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Designing Weston: The Olmsteds and their Contemporaries

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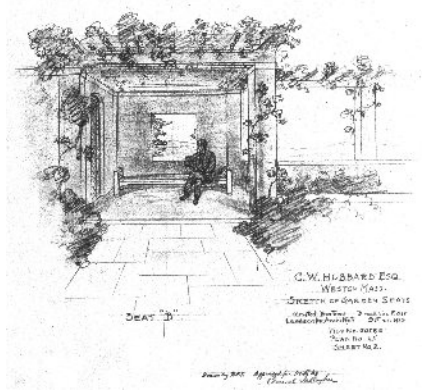
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Introduction

Before the Civil War, landscape architecture as a profession did not exist. The people who influenced design of the environment were landscape gardeners, cemetery designers, horticulturists, nursery owners, engineers, surveyors, and conservationists, among others. It was Frederick Law Olmsted who brought these disciplines together.

This issue looks at Olmsted, his successors, and other landscape designers working in Weston from the 1870s through the 1920s. It is based on a lecture I delivered to a joint meeting of the three Weston garden clubs on April 25, 2013. I would like to thank the National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, for providing plans and photographs to supplement those that I copied at the Olmsted National Historic Site more than a decade ago.

Pamela W. Fox



Ernest W. Bowditch (1850–1918)

Ernest Bowditch was the first to put his stamp on Weston, as the designer of Francis Blake's fabled estate, Keewaydin. A man of many talents, Bowditch called himself a landscape gardener. He remains relatively unknown, despite the fact that he laid out estates and wealthy suburbs throughout the Northeast including the Breakers in Newport and the resort community of Tuxedo Park, New York.

Bowditch was born in Brookline in 1850 to a prominent Massachusetts family. His grandfather, Nathaniel Bowditch, was a mathematician credited as the founder of modern maritime navigation. Ernest studied chemistry and mining at MIT but ended his studies in 1869 without receiving a degree. Through family connections he became assistant mineralogist for the first Darien Expedition, which spent the first half of 1870 looking for a route across the Isthmus of Darien (now Panama).

Later that year, working in the Boston office of Shedd & Sawyer, Civil Engineers, Bowditch was assigned to general maintenance at Mt. Auburn, America's first romantic cemetery. He laid out driveways, paths, and gardens as well as the artificial body of water called Halcyon Lake. He drew on that experience in creating artificial bodies of water on other jobs. The principles of picturesque landscape design embodied at Mt. Auburn influenced all his later work.

Bowditch's aesthetic was influenced by both the naturalistic tradition of English landscape design and the formal gardens of Italy. In her biographical sketch of Bowditch in *Pioneers of American Landscape Design*, Kara O'Donnell calls him "a talented designer, both creatively and technically, as well as an adept manager of project construction." (1) He was involved in municipal sewer and water design, land surveying, structural engineering, subdivisions and suburban planning, park design, and landscape design at affluent summer resorts.

Bowditch worked in conjunction with architectural and engineering firms including such prominent Boston and New York architects as McKim, Mead, and Bigelow, Frederick Law Olmsted Sr., Bruce Price, Peabody & Stearns, and H.H. Richardson. He also took independent commissions and had offices in Boston, New York, and Cleveland, where approximately 60 engineers and 14 gardeners carried out some 2,500 projects in the four decades between 1870 and 1910. (2)

Relationship between Bowditch and the Olmsted Firm

In their book *Community by Design: The Olmsted Firm and the Development of Brookline, Massachusetts*, authors Morgan, Cushing, and Reed write:

In their early work, Peabody and Stearns frequently collaborated with Ernest W. Bowditch . . . on the landscape development of their projects, a relationship that was challenged by Olmsted's arrival in Brookline [in 1883]. This collaboration was especially important for larger country estates and summer cottages, where significant landscapes were expected. (3)

In two such centers, Newport, Rhode Island, and Lenox, Massachusetts, Bowditch and Olmsted Sr. competed for the opportunity to collaborate with Peabody and Stearns.

Bowditch also frequently worked with Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. and his stepson John Charles Olmsted, as a draftsman and surveyor. But the relationship has been described as less than cordial. To quote O'Donnell in *Pioneers of American Landscape Design*: "despite a long professional relationship with the Olmsteds, he generally felt animosity for them because of their wide renown." (4) Bowditch criticized his better known contemporaries for having driven local practitioners out of business. (5)

To give a specific Weston example of this rivalry, shoe manufacturer Charles Jones worked with Bowditch in the early 1890s, when Jones developed Chaquoit Island off Cape Cod as an upscale summer retreat. But when Jones purchased a property in Weston in 1901, he turned to the Olmsted firm. A year later, displeased with having to deal with unfamiliar staffers, Jones, according to a report from Olmsted employee Andrew Autin, "began to talk about going to Mr. Bowditch." (6)

Ernest Bowditch for Francis Blake, Keewaydin (1870s – 1890s) 44 Tamarack Road

For more than two decades, inventor Francis Blake devoted his considerable energy and talents to developing Keewaydin, as the home of a country gentleman. At its peak in size, the estate totaled some 83 acres. Landscaping, road construction, and general development was planned and overseen by Ernest W. Bowditch.

Bowditch had much in common Blake, who was born the same year and also attended Brookline High School. They both sailed with the Darien Expedition, although on separate voyages. The two men shared common Hubbard relatives through marriage and were both major stockholders in the Hubbard's Ludlow Manufacturing Company.

In 1873, Francis Blake he married Elizabeth Hubbard, daughter of Weston estate owner Charles Townsend Hubbard. Blake hired the young architect Charles Follen McKim to built a house on six hilltop acres on what is now Tamarack Road, adjoining his father-in-law's 200+ acres and overlooking the Charles River Valley and Boston and Albany Railroad tracks. In the words of Elton Hall in his biography *Francis Blake, An Inventor's Life, 1850 - 1913*:

From the start, Blake's dominance over his Weston estate rivaled that of any medieval lord over his manor. Blake made and remade his estate, a fabulously picturesque and efficient compound complete with its own water supply and distribution system. (7)

Hall breaks the development of Keewaydin into four major projects: expansion of the main house inside and out, creation of an outbuilding complex known as "The Cottage"; development of the waterworks; and, finally, "an extensive program of land acquisition, road building, landscape architecture, horticulture, and arboriculture" in which Blake, with the help of Bowditch, transformed the landscape. (8)

These projects began about 1879, the year Elizabeth's grandfather, Benjamin Sewall, died, leaving a trust fund benefiting his granddaughters. Blake hoped that McKim would help him expand his house. Bowditch developed and submitted to McKim a topographical survey and information that McKim would need. (9) Due to the architect's ill health, it was the Boston firm of Cabot and Chandler that did the 1880 additions and designed "The Cottage," a handsome complex of attached brick outbuildings.



Francis Blake's sunken garden and adjoining terrace walk were decorated with more than 100 choice tub plants, according to reports. A newspaper reporter wrote: "During the summer months, this spot is brilliant with velvet lawns, potted plants, and graceful palms and ferns." (Photo courtesy of Thomas M. Paine)

As part of the project, Blake leveled the lawn for a hundred feet from the front of the house on the south side, which required a retaining wall of massive proportions, 300 feet long and 16 feet high, braced by six buttresses three feet thick. (10) The new lawn was bordered by a balustrade atop the retaining wall. Presumably it was Bowditch who did the design and engineering.

Blake's brother helped design a water system for the property. Pressure from an elevated reservoir was sufficient to throw a stream of water 80 feet high in a man-made pond created by Bowditch. This feature was turned on for special occasions.

Terracing down the hill from the house to the railroad tracks appears to have been done in the late 1880s. In 1891, Blake purchased a Lord & Burnham greenhouse measuring 127 feet long, which he installed on the second terrace. In Blake's time, plum, peach, apple, and pear trees were planted on the upper terrace. The third and lowest terrace was covered with seasonal flowers.

In 1893 the house was expanded for a second time and encased in tan brick. The sunken garden to the northeast of the house was created at that time, inspired, according to all accounts, by the gardens at Hampton Court. It measured approximately 160 by 120 feet and was five feet below grade level and surrounded by a broad gravel path with panoramic views in all directions. At the center of the formal circular layout was a sundial imported from England. The garden and terrace walk were decorated with more than 100 "choice tub plants," according to newspaper accounts.

Because of the sloping topography, considerable earthmoving and a retaining wall was needed to achieve the sunken effect. While the area around the house was treated formally, the landscape in other parts of the estate was treated in a more naturalistic manner characteristic of English estates.

Bowditch was also responsible for procuring the plantings, a task he delegated to his brother and business partner, James H. Bowditch, a landscape gardener. Elton Hall describes the initial plant material as follows:

The first major delivery on November 15, 1880 included twenty-nine varieties of flowering plants and about a hundred different species of bushes, shrubs and trees, barberry, deutzia, spirea, weigelia, forsythia, dogwood, hydrangea, flower plum, Japanese quince, euonymus, snow-berry, lilac, and hibiscus. The 1,238 plants and 1,470 pounds of trees, which came from Geneva, New York, testified to Blake's dedication. (11)

Ernest Bowditch negotiated on Blake's behalf to acquire mature trees from neighboring properties. In an 1881 letter, Blake's father-in-law complimented him for his wisdom in relocating mature trees:

The elm & other trees you mention will give your place an entirely different look & improve it immensely. You showed good judgment in



Ernest Bowditch created this man-made “miniature lake” at the Francis Blake estate, Keewaydin. The pond remains on Tamarack Road. (Photo courtesy of Thomas M. Paine)

taking trees 25 years old instead of waiting for them to grow 25 years on your land. There is no difficulty in transplanting even much larger ones with care & money. Money indeed is as near a lever to raise the world as will ever be found & I rejoice that you & Liz have enough of it. (12)

Blake continued his purchase of plants over the next two years, including 994 trees and bushes comprising 92 species of fir and pine; 199 deciduous trees of 41 species plus 60 fruit trees from Mount Hope Nurseries in Rochester, New York; and, in 1883, another 492 evergreens. (13)

By the 1890s, Keewaydin was the finest showplace in Weston. To maintain the grounds, Blake had a permanent staff of five full-time gardeners and grounds keepers with additional part-time summer help. (14) In 1892, he ordered 3,600 tulips and 2,100 narcissuses. According to Hall, he planted so many flowers in so many varieties that he had to ask Ernest Bowditch to draw up detailed garden plans. (15)

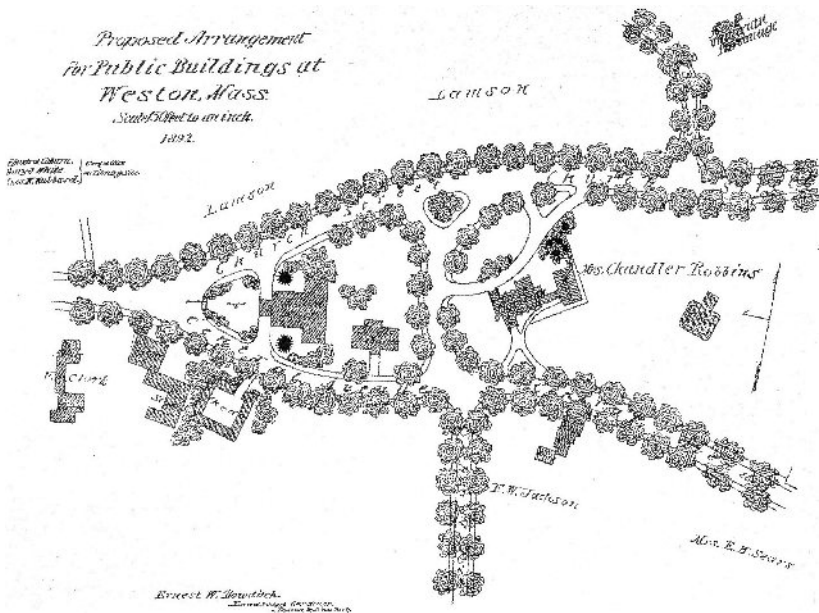
Francis Blake consulted with other experts about his estate, including Benjamin Watson of Harvard’s Bussey Institute, who advised on the thinning out of the trees. (16) In 1911-12, Francis Blake engaged Olmsted Brothers. Further research is needed but it appears that he was thinking of adding a teahouse to his formal garden. By that time Blake’s health was declining. The last plan listed in the Olmsted records is dated December 1912. Blake died in January 1913.

Ernest Bowditch: Plan for Weston Town Square (1892)

In 1892, two years after Francis Blake became a Weston selectman, Ernest Bowditch was hired to prepare a comprehensive plan for the “Town Square” at the intersection of Boston Post Road, School Street, and Church Street. One goal was to determine potential sites for a future library and new town hall.

One of Bowditch’s plans appears in the 1892 *Town Report*. It shows the two proposed new buildings located on a small common in front of First Parish Church. His plan replaces the Josiah Smith Tavern with an inn described in the report as “a pretty wayside inn, after the manner of New England fifty years ago.” (17)

The master plan was not implemented. Town leaders chose the conservative option of purchasing only the George W. Cutting House as a library site. The Bowditch plan appears overly constrained compared to the sweeping Shurcliff plan of two decades later. Perhaps it was clear by the 1910s that a more dramatic solution was needed.



Ernest Bowditch created this plan for the “Town Square” in 1892. It appears in the Town Report of that year. Twenty years later, Weston adopted a more extensive redesign plan by Arthur Shurcliff (see page 37).



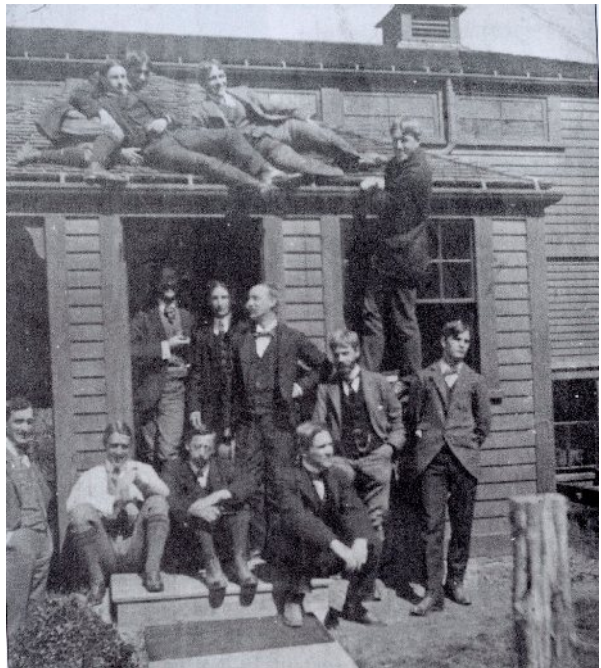
Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. (1822–1903)

Frederick Law Olmsted's distinguished career as the father of landscape architecture has been extensively documented and will not be covered here except in regard to his Weston commissions. In 1883, when Olmsted was commissioned as landscape advisor for the Boston park system, he closed his New York office and moved permanently to Brookline. Olmsted established an office in his new Brookline home, Fairsted, at 99 Warren Street, only a short

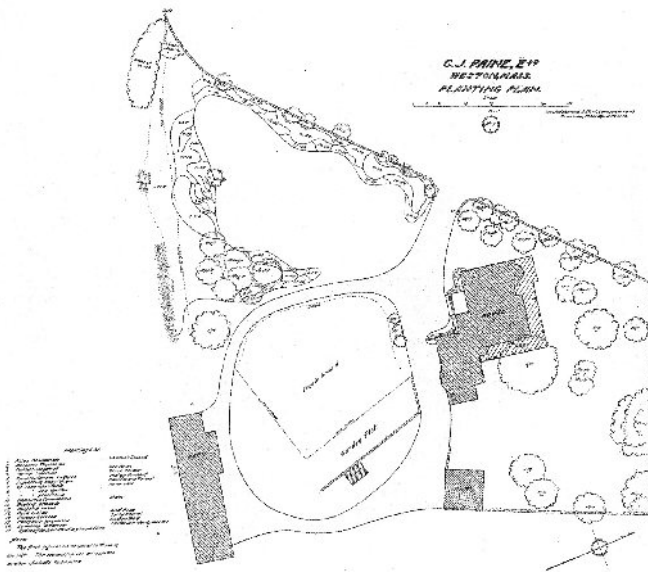
walk from the home of his frequent collaborator, architect H. H. Richardson.

The Olmsted family consisted of his wife Mary and five children. (Olmsted's older brother John had died of tuberculosis and Olmsted had married his brother's widow, Mary, in 1859 and taken charge of their three children. The couple then had two more children.) When they moved to Brookline, his 31-year-old nephew and stepson, John Charles, became a full partner in the new Boston office. FLO's son Frederick Jr. was 13.

Olmsted instituted an apprentice system that combined instruction, assigned reading, and practical experience. Two of his most important pupils were John Charles and Frederick Jr., both talented designers who carried on their father's work under the name Olmsted Brothers. Two other landscape architects who trained in the Olmsted office and later worked in Weston are Charles Eliot and Arthur A. Shurcliff (originally Shurtleff).



Office members at Fairsted (Courtesy National Park Service, FLO National Historic Site)



Charles Jackson Paine contacted Frederick Law Olmsted in 1883 and again in 1894 regarding his large estate in Weston. The Paine house was located near the present 64 Highland Street. In 1894 the firm produced this simple planting plan. (Courtesy National Park Service, FLO National Historic Site)

FLO Sr. for Charles Jackson Paine (1883 and 1894, Job # 01396) Highland Street

News of Olmsted’s move to Boston must have spread quickly, because in 1883 two Weston estate owners invited him out for a consultation. The first was General Charles Jackson Paine (1833–1916). Paine bought his first 120 acres in Weston after the Civil War and eventually owned more than 700 acres, the largest estate in Weston. The family used it mainly in the spring and fall.

C. J. Paine had many passions, most notably yachting and horseback riding. His style was casual and his interest in landscape design and gardening was limited. Initially, Paine kept the original mid-18th century colonial house, to which he added an addition. In 1883 Paine moved the original house off the property and built an addition to his addition. Later that year, he contacted Frederick Law Olmsted by letter, as follows:

My dear Sir:

I should be glad to have your advice about the position of an avenue to my house here, if you will kindly come out here for so small a matter. We shall be here a few days longer before moving to Boston . . .” (18)

The result of Olmsted’s visit was a simple sketch of the house and barns connected by a circular drive. The general was apparently satisfied with this minimal plan until 1894, when the successor firm of Olmsted, Olmsted and Eliot was hired to landscape the immediate vicinity of the house. The planting list was spartan compared to those prepared by the firm in later years for fellow Weston estate owners Charles Jones, Horace Sears, and Charles W. Hubbard.

FLO Sr. for Charles Townsend Hubbard (1883–84, Job #05058)
80 Orchard Avenue

In 1883, another wealthy Weston estate owner was also enhancing his property. Charles Townsend Hubbard (1817–1887) made his fortune in the processing of flax and hemp. He founded the Ludlow Manufacturing Company and served as treasurer until his death.

C. T. Hubbard and his family had been summering in an old farmhouse in the southeast corner of Weston since 1867. The size of his estate varied over time. In 1879 he was taxed for 404 acres. Hubbard called the property Woodlands, but it is more commonly known by the name of his house, Ridgehurst. This fashionable Shingle style mansion, built between 1881 and 1883, was located at what is now 80 Orchard Avenue directly adjacent to the house of his son-in-law, Francis Blake. C.T. Hubbard was 64 when Ridgehurst was constructed. Perhaps he was spurred to action by Blake's increasingly elaborate projects. The two men used the same Boston architecture firm, Cabot and Chandler.

Ridgehurst was nearing completion when Olmsted Senior was consulted about the site plan, plantings, and placement of the driveway. The earliest surviving correspondence is from August 1883, when Olmsted came out to Weston but missed meeting with Hubbard because a letter had been delivered to the wrong place. Hubbard explained the error in a handwritten note and continued as follows:

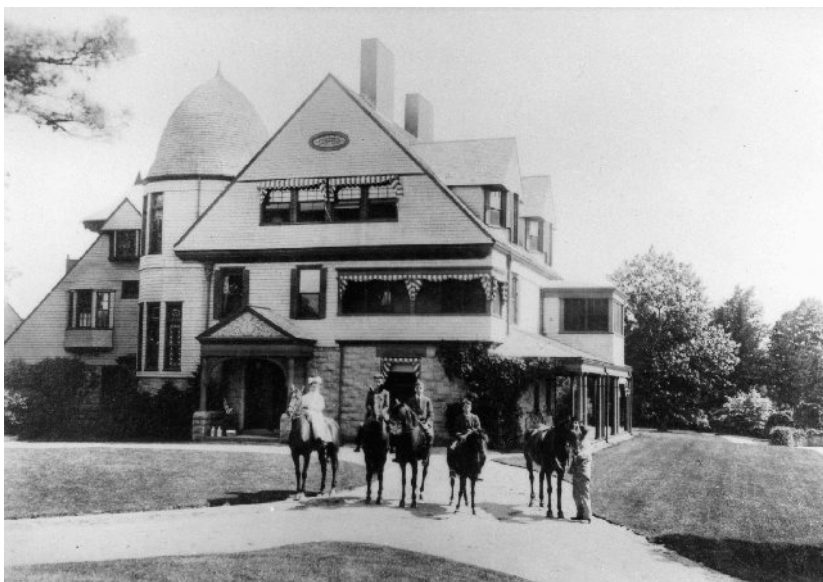
I had grade stakes set from the house to the road and I do not know of anything that surveyors could do more for me. It appears to me that all I need now is a little good advice as to where the house road should join the main road. Since you were there I have had the humps of gravel removed & it may be more easy to locate the roadway. When I find we cannot go further without advice I will write to you. (19)

A letter of February 1, 1884, from Hubbard to Olmsted Sr. makes it clear that Olmsted was responsible for the fieldstone boulder wall and retaining wall used to create a flat lawn between the house and the sloping hillside to the south. Note Hubbard's comment about Blake and Bowditch importing large numbers of plants that did not survive the winter:

My dear sir

I am much obliged for your favor of 26 _____. I am in no hurry to set out many plants or shrubs about the house, as it appears to me, we can better tell what is needed after we have moved into the house, & I should prefer to use only the most hardy only ! such as will stand our winters without any protection.

Mr. Blake imported through Mr. Bowditch a large quantity of so-called hardy plants, & the most of them died the first winter.



C.W. Hubbard's children in front of Ridgely in 1904. The house still stands on Orchard Avenue. (Courtesy Weston Historical Society)

I have endeavored to carry out your ideas in the spirit & almost to the letter, except the tunnel leading to the glen, if I may so call it.

In the steep bank of boulders we tried to carry out your ideas exactly, & I think your son said it was just what you wanted.

I have a large lot of well rotted manure to dig into the ground as soon as the earth shall be dry enough, but if you can kindly find time to come out after that & mark out just where to put trees & shrubs I shall feel much obliged.

With the bank of large boulders on one side & the finishes & capped wall on the other, it seems to me you will have what you planned for an artificial court yard about the house . . .(20)

The following day FLO Sr wrote the following caustic response as a rough draft with many crossed out passages, quoted here in part. Whether or not it was sent is unknown, but Olmsted was clearly annoyed with his client for taking liberties with his design:

I did not doubt that you thought that you were, as you say, carrying out my ideas with only such immaterial variations as were judicious and required to make the result satisfactory to your self but as to what my ideas were, what was essential of them & what immaterial & what judicious there is room for difference of opinion. I did not mean to object to your going ahead on your own view but your doing so before consulting me in the points of difference relieved me of my professional responsibility.

The aid my son has given you since has been in carrying out your ideas of what was desirable. I do not expect you to take this view but you must not expect me to take yours. I am a designer, which I should not be if I did not know better than anyone else what is and is not essential in my designing.” (21)

The remainder of the letter is difficult to read, but it appears that Olmsted did not wish to continue to help Hubbard in the matter of choosing plantings. There is no further correspondence in the Olmsted files between C.T. Hubbard and Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.

Almost thirty years later, Olmsted’s sons and C.T. Hubbard’s son, Charles Wells Hubbard, apparently worked more harmoniously in creating the handsome Italian Garden behind Ridgehurst. (See page 30)



Charles Eliot (1859–1897)

Charles Eliot was the son of professor and later Harvard president Charles W. Eliot. After graduating from Harvard College in 1882, the young Eliot decided to become a landscape architect. Because there were no graduate programs in the subject, he enrolled in the Bussey Institute, Harvard’s department of agriculture and horticulture. Eliot’s uncle, architect Robert Peabody, introduced Eliot to Frederick Law Olmsted;

and in April 1883, he became the first apprentice in Olmsted’s Brookline office. During his two-year internship, 1883-85, Eliot worked on the Emerald Necklace and Arnold Arboretum. After a year-long tour of Europe, Olmsted asked him to join the firm, but Eliot opted to open his own office instead.

In 1893, with the untimely death of a talented young associate in the Olmsted firm, Henry Codman, Eliot agreed to join the firm, which became Olmsted, Olmsted, and Eliot. He brought with him the job of planning a system of metropolitan Boston “reservations,” which he had inaugurated during a decade of independent practice. Eliot’s own brilliant career was cut short when, in 1897, he died from meningitis at age 37. According to Keith Morgan’s biographical sketch in *Pioneers of American Landscape Design*, his premature death provided the impetus for establishing a landscape architecture program at Harvard, out of which grew the profession of regional planning. (22)

Charles Eliot's landscape treatment of First Parish Church can be seen in this late 19th century photo of the watering wagon, which was used to keep dust down on streets. (Courtesy Weston Historical Society)



Charles Eliot: First Parish Church (1888)

In 1888, Horace Sears, son of former First Parish minister Rev. Edmund Hamilton Sears, led the drive to construct a new church building in Weston. The architect, Robert Peabody, was undoubtedly the one who brought in his nephew, Charles Eliot, to do the planting. Sears was the contact person for the job.

The 1888 plan for First Parish was an early commission for the young landscape architect. At this point Eliot had no assistant. He did the grading plan, laid out paths, designed the planting plan, selected the plants, and supervised planting, all for \$25 plus \$2 an hour for time spent on the ground. The order of work is included in his father's biography, *Charles Eliot*. Eliot's father wrote that this project gave his son "much pleasure from the beginning . . ." (23)

Eliot wrote about the project in a short article of September 18, 1888 entitled "A Village Church." His poetic description is quoted here in full:

In the heart of the township of Weston, Massachusetts, four country roads meet at the town flagstaff. Beside the flagstaff stands the village church The accompanying plan shows the irregular arrangement of . . . buildings, the curves of the roadways as they were determined by "the lay of the land," the bounding field walls, the grassy spaces at the roadsides, and the trees and shrubberies which break and partly hide the stiffness of the buildings. The new church, built of rough field stone, is only recently completed, and the gentle slopes about it are as yet only grassed, but the next planting season will see masses of Mountain Laurel, and of wild Roses, Sumacs, and Barberries, set about the foot of the walls, " native plants beside the native boulders. Our sketch and plan, taken together, well show what happy results can be attained when wise design works to complete what chance and nature have well begun. The latter fixed the cross-roads . . . but design placed the church upon the rise of ground and built it of the rough stones of the New England fields. Many a village, both within and without this New England, might draw a useful lesson from Weston. (24)

Charles Eliot: Charles River Reservation (1890s)

In 1890, Eliot published a letter in the magazine *Garden and Forest* proposing an organization that would become the Trustees of Reservations. The Trustees in turn advocated for metropolitan parks. In 1892 the Metropolitan Park Commission was established, with Eliot as the landscape architect.

The metropolitan park plan established the Middlesex Fells and Blue Hills wilderness reservations. Eliot also advocated for a wilderness reservation west of the city, spanning Waltham and Weston, but it was never established. The result of Eliot's work can be seen in Weston in the Charles River Reservation, which prevented development along the river.



Olmsted Brothers (1898–1961)

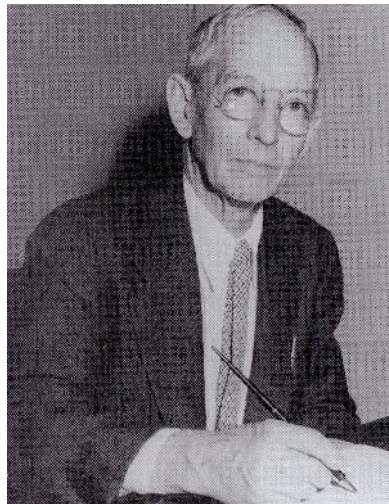
**John Charles Olmsted (1852–1920)
Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. (1870–1957)**

Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. lived until 1903, and many people mistakenly believe he was involved in projects up to that date. Sadly, he retired from the firm in 1897 but suffered memory problems even before that date. For the last five years of his life he was

hospitalized at McLean in Belmont because of senile dementia.

After Charles Eliot's death in 1897, the firm took the old title of F.L. & J.C. Olmsted, but at this point Frederick Jr. had replaced his father. In 1898 John Charles and Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. formed the partnership of Olmsted Brothers, a name the firm would retain until 1961. The first three decades of the 20th century saw a great increase in work and size of staff, which reached 47 in 1917 and up to 60 at its peak in the 1920s.

John Charles Olmsted, stepson of FLO Sr.,



was the senior partner at Olmsted Brothers from 1898 until his death in 1920 and provided continuity to the firm after FLO's retirement. He was a talented designer and planner who developed a productive office and managed a growing staff and diverse national practice. He was admired for his ability to resolve complex design problems with artistry and practicality while protecting the natural features of a site. John Charles was committed to the development of land-

**CENTRAL PARK
1858**

*The Family Tree of
The Olmsted Firms*

James Richardson

Carl Rex Barber

W.H. Van Hall Axtell

Edward Clark Whiting

Wesley Lindheimer

Harry Sargent Collins

John Douglas Stuart

The seed of the Olmsted Office determined in 1859 when Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux submitted their "Greenward" plan to contractors for the design of New York's Central Park. Since that time there has been a dominating and organic succession of firms carrying on the name of Olmsted, and the firm names - together with their date of activity - are shown as branches of the tree. In the design are the names of the principal responsible persons carrying on the work of the firms. These landscape architects are represented in photographs around the border of the chart.

Joseph C. Tilden

Charles Scott Vasey

Leon H. Zach

Henry Abbott Libbert

George Frederick Parsons

George Klatt

Frederick L. Olmsted, Jr.

The first tree was a Central Park tree, and it has been used in the design of many a variety of Olmsted designs: the National Capitol grounds; the Temple's setting at Mountain Lake in Florida; the University and Park Plaza Park in New York; the Government House at New York; the full landscape development of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception; and of the Detroit Jefferson Memorial in the District of Columbia; and the Duke University campus in Durham, North Carolina, among his last representations on this continent.

CHRONOLOGY

Olmsted and Vaux	1858-1864
Frederick Law Olmsted	1864-1884
F.L. and J.C. Olmsted	1864-1885
F.L. Olmsted and Company	1889-1892
Olmsted, Olmsted, and Fisher	1892-1897
F.L. and J.C. Olmsted	1897-1898
Olmsted Brothers	1898-1961
Olmsted Associates	1961

*† Tilden and Vaux
** Architects
*** Partnership 1961-64, Incorporated 1964*

scape architecture as a profession and was first president of the American Society of Landscape Architects. He advocated for parks and continued the park planning begun by his stepfather in Boston and other communities.

Even while a Harvard student, Frederick Jr. was included in his father's projects including the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. After graduating in 1894 he spent 13 months on site at the Vanderbilt estate, Biltmore. He entered the firm in 1895 and became a full partner with his half-brother upon his father's retirement in 1897. He emerged on the national scene in 1901 when he assumed what would have been his father's place on the Park Improvement Commission for Washington D.C.

***Olmsted Brothers for Horace S. Sears, Haleiwa
(1898–99, Job #02060)
321, 327, 335 Boston Post Road***

Horace Scudder Sears (1855-1923) was the youngest of three sons of Rev. Edmund Hamilton Sears, who became pastor of First Parish in Weston when Horace was 10 years old. The family purchased a house and 10 acres on Boston Post Road just east of the church. Sears graduated from Weston High School at age 16 and had no further formal education. He began his career as a clerk and rose to become a principal in the textile-manufacturing firm of Wellington, Sears & Co. His father died when Sears was just 20. In the early 1880s he moved back to Weston and lived with his mother until her death 21 years later, in 1897.

In 1898, at age 43, Sears began the decade-long process of developing his estate, which he called Haleiwa, a Hawaiian word meaning "the perfect home." His first step was to engage the Olmsted firm, newly renamed Olmsted Brothers and headed by John Charles. One of the young designers working there at the time was Arthur Shurcliff.

The 26 plans generated in 1898 have been lost, but index cards record what was done, including topographical maps, a study for the location of the driveway, grading plans, planting plans, and a proposed treatment of the principal view.

On returning from a short vacation and reviewing some of this work, Sears wrote a letter to the firm in early August, explaining his goals:

Gentlemen

. . . The partial suggestions which you make do not meet my requirements. What I want is a full and comprehensive plan for the laying out of my whole estate, showing the grades, roads, shrubbery, flowers, etc., then I can work upon it by degrees as I feel inclined. . . The approximate location of any house I may build is well understood, and the road, as you have just laid it out, seems to be all right. But it is quite probable I



Horace Sears estate, Keewaydin, on Boston Post Road. Olmsted Brothers did the original site plan and Arthur Shurcliff designed the Italian Garden, which was partially completed when this photo was taken in 1905 (Courtesy Weston Historical Society)

may not decide to build a new house for some years; but meantime I want to be working on the grounds, particularly planting out shrubs and trees, constructing the road, and changing the grade of my old tennis court. Can not you send me such plans and specifications as I need at an early date, for I want to get right at the work, make estimates, and see where I am before it is too late to do planting and grading this Fall? (25)

Within weeks Sears had a planting plan and extensive plant list that specified over 80 flower or shrubbery beds, with more than 4200 individual plants. By September a contract had been drawn up for the work. The only other piece of Olmsted correspondence is a follow-up report, one year later, on the condition of the plantings.

With the initial planning completed, Sears proceeded to build his large Italian Renaissance mansion atop the hill, with full-length windows facing south. The position of the house was ideal for the site. Perhaps Sears envisioned the future Italian garden along the south slope, but from 1899 to 1903 he was occupied with house construction.

In August 1903, Sears held a formal dedication and reception. One newspaper article noted “the landscape features are beautiful, the display of flowers being very handsome. The show of begonias was pronounced and remarkable.” (26) The next phase, creation of the Italian Garden and other landscape features, was underway in 1905. It was the work of Arthur Shurcliff, who had just established his own independent practice. (see page 33)

Olmsted Brothers for A. L. Coburn (1898, Job# 02067)
29 Webster Road

Arthur Leslie Coburn (1860–1931) was a life-long Weston resident and member of a prominent farm family. He grew up in the family homestead at 153 Church Street, across from the red barn built by his father, Isaac. In 1897 Coburn became superintendent at the nearby Hook & Hastings organ factory. In 1898 he engaged Olmsted Brothers to design the grounds of his new Shingle style house at 29 Webster Road. Further research is needed on the contents of 17 letters and three Olmsted Brothers reports in the A. L. Coburn file. The house was destroyed by fire in 1968, and the property has been extensively re-landscaped in recent years.

Olmsted Brothers for Charles H. Jones, Fillmore Farm
(1901–29, Job #00038)
458 Glen Road

Charles Henry Jones (1855–1933) was a self-made man who began work in the shoe industry in his mid-teens and later founded Commonwealth Shoe and Leather, makers of the Bostonian shoe. Jones was the most serious of Weston's gentlemen farmers. His 270-acre estate on Glen Road was the fourth largest in Weston.

John Charles Olmsted's first visit to Weston on August 12, 1901, was the beginning nearly 30 years of association between Jones and the Brookline firm. Because of John Charles's extensive notes, we have insight into his thought process and the difficulties of working with a client who lacked a clear vision for his property and started work before developing a comprehensive site plan. Jones was clearly a hands-on owner. No detail was too small to warrant his attention. The fact that he often did the work first and asked advice later is a constant theme in reports from the field.

On his first visit, John Charles determined that his client had two main goals, to create a farm operation for his own use and to develop house sites that could be sold at a profit in the future. By the time the firm was brought in, construction of the house, carriage house/barn, and driveways was already underway on the overgrown former agricultural land, as described in a 1901 Olmsted field report:

He [Jones] is now building pretty near the street . . . adjoining the chicken yard of his neighbor, who seems to be a small farmer. There is also another small farmhouse across the street. . . . This part of the land was bought of some woman, the survivor of a farmer family and the place grew wild for years. (27)



Charles H. Jones estate on Glen Road. (Above) The boulder entrance posts remain. (Below) The house remains, although part of the second floor and the rear porches were removed in the 1950s. Also remaining are the carriage house at right and the stone wall around the vegetable garden. (Right) Rear terrace garden. (Courtesy Weston Historical Society)

Jones had a winter house in Brookline and a summer house in West Falmouth. According to John Charles Olmsted, Jones was unsure how the Weston property would be used: “He seems to be building in Weston as an experiment. He thinks he may live there in winter but fears it may be too lonesome for his family.” (28) Jones and his architect, J. Williams Beals, started with the concept of building a farmhouse and adjacent barn in the New England tradition. Jones intended to keep three cows for his own use and a few workhorses. As Olmsted noted, how-

ever: “The house . . . has grown and is now rather larger for a farmhouse and has several bathrooms and a carriage porch.” Olmsted felt that the more stately residence did not belong next to a farm barn. Nor, in his opinion, was the house properly oriented on the site:

The new house is pleasantly located for a rather small, cheap place but seemed to me wrong end to, that is, the kitchen is at the south end and the reception room and sitting room are at the north end. It is also unpleasant to have the barn so near the house, as it is to have a cow and manure yard . . . This may have been justifiable when he planned to build a real farmhouse, but he has allowed himself to drift away from that idea. (30)

On his first visit, John Charles modified the driveway layout and suggested a boulder wall and posts to mark the entrance. Later reports discuss the problem of where to locate the formal garden. John Charles suggested a location away from the house, but Jones wanted it adjacent. This required building up a terrace, using as much as 2200 cubic yards of fill. Olmsted pointed out that Jones could make use of the dirt from an artificial pond being excavated behind the house.

In November 1901 the Olmsted firm sent Jones an extensive planting plan and 14-page planting list with an estimated cost of \$552 for thousands of plants. For trees, the firm suggested hawthorns, witch hazel, silver-bell trees, sugar maple, pin oaks, beeches, elms, white and red oaks, and several varieties of birch and dogwood. Shrubs included honeysuckle, forsythia, elder, high bush blueberry, cranberry, lilac, winterberry, swamp azalea, barberry, pepperbush, and dwarf sumac. The plan called for flowerbeds full of roses, peonies, phlox, oriental poppies, columbines, and mixed perennials. One bed was to be planted with 1000



tulips. Another had 18 varieties of phlox for a total of 200 phlox plants. The banks of the terrace were planted with creeping roses.

John Charles visited again in 1902, when Jones was thinking of building a new and larger house on a hill. This was never done. The Olmsted files include a report on that meeting, along with two pictures taken by Percival Gallagher. John Charles was clearly frustrated with Jones and critical of virtually everything about the property:

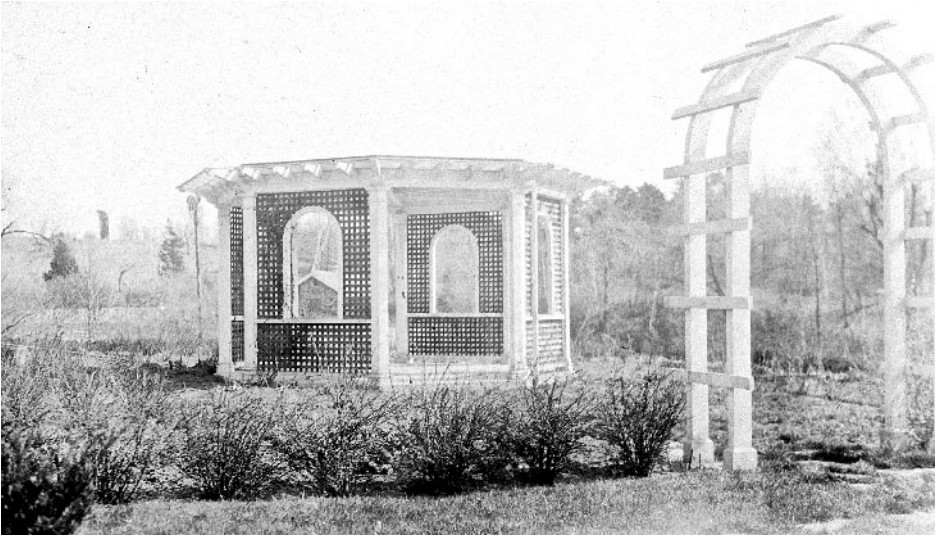
His method of proceeding without any comprehensive plan and asking advice after he had decided or partly executed his ideas make it impossible to arrive at any creditable result. The house is too far from the street and entrance for a gate lodge, too large and expensive for that or for a farmer, too near the stable to let, and has the kitchen wing at the wrong end. The lane is a poor undignified approach to his future house, the vegetable garden breaks across what would have been finer as a meadow, the pond has a stiff, unnatural shore. The ice-house doesn't keep ice as it should. The stable has the proportions of a farm barn but is too ornate for that and is too high and prominent for a stable. (30)

Olmsted Brothers did additional planting plans between 1904 and 1906. There is a planting list for another cow barn and a farmer's cottage. (31) In one communication Jones writes: "I desire an immediate effect, and should prefer the larger plants. . . ." (32)

Percival Gallagher of Olmsted Brothers for Charles H. Jones, Garden (1914–1929)

Jones enlarged the house in the mid-teens, creating the need to redo the garden. The head designer on this project was Percival Gallagher (1874-1934). Gallagher joined the firm of Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot in 1894 but left in 1904 to form a partnership with James Sturgis Pray. Overwhelmed by the administrative burden of running his own firm, he returned to the Olmsted firm two years later. His work is not always recognized because all design work was recorded without reference to specific individuals. However, Gallagher's name appears in many letters and reports in the Jones file, especially between 1912 and 1925, and it is clear that he was the senior member on these later projects. Gallagher has been described as having a modest, unassuming temperament, which would have made him a good choice for working with Jones. (33)

A letter of August 31, 1912, makes it clear that Gallagher was responsible for choosing the site of Jones's tennis court. In February 1914, Gallagher sent a planting plan for the grounds around the "little cottage" and tennis courts. (34)



Photograph of the summer house, which was part of the re-design of the terrace garden behind the Charles Jones house on Glen Road. Percival Gallagher was the principal associate for the garden project, which was executed in the mid-1920s. (Courtesy National Park Service, FLO National Historic Site)

In March 1914, Olmsted Brothers sent Charles Jones a letter discussing the need to re-design the garden, which at the time was semi-circular in shape. The unknown staffer writes that the “considerable addition to your house” had thrown it out of relation to the semicircular terrace. There were other issues as well:

The thought Mr. Gallagher carried away, after talking to your sister, was that the present garden lacked the usual form and characteristics of the old-fashioned flower garden and that its beds were so arranged as not to admit of treating them in a varying way suitable for growing flowers for cutting purposes. The present arrangement is of such a form as to make it impossible to subdivide it so that one part can be separate from the rest. To do this, it seems to us necessary to reshape the terrace so that it will form one long terrace parallel with the face of the house, with the central portion forming a turf panel on the principal axis of the house and lying in the field of the central view, and on either side of its two garden areas: one to the westward, forming the flower garden proper, and the other a garden for cut flowers. To balance the cut flower garden with the other we have suggested a centrally placed summer house, which would be covered with vines and would furnish a very desirable feature. (35)

Executing the design would require cutting away part of the existing terrace, which would furnish the material to build out on either side.

Gallagher was still the contact in June of 1920, when he recommended plantings for around the house. Not until June 1924 did Jones start constructing the stone retaining wall needed for the redesigned terrace garden. Jones was involved in smallest details, such as the width and treatment of walkways. At one point he writes to Gallagher: "I am completely out of patience with the way your company seem to treat my utmost efforts to get a little information concerning the work which I have been trying to do for some months." (36) A member of the firm visited the following day to clear up the problem.

The planting list for the garden includes close to 2000 individual perennial plants and vines (62 different species), as well as 330 irises (26 species), 83 phlox (six species), 129 peonies (12 species), 233 roses (21 species), and 429 trees and shrubs (23 species). The largest number of any one plant was 348 *Gladiolus primulinas* hybrids. At the end of the list are the names of 15 nurseries that would be supplying the 3,188 plants, at a total cost of \$1551.56. (37)

How was it possible to tend all these plants? The Joneses had a gardener; but in a 1929 report, F.D. Brown, a member of the Olmsted firm, questioned his competence:

The gardener is fine for greenhouse work, for vegetable and cut-flower gardens, but seems to have no idea of the maintenance of the flower garden. Large clumps of goldenrod and boltonia have sprung up in odd places. The gardener has no idea of replacing plants that have died or restraining those that grow too vigorously. (38)

Brown suggested filling up the bad places in the garden with annuals such as "petunias, scabiosa, salpiglossis, etc." adding "They consider marigolds and zinnias too coarse."

This is the final letter in the file, despite the suggestion that "in order to keep the garden up to the proper maintenance there should be more oversight by someone from the office," as well as more careful supervision by the family, as the gardener did not seem up to the task.

Olmsted Brothers for Charles Jones, "Daughter's House"
(1930, Job# 09235)
492 Glen Road

In September 1930, Olmsted Brothers was brought in to plan for a new house immediately west of the Jones house. A topographical survey was done, along with site plans and a simple planting plan.

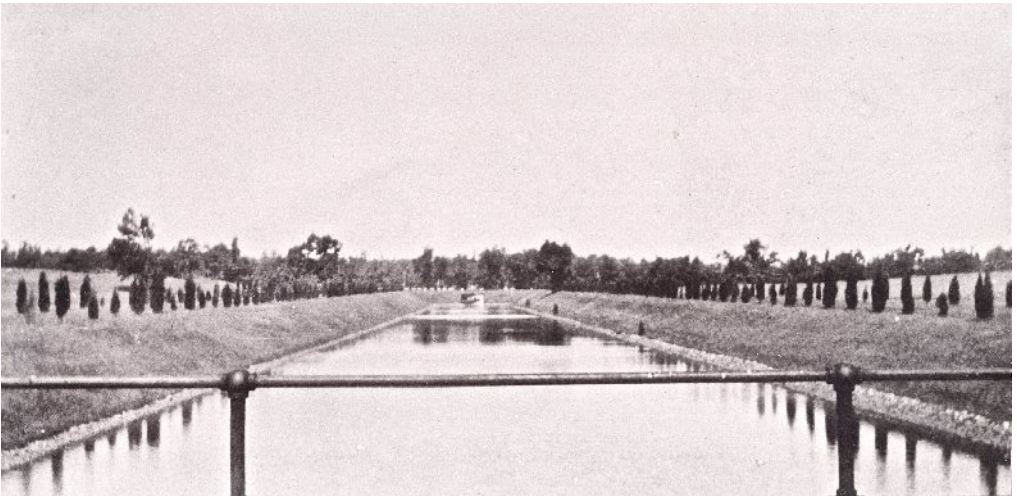
Referred to in some Olmsted lists as the "Daughter's Home," this house may also have been intended for one of C. H. Jones's sons. In any case, none of his four children decided to live there. While the Colonial Revival residence was under construction, it was sold to Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Grant, who owned it until 1954.

***Olmsted Brothers: Weston Aqueduct and Reservoir
(1899–1910, Job #02074)
Ash Street***

The Weston Aqueduct and Reservoir was constructed between 1901 and 1903 as part of the water supply system for metropolitan Boston. The Metropolitan Water Board purchased some 200 acres in Weston, approximately 66 acres for the reservoir and the remainder as a buffer zone to ensure the quality of water. Olmsted Brothers was responsible for the landscape design in Weston. It may have been Arthur Shurcliff who was the firm's primary designer on this project. Later in his career, Shurcliff was a regular consultant to the Metropolitan District Commission water and parks division.

The design consists of two parts. The linearity of the open channel, reinforced by rows of conifers and the central placement of the channel chamber, displays a classical formality. The naturalistic landscaping of the reservoir belies its utilitarian purpose.

The reservoir was created by stripping organic matter in a naturally low-lying area, while retaining many natural landforms. The Olmsted firm utilized these and created others to produce an informal naturalistic setting. The area was planted with conifers and arborvitae to inhibit soil erosion and enhance the park-like character of the reservoir. Selection of conifers over deciduous trees was based on the fact that conifers drop their needles onto the ground, whereas deciduous leaves would tend to blow into the reservoir.



Open channel leading to the Weston Reservoir on Ash Street. Olmsted Brothers designed the Weston Reservoir and Aqueduct, constructed 1901-03. (Courtesy Weston Historical Society)

***Olmsted Brothers for Robert Winsor, Chestnut Farm
(1910–1914, Job #03994)
Meadowbrook Road Area***

Robert Winsor (1858–1930) was the first Weston estate owner to make large-scale plans for the future development of property, a process overseen by Olmsted Brothers beginning in 1910. The beauty of the Meadowbrook Road area is clearly the result of this careful planning process. The plans demonstrate the naturalistic subdivision design principles developed by Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. His successor firm located roadways and house lots based on topographical and geological features, taking advantage of any irregularity.

Winsor grew up in Salem and Winchester, the son of a much-loved physician and a devoted educator. After graduation from Harvard in 1880, he began work at the investment bank Kidder Peabody & Co, where he eventually became the senior partner. With his forceful personality and constructive mind, he led the bank during a period of reorganization and consolidation in American transportation, utilities, banking, and communications. Newspaper articles lauded him as “the J.P. Morgan of Boston.” (39)

Winsor and his family settled on what is now Hemlock Road in Weston in 1883. In 1898 he made his first large land purchase, the 83-acre Bryden farm, which included much of the land that is now Weston Golf Club. He continued to buy land for his “Chestnut Farm”, which at its peak totaled 472 acres, the second largest estate in Weston. His holdings included much of the land bordered by Boston Post Road, Summer Street, Loring Road, Doublet Hill Road, Newton Street, and Wellesley Street.

Winsor built a Tudor mansion at what is now the end of Winsor Way in 1902. A few years later he arranged for the civil engineering firm of Aspinwall & Lincoln to survey the property and lay out roadways and an entrance drive.

Winsor wanted his children to grow up in an unpretentious farm atmosphere. His estate was described in a 1903 newspaper article as a place “where comfort, not lavishness, is the keynote.” (40)

In 1910, Robert Winsor hired Olmsted Brothers to study his property with an eye toward future development rather than beautification. Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. was the principal partner involved, along with George Gibbs Jr. Olmsted filed this report after meeting with Winsor and his wife, Eleanor:

He wants to keep the place quiet and natural. Does not want to go in for any large expenditures; but wants to build some woods-roads and gradually improve the place with the idea in mind of subdividing it as time goes on, in 10 or 25 or 50 years, into smaller places of (say) ten acres and



Olmsted Brothers worked to make Robert Winsor's man-made pond on Skating Pond Road look natural and also drew up a planting plan for around the pond. Winsor built the log shelter for use by winter skaters. (Courtesy Weston Historical Society)

upwards. He had recently built a crude pond and wants it brought to a finish . . . He wants advice about vicinity of house . . . (41)

Winsor wanted a road system that would be convenient for his own use and of value when the property was subdivided.

In a field report that fall, Olmsted representative F.A. Hammond, working with Winsor's superintendent, Philip Spaulding, expressed concern over whether the pond would be fashioned in a naturalistic manner:

[Mr. Spaulding] wished me to go with him to the swamp in the woods, where all the undergrowth and trees have been removed preparatory to excavating for the pond. He said he was afraid Mr. Winsor would make a mistake if he went too far with the work before having some advice or plans . . . Judging from the area cleared, I thought that there was danger of their making the pond too formal in outline to look well in that location. (42)

Winsor was firm about making the pond deep enough for swimming. An Olmsted representative staked the outlines, the pond was dug, and the muck was deposited on Winsor's farm fields.

The overall planting plan for the pond was to use hemlocks on the higher portions and rhododendrons and azaleas in the lowland at the edge of woods. The planting list, dated April 27, 1911, is five pages long and includes flowering trees, buckthorn, common privet, arrowwood, high bush cranberry, hornbeam, cockspur thorn, common barberry, witch hazel, swamp wild rose, panicled osier,



Aerial view of the Winsor house, once located at the end of Winsor Way. It was demolished after World War II. Olmsted Brothers made suggestions for improvements around the house, but it is not clear which ideas were executed. (Courtesy Weston Historical Society)

beach plum, elderberry, steeple bush, silver thorn, Bohemian olive, sea buckthorn, meadowsweet, black alder, shadbush, great mallow, madonna lily, red cedar, swamp honeysuckle, Japanese holly, cock-barked euonymus, yew, Indian current, and others. The largest numbers were native rhododendrons (200 plants), mountain laurel (265 plants), and hemlock (275 plants.)

Around the mansion house, Olmsted Brothers suggested broad areas of lawn, a boulder wall, a large flower garden and greenhouse, a shrubbery garden with plants of special botanical interest, a vegetable garden, and plantings at the edge of the woods. The plan of February 3, 1911, distinguishes areas of “thick woods,” in which low growing plants and deciduous and evergreen trees should be closely massed, and “thin woods” on the more level areas and the valleys, where tall growing trees and more open grouping should be adopted. Suggestions for treatment of roadways included the addition of rhododendron and laurel, wild roses, and possibly goldenrod along the roadside.

Most of these suggestions were probably not implemented, given that there are no planting plans or other supplementary materials in the files. Winsor’s interest in gardens and horticulture was apparently limited.

The firm approved a proposed site for the Spaulding cottage at 248 Boston Post Road. They advised Spaulding to use large boulders to build up and protect the bank on Central Avenue (now Boston Post Road). In 1910 they drew up a planting plan for the newly built cottage.

Between 1910 and 1912 the firm provided a number of overall plans for the estate showing roads and prime house sites. The plans sometimes changed depending on Winsor’s success in purchasing adjoining properties. The last major plan

designates prime house sites on topographical high points. The reason the lowlands were not subdivided is explained in an accompanying letter:

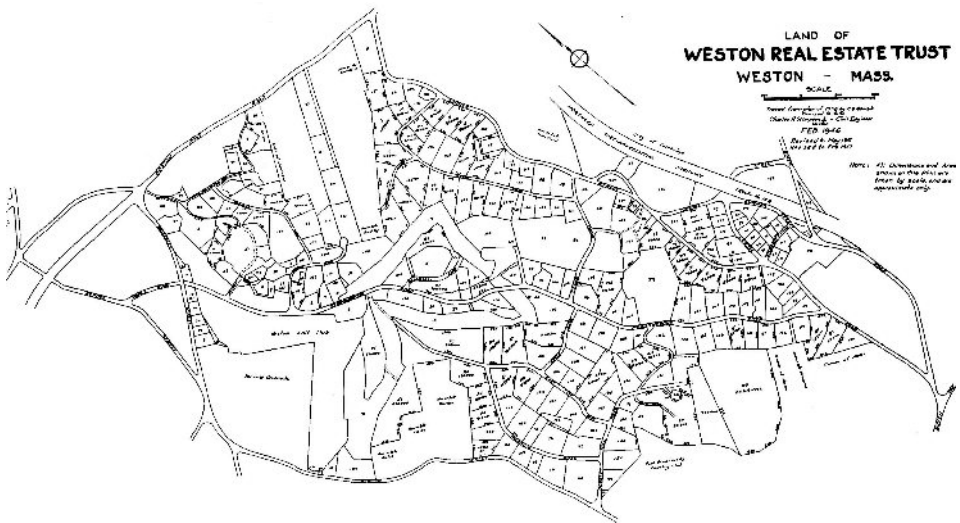
. . . those areas offer little attraction for high class residences, and because when the time does come that those areas are required for building the question of subdivision will be a relatively simple matter . . . ” (43)

Road construction did not begin in earnest until late 1916. The line of Meadowbrook Road had to be changed, in part because Winsor was unable to purchase the Kingsbury property on Loring Road. Soon after that, Winsor sold 50 acres to the Weston Golf Club, which relocated here. A report by George Gibbs Jr. noted:

Winsor has sold his stable and all the farm land to a golf club of which he is a member. . . and Mr. [Donald] Ross has laid out a golf course in that area. The drive which we had planned as one of the main streets on the property passes through the golf grounds but not exactly on the line which we had designed. . . . Mr. Winsor expects to move his farm to the other end of the property. (44)

Winsor kept 16 acres and turned over the rest to the Weston Real Estate Trust, which sold lots gradually.

Weston Real Estate Trust kept the subdivision looking natural. Lots of varying sizes and shapes were carved out as needed whenever an “approved” buyer came along. These lots were generally larger than one acre even before the town adopted zoning requirements. The Depression and World War I slowed land sales, and many of the interior roads were not completed until after World War II.



Olmsted Brothers laid out the road system for the Robert Winsor estate (now the Meadowbrook Road area). Winsor was less interested in aesthetics and more interested in future real estate development. (Courtesy Weston Golf Club)

Olmsted Brothers for Meadowbrook School (Richard Lombard)
(1924–28, Job# 03994)

Records show that, under the same job number as the Winsor estate, there are Olmsted Brothers plans for Meadowbrook School (formerly the Pigeon Hill School), which Winsor was instrumental in relocating to his property in 1924-25. A planting plan was done in October 1928.

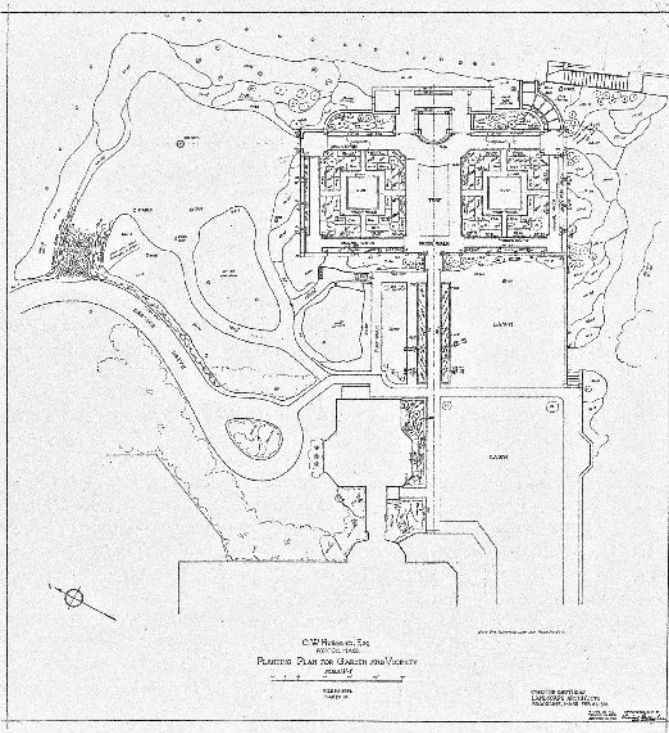


Winter view of the Charles W. Hubbard's Italian Garden, designed by Olmsted Brothers. (Courtesy Weston Historical Society)

Olmsted Brothers for Charles Wells Hubbard
(1910-16, Job # 05058)

In 1910, Charles Wells Hubbard, son of Charles Townsend Hubbard (see page 11), contacted Olmsted Brothers. Initially, Hubbard wanted to survey parts of his property to locate a site for a hillside cottage, an idea he had abandoned by the spring of 1911. He did engage the firm to design the grounds around his house, Ridgehurst, and integrate a new billiards room added for Charles Jr. and his college friends.

Olmsted Brothers extended the stone retaining wall east toward the adjacent Blake house and introduced a formal Italian garden measuring about 55 by 80 feet. The interior space was divided into two square perennial flowerbeds and a grassed center. The geometric layout is typical of the Italian garden style. The



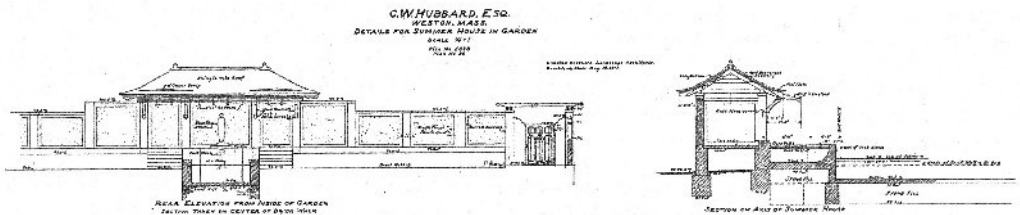
This Olmsted Brothers plan for Charles Wells Hubbard's Italian garden at Ridgehurst shows more than 200 planting areas keyed to a 20-page planting list. The garden remains at 80 Orchard Avenue. (Courtesy National Park Service, FLO National Historic Site)

space was enclosed by a colonnade and vine-covered pergola and featured two small hip-roofed grottoes and a fountain (see cover photo).

The Italian garden was constructed in early 1912. The planting plan (April 22, 1912) for garden and grounds around the house is 20 pages long, divided into 212 planting areas. The choice of plants is explained as follows:

In the selection of the various plants we have been guided largely by the thought that rather choice plants should be used, remarkable for their flowers as well as habit of growth to suit the situation in which they have been placed. (45)

Photographs show the abundant use of plant materials common in an era when plants were inexpensive and a full-time Italian gardener was on staff in season.



Plans show that the Hubbards were offered an alternate thematic choice with the same basic layout and a Japanese-style pavilion.

Olmsted Brothers for Fiske Warren (1917 – 1932, Job #07787) and Cambridge School (1931 – 32, Job #09251)

In 1927, Fiske Warren and M. Phillips Mason, Trustees of the Georgian Trust, along with the Trustees of Trapelo, purchased 200+ acres at North Avenue and Lexington Street. One hundred and fifty acres were sold to the Cambridge School Inc. in 1931. The school kept part of the land for their new high school campus and divided off house lots along Georgian and Fairhope Roads. A second parcel was leased to the Trapelo Golf Club for 20 years and then sold to Kendal Common Inc. in 1949. (46)

Olmsted Brothers plans for the property included laying out Georgian and Fairhope Roads and designing the Trapelo golf course. The firm also did site, grading, and planting plans for the Cambridge School.

Other Olmsted-related Weston Projects

The Olmsted Archives (<http://www.nps.gov/frla/olmstedarchives.htm>) is one of the most widely researched museum collections in the National Park System, containing over 1,000,000 historic documents. Their website is a good place to begin research, as it has links to sites such as ORGO, the Olmsted Research Guide Online <http://ww3.redisov.com/olmsted/>.

Using ORGO, one can search for records by town, name(s), or job name. Below are listed the job numbers for Weston through 1952. By entering the job number in ORGO under Search, you can find a list of existing items (correspondence, site plans, planting plans, photographs) pertaining to that job number. It is not yet possible to actually see the documents online. For that it is necessary to write or email either the Library of Congress, which has the correspondence files, or the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, which has everything else.

When I was working on my book in the late 1990s I was able to make appointments to photograph items. For the joint garden club lecture in April 2013, I requested maps and photographs recorded in my notes and received these items, and more, in digital form, on a DVD.

FLO Sr. and his successors assigned specific job numbers to some 6000 projects. The following projects through 1952 have job numbers listed under Weston:

00038 C.H. Jones 1901 - 13
01348 Sears, P.H. 1893-94 (this house may have been in Waltham)
01391 Rev. Charles F. Russell 1894 - 95, 1901.
01396 Gen. Charles J. Paine 1883, 1894
02067 A.L. Coburn 1898 - 99

- 03495 Weston Center School 1908 – 11, 1946
- 03994 Robert Winsor: Richard Lombard (Meadowbrook School) 1900 – 41
- 05058 Charles W. Hubbard 1910 -17
- 05445 Francis Blake 1911-12
- 07442 A. Lincoln Filene 1925
- 07524 Waldo Noyes (no existing plans or correspondence)
- 07738 First Baptist Church 1926
- 07737 First Baptist Church Parsonage 1926
- 07787 Fiske Warren (Kendell (sic) Green) 1917 – 32
- 09235 Charles H. Jones “Daughter’s Home” 1930
- 09251 Cambridge School 1931-32
- 09554 Homer N. Sweet - Private Estate 1938-41
- 09556 Bjarne Ursin – Private Estate 1937 – 40
- 09535 Theodore G. Patterson 1926-38; 1971
- 09621 Everett L. Cuneo / Mr. and Mrs. Bernard J. Rothwell 2nd 1940 – 63
- 09620 Richard Lombard 1941
- 09568 Thomas G. Wilder 1939
- 09925 Weston elementary school 1952

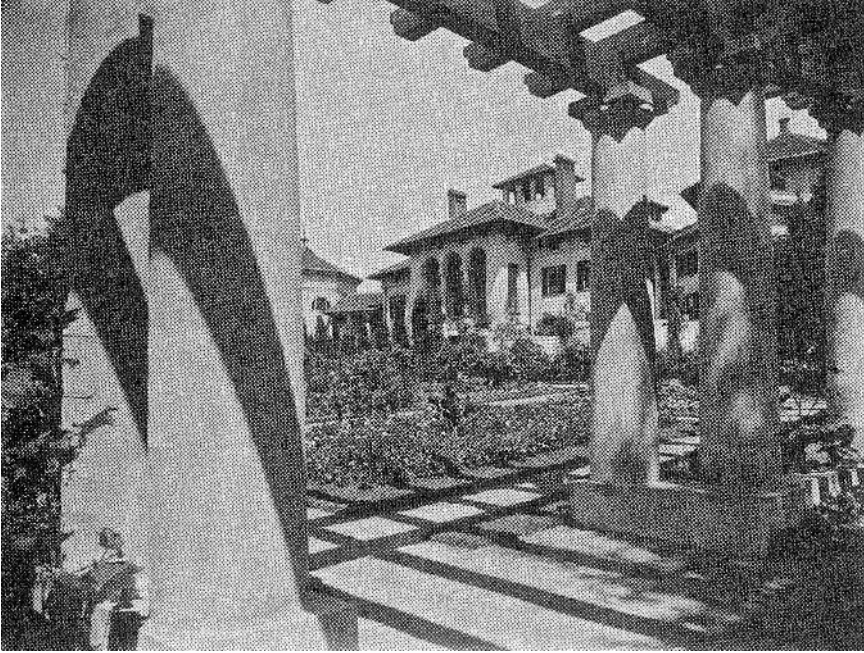


Arthur Asahel Shurcliff (Shurtleff) (1870 – 1957)

More than any other landscape architect in the town’s history, Arthur Shurcliff influenced what Weston looks like today. His work in designing the town green and recommending construction of the State Road Bypass had a profound influence in beautifying the town center and diverting traffic. He also designed Weston’s largest pre-World War II subdivision, Chiltern Hundreds.

Born in Boston in 1870, his surname was Shurtleff until he changed it in 1930 to the old English spelling, Shurcliff. His preferred spelling is used in this Bulletin. He studied engineering at MIT, graduating in 1894. After conferring with Charles Eliot and Frederick Law Olmsted Sr., he pursued his interest in landscape design by enrolling in courses at Harvard and the Bussey Institute, receiving a second B.S. in 1896. He began his professional career at the Olmsted firm and a few years later took the first of many study tours in Europe.

In 1899, Shurcliff assisted Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. in founding the first four-year course in landscape architecture in the country, at Harvard, where he taught until 1906. (47) Shurcliff worked with the Olmstedes until late 1904, when he established his own office in Boston.



This photograph of the Sears Estate, Haleiwa, shows the first of a series of “outdoor rooms” developed by Arthur Shurcliff using the Italian garden theme popular in the early 20th century. Notice the profusion of flowers in the planting beds. (Photo from Once Upon a Pung by Brenton H. Dickson)

Arthur Shurcliff for Horace Sears, Haleiwa (1904-08)
321, 327, 335 Boston Post Road

The Italian garden at the Horace S. Sears estate, Haleiwa, was probably one of Shurcliff’s first independent commissions. As discussed earlier, Olmsted Brothers did the initial site planning and planting at Haleiwa in 1898-99. As a member of the firm at that time, Shurcliff may have been involved. Sears was one of the first to hire this talented young professional after he established his own independent practice.

Newspaper articles in 1905 report on the building of the walls and steps and other architectural features. Firm evidence that Shurcliff was responsible comes from this note in his diary on April 27, 1905:

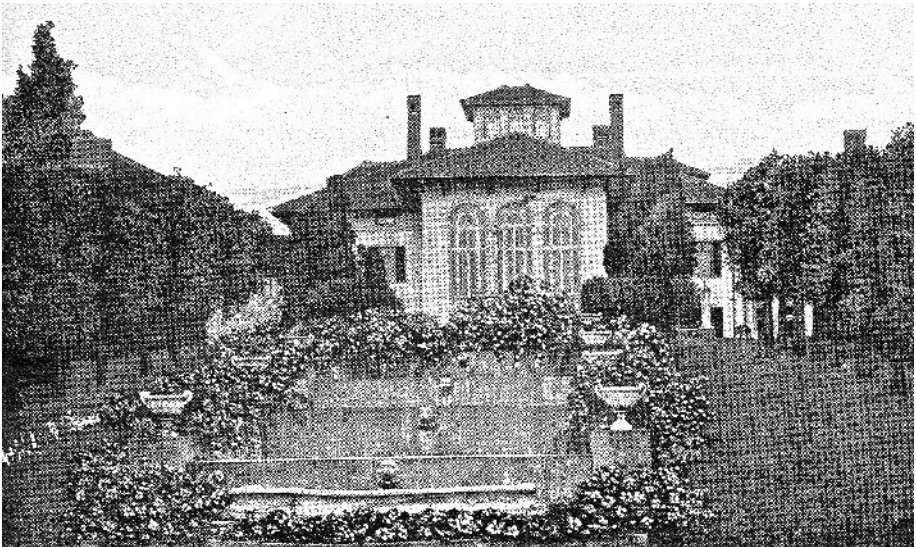
Immediately I took the early train to Weston to the Horace Sears estate where I took charge of setting out the avenue of horse chestnut trees. My mind was naturally rather divided in its interests only being held to the tree work by pressing need of seeing it completed in season for the spring leaves. (48)

The reason his mind was “rather divided in its interests” was that he was to be married that day, to Margaret Nichols, at King’s Chapel in Boston.

Part of the success of Sear’s Italian garden comes from the original site planning. The mansion is at the top of the hill, facing south, a placement that lends itself to the Italian theme. Whenever possible, Italian villas were set on hills to take advantage of views of the surrounding countryside. At Haleiwa, a north-south axis extended from the house to a lagoon located where the State Road Bypass is today. The lagoon was narrow in width but extended almost 600 feet in length. (49)

The formal gardens at the Sears estate exemplify a turn-of-the-century movement away from the natural style of landscaping popularized by Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. Proponents of a more formal landscape argued that the most delightful thing about a garden is that it is artificial and has been contrived by man, and that one could enjoy the spontaneity of nature just outside its boundaries.

Shurcliff’s Italian garden is a series of outdoor rooms of the type extolled in Italian garden publications. The first “room” was designed around a marble pool



Postcard showing the south facade of the Sears estate and the lion’s-head fountain. Large windows took advantage of the view down the north-south axis to a distant lagoon. (Courtesy Weston Historical Society)

about 25 feet in length. Interior divisions within this first garden room were formed with hedges. Early pictures show beds of roses within the hedges. This area is framed by a built-in curved garden bench similar to one in the influential 1894 book *Italian Gardens* by Charles Platt. Platt's book was one of the first illustrated publications in English depicting the gardens of Renaissance Italy, and it heavily influenced the emergence of a formal garden style in the United States.

Proceeding down the gradual slope, the second Sears garden room is defined at the sides by an allee of trees and in the center by a dramatic water feature, the lions-head fountain. Water cascading down a hill is another feature of the Italian garden. In this case, the water flowed from the house to the marble pool and then by pipe through the mouths of the lions to a semi-circular pool at the lower level.

The third "room" was a flat terrace about 40 by 100 feet, bordered on three sides by a concrete balustrade. This space was created using a high retaining wall. A grand staircase leads down to a second staircase, which ends at a large decorative iron gate. At this point the garden is interrupted by Boston Post Road. In Sears's time, the gardens continued in terraces on the south side, where St. Peters Church and parking lot is today.

Shurcliff used concrete very effectively at Haleiwa for walls and landscape features. Advances in concrete construction made it possible to create traditional masonry-like forms that would have been much too expensive to build in stone.



Sears estate landscape features include gates, marble pool, and detail from the lions-head fountain. (Photos by Pamela W. Fox)

Arthur Shurcliff for the Town of Weston (1911–20) *Town Improvement Plan*

On establishing his own office in 1904, Shurcliff initially emphasized his experience as a town planner. (50) During his long and prolific career, Arthur Shurcliff made extensive plans for the City of Boston as well as cities and towns in the Boston metropolitan area and nationally. He was also the chief landscape architect for the restoration at Colonial Williamsburg.

In 1911 Weston formed a Town Improvement Committee to look at the “Town Square,” the term for the intersection of Boston Post Road, School Street, and Church Street. This was the center of the town’s institutional, commercial, and religious life at the time. The committee included Horace Sears.

Weston resident and landscape designer Nancy Fleming has written about the resulting plan in her booklet *Weston Town Common: A History*, printed by the Weston Garden Club in 1991. According to Fleming, Shurcliff’s plan reflects the influence of Olmsted’s design philosophy:

[Frederick Law Olmsted] believed that pastoral scenery would relieve stress and promote a sense of tranquility. Using the natural terrain of a site as the basis for his design, Olmsted created open greenswards surrounded with scattered groves of trees and relied heavily on native trees, shrubs, groundcovers and vines. (51)

Weston is indebted to Shurcliff for his brilliant plan for the town center. He put a stream underground, which created a dry greensward that followed the natural contours of the site. To improve traffic circulation and isolate the new “town common,” as a distinct entity, he encircled it with a marginal road. The site for the new town hall provided a focal point.

Shurcliff’s planting plan has been lost but we know that he used native shrubbery including common barberry, dogwood, common hazelnut, witch hazel, viburnum, and woodbine. Creating the town green required the taking of approximately 11 acres from eight different owners.

At the dedication of the new town hall in November, 1917, Calvin Coolidge, then Lieutenant Governor, congratulated the town: “We are coming to see in these modern days . . . that we need not only utilitarian motives . . . that we need to pay some attention to the beautiful as well as that which is merely useful.” (52)

Shurcliff was consulted again in 1917. The committee requested that a “well-built broad path should be made across the meadow and possibly some steps at both the north and south ends.” (53) Also at issue was what to do with the existing retaining wall that had supported the horse sheds next to the old town hall. The first option was to take it down and bury the stones to create a knoll. The

Arthur Shurcliff for the Town of Weston (1922 – c. 1930) *Planning Consultant*

In 1921, Weston residents voted to create a planning board under new state enabling legislation. The first five members were elected in 1922. One of their first actions was to engage Arthur Shurcliff to coordinate a comprehensive study of the town.

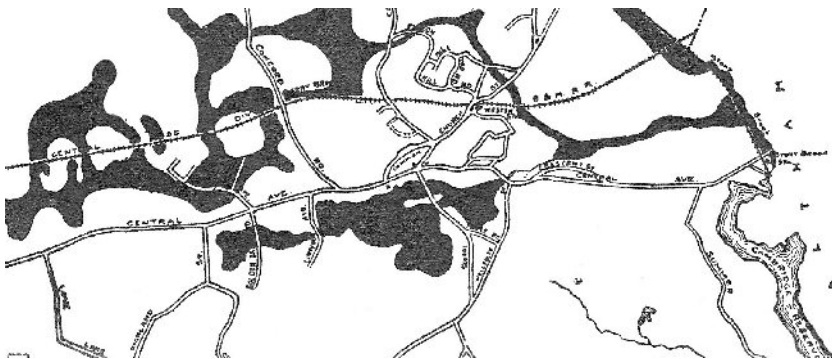
Shurcliff's nine-page report appears in the 1924 *Town Report* and includes a map of swamp land. His recommendations, many of which were implemented in the ensuing years, influenced the development of Weston in this period of rapid changes brought about mainly by the automobile.

The number one problem cited by Shurcliff was traffic congestion. He also stressed the importance of town planning in developing a coherent street plan and preventing the "monotonous arrangements of streets . . ." (58) He recommended identifying areas best suited to business and manufacturing and areas where parkland could be acquired before land values increased.

Shurcliff mapped the town's 800 acres of swampland, of which 100 were located in the town center. He pointed out that draining some of this "useless" land could help solve traffic problems as well:

That steps should be taken in the near future to prevent the development of slum conditions in the center of the town along the margin of the great swamp is evident, and that a relief of the present traffic congestion in the center of the town is involved in this swamp problem appears probable from studies . . . (59)

In 1926 he drew up a plan for what we now call the State Road Bypass.



Above is a detail from the *Town of Weston Swamp Lands map* included in the 1924 *Town Report*. The data was compiled by Arthur Shurcliff in his consulting role as "town planner." It was Shurcliff who mapped the route for the State Road Bypass, which was built through the swamp south of the Boston Post Road and diverted traffic from the town center.

Shurcliff was prescient in pointing out the future need for sports fields:

Sooner or later the town will require playgrounds in addition to those needed immediately around school buildings. The constantly increasing demands for large recreation areas for baseball and football require the Town to consider where tracts of level ground of good extent can be found in regions where these demands will spring up. (60)

He suggested that the town might wish to acquire not only park land but also “lands of scenic interest” like high hills and the banks of ponds and streams:

As the town builds up more loosely, the question will arise to what degree the townspeople are willing to allow these landscapes to disappear as land is cut into house lots and occupied by dwellings and stores. (61)

Shurcliff also made a strong case for the adoption of zoning regulations:

The automobile has forced most cities and towns in the Commonwealth to consider or to adopt zoning regulations to protect residence districts against property valuation depreciation through the construction of public garages, repair shops, storage yards and filling stations. Motors have also led to the erection in residence districts of food vending booths, restaurants, and rest rooms. (62)

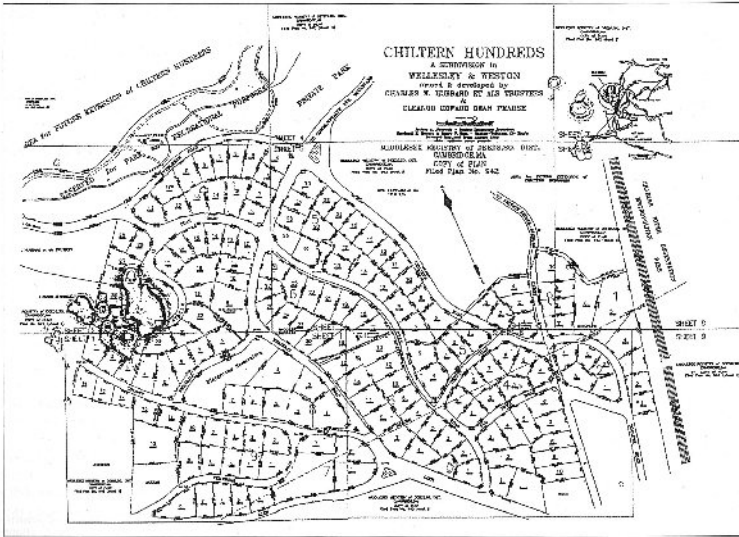
The dependence of the Town of Weston as a residence district upon the preservation of the natural attractiveness of the Town should also be kept in mind in considering the need of zoning. (63)

A comprehensive set of zoning ordinances was published in the *Town Report of 1926* and passed, with some amendments, at Town Meeting in 1928.

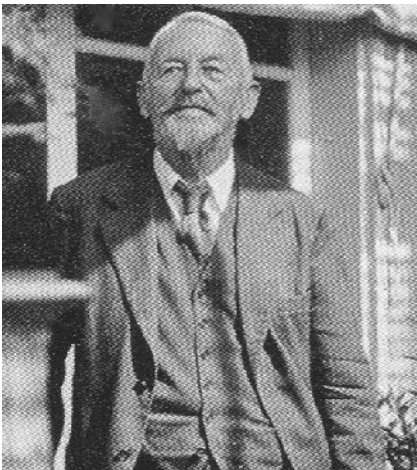
***Arthur Shurcliff for Charles Wells Hubbard:
Chiltern Hundreds Subdivision (1925)***

In the early 1920s, estate owner Charles Wells Hubbard put more than 150 acres of land in Weston and Wellesley into a real estate trust and hired Arthur Shurcliff to design the Chiltern Hundreds subdivision, recorded in 1925. The winding street plan includes Ridgeway, Dean, Chiltern, Old Colony, Locust, and Pembroke Roads.

Through deed restrictions, Shurcliff and Hubbard put into place some of the provisions later required by zoning, including prohibiting business and industrial uses, establishing setback lines, and requiring that residences be single family only. Twenty acres were reserved as a “picturesque private park,” half of which could be used for future tennis courts, playing fields, and a swimming pool. Three acres were reserved for a “schoolhouse and playground when needed by the town.” (64)



Shurcliff's design for Chiltern Hundreds is a model for a carefully planned residential subdivision. Not only did he preserve open space and landscape features, but he also thought about future needs and set aside land for neighborhood amenities. Not all of his ideas were implemented, but the beauty of this neighborhood is a tribute to his vision. (Middlesex County Registry of Deeds, So. District, Filed Plan 942)

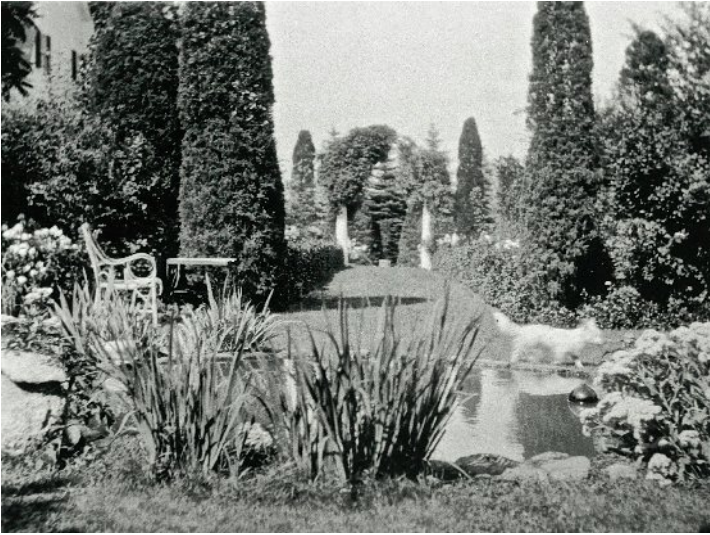


Joseph Everett Chandler (1864 – 1945)

Joseph Everett Chandler was one of the best known and most influential of the first generation of preservation-oriented architects who discovered, popularized, and restored Early American houses beginning in the late 19th century. Chandler was also a talented horticulturist and landscape designer who included a chapter on colonial gardens in his 1916 book *The Colonial House*.

Chandler was a personal friend of Arthur Wellington (1868-1938), a Boston businessman and active gentleman farmer who summered at “Gateways Farm” on Wellesley Street with his brother Louis and their families. For the Wellingtons, Chandler designed a garden that relied extensively on perennial plantings

and was enhanced by a lily pond, several stone-carved garden ornaments, and, most dramatically, a pair of large white fluted columns that brought architecture and nature together in a comfortable outdoor room. (65)



Joseph Everett Chandler designed the perennial garden at Gateways Farm in the 1910s. The basic elements of the garden remain at 500 Wellesley Street.

Footnotes

(1) *Pioneers of American Landscape Design* 34; (2) Murphy 162; (3) *Community by Design* 80; (4) *Pioneers* 34 (5) Murphy 164; (6) Records of the Olmsted Association, Library of Congress, Job #00038, April 12, 1902; (7) Hall 96; (8) *Ibid* 97; (9) *Ibid* 98; (10) *Ibid* 98-99; (11) *Ibid* 111; (12) *Ibid* 112; (13) *Ibid*; (14) *Ibid* 177; (15) *Ibid* 178; (16) *Ibid* 175-76; (17) 1892 *Town Report (TR)* 99; (18) Record, Job #01396, December 3, 1883; (19) Records, Job #05058, August 10, 1883; (20) *Ibid*, Feb. 1, 1884; (21) *Ibid.*, Feb. 2, 1884; (22) *Pioneers* 109; (23) *Charles Eliot*, 224; (24) *Ibid.* 226-27. The date and title of the article are given but not the publication. Accompanied by a site plan and 1902 photo; (25) Records, Job #02060, August 1, 1898; (26) *Waltham Daily Free Press Tribune*, Sept. 4, 1903; (27) Records, Job #00038, August 12, 1901; (28) *Ibid*; (29) *Ibid*; (30) *Ibid*, August 12, 1902; (31) *Ibid*, Sept. 21, 1904; (32) *Ibid*, March 6, 1905; (33) *Pioneers* 131; (34) Records, Job #00038, August 31, 1912; (35) *Ibid*, March 9, 1914; (36) *Ibid*, April 24, 1925; (37) National Park Service, FLO National Historic Site, Job #00038, List of Plants for Plan No. 54, April 4, 1925; (38) Records, Sept. 11, 1929; (39) Fox 456-73; (40) 1903 article from unidentified newspaper, Harvard University Archives #B5122 (Robert Winsor file); (41) Records, Job #03994, March 20, 1910; (42) *Ibid*, Nov. 16, 1910; (43) *Ibid*, August 19, 1912; (44) *Ibid*, Nov. 23, 1916; (45) Records, Job #05058, April 1, 1911; (46) Fox 232; (47) *Pioneers* 352; (48) Shurtleff, Arthur A, *Journals*, vol. 5, April 27, 1905, 83; (49) Fox 319, map based on 1913 plot plan; (50) *Pioneers* 352; (51) Fleming 4; (52) 1917 *TR* 116;

(53) 1916 *TR* 133; (54) *Ibid*; (55) Fleming 7; (56) 1919 *TR* 74; (57) 1921 *TR* 67; (58) 1924 *TR* 63; (59) *Ibid* 66; (60) *Ibid*; (61) *Ibid* 76; (62) *Ibid* 68; (63) *Ibid* 69; (64) Chiltern Hundreds real estate brochure, photo copy WHS; (65) Fox 622.

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Percival Gallagher, by Robin Karson
Frederick Law Olmsted Sr., by Charles E. Beveridge
Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., by Susan L. Klaus
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With Grateful Thanks

To Sue and Marc Laufer for their donation of the picnic table "Traveling through Time" created by Sue for the Weston300 auction on June 1, 2013. Sue copied Weston newspaper headlines from the historical society collection and created a decoupage arrangement pierced by two "wheels of time."

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