



TERRAFIRMA

PUTTING HISTORIC LANDSCAPE PRESERVATION ON SOLID GROUND

*"Landscapes mirror and landscapes
matter ... they tell us much about the
values we hold and ... affect the quality
of the lives we lead"*

DW MEINIG, "The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene"

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Terra Firma is a publication of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA).

Mitt Romney, Governor

Kerry Healey, Lt. Governor

Ellen Roy Herzfelder, Secretary, EOEA

Patrice Kish, Director, Office of Historic Resources, DCR

Joanna M. Doherty, Program Manager, Historic Landscape Preservation Initiative, DCR

Author: Joanna M. Doherty

Guest Editors: Robin Karson, Lauren Meier,
Eric Seaborn and Michael Steinitz

Funding provided by the USDA Forest Service, through the DCR's Urban and Community Forestry Program

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is pleased to present **Terra Firma: Putting Historic Landscape Preservation on Solid Ground**, a new series of publications from the DCR's Historic Landscape Preservation Initiative. Intended for use by all who care for and about historic landscapes, **Terra Firma** will offer technical information in an engaging and accessible format. This, our first issue, provides an introduction to historic landscapes and their protection. Subsequent issues will focus on particular aspects of planning, maintenance and rehabilitation. Developed with a wide range of input – from experts in the field as well as those who are new to the subject – **Terra Firma** will be a valuable tool for anyone concerned about the preservation of historic landscapes.

The DCR's mission – to protect, promote and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural and recreational resources for the well being of all – extends beyond the land we manage. We work with cities and towns to document significant landscapes, manage public trees and forests, protect open space and create greenway and trail networks, among other critical activities. The DCR recognizes the power of collaboration, and to that end, we have developed the Office of Public/Private Partnerships with the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs to enhance existing partnerships and to develop new relationships with municipalities, private organizations and the general public. **Terra Firma** reflects the DCR's legacy of stewardship and signals our commitment to reach out to and work with those who share our dedication to protecting the Commonwealth's distinctive character.

One of the DCR's key goals is to create a sense of stewardship in every citizen of the Commonwealth for our public land. It is our hope that **Terra Firma** will increase public awareness of the rich collection of historic landscapes in Massachusetts and facilitate their preservation.



The Italian Garden at Maudslay State Park, in Newburyport, was designed by the noted landscape architect Martha Brookes Hutcheson in 1902–3. Enclosed within brick and granite walls, the garden incorporates plantings, paths and architectural elements within clearly defined boundaries.



AN INTRODUCTION TO HISTORIC LANDSCAPE PRESERVATION

Historic landscapes are places that, through their physical characteristics and features, reflect the interaction of human beings with the environment. They may be associated with a historically significant activity, event or person, or otherwise manifest the values or traditions of a culture. Sometimes called cultural landscapes or heritage landscapes, historic landscapes often incorporate both natural resources, such as vegetation, bodies of water and topographical characteristics, and human-made features, such as buildings, monuments and path systems. Ranging in size from a small plot to thousands of acres, historic landscapes may be the setting for an important building or might be significant in their own right. Some historic landscapes are easily identified while others are less obvious – so subtle that you might not notice them until they are gone.

Due to their dynamic nature, historic landscapes present complex preservation challenges: the trees and shrubs in a designed garden grow, mature and eventually die; gravel paths winding

through a town park become compacted and their edges erode; grave markers in an ancient burial ground wear over time. As with buildings, it is generally preferable to retain as much of the original fabric of a historic landscape as possible, but change is inevitable and historic landscape elements may be lost through the years. Careful planning and the implementation of appropriate preservation tools can help identify historically significant landscape characteristics, develop a preservation treatment approach and decrease the rate of deterioration. Through the preservation of the property's essential elements and sensitive adaptation, the overall character and integrity of a landscape can be retained.

This issue of *Terra Firma* is intended to assist readers in the identification of historic landscapes and to provide an overview of tools for preserving these significant places. Resources that offer further guidance are noted throughout the text and on the back cover.



Additional discussion of historic landscape types, documentation strategies and preservation tools may be found in the Department of Conservation and Recreation's *Reading the Land — Massachusetts Heritage Landscapes: A Guide to Identification and Protection*, free and available for order at www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/histland/histland.htm or (617) 626-1250.



Since its establishment in the 1720s, the Grafton Common has served as the center of everyday life in the community. The focal point of a National Register and Local Historic District, the common is surrounded by nineteenth-century commercial and residential buildings, three churches and the 1805 Grafton Inn. The common itself features mature shade trees, a granite post-and-rail fence and a 1935 bandstand.

IDENTIFYING HISTORIC LANDSCAPES

Every community in Massachusetts contains historic landscapes. A small garden designed by a well-known landscape architect is a historic landscape, as is a town center with tree-lined roads, a common, a meetinghouse, a burial ground and historic residences.

The National Park Service has defined four categories of historic landscapes that encompass a wide range of property types.

A HISTORIC DESIGNED LANDSCAPES were consciously laid out, often by a landscape professional, and reflect a recognized style, tradition or aesthetic.

B HISTORIC VERNACULAR LANDSCAPES reflect the everyday life of the people who shaped them. Vernacular landscapes may illustrate commonly held design traditions, but their layout was typically influenced less by aesthetic considerations and more by function.

C HISTORIC SITES are significant for their association with a historic event, activity or person.

D ETHNOGRAPHIC LANDSCAPES encompass a variety of features – often both natural and cultural – that relate to the history and/or culture of a group of people, such as an ethnic community.

These categories are not hard and fast, and a single landscape may fit into more than one. Massachusetts contains examples of a wide range of historic landscapes; see the historic landscape types illustrated on pages 4-7.

H I S T O R I C L A N D S C A P E T Y P E S



Historic landscapes include: town commons · urban parks · rural parks · town centers ·

planned communities · estates · residential subdivisions · industrial landscapes · harbors · mill villages · roads ·

trails · parkways · gardens · cemeteries · burial grounds · campgrounds · recreational facilities · botanic gardens ·

archaeological sites · farmsteads · orchards · college campuses · forts · grounds of public buildings ·

religious sites · fairgrounds ·

and many more...

1 Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Concord was founded in 1855 and reflects the nineteenth-century rural cemetery movement, in which burial grounds were places for the dead as well as retreats for the living. Planned by Horace Cleveland and Robert Morris Copeland, this **historic designed landscape** features winding paths, native woodlands and a pond. As the resting place of many significant individuals — including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and the Alcott family — Sleepy Hollow Cemetery also could be considered a **historic site**. (Photo courtesy of Concord Free Public Library, Concord, MA.)

2 Established in 1754, the Templeton Common Burial Ground features grave markers attributed to notable New England carvers, as well as mature trees, stone walls and a terraced topography that contribute to the landscape's character. The burial ground was not designed but, rather, evolved over time and reflects eighteenth- and nineteenth-century attitudes toward death and burial. It is, therefore, a **historic vernacular landscape**.

3 A tobacco barn in Whately speaks to the town's agricultural traditions and is part of a **historic vernacular landscape**. In addition to providing open space and contributing to community character, such landscapes reflect the impact of geography and climate on land use, resulting in regional variations across the state, from the cranberry bogs of southeastern Massachusetts to the dairy farms of the Berkshires.

4 Hancock Shaker Village includes a complex of buildings, along with a working farm and gardens — an **ethnographic landscape** that reflects the Shakers' tenets of common property, equality between the sexes, celibacy and pacifism. (Photo courtesy of Hancock Shaker Village, Hancock, MA.)

5 Sometimes historic landscapes encompass large and complex urban areas. The industrial landscape of Lawrence clearly demonstrates the interaction of humans with the environment; textile companies controlled the Merrimack River with dams and canals, providing power to the mills. The canals, industrial buildings and workers' housing are all part of Lawrence's extensive **historic vernacular landscape**.





PROTECTING HISTORIC LANDSCAPES

Interest in historic landscapes is on the rise, but important examples are often overlooked, even by those who are knowledgeable about preservation. Landscapes may go unrecognized because they are perceived as backdrops for other, more traditional resources, such as buildings or monuments. The organic quality of landscapes also contributes to their vulnerability; they change constantly but incrementally, and loss may not be apparent to the casual observer. Historic landscapes face many threats: an inactive burial ground may lack funds for upkeep, a former farm may be ripe for development, a town common may be squeezed by widening roads. As is true for any historic resource, a landscape requires thoughtful planning and protection if its character and integrity are to be preserved.

DOCUMENTING HISTORIC LANDSCAPES

Documenting a landscape's history and appearance through research and fieldwork is an important first step toward protecting it and a necessary part of any preservation effort. Landscapes may be documented through Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) inventory forms, nominations to the National Register of Historic Places and historic landscape preservation plans (for more on preservation plans, see page 8). **MHC inventory forms** document the many types of historic properties in Massachusetts through text and photographs. There are specific forms for parks and landscapes, burial grounds and areas that include multiple historic resources, among others. Inventory forms follow established standards, and offer a streamlined and cost-effective method of documentation and planning at the state and local levels. For example, MHC staff consults inventory forms when reviewing the impacts of a proposed project on historic properties.

Completing inventory forms also provides an opportunity to evaluate a property's eligibility for listing in the **National Register of Historic Places**, the nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. In Massachusetts the National Register program is administered by the MHC. Listed landscapes include parks, estates, town commons, farmsteads, burial grounds, battlefields and others. Listing provides recognition of the property's significance, may afford certain tax benefits and can offer protection from projects involving federal or state assistance, if such a project would have an adverse effect on the historic resource. In addition, many grant programs are open only to National Register properties.

Because landscapes are often closely connected – geographically and thematically – to the buildings around them, they are frequently included in districts, rather than recognized individually. A town common, for example, may derive its significance from being part of a collection of resources that make up the historic town center. **Local historic districts** are established at the municipal level and generally provide a greater degree of protection than National Register historic districts; for example, projects within a local historic district may be reviewed for appropriateness by the local historic district commission.



MHC publications provide further information on documenting historic landscapes. See *Know How #6* about inventory forms (www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhcpdf/kn6.pdf), *Know How #3* on the National Register (www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhcpdf/kn3.pdf) and *There's a Difference!* about National Register districts and local historic districts (www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhcpdf/difference.pdf). Call (617) 727-8470 for hard copies.

Consult the National Park Service (NPS) for more information on the National Register at www.cr.nps.gov/nr/ or (202) 354-2213. The NPS publishes National Register bulletins about designed landscapes, rural landscapes, battlefields and cemeteries, all of which are free and available for downloading at www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/puborder.htm or may be ordered at (202) 354-2213.

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6 Monument Park in downtown Fitchburg was dedicated in 1874 as a memorial to the city's Civil War veterans. A **historic designed landscape**, this small urban park includes a monument at its center, as well as walking paths, plantings and a cast-iron perimeter fence.





LANDSCAPE PRESERVATION TOOLS

A broad range of tools – from public education to acquisition – is available to assist communities in protecting historic landscapes. The selection of an appropriate method depends on the threat to the resource, the landscape’s context, the preservation objective and other factors. State laws and regulations particularly relevant to landscapes include the following:

Preservation and Conservation Restrictions, established by Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 184, Sections 31-33, govern the use or appearance of a property for a set period of time or in perpetuity, and may be applied to a variety of resources, including buildings and their grounds, archaeological sites and scenic vistas. **Agricultural Preservation Restrictions** are similar, but apply exclusively to active farmland.

Massachusetts General Laws **Chapters 61, 61A and 61B** provide short-term protection, by offering property tax breaks to current owners of active forest, agricultural or recreational land.

Scenic Road Bylaws protect street trees and stone walls located within the public right-of-way when a road is being repaired, maintained, reconstructed or paved.

The **Community Preservation Act** enables a city or town to establish a community preservation fund, dedicated to open space, low- and moderate-income housing and historic preservation activities and financed through a real estate tax surcharge and state matching funds. The fund is overseen by a local community preservation committee and may be applied to a wide range of landscape preservation activities. To date, communities have implemented town-wide landscape surveys, restored burial grounds, acquired agricultural preservation restrictions, supported archaeological surveys, purchased historic farmland and restored town commons. Community preservation funds may also be used as matching funds for many grant programs.

Future issues of *Terra Firma* will discuss these and other protection methods in greater detail.



The MHC’s *Preservation through Bylaws and Ordinances* provides an overview of preservation mechanisms, including many not listed here. To receive a copy, go to <http://commpres.env.state.ma.us/content/ptbo.asp> or call the MHC at (617) 727-8470.

For more information on the Community Preservation Act including strategies for passing it in your community and a database of CPA-funded projects consult the Community Preservation Coalition at www.communitypreservation.com/ or (617) 367-8998 or the Community Preservation Initiative at <http://commpres.env.state.ma.us/index.asp> or (617) 626-1000.

7 Roads are more than just routes of travel; they may have historic associations and design features that make them significant as **historic vernacular landscapes**. The mature trees, gentle shoulder, and lack of curbing all contribute to the character of Foster Hill Road, the site of West Brookfield’s earliest European settlement, and influence the traveler’s experience.

8 Fort Phoenix, a **historic site** in Fairhaven, was a place of military activity in the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812 and the Civil War. The gunpowder magazine, parapet and cannons are reminders of the site’s past.

9 Naumkeag, a Stockbridge estate owned by The Trustees of Reservations, includes eight acres of landscaped grounds that showcase the modernist aesthetic of the landscape architect Fletcher Steele. A **historic designed landscape**, the grounds include several intimate “garden rooms” while also encompassing expansive views of the surrounding woodland, meadows and pastures.

(Photo by Carol Betsch, from *A Genius for Place*, courtesy of Library of American Landscape History, Amherst, MA.)

DEVELOPING A HISTORIC LANDSCAPE PRESERVATION PLAN

The development of a historic landscape preservation plan – a written report that documents a resource’s history and significance and delineates an appropriate treatment – is critical to the protection of a historic landscape. Indeed, the lack of proactive planning can pose a serious threat; even small, incremental changes – the death of a few trees, the removal of a failing stone wall, the deterioration of a fountain in a formal garden – can have a profound impact on a landscape’s character. Sometimes called a cultural landscape report, the preservation plan generally documents a landscape in greater detail than either an inventory form or a National Register nomination, and provides a site-specific preservation strategy to guide all future activities.

Planning should be a precursor to any project that involves physical work at the property, to insure that all work is appropriate and that damage is avoided. The preparation of a preservation plan typically involves the following steps:



Developing the plan for the rehabilitation of Whitman Park, in Whitman, involved (1) historic research, (2) an inventory and analysis of existing landscape features and (3) proposals for the park’s rehabilitation.

(Images courtesy of Walker-Kluesing Design Group.)

- 1 A plan of the park, ca. 1903, shows the landscape at a point in time.
- 2 The park’s significant features include a pond, a Civil War monument and mature trees.
- 3 The plan recommendations include re-establishing historic paths and planting trees, among others.

HISTORIC RESEARCH

To understand the landscape’s development over time, a thorough review must be conducted of primary and secondary sources, such as historic plans, plant lists, atlases, photographs, newspaper articles, town records and published histories.



INVENTORY OF EXISTING CONDITIONS A detailed inventory of the landscape’s features, including topography, spatial relationships, vegetation, circulation systems and structures, will help determine the landscape’s current condition. These may not be purely physical features, but could include the historical use of the landscape or its association with a particular group of people; such intangible elements often prove just as significant.

ANALYSIS OF INTEGRITY AND SIGNIFICANCE The overall landscape and individual features noted in the inventory are evaluated for integrity and significance. Character-defining features – those elements of the landscape that contribute strongly to its historic significance – are identified, and the property’s ability to convey its historic identity through its physical characteristics is assessed.

DEVELOPMENT OF A PRESERVATION APPROACH AND TREATMENT PLAN

Information gathered through research, inventory and analysis forms the basis of the preservation approach for the landscape. The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, a nationally accepted set of principles, identifies four possible treatment approaches: (1) preservation, (2) rehabilitation, (3) restoration and (4) reconstruction. The significance and integrity of a property will inform the choice of treatment, as will its current use, the project objectives and cost considerations. With landscapes more than any other type of historic resource, the preservation approach must be designed to accommodate change.

*[A historic landscape is] a resource in which change, function
and use are as significant as design and material...*

a landscape must be managed as a process, and not an object.

Nora J. Mitchell and Robert R. Page, "Managing the Past for the Future: The Stewardship of America's Landscape Legacy"



3

MAINTENANCE PLAN Strategies for maintaining the landscape – that is, monitoring its condition and employing appropriate techniques to limit deterioration – should be developed during the planning process. The maintenance plan should be updated as the preservation plan is implemented.

Depending on the type and complexity of the landscape, other steps may be required. For example, it may be important to inventory the inscriptions and condition of the grave markers in an early burial ground. For a designed landscape, information about other works by the landscape architect might be pertinent. Similarly, the nature of the resource will determine the specialists needed to prepare the plan. Potential participants include historical landscape architects, engineers, materials conservators and archaeologists, among others.



For more information on the landscape planning process, see *Preservation Briefs #36: Protecting Cultural Landscapes*, available for downloading at www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/brief36.htm or for purchase at <http://bookstore.gpo.gov/> or (866) 512-1800.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes may be purchased at <http://bookstore.gpo.gov/> or (866) 512-1800. View an excerpt at www.cr.nps.gov/hli/introguid.htm

The Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation publishes the *Guide to Developing a Preservation Maintenance Plan for a Historic Landscape*, available for order at (617) 566-1689.

HISTORIC LANDSCAPE PRESERVATION IN MASSACHUSETTS:

THE ROOTS OF STEWARDSHIP

Perhaps because of the depth and variety of its landscapes, Massachusetts has a long tradition of landscape preservation, stretching back to the late nineteenth century. Massachusetts native Charles Eliot, a landscape architect who had apprenticed in Frederick Law Olmsted's Brookline office, founded The Trustees of Reservations in 1891, "for the purposes of acquiring, holding, maintaining and opening to the public ... beautiful and historic places ... within the Commonwealth." The Trustees is notable as the nation's first private, statewide conservation organization and for its integrated approach to open space conservation and historic landscape preservation.

Charles Eliot was also instrumental, with Sylvester Baxter, in establishing in 1893 the Metropolitan Parks Commission (later the Metropolitan District Commission), which would oversee parks planning in the greater Boston area. Early acquisitions include the Beaver Brook, Blue Hills, Middlesex Fells and Stony Brook reservations. About the same time, the state park system was launched, with the acquisition of Mount Greylock, Massachusetts' highest peak, in 1898 — the origins of the Department of Environmental Management. Today, these historic agencies have merged to form the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Concern about the preservation of landscapes designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and successor firms led to the establishment of the National Association for Olmsted Parks (NAOP) in 1980; the following year, the organization held its first conference in Boston, Brookline and Cambridge. The Massachusetts Association for Olmsted Parks, established in 1981, was the first statewide NAOP affiliate. In 1983 the Olmsted Historic Landscape Program became the first statewide historic landscape preservation program in the country. Administered by the Department of Environmental Management, the program was the precursor to today's Historic Landscape Preservation Grant Program, which works to preserve all types of historic landscapes across the Commonwealth.

HISTORIC LANDSCAPE PRESERVATION RESOURCES

Helpful resources for identifying and protecting historic landscapes have been noted in the text. An extensive bibliography, including practical guidelines about particular landscape types as well as more scholarly books, may be obtained at www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/histland/histland.htm or (617) 626-1250. In addition, numerous agencies and organizations provide technical assistance and general information related to historic landscape preservation.

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
(617) 626-1250
www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/histland/histland.htm

Massachusetts Historical Commission
(617) 727-8470
www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

PreservatiON MASS
(617) 723-3383
www.preservationmass.org

National Trust for Historic Preservation
(800) 944-6847 or (617) 523-0885
www.nationaltrust.org

Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation
(617) 566-1689
www.nps.gov/oclp

National Park Service — Historic Landscape Initiative
(202) 354-2076
www2.cr.nps.gov/hli

National Park Service — National Register of Historic Places
(202) 354-2076
www.cr.nps.gov/nr

Historic American Landscape Survey
(202) 354-2116
www.cr.nps.gov/habshaer/hals/index.htm

National Association for Olmsted Parks
(202) 783-6606
www.olmsted.org

Landscape Institute, Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University
(617) 495-8632
www.arboretum.harvard.edu/programs/ld/ld.html

The Cultural Landscape Foundation
(202) 483-0553
www.tclf.org

Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation
www.ahlp.org

Library of American Landscape History
(413) 549-4860
www.lalh.org

The Trustees of Reservations
(978) 921-1944
www.thetrustees.org

Trust for Public Land
(617) 367-6200
www.tpl.org

Association for Gravestone Studies
(413) 772-0836
www.gravestonestudies.org

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation maintains an extensive list of granting agencies and programs — (202) 606-8503 or www.achp.gov/funding.html. A database of all federal grants may be found at www.grants.gov/Index. The Foundation Center offers technical assistance to those seeking funding sources — (212) 620-4230 or <http://fdncenter.org>. Specific sources of funding include:

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
Historic Landscape Preservation Grant Program
(617) 626-1250
www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/histland/histland.htm

Urban Forestry Grant Programs
(617) 626-1250
www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/forestry/urban

Massachusetts Historical Commission
Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund
(617) 727-8470
www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhcmppf/mppfidx.htm

Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities
(413) 584-8440
www.mfh.org/grants/index.htm

National Trust for Historic Preservation
(617) 523-0885
www.nationaltrust.org/help/funding.html

Transportation Enhancements
(888) 388-NTEC
www.enhancements.org/TE_basics.asp

Save America's Treasures
(877) 873-2787
www.saveamericastreasures.org/funding.htm

Getty Conservation Institute
(310) 440-7325
www.getty.edu/grants/conservation

National Heritage Area Partnership Program Grants
Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor
(401) 762-0250
www.nps.gov/blac/home.htm

Essex National Heritage Area
(978) 740-0444
www.essexheritage.org/index.html

Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor
(860) 963-7226
www.thelastgreenvalley.org