

**CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT
THE ESPLANADE
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS**

Prepared for

The Esplanade Association
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April 2007

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
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PART I: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

1. Early History (to 1893)	4
Shaping the Land	
Beacon Hill Flat	
Back Bay	
Charlesgate/Bay State Road	
Charlesbank and the West End	
2. Charles River Basin (1893-1928)	11
Charles Eliot's Vision for the Lower Basin	
The Charles River Dam	
The Boston Esplanade	
3. Redesigning the Esplanade (1928-1950)	20
Arthur Shurcliff's Vision: 1929 Plan	
Refining the Design	
4. Storrow Drive and Beyond (1950-present)	30
Construction of Storrow Drive	
Changes to Parkland	
Late Twentieth Century	

PART II: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ANALYSIS

5. Charlesbank.	37
Background	
General Landscape Character	
Lock Area	
Playground/Wading Pool Area	
Lee Pool Area	
Ballfields Area	
6. Back Bay.	51
Background	
General Landscape Character	
Boating Area	
Hatch Shell Area	
Back Bay Area	
Lagoons	

7.	Charlesgate/Upper Park	72
	Background	
	General Landscape Character	
	Charlesgate Area	
	Linear Park	
8.	Summary of Findings	83
	Overview/Landscape Principles	
	Character Defining Features	
	Next Steps	
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	89
	APPENDIX A – Historic Resources	91
	APPENDIX B – Planting Lists	100

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The Esplanade is one of Boston's best loved and most intensively used open spaces. It is part of a linear park system that stretches along the Charles River for miles but also has a distinct identity of its own. For the purpose of this report, the Esplanade encompasses the Boston side of the Charles River Reservation from the old Charles River dam on the east to the Boston University Bridge on the west. It is generally bounded by the Charles River on the north and Storrow Drive on the south.

The Esplanade as we know it today is a relatively recent creation. Filling of Boston's Back Bay occurred during the second half of the nineteenth century, with Back Street and the adjacent seawall forming most of the northern edge by the 1870s. At that time the river was still tidal and was considered a distinct liability because it was so foul smelling. Damming of the Charles River in 1908 changed the odiferous mud flats into a wide basin with a constant water level. Initially there was only a narrow strip of parkland. The area was transformed again in the 1930s by landscape architect Arthur Shurcliff with the parkland nearly doubled. This was the foundation of the park as we know it today. Construction of Storrow Drive in the early 1950s brought further changes and the creation of new parkland to compensate for the land taken by the roadway. Also in the 1950s additional recreational facilities were constructed in the eastern end of the Esplanade.

The Charles River Reservation (including land in Cambridge and Boston) from the Charles River dam to the Eliot Bridge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places in recognition of its significance as a pioneering work of engineering and regional planning, and as a work of landscape architecture. The Charles River Basin is also a National Civil Engineering Landmark and land adjacent to the Esplanade is included in several Boston historic districts.

The area referred to today as the Boston Esplanade is in three distinct segments defined by the bridges that cross the Charles River. The easternmost segment, Charlesbank, extends from the Charles River dam to the Longfellow Bridge. The middle segment, referred to here as the Back Bay section, is the best known and the area most commonly referred to as the Esplanade. It extends from the Longfellow Bridge on the east to the Harvard (Massachusetts Avenue) Bridge on the west. It contains many of the best-loved features of the Esplanade, including the Hatch Shell, Community Boating, Union Boat Club and the lagoons. The third segment, referred to as Charlesgate/Upper Park, extends from the Harvard Bridge to the Boston University Bridge.

The Esplanade is considered the focal point of the Charles River Reservation – the site of the Fourth of July fireworks, concerts and

important green space for downtown residents. The *Charles River Basin Master Plan* completed in 2002 establishes an overall vision for the lower basin, which extends from the old Charles River dam to Watertown Square. However, the *Master Plan* is conceptual and does not provide detailed information about the historic resources for each area within the basin.

Creation of The Esplanade Association in 2001 was an important step in recognizing the special qualities of the area and the need for advocacy on its behalf. In the years since the organization was established, it has assumed a more active role in fundraising in support of its mission to restore and enhance the park. The Association is now faced with daily questions about how to make the best use of its resources towards the completion of capital projects, programs and in support of improved maintenance. Setting priorities for the most effective expenditure of funds requires a detailed knowledge of the history and significance of various elements within the park and the impacts of proposed actions. When it considers large complex projects, The Esplanade Association must take many factors into consideration. Central to this process is a commitment to preserving and protecting the historic integrity of the park. This depends on a thorough understanding of the historical design intent, particularly with regard to vegetation.

This *Cultural Landscape Report* was commissioned by The Esplanade Association in 2006 to provide resource information to help guide the organization in its decision-making process. Esplanade Association Executive Director Patrice Todisco initiated this project and oversaw the work. Staff member Trinidad Rodriguez provided valuable insight on day-to-day life in the park. Former Esplanade Association board members Linda Cox and Penny Cherubino, who have been studying the history of the park for many years, shared their research information. Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) archivists Sean Fisher and Judy Greene were both generous with their time and knowledge of the Esplanade. DCR planners Rick Corsi and Karl Haglund cheerfully answered obscure questions and offered many helpful suggestions.

APPROACH AND CONTENTS

The early history of the area and the filling of the Back Bay have been well documented by others. Walter Muir Whitehill's seminal work *Boston, A Topographical History*, written in 1959, laid the groundwork for understanding of the Charles River Basin. Nancy Seasholes elaborated on this topic in her recent book *Gaining Ground, A History of Landmaking in Boston* which includes a rich collection of maps, diagrams and photographs and a detailed discussion of the filling of the Charles River banks. Karl Haglund's *Inventing the Charles River* traces the history of the basin from its early evolution to construction of the new dam in the 1970s and creation of new parkland beginning in the 1990s.

Other important sources were Cynthia Zaitzevsky's *Frederick Law Olmsted and the Boston Park System* and Linda Cox's *The Charles River Esplanade, Our Boston Treasure*. These publications establish the conceptual framework for creation of the landscape, which allows this report to focus on the more recent history of the Esplanade and its specific areas and features.

Published sources were supplemented with information from the DCR archives. This included annual reports, correspondence, photographs, planning documents, legislative reports, contract information, plans, illustrative drawings and other materials. The Frances Loeb Library at Harvard University provided information about Arthur Shurcliff's professional papers.

Part I, Historical Overview, is organized into four chapters. The first chapter, which covers the period up to 1893, documents the early history of the area that later became the Esplanade, outlining the construction of the Mill Dam and the filling of the Back Bay. The second chapter (1893-1928) describes the problems associated with the tidal Charles River, Charles Eliot's vision for the Charles River basin, construction of the Charles River dam and the early Esplanade. The third chapter (1928-1950) focuses on Arthur Shurcliff's plans for the Charles River parkland. The fourth chapter (1950-present) describes the construction of Storrow Drive and subsequent changes to the parkland over the past 50 years.

Part II, Existing Conditions and Analysis, describes the present appearance of the park, with an emphasis on extant historic resources and design intent. The discussion of each of the three segments within the Esplanade includes a brief historical summary, a description of general landscape character and a more detailed description of sub-areas within the segment. While the emphasis is on documenting existing conditions, the history of individual features is sometimes discussed where this is critical to understanding their significance and historic integrity. The final chapter of Part II is a summary of findings. Existing conditions photographs were all taken in summer/fall 2006. The source of other photographs is listed in the caption.

This report brings together much information about the Esplanade but leaves many questions unanswered. Further research is needed to resolve some issues; more images are needed to document historic conditions; better graphics would help to convey the complex story; and thoughtful integration of the information contained here with other ongoing planning studies (such as the tree inventory and user study) will help the stewards of the Esplanade to refine resource management priorities.

SHAPING THE LAND

The Charles River basin that exists today is entirely a man-made creation. The river was originally a wide expanse of mudflats and tidal wetlands that became polluted because it was used as a dumping ground and open sewer. As the city of Boston grew, the narrow peninsula known as Boston Neck was gradually filled out into the river. Initially, the filling occurred on a small scale but by the nineteenth century it had increased exponentially, totally altering the shape of the city and the river.

The section of Boston known today as the Back Bay was part of the tidal estuary of the Charles River until the nineteenth century. By 1821 the Mill Dam had been constructed along the line of present-day Beacon Street from Boston Common to Sewell's Point in Brookline (later known as Kenmore Square). It was 1.5 miles long, 50' wide and enclosed 600 acres of the Back Bay known as the Receiving Basin.

By 1849 the Boston Board of Health described the Back Bay as a "nuisance, offensive and injurious to the large and increasing population residing upon it."ⁱ In 1852 a legislative commission was established to determine the future of the Back Bay. It recommended curtailment of industrial development and established a plan for filling the area, beginning in 1857. Streets were laid out in a grid-like pattern and over the next three decades, the area was gradually filled and developed, moving from east to west. The granite seawall adjacent to Back Street (the alley behind the Beacon Street houses) formed the northern edge of the newly created Back Bay neighborhood. While the Back Bay was primarily residential, the Beacon Hill Flat and West End waterfronts to the east were more industrial in the nineteenth century, with warehouses, docks and a network of bridges leading to East Cambridge. The Charles River remained tidal and polluted, a source of increasing irritation to Back Bay residents, particularly at low tide.

In the 1870s there were numerous proposals to turn the entire shore of the lower Charles River into an embankment with walks, trees, a bridle path and a carriageway. Many were based on European precedents, particularly the Alster Basin in Hamburg, Germany. Later concepts were inspired by Frederick Law Olmsted's design for the Back Bay Fens, which created new parkland while also solving drainage and engineering problems.ⁱⁱ However, no action was taken at that time as there was opposition to construction of new land north of the Back Bay from the wealthy and influential residents in the houses along the north side of Beacon Street, who were strongly opposed to having their view of the river blocked.

In the late nineteenth century the edges of the Charles River were not one unified shoreline but Commonwealth tidelands, available to abutters under license and developed independently. Downstream of the Longfellow Bridge there were far more bridges than there are today (see left side of Figure 1.1 below); upstream the number of bridges has increased. Since the history of each part of the riverbank was so different during this period, the various segments are addressed separately.

BEACON HILL FLAT

The area west of the West Boston (now Longfellow) Bridge to roughly the intersection of Beacon Street and Arlington Street (northwest corner of the Public Garden) was originally tidal flats that extended out into the river. Over time, the area was filled to accommodate the demand for new land close to downtown Boston. Beginning in the early nineteenth century land from nearby Mount Vernon was used to fill in the flats west of the newly created Charles Street, which was extended north from the Common to Cambridge Street between 1805 and 1807.

Completion of the Mill Dam in 1821 defined the southern edge of this area. The land extending north of the Mill Dam (Beacon Street) along the west side of Charles Street was gradually filled during the nineteenth century, primarily by private speculative projects rather than public works. There were initially wharves along the waterfront but over time they were replaced by residential development. By 1870 a seawall extending north from Back Street near the Public Garden had been built to enclose the new land to the west of Charles Street. It connected with the seawall extending along the northern edge of the Back Bay.



Figure 1.1 – Detail of 1870 Fuchs map of Boston. Back Street and the Beacon Street houses are at the lower right with seawall at the water's edge. Charles Street extends left from Back Street with industrial buildings along the water's edge.

BACK BAY

The area known today as the Back Bay, which extends from Arlington Street west to Massachusetts Avenue, was gradually filled over an extended period to create additional land. The filling of the northern section occurred largely in the 1850s and 60s, moving from east to west.

The houses along Beacon Street were substantial structures that were occupied by wealthy and influential Bostonians. The rear of these houses faced the river, which was tidal and functioned as an open sewer that was particularly noxious at low tide. Most of the rear yards were enclosed by high walls, literally turning their back to the river.

Along the northern side of Beacon Street was a narrow service road known as Back Street with a granite seawall forming the northern edge of the Back Bay and the southern edge of the Charles River.ⁱⁱⁱ The wall was built of massive granite blocks stacked on pile-supported timber platforms. There was little embellishment, just a thin discontinuous railing. This section of the riverfront was an alley for service use, not an amenity.



Figure 1.2 – View along Back Street looking east in the 1890s with the tidal Charles River at the left and rear of Beacon Street houses at the right. (DCR archives)

The seawall is an important constant around which the Esplanade has evolved. By 1870 it formed the southern edge of the Charles River from the West Boston Bridge on the east to Charlesgate (where the Muddy River empties into the Charles) on the west. The seawall along Back Street west of Charlesgate was built later. Portions of the seawall constructed in the 1860s are still visible adjacent to Storrow Drive but it no longer forms the water's edge as the land has been filled out into the river in the intervening years.

CHARLESGATE/BAY STATE ROAD

The Muddy River flows into the Charles River west of Massachusetts Avenue. Like the Charles, the Muddy River was tidal and foul smelling, functioning as an open sewer. By the 1880s it had become an impediment to the westward expansion of the Back Bay neighborhood.

A key part of Frederick Law Olmsted's design for the Boston park system was the project known as the Sanitary Improvements to the Muddy River. To solve the problem of foul smelling flats at low tide, Olmsted proposed that the parkland along the Muddy River function as a natural storage basin where the water level would be maintained at a constant level. He planted the edges with a variety of salt tolerant plants and created a series of walks and drives around the perimeter.

A short distance west of Charlesgate was the area originally known as Gravelly Point and later as Kenmore Square, where Commonwealth Avenue intersects with Beacon Street. Land in this area was generally filled in the 1880s and 90s. The relationship to the Charles was much as it was in Back Bay, with townhouses built along the northern side of Bay State Road (which runs parallel to Commonwealth Avenue one block to the north) and a continuation of Back Street behind, with a granite seawall forming the boundary between the land and the river. Part of the seawall is still visible adjacent to Storrow Drive.

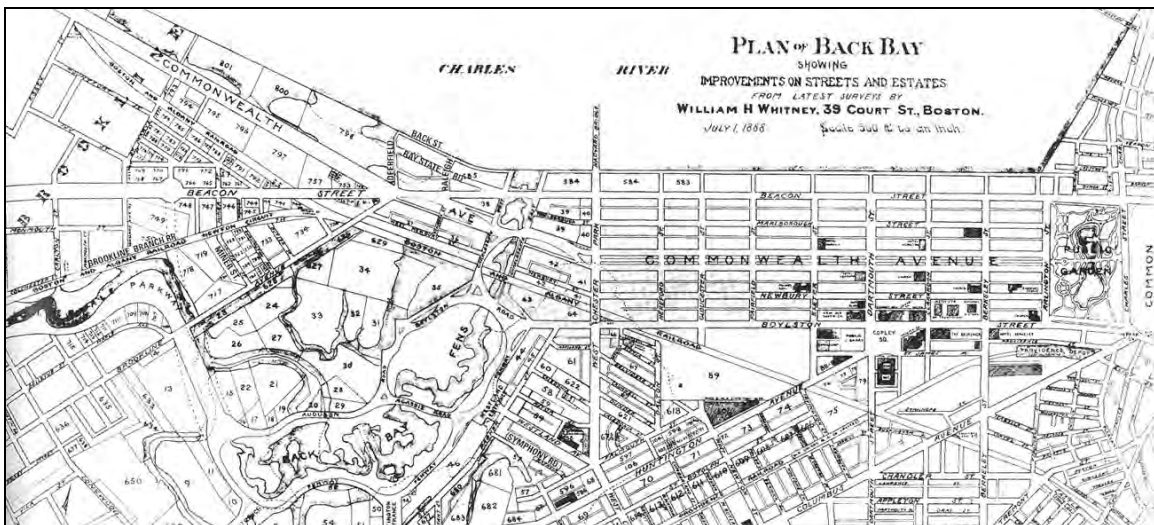


Figure 1.3 – Detail of 1888 map showing Back Street extending west as far as Deerfield Street near Kenmore Square and land west of that still in the process of being filled.

CHARLESBANK AND THE WEST END

The area that lay between the Canal Bridge (later known as the Craigie Bridge) and the West Boston Bridge (replaced in 1907 by the Longfellow Bridge) was known as Boston's West End. Like much of Boston, the area was largely filled land. Initially it was used primarily for industrial purposes. However, proximity to downtown Boston also made it desirable for other uses. Massachusetts General Hospital was established in the area in 1821, followed a few years later by a new courthouse and by city and county jails. More filling took place throughout the nineteenth century and in 1851 the new Suffolk County Jail was constructed on Cambridge Street.^{iv} As the city grew, the area became increasingly residential, occupied primarily by tenements for low income residents, including many immigrants. Industrial use continued along the waterfront.^v

In 1880 the Boston Park Commission acquired the industrial land on the shorefront side of Cambridge Street with the intent of creating a park for the residents of the West End. The proposed project was initially called the Charles River Embankment. The park department's 1880 plan called for construction of a granite seawall about 200' north of Charles Street. Filling of the proposed parkland occurred gradually between 1881 and 1885, with construction of the seawall completed in 1886. It was built of massive granite blocks on timber platforms and was slightly angled near the northern end to mirror the bend in Charles Street. At the bend was a rounded protrusion in the seawall that provided a viewing point up and down the river.

The landscape architectural firm of Frederick Law Olmsted was hired to prepare a plan for the new 9.6-acre park, an area roughly 2,000' long by 200' wide. A primary purpose was to provide recreation for urban residents who had little access to fresh air and open space. The area became known as Charlesbank.

Olmsted's preliminary plan of 1887 focused entirely on the promenade along the river. His revised plan of 1892 included a wide promenade with numerous benches and three boat landings providing access to the water. Streetlights were located along the water's edge to accommodate nighttime use. The central part of the park was a low berm that separated the city and the river. It was planted with turf and scattered trees with some shrubs at focal points. There were curvilinear paths inside the park as well as the broad promenade along the waterfront and a sidewalk along Charles Street.^{vi}

The most innovative aspect of the park, however, was the inclusion of two gymnasias, which were based on European precedents that encouraged active recreation to counteract the unhealthy conditions of urban life. The men's gymnasium at the eastern end of the park was equipped with horizontal bars, trapezes and flying rings and was surrounded by a running track. In the winter the ground was flooded for skating. The gymnasium for women and children at the western end of

the park also included a running track, as well as opportunities for less strenuous recreation, supervised by a staff of trained instructors. For children there were sand boxes and a “turf playground for young girls.” Subsequent changes have obliterated all evidence of the original park except one segment of seawall, although the area has retained a tradition of active recreational use.^{vii}

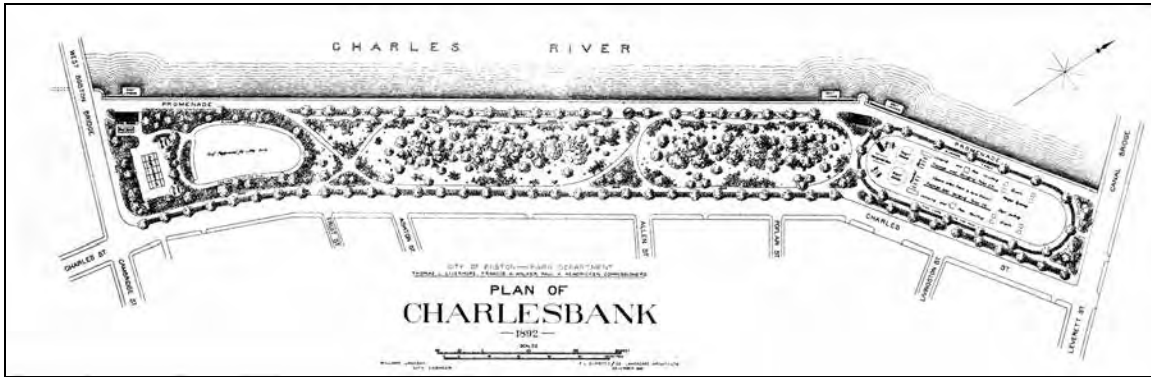


Figure 1.4 – 1892 plan of Charlesbank by F. L. Olmsted & Co. Women’s gymnasium is at the far left; men’s is at the far right with a landscaped berm in between. This plan was actually more elaborate than the park that was built (see below) which featured simpler plantings, the promenade and a continuous row of benches as well as the active recreation areas. (Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site)



Figure 1.5 – Charlesbank undoubtedly provided inspiration for later Esplanade designs. However, almost nothing remains from this period. (Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site)

Charlesbank was the first section of parkland along the Boston side of the Charles River and its early history is somewhat separate from the rest of the Esplanade as it remained part of the Boston park system until 1949. However, its success prompted proposals for additional parks extending south along the Back Bay all the way to the Fens, which by this time was being reshaped by the Olmsted firm as part of the Muddy River project.

While the first phase of land filling along the Charles River was largely complete by the early 1890s, the area was a far cry from the Esplanade that we know today. The Charlesbank section was the only area where parkland had been established. The Beacon Hill Flats, Back Bay and Charlesgate/Bay State Road areas were residential neighborhoods that turned their backs on the river.

ⁱ Walter Muir Whitehill, *Boston, A Topographical History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968, second edition, enlarged), 150.

ⁱⁱ For a discussion of the many unbuilt proposals for the Charles River, see Karl Haglund, *Inventing the Charles River* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 186-193 and Alex Krieger, “Experiencing Boston: Encounters with the Places on the Maps,” in Alex Krieger and David Cobb, *Mapping Boston* (Boston: MIT Press and Leventhal Foundation, 1999), 159-161.

ⁱⁱⁱ Back Street and most of the seawall adjacent to it still exist. The seawall now forms the southern edge of Storrow Drive in the Back Bay area. The wall is an important historical artifact that is useful for understanding the evolution of the Esplanade.

^{iv} The Charles Street Jail, which is adjacent to Mass General Hospital, is still a dominant presence along Charles Street. It was closed by court order in 1990 and now being renovated as part of a new hotel complex.

^v For a detailed description of the filling of Boston’s West End in the nineteenth century, including numerous illustrations, see Nancy Seasholes, *Gaining Ground, A History of Land Making in Boston* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), Chapter 5.

^{vi} The Olmsted National Historic Site has 178 plans and drawings for Job #907, Charlesbank Gymnasium, dating from 1851 to 1907. Many of these are conceptual plans; others address the gymnasium buildings and playground equipment, while still others deal with the larger Esplanade area from Charlesbank to the Back Bay Fens. There are also two lithographs and a photo album containing 59 photographs from 1897 to 1907. None of the plans are listed as planting plans and there are no plant lists. There may also be information about Charlesbank at the Boston Park Department.

^{vii} For additional information on the early history of Charlesbank, see Cynthia Zaitzevsky, *Frederick Law Olmsted and the Boston Park System* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 95-99.

CHARLES ELIOT'S VISION FOR THE LOWER BASIN

In 1893 the Metropolitan Park Commission was established to create a regional park system to preserve the rapidly disappearing scenic and natural resources of the greater Boston area. Charles Eliot was appointed landscape architect to the commission and journalist Sylvester Baxter was appointed secretary. Their report envisioned a park system that included ocean frontage; beaches and islands of Boston Harbor; tidal estuaries; large forested areas; and small parks and playgrounds.ⁱ

One of the highest priorities was the Charles River basin. Eliot and Baxter noted that the many municipal jurisdictions along the river made any sort of comprehensive plan difficult without the involvement of the regional park agency. While upstream sections of the river were used for recreational activities such as boating and swimming, downstream sections were severely polluted and a threat to public health. Eliot described the challenges and the opportunity:

... the metropolitan district is now in a position to make for itself, whenever it may so desire, a river park which with its bordering drives, will extend six miles west from the State House. The broad Basin, surrounded as it will be by handsome promenades, is destined to become the central "court of honor" of the metropolitan district; while by building a dam which shall exclude the tides, the pleasing scenery of the fresh water river, with all its delightful opportunities for boating and skating, may be brought down stream to the central basin itself.ⁱⁱ

In the 1890s the Metropolitan Park Commission undertook land acquisition throughout the metropolitan region at an unprecedented scale including the upstream section of the Charles. However no action was taken on the Boston side of the lower basin at this time. This was partly because of the uncertainty regarding whether a dam and an additional row of houses north of Beacon Street would be built and partly because it was assumed that the Boston Park Commission would take responsibility for the Boston side of the lower basin.

Eliot cited Olmsted's work at the Muddy River as an example of a solution to a polluted river that was both attractive and inexpensive, solving drainage and flooding problems while creating a naturalistic park. The recently completed Charlesbank Park was also considered a model for what public parkland along the banks of the Charles could be, as were the newly established riverfront parks along the Cambridge side of the Charles. The 1893 report of the commission cited problems of direct access to Boston from the west and mentioned the parkways of the Boston's park system as good models of roadway planning. Eliot and

Baxter argued for acquisition of not just pristine landscapes but also degraded riverbanks, which they felt should be publicly owned and open to all.

Once the report was completed Eliot refined his design ideas for the lower basin. On the Boston side he envisioned a continuous seawall with “promenades and plazas - broad gravel-ways well shaded by trees afford[ing] pleasant out-of-door halls where crowds may mingle in an easy social life . . .” He also proposed “. . . concert grounds, outdoor halls, nurseries, playgrounds, gymnasias, and gardens” which could be combined so that no individual feature would take more than a small space and also “a roadway which will serve as a pleasure drive and also as an approach to the buildings on the abutting estates.”ⁱⁱⁱ

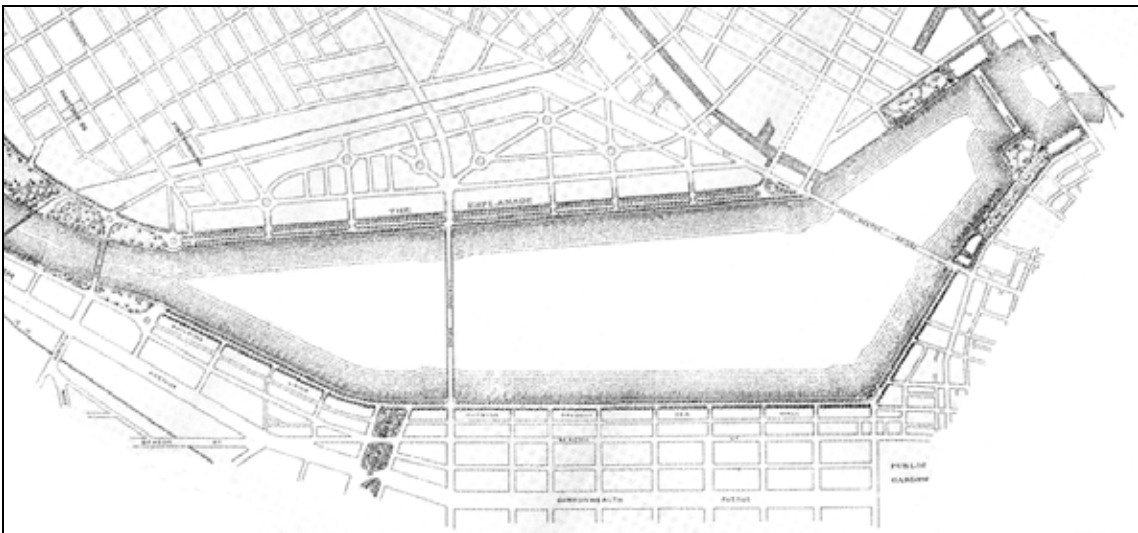


Figure 2.1 – Detail of Charles Eliot’s schematic 1894 plan for the Charles River Basin. The dam shown here is slightly upstream from the Craigie Bridge where the dam was eventually built. (DCR archives)

In 1894 the newly established Cambridge Park Commission began to implement an ambitious program for the Cambridge section of the lower basin. They hired Charles Eliot as landscape architect and began to acquire the Cambridge frontage along the river and transform it from an industrial dumping ground to a landscaped park. A small demonstration project near Harvard Square completed in 1897 was dramatic illustration of the potential of riverfront parkland and an immediate success.

Eliot was also appointed to the Charles River Improvement Commission which was established in 1891. As secretary, he was largely responsible for the commission’s first report, which focused primarily on the physical characteristics of the river. The commission’s second report addressed some of the technical issues associated with the river and made a stronger case for public acquisition of the entire shorefront. It also delineated proposed boundaries for public acquisition between the West Boston Bridge and Charlesgate (see figure 2.2) that were approved by the state legislature in 1893.^{iv}

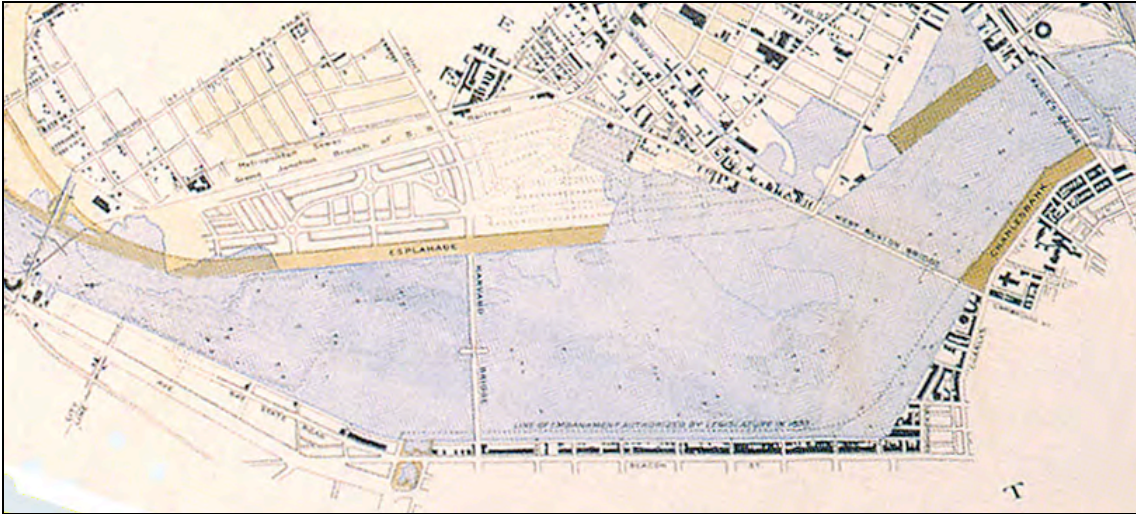


Figure 2.2 – Detail of 1894 existing conditions plan for the Charles River Basin. Charlesbank Park and the new Cambridge Esplanade are shown in brown. The dotted line above the Back Bay is the boundary for the Boston Esplanade authorized by the legislature in 1893. (DCR archives)

In 1894, a report on the Charles River was issued jointly by the Metropolitan Park Commission and the State Board of Health which had been mandated to investigate the sanitary condition of the Charles River and to prepare plans for the removal of nuisances and the improvement of the beds, shores and waters of the river. The report determined that the pollution of the river was indeed severe enough to endanger public health and recommended that the lower section of the river be dammed near the harbor, transforming it from a tidal estuary to a basin with a permanent water level. The report also recommended the construction of an extra row of houses north of the seawall behind the Beacon Street houses. The rationale was that the houses along the river should face the river, not turn their back to it as Beacon Street houses did. Beacon Street residents strongly opposed additional houses that would block their view of the river.

Eliot was an articulate and effective spokesman for improvements to the Charles River basin but he died in 1897 before most of his ideas were implemented.

THE CHARLES RIVER DAM

The proposal to construct a Charles River dam languished for several years until James Jackson Storrow campaigned for a new commission, which was appointed in 1901. Harvard president Charles W. Eliot (father of the landscape architect) spoke eloquently in favor of the dam, arguing that the principal reason for the improvement of the basin was to increase the health and happiness of 400,000 people who lived within walking distance of the river.

Storow's successful campaign resulted in the appointment of John Ripley Freeman, a well-respected engineer, to address the technical questions of the proposed dam. Freeman's thorough scientific approach was presented in a 1903 report that argued strongly in favor of the dam on the grounds that it would improve sanitary conditions; that the interests of navigation and manufacturing would benefit; that the harbor would not be adversely affected; and that "a magnificent opportunity for wholesome recreation and the enjoyment of a more beautiful landscape will be made possible by the construction of this dam."^v He also made the argument that building the dam would actually be no more expensive than addressing the various infrastructure issues separately.

Once Freeman's report established the benefits of the Charles River dam, the state legislature authorized construction of the dam that same year and established the Charles River Basin Commission to oversee the project. The dam was a broad earthen structure of concrete retaining walls faced with granite, on which a seven-acre park was laid out (where Boston Museum of Science is currently located). The basin construction also included a strip of parkland that was 300' wide between Longfellow Bridge and Brimmer Street and 100' wide west of Brimmer Street. While Charlesbank was visually a part of the Esplanade, it remained city parkland. The row of houses north of Beacon Street was deemed an auxiliary issue and was omitted from the proposal.

The primary mandate of the Charles River Basin Commission was construction of the Charles River dam but the legislation included other elements as well. Aspects of the project that fell under the purview of Chief Engineer Hiram A. Miller included the dam, the lock and the Boston Marginal Conduit, a sanitary sewer that carried away wastes from the Boston side of the river which were polluting the Charles River and discharged them below the dam.^{vi} The conduit, which was up to 16' in diameter, ran on the north side of Back Street and through Charlesbank Park, which had to be dug up in 1905-06 to accommodate it. Construction of the Longfellow Bridge between 1900 and 1907 further disrupted the western end of Charlesbank.



Figure 2.3 – 1904 aerial perspective showing proposed Charles River dam in the foreground, Longfellow Bridge in the background and Charlesbank at far left. (DCR archives)

In conjunction with construction of the dam, the park at Charlesbank was expanded to accommodate construction of the new lock and related structures. A new section of parkland was added adjacent to the men's gymnasium that included the two gatehouses (still extant) and the landscaped area designed by Guy Lowell (most of which is now a paved parking lot).^{vii}

Water quality in the river improved dramatically with construction of the Marginal Conduit and the water level was now stable so access to the water became important. Bathing cages had been built by the city on the edge of the West End in 1866 to provide an enclosed space that was safe for swimming. They were wooden structures open at the top that river water could flow through. After the park at Charlesbank was completed, the cages were once again located along the water's edge. Such cages had also been popular further upstream on the Cambridge side of the river.^{viii}

THE BOSTON ESPLANADE

The Charles River Basin Commission was also authorized to expand the parkland west on the Boston side from the Longfellow Bridge to Charlesgate. The new park was created as part of the dam and conduit project, using material generated by the dredging, as well as additional fill that was hauled in by cart, to create new land north of the seawall. The Beacon Hill section (right below) was the widest, with up to 300' of newly filled land. The Back Bay section (left below) was 100' wide.

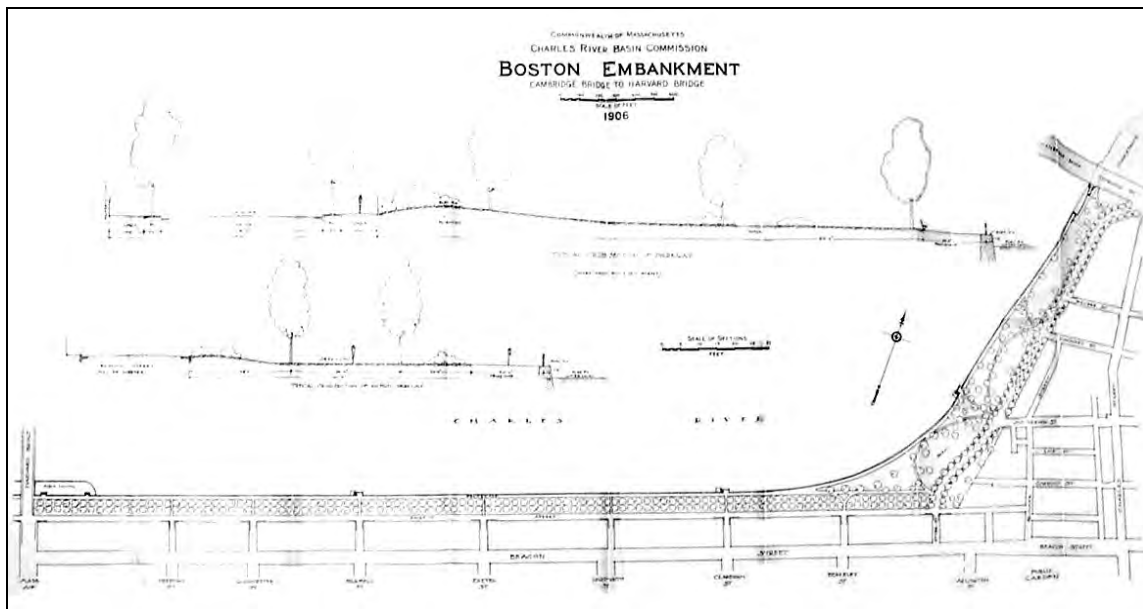


Figure 2.4 – Schematic 1906 plan showing the newly added parkland and proposed landscape treatment. This plan was never fully implemented although many of its key features were reflected in subsequent construction of the park. (DCR archives)

The Beacon Hill section of the park, between Longfellow Bridge and Otter Street (near Berkeley Street), was bounded on the southeast by the new Embankment Road (see figure 2.4). In the Back Bay section from Berkeley Street west to Charlesgate, the Back Street wall formed the southern edge of the park. A newly constructed seawall north of the original wall formed the northern edge of the park for the entire length, with several landings to provide access to the water. The parkland sloped down slightly from the elevation of Back Street with a broad expanse of turf. There was a wide paved walkway along the river with a metal rail fence and decorative light fixtures. Crosswalks connected the promenade with the ends of the Boston streets.

On July 1, 1910, the Charles River Basin Commission, which had been responsible for construction of the dam and associated parkland, turned the Boston parkland over to the Metropolitan Park Commission, which was to operate the dam and riverfront park. The Cambridge riverfront remained under the jurisdiction of the Cambridge Park Commission and Charlesbank remained under the jurisdiction of the Boston Park Commission.

There were no plants other than grass when the land was transferred, but in 1911 Guy Lowell, the architect and landscape architect for the Basin Commission, prepared planting plans for a border along the north side of the Back Street wall that included small trees such as dogwoods and hawthorns, as well as many species of flowering shrubs.^{ix} The plan also showed the location for a double row of trees (species not identified) but these were added later. Soon after the transfer of the Esplanade to the Metropolitan Park Commission, shade shelters were added because the area was hot in summer.



Figure 2.5 – Ca. 1910 view of Esplanade behind Back Street, looking east towards Beacon Hill. Note the distinctive light fixtures. (DCR archives)



Figure 2.6 – Ca. 1910 view of the Back Bay section of the Esplanade from the Harvard Bridge. (DCR archives)



Figure 2.7 – Post card view from Harvard Bridge (after 1912) shows shrub plantings adjacent to Back Street wall, canvas covered shade shelters and landing in the foreground. (private collection)

By 1909 the two lock gatehouses at the dam were in place, as was the Fens gatehouse at Charlesgate. The old boathouse of the Union Boat Club was landlocked by construction of the embankment and a new boathouse was built on the embankment near Mount Vernon Street. There were also two recreation buildings at Charlesbank, one for men and one for women. The Tea House (also known as the Refreshment Building) was built near Berkeley Street in 1913.



Figure 2.8 – Women’s recreation building at Charlesbank with Charles Street Jail in the background, early 20th century. (private collection)



Figure 2.9 – Tea House near Berkeley Street, built in 1913, demolished in 1950. This picture was taken in 1913. (DCR archives)

By 1912 the area was considerably more pleasant than it had been, but still far from the lively promenade that Eliot had envisioned. Back Street remained a private alley rather than a public parkway and Beacon Street residents made it clear that they preferred to have their view kept open rather than blocked by trees. The boat clubs on the river by the 1870s included Union, Riverside, several Harvard clubs, St. Alphonsus and Cambridge Boat Club. The water was choppy especially between the seawalls along Back Street in Boston and the Cambridge esplanade and the broad basin was perceived as a vast uninteresting expanse.

There were numerous ideas for the basin, including a 1911 proposal by landscape architect Arthur A. Shurtleff (1870-1957, later Shurcliff)^x to construct a large island in the middle of the river. Shurtleff praised the new park as an improvement but argued that the basin “must be made infinitely finer and more serviceable to a recreation-seeking public . . . The provision at this time of the most primitive recreation facilities would go far to make the Basin the most notable water park in the world.”^{xi} He cited shade, benches and access to the water as primary needs.

ⁱ For an overview of the creation of the metropolitan park system, see Karl Haglund, *Inventing the Charles River* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), Chapter 4, “The Emerald Metropolis.”

ⁱⁱ Charles Eliot, “The Boston Metropolitan Reservations,” *New England Magazine*, September 1896, 117-118.

ⁱⁱⁱ Charles William Eliot, *Charles Eliot, Landscape Architect* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries, 1971, first published in 1902). This thorough collection documents the writing of Charles Eliot on various aspects of the Charles River, including his work for the Metropolitan Park Commission, the Cambridge Park Commission and the Charles River Improvement Commission.

^{iv} Eliot, 559-592.

^v Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Committee on the Charles River Dam, *Report of the Committee on the Charles River Dam . . .* (Boston, 1903), 38.

^{vi} For a detailed description of the construction of the Charles River dam, see Haglund, 176-183.

^{vii} The index to the DCR plans archive indicates that there is Guy Lowell plan of the Charlesbank landscape on file there but the plan may have disappeared.

^{viii} For further discussion of swimming in the river and bathing cages along the Charles River (including a photo) see Haglund, 73-75.

^{ix} See Appendix B for complete 1911 plant list, which includes only shrubs and small trees, not the large trees that were added later. Copies of planting plans were made for Esplanade Association files.

^x Shurtleff, who changed his name to Shurcliff in the early 1930s, is referred hereafter to here as Shurcliff, as that is how he was best known. For biographical information on Shurcliff, see Charles A. Birnbaum and Robin Karson, *Pioneers of American Landscape Design*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000), 351-356.

^{xi} Arthur A. Shurtleff, “The Development of the Charles River Basin” *New Boston*, November 1911, 246.

ARTHUR SHURCLIFF'S VISION: 1929 PLAN

Dissatisfaction with the Esplanade continued through the 1920s. A legislative commission issued a report in 1928 that characterized the basin as “unsatisfying and disappointing . . . it is apparent that what we miss is life – animation.”ⁱ The report described the three basic purposes of the basin: sanitary, aesthetic and recreational. It determined that the sanitary goals of creating the basin had largely been met and the artistic goals were gradually being realized through construction of new bridges and development of educational institutions along the banks of the river but that the recreational development of the basin was a disappointment.

Since the 1890s the potential of the basin as a “waterpark” had been emphasized by many, but the intended use levels had not been realized for several reasons. The high seawalls limited access, although there were landings in some places along the Boston side. Rough water, which was exacerbated by the high walls in the basin, was a deterrent to boating, particularly in small boats. Water safety was another concern, because if anyone fell into the river, it would be difficult for them to climb out. Lack of facilities was also a problem.

The Union Boat Club had been established in 1851 but it was accessible only to members. By the 1920s Harvard had expanded its campus along the river and MIT had built a new campus in Cambridge. Rowing became popular in the late 19th century; sailing did not develop as a major recreational activity on the river until later. The 1928 legislative report concluded with the recommendation that the Metropolitan District Commission (created in a merger with the metropolitan water and sewer commissions in 1919) or the Board of Health or the two together be authorized to undertake a more detailed study of the basin.



*Figure 3.1 – Lifesaving apparatus along the Charles, 1916.
(DCR archives)*

In April 1928 the legislature authorized a special commission to undertake a study to investigate making the basin more suitable for recreation and civic welfare. Members included Henry I. Harriman, Chair; Henry Parkman Jr.; James W. Rollins; George Owen and landscape architect Arthur A. Shurcliff. The commission's report, which was presented to the legislature in January 1929, began with a history of the basin and a summary of three issues that were essential to the improvement of the basin. The first was improvements to the banks of the river. The second was the completion of the Charles River parkway system, with uninterrupted parkways on both sides of the Charles River from the dam to Watertown Square. Third, the commission recommended that the river should be made safer and more attractive for boating and water sports. Specific recommendations that pertained to the Esplanade included:ⁱⁱ

- ***Widening and Extending the Esplanade*** – A key proposal was widening the Esplanade on the Boston side from Charlesbank to Charlesgate and extending the park further west to the Cottage Farm (Boston University) Bridge. Dredged material from the river was to be used to create the new parkland, which would vary from 300' to 400' wide east of Charlesgate and be narrower to the west. The land was to be brought down to the water's edge and have pebbled beaches rather than a seawall. The edge was also to be gently undulating rather than straight. The new area would be covered with loam, planted with shrubs and trees, and have numerous walkways.
- ***Playgrounds and Bathing Beaches*** – The park at Charlesbank was to be expanded from 9.6 to 15.4 acres and was to have a wading pool, a swimming pool and bathhouses. Although swimming was occurring in some parts of the basin, the report expressed concern about the safety of the river for swimming as overflow sewage sometimes flowed into the river.
- ***Landing and Plaza*** – The report proposed a landing for boats and a decorative plaza with terraces and fountain where people could congregate and outdoor concerts of "high grade music" could be given.
- ***Parkways*** – Planning studies had long recommended that there be continuous parkways along both sides of the Charles River Basin from the dam to Watertown Square. The section between the Longfellow Bridge and the Cottage Farm Bridge was one of the missing links in 1929 and was considered to be the highest priority. The dual goal was to create a parkway along the river and to alleviate congestion on city streets. The proposal was to place the parkway at least 150' from the rear of the houses and to create additional parkland on the water side that was roughly 200' wide, double the width of the existing parkland. The commission also suggested that the parkway be depressed below grade so that it would not be visible from the rest of the Esplanade.

- **Lagoon** – There was an alternate proposal by architects Perry, Shaw and Hepburn to construct the parkway on a lagoon built out into the river. It was clear that this alternative would be more expensive and it was not the preferred alternative of the commission so it was dropped.
- **Widening of Charles Street and Creation of Traffic Circle** – Another proposal involved the widening of Charles Street adjacent to Charlesbank Park, which would necessitate some taking of parkland in that area. Related to that was the creation of traffic circle at the junction of Charles and Cambridge Streets, an area that was already seriously congested.
- **Boating** – The primary limitations to use of the river for boating were determined to be the choppy water and lack of facilities. The elimination of the embankment wall on the Boston side and the widening of the embankment with a sloping beach that would absorb wave action were seen as important steps towards improving water conditions in the basin. There was some interest from boating enthusiasts in having islands in the middle of the river, but the commission felt that this would not be appropriate as landings were already provided. The commission felt that boathouses should be allowed as long as they were of “unobtrusive design and properly masked by planting.”

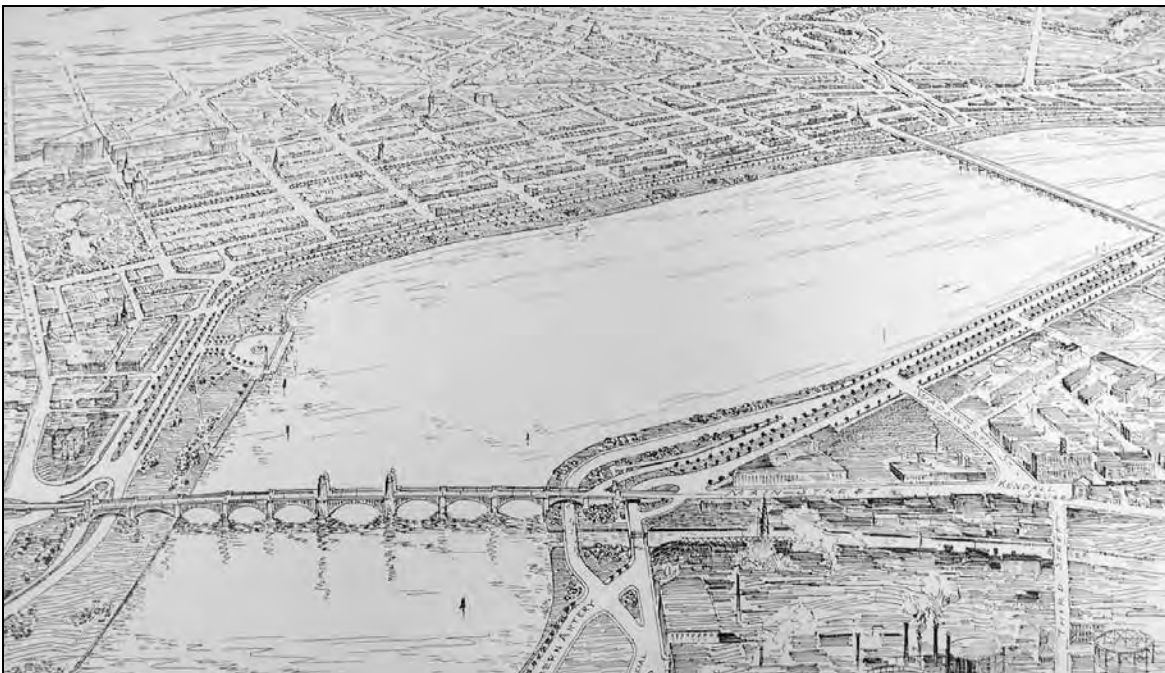


Figure 3.2 – Arthur Shurcliff’s 1929 illustrative plan for the Back Bay section of the Esplanade with Boston at the top and Cambridge at the bottom. The plaza at the left just above the Longfellow Bridge was the focal point, otherwise the design was fairly simple. (DCR archives)



Figure 3.4 – Shurcliff's schematic 1929 plan for the Charlesbank segment of the Esplanade. The green area above the dotted line was proposed fill to compensate for the taking of parkland to widen Charles Street and create a rotary at Charles and Cambridge Streets. (Note: the proposed fill shown on this plan was not entirely completed.) (DCR archives)



Figure 3.5 – Shurcliff's schematic 1929 plan for the Back Bay segment of the Esplanade. Note boathouse and formal plaza at far right and landing at Dartmouth Street. The parkway shown in this plan was not built at this time. (DCR archives)

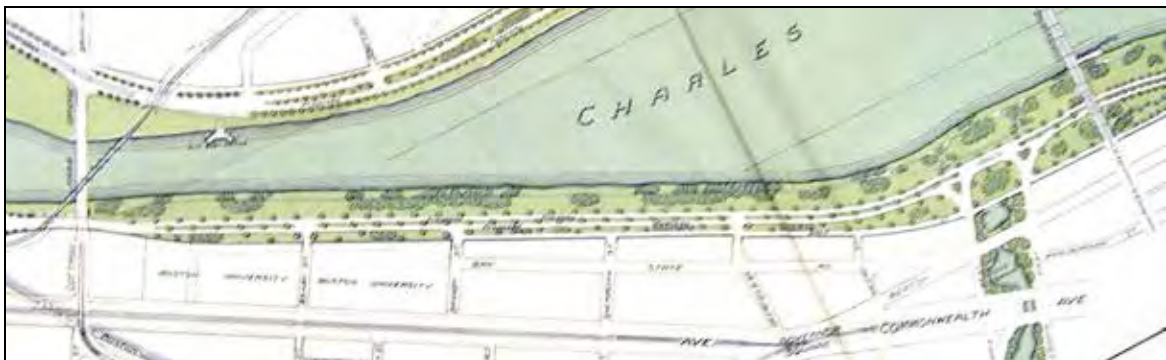


Figure 3.6 – Shurcliff's schematic 1929 plan for the Charlesgate segment of the Esplanade. The parkway shown here was not built at this time. (DCR archives)

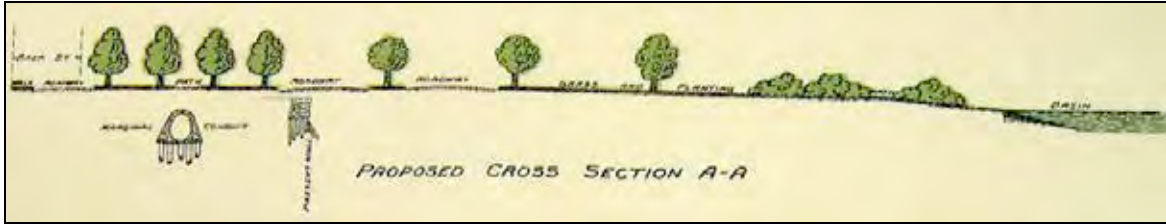


Figure 3.7 – Cross section from Shurcliff's 1929 plan showing location of Back Street, Marginal Conduit and 1910 seawall in relation to the proposed parkland, as well as proposed plantings and the new water's edge. (DCR archives)

The commission's findings were published in January 1929 as a legislative report and in February as a large format publication with numerous photographs and schematic plans by Shurcliff. A major boost to the proposed work had come in 1928 in the form of a generous bequest from Helen Osborne Storrow, widow of James Storrow who had been instrumental in getting the dam built. Mrs. Storrow offered \$1,000,000 towards the beautification and improvement of the Charles River Basin. The only stipulation was that the money be used in connection with legislative appropriations to carry out a comprehensive plan for the beautification and improvement of the basin with public funds. The total cost of the work was estimated at \$4,250,000.

The commission's report was generally well received but there was concern about the impacts of the proposed parkway. The commission strongly supported the continuous parkway but there were many opponents, including Helen Storrow, so the parkway was dropped but the legislature authorized the remainder of the project.

REFINING THE DESIGN

Once the parkway was eliminated, there were major revisions to the design, especially in the middle segment of the Esplanade as shown in Shurcliff's 1932 plan (figure 3.8). Construction was ongoing through 1936, with much of the fill provided by subway construction elsewhere in Boston.

A major focus of the 1930s improvements was in the middle section of the Esplanade. Adjacent to Beacon Hill, Embankment Road continued to form the inland edge of the park. The main feature in this area was the Boat Haven, a plaza with two boat landings and a curved breakwater in the river. On either side of the Boat Haven were large turfed ovals. The southern one was used for music. Concerts were very popular and the small shell was replaced by the current Hatch Shell, completed in 1940. In the western part of the Back Bay there was a wide lagoon that extended roughly from Exeter Street to Fairfield Street, with landings on either side of it at Dartmouth and Gloucester Streets.

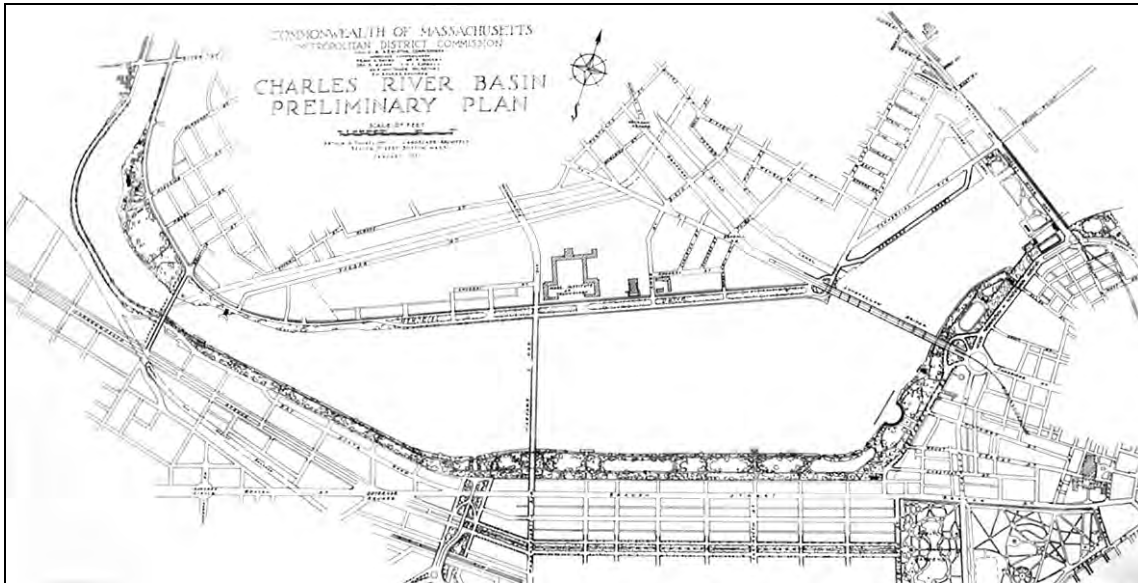


Figure 3.8 – 1931 plan by Arthur Shurcliff. The parkway included in Shurcliff's initial plan was eliminated, although Embankment Road behind Beacon Hill was retained and Charles Street adjacent to Charlesbank was widened. The breakwater at the Boat Haven was flat rather than curved in this version and the lagoon had not yet appeared. (DCR archives)

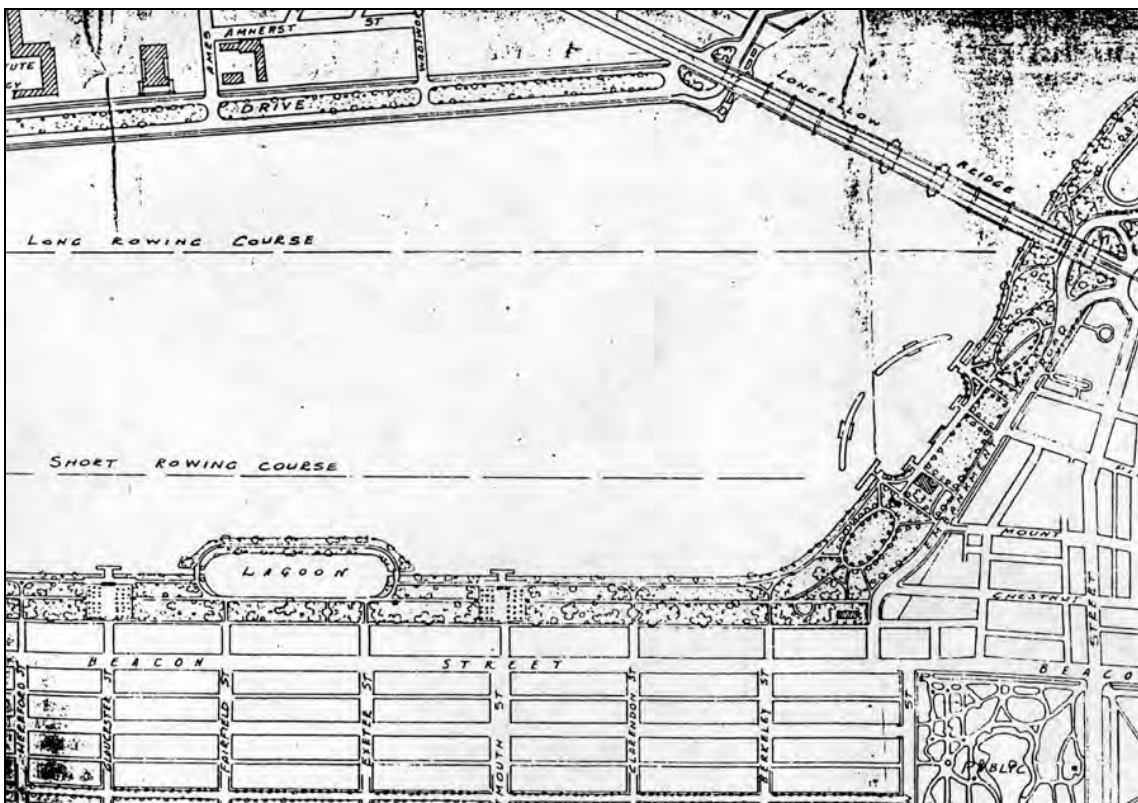


Figure 3.9 – This detail of Shurcliff's 1932 plan shows how the design evolved in the Back Bay area. The breakwater at the Boat Haven was curved and the landing was more clearly articulated. In the western part of Back Bay the lagoon was in place with plazas on either side at Dartmouth and Gloucester Streets. (DCR archives)



Figure 3.10 – Aerial view of Boat Haven soon after construction showing the formality of the design. Embankment Road is at the left, Union Boat House and the 1934 music shell are at the upper left. (DCR archives)

In the Back Bay section of the park, the width of the parkland had been doubled to 200'. The walkway previously located along the water's edge was now the central path and there was a new walkway along the water's edge. In 1934, 1,060 trees were planted between the Boston University Bridge and the Longfellow Bridge in accordance with Shurcliff's design. Species included lindens, pin oaks, red oaks, Norway maples and buttonwoods, with white willows used along the water's edge and on the island at the lagoon. In most of the park trees were arranged informally in single species groups, while at the two plazas the Norway maples were planted in a grid. There were also shrub plantings at key locations around the park.ⁱⁱⁱ

The focal point of the Back Bay area was the new Storrow Lagoon between Exeter and Fairfield Streets. It created a quiet shallow area that was used for sailing of model boats in summer and ice skating in winter. Bridges at either end provided pedestrian access to the breakwater that formed the lagoon.

Other key features of the design were the overlooks at Dartmouth and Gloucester Streets on either side of the lagoon. These were rectangular plazas planted with a bosque of trees and with classically detailed granite edged balustrades at the water's edge and docks in the water.



Figure 3.11 – Aerial view of Back Bay section under construction in 1933. The wide central path marks the former edge of the Esplanade. The land to the right of it is new fill. The lagoon is in the background in this photo and the one below. The small building along the path was the police station that was featured in the children’s story “Make Way for Ducklings.” (DCR archives)



Figure 3.12 – Photograph taken in 1935. Note the mature plantings of trees on the older (inland) section of the park and the smaller plantings on the new parkland to the right. (DCR archives)



Figure 3.13 – Aerial view of the lagoon and Gloucester Street landing in 1935. (DCR archives)

At Charlesbank a substantial piece of the park was taken for creating a new traffic circle at Cambridge and Charles Streets and for widening of Charles Street, so additional filled land was created to compensate (see Figures 3.4 and 3.8). The landscape treatment remained fairly simple with a large open oval in the wide western part of the park surrounded by tree-lined promenades. The eastern part of Charlesbank remained largely unchanged with lock operations and recreational facilities for the West End neighborhood.

Treatment was also simple along the far western end of the Esplanade sometimes known as the Upper Park. The newly formed parkland west of Charlesgate was a straight strip of land roughly 100' wide that extended from Back Street down to the pebbled beach at the water's edge. There were three docks built out into the water as well as grass, trees, shrubs at key locations and a path.

When the Storrow Memorial Embankment was dedicated in 1936, the parkland between the Longfellow Bridge and the Boston University Bridge had more than doubled in size. It was almost universally referred to as the Esplanade. Significant changes occurred at Charlesbank as well but it remained under the jurisdiction of the Boston Park Department.

Major buildings on the Esplanade by the late 1940s included the two gatehouses at Charlesbank (1908); the Fens Gatehouse at Charlesgate (1909); the Tea House near Berkley Street (built 1913, demolished 1950) the Union Boat Club Building (1910); the Recreation Building (1939, demolished 1950); the Hatch Shell (1940); and Community Boating (1941).



Figure 3.14 – The Recreation Building constructed in 1939 was located near the lagoon and was used by skaters and model boat builders. It was demolished in 1950 to make way for Storrow Drive (DCR archives)

ⁱ Rollins, James Wingate and others, “The Charles River Basin as a Water Park and Playground, A Brief Consideration of the Purposes for which it was Created and the Uses to which it is Suited” (prepared pursuant to House Bill 454, February 1928).

ⁱⁱ Harriman, Henry and others, “Report of the Special Commission Established to Investigate Methods of Making the Charles River Basin More Suitable for Recreation and Civic Welfare Purposes (prepared in reference to House Bill 1050, January 1929).

ⁱⁱⁱ The full 1933-34 planting list can be found in Appendix B.

CONSTRUCTION OF STORROW DRIVE (1950-55)

The demand for a parkway between Back Bay and the Esplanade, proposed in the 1929 plan, increased after World War II. In 1946 the Metropolitan District Commission was directed to prepare plans, estimates and specifications for the construction of a parkway along the Storrow Memorial Embankment from Embankment Road to Soldiers Field Road in Brighton. Two years later, the Metropolitan Area Highway Plan was completed, with the new parkway (later named Storrow Drive) as an important component. There was strong legislative and public opposition to construction of a parkway along the Esplanade but ultimately the bill passed by a narrow margin. The intent was that most of the road was to be below the grade of the Esplanade and that new parkland was to be created using the fill from the road. Ironically, the new road was named James J. Storrow Memorial Drive, which many observers felt was particularly inappropriate given the Storrow family's history of creating parkland along the Back Bay and Helen Storrow's earlier opposition to the road.

The new highway was located immediately north of Back Street on the 100' strip of filled land that had been created between 1907 and 1909. Near Berkeley Street a tunnel was constructed so that land did not have to be taken from the popular Music Oval. The project was massive in scale and disrupted the entire Esplanade for several years.



Figure 4.1 – This 1950 view shows construction of the Storrow Drive tunnel. (DCR archives)

CHANGES TO PARKLAND (1950-1955)

Arthur Shurcliff and his son Sidney, who joined his father in the firm, were asked to redesign the Esplanade to make room for the new road. The mandate was to create as much new parkland as was taken by the road. The 1949 Shurcliff plan laid out the basic concepts for the park. They are addressed here by segment, going from east to west.

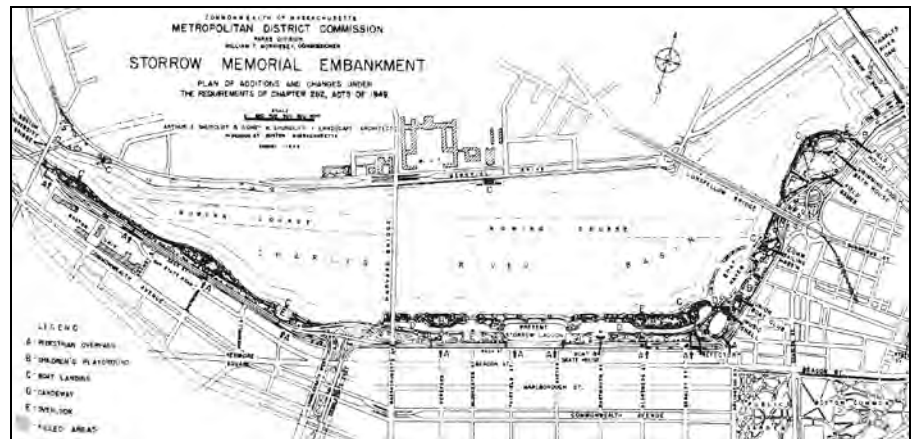


Figure 4.2 – Shurcliff’s 1949 plan. (DCR archives)

Charlesbank

Charlesbank remained part of the Boston park system until 1949 when it was transferred to the Metropolitan District Commission in anticipation of the construction of Storrow Drive.ⁱ At Charlesbank land was taken from the park to widen the adjacent roadway to six lanes and to expand the traffic circle at Longfellow Bridge so 5.1 acres of additional fill was added at the western end of the park, which arrived at the rate of 90 truck loads per day. The project disrupted the park and the neighborhood for several years.ⁱⁱ At the western end, new paths, trees and baseball fields were added, as well as a fieldhouse, swimming pool and bathhouse. The eastern end of Charlesbank, with gatehouses and playground, remained largely unchanged.

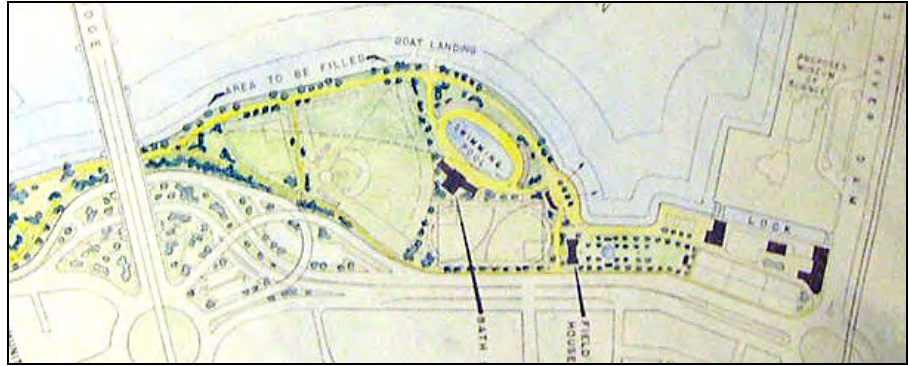


Figure 4.3 – Detail of preliminary 1949 plan. The design was changed somewhat when the Lee Pool was built in 1951. (DCR archives)



Figure 4.4 – Aerial view of Lee Pool and Wading Pool 1952. Newly filled land is at center, Storrow Drive is at left. (DCR archives)

Back Bay

There were relatively few changes in the 1950s to the Boat Haven and Music Oval. Community Boating and the Hatch Shell were popular facilities that had been in place since the early 1940s. A new refectory (food service) building was built near the Hatch Shell to replace the old Tea House near Berkeley Street that was torn down to accommodate Storrow Drive.ⁱⁱⁱ Many of the monuments located in the park also had to be relocated; some were moved to the outer edge of the Music Oval.

In keeping with the mandate to create as much parkland as had been taken for Storrow Drive, a long narrow island was created north of the Back Bay section of the Esplanade with fill trucked in from the suburbs. The island was connected to the mainland by five bridges, the two granite block bridges at either end of the original Storrow Lagoon built in the 1930s as well as three new concrete bridges. The island gave a very different character to the Back Bay section of the Esplanade, creating a new water channel that was appropriate for canoes and small boats.



Figure 4.5 – Detail of 1949 plan showing the Back Bay section with long island and lagoon. (The proposed section of the island west of Storrow Lagoon was never constructed.) (DCR archives)

The 1930s plantings were maturing by this time but some supplemental plantings were added in older sections of the park and extensive planting was done on the expanded island. Tree species included Norway maples, sugar maples, katsuratree, red English hawthorn, common honey locust, northern red oak, pin oak, Babylon weeping willow and littleleaf linden. Shrubs included five leaf aralia, Japanese barberry, Tartarian dogwood, forsythia, privet and spirea. Plantings were informal with trees typically clustered in same species groups and shrubs used at focal points in the landscape.^{iv}

LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The parkways and parkland created along the southern edge of the Charles River in the 1950s are still largely what exists today. Over the past 50 years there have been minor adaptations to adjust to evolving needs and conditions, but few changes as dramatic as those that occurred between 1870 and the 1950s.

The mid-1950s marked a major transition in the history of the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC). By this time the intensive period of parkway construction and re-configuration was over. In 1956, many of the Boston parkways, which had been operated by the Boston Park Department but were connected with the MDC roads by design, were transferred to the MDC, which was perceived as a more appropriate steward. In 1959 the state legislature investigated a transfer of MDC parkways to the Massachusetts Department of Public Works. However, the unique nature of the parkways as both traffic ways and open space was advanced to argue successfully against the transfer.^v

Charlesgate and Bowker Overpass

By far the most significant change to the Esplanade area over the past 50 years was construction of the Bowker Overpass, which links Boston's emerald necklace parkways with Storrow Drive. While the overpass is not considered part of the Esplanade (which is generally defined as the land between Storrow Drive and the river), it necessitated additional filling out into the river at Charlesgate to accommodate all the ramps (see figure 4.6 on next page).

Construction of the overpass largely obliterated the Olmsted-designed landscape known as the Beacon Entrance which connected the Back Bay Fens and the Charles River at Charlesgate and created a new edge further out into the river where a granite balustrade similar to those at the landings was built. Even with the extra fill, there is now barely enough room along the Esplanade for a narrow pedestrian path beside the river. The late nineteenth century pedestrian bridge and the 1909 gatehouse that were originally located at the edge of the Charles are now far from the river lost under a maze of overhead roads.



Figure 4.6 – Bowker Overpass, completed in 1966, connects Storow Drive at the far left with the Back Bay Fens at the far right. (DCR archives)

Additional changes in the vicinity of Charlesgate, although outside the area that is usually considered the Esplanade, occurred in the 1980s when the Harvard Bridge was reconstructed and one access ramp to Storow Drive was removed west of the bridge. This created additional parkland between the eastbound and westbound lanes of Storow Drive. The area is attractively landscaped, however it feels unsafe because it is relatively isolated. The gate leading to the area has been sealed shut.

Another change that is outside the Esplanade but is closely related is construction of parkland along the “lost” half mile of the Charles River Reservation immediately downstream from Charlesbank. For over a century Charlesbank was the eastern terminus of the reservation, but when a new dam was built downstream in 1978, plans were made to create new parkland along the southern edge of the Charles between the old dam and Boston Harbor. That parkland is now nearing completion and will function as an extension of the Esplanade parkland extending east towards Boston Harbor.^{vi}

Other Physical Changes

Other changes to the Esplanade over the past 50 years have included:

- Arthur Fiedler Footbridge dedicated (1953)
- Community Boating expanded with second story (1987)
- Hatch Shell restored with enlargement of restroom building to accommodate utilities (1990-91)
- Charlesbank and Stoneman Playgrounds rebuilt (late 1990s-2001)
- Several additional monuments dedicated. See Appendix B for additional information on monuments.

-
- Ballfields at Charlesbank rebuilt and dedicated to Teddy Ebersol (2006)
 - Reconstruction of granite landings (2006 ongoing)
 - Replacement of docks (2006 ongoing) Note: The river dock was completed in 2006. Three new docks at Commissioners Landing are scheduled to be completed in 2007 and the Community Boating docks are scheduled to be completed in 2008.
 - Study to determine the future of Lee Pool complex will begin in 2007.

Changing Park Use

By the 1960s health and fitness were important social themes, reflected in the Esplanade by interest in linear recreation such as biking, running and walking. Bicycles were allowed on the Esplanade for the first time in 1960 and the Dr. Paul Dudley White Bicycle Path was constructed in four phases between 1971 and 1978, ultimately creating a continuous 17-mile loop extending along both sides of the Charles River from the dam to Watertown Square.

Water-based activities also increased in popularity. Union Boat Club is the oldest continuously operating rowing club in Boston. The boathouse remains in active use, which is limited to members. Community Boating, which was established in 1939 and has operated in its present location on the Esplanade since 1941, runs a very active public program geared towards instructional and recreational sailing, windsurfing and kayaking. A significant percentage of its participants are young people 16 and under who pay a membership fee of only \$1 per year. The organization has grown substantially in recent years, with total membership reaching 10,000 in the mid-1980s. The lower Charles has also become an important venue for crew races, with the Head of the Charles attracting thousands of rowers and spectators annually.

The Lee Pool at Charlesbank has been closed for over a decade and the wading pool has been open on a limited basis in recent years. The two playgrounds in the Esplanade have recently been renovated and are actively used. There is also increased use of the recreational facilities at the Esplanade by organized groups such as the Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital and sports leagues who are looking for baseball and soccer fields. The Teddy Ebersol Red Sox Fields were established in part to respond to this demand.

Another trend has been the use of the Esplanade for organized events such as races, fundraising walks and concerts. Over time these have become larger and have more heavily impacted the park. The Fourth of July concerts at the Hatch Shell are the largest event, requiring months of preparation and drawing hundreds of thousands of visitors.^{vii}

Management, Funding and Partnerships

In recent years funding for all aspects of the state parks has been reduced substantially, while the system itself has been greatly expanded. By the 1990s the condition of the metropolitan park system had become so severe that a state-wide commission was appointed to review the issues and make recommendations.^{viii} One of the outcomes of the commission's report was a new interest in park partnerships.

A major catalyst for renewed interest in the Esplanade was the *Charles River Basin Master Plan* completed in 2002 after several years of planning and community meetings. The Esplanade Association, which was established in 2001, was one outgrowth of this planning process.

ⁱ Acts of 1949, Chapter 262, section 6 (May 5, 1949) was the authorizing legislation.

ⁱⁱ Seasholes, 132.

ⁱⁱⁱ The new refectory is shown on the far right of figure 4.1.

^{iv} See Appendix B for complete planting list for 1953. Copies of planting plans were made for Esplanade Association files.

^v The history of the Boston metropolitan parkways is well documented in a thematic National Register nomination prepared by PAL Inc. and the Massachusetts Historical Commission beginning in 2001.

^{vi} For more information about the new dam and the “lost half mile” see Karl Haglund, *Inventing the Charles River*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), Chapter 8, 280-307.

^{vii} For additional information about current use, activities and their associated impacts see, Goody Clancy Associates. *Master Plan for the Charles River Basin: The Second Century*. Boston: Metropolitan District Commission., 2002.

^{viii} The findings of the commission were reported in: Green Ribbon Commission, *Enhancing the Future of the Metropolitan Park System*, (Boston: Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1996).

BACKGROUND

Charlesbank is the smallest segment of the Boston Esplanade and also the easternmost. It extends from the old Charles River dam on the east to the Longfellow Bridge on the west. It is bordered on the north by the Charles River and on the south by Storrow Drive. It is roughly 2,000' long and is considerably wider at the western end than the eastern end.

As described in Chapter 1, the Charlesbank area was gradually filled during the late nineteenth century and was the first section of the Boston Esplanade to become parkland. Frederick Law Olmsted designed a pioneering park (figure 5.1) here in the 1890s that included a promenade along the river as well as landscaped grounds for passive recreation and two active recreation areas for the residents of the West End tenements. The park was modified somewhat with construction of the Charles River dam in 1908 but remained essentially a linear park with both active and passive recreation.

In the 1930s Charles Street, which formed the southern boundary of Charlesbank, was widened to accommodate increasing traffic and fill was added at the western end of the park to create additional parkland to compensate for the loss (figure 5.2). The new land had a sloped edge rather than a seawall and largely obliterated what remained of Olmsted's Charlesbank plan, although the area continued to be used for active recreation.

In the early 1950s Storrow Drive was constructed adjacent to Charles Street, necessitating the taking of additional parkland. More filled land was created in the western part of the Charlesbank park (figure 5.3). In 1951 Lee Pool and the adjacent playground were built to provide expanded recreational opportunities for West End residents.

More recently construction of the new Charles River dam has eliminated the need for an active lock at the old dam and there have been minor modifications to Leverett Circle as part of the Central Artery/Tunnel project. The most recent park projects at Charlesbank have been renovation of the playground and complete redesign of the ballfields.

For the purpose of this analysis, the entire Charlesbank area is considered Segment 1 of the Esplanade, which has been divided into four sub-areas:

- 1A Lock Area
- 1B Playground/Wading Pool Area
- 1C Lee Pool Area
- 1D Ballfields Area



Figure 5.1 – 1892 Olmsted plan for Charlesbank. Women’s gymnasium is at the far left, men’s gymnasium is at the far right. (Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site)



Figure 5.2 – Arthur Shurcliff’s 1929 schematic plan for Charlesbank. White area at upper right corner of Charlesbank (where gatehouses are located) was added in the early 1900s when the dam was built. Green area above the dotted line was filled land that was added in the early 1930s to compensate for taking of parkland to widen Charles Street. (DCR archives)

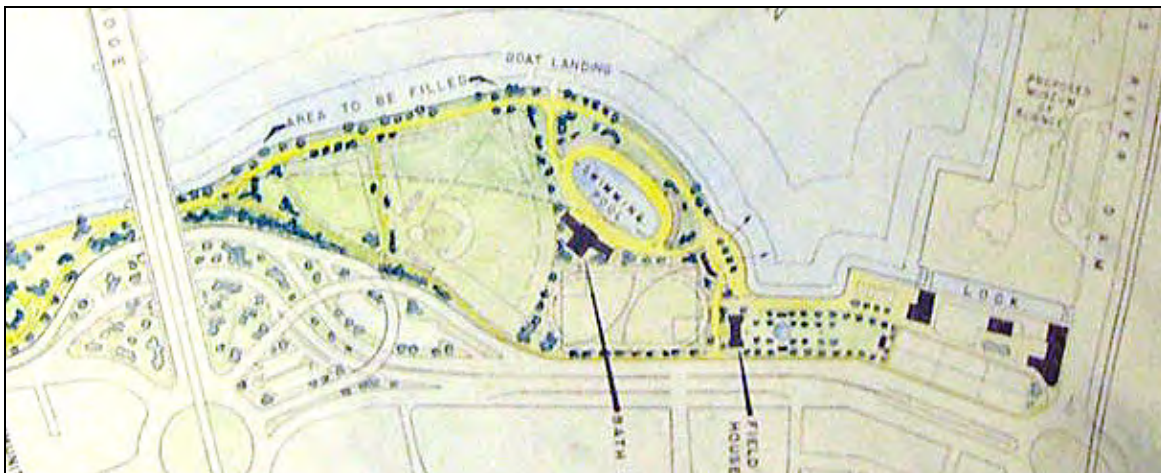


Figure 5.3 – This conceptual 1949 plan by Arthur Shurcliff shows the large amount of land that was taken for construction of Storrow Drive and the additional parkland that was created in the early 1950s (above dotted line). The actual configuration of the park was built somewhat differently, particularly in the swimming pool area. (DCR archives)

GENERAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

At its eastern end (Lock and Playground/Wading Pool Areas) Charlesbank is narrow and largely hard surfaced, with seawall at the river's edge. The western end (Lee Pool/Ballfields Areas) is wider and with the exception of the Lee Pool is generally characterized by lawn areas, ballfields, groves of trees, perimeter path and sloping river edges.

One of the oldest extant features in the entire Boston Esplanade is the section of granite seawall behind the wading pool, which was completed in 1886. The remainder of the original wall was removed over time, beginning when the area was reconfigured in the early 1900s to accommodate the Charles River dam. Some of the granite blocks were most likely reused. Key historic features from the circa 1910 period include the Upper and Lower Gatehouses and the Charles River lock, as well as additional sections of seawall in the Lock Area.

In the 1930s and again in the 1950s the park was reduced on the inland side to accommodate road widening and fill was added at the western end. Arthur Shurcliff's 1929 and 1949 plans (figures 5.2 and 5.3) for the western part of the Charlesbank area show the primary elements as open fields with scattered trees around the perimeter and a swimming pool. While the exact form of these has changed over time, the activities remain much as Shurcliff envisioned.

Other aspects of the Charlesbank area that continue to reflect some aspects of Shurcliff's (and to some extent Olmsted's) design intent are the continuous path along the water's edge from the upper gatehouse west to the Longfellow Bridge; the grass strip and tree plantings along the Storrow Drive edge; and the use of informally massed deciduous trees in turf areas, particularly around the perimeter of the parkland.



Figure 5.4 – Charlesbank as shown in 2002 Master Plan. This is an idealized plan that does not reflect the current configuration of the Lee Pool and ballfields area. Longfellow Bridge is at the left and Charles River dam is at the right.

LOCK AREA (1A)

The Lock Area was initially a landscaped part of the park but over time has become an administrative area with limited public use that is dominated by parking lots. The lock and the two gatehouses are significant historic features that should be considered high priority for preservation. Individual features within the Lock Area are described below.

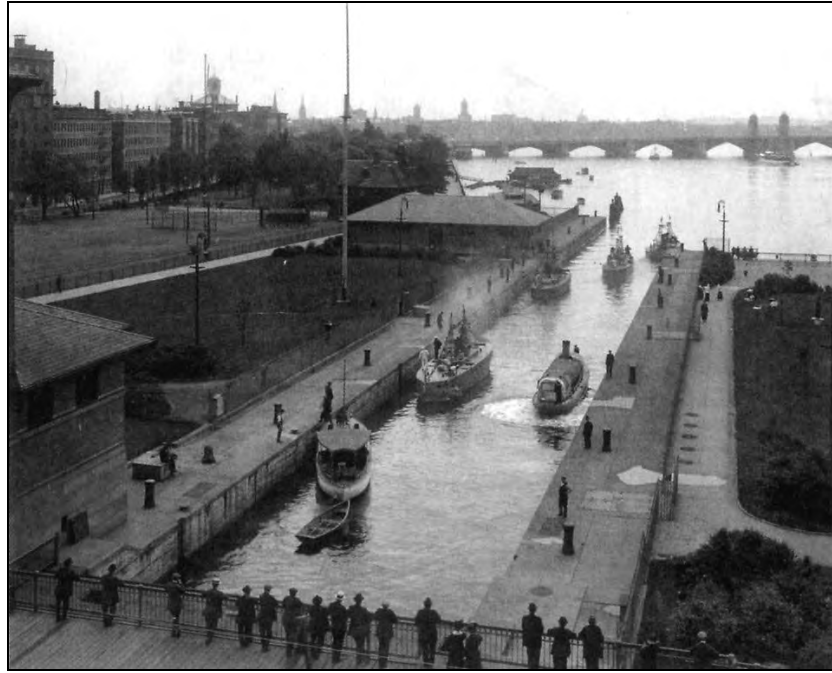


Figure 5.5 – Lock area in the early twentieth century. Some of the lawn at the far left was taken in the 1950s to accommodate Storrow Drive. Much of the rest has been converted into parking lots. (DCR archives)

Charles River Lock

The lock was built in 1908 as part of Charles River dam project. It has granite block walls with concrete and bituminous surface along the sides. The lock mechanism is in place but is no longer used since completion of a new dam downstream in 1978. The condition of the lock appears to be fair but the pavement adjacent to the lock is poor and there is invasive vegetation along the lock edges. The lock is inaccessible to the public although it is visible from the bridge.

Lower Lock Gatehouse

The Lower Lock Gatehouse is a two-story brown brick building with a tower that is located at the downstream end of the lock. It was built in 1908, with modifications in 1914 and later additions at the rear including a small mortuary for bodies pulled from the river. Guy Lowell, the architect for the building, also designed the adjacent landscaping (which no longer exists). The building was intended as a residence for the lock

superintendent with an attached tower for the drawbridge tender.ⁱ However, the state police have used the building since soon after its construction and it is not open to the public. Although roof and gutter work have recently been completed, the building remains in poor condition overall. There is a bronze plaque on the side of the building facing the lock.



Figure 5.6 – Lock with garage and Upper Lock Gatehouse beyond.

Upper Lock Gatehouse

The Upper Lock Gatehouse, also built in 1908 with design by Guy Lowell, is a hipped-roof one-story brown brick building located at the upstream end of the lock. Its function is to protect the sliding lock mechanism. Also known as the pumphouse, it contains pumping equipment for drawing down the river in case of flooding (although this is no longer needed since construction of new dam downstream). The building is in poor condition and is surrounded by chain link fencing.

Garage

The four-car two-story hipped roof yellow brick garage lies between the two gatehouses. It was built in 1937 and is used for storage. It is in poor condition and is surrounded by a parking lot.

Tennis/Basketball Courts

Between the Upper Lock Gatehouse and Storow Drive are two hard surfaced tennis courts placed end-to-end. One also has basketball hoops. The courts are enclosed by high chain link fencing and are in good condition although they are surrounded on two sides by parking lots and one side by Storow Drive. Patients from Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital use the courts regularly.

PLAYGROUND/WADING POOL AREA (1B)

This area, which is immediately west of the Lock Area, includes remnants of the 1880s seawall and an adjacent park area, as well as the Charlesbank Playground and a wading pool. The recreation facilities continue the tradition of active recreation that dates back to the 1890s but the existing facilities date from the mid to late twentieth century. The area is generally in good condition and functions well as parkland for a variety of users. Unlike the Lock Area, it provides access to the river and also connects with the riverfront path in the Lee Pool area. A planting strip with sycamore trees (many in poor condition) offers some separation from Storrow Drive and a pedestrian bridge opposite the wading pool provides convenient access for residents of adjacent housing and hospitals. The Shurcliff bench, which has been selected as a standard for the Charles River basin parkland, is used throughout this area. Paving includes concrete and bituminous and is in good condition except along the river edge behind the playground as noted below.

Charlesbank Playground

Charlesbank Playground is a rectangular area of approximately 10,000 square feet adjacent to the tennis courts and Storrow Drive designed for use by young children. It has been recently renovated and is in good condition. The playground is fully accessible and appears to be heavily used. There are benches and some mature trees in the playground area and it is surrounded by a tall chain link fence.

Wading Pool and Equipment Building

The wading pool adjacent to the playground is enclosed by a roughly 5'6" metal picket fence similar to that along part of the seawall. The pool, which was completed in 1951, is oval in shape and is popular with young children. The area surrounding the pool includes paving and grass as well as some trees and benches. Located within the pool enclosure is a one-story brick building containing mechanical equipment for the pool.



Figure 5.7 – Wading pool, 1972. (DCR archives)



Figure 5.8 – Wading pool with Science Museum in background.



Figure 5.9 – Building in pool area and metal fencing dating to the 1950s.

Granite Seawall and Fencing

The seawall in this area consists of large granite blocks rising about 5' feet above the water level. The section immediately behind the wading pool dates to construction of the original Charlesbank park in the 1880s and is significant for its age and as evidence of early park history. The section behind Charlesbank Playground is of the same granite block construction but its location reflects the realignment of the water's edge in the early 1900s for construction of the dam and lock.

Fencing at the area behind the wading pool (which may be the original fencing) is about 3' tall and is directly at the water's edge. It consists of metal pickets with wide round metal posts. It provides separation from the water without feeling like an obstruction. Fencing on the seawall behind the playground is of narrow metal pickets about 5'6" tall and dates to the 1950s. The fence is set back about 6' from the edge, prohibiting access to the water. Pavement in this section is deteriorated.



Figure 5.10 – Section of original 1880s stone wall behind wading pool with benches, trees and low fencing. Lee Pool is at far right.

Lawn Areas

The area between the river and the playground is a rectangle of turf and mature deciduous trees with a path running adjacent to the playground. This area reflects the general design intent of the Shurcliff landscape but is not heavily used. This may be because there is a tall fence separating it from the river and also because there are no benches or tables. The pavement at the river edge is crumbling and uneven, which may be the reason that it is fenced off.



Figure 5.11 – Area behind playground looking east towards the lock.

The area behind the wading pool is much narrower, with a low fence at the water's edge with wide path and benches. There is a wide grass strip with mature trees planted in rows. Benches in this area are heavily used.



Figure 5.12 – Area behind wading pool with Science Museum in the background. Wading pool fence is at right.

LEE POOL AREA (1C)

The Lee Pool Area consists of the pool complex and adjacent areas of parkland, as well as a small concession stand. The parkland widens between the pool and the Longfellow Bridge where fill was added in the 1930s and 1950s. The edge is riprap with low vegetation and an adjacent bituminous paved path, with benches and an informal row of deciduous trees. In front of the Lee Pool building, which is set back from the roadway, there is a heavy tree cover that contributes to the park-like character of the area and also creates separation between the parkland and Storrow Drive.



Figure 5.13 – Lee Pool in 1952 with wading pool in the foreground. Parking lot was much smaller that time and did not extend to the water's edge. (DCR archives)

Lee Pool

The Lee Pool was completed in 1951. It is a single story modern brick building with horizontal bands of high windows. It is set back from the sidewalk with a lawn area in front and scattered mature deciduous trees. The pool area includes an outdoor pool, diving pool and bleachers and is surrounded by chain link fence. The pool has been closed for about ten years and is used as a maintenance and equipment storage area. The building is in poor condition; pool facilities are obsolete and no longer useable.



Figure 5.14 – Front façade of Lee Pool.



Figure 5.15 – East façade of Lee Pool with parking lot in the foreground.



Figure 5.16 – Main pool with bleachers in the background.

Concession Building

The small concession stand between the Lee Pool and the wading pool is a one-story building with sloping roof and brick base. It dates to ca. 1960s and was not in use during summer of 2006. While it is somewhat out of character with other park buildings, it appears to be in good condition and might have potential for reuse.



Figure 5.17 – Concession building.

BALLFIELDS AREA (1D)

In 1972 the area between the Lee Pool and the Longfellow Bridge was named Lederman Athletic Field in honor of Dr. Melvin Lederman, an Army surgeon who was killed in action in 1969.ⁱⁱ It has recently been renamed Lederman Park. The fields have been renovated and expanded. They were dedicated in June 2006 as the Teddy Ebersol Red Sox Fields, in honor of a young Red Sox fan who was killed in a plane crash. While the fields have become more formalized over time, this area generally reflects the original design intent expressed by Arthur Shurcliff in the 1930s and 1950s to create an open area with informal masses of trees, especially at the perimeter.

Lederman Memorial

A simple granite boulder (ca. 1974) with incised lettering saying “Lederman Field” is located at the western end of Lederman Park near the Longfellow Bridge.



Figure 5.18 – Boulder commemorating Lederman Field.

Teddy Ebersol Red Sox Fields

The tennis courts previously located in this area were recently removed and the ballfields were completely redesigned in 2005-06 to include two baseball/softball diamonds, a youth baseball diamond, a T-ball area and an outfield area that can be used for soccer and other field games. Fields are lit and may be used by permit only. As of September 2006 the fields were in excellent condition and available for limited use. They are enclosed by a chain link fence, which appears to be temporary. The greatest challenge with this new facility will be to regulate use, particularly that which would heavily impact the fields, and to provide appropriate maintenance.



Figure 5.19 – Newly constructed baseball field, looking west towards Hancock tower and Prudential building.

Perimeter Path and River's Edge

Another essential element of the Lederman Park area is the path along the river, which is heavily used by joggers and others interested in linear recreation as well as by those who desire a quiet place to sit and enjoy the scenery. The path is roughly 8' wide and is striped at the center. Mature deciduous trees are located on both sides of the path. The edge of the river is stone riprap with low vegetation growing along it, primarily false indigo. Without ongoing volunteer efforts, the edge vegetation would be much taller. There are numerous Shurcliff benches, trash receptacles and black shoebox light fixtures. There is a short section of low metal fence near the Longfellow Bridge, which probably dates to the 1950s.

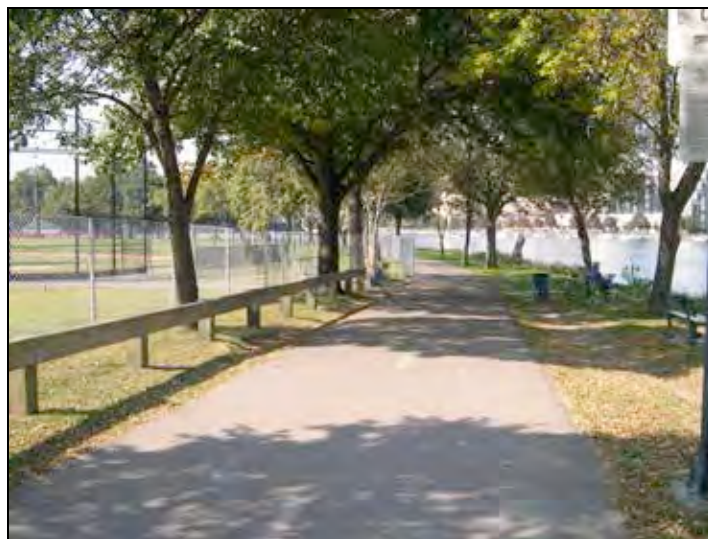


Figure 5.20 – Perimeter path.

Longfellow Bridge

While the bridges are not addressed in detail in this report, Longfellow Bridge deserves mention for several reasons. First of all, it is an important presence within the park. Secondly, it is a historically and architecturally significant structure designed by architect Edmund M. Wheelwright with engineer William Jackson. It was completed in 1907 and replaced the earlier West Boston Bridge, which was built in 1793. The bridge was named for poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in 1927. It is presently in poor condition and in need of major structural repairs that will take several years to accomplish.ⁱⁱⁱ The pedestrian connection between the bridge and Charlesbank now ends up in the parking lot with no direct access to the park (see figures 6.5 and 6.6).



Figure 5.21 – Longfellow Bridge from Lederman Field.

MDC

ⁱ DCR still employs a drawbridge tender in the Lower Gatehouse tower 24 hours a day in accordance with Coast Guard regulations.

ⁱⁱ Voted by Metropolitan District Commission, December 4, 1972. Minutes, Vol. 40, page 152.

ⁱⁱⁱ For a detailed discussion regarding construction of the Longfellow Bridge see Karl Haglund, *Inventing the Charles River* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 168-171.

BACKGROUND

The Back Bay is the middle of the three segments in the Esplanade and the most intensively used. It extends from the Longfellow Bridge on the east to the Harvard Bridge on the west and is bordered on the north by the Charles River and on the south by Storrow Drive. It is roughly 1¼ mile long and varies in width.

As described in Chapter 1, the Back Bay area was gradually filled during the nineteenth century. The seawall along the northern edge of Back Street formed the northern edge of the Back Bay neighborhood until the early 1900s when a 100' wide strip of parkland was added as part of the Charles River dam project. While the promenade along the river was welcome, it was not the lively space that Charles Eliot and others had envisioned.

The park was more than doubled in size in the 1930s with the land sloping down to a turfed edge rather than the seawall. Arthur Shurcliff's design included the Boat Haven and Music Oval at the eastern end and two landings and a lagoon at the western end. A parkway along the river was proposed at that time but not built.

In the early 1950s Storrow Drive was constructed adjacent to Back Street, necessitating the taking of additional parkland. More filled land was created to compensate for the taking, primarily in the form of a long island connected by a series of bridges. It was at this time that pedestrian bridges were built to connect the park and the city.

There have been relatively few physical changes to the Back Bay segment of the park since the 1950s but use levels have increased dramatically as cycling and running have become more popular and as programmed events, particularly at the Hatch Shell, have increased in size and number.

For the purpose of this analysis, the entire Back Bay area is considered Segment 2 of the Esplanade, which has been divided into four sub-areas:

- 2A Boat Haven
- 2B Music Oval
- 2C Linear Park
- 2D Island and Lagoon

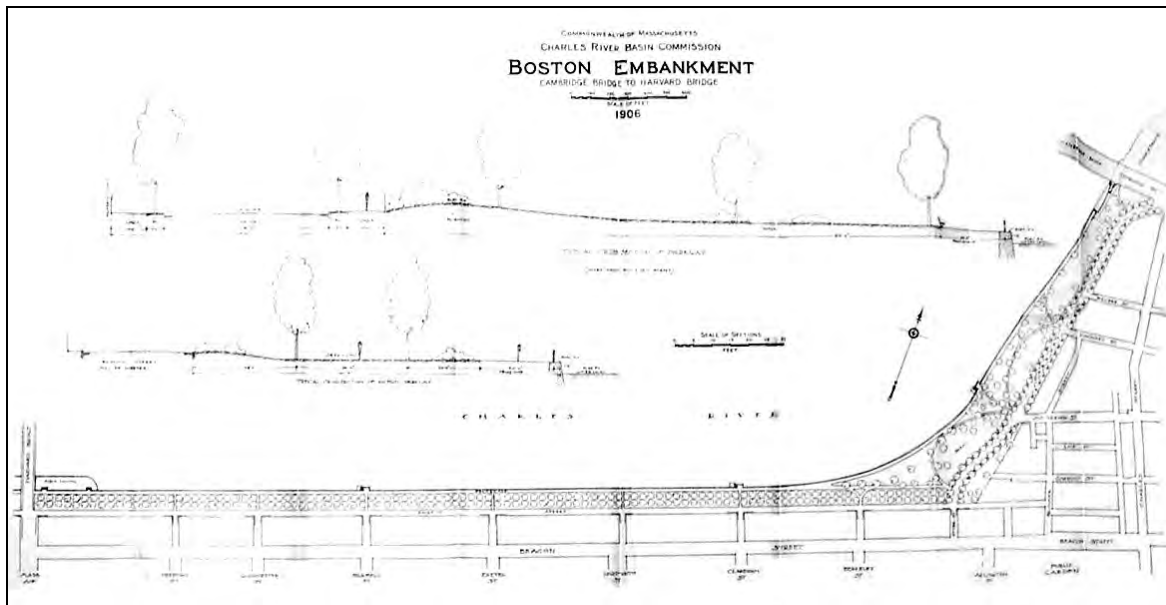


Figure 6.1 – Schematic 1906 plan of Back Bay section of the Esplanade. (DCR archives)



Figure 6.2 – Shurcliff's 1929 schematic plan for the Back Bay segment which was later modified. Parkway was not built until later. (DCR archives)



Figure 6.3 – Shurcliff's 1949 plan shows Storow Drive and the islands that were created in the early 1950s. (DCR archives)

GENERAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The Back Bay segment of the Esplanade retains many features that date to the 1930s, as well as additions from the 1950s. Although not always evident on the ground, in plan view it is still fairly easy to determine the earlier spatial organization of the park, which is reflected in the straight alignment of many of the paths.

While not actually part of the park, the seawall along the northern edge of Back Street is an important placemaker, as it delineates the water's edge from the 1870s until the early twentieth century. The land now occupied by Storrow Drive roughly corresponds with the first parkland north of the wall, which was completed in 1910. The path along the south side of the lagoons from roughly Berkeley Street to Exeter Street marks the edge of the second filling that occurred in the 1930s. The Boat Haven, Music Oval and Storrow Lagoon as well as the Dartmouth Street and Gloucester Street landings were also established in the 1930s. Storrow Drive and the island in its present form are the major features that date to the 1950s.

The landscape has finally achieved many of the objectives laid out more than a century ago. The water is now accessible, with boating available to a wide range of users. In fact the basin is often overcrowded during the summer months. The park is also lively, with runners, walkers, bicyclists and skaters enjoying the linear path system in all seasons. The music program has grown from the small informal concerts of the late 1920s to the extravaganza that the Fourth of July celebration has become.

The plantings of the park have matured. Early images show a bleak landscape with only small trees. The park now has a heavy tree canopy and extensive shade. There are few remaining shrub plantings, as many have disappeared over time and not been replaced. While the overall condition of the park is good, some features are deteriorated or under used. This is particularly true of built features.

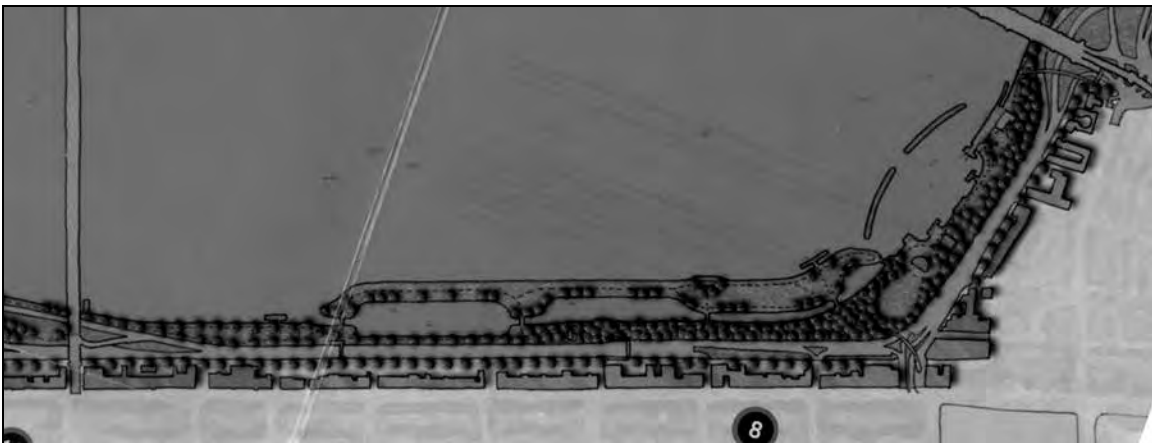


Figure 6.4 – Back Bay section of the Esplanade as shown in 2002 Master Plan. Longfellow Bridge is at the right and Harvard Bridge is at the left.

BOAT HAVEN AREA (2A)

The parkland along the Beacon Hill edge was a narrow strip by 1910 and was widened in the 1930s when the Boat Haven was established and the breakwater constructed. The Boat Haven area retains much of its 1930s character although facilities have been added and the trees have grown up significantly, giving the area a more wooded appearance. The area has also become less formal over time. (See figure 3.10 for 1930s aerial view of Boat Haven and Music Oval.) The Boat Haven area has been the subject of a recent planning study by Bourne Consulting Engineering that addresses deteriorated resources, landscape character, access and use.

Connection to Charles Street and Longfellow Bridge

Charles Street is a major entry into the Esplanade but the connections are awkward and unsightly. The steps from the bridge now connect with an island in a sea of roads and there is only an indirect connection to the pedestrian overpass that leads from the Charles Street subway station to the park. This area is unattractive and overgrown but recent pruning of the trees adjacent to the pedestrian bridge and new streetscape work in conjunction with the subway station are a substantial improvement.



Figure 6.5 – This picture, taken in 1932, shows the landscaped connection between the bridge and the park. (DCR archives)



Figure 6.6 – This picture from the pedestrian bridge shows a similar view. There is no longer a direct connection to the park.

Community Boating

The grey brick Community Boating building designed by Kilham, Hopkins and Greeley was constructed in 1941 at the eastern end of the Boat Haven specifically to provide a facility for public boating and was expanded in 1987 when the second story was added. The building retains much of its original character but the operation has grown substantially in the intervening years with expanded docks and fenced storage of a large number of boats.



Figure 6.7 – Community Boating building with second floor addition on the left.



Figure 6.8 – Waterfront view of Community Boating looking west.

Union Boat Club

The two-story hipped-roof Union Boat Club, built in 1909, is located at the western end of the Boat Haven. The appearance and operation of the boathouse have changed relatively little since then and the building is actively used. Building materials are stacked adjacent to the building on the west side, which is used as an informal parking lot.



Figure 6.9 – Union Boat Club building looking northeast.

Commissioners Landing

Commissioners Landing was designed by Arthur Shurcliff in the 1930s as a focal point at the eastern end of the Esplanade. It consists of a long straight classically detailed granite wall approximately 3' tall with balustrade and central granite steps leading down to the water. The ends of the basin curve to create a slightly enclosed space. There are two wooden docks in the recessed part of Commissioners Landing, both are for general public use; the western one is also used by Union Boat Club. Governors Landing is located immediately to the west of Commissioners Landing. The deteriorated docks in the Boat Haven were closed in 2006 as a safety precaution. Stonework associated with the landing is in poor condition but restoration of landing and docks is planned for 2007.ⁱ Inscriptions at either end of the steps commemorate the commissioners of the Metropolitan Park Commission and the Metropolitan District Commission.

The area adjacent to Commissioners Landing was once a more formal and symmetrical space that was originally intended as a plaza (see figure 3.10) and was more recently the site of a playground.ⁱⁱ The area is now covered with mulch and is used for backup parking and as a staging area for Fourth of July activities. Today it has heavy tree cover and does not have a strong connection to the landing.



Figure 6.10 – Commissioners Landing looking west from dock.



Figure 6.11 – Commissioners Landing looking east.

Breakwater

The breakwater was built in the 1930s to provide a protected area for small boats. It consists of two earthen islands that echo the shape at Commissioners Landing. (See figure 3.10.) Vegetation is managed by volunteers to keep the undergrowth low enough so that Community Boating can monitor the sailboats. There are 30-40 goose nests on the island, which is a target area for goose population stabilization.



Figure 6.12 – View of breakwater as seen from island.

Charles Eliot Memorial

Landscape architect Charles Eliot (1859-1897) was largely responsible for the establishment of the metropolitan park system. The Charles Eliot Memorial, a square monument and base that also serves as a bench, was designed by Arthur Shurcliff. It includes an inscription to Eliot and lists the metropolitan parks in each direction.ⁱⁱⁱ The area is used by Community Boating as an outdoor learning space but is not particularly welcoming. Some of the paving stones in the octagonal plaza are cracked; the area is heavily shaded; and grass growing through joints in pavers makes the area seem unkempt.



Figure 6.13 – View of Charles Eliot Memorial from the south.

Parkland along Storrow Drive

While the focal point of the Boat Haven area is on the water, there is also a strip of parkland between Commissioners Landing and Storrow Drive that provides a welcome screen from the roadway. It is a shady area with a heavy cover of mature trees. There is a path along the edge of Storrow Drive and another along the inland edge of the area. However there is no barrier separating the road from the parkland. Furnishings include Shurcliff benches, a few shade shelters, picnic tables, shoebox lights and trash receptacles.



Figure 6.14 – View west along path with Storrow Drive at the left.

MUSIC OVAL (2B)

Small informal concerts were held on the Esplanade as early as 1910. Arthur Fielder conducted the first Boston Pops concerts on the Esplanade in 1929.^{iv} The Music Oval was established in the early 1930s to provide a space for concerts, a tradition that has become increasingly popular in the intervening years. The focal point is the Hatch Shell and adjacent turfed area, which is now surrounded by monuments. While the Music Oval is open turf, most of the surrounding area is heavily planted with mature trees.

Hatch Shell

The Hatch Shell was constructed in 1940 and restored in 1990-91. The shell is heavily used for a wide range of events and generates a fair amount of traffic and parking, especially in association with large events such as the annual Fourth of July celebration. The seating area for the Hatch Shell is the lawn, which is impacted by the heavy use that the area receives.



Figure 6.15 – Hatch Shell with Music Oval in the foreground.



Figure 6.16 – Rear of Hatch Shell, which is used as a staging area.

Monuments and Memorials at Music Oval

The Music Oval is surrounded by monuments, most of which commemorate famous statesmen with Massachusetts connections. They are listed here (clockwise when facing the Hatch Shell) with supplemental information provided in Appendix A. They include:

- **General George Patton** – 1955, by James Earle Fraser. Bronze figure on pink granite base and pedestal.
- **Charles Devens** – 1893-96, by Olin Levi Warner. Bronze figure on gray granite base and pedestal. Moved here from State House grounds 1950.
- **David Ignatius Walsh** – 1954, by Joseph Coletti. Bronze figure with brown granite base and plinth. Partially obscured by trees.
- **Cherry Tree Plaque** – 1985. Inscribed pink granite boulder marking the gift of cherry trees from the government of Japan.
- **Maurice J. Tobin** – 1958, by Emilius R. Ciampa. Bronze figure on grey granite base.
- **Metropolitan Police Memorial** – Bronze plaque on pier adjacent to bridge commemorating the centennial of the metropolitan police force, 1893-1992.
- **David Mugar** – Cannon, in commemoration of his role in establishing the fireworks at the Hatch Shell. *“You bring the music and I’ll bring the cannon.”*
- **Edwin U. Curtis** – Circa 1924. Two large urns and plaque at bridge to island.



*Figure 6.17 – Top Row: Patton, Devens, Walsh, Tobin
Bottom Row: Cherry Trees, Police, Mugar, Curtis (one of two urns)*

Fiedler Footbridge and Embankment Sign

While most of the pedestrian bridges over Storrow Drive are not addressed in detail in this report, the Arthur Fiedler footbridge deserves special mention because of its unique character. It is a painted concrete structure with curvilinear lines that is distinctly different from all of the other pedestrian bridges in the Esplanade. It was built in 1952-54 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Esplanade concerts. A dedication plaque is located at the southern end of the bridge. The bridge is in need of structural repairs, as well as painting and improved lighting. Immediately adjacent to the south entrance of the bridge is a remnant sign from the 1930s identifying the area as the Storrow Memorial Embankment.

The inbound lane of Embankment Road, which extends from the Fiedler pedestrian bridge to Charles Circle, was renamed David G. Mugar Way in honor of Mugar's contribution to the Fourth of July celebration.



Figure 6.18 – View of Fiedler footbridge from the Music Oval.



Figure 6.19 – The one remaining Embankment sign from the 1930s.

Esplanade Café

There have been a series of refreshment buildings near the Music Oval. The present building west of the Hatch Shell was built in the 1980s on the site of the earlier concession stand. It is a single story shed roof building with appendages at the rear and outdoor seating in front. It is open seasonally. On event days, the café is supplemented by up to a dozen extra food carts that line the adjacent pathways



Figure 6.20 – Esplanade Café with seating area in the foreground.

Gondola Kiosk

A relatively recent addition to the Esplanade is an Italian gondola service that operates on the lagoon during the summer months. It includes a kiosk and two gondolas.



Figure 6.21 – Gondola kiosk near Esplanade Café.

LINEAR PARK (2C)

This section is the relatively narrow piece of parkland that extends west from the Music Oval to the Harvard Bridge. It is primarily characterized by the path, grass and trees with some focal features along the way. The island (section 2D) runs parallel to it with the lagoon in between.

Landscape Character

From roughly Berkeley Street to nearly Exeter Street, the path follows the alignment of the 1930s path along the water edge of the Esplanade. It is a paved path approximately 10' wide with center stripe. For much of this section there is no barrier between the park and Storow Drive. The landscape character is generally one of grass and mature deciduous trees, with a few shrubs. There are Shurcliff benches, a few shade shelters and several monuments and sculptures along the way. There are also a few electrical transformer boxes near Storow Drive.

From just before Exeter Street to just beyond Fairfield Street the adjacent Storow Lagoon is wider and the strip of parkland along Storow Drive narrows to approximately 20' wide, barely enough for the path and a narrow strip of grass with struggling honey locust trees. The presence of Storow Drive is particularly noticeable in this section, and because of the proximity there is a low metal fence between the road and the path.

Dartmouth Street Landing and Sanitary

The Dartmouth Street landing was created in the 1930s as a formal plaza at the end of a major street leading to the park. At that time there was a strong relationship between the park and the neighborhood, which has been severed by Storow Drive. The granite balustrade at the water's edge remains.^v Granite stairs lead down to the water but there is no longer a dock at the bottom. Major vegetative elements include grass and trees, but no ornamental plantings. On axis with Dartmouth Street in the center of the plaza is the MDC Centennial Memorial, which is discussed in more detail at the end of this section. A proposed boathouse for the plaza is shown on a 1949 plan of the area but it was never built. A distinctive feature of the Dartmouth Street landing is the presence of a regularly spaced grove of trees. The original grove was Norway maples, which were replaced with honey locusts some time after 1952 (probably at the time of the MDC centennial). There were still a few maples along the balustrade as late 2005 but these were removed for safety reasons. Today the area lacks a sense of place, perhaps because there are few benches and no reason to linger.

Adjacent to the landing is a one-story brick "Sanitary" which was designed by Holmes and Edwards Architects (1952-53). The restrooms are no longer functioning and the building is now used as storage space by the Model Sailing Club, The Esplanade Association and the Department of Conservation and Recreation.



Figure 6.22 – View of Dartmouth Street landing looking west.



Figure 6.23 – Dartmouth Street sanitary.

Gloucester Street Landing

The Gloucester Street landing is similar to the one at Dartmouth Street. It is on axis with Gloucester Street and has a classical granite balustrade and dock at the water's edge and a paved path running through it. Unlike the Dartmouth Street landing, however, the Norway maples that Shurcliff intended still remain (although they are in poor condition) and there are benches in the plaza area. The focal point is the Storrow Memorial with the surrounding perennial garden, which has recently been replanted by The Esplanade Association.



Figure 6.24 – Linear parkland and path near Fairfield Street looking towards Gloucester Street landing.



Figure 6.25 – View of Gloucester Street landing looking west.

Stoneman Playground

The Stoneman Playground (named for Sidney and Miriam Stoneman), located at the far western end of Segment 2, is divided into two separate areas, one for very young children and another for slightly older children. This area, which was the site of an earlier playground, was recently rebuilt (reopened in 2001) and is heavily used.



Figure 6.26 – View of Stoneman Playground looking east with lagoon at the left and Storrow Drive at the right.

Storrow Drive Edge

Storrow Drive forms the southern edge of the Esplanade for its entire length. In some parts of Segment 2, there is enough space and vegetation that the impact of the roadway is softened. However in some areas, particularly where the lagoon widens, the parkland is narrow and the impact of Storrow Drive is high. When Storrow Drive was built, there was fencing along the entire boundary with the park, but much of that has disappeared over time, making the road seem even closer.



Figure 6.27 – Some of the original 1950s fencing along Storrow Drive remains near the lagoon.

Monuments and Memorials in Linear Park Area

There are a number of monuments along this section of the Esplanade. They are listed from east to west. There is supplemental information about many of the monuments in Appendix A.

- ***Lotta Fountain*** – 1939, sculptor was Katherine Lane Weems. Located between Berkeley and Clarendon Streets. Fountain (not operative for the past 5-6 years) with sculpture of dog and small plaza near Storrow Drive named for its benefactor Lotta Crabtree.
- ***Trimblod X Sculpture*** – 1970, metal sculpture by David Kibbey. Located between Clarendon and Dartmouth Streets.
- ***MDC Centennial Memorial*** – Created in 1993 to honor the centennial of the metropolitan park system. Located at Dartmouth Street landing. Monument is a circular bronze plaque set in granite paving.
- ***Oliver Wendell Holmes Memorial*** – 1914, by architects were Parker, Thomas and Rice. Semicircular granite bench with central short round pillar (which originally held a sundial) in small plaza. Located between Dartmouth and Exeter Streets. Moved to its present location circa 1950 to make room for Storrow Drive.
- ***Storrow Memorial*** – 1936. Large circular gray granite base with bronze plaque honoring James and Helen Storrow. At Gloucester Street landing on small plaza with surrounding perennial beds.



Figure 6.28 – Top Row: Lotta, “X”, Holmes, Bottom Row: MDC Centennial, Storrow.

ISLAND AND LAGOON (2D)

Island Character

The western-most segment of the lagoon, known as the Storrow Lagoon, was built in the 1930s to provide a sheltered area for canoes and model boats. The northern edge was created by an island that was accessible at either end by a granite arched bridge that canoes and small boats could pass under. When Storrow Drive was constructed in the early 1950s the island was extended eastward all the way to the Music Oval, creating a long narrow island of varying width. (See figure 6.3 for plan of island.)

The island is in three sections. The eastern part, which extends roughly from the Music Oval to Clarendon Street, is fairly wide, has a dual path system and there is a dock on the river side. The Arthur Fiedler memorial, which commemorates the famous Boston Pops conductor, is located here. It was sculpted by Ralph Helmick in 1984.



Figure 6.29 - The Arthur Fiedler memorial is located on the eastern end of the island near the Music Oval.



Figure 6.30 – View of island from eastern end looking west with river at right.

The middle part of the island extends from Clarendon Street to just east of Exeter Street. It is narrower than the eastern part with a single path and less vegetation. A primary characteristic of this area is the broad views across the Charles River.



Figure 6.31 – Narrower western part of island looking west.

The western part of the island is also narrow but has a different character because it has more mature vegetation, including a number of very large willows. Cherry trees have recently been planted here as well. There is a dual path system in the wider parts of the island, which becomes a single path in the western part.

There is a small, inscribed boulder identifying a grove of birch trees near Exeter Street as the Otis Grove, in memory of State Representative William F. Otis and his wife who were murdered in their Back Bay apartment in 1968.



Figure 6.32 – Otis Grove area.

Lagoon

The lagoon is in two parts. The wider western part built in the 1930s is known as the Storrow Lagoon. It is a long oval about 230' wide and about 950' with granite-lined edges, which give it a formal character. The eastern part that was added in the 1950s is narrower and somewhat irregular in its alignment with generally wooded banks. It has riprap walls and passes under four bridges. Opposite the Dartmouth Street landing there is a fountain in the newer section of lagoon that was originally installed in 1993 as a three-tiered fountain to celebrate the MDC centennial. The present fountain is a single spray floating replacement that was installed by the company that operates the gondola concession. It floats around the lagoon and does not have the same axial relationship as the earlier fountain.

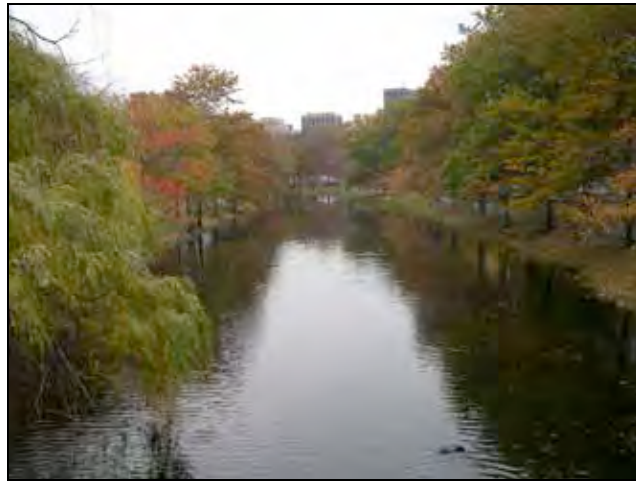


Figure 6.33 – Narrow tree-lined eastern section of lagoon.



Figure 6.34 – Western part of lagoon with centennial fountain.

Bridges

There are five bridges that connect the island with the lagoon. The two westernmost bridges were built in the 1930s when the original lagoon was built. The other three date to the 1950s. The easternmost bridge near the Music Oval has two urns on it commemorating Edwin U. Curtis. This area is described in conjunction with section 2B.



Figure 6.35 – Original granite bridge with new railing.

ⁱ See Mills Whitaker Architects, *Assessment Report for the Restoration of Historic Landings, Charles River Esplanade* (Boston: Metropolitan District Commission, 1999).

ⁱⁱ The 2002 base maps show a playground in this location.

ⁱⁱⁱ For additional information on monuments and memorials, see Appendix A.

^{iv} The first music shell was built in 1929; the second in 1934 and the present Hatch Shell in 1940. For further information about the history of music on the Esplanade, see Karl Haglund, *Inventing the Charles River*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 227.

^v For details regarding the Dartmouth Street Landing, see Mills Whitaker, *Assessment Report*.

BACKGROUND

Charlesgate/Upper Park is the westernmost segment of the Boston Esplanade. It extends from the Harvard Bridge on the east to the Boston University Bridge on the west. Like the other two segments, it is bordered on the north by the Charles River and on the south by Storrow Drive. It is roughly a mile long and is narrow, ranging between 30' and 230' wide.

Charlesgate and the Bay State Road area were the last section of the Esplanade to be filled. In the 1870s the condition of the Muddy River was a major problem that was impeding westward expansion of the Back Bay. Like the Charles, the Muddy River was a tidal estuary that had become an open sewer. Frederick Law Olmsted's design for the Muddy River, undertaken for the Boston Park Commission in the 1870s, created a retention basin surrounded by parkland that later became known as the Back Bay Fens. While the Muddy River and the Fens are part of the Boston park system rather than the metropolitan park system, resolution of this issue was closely related to the design of the Esplanade.

West of Charlesgate the seawall turned slightly north and followed the alignment of the newly established Commonwealth Avenue with Bay State Road running parallel to it on the north. The alley on the north side of Bay State Road was a continuation of Back Street and was similar to the section further east, a service area with no pretense at being parkland. Some filling was done between the Harvard Bridge and the Beacon Entrance of the Muddy River at Charlesgate in the early 1900s as part of the creation of the Charles River basin, but at that time the narrow strip of parkland extended only as far west as Charlesgate. Further west, Back Street still formed the northern edge of the land.

Additional filling was done in the 1930s as part of the creation of the Storrow Memorial Embankment. At this time a 155' wide strip of parkland was extended west from Charlesgate to the Boston University Bridge. When Storrow Drive was built along the south side of the Charles River in the 1950s, the parkland was widened again to compensate for the taking of land. This time the shoreline was undulating rather than straight. Construction of the Bowker Overpass in the 1960s resulted in further filling at Charlesgate, with much of the new land area dominated by overhead highway ramps.

For the purpose of this analysis, this segment of the Esplanade has been divided into two sub-areas:

- 3A Charlesgate/Bowker Overpass Area (eastern end)
- 3B Upper Park (western end)

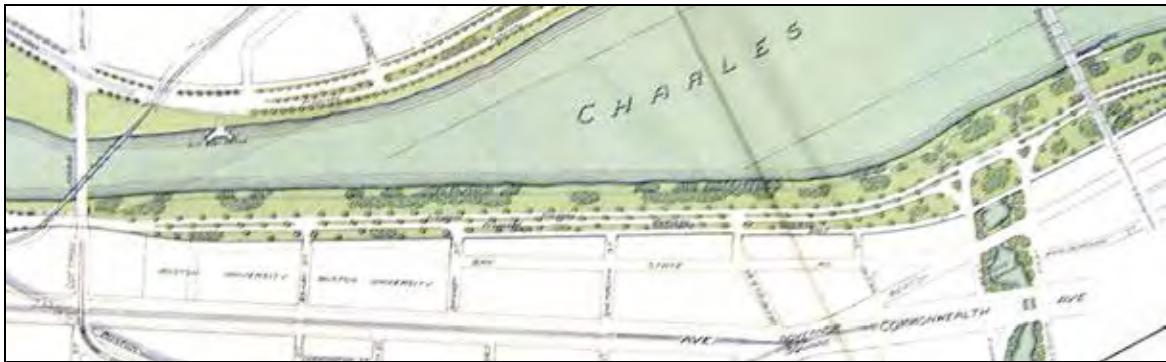


Figure 7.1 – Arthur Shurcliff's 1929 schematic plan for Charlesgate. The road shown in this early proposal was not built at that time. (DCR archives)

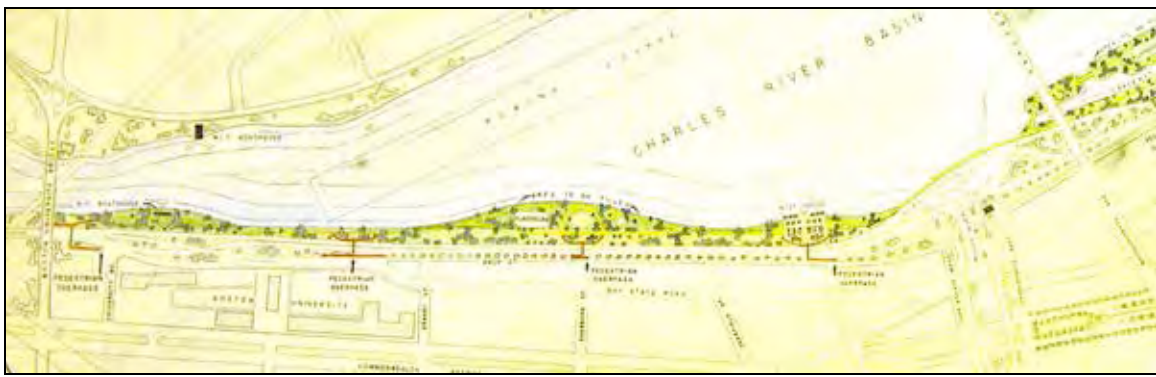


Figure 7.2 – This conceptual 1949 plan by Arthur Shurcliff shows the large amount of land that was taken for construction of Storrow Drive and the additional parkland that was created in the early 1950s to compensate. The undulations were created to make the shoreline more interesting. (DCR archives)



Figure 7.3 – 2002 Master Plan. Harvard Bridge is at the right, Boston University Bridge is at the left. Charlesgate and the Bowker Overpass are at the right near the number 10 with the linear parkland extending to the left.

GENERAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The Charlesgate/Upper Park segment of the Esplanade is in two distinct sections. The eastern part is dominated by the Bowker Overpass which occupies much of the parkland, forcing the pedestrian path into a narrow strip between the road and the river. West of the overpass is a long strip of linear park that is more spacious and is characterized by grass, trees, path and water's edge. As this section of parkland is narrow, Storrow Drive is a dominant presence immediately adjacent to the park. There are relatively few structures and recreational features in this segment.

Olmsted's intended design for the Beacon Entrance, which connected the Muddy River and the Charles River, has been all but obliterated with the addition of new parkland out into the river in the early twentieth century, construction of Storrow Drive in the 1950s and the addition of the Bowker Overpass in the 1960s. On the other hand, the Upper Park section to the west of Charlesgate largely reflects Shurcliff's design intent for this area.



Figure 7.4 – In the section of parkland immediately west of the Harvard Bridge, Storrow Drive, which is three lanes wide in each direction, crowds the path and parkland into a narrow strip of land.



Figure 7.5 – West of the Bowker Overpass the parkland widens and the shoreline is undulating with mature trees.

CHARLESGATE/BOWKER OVERPASS AREA (3A)

The Charlesgate/Bowker Overpass area is one of the most dramatically changed sections of the Esplanade. Olmsted and Shurcliff's designs for the area have been almost completely obscured by construction of additional land and roadways. Important remnants of the early history of this area are the pedestrian bridge and the gatehouse, both originally at the junction of the two rivers but now lost in a maze of roadways.

Bowker Overpass

The Bowker Overpass was constructed between 1964 and 1966 to provide a vehicular connection between Storrow Drive and Boston's Emerald Necklace parkways. It obliterated what remained of the Beacon Entrance and seriously compromised the Esplanade parkland in this area.



Figure 7.6 – This 1960s view shows the gatehouse at the lower right and the pedestrian bridge in the center. (DCR archives)



Figure 7.7 – Pedestrian path squeezed between river and Storrow Drive with Bowker Overpass overhead and the westbound lane of Storrow Drive on the right.

Gatehouse

The Fens Gatehouse, built in 1909, was designed by Walter R. Kattelle for the Charles River Basin Commission. It was originally located adjacent to the Charles River promenade. Over time the adjacent area has been filled out into the river leaving the gatehouse surrounded by highway ramps and completely devoid of its context.



Figure 7.8 – Fens Gatehouse ca. 1910. Path at the left was along the river’s edge. (DCR archives)



Figure 7.9 – Fens Gatehouse today.

Pedestrian Bridge

The pedestrian bridge near the original mouth of the Muddy River was part of Olmsted’s design for the Beacon Entrance. Today the stagnant Muddy River and the bridge are all but lost beneath the Bowker Overpass.



Figure 7.10 – View of Muddy River and pedestrian bridge.

Railing at Water's Edge

The railing at the edge of the Charles River was erected in the early 1950s when Storrow Drive was constructed. The substructure is concrete and the upper part is granite. It was intended as a formal element in the park to mark the Beacon Entrance but with construction of the Bowker Overpass, it has been crowded by the westbound lane of Storrow Drive.



Figure 7.11 – Railing, path and willow trees with Harvard Bridge in the background.

Path and Parkland along the River's Edge

The parkland along the river's edge is unusually narrow at Charlesgate due to land taking for Bowker Overpass and reflects little of the intended landscape character. The path shifts its alignment as needed to accommodate the overhead highway ramps and there is little space for plantings. One exception is on either side of the overpass where there are groves of weeping willow trees that are a distinctive feature of the Esplanade, particularly in the early spring when they turn green long before other waterfront vegetation.

Parkland Surrounded by Roads

While the parkland along the river's edge is particularly narrow, there are areas of parkland between the highway ramps that are largely inaccessible to the public, although they contribute to the parkway-like character of Storrow Drive. The largest area is immediately to the west of the Harvard Bridge between the inbound and outbound sections of Storrow Drive. There was at one time an exit ramp from the bridge onto Storrow Drive that was removed when the bridge was reconstructed in the 1980s. The area is attractively landscaped with mature trees but it feels isolated and unsafe and the gate leading to the area has been welded shut. The area under the Bowker Overpass is unattractive and feels unsafe.



Figure 7.12 – Area west of Harvard Bridge where access ramp was previously located.

UPPER PARK (3B)

This area extends west from the Bowker Overpass to the Boston University Bridge, a distance of roughly 4,000'. Unlike the area to the east, it reflects the design intent of the Esplanade and functions well as parkland. The general landscape character is described in the beginning of this chapter. More specific details are discussed here.

Landform and River's Edge

This section of the park is entirely filled land that was created in several stages. The most recent filling occurred in the early 1950s when additional parkland was created to compensate for land taking associated with construction of Storrow Drive. The river edge is undulating with two areas where it widens to create additional parkland.

The undulating shoreline, riprap and low vegetation along the water's edge, create a naturalistic appearance that is an important characteristic of this part of the park. Vegetation consists of mature trees, primarily deciduous, but also including some evergreens between the path and Storrow Drive. There are a large number of oaks as well as maples, ashes, willows, lindens and cherries planted in irregular groves. In a few areas there are some overgrown shrub plantings that may date to the 1950s.



Figure 7.13 – Typical view along linear park area. Note worn path at left.

The path is paved with asphalt and is about 9-10' wide for most of its length with a center stripe to delineate lanes. The path is straight for most of its length but splits into two paths where the land widens towards the western end. There is also a secondary path where the land widens at near Sherborn Street. The path is part of the Dr. Paul Dudley White Charles River Bike Path. As the path reaches Boston University Bridge, there is no room for it to pass between Storrow Drive and the bridge

abutment so it jogs to the right and continues under the bridge on a wooden pedestrian bridge cantilevered out over the water. There are two pedestrian bridges over Storrow Drive. The one near the Boston University Law School is older and in poor condition while the one near Sherborn Street is newer and includes a handicapped ramp.

Site furnishings include Shurcliff benches, several picnic tables, trash receptacles and shoebox lights. All appear to be in fairly good condition. There is also a late twentieth century exercise station near Sherborn Street in the widest section of parkland and two concrete electrical transformer boxes that provide power to the park lighting. Canada geese can be found in this area.

Storrow Drive

West of the Bowker Overpass, Storrow Drive narrows from six lanes to four although there are pullouts in some sections for emergency use. The road is straight and runs parallel to Back Street. It is separated from the park by a 3' tall metal picket fence that probably dates to the construction of Storrow Drive in the 1950s. In some cases the road is very close to the park path while in other places there is more room.



Figure 7.14 – Relationship of pedestrian path and Storrow Drive in one of the narrower sections of parkland.

Dock

Located roughly opposite Deerfield Street is a dock that provides access to the river. It is a rectangular platform roughly 135' feet long by 18' wide with three indentation on the water side. Although the idea of landings to provide access to the water dates back to the early years of the Esplanade, the current dock is a relatively recent replacement for an earlier wooden dock and is made of synthetic materials. The dock is open to the public and is also used by the Northeastern sailing team.



Figure 7.15 – View of dock with Harvard Bridge in the background.

Boston University Sailing Pavilion

The Boston University Sailing Pavilion was built circa 1940 with an addition in 1946. It is a long narrow one-story hipped-roof building with shed roof and various types of wooden siding. It is located immediately east of the Boston University Bridge. Associated with the pavilion is a boat dock. This busy facility is used primarily for sailing and kayaking. Boston University has recently constructed a large boathouse on the Cambridge side of the river that is used by university crew teams.



Figure 7.16 – View of Boston University Sailing Pavilion and dock looking west with Boston University Bridge and railroad bridge in the background.

Boston University Bridge and B&M Railroad Bridge

The Boston University Bridge, which forms the western edge of the Charlesgate Area, was constructed between 1923 and 1928 to replace the 1851 Cottage Farm Bridge. It was designed by Haven and Hoyt Architects who also designed several other bridges across the Charles River (River Street, Western Avenue and Arsenal Street). It is presently in poor condition and there is no direct connection between the bridge and parkland. Access is via a pedestrian bridge located a short distance downstream near the Boston University Law School. There is no room for the path to continue along the shoreline so it passes out onto a pedestrian walkway over the water. The section of parkland west of the Boston University Bridge, which is part of the Charles River Reservation but not part of the Esplanade, is extremely narrow. The B&M Railroad Bridge, built circa 1928 passes under the Boston University Bridge.



Figure 7.17 – Pedestrian walkway passing under the Boston University and B&M Bridges, view looking west.

This chapter is in two parts. The first lists major landscape principles associated with the history of the park. The second identifies key park elements that are character defining features of the Esplanade.

OVERVIEW/LANDSCAPE PRINCIPLES

Period of Significance

The history of the Esplanade has been one of almost continuous change. Unlike some landscapes that have a single primary period of significance, each phase in the development of the Esplanade represents a distinct period that has historical significance in its own right. The major periods are as follows:

- **1880s/90s** – Construction of Olmsted designed park at Charlesbank and creation of Metropolitan Park Commission’s Charles River Reservation.
- **1910s** – Damming of Charles River and construction of narrow strip of parkland from Longfellow Bridge to Charlesgate.
- **1930s** – Expansion and redesign of Esplanade parkland by Arthur Shurcliff. It was during this period that many of the more formal and architectural features of the present Esplanade were established, as well as a distinct landscape character.
- **1950s** – Construction of Storrow Drive with corresponding addition and redesign of parkland.

While the Esplanade as we know it today incorporates elements from each of these periods, the core of the present landscape is the Shurcliff design of the 1930s. It was at this point that the western end was expanded from Charlesgate to the Boston University Bridge and that the major elements of the park, particularly the middle section, were established. As Shurcliff was also involved in the 1950s design, there is a consistency of approach between these two periods.

Regional Landscape

The Esplanade is part of the Charles River Reservation and the metropolitan park system. Most park users probably do not perceive the Esplanade as a distinct and separate entity but rather as part of the larger reservation. Decisions made with regard to the Esplanade must acknowledge and respect this heritage and the design tradition that comes with it. This is most evident in the design details associated with the Charles River Reservation: railings along the river; park furnishings such

as benches and shade shelters; signage and design consistency along the length of Storrow Drive and the bicycle path.

Linear Park Corridor

Related to the idea of the regional landscape is the notion of a linear park. Many people value the Esplanade as part of a regional corridor that allows them to bicycle, skate, run or walk largely unimpeded for miles. The connection from the old Charles River dam to Watertown is well established. The connection downstream to the new Charles River dam is still evolving and will create new opportunities for connecting the Esplanade with parkland to the east.

Connection to the City

The Esplanade was intended as a park that was directly connected to the city that it served. Formal elements like the Dartmouth and Gloucester Street landings were built on axis with the city streets, which were narrow and lightly traveled enough to make pedestrian access easy. The Longfellow Bridge was built with steps leading down to the Esplanade. Storrow Drive now separates the parkland from the city. Access from the south is now almost entirely via pedestrian bridges that are often difficult to locate and unattractively sited along Back Street.

Parkways

Parkways were envisioned as part of the Esplanade from the beginning, but what Olmsted, Eliot and Shurcliff had in mind were narrow two lane park roads that were primarily for enjoying the scenery. Storrow Drive was built to serve a very different need, and functions as part of the regional transportation system. Some early proposals suggested a partially sunken roadway with adjacent land bermed up so that the road would be barely visible or audible from the park. A key principal associated with construction of Storrow Drive was that any land taken for the road would be mitigated by creation of an equal amount of new parkland.

Liveliness/Activity

In the 1890s a key element of Charles Eliot's vision for the Charles River Basin was that the parkland be a place of liveliness and activity. His view was inspired by the Alster Basin in Hamburg, Germany. Olmsted's 1890s design for Charlesbank fulfilled this expectation and even broke new ground in terms of athletic facilities in the United States. The 1910 Esplanade was a disappointment however; it was hot, with few benches, no shade and limited access to the water, which was choppy and difficult for small boats to use. Shurcliff's design of the 1930s solved this problem with creation of the Boat Haven, Music Oval and landings, which brought new life to the Esplanade and the river. Over time organized activities such as the Hatch Shell concerts, Fourth of July

events and fundraising walks have grown and now threaten to overwhelm the parkland.

Places and Place Names

An important aspect of Shurcliff's design was to create "activity centers" which were identified with distinct names: Boat Haven, Music Oval, Dartmouth and Gloucester Street landings, that contribute to defining the area and making it an identifiable entity.

Passive Recreation

Another key premise of the Esplanade was that it provide a place where urban residents could get away from the noise and cares of the city to enjoy fresh air, scenic views and a sense of space. Passive recreation remains a vital component of the Esplanade, a place where people of all ages can go to read, think, stroll, sunbathe, explore, talk to friends. Individual users are often less vocal about the needs of the park than organized groups, but in many parks they comprise the majority of the users.

Stewardship and Infrastructure

From the 1890s to the 1950s the Esplanade has undergone major transitions and an infusion of capital every 20 years for more than a century. It has now been over 50 years since there has been a major investment of public funds and much of the infrastructure of the Esplanade is crumbling, a situation that is evident throughout the metropolitan park system. The efforts of The Esplanade Association have mitigated this situation to some extent but they have concentrated on specific park elements rather than infrastructure.

CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES

The landscape character of the Esplanade has evolved over time, with distinct features associated with each of the three major periods:

- **1890s** – Key features of Charlesbank as designed by the Olmsted firm were: a vertical edge to the river created by a granite seawall with metal railing; a wide promenade with benches; open turf areas with scattered trees; men's and women's gymnasias at either end.
- **1910s** – The Charles River Basin Commission created a linear park 100' wide with seawall; promenade; lights and turf area. The Back Street wall formed the southern edge of the park. Plantings, consisting of shrubs along the Back Street wall and trees in rows along the path, were added a few years later, as were benches and shade shelters.

-
- **1930s** – The Esplanade took on a very different character in the 1930s when the edge was softened and focal elements in a Neo-Classical style were added, giving a new formality to the park. By this time the original plantings had grown and the park had a more established appearance.

Water's Edge

From the 1870s to the early 1930s, the water's edge was entirely seawall, separating park users from the river and limiting access to the water. Now almost all of the water's edge is a softer landscape, with the parkland extending to the water. In most cases there is riprap to stabilize the edge and low plantings have grown up. Other than the Back Street wall (which is no longer at the water's edge), only a small area of the early seawall remains, notably the section of 1880s wall at Charlesbank behind the wading pool and the circa 1908 wall in the area of the lock. The landings, created in the 1930s, represent another edge condition, as do the docks, which were designed to facilitate access to the water. The granite coping of the Storrow Lagoon is another edge condition.

City Edge

Although no longer an integral element of the park, the Back Street wall, which lies on the south side of Storrow Drive for much of the Back Bay and Upper Park sections of the Esplanade, is an important feature that initially formed the southern edge of the Esplanade and now forms the southern edge of Storrow Drive, which runs along the southern edge of the Esplanade for its entire length. In the 1950s there was a low metal picket fence separating the road and the park. Some sections of this fence remain; in other cases there is no longer a barrier, while in still other places a standard metal guardrail separates the park and the road.

Vegetation

Plantings from the early years of the Esplanade were more elaborate than what presently exists and depended on more grounds maintenance than is realistic today. Olmsted and Shurcliff both used primarily a limited palette of large deciduous trees that would do well in urban conditions, although Shurcliff also used hawthorns (which are smaller ornamental trees) in his 1952 planting and there are a few evergreens. Some of the earlier trees were planted in straight rows along the edge of the promenade or the adjacent roadway, while trees internal to the park were placed more informally, often in same species groupings. (See plant lists in Appendix B.) Groupings of shrubs were used by both Olmsted at Charlesbank in the 1890s; by Guy Lowell along the Back Street wall in 1911; and by Shurcliff in the 1930s and 1950s. Concern from the 1910s was that the park was totally lacking in shade, making the park hot and uncomfortable in summer months. Today this is no longer the case, the current palette of vegetation is mature although greatly simplified, with few shrubs. Small ornamental trees were generally not used except in conjunction with shrub plantings along the Back Street wall.

Pedestrian Circulation System

The path system is an integral feature of the park. In most places it is no longer the formal promenade along the seawall that characterized the park in its early years, but rather runs further away from the water's edge in a more informal alignment that responds to the changing character of the shoreline. In some cases there is a dual path system. All paths are bituminous.

Buildings

Buildings serve as focal features in the landscape. Most of the extant buildings date to pre-1950. The buildings within the Esplanade fall into three categories of historical significance.

Significant Historic Buildings

Buildings that are significant to the history of the Esplanade:

- Upper and Lower Lock Gatehouses
- Community Boating Building
- Union Boat Club
- Hatch Shell
- Fens Gatehouse

Secondary Historic Buildings

These include buildings that are more than 50 years old but that are not primary historic resources:

- Garage adjacent to lock houses
- Lee Pool Complex
- Dartmouth Street Sanitary
- Boston University Sailing Pavilion

Buildings Less than 50 Years Old

These buildings are not historically significant:

- Equipment Building at Wading Pool
- Concession Stand near Lee Pool
- Concession Stand near Hatch Shell
- Gondola Kiosk

Structures

With the exception of the Back Street wall, which is of paramount importance to the history of the Esplanade and the Back Bay, only features that are internal to the Esplanade are included here.

Significant Historic Structures

Structures that are important to the history of the Esplanade:

- Charles River Lock
- Remnant sections of granite seawall at Charlesbank
- Fiedler Footbridge
- Commissioners Landing
- Breakwater at Boat Haven
- Dartmouth Street Landing
- Gloucester Street Landing
- Island Bridges (over Lagoon)
- Granite curbing at Storrow Lagoon
- Charlesgate Landing
- Longfellow Bridge
- Harvard Bridge
- Boston University Bridge

Monuments

All monuments within the Esplanade should be considered either artistically or historically significant. See complete list in Appendix A.

Furnishings

Park furnishings rarely have a long life. In most cases extant furnishings are reproductions, such as the Shurcliff bench, or are modern fixtures designed to meet contemporary standards and needs, such as the shoebox lights, utilitarian trash containers and the concrete drinking fountains. There are a few remnants of early furnishings. They include:

- Remnant early fencing on top of seawall behind Wading Pool
- Remnants of 1950s fencing along Storrow Drive and at Charlesbank
- Remnant historic sign south of Fiedler Overpass

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APPENDIX A: HISTORIC RESOURCES

This list is drawn from DCR records and onsite observations made during 2006. The list includes only features within the Esplanade itself; it does not include the bridges across the river, Storrow Drive or the pedestrian overpasses over Storrow Drive. The list is broken into four categories: buildings, structures, monuments and furnishings. Each of the four categories is organized by segment, from east to west. Landscape features (such as plantings and paths) are discussed in the text of this report but are not listed here.

BUILDINGS

Lower Lock Gatehouse (Police Station)

Segment 1A

Two-story brown brick building with tower, built 1908, small addition at rear. Architect was Guy Lowell. Poor condition overall, although roof and gutter work was recently completed.

Garage

Segment 1A

Four-car two-story hipped roof yellow brick garage built in 1937 (see figure 5.6). Used as garage/storage. Poor condition. (Described in 1942 MDC list as Garage and Stop Plank House)

Upper Lock Gatehouse

Segment 1A

One-story brown brick hipped roof building built in 1908 (see figure 5.6). Architect was Guy Lowell. Poor condition.

Equipment Building at Wading Pool

Segment 1B

Brick one story building with gable roof. Houses wading pool equipment (see figure 5.9). Late 20th century (does not appear in 1952 photo). Good condition.

Concession Stand near Lee Pool

Segment 1C

One-story building with sloping roof and brick base (see figure 5.9). Ca. 1960s. Good condition. Limited use in 2006.

Lee Pool Complex

Segment 1C

Completed in 1951. Pool area includes brick building, outdoor pool, diving pool and bleachers (see figures 5.14-5.16). Poor condition, pool facilities are obsolete and no longer useable.

Community Boating Building

Segment 2A

Grey brick, built 1941, architect was Kilham, Hopkins & Greeley. Second story added 1987. Good/fair condition, actively used (see figures 6.7-6.8).

Union Boat Club

Segment 2A

Built 1909. (see figure 6.9). Good/fair condition.

Music Shell (Hatch Shell)

Segment 2B

The first music shell was built in 1929. A larger shell was built in 1934. The present Hatch Shell was completed in 1940, with the adjacent restrooms constructed in 1960-61. It was restored in the early 1990s (see figures 6.15 and 6.16). Good/fair condition.

Concession Stand near Hatch Shell (Esplanade Café)

Segment 2B

One story wood building with appendages at rear, ca. 1980s (see figure 6.20). Good/fair condition.

Gondola Kiosk near Hatch Shell

Segment 2B

Small kiosk, early 21st century (see figure 6.21). Good condition.

Dartmouth Street Sanitary

Segment 2C

One story brick building with copper roof, 1952-53, architects were Holmes and Edwards (see figure 6.23). Fair condition.

Fens Gatehouse

Segment 3A

Stone and granite one-story structure, built 1909 to control flow of water from Muddy River into Charles River. Architect was Walter R. Kattelle (1878-1970). Located underneath Bowker Overpass (see figure 7.8 and 7.9). Poor condition.

Boston University Sailing Pavilion

Segment 3B

Long narrow one-story shed-like building with hipped roof. Built 1940, with addition in 1946. Fair condition.

Note: There were also several early buildings that were demolished. They were: Men's and Women's Gymnasia at Charlesbank (built 1890s, demolished??) (see figure 2.8); Tea House near Berkeley Street (built 1913, demolished ca. 1950) (see figure 2.9); Recreation Building near Fairfield Street (built 1939, demolished ca. 1950) (see figure 3.10); Underground Sanitary near Embankment Road (construction date???, probably demolished ca. 1950).

STRUCTURES

Charles River Lock

Segment 1A

Built as part of Charles River dam project, 1908 (see figure 5.5 and 5.6). Granite block walls with concrete and bituminous paving. Condition of lock appears to be fair but pavement is poor.

Granite Seawall

Segment 1B

Part of the granite block seawall behind the wading pool dates to construction of the original Charlesbank park in the 1880s and is significant for its age and as evidence of early park history (see figure 5.10), as is the fence on top of it.

Commissioners Landing

Segment 2A

Designed by Arthur Shurcliff in 1930s. Presently in poor condition but restoration is planned for 2007. There are several docks associated with Commissioners Landing. Includes plaque honoring past commissioners (see figure 6.10 and 6.11). See Mills Whitaker Report for detailed description and condition assessment.

Breakwater

Segment 2A

The breakwater was built in the 1930s to calm the water near the landing and boathouses. It is arched in shape and is made of earth and boulders with trees on top (see figure 6.12).

Dartmouth Street Landing

Segment 2C

Granite balustrade and steps built ca. 1933 as part of Shurcliff design (see figure 6.22). Fair condition. See Mills Whitaker Report.

Gloucester Street Landing

Segment 2C

Granite balustrade and steps built ca. 1933 as part of Shurcliff design (see figure 6.24 and 6.25). Fair condition. See Mills Whitaker Report.

Island Bridges

Segment 2C/D

Five pedestrian bridges connect the island with the lagoon. Two were built in the 1930s (see figure 6.36) of granite blocks. The other three date to the 1950s.

Charlesgate Landing

Segment 3A

Granite balustrade similar to those found at other landings. Built 1950s when Storrow Drive was constructed?

Docks

Various

Found at various locations including at most of the landings, at the lagoon and near Boston University. All are of recent origin, condition varies.

MONUMENTS AND MEMORIALS

Note: DCR plans library has plans showing original site of pre-1949 memorials and proposed relocation in anticipation of the construction of Storrow Drive ("Storrow Memorial Embankment, Relocation of Memorials, September 9, 1949," DCR# 28675-28684).

Lederman Monument

Segment 1D

Inscribed boulder honoring Dr. Melvin Lederman, ca. 1974. Recently the entire ballfield area was designated Lederman Park while the fields were renamed the Teddy Ebersol Red Sox Fields at Lederman Park. (See figure 5.18.)

Teddy Ebersol Red Sox Fields

Segment 1D

Fields have recently been renovated and are now known as the Teddy Ebersol Red Sox Fields, in honor of a young Red Sox fan who was killed in a plane crash. In 2006 a bench was installed with a bronze glove at the backstop as the memorial to Teddy Ebersol but there is no text associated with the monument.

Charles Eliot Memorial

Segment 2A, near Community Boating

Honors landscape architect Charles Eliot (1859-1897) who was instrumental in early plans for the Esplanade. Designed by Arthur Shurcliff, plans in DCR archives are dated 1938. Four-sided granite block with granite bench around perimeter set in octagonal plaza with stone pavers (see figure 6.13). Each face of the monument (north, east, south and west) lists the metropolitan parks in that direction.

Arthur Fiedler Footbridge

Segment 2B, near Hatch Shell

Erected 1952-54 in honor of the Boston Pops conductor. Architect was Coolidge Shepley Bulfinch & Abbott, landscape architect was Shurcliff & Shurcliff.

David G. Mugar Way

Adjacent to Section 2B

In June 1998 the inbound section of Embankment Road from Arlington Street to Charles Street Circle was renamed David G. Mugar Way. The outbound section is still known as Embankment Road.

Note: There are multiple monuments around the Music Circle, most are in honor of prominent Massachusetts residents. They are listed in order as one proceeds around the Music Oval clockwise from the Hatch Shell.

General George S. Patton

Segment 2B, Music Oval

Honors general George S. Patton (1885-1945) an important U.S. Army general during World War II. Bronze portrait statue on granite base (see figure 6.17). By James Earle Fraser, 1955.

Charles Devens

Segment 2B, Music Oval

Honors Charles Devens (1820-1891), a lawyer, jurist and statesman who also served as U.S. Attorney General. Bronze portrait statue on granite base (see figure 6.17). By Olin Levi Warner, 1893-96, moved here from State House grounds, 1950.

David Ignatius Walsh Memorial Statue

Segment 2B, Music Oval

Commemorates David Walsh (1872-1947) former Massachusetts governor and senator. Bronze portrait figure with granite base. Bronze figure with granite background. Authorized 1950, design by sculptor Joseph A. Coletti. Built 1951-1954, unveiled June 7, 1954.

See 1949 Report from Art Commission of the Commonwealth regarding placement of monuments on the Hatch Shell Oval (reserved for great members of the Commonwealth). See article entitled “The Sculpture of Joseph A. Coletti” by Alan A. Priest published 1968. Coletti papers and photos are at Boston Public Library (DCR archives has copies of some of these materials) (see figure 6.17).

Cherry Tree Boulder

Segment 2B, Music Oval

Inscribed pink boulder commemorating the donation of cherry trees for the Esplanade from the government of Japan (see figure 6.17). Erected in 1985.

Maurice J. Tobin Statue

Segment 2B, Music Oval

Bronze portrait figure on grey granite base sculpted by Emilius R. Ciampa. Maurice Tobin (1901-1953) was Mayor of Boston and Governor of Massachusetts, served in the U.S. Senate and was U.S. Secretary of Labor (see figure 6.17).

Metropolitan Police Memorial

Segment 2B, Near Music Oval

Plaque on pier adjacent to bridge (see figure 6.17).

David Mugar Memorial

Segment 2B, Music Oval

Cannon, in commemoration of Mugar's role in establishing the fireworks at the Hatch Shell (see figure 6.17). "*You bring the music and I'll bring the cannon.*" Embankment Road has also been renamed David Mugar Way in his honor.

Edwin U. Curtis Memorial

Segment 2B, Bridge Near Music Oval

Two large urns that commemorate former Boston mayor Edwin Upton Curtis (1861-1922) (see figure 6.17). Erected 1923-24. Originally located near Clarendon Street, then moved to a temporary location and now located on piers of pedestrian bridge near Hatch Shell. DCR archives has file with additional information. See also MDC Annual Report 1923 and 1924. Trees planted adjacent to urns obscure views of the urns and may pose a potential threat to them in windy conditions. *This next group of five monuments is located in Segment 2C along Storrow Drive.*

Lotta Fountain

Segment 2C, between Berkeley and Clarendon

Lotta Crabtree (1847-1924) was a dance hall performer who made a substantial fortune in 19th century California. She moved to Boston late in life and left \$4 million in trusts for several needy causes including the Lotta Dumb Animal Fund. In 1939 the trustees carried out a provision in her will to erect a drinking fountain in Boston for "men, horses, birds and dogs" on a site near Embankment Road.

A six-foot granite fountain and sculpture with dog and cat was designed by Katherine Lane Weems (1899-1989) (see figure 6.28). The Lotta Fountain was initially located between Arlington and Berkeley Streets, and is now between Berkeley and Clarendon. The fountain is in poor condition and no longer functions properly. The Esplanade Association hopes to raise \$200,000 for its restoration.

Crabtree's papers are at Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe, other materials are at Smithsonian Archive of American Art. See also *Boston Sunday Globe* 1/6/2002, City and Region, Section B1 for article on Crabtree estate. Also *Yankee Magazine* "The Will of Lotta Crabtree." No photos in DCR or state archives.

Trimblويد "X"

Segment 2C, between Clarendon and Dartmouth Streets

1970, sculptor was David Kibbey. (see figure 6.28)

MDC Centennial Memorial

Segment 2C, Dartmouth Street Landing

Created in 1993 to honor the centennial of the metropolitan park system. A circular bronze plaque set in granite paving (see figure 6.28) on axis with Dartmouth Street (see figure 6.28). Plaque appears to be in good condition, paving around it has settled and is cracked. DCR archives has dedication brochure. A three-tiered spray fountain was also installed in the adjacent lagoon at the time of the centennial. It has since been replaced with a single spray fountain.

Oliver Wendell Holmes Memorial

Segment 2C, between Dartmouth and Exeter Streets

Semi-circular granite bench on low platform with central circular element (which originally held a sundial) (see figure 6.28). Rectangular paved section in front. Architect was Parker, Thomas and Rice who submitted plans for the memorial in 1915 (copy in DCR archives). Originally at rear of 296 Beacon Street (no longer standing) between Exeter and Fairfield, which was once the home of Oliver Wendell Holmes. Circa 1949 was relocated near Dartmouth in anticipation of Storrow Drive. Further documentation on the origins of the memorial can be found in the 1914 and 1915 Minutes of the Commission.

James and Helen Storrow Memorial

Segment 2C, Gloucester Street Landing

Honors James (1864-1926) and Helen (1864-1944) Storrow, who were instrumental in the creation of the Esplanade at several stages in its development. Polished pink granite base with bronze decorative plaque erected by Mrs. Storrow in memory of her husband (see figure 6.28). Designed by Arthur Shurcliff, dedicated September 10, 1936. Memorial appears to be in good condition, some pavers are broken. Planting around memorial helps to screen it from Storrow Drive.

Arthur Fiedler Memorial

Segment 2D, on island near Music Oval

Commemorates popular Boston Pops conductor Arthur Fiedler (1894-1979). Sandblasted aluminum plate on polished pink granite base, 92" high, 82" wide and 81" deep. Commissioned by the Friends of Fiedler and the City of Boston. Sculpted in 1984 by Ralph Helmick. DCR archives has short report that includes Helmick's proposal for the project, including cost estimates. Statue, base and paving appear to be in good condition.

Otis Memorial Grove

Segment 2C, on island

Boulder with carved inscription reading "OTIS GROVE" in setting of birch trees with benches. William F. Otis was a state representative and realtor; he and his wife were murdered in their Back Bay home in October 1968 during a robbery. The area was designated by the Metropolitan District Commission on December 13, 1972 (MDC minutes).

FURNISHINGS

Note: Furnishings are addressed by type.

Fencing

Many types of fencing are found along the Esplanade. The major types are summarized here.

Type A – 3' tall fence along the water's edge (see figure 5.12). Large round metal posts with round top rails and narrow metal pickets. This fencing is used throughout the Charles River Reservation.

Type B – Narrow square metal pickets with U-channel posts. Found around the Charlesbank wading pool and along sections of the river's edge in Charlesbank where it is 5' tall (see figure 5.9 and 5.11). Found between Storrow Drive and the Esplanade near Boston University Bridge, where it is typically about 3' tall. This fencing type is associated with the 1950s.

Type C – Black chain link fencing. Used around recreational facilities such as the wading pool and playgrounds. Not historically significant.

Type D – Wood guardrail type fencing. Found between the path and the ballfields at Charlesbank (see figure 5.20), also found along sections of Storrow Drive and also.

Lights

The standard historic light fixture for the Charles River Reservation is the Cambridge 27' 0" steel post with the Cambridge single 6' 0" mast arm and the Manchester 110 refractive globe luminaire. Manufactured by Spring City Electrical, Spring City, PA. This light is similar in appearance, but sturdier than, the '1907 fixture' along Memorial Drive.

Benches

Type A – Wood benches used in early Olmsted design for Charlesbank (see figure 1.5). These existed only until the 1930s and are no longer found in the Esplanade.

Type B – Shurcliff benches (designed by Arthur Shurcliff), with metal supports and wooden slats. These are now the standard bench for the Esplanade. They are sometimes found in association with shade shelters and recent installations have also included concrete pads. Some benches have been named in honor of donors. Available from O'Brien & Sons, Inc., Catalogue No. 61-564-6.

Shade Shelters

When the Back Bay section of the Esplanade opened in 1910, the park was devoid of trees and very hot so shade shelters were built adjacent to the path. The early ones were made of wood with canvas covers. None of these remain. In the 1930s more permanent wooden shade shelters with asphalt shingled roofs were built. About half a dozen of these remain, primarily in segment 2. While no longer needed in most areas, they are a distinctive feature of the Charles River Reservation.

Trash Receptacles

The standard trash receptacle on the Esplanade is the 55-gallon drum. Most early photographs don't show trash receptacles although a concerted search might reveal some historic images.

Signs

There is no standard signage system on the Esplanade and most of the current signs date to the late 20th or early 21st century. One older sign that is worthy of note is the Storrow Memorial Embankment sign (see figure 6.16) adjacent to the south entrance of the Fiedler Footbridge. It is a remnant from the 1930s.

APPENDIX B: HISTORIC PLANT LISTS

One of the key questions raised by the Esplanade Association was the issue of what plants were used in the earlier designs. While plant lists have not been found for all periods, several key lists can provide useful guidance. Plans from which these were taken are in the DCR plans archive, with copies at the Esplanade Association.

1911 GUY LOWELL SHRUB LIST

(These were planted along the Back Street seawall from the Longfellow Bridge to Charlesgate, see figure 2.7. No large trees were planted at this time.)

<i>Scientific Name</i>	<i>Common Name</i>
<i>Berberis thunbergii</i>	Japanese Barberry
<i>Berberis vulgaris</i>	Common Barberry
<i>Cercis canadensis</i>	Eastern Redbud
<i>Cornus alba</i>	Tatarian Dogwood
<i>Cornus florida</i>	Flowering Dogwood
<i>Cornus rubra</i>	Pink Flowering Dogwood
<i>Cornus stolonifera</i>	Red Osier Dogwood
<i>Cornus stolonifera</i> , var <i>lutea</i>	Yellow Twig Dogwood
<i>Crataegus cordata</i>	Washington Hawthorn
<i>Crataegus coccinea</i>	Scarlet Hawthorn
<i>Crataegus mollis</i>	Downy Hawthorn
<i>Crataegus oxyacantha</i>	English Hawthorn
<i>Forsythia intermedia</i>	Border Forsythia
<i>Forsythia suspensa</i>	Weeping Forsythia
<i>Lonicera morrowii</i>	Morrow's Honeysuckle
<i>Lonicera tartarica alba</i>	Tatarian Honeysuckle
<i>Lonicera tartarica rubra</i>	Red Tartarian Honeysuckle
<i>Philadelphus coronarius</i>	Sweet Mockorange
<i>Philadelphus lemoinei</i>	Lemoine Mockorange
<i>Rhamnus catharticus</i>	Buckthorn
<i>Spiraea vanhouttei</i>	Vanhouette Spirea
<i>Symphoricarpus racemosus</i>	Snow Berry
<i>Viburnum acerifolium</i>	Mapleleaf Viburnum
<i>Viburnum dentatum</i>	Arrowwood
<i>Viburnum lentago</i>	Nannyberry
<i>Viburnum opulus</i>	European Cranberrybush
<i>Viburnum plicatum</i>	Japanese Snowball

1933 SHURCLIFF TREE LIST

(these were used throughout the Esplanade)

<i>Scientific Name</i>	<i>Common Name</i>	<i>Number</i>
<i>Acer platanoides</i>	Norway Maple	277
<i>Platanus occidentalis</i>	Buttonwood/Sycamore	161
<i>Quercus palustris</i>	Pin Oak	161
<i>Quercus rubra</i>	Red Oak	161
<i>Salix alba</i>	White Willow	161
<i>Tilia europaea</i>	European Linden	161
	<i>Totals</i>	<i>1082</i>

1933 SHURCLIFF SHRUB LIST

(these were used throughout the Esplanade)

<i>Scientific Name</i>	<i>Common Name</i>	<i>Number</i>
<i>Acanthopanax pentaphyllum</i>	Fiveleaf Aralia	280
<i>Aralia spinosa</i>	Devils-Walkingstick	385
<i>Berberis thunbergii</i>	Japan Barberry	1080
<i>Cornus alba siberica</i>	Tatarian Dogwood	240
<i>Cornus alba siberica</i>	Tatarian Dogwood	240
<i>Crataegus crusgalli</i>	Cockspur Thorn	55
<i>Deutzia</i> , Pride of Rochester	Pride of Rochester	500
<i>Forsythia fortunei</i>	Fortune Forsythia	720
<i>Forsythia suspensa</i>	Weeping Forsythia	640
<i>Ligustrum ibota</i>	Ibota Privet	1825
<i>Ligustrum amurense</i>	Amur Privet	370
<i>Lonicera morrowi</i>	Morrow Honeysuckle	1168
<i>Lonicera tatarica</i>	Tatarian Honeysuckle	220
<i>Philadelphus coronarius nana</i>	Dwarf Mockorange	155
<i>Rhamnus cathartica</i>	Common Buckthorn	42
<i>Rhus canadensis</i>	Fragrant Sumac	390
<i>Spiraea thunbergii</i>	Thunberg Spirea	220
<i>Spiraea vanhouttei</i>	Vanhoutte Spirea	725
<i>Syringa vulgaris</i>	Common Lilac	435
<i>Viburnum dentatum</i>	Arrowwood	270
<i>Viburnum lantana</i>	Wayfaring Tree	370
<i>Viburnum lentago</i>	Nannyberry	370
<i>Viburnum opulus</i>	European Cranberrybush	310
<i>Viburnum opulus nanum</i>	Dwarf Cranberrybush	900
<i>Weigela rosea</i>	Pink Weigela	350
	<i>Totals</i>	<i>12,020</i>

1952 SHURCLIFF TREE LIST

(used mostly on islands)

<i>Scientific Name</i>	<i>Common Name</i>
Acer plantanoides	Norway Maple
Cercidiphyllum japonicum	Katsuratree
Crataegus crusgalli	Cockspur Hawthorn
Gleditsia triacanthos	Common Honeylocust
Quercus borealis	Northern Red Oak
Quercus palustris	Pin Oak
Salix babylonica	Babylon Weeping Willow
Tilia cordata	Littleleaf Linden

1952 SHURCLIFF SHRUB LIST

(used mostly on islands)

<i>Scientific Name</i>	<i>Common Name</i>
Acanthopanax sieboldiana	Five Leaf Aralia
Berberis thunbergii	Japanese Barberry
Cornus alba	Tatarian Dogwood
Forsythia intermedia	Border forsythia
Ligustrum amurense	Amur privet
Spiraea Vanhoutii	Vanhoutte spirea

