OPEN SPACES OF HARVARD 1636-2013

October 2013 | Anita Berrizbeitia
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>John F. Kennedy Memorial Park</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Charles River</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Harvard Business School</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Peabody Terrace</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>J.F.K. School of Government</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Holyoke Center</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Harvard Yard</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Carpenter Center</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The Plaza and Tanner Fountain</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Science Center Courtyard</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Cambridge Common</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Radcliffe Yard</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Being a former MTA bus and subway storage yard, the site had been proposed as the parking lot for the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library to be located on this property. The Library, however, raised different concerns and was eventually moved to its actual site in South Boston next to the University of Massachusetts, Boston.

The site was then divided in three main areas.

- Harvard John F. Kennedy School of Government
- Private mix use development
- John F. Kennedy Memorial Park

The park grades towards the river to emphasise on the view towards it. The main walkways intersect with the main pedestrian route between the Government School and the private development connecting to Harvard Square. This intersection is celebrated with the memorial fountain which incorporates Kennedy’s speeches between the falling water and the granite rock.
“The Historic evolution of Harvard and Cambridge expose a continuous dialogue between a University which can be understood as a city in itself and an actual city that is made up mostly by an academic community. This dialectic relationship has been drastically amplified throughout the last century when both campus and city grew at a swift pace... Its current state is the outcome of a series of complementary or contradictory interventions rather than the result of a pre-established master plan. Given this framework, the presence of the river is remarkable. An element that for years was seen as the gap that divides the Cambridge and Allston Campuses is today the key element that can glue together Harvard’s different spatial pieces.”

Joan Busquets

The 308 square miles watershed is fed by approximately 80 brooks and streams, and several major aquifers and contains 33 lakes and ponds - most of them man-made.

The river as we know it today is a complete transformation of its native condition of wetlands and marshes. It transitioned from a series of alterations such as land filling of marshes and the construction of 20 dams and 43 mills during the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, to being one of the most successful public parks in Boston in part to the effort of important figures such as Charles Eliot and Frederick Law Olmsted.
Native Americans inhabit watershed

First European settlers

Construction of weir on the Charles

Grist mill dam erected - first of 43 mills

Street paving

Underground drainage system

Public water supply

Internal plumbing waste

738 acres of tidal marsh in Back Bay is filled

Back Bay completely filled

Plan of Charles River parkways by Charles Eliot

First metropolitan sewer

Sanitary Improvement Plan of Back Bay adopted

Construction of old Charles River Dam (Museum of Science)

Construction of Memorial Drive and Soldiers Field Road

New dam constructed at mouth of harbor to control flooding

Red Line subway depot replaced by Kennedy School of Government and John F. Kennedy Park

Deer Island Plant and outfall tunnel

Time Line:


Maps


Time Line:

In 1890, Harvard acquired Soldiers Field.

In 1897 the Carey Cage was built to designs of H. Langford Warren, but it was demolished in the 1990’s.

The Weld Boat House, the first permanent structure for such use, was built on the south bank of the Charles in 1899 by Robert Peabody of Peabody and Stearns.

Harvard Business School’s Great Court opens grandly to the river, flanked to each side by generous interlocking buildings in a complex with extraordinary amplitude.

The Baker Library is endowed with a conspicuous colonnade and cupola as well as ornamental mantling in the pediment. The bell hung in the central gilded cupola of the library was brought from the old Harvard Hall to endow the Business School with some memory of the Old Yard.
McKim, Mead & White [1925]
Business School, Competition, Harvard University, Boston (Allston), Massachusetts, United States
Harvard President: Nathan Marsh Pusey
Designer: Josep Lluís Sert, Jackson & Gourley
Date: 1963

Peabody Terrace, a three-tower complex for married students, is one of the most successful contemporary buildings at Harvard and possibly one of Sert’s best work.

Along other Sert’s buildings in Harvard, it introduced an early Brutalist aesthetic with a strong philosophical and visual link to Le Corbusier’s Unité d’Habitation and to many of his proportional and planning concepts.

Peabody Terrace symbolized the mobility and the diversity of the Post war University population.

Important characteristics:

1. Its location along the riverfront skyline
2. The combination of balconies and sunscreens characteristic of Sert’s architecture.
3. Change in suite orientation and direction at different floors
4. Intersection between tower and site
5. Variety in heights, scale, shape and color of both the buildings and open spaces.
The John F. Kennedy School of Government building complex is one of the most controversial architectural projects in recent Harvard History. The original proposal was a large complex by renowned architect I.M. Pei combining academic facilities with the John F. Kennedy Library. However the scheme had to be modified.

The built structure was smaller and less spectacular than Pei’s design, but it is more consonant with academic buildings and represents a better environmental planning. Its visual interest derives from broken massing, the proportions of the fenestration and geometric units, and slight variations in the texture of the masonry.

It faces J.F.K. Street and the dormitories to the east, and its setback provides space for trees for shade and the enhancement of the traffic way. To the south, the building faces the park, which allows for constant views towards the Charles and placing Eliot House as gateway to Harvard.

The completion of the John F. Kennedy School Campus, represented a final step in the reclamation of the riverfront area.
Harvard University Library [1964]
Architectural Resources Cambridge, Inc.,
Kennedy School of Government. Addition, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, United States
**Holyoke Center**

Harvard President: Nathan Marsh Pusey  
**Designer:** Josep Lluís Sert, Jackson & Gourley  
**Date:** 1962 - 1967

**Modernist style**, ten-stories tall, 360,000 sq. ft.

**Program:** main administration building of Harvard University

1. **Ground Level:** shops, bank, health center reception and pharmacy  
2. **Upper floors:** university administration offices and University Health Services.  
3. **Underground parking.**

The random pattern of the fenestrations show the architect’s ideas of modernism, while providing variety within a system of standardized construction and sun protection.

Holyoke greatest success is the relation and enhancement to its environment. Forbes Plaza on Massachusetts Avenue with its benches and shade trees provide refuge to pedestrians.

The I-shaped mass of the upper floors allows ample light and air to penetrate the narrow side streets, and keeps the building from looking heavy or overbearing. The grass mall on Mount Auburn Street is also pleasant but less vital to the environment.
Exterior views of Holyoke Center

Sert Jackson & Gourley, 1967
Harvard Yard is composed of three main spaces, the Old Yard, the Tercentenary Theater, and Sever Quadrangle.


1800: By the end of the 1800th Century the college had long since turned away from the Cambridge Common toward its yard, created by the construction of Hollis Hall, Stoughton Hall University Hall from 1804 to 1813 enclosing the northern side of the Old Yard. The southern part was enclosed by Grays Hall from 1863 to 1873 completing the yard’s rectangle.

1900: The Tercentenary Theater was created in 1936 due to Harvard's 300th anniversary. Its enclosure was completed with Memorial Church in 1931 by designers Coolidge, Shepley, Bulfinch, and Abbott, and it has succeeded Memorial Hall and Sever Quadrangle as the site of commencement.

1993: Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates (MVVA) Master Plan for the Harvard Yard Landscape for the restoration. At that point, the overall maturity of the tree canopy and the loss of most of the American Elms to Dutch Elm Disease were pressing concerns. A high amount of trees was lost and there was the necessity to replant the Yard’s canopy.
Harvard President: Nathan Marsh Pusey  
Designer: Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, “Le Corbusier”  
Date: 1960 - 1963

Is his first and only building in America

Official building program: to create a place for communication among artists.

The Idea of synthesis became thematic to the design problem of the Carpenter Center. It was design after La Tourette and the Capitol Complex at Chandigarh (India) and it reinvests the brutalist movement in architecture with qualities of the early Dom-ino [open floor plan].

The design of the Brise-soleil is different in every facade allowed for protection from the sun depending on its orientation.

For Le corbusier, his buildings did not simply respond to nature, but they constructed it. He Described this idea at the Carpenter Center as a “landscape within a landscape”, in reference to the literal interaction of architecture and garden on the roof terraces, and to the imagistic forest of pilotis within a climbing topography.
“The Plaza” and Tanner Fountain

Harvard President: Derek Bok and Drew Gilpin Faust
Designer: PWP Landscape Architects, Stoss LU
Date: 1968, 2013

The Plaza is a new gathering space for the University and local communities. It sits atop a vehicular tunnel, adjacent to Harvard’s historic Yard.

The strategy articulates the space atop the tunnel as a new kind of public infrastructure, an active threshold between the Yard and the North Campus. A distinct paver field extends across the tunnel cap, and is intermittently interrupted by clusters of sculptural benches.

The Tanner Fountain built in 1984 by PWP Landscape Architecture consists of 159 granite boulders sourced from regional farms, recalls the colonists’ arduous experience of clearing their agricultural fields. The boulders create a 60-foot-diameter circle overlapping the asphalt paving, the existing grass, and two trees. For three seasons of the year 32 nozzles emit a dematerializing mist while in winter steam from the university heating plant creates a fog around the fountain.
Science Center Courtyard

Harvard President: Lawrence H. Summers
Designer: Stephen Stimson Associates
Date: 2001

An existing two story wing of the Harvard Science Center was replaced with a four story addition, housing the Museum of Scientific Instruments and office space. This project involved re-design of the courtyard and the Oxford Street landscape, providing an accessible entrance to the building.

Both courtyard and streetscape are constructed over the structure. Accessibility is provided by a sidewalk connection towards the center of campus, with steps directed toward Oxford Street and the North Campus. A wall supports the walkway above grade, with a long bench facing Oxford Street.

The courtyard provides a series of stepped terraces with tree planting beds and benches. Moveable tables and chairs provide seating in warm weather, with fixed benches and broad steps for additional seating. A variety of trees, shrubs and groundcovers in the courtyard screen and integrate exposed ventilation grates which service the Central Chiller Plant below.
1640: Used for cow pasture, and one annual event such as the Governor elections and Harvard commencements.

1775: It was reduced in size from 86 to 16 acres and it was used as a training field for Patriot volunteers cutting down the trees.

1830: A fence was erected and tree-planting began.

1870: The Soldiers’ Monument was erected.

1890: A statue of John Bridge (Puritan leader) was erected.

1900: The new Park Department started its management using native trees and elimination of the formal flowerbeds.

1910: The vista from Harvard Square toward the Common was blocked by the Construction of the Harvard Square subway underpass.

1930: The Common changed shape when Harvard acquired the corner where Littauer Center now stands.

1960: Overuse by enormous crowds had left it desolate.

1977: Landscape architects Mason and Frey improved its conditions and designed the Dawes Memorial. It then became part of the Old Cambridge Historic District.
Cambridge Common from the Seat of Caleb Gannett

Daniel Capt. Bell [1808-1809]
Cambridge Common from the Seat of Caleb Gannett
In 1878 historian Arthur Gilman proposed to President Eliot the foundation of a college for women.

The Radcliffe Yard we know today is the result of almost four decades of property acquisition and parcel consolidation. The first structure owned by the college was Fay House (1806). However it was not until 1887 that Radcliffe began to purchase the rest of the block that now constitutes its Yard. a process that involved assembling eighteen small parcels over a thirty year period. The northwest end was consolidated first, and construction of the college buildings began with McKim’s Hemenway Gymnasium (1898), followed by Longfellow’s Agassiz House (1904) and Winslow and Bigelow’s Radcliffe Library (1907). Acquisition for the southeastern half of the block was completed in 1917.

The scheme Arthur Shurtleff works to form a visual whole without scattering the buildings as it happened with Harvard Yard before its re-organization and other open spaces around Cambridge and Boston.
Shurcliff, Arthur Asahel [1907]
Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Mass. scheme for a group of buildings having a dignified approach
REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING:


Emmet, Alan, Douglas C. Allen, and Harvard University Department of Landscape Architecture. 1978. Cambridge, Massachusetts, the Changing of a Landscape. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University].


Houghton, Deborah, Paul Petschek, David Porter, Roy Rudenstine, Stanislaus von Moos, Holyoke Center Harvard University, and Harvard University Department of Visual and Environmental Studies, Student problems. 1973. Holyoke Center:, Cambridge, Mass.]: Harvard University, Department of Visual and Environmental Studies.


