

# The Landscape Architect's Guide to **BOSTON**

## Jamaica Pond

### History

**ca. 1790s-1848** Jamaica Pond is an important source of water for Boston and the shores of Jamaica Pond are a popular location for the summer homes of wealthy Bostonians.

**ca. 1848-1890s** Ice making is an important business at Jamaica Pond and skating is popular on Jamaica Pond from the late 19th century into the early decades of the 20th century, when the pond no longer froze solid.

**1875** A Park Act is passed by the legislature allowing the city to acquire lands for park purposes within the city of Boston and in cooperation with adjoining cities and towns. A referendum established a municipal commission and Frederick Law Olmsted is contacted informally and is driven through the proposed park sites with the commissioners.

**In 1876** in the Second Report of Board of Commissioners of the Department of Parks, the Commissioners recommended the inclusion of Jamaica Pond and published a plan of the location. Probably due to the cost of acquiring the expensive properties around the pond, the design and construction of this park was deferred.

**ca. 1878** Peabody and Stearns construct a summerhouse for historian Francis Parkman from designs. Parkman was also a noted horticulturalist and had a renowned rose garden in the city.

**1892** The Boston Park Commission published the Preliminary Plan of Jamaica Park by Frederick Law Olmsted and Co. Probably because of the cost of land and possibly because of objections from neighbors, who included Charles Sprague Sargent, a smaller amount of land was taken than the firm wished, especially on the northwest side of the pond. Olmsted had about 60 acres to lay out for recreational purposes. Olmsted planned to retain both the third Pinebank and the Parkman house as Refectories, as well as the cove on the east side of Pinebank Peninsula, now extant. A continuation of the

Riverway (parkway), here called the Jamaicaway, was to run along the east side of the pond. New features planned included a boathouse on the east side at the intersection of the Jamaicaway and Pond Street and a bathhouse on the southeast side. The bathhouse and beach were never constructed, because of objections from neighbors.

**1894** Construction began on Jamaica Pond in accordance with the Jamaica Park Plan by Frederick Law Olmsted. Also in 1894 a fire destroyed the roof and interior of the third Pinebank and it was rebuilt from designs by Edmund M. Wheelwright, City Architect, but Sturgis's distinctive roof with its chimney pots were not replicated, the interior was remodeled and a large terrace is added. It was unclear whether Pinebank was ever used as a Refectory. Until 1913 the house was the headquarters for the Boston Parks Department.

**1913** William D. Austin built the boathouse and bandstand at the Jamaicaway at Pond Street from designs. Also in 1913, Pinebank became the first home of Boston Children's Museum, and served in that role until 1936. From 1936 to 1970 Pinebank was again occupied by the engineering department of the Boston Parks Commission. From 1970 to 1975, Pinebank was used for a city-sponsored community arts program. After that, fires in 1978 and 1982 destroyed the interior and seriously damaged the roof. A theater group also used the adjacent kettle hole just to the north of the house for performances.

**1984-1989** The Emerald Parks Master Plan for Back Bay Fens, The Riverway, Olmsted Park and Jamaica Pond was prepared by the Walmsley/Pressley Joint Venture under the Department of Environmental Management (DEM), Olmsted Historic Landscape Preservation Program for the benefit of the City of Boston, Town of Brookline, and the Metropolitan District Commission the municipalities and the state agency entrusted with the care and control of the Emerald Necklace Park System including the parks and parkways. In 2001 the master plan was published.

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**1986-2000** a series of projects were completed at Jamaica Pond. Boston Parks and Recreation Department (BPRD) transformed the historic "ride" for equestrians into a designated bikeway from Kelly Circle at Jamaica Pond through Olmsted Park to Route 9 with State funding. Due to the popularity of this paved path it was then designated as a multi-use path for both bikers and pedestrians. By 1990, the southern pedestrian path at the Jamaicaway side was also upgraded and again heavily used by walkers and joggers. This perimeter path was designated for pedestrians only, which is enforced by Boston Park Rangers. Bicycle racks are provided at key points. Also included at this time was selective removal of plants to reopen views and remove invasive plants, the incorporation of fishing stations, the restoration of the pond water control mechanism, the selective restoration of the pond riprap edge, installation of benches, and new planting were completed.

**1989-1990** The Boathouse and Bandstand were rehabilitated to provide improved facilities for the food concession and boat rental program, an environmental education area for the neighborhood children on the second floor, an improved accessible restroom facilities in the boathouse, as well as a ranger station office in the bottom of the Bandstand.

**1999** Shoreline repair of the southern and eastern rip rap edge and path from the Bandstand to Parkman Drive and planting improvements began and were completed in 2000. Work also included the installation of a bikeway and crosswalks along Perkins Street and Prince Street to the Jamaicaway and the restoration of historic views through selective removal of invasive vegetation and the rehabilitation of understory planting for stabilization of the steep slope below Pinebank.

**2006** The City of Boston released a structural analysis report that concluded that Pinebank was unsalvageable. The Boston Landmarks Commission unanimously

approved the demolition so the Boston Parks & Recreation Department demolished the building, citing that the structure was a safety hazard with demolition complete in 2007. Some of the structure's artifacts were entombed in a vault in the foundation, to be used as reference material if the mansion is one day rebuilt. A memorial design was chosen to delineate the mansion's perimeter in granite, set flush with the ground, and with the outline filled with grass. The front of the house was marked with a low brick wall with a granite coping that can be used as a bench, and interpretive signage provided information on the former building.

#### Resources:

[The Cultural Landscape Foundation](#)

[Emerald Necklace Conservancy](#)