

Roxbury Heritage State Park

PARK LANDSCAPE

OPPORTUNITIES

- Create a more welcoming sense of arrival
- Simplify the landscape to better reflect its period of significance
- Reuse some of the materials already on site
- Provide an improved venue for performances/gatherings
- Open views to Boston
- Clarify/enhance circulation throughout
- Direct visitors to other historic sites in Roxbury
- Create a dynamic (changing) sense of discovery for visitors (especially children)
- Create a historical narrative within the landscape through details and amenities

ARCHITECTURE & HOUSE UPGRADES

OPPORTUNITIES

- Use the preserved historic character and location of the house as a platform to speak of the history of Roxbury, its relation to the land and surrounding landmarks. The house itself is an exhibit.
- Building repairs and upgrades that significantly improve the indoor environment of the building and allow for more public uses would further attract area residents and visitors.
- Integrate the house, physically and programmatically, to the landscape and outdoor programs.



CONSTRAINTS

- Parking area divides the space
- Existing topography may deter visitors approaching from the parking lot
- Timilty School closely abuts the west side, creating visual barrier
- Timilty School and brick multi-story building to the east create a “pocket” for the house
- Gate & padlock make the property seem inaccessible to the community

CONSTRAINTS

- Modifications to the historic house are limited given the historic status of the house, the original residential use, and age of the structure.
- The third floor is not accessible to people with disabilities.
- The construction of the historic house building envelope, doors and windows allows for substantial heat loss, which has a direct impact on the life, maintenance and operating costs. Some of Roxbury’s history has limited documentation.

FUN FACTS

- *House was built as a parsonage for the First Church of Roxbury – it was connected to the Church from the time of its construction.*
- *The house was probably used by General John Thomas as a headquarters of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War, as the rear windows could afford a reasonable view of “Boston Neck,” and beyond, to Charlestown.*
- *The property was always small, even smaller than today.*
- *Landscape details were simple (granite curbing, posts, wood picket fencing) and planting was minimal.*
- *The Dillaway family occupied the house from 1833 until 1903, during which time structures were built on abutting properties to the east and west.*



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EXHIBIT AND INTERPRETIVE DESIGN

OPPORTUNITIES

- Well-documented historic site and historic events (Dawes ride)
- Unique geology (puddingstone) and geography make for interesting natural sciences stories.
- Opportunity to create an archaeology lab with opportunities for public education
- A place to tell – and re-tell – Roxbury's stories:
 - Colonial and Revolutionary Roxbury
 - Wartime in Roxbury (Civil War etc.)
 - Who's Who of Roxbury, Then & Now: Community Heroes and Leaders thru years
 - 21st-century Roxbury
 - The Arts in Roxbury: Music, Painting, Literature, Architectural Design
- A living "story lab" for Roxbury youth and families to create and share their own history in 21st-century Roxbury

CONSTRAINTS

- Limited staff means exhibits must be self-guided and easy to maintain
- Setting in historic house means limited space as well as constraints on interior remodeling
- Some of Roxbury's history has limited documentation



MORE FUN FACTS

- *The civic center of Roxbury lay at Eliot Square into the mid-1800s and the Dillaway-Thomas House stood within this hub.*
- *While there is no evidence of a farm/ orchard having been associated with the house, the Roxbury Russet, one of the earliest known varieties of apple grown in American, was cultivated on the plains below Eliot Square.*
- *The Heritage State Park initiative, begun in the 1980s, transformed a boarded-up house and site into a renovated interpretive center and public park.*

