By the end of the period men such as these were able to have considerably less impact, and those who did effect change were much less public minded. They more likely to be promoting their own financial interest than simply the public good. Henry Whitney represents this group very well. The widening of Beacon Street was a success, but its genesis was as a commercial enterprise not a public service.

The questions with which I began this research were:

> 1. How was it that the Chestnut Hill Reservoir was built when and where it was as a *de facto* park that became not only a very successful recreation area but also influenced future park plans?

[6] Ibid.
[7] In 1885 the power of the mayor was increased and it was possible for that office to exercise more oversight, but by then it was too late to help the Brighton Park as a part of the Park System.

2. Why was Brighton Park never built when not only was it included on the park commission's plan, but some version of a park adjoining the reservoir was on all surviving park system proposals?

Looking at these research questions there are several crucial points that have emerged and go some way toward an answer. The first is that the Chestnut Hill Reservoir was built when Boston was still a relatively small city without a large and complex government structure. The Cochituate Water Board was an unprecedented creation, at a time when engineering was a new way of improving life and engineers were saviors. This was also a time when men who had achieved success, or sometimes simply those born to a wealthy family, believed that it was their duty to engage in public service. Those two factors together produced a group of men who kept Boston's water flowing and at the same time created a place of great beauty for people of greater Boston. Bradlee emerges as the major figure behind the Chestnut Hill Reservoir but the Water Board was generally made up of men of his stamp. Both Otis Norcross and Nathaniel Shurtleff, who later served as mayors of Boston were also members of the Water Board during the time that the Chestnut Hill Reservoir was being built.

It is easy to believe that the men who made up the Water Board and worked so dedicatedly to ensure the city had adequate water supply, would also be alive to the issue of a park for Boston. We know by the petition of 1869 that the park movement was already strong in Boston and the step between building a reservoir and turning it into a place of recreation was not that large. Nor were they alone in doing this. Mount Auburn Cemetery is a prime example of the cemetery as park, but in addition there were other reservoirs that were designed as parks. The first of these was Philadelphia which had also been the first city to invest in a public water supply, but both New York and Cleveland had included a park aspect in their reservoirs before the Chestnut Hill Reservoir was designed.

In an 1899 paper[8], Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. makes a point of the desirability of combining distribution reservoirs with parks where the topography makes it feasible. He sees "the very lack of cooperation between Water Board and Park Commission" as resulting in a waste of money when an opportunity for a park is overlooked. He is lamenting the increase in government complexity that did not exist thirty years before he was writing and the fact that what happened in Chestnut Hill is unlikely to happen in 1900. "The sort of genius who can . . . plan a park without previous training or practice is very rare, even amongst the ablest hydraulic engineers." Specialization happened very rapidly and the task that Bradlee undertook in 1868 seemed unlikely to landscape designers thirty years later.

By the time that the Boston Park System was being implemented in the late 1870s and 1880s the size and complexity of the city government increased. The structures that were necessary to administer a large city created hurdles that limited the type of initiative engaged in by the Water Board. Just ten years after the start of work on the reservoir, we see Charles Dalton struggling with the complex rules to obtain support and funding for the park system.

One factor that worked against the creation of Brighton Park was a manifestation of the privatization of public issues. In the first chapter, Boston's choice of a public water system was explained by the fact that the city had a strong social conscience and tended to see issues in terms of whether they contributed to the public good. The newly expanded city was a little different. The neighborhoods had, until very recently, been separate and often competing towns. Both residents and councilors tended to continue to see things in those terms, ignoring the good of the city as a whole. Olmsted was aware of this, as we saw in chapter

[8] Federick Law Olmsted, Jr., "The Relation of Parks to Reservoirs," *American Park and Outdoor Art Association* 3, no. 2 (1899).

five, and he understood the possible impact on the proposed park system. As long as this 'balkanization' was in effect, a park in an outlying neighborhood would have very little support, whether or not it was a key part of an integrated system. This was especially true where Brighton was isolated by Brookline from any neighbors who might otherwise have expected to use, and so supported, Brighton Park. If people were thinking in terms of neighborhood parks, then Brighton already had one, the Chestnut Hill Reservoir, at that time the most celebrated park in Boston.

The park advocates in Boston in the 1860s and 70s were proposing park making as land preservation. Their concept, particularly Crocker's, was to take land that was naturally beautiful, and if possible already in a state where people used it as a place of recreation, purchase it and make sure that it stayed as a park. This is quite different from taking a piece of waste land and turning it into a park, although either might become a successful park. The point about the idea of parks through preservation in the 1870s was that it appeared to be a thrifty way to reach the goal of a park system. The City could purchase cheap land, spend little on modifying it and the whole process would be inexpensive. But the continued population growth of the city was creating outward pressure and a desire for housing in more outlying areas. Without the accompanying technological change this might not have had much impact on the area that was expected to become Brighton Park. But with better building and transportation techniques, suburban land prices increased even on difficult sites and the resulting housing boom of the early 1880s ensured the commercial pressure on the land along Beacon Street.

In 1870 the land across Brighton and Brookline that formed both Crocker's park and the Brighton Park might easily have been preserved. This would mean that all that should be

done was to purchase land while prices were low and wait until there were funds to do any needed work. If land prices increased, as many thought they would, it might even be possible to sell a small part of it at a profit and fund that work. This was the thinking of Alderman Hugh O'Brian who argued strongly that parks should be something one created during poor economic times for just this reason. He went so far as to argue doing the work while labor was cheap would also be positive since it would help to put men to work and stimulate the economy.

Parks through land preservation is defensible when the discussion is about whether to spend limited resources on parks or on other projects. Money spent on the parks is an investment in the future either as parks, or as land that can later be sold. But when the discussion moves to one of whether the city should purchase and preserve land versus opening it to development that is a potential source of tax revenue, the argument for purchasing the land loses support. This is what happened with the land on Corey Hill in Brookline[9] and the Aberdeen area of Brighton that was to be the Brighton Park. Once the businessmen and the city government are on the same side, that of increased profits and revenue, preservation has a slim chance of success. Times of rapid growth only exacerbate this. The faster the change happens, the more difficult it is to succeed in preserving land as parks. Where there is a long planning process, as there is likely to be when a city becomes large and complex, the difficulties multiply. It was the economic and technical change that made the use of Corey Hill and Aberdeen feasible for building houses and that in turn influenced the investors and ultimately

[9] The name Corey's Hill became changed to Corey Hill sometime in the late nineteenth century. Certainly it is still Corey's Hill on the 1864 lithograph and on maps of that time. On Olmsted's plans for Beacon Street it appears as Corey Hill. There appears to be no record of exactly how this happened.

created a barrier to park creation. Had the park plans been developed when there was no prospect of building, the outcome may have been entirely different.

Finally, the close examination of events in Greater Boston during the last third of the nineteenth century has indeed thrown light on why the Chestnut Hill Reservoir was built and the Brighton Park never moved into the planning stage. It has also shown that there is no such thing as a simple explanation and that park making is closely tied to social and economic changes. In the end it is not possible to say what the outcome would have been if one factor or another had changed, only that it would have been different. Had Brookline voted for annexation, for instance, Brighton Park may have been constructed, but looking at all the other factors involved, it equally might not. The result may instead have been that Beacon Street failed to live up to expectations as badly as Commonwealth Avenue. All that we can say with any certainty is that this is a study of how completely park making is a social activity.

Appendix

Chronology

YEAR	EVENT
1822	• Boston incorporated as a city with a Board of Aldermen and Common Council. The Mayor had with little power until the changes of 1885
1845	• Boston Hired John Jervis as a consultant to look at plans for bringing fresh water to Boston. He advised building an aqueduct to bring water from Long Pond in Framingham. • The plan was accepted and commission was set up to implement it with Jervis retained as consultant. This was a public project funded by state bonds.
1848	• The conduit was completed linking Long Pond, renamed Lake Cochichuate, with the Brookline Reservoir and Boston, bringing fresh water to the city. The Brookline reservoir was the main water storage basin for the city of Boston. Other holding reservoirs were built in South Boston, East Boston and Beacon Hill. • The Cochituate Water Board was formed and given responsibility for all aspects of Boston's water supply. • Brighton purchased Evergreen Cemetery lot to become their rural cemetery
1857	• New York's Central Park Opened • Filling of Back Bay begun with gravel from Needham
1858	• Olmsted and Vaux' Greensward Plan for improvement of Central Park wins competition

- Work begins on Central Park

1859

- Boston's Public Garden finally secured as a park and plans laid out by George F. Meacham.
- A major break occurred in the Boston aqueduct bringing water to Boston.
- The Water Board and city government were alerted to the fact that there was only four days worth of water in the storage reservoirs.

1860

- Boston Public Garden was completed with modifications to Meacham's plan.

1861

- Civil War begins. Continues until 1865.

1862

- The first mention of the need for a new reservoir in Water Board Reports

1863

- Water Board President: Ebenezer Johnson

1864

- The subject of a new reservoir was discussed by the Water Board and brought to city government
- The City Engineer recommended the Chestnut Hill site for a new reservoir on land owned largely by Amos Adams Lawrence of textile fame, a former member of the Water Board
- Water Board members conducted "private interviews" with the mayor and members of the city government
- The water shortage was a serious issue throughout the year. Various measures of conservation

1865

- April, the Water Board was granted authorization to develop a

distribution reservoir at Chestnut Hill

- Land was purchased in Chestnut Hill for creation of reservoir between May and December. This land was in Brighton and Newton, no land was purchased in Brookline.
- Otis Norcross elected president of Water Board
- The decision was made to name the new reservoir Chestnut Hill Reservoir
- A superintendent of the reservoir appointed: Edward F. Knowlton

1866

- Work began on creating the reservoir. Support was sought and won for creating a carriage drive around the reservoir
- A resident engineer for the reservoir was appointed: Henry M. Wightman
- Edward Knowlton dies, Albert Stanwood appointed to replace him.
- September 27, the Water Board was in communication with the City Council about creation of carriage drive. They suggested a separate appropriation and estimated cost at $117,485
- October 8, City Council authorized a sum not to exceed $125,000 for the purpose.
- Progress was made in preparing the reservoir site

1867

- Otis Norcross (Board President) was elected Mayor of Boston and resigned
- John H. Thorndike chosen to replace him as president of the Water Board
- In March, the entire reservoir workforce struck and was fired and replaced
- April 5, Thorndike, Standish and Bradlee chosen as committee on construction
- Work on the reservoir continued rapidly

1868

- The Committee on Construction considered a gateway for Chestnut Hill Reservoir to be placed at the Chestnut Hill Avenue entrance to the reservoir.
- The smaller, Lawrence, basin opened
- The town of Roxbury voted for annexation to Boston

1869

- The City of Boston appoints a committee to consider the location of public parks in the metropolitan area.
- Uriel H. Crocker's plan for a park was submitted. This park was largely in Brighton and Brookline, and included Chestnut Hill Reservoir.
- Reservoir gate House #1 begun. Completed in 1870. Designed by Edward R. Brown of the City Engineer's Office
- Olmsted began to get letters about Boston's parks although he was not officially consulted

1870

- January, the town of Dorchester annexed
- February, Olmsted gives lecture at Lowell Institute. Title "Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns"
- May 27, the Park Act of 1870 passed by the General Court but needed a 2/3 vote of public before enactment. Failed. This Park Act, written by Uriel Crocker, provided for a metropolitan commission to take lands outside the City of Boston and lay out parks.
- Larger reservoir basin opened. Mamed the Bradlee basin for Nathaniel Bradlee, now President of the Water Board
- Triumphal entrance arch to reservoir land built out of granite where reservoir carriage road joined Chestnut Hill Avenue

1872

- The State ordered all slaughterhouses to be consolidated into one abattoir. This, when implemented, improved the Brighton area by

removing a large and noisesome industry north to the Charles River.

- Great fire of Boston burned a large part of the business district.
- Robert Morris Copeland published *The Most Beautiful City in America: Essay and Plan for the Improvement of the City of Boston*

1873

- Economic Recession known as the "panic of 1873". Recession lasted until 1879
- Brighton, West Roxbury and Charlestown voted for annexation to Boston
- Brookline decisively rejected annexation

1874

- Samuel Cobb elected mayor of Boston. He was strongly pro park
- Brighton, West Roxbury and Charlestown officially become a part of Boston

1875

- Boston negotiates a land exchange with Newton so that Chestnut Hill Reservoir falls entirely within Boston boundaries
- March 25, Charles A. Shaw presented a plan for a park system to the Common Council. Plan similar to Crocker's and includes Chestnut Hill Reservoir as the "destination" This is the plan that had been submitted in 1869 and again in 1870.
- June, New Park Act introduced to propose a municipal (as opposed to metropolitan) park system. Passed and three commissioners appointed, Charles Dalton to chair.
- Commissioners collected information, viewed sites and informally consulted Olmsted. Still no official role for Olmsted
- Ernest W. Bowditch park plan published. Metropolitan rather than municipal. Included the Chestnut Hill Reservoir and Brookline as integral parts.

1876

- Boston Park Commissioners released their report detailing a plan for a complete park system containing small city parks, large suburban parks and connecting parkways
- Report included a 160 acre park in Brighton abutting the Chestnut Hill Reservoir

1877

- City Council finally appropriates the meager sum of $450,000 to buy land for a Back Bay park

1878

- Land in the Back Bay acquired, although not exactly as the plan had laid out.
- Competition to design a park. Nobody hired.
- Olmsted commissioned to create a park in the Back Bay.

1879

- Attempts to acquire funding for the parks in the system continues through the next several years.

1880

- Beginning of a housing boom

1881

- Olmsted sends memo to Park Commission, passed on in their report. Decries the effect of divisions and competition between "towns" and reiterates the difference between a series of neighborhood parks and a park system. Park commissioners report.
- Money finally appropriated for West Roxbury Park
- Dec 10 Globe. Order offered (alderman Breck) authorizing park commissioners to take land in Brighton "Not exceeding $175,000" for park. Lost and referred to next Board of Aldermen

1882

- December, Common Council receive communication from businessmen about construction of a parkway through what was to be Brighton Park.

Referred to committee on Streets.

1883
- January, an order to purchase land in Brighton passed Board of Aldermen but failed in Common Council. No action taken.

1884
- September, value of a parkway for Brighton in place of a park expressed publicly in newspapers. Olmsted hired and planning for Commonwealth Avenue Extension (then called Massachusetts Avenue) begun.

1885
- City of Boston charter amended significantly increasing the power of the mayor.
- Commonwealth Avenue extension begun.

1886
- Olmsted hired by the Town of Brookline to redesign Beacon Street into 160' wide boulevard
- Provision for electric rail cars on Beacon St. was included.

1887
- High service pumping station at Chestnut Hill Reservoir built. Designed by Arthur Vinal, City Architect, Richardsonian Romanesque

1889
- Trolleys introduced on Beacon Street

1891
- Trustees of the Reservations created by legislature (Eliot's influence)
- Sixty five Boston businessmen petitioned the city to bring Commonwealth Avenue into line with Olmsted plans.

1892
- Second stage of Commonwealth Avenue extension commenced

1893	• Metropolitan Park Commission created by legislature • Severe economic downturn, depression of 1893. Destroys the real estate market
1895	• Commonwealth Ave. extension to Chestnut Hill Reservoir completed.
1896	• Granite entrance arch to Chestnut Hill Reservoir dismantled to make way for a further Commonwealth Avenue extension to the Charles River in Newton. • The extension was built, slicing off a part of the Chestnut Hill Reservoir grounds.
1898-99	• Low service pumping station built at Chestnut Hill Reservoir. Designed by Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge in the Beaux Arts style.
1899-1901	• Gate House #2, built by Wheelwright and Haven, Renaissance Revival style
1909	• Electric trolley line established on Commonwealth Avenue
1948-49	• Lawrence Basin phased out and sold to Boston College

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