H.H. Richardson Train Station, Holyoke: A Nineteenth Century Landscape for Twenty-first Century People

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H.H. Richardson Train Station, Holyoke: A Nineteenth Century Landscape for Twenty-first Century People

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1. Introduction

The Collaboration between H. H. Richardson, Frederick Law Olmsted, and Charles Sprague Sargent on the train stations and grounds of the Boston and Albany railroad, and connected lines, involved the newest technology of the day, yet engaged the landscape reverently. Their work for the Boston and Albany Railroad was called, by Charles Mulford Robinson, “the railroad beautiful”, and led the way for the City Beautiful movement of the turn of the century. Richardson completed nine stations before he died at age forty-seven. His successor Sheply, Rutan and Coolidge completed another twenty-three.

Although no landscape plans exist, the train station in Holyoke and the massive surrounding retaining walls reflect the spirit of this unique collaboration. The great architectural critic Louis Mumford writes that Richardson created, “out of a confusion which was actually worse than a mere void, the beginning of a new architecture”.\(^1\) The train station is the only building in the city of Holyoke designed by H. H. Richardson, and one of only three in all of western Massachusetts.

This project will study the relationship between Olmsted and Richardson, as evident in the designs of the train stations and grounds they worked on together. A plan for the landscape surrounding the train station in Holyoke will be the principle result of this study.
The Holyoke train station, one of the nineteenth-century architectural gems of the city, is currently owned by an auto parts dealer and is used for storage. Although the train station was owned by the railroad, it belonged to the townspeople as much as to the train, serving as a gateway between the city and the rest of the region. The station in Holyoke served the “Montrealer” on the Connecticut River line, which brought thousands of French Canadians to Holyoke to work in the mills. The station served as a point of connection between Montreal and Holyoke.

The station would be an appropriate place to house the Holyoke History Museum, which currently occupies a room in the Holyoke Public Library. Any building by H. H. Richardson is of interest both historically and architecturally. The role the station played in bringing people to Holyoke, both the large French Canadian community and the later immigration from Eastern Europe, makes it a
significant place to remember. In several Holyoke master plan public forums, local history education was identified as a potential way to knit the community together. By providing a large flexible open space, the station could be a place for teachers to bring students to learn about the people of Holyoke and find common ground. A museum of the people of Holyoke would also provide an opportunity to learn about the industrial revolution and the developments of nineteenth-century America.

The central open space in the station could be a venue for performances, art shows, and other community activities, as well as a neighborhood café. Twin two-story wings and a separate baggage annex are enough space to house books and collections and provide study and office space. Outside, a landscape inspired by the work of Frederick Law Olmsted on the Boston and Albany Railroad would be a restful park and a garden walk. A plaza and new steps provide connections to the neighborhood and places to meet. The hipped roof surrounding the station shelters people from sun and rain. An outdoor café is something that many museums offer to help defray costs and add interest.

fig.2  The station can be glimpsed behind the tree, just around the corner from the proposed canal walk.
1.3 Issues and Opportunities

At one time he train station and Immaculate Conception Church each served as a terminus to Ely Street. The station was built in 1885 and as mentioned previously, was important to the French Canadian community. In 1925 the Immaculate Conception Church was built at the other end of Ely Street. It is a monument to the success of the French Canadian community in Holyoke. In a mid-twentieth century urban renewal project, the historic street connection was broken by the creation of a small pedestrian park. The park is in need of renovation and could be handled in a way that emphasizes the historic street pattern, while maintaining its status as a park.

fig. 3 The 1925 church is added to an 1889 Sanborn insurance map to show the historic connection between the church and the station at either end of Ely Street.

fig. 4 The 1990 city map show the changes in the street pattern. Ely Street park is where the north end of Ely Street once was.

The railroad right of way is underused. Only one slow train passes each day. There is plenty of room to share the right-of-way with a bike trail. There are over seventy
shared rails with trails in this country and a dozen more are being planned. New England, Maine, Vermont and Rhode Island are all developing trails within rail corridors. Many people would enjoy a bike trail that wends through the industrial landscape of Holyoke and along side the Connecticut River.

The Canal system is one of three districts in Holyoke listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The power canals were built by a group of Boston businessmen to attract industrial development. Manufacturers were invited to relocate their mills along the canals, away from the unpredictable flow of rivers. The canals and dam are still used to create hydro-electric power, and many of the nineteenth century mills are being used for light industry as well as artist’s studios and other businesses. The “Canal Walk”, a pedestrian park, is in the planning stages for the city. One of the gateways to the proposed canal walk is just across the street from the corner of the railroad property, under the bridge. The canal walk will link existing parks and provide access to the canals.

Over ninety percent of the people living in South Holyoke in proximity to the station are Puerto Rican. How can historic preservation of the nineteenth century industrial landscape be done in a way that serves the present community? Community involvement in the design process would be imperative. Hopefully sometime in the future that will happen. For now, the purpose of this project is to highlight the resource of the train station and to explore one design possibility for the surrounding landscape. The landscape design will reinforce the historic integrity of the nineteenth-century by including design characteristics of the work of Frederick Law Olmsted for
the Boston and Albany railroad. The design will also reflect spatial preferences of the people in the community as identified in the work of Forsyth, Lu, McGirr. vi

2. Holyoke

2.1 Ireland Parish

Holyoke, in colonial times, was the northernmost parish of West Springfield Massachusetts. Situated east of Mount Tom and west of a bend and falls in the Connecticut River. Ireland Parish, the area now known as Holyoke, was a farming community that included small industries such as clockmaking and paper-making, a tannery and sawmills. Farmers earned extra money hauling river boats and goods by road around the falls which dropped sixty-five feet in less than two miles.

A two and a half mile long canal and inclined plane built in 1792 on the opposite side of the river, allowed Canal Village in what is now South Hadley Falls to dominate river traffic through the first half of the nineteenth century. A settlement grew around the canal traffic and for a time Canal Village was the more urban settlement.

In 1827 the Massachusetts legislature authorized a group of local men, John Chapin, Steven Chapin, Warren Chapin and Steven Smith to construct a wing dam diagonally up the west side of the river to harness water power for cotton and woolen mills, as well as a Grist mill and an iron works. The Hadley Falls Company employed seventy people by 1837, mostly women from nearby farm families. vii
2.2 Industrial Holyoke

The Connecticut River railroad was chartered to build a railroad between Springfield and Northampton in 1842. The original plan would have laid the tracks through the Canal Village, but the grade proved more favorable, and the distance shorter on the west side of the river, so the train passed through Ireland Parish. The Connecticut River railroad connected to the Boston and Albany Railroad at Springfield.

![An early map of Ireland Parish reveals the settlement pattern of a farming community.](image)
A traveling salesman, George C. Ewing, who sold scales throughout New England to mill owners, is credited with the vision for the mill city of Holyoke. He was aware of Lowell and the Merrimack River and of the Slater Mill on the Blackstone. Most of the sixty-five foot drop in the Hadley Falls occurred within about six-hundred yards at the edge of a strata of shale. Ewing saw the potential for much larger industry and involved his employer, the Fairbanks Scales Company of Saint Johnsbury Vermont. Together they were able to interest a group of Boston businessmen, including George W. Lyman, Edmond Dwight, William Appleton, Samuel Cabot, and Ignatius Sargent, in investing in new mill sites. These men were responsible for cotton manufacturing all across the state. The Fairbanks company pulled out, but Ewing stayed on and arranged for the purchase of the Hadley Falls Company and the flat farmland within the bend in the river. One farmer, Sam Ely resisted selling his farm, but eventually Ewing prevailed.

Holyoke is the resulting planned industrial city. The investors built a dam to harvest part of the flow of the Connecticut River into a series of power canals. The first wooden dam failed in a matter of hours, undaunted they rebuilt in stone. The Holyoke Water Power Company harnessed enough power for dozens of mills, and then offered these sites to industrialists. Mill owners appreciated the safe steady supply of waterpower the canals offered, in contrast to the unpredictable flow of Rivers. William Skinner rebuilt in Holyoke after the Mill River disaster of 1874 for example. Skinner Silks stayed in business in Holyoke longer than any other textile mill, operating until the nineteen sixties.
Finding labor to operate the machinery was a problem. Few local farmers were interested in changing their way of life. Some Irish immigrants worked in the mills and young women were recruited from farms throughout New England. An agent for Lyman mills named Proulx went as far as Quebec searching for young women and girls whose dexterous fingers could handle the spindles. His covered wagon carried almost fifty people at a time from Quebec to Holyoke to work in the mills. French Canadian men usually found work as laborers, while the women worked the mills. In 1880 about twenty-eight percent of the people in Holyoke were French Canadian. There were tensions between the Irish and French communities for many years as competition for jobs and housing continued.
fig. 6 The regular plan of the city of Holyoke is the result of planned industrial development.

Although textiles were a major industry in Holyoke, the shortage of cotton during the civil war caused several mills to fail. The plentiful and chemically pure water, and the abundance of rags from the textile mills created an opportunity for paper manufacturing. By 1870 papermaking was the dominant industry. In contrast to the textile mill owners who lived in Boston, the paper mill owners were local. The industry, which produced fine writing paper, thrived until the 1920s when the new pulp-sulphite process
allowed paper to be manufactured from wood pulp much cheaper than the high quality rag paper Holyoke was known for.\textsuperscript{xix} Wood pulp was in short supply near Holyoke. In time, large paper mills in northern Maine and Wisconsin, close to huge forests, gained a competitive edge.

2.3 Present Day Holyoke

During the last hundred years, Holyoke, like many Cities in the Northeast has suffered a loss of population and density. Planners and developers often look at low density as a positive thing, assuming more space per person creates better quality of life. If that space is vacant lots and uncared for places, how is it better? Some of the most enjoyable places are crowded urban neighborhoods. Lower density housing is creating suburban sprawl, and sooner or later cities and towns will be unwilling to support the huge infrastructure required to serve each house. Cities and towns across the country are reinvesting in the historic neighborhoods at the core to entice people downtown. Frederick Law Olmsted believed that great cities needed suburbs. Suburbs have grown disproportionately in the last hundred years and now it is the suburbs that need the central cities.

Unlike many New England mill cities and towns, Holyoke maintains an industrial economy, but it is not the thriving city it once was.\textsuperscript{xvii} The decline of industry in Holyoke in the twentieth century is in many ways the same story as other New England mill towns. Some people blame the unions, some people blame corporate greed. The population explosion of the 1950s created tremendous demand for material goods. Post World War II international trade
and competition are part of the complex story. Many cotton manufacturers relocated in the Southeastern United States near where the cotton was grown. Ironically, the mill sites in Holyoke are constrained by the very canals that allowed them to be so successful in the nineteenth century; the lack of space for expansion and modernization is a factor that led to their decline.

While some mills remain active, others are being converted to new uses. A new arts district has been established. A large mill was converted to artists’ lofts in the 1970s. Two others are now planning to do the same. The nearby neighborhood known as “the flats” has been through urban renewal. Some mid-nineteenth century tenements have been preserved, but many others have been demolished. New housing including duplexes and one mid-rise apartment building are scattered across open blocks resulting in a landscape of patchy historic character. Thanks to the community group Nueva Esperanza, neighboring South Holyoke has had more community involvement in the redevelopment of the existing tenements. An interesting study of the open space preferences of the people of South Holyoke is relevant to both neighborhoods. Although they are historically separate districts, today they share a similar population.

Holyoke has managed to lure more new industries than many mill cities and towns in New England. Today remaining quality mill space is ninety percent occupied. The fabric of the City has opened up tremendously. In the 1850s, Holyoke was as densely populated as New York City and Hoboken. Today Heritage State Park graces the site of the former Skinner Silk Mill, which burned down in the 1980s. The park, built along the first level canal, provides green
space, an antique merry-go-round, and a visitor’s center. It is adjacent to the Volleyball hall of fame and the Children’s museum.

‘The flats’ was packed with four story tenement housing, most of which has been torn down and replaced with duplex housing. The Connecticut River line was absorbed by the Boston and Maine Railroad and now serves a freight train, which brings coal to the Mount Tom power plant. Passenger service ended in 1969.

3. Railroads

3.1 Changes Brought by the Railroad

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, canals flowed through wetlands and other uninhabited places, making new connections in the landscape between towns and villages. Where there was a lock an inn was likely to sprout. New settlements emerged, having more to do with commerce and travel, than traditional farming villages. Canal Village, cross the river from Holyoke, is an example of such a place.

Railroad lines created new patterns. Activity centered around the depots. Trains brought food, freight, and people. Railroad depots usually contained the telegraph. The railroad industry ran by the clock and was instrumental in setting standard time. Every Thursday at noon, the Western Union sent a signal to all depots to verify the correct time. Watches were more and more popular and people would gather around the station on Thursday to set the time. The mills ran by the clock as well, causing an enormous change in the rhythm of daily life. The mail
arrived at the depot, including newspapers, and so train stations served as the connection to the larger world, as well as the point of transition from one city, or country, to another.

3.2 The Connecticut River Line

The Connecticut River Line, chartered in 1842, connected to the Western Railroad at Springfield. The Boston and Worcester Railroad, one of the first trains to be used by commuters, was chartered in 1831. It merged with the Western Railroad in 1867 to form the Boston and Albany Line, the first rail line to cover a long distance between large urban centers in the United States.

fig.7 The Connecticut River Railroad and the bend in the river at Holyoke are visible on this 1900 map of the Boston and Albany Railroad.

Chester Chapin of Springfield, who had controlled Connecticut River steamboat service, became president of the Boston and Albany. The Connecticut River line eventually ran all the way from Washington D.C. to Quebec
and brought many French Canadians to Holyoke to work in the textile and paper mills. Travel was much faster than the covered wagons and flat boats had been. People traveled back and forth, maintaining close ties to Quebec, keeping their language and customs. So significant were the French Canadians to Holyoke that the train station plan shows a separate emigrants waiting room, something not seen on plans for similar stations.

![Diagram of the Connecticut River Railroad Station](image)

*fig. 8 The plan for the Station at Holyoke has a separate emigrant’s room.*

### 3.3 The Railroad Beautiful

The Boston and Albany railroad was so profitable by 1880 that according to Commonwealth Law it had to re-invest surplus profits. That same year, Charles Sprague Sargent, son of Ignatius Sargent became director of the Boston and Albany Railroad. Sargent was a graduate of Harvard. After serving in the Civil War he developed an interest in plants and became a professor of horticulture and arbor culture at Harvard. He was the director of the Arnold Arboretum and created the layout with the help of Frederick Law Olmsted.
When Sargent became director of the B&A, it was natural for him to combine his love of plants and the landscape, with his plans for the improvement of the B&A facilities.

James A. Rumrill, the son-in-law of Chester Chapin, was vice president of the Boston and Albany Railroad and also a Harvard graduate. Rumrill had been a friend of Henry Hobson Richardson at Harvard. It was at Rumrill’s suggestion that Richardson entered a competition in 1866 to design the Unity church in Springfield. The Unity Church was Richardson’s first significant building. By 1880 he was the leading architect in the country.

The collaboration of Frederick Law Olmsted and Henry Hobson Richardson involved the newest technology of the day yet they engaged the landscape reverently, reflecting the transcendentalist thought of the nineteenth century. The train stations remain as evidence of the philosophy of Emerson, who asked Americans to find beauty in the roadside and field, the shop and mill, and the landscape directives of Olmsted, who searched for an architecture that would reflect new settlement patterns as well as the American landscape.

Before Richardson, nineteenth century architecture was for the most part derived from European historic sources. Civic buildings with new uses were modeled on cathedrals, temples and palaces. In his train stations, H. H. Richardson created a new building type, which was to have an influence on the next two great American architects Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright. James F. O’Gorman writes that, “The depots were crystallizations of the duality of transition and shelter.” They were simple structures, little more than covered platforms. Built of heavy rusticated granite, often trimmed with brownstone,
they belonged to the landscape and the track with low-slung roofs. A point of arrival and departure and a place to wait for the train, the stations were a place to pause. They are gateways both to the towns they are in as well as portals to the rails, and they seemed to belong as much to the townspeople as to the railroad company.

4. Charles Sprague Sargent

4.1 Harvard and the Arnold Arboretum

Charles Sprague Sargent was a member of one of Boston’s elite families. He was descended from Epes Sargent, a merchant who had moved to Gloucester from England in 1675. His father Ignatius Sargent was a banker who invested in the Connecticut River Railroad and the Boston and Albany, later becoming the director of the latter.

Charles entered Harvard in 1858, but there is no record that he was interested in plants while he was a student. He served in the Civil War, achieved the rank of major and was honorably discharged in 1865.

Henry Sargent, first cousin to Ignatius had an estate across the Hudson River from the great landscape gardener and writer Andrew Jackson Downing. Downing worked with Sargent to plan and plant his twenty-two acre estate. Downing also advised another relative, Horatio Hollis Hunnewell. It is these two cousins who introduced Charles to the art of horticulture, and guided him as he took over management of the family estate in Brookline.

Scientific knowledge was increasing at an accelerated pace. Asa Gray, Harvard’s botanist and director of the
garden petitioned for help. Sargent began his tenure at Harvard by taking over responsibility for the Harvard Garden in Cambridge. He later served as Professor of horticulture and arbor culture, but he is best remembered as the longtime director of the Arnold Arboretum.

When the Arnold Arboretum, endowed after the death of James Arnold who left his fortune in trust to “be applied for the promotion of agricultural or horticultural improvements”, Sargent assumed responsibility. Around the same time that Sargent became director of the arboretum, Olmsted was devising a scheme for the Boston Park system. The Arnold Arboretum lay in the path of the “Emerald Necklace” which connected the Boston Common with Franklin Park, which was seven miles away from the Common. Olmsted proposed an alliance with the city, which would allow public access to the arboretum in exchange for city maintenance. Olmsted offered to forgo his design fee and help to plan the arboretum.

4.2 Sargent and the Boston and Albany Railroad

Charles Sprague Sargent assumed his Father’s directorship of the Boston and Albany Railroad. When the Railroad embarked on an extensive program of improvements he naturally turned to his good friends and neighbors, Frederick Law Olmsted and Henry Hobson Richardson. In addition to his work at Harvard and at the Arnold Arboretum, and the Boston and Albany Railroad, Charles Sprague Sargent served as the editor of Forest and Garden Magazine. It was here that the work done for the Boston and Albany line was publicized and so led the way for the city beautiful movement.
5. Henry Hobson Richardson

5.1 Answering Emerson’s Call for American Architecture

Although Richardson’s architecture has its roots in the French Romanesque, his buildings are not covered with a pastiche of historic detail like those of his contemporaries. He borrowed the round arches and the heavy rusticated stone vocabulary from Romanesque architecture, but he used the style to create modern buildings for new purposes. The plans are logical. His buildings serve the needs of the people. When it is a new need, such as a train station or a public Library, the plan reflects the purpose. The exterior of the building reveals the function of the interior.

Richardson’s architecture took on a geological quality in the years he collaborated with Olmsted. Olmsted had strong ideas about how the American landscape should look, including American architecture, and he guided his younger colleague. Richardson and Olmsted visited Niagara Falls together and Olmsted instructed Richardson in appreciation for the landscape. Both men were good friends of William Emerson, Ralph Waldo’s older brother, who was also a Transcendentalist. Clearly Olmsted influenced Richardson and their collaboration involved more than greening the property once the stations were finished. They were neighbors in Brookline and Olmsted was a frequent guest at the Monday night dinners in the architect’s home.
fig. 9 The train station in North Easton, Massachusetts was the first station that Richardson and Olmsted collaborated on.

There is a remarkable consistency to the train stations of the Boston and Albany Railroad. Richardson completed nine of the stations and another twenty-three were completed by his successors firm, Sheply, Rutan and Coolidge. The station at Holyoke is one of the few that does not serve the Boston and Albany Line. The stations were all built by the Norcross Brothers of Worcester, and many were landscaped by Frederick Law Olmsted. Olmsted and Richardson created a rugged horizontal geographic architecture as elemental as the landscape itself.

The program for the B&A was a massive undertaking of unprecedented scale. Richardson, Olmsted and Sargent sought to marry the dominant opposing forces in nineteenth-century America. That is rapid industrialization, westward
expansion and progress, and a reverence for the American landscape, which was perceived to be rapidly disappearing.

fig.10 The connection to the landscape and geological quality of Richardson’s train stations is evident in this photograph of the Palmer railroad station.
fig. 9 An 1888 photo of the station in Holyoke reveals the characteristic horizontality of Richardson’s train stations.

6. Frederick Law Olmsted

Although people love trees, the wilderness or forest is not the landscape most people prefer. J. B. Jackson identifies the Olmstedian “natural” landscape of groups of trees in an open landscape as the style most Americans prefer. Olmsted believed that landscape provided relief from the rigid cityscape and refreshed the mind and spirit. He was concerned with health and sanitary conditions and believed that beautiful natural scenery contributed to a feeling of well being while providing fresh air.
6.1 Early Career

Long before Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux named themselves landscape architects, Olmsted was interested in scenery and the landscape. His early careers were in farming and journalism and it was his knowledge of drainage, and his eye for scenery, together with his belief in the role of the landscape in health and social reforms that were to influence his career as a landscape architect.

In 1850, Olmsted toured Europe, some of which he described in his 1852 book, "The Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England".¹⁹

One of the most important and influential developments in Central Park was the separation of traffic by grade changes and bridges and underpasses. The separation allowed pedestrians to walk safely and carriages to move quickly. Much of Central Park was planned for the pleasure drive and the scenery is well appreciated sequentially. Paths curve and views open up, creating a feeling of anticipation.

6.2 Fairsted

Olmsted combined two landscape gardening aesthetic effects in his work, the beautiful and the picturesque. The beautiful tradition in landscape included pastoral lawns and informal groups of shade trees. The picturesque tradition was more rugged, with rock outcroppings and dramatic effects of light and shadow. One can observe these diverse effects working together in the domestic landscape at Fairsted, his home in Brookline.
fig.12 The domestic landscape at Fairsted juxtaposes a beautiful green lawn and trees with a picturesque rock garden and hollow as seen in this axonometric drawing from a National Park Service Fairsted Brochure.
fig. 13 The lawn at Fairsted frames an American Elm and is enclosed by a tapestry of small trees and shrubs.
6.3 Olmsted and the Boston and Albany Railroad

Olmsted’s work for the B&A carries sequential design into a new realm. Although he was a master of the pastoral and the picturesque landscape, he was eager to face contemporary developments in urbanization and transportation. People often talk about plants softening architecture. Olmsted used plants as part of a powerful dynamic system, not to be overpowered by the technology of the train, nor to mask it, but to exist side by side, two powerful forces of nineteenth century America, industrialization and the American Landscape.

The most extensive landscape programs of the B&A were for the commuter stations west of Boston. Together with his predecessor Andrew Jackson Downing, Olmsted is more responsible than anyone for promoting the American Suburb. How could he have foreseen the changes in transportation that would allow suburbanization to so dominate the American landscape? In looking back we can rediscover the importance of the relationship between the city and the suburban landscape. In the landscapes of the B&A stations, two dominant forces, industrialization and the transcendentalist’s worship of the land, are braided together creating a powerful image of late nineteenth century America.

7. Remnants of the Boston and Albany Railroad

The stations at Auburndale and Chestnut Hill both had landscaping by Olmsted and stations by Richardson and unfortunately, both have been destroyed. Most remaining stations with Olmsted landscapes have not withstood the
changes of the last century. Parking lots and wider streets have paved over these and other historic landscapes. In visiting several stations, and by looking at plans and drawings at the Olmsted Foundation Archives at the National Park, Fairsted, and photographs in Forest and Garden Magazine, and by visiting restored Olmsted landscapes like Fairsted and Central Park, it is possible to piece together what the landscapes looked like.

fig.14 A planting plan from 1882 for the Auburndale station in Newton had a curved drive and walkways with curved edge of shrubs and trees.
fig. 15 A curving drive and walk are also evident in the 1884 planting plan for Chestnut Hill.

7.1 Wellesley Farms Railroad Station

The train station at Wellesley Farms is on the National Register of Historic Places. It is a tiny station that has been preserved almost as a garden folly, in that it is now an open-air structure. The roof has been repaired and the stone and wood structure is intact, but all doors and windows have been removed. The station serves a commuter line that travels between Worcester and Boston. It is nestled at the bottom of a hill by a pond in a quiet suburban neighborhood. A curved drive approaches the depot, encircling a stand of rhododendrons and oak trees. The parking lot hides behind trees on the other side the pond, so the picturesque quality is not crowded out by an expanse of cars. The parking lot is a short walk away along the platform.
fig. 16 A bronze plaque informs people of the station’s historic status.

fig. 17 A curved drive passes by the tiny Wellesley Farms station before circling a pond and arriving at a parking lot.
7.2 Palmer Railroad Station

An antiques store occupies the Palmer depot. The station doesn’t appear to have been renovated, but it has held up relatively well over the years. The plan is an unusual trapezoid because Richardson fit the building between the existing tracks. A stone arch is the only remaining evidence of Olmsted’s landscape. The area around the station is a muddy, treeless, formless railroad yard.

fig. 18 The designed landscape is long vanished under nearly one hundred years of automobiles traffic.
fig.19 This rough sketch reveals that Richardson designed the Palmer Station to fit the site.

A rough sketch by Richardson is evidence of his willingness to consider the site when designing a building. The form of the station fits between two converging railroads.

An Olmsted grading plan reveals changes in topography and a characteristic curving drive. Some sections indicate that trees were part of the design, although placement is not evident in plan.
fig. 20 The Converging tracks define the site which Olmsted developed with a characteristic curving drive and landforms.

fig. 21 Section drawings of Palmer reveal shade trees and a stone arch.
7.3 Framingham Railroad Station

Downtown Framingham has a Richardson station, but any landscape has been paved over to widen streets and create room for cars. The porch is gone, due to the encroaching street. The station itself has been renovated for use as a restaurant. It will be re-opened as a club in its next incarnation.

fig. 22 The station in Framingham has lost its porch to a wider street.
8. New Uses for Old Places

8.1 Holyoke Train Station

In contrast to the previously mentioned stations, there is no record that Olmsted was involved in designing the Holyoke Station landscape. The Holyoke station was the second train station to be designed by Richardson. The first one in North Easton belonged to the extensive collaboration with Olmsted for the Ames family. The landscape surrounding the station in Holyoke is strictly utilitarian. The grounds are surrounded by massive retaining walls that allow for the nearby streets to pass under the tracks. The wall was penetrated on each side by steep cast iron stairs, and was open, on grade at the front. An early photograph reveals a planting bed at the perimeter, but at the time it was taken the bed was prepared for planting, but empty. Today the grounds are mostly paved with an edge that includes one pin oak, some sumac, multi-flora roses and other weeds.
Fig. 23 This early Richardson sketch of the Holyoke station included a tower.

Fig. 24 Richardson’s early sketch of the plan is nearly the same as the plan of the completed station.

If Olmsted had been involved in the landscape, the grade changes would undoubtedly have been handled more artfully than the iron staircases. In planning for a landscape design that is historically sensitive, while serving today’s needs, Olmsted, Richardson and Sargent’s work on the Boston and Albany Line can serve as a model.
fig.25 This 1888 photograph of the Richardson station in Holyoke was taken shortly after the station was completed. A planting bed rings the perimeter. Utilitarian steps and a 10’ high retaining wall present a daunting southern entrance.

As previously mentioned the train station could house the Holyoke History Museum, which might include a café and flexible educational and performance space. Finding a public use for the station would return it to the people and community where the station could play a significant role in the revitalization of downtown Holyoke, and help to connect the flats to the canal district.
8.2 Arts and Industry District

Mixed-use neighborhoods, often pioneered by artists, have played a significant role in the revitalization of neighborhoods in cities and towns across the country.\textsuperscript{xxi} Mill buildings have been reused in creative ways throughout New England, from condominiums to elderly housing, to offices and studios.\textsuperscript{xxii}

As Manufacturing became more complex larger mills than could be accommodated at the mill sites in Holyoke were able to spin, weave, and finish cloth in connected processes. The original mill buildings in Holyoke are constrained between the first and second level canals and unable to expand. Much of the industrial space in Holyoke has been converted to new uses, including light manufacturing and office and warehouse space.

David Sher of the Canal Gallery Building has been providing studios for artists since the nineteen seventies.\textsuperscript{xxiii} An enormous mill, it is a rough space that has partitions dividing studios, each with a couple of windows.

A new mixed-use zoning district will allow artists to live and work in converted lofts. Open Square, a large mill complex directly across the second level canal from the railroad, is in the process of a complete renovation. In 2003, seven hundred children will attend a charter school in the second wing of Open Square.\textsuperscript{xxiv} The University of Massachusetts is currently negotiating with Open Square for space to house their art studios.
fig.26 Open Square, a renovated mill building visible beyond the railroad yard retaining wall, contains mixed use development including residences and a charter school. The city hall spire rises beyond.

8.3 Rails with Trails

Although this project focuses mainly on the Holyoke train station and grounds, the larger landscape of the railroad right-of-way merits some attention as well. The right-of-way as it passes by the station is two tracks wide. The track closest to the station is badly degraded. The other track is still active, serving a freight train, which delivers coal to the Mount Tom Power Plant. Each day,
the train passes by only once, very slowly, either going to, or coming from Mount Tom.

While most rail trails make use of abandoned railroad corridors, to date there are approximately seventy rail-with-trails in thirty states.\textsuperscript{xxv} There are hundreds of kilometers of such trails in Canada, Western Australia and Europe. With slow speed and low use railroads a minimal setback is required. The track can be separated from the trail by a fence, a grade change, a wall, shrubbery, or a combination of the above.

\textbf{fig. 27} There is adequate room for trail and track to share the right of way.
8.4 The Planned Canal Walk

A canal walk is being planned to celebrate the Holyoke Power canals, a marvel of nineteenth century engineering, on the National Register of Historic Places. The canals continue to provide power to some of the mills and are also an amenity for the city, which has been called ‘the Venice of Western Massachusetts’. The canals give Holyoke a high degree of imageability, as defined by Kevin Lynch in, _The Image of the City_.xxxvi The order and structure of the canals give the city legibility, a quality that Kevin Lynch defines as a city, “whose districts or landmarks or pathways are easily identifiable and are easily grouped into an over-all pattern”.xxxvii
fig. 28 The canals are perched high enough to be visible from the street.

fig. 29 A map of the proposed canal walk indicates the first phase of the walk in dark green and the second phase in light green. The arts and industry district is indicated with a black line.

Water in the landscape is something that landscape designers past and present agree is essential. Water brings the sky to the earth, reflecting the passing clouds and sun. Wind and light animate the surface and dappled light reflects onto surrounding surfaces. A large body of water also helps to modify extremes in temperature.
The power canals are a spectacular example of nineteenth century engineering. The water level in the canals is high enough that the surface is visible from most nearby streets. Fortunately they have been useful enough to be well maintained and are untouched by mid-century urban renewal. The renewed appreciation for the heritage of the industrial revolution that led to the creation of the Heritage Parks in Massachusetts, has also led to an appreciation of the industrial landscape.

The Canal Walk will connect people along the canals from the flats and South Holyoke to downtown. Combined with the new arts district, Heritage Park, the Children’s Museum, and the Volleyball Hall of Fame, the Canal Park will enhance life in the city.

9. Holyoke Parks and Historic Districts

Holyoke’s largest park is Mount Tom. A ski area on Mount Tom was recently purchased by the state. Dinosaur tracks can be visited nearby. City parks at one time included four different parks by Olmsted. Today, of the four, only Pulaski park remains and is currently being renovated. The purpose of this paper is to explore the train station and surrounding neighborhood, so only those parks and historic districts in close proximity will be described in any detail.
9.1 Heritage State Park, Holyoke

fig. 30 Heritage State Park occupies a strip of land along the first level canal in Holyoke.

Pride mixed with shame in 1976 when Americans looked back at two hundred years of history. The Vietnam war, Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, the energy crisis, the loss of a manufacturing economy and acres of quiet mills all spoke of the tremendous growth that had also created tremendous problems. Westward expansion left the Northeast seeming used up and ruined by industry that grew up fast and died even faster. People who could afford to abandoned inner cities for the suburbs. Lack of jobs and years of neglect left many eastern cities desolate at the core.

In that same year the Massachusetts government planned a program to build Heritage parks in eight downtown areas throughout the state. The $35 million program intended to inject new life into cities across the state and to emphasize their manufacturing history. Visitor centers appeared with elaborate displays about the people, mills
and machinery that shaped each region. By 1984 seven visitor centers were opened.

From 1976 until 1984, Heritage State Parks, including visitor centers, were built in Fall River, Gardner, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, North Adams, and Uxbridge. Budget cuts in the late 1980s may have led to the near closing of the parks by the Weld administration in the early 1990s but public pressure intervened. How successful the Heritage Parks have been in revitalizing these downtowns continues to be evaluated.

Tourists spent over ten billion dollars in Massachusetts in 1997, up 5.8% from 1996. Among the fifty states, Massachusetts ranked eighth in international travel and fourteenth in domestic, resulting in nearly 1.7 billion dollars in federal, state, and local taxes, as well as $3 billion in wages and salaries. Tourism has not replaced the tremendous loss of manufacturing jobs in the northeast, but clearly it has real impact and is an important factor in the changing economy.

The first Heritage Park visitor center was built in Lowell in an empty mill in 1976. Inside was a phenomenal display of a working waterpower system and costumed interpreters. It was expensive to build and maintain and it didn’t stay open for very long, however the park has been successful in other ways. Now a National Park, Lowell has received visitors from all over the world, including Prince Charles, who came to see the remarkable transformation of this industrial city. An estimated seventeen dollars of private funds were invested for every dollar of public money.

Peoples’ attitudes toward Lowell have changed. What was once one of the most depressed and depressing failures
in the state is now a vital small city that can fill a 6000 seat arena for concerts. The visitor center was at the beginning of the economic turn-around, but it is only one part of the story. There was an agreement in Lowell among many people to try to change attitudes. People and businesses had given up on Lowell and moved out. Local banks created a consortium to administer grants and loans to local businesses. Lowell State park suffered budget cuts in the late 1980s, as have all the Heritage Parks. Since it is now a National Park as well, it hasn’t been hit as hard. Lowell offers a lot of interest, from boat rides on the canals, to trolley rides, to a walking tour. A Victorian garden grows downtown and a museum interprets history of the textile industry in an old mill. Other attractions include a quilt museum and the nearby Merrimack River. Lowell has managed to attract tourists, but more importantly Lowell has attracted new businesses, which generates jobs and tax revenue.

While the Lowell Heritage Park was one of the first to be built, Holyoke Heritage Park was one of the last. Completed in 1984, it didn’t benefit from a full budget for long. Even with limited support from the state, the numbers of visitors have increased an average of 10% each year. As with all the Heritage State Parks, it was nearly shut down in the early 1990s by the Weld administration. Public demand led to a partnership with the city of Holyoke as well as continued funding from the state in a much more limited way.

Charley Lotspeach, the visitor services supervisor, and his staff create programming to pull people into the park. The Holyoke Children’s Museum is just down the street. The park was given an antique merry-go-round, which
at one time entertained children at Mountain Park on Mount Tom. Park programs are usually directed towards families with young children and they attract people from about a thirty-minute radius. They also reach out to school groups and strive to create programs that fit within school curriculum. Lotspeach is skeptical about interpreting industrial history because he feels it has a limited appeal. The exhibits change frequently, which is a lot of work for the staff. A student art show celebrating peace week was on display recently.

Ann Sinclair, Director of Community Development for the City of Holyoke, believes that the park has helped to revitalize downtown, but she and Lotspeach both credit the Children’s Museum with being a bigger attraction. The Children’s Museum, begun in a storefront over seventeen years ago, now shares a large sunny space with the Volleyball Hall of fame that is adjacent to the park. Greater Holyoke Inc. is a non-profit organization that sponsors “Celebrate Holyoke”, a food and music festival, which takes place in the park every summer. Complex social and economic problems continue in Holyoke, but it does appear to be improving.
fig. 31 The antique Merry-go-round from Mountain Park on Mount Tom was installed in Heritage State Park a few years after the park opened.

9.2 Ely Street Park

Ely Street Park is a tiny linear park that was created out of the north end of Ely Street during an urban renewal project of the nineteen seventies. The curvy path and low crabapple trees effectively block the view down Ely Street from the train station. The park is separated from adjacent properties by a chain-link fence. A row of Sugar maple trees defines each side of the park, yet a wiggly path negates the memory of the street pattern. The park is not well maintained and has a no-mans-land feeling.
fig. 32 Ely Street park baffles the connection from Ely Street to the Train station, the former terminus of the street.

9.3 North High Street Historic District

The North High Street Historic District includes several blocks of late nineteenth century commercial buildings on High Street between Dwight and Lyman streets. Although Main Street was the commercial center earlier in the development of the city, the magnificent City Hall, which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975, was built on High Street and fashionable shops soon followed. The North High Street Historic
District has been on the National Historic Register since 1986, and was expanded in 1992.

**Fig. 33.** Historic districts are highlighted on this city map.

**9.4 Hadley Falls Company Housing District**

Hadley Falls Manufacturing Company Mill Housing, dating from 1848 is characteristic of early mill housing. They are simple three story brick row houses arranged along streets will alleys in between. The brick row houses have
been renovated by “Olde Holyoke Incorporated”, and are being used for housing once again. Hadley Falls Company Housing was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places in 1972. xxix

fig. 34 Mature trees and brick garden walls contribute to the beauty of the historic mill housing.

9.5 The Holyoke Power Canals Historic District

The Holyoke Power Canals, designed by John Chase and Philander Anderson, and built by Irish laborers of local sandstone, are a National Civil Engineering Landmark. The canals have been on the National Register of Historic Places since 1980. The statement of significance in the National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form reads, “The Holyoke Canal System possesses integrity of location, design, setting and materials, and remains as an essentially unaltered example of nineteenth century
engineering dating from 1847-1893.” The canals contribute tremendous character and historic integrity to the city, as well as providing the visual amenity of large expanses of water in the context of the city.

![Image of the Holyoke Canal System](image)

**Fig. 35. A large expanse of water reflects the wind and sky bringing light into the landscape.**

### 10. Present Conditions around Holyoke Train Station

The neighborhood surrounding the train station is generally rundown. It is not as densely populated as it once was, in part because much of the early mill housing has been replaced with duplex homes. At one time the flats, or Ward 1, suffered the highest level of crime in the city. It is now number five on the list of high crime neighborhoods in Holyoke. The station block is watched over
by many eyes in the mid-rise apartment building opposite, and is relatively safe.

The train station has a concrete block addition at the southern end, and a second story has been built in the central open room. Even with these changes, it is closer to its original form than many other Richardson stations. The design ideas in this paper assume that the building can be restored to a state that is similar to its original condition.

10.1 Existing Conditions

A Plan and section of the existing conditions follows. The base information is taken from drawings from the City of Holyoke engineering department. The exact placement and size of trees in estimated, as is the exact nature of the paving pattern in Ely Street Park. The floor plan of the station is not to scale, but is included to make visible the entrances and windows.
fig. 35. The information used in the plan is pieced together from 100 scale plans of the city obtained from the Holyoke engineering department. The drawings are for planning purposes only. Including the floor plan of the station in the site plan clarifies the relationship of the entrances to the building to the entrances to the property.
10.1.2 Existing Conditions Sections

**fig. 36.** The Section drawings show the relationship of the station to the surroundings and to scale figures. The canopy of the crabapple trees in Ely Street Park blocks sight lines.

10.2 Site Analyses

A series of base plans of Ely Street Park and the railroad yard are highlighted and annotated to indicate site features that are relevant to design decisions.
10.2.1 Topography

The topography around the train station and in Ely Street park is relatively flat. A massive granite retaining wall contains the railroad yard. The streets slope away from the front entrance. The walls are the tallest where the roads cross under the track. Most of the yard is paved with asphalt. The paving in Ely Street Park is concrete.

fig. 37. The grade changes radically around the retaining walls and is relatively flat within the railroad yard and extending out into the Ely Street Park.
10.2.2 Views

Some of the views from the station support the historic feeling of the nineteenth century industrial city and some views are unsupportive. The 1848 mill housing has historic integrity as does Open Square Mill and the Holyoke Water Power building and fire station. Ely Street Park and the surrounding residences have a more contemporary look.

Fig. 38. The Railroad yard is elevated from most of the surrounding landscape and provides prospect in all directions. The view down Ely Street is lacking in historic integrity, but other views are of nineteenth century buildings, an early steel bridge, and the second level canal.
10.2.3 Circulation

Main Street has the heaviest traffic in the neighborhood. It leads from the route 116 bridge over the Connecticut River to route 391. Most local traffic shifted from Main Street to High Street sometime in the early twentieth century. Traffic is lighter on Lyman, Bowers and Mosher Streets. There is only light pedestrian use in Ely Street Park, which is separated from the large apartment building by a chain link fence.

The only functioning entrance to the railroad yard is on Bowers Street. Trespassers may enter the property from the track. One freight train passes each day.

fig. 39. Sidewalks border both sides of the lightly traveled streets in the neighborhood.
10.2.4 Sun and Shadow

The east facing entrance and most of the railroad property is in full sun most of the day. North facing steps are likely to be icy in the winter, so care should be taken to open up the north entrance as much as possible to the eastern sun. Mature sugar maples and crabapple trees shade most of Ely Street Park. An enormous oak tree next to the waterpower building offers filtered light and helps to diffuse the western summer sun.

*fig. 40. The sunny bare open space in front of the station is in contrast to the tree-lined Ely Street Park.*
There is little significant vegetation on the railroad yard. One young pin oak stands near the northeast corner and some sumac has invaded the southern edge. Most of the other vegetation is a weedy mix that includes multiflora roses. Some young black cherry saplings and a paper birch edge the top of the retaining wall near the track.

Ely Street Park contains seven sugar maples. Sugar maples also line the east side of Bowers Street. The most significant tree in the neighborhood is the enormous and well cared for oak tree on the Holyoke Water Power property.

![Diagram of vegetation and tree locations around the train station.](image)

*fig.41.* Most of the trees near the station are sugar maples that are about thirty years old. An enormous oak on the Holyoke Water Power property is the biggest tree in the neighborhood.
11. New Landscape Plan for the Train Station, Adapted for use as the Holyoke History Museum.

The design for the landscape takes direction from multiple sources. Although Frederick Law Olmsted never designed a landscape for this station, his and Richardson’s work for the B&A is the primary source of the new landscape design presented here.

The landscape around the station in Holyoke is too small to contain a sweeping curved drive that is of the type characteristic of most of the Boston and Albany landscapes. Given the new use of the station, the size of the property, and adequate nearby parking, on street parking will suffice for the new museum. Because of the small scale of this landscape, Olmsted and Richardson’s domestic collaborations are also relevant. Imagine the retaining wall as a rock outcropping. A walk can be been carved into the stairwells, that is similar to the ramble in Central Park, the Ames Gate Lodge and war memorial in North Easton, and Olmsted’s own domestic garden at Fairsted. A gentle climb up granite steps edged with boulders and New England woodland plants creates a picturesque garden path that invites passersby to come in from the street and explore. Wide steps at sidewalk level also serve as casual seating.

A wider, curving footpath enters the property from the front, allowing universal accessibility and an unobstructed entrance for emergency and service vehicles, as well as bicyclists. A smooth lawn, with clusters of shade trees, provides a beautiful green at the northeast section of the property.
While the setting for the station is Olmstedian. The plaza at the Bowers Street entrance responds to an article by Ann Forsyth, Henry Lu and Patricia McGirr, entitled, “Plazas, Streets and Markets: What Puerto Ricans Bring to Urban Spaces in Northern Climates”. This study of the special preferences of the people of South Holyoke is relevant to any public design work in the Flats or South Holyoke. This project is not about creating a design that appeals to a narrow group of people, but to create a place that respects and illuminates history, while appealing to people in the neighborhood and providing space for education and enjoyment.

A plaza in front of a significant civic building was one landscape preference identified in the study. Color in the paving, rather than beds of flowers, and flowering shrubs and shade trees were others. The relationship to the street is also important. Combining these diverse elements is a challenge that can create a rich experience.

Too often public space is designed with little regard for the people who use it. If, in the future, the City of Holyoke chooses to purchase the station and return it to the public, community participation in design decisions would be essential. Meanwhile, this design responds to landscape elements outlined in the Forsyth, Lu, McGirr paper, along with the nineteenth-century vocabulary outlined above.
11.1 Visual Connection to other Significant Structures

The spire of the 1875 Holyoke City Hall rises up from High Street dominating the skyline of Holyoke. High street is only a few blocks up hill from Main Street and the spire rises behind Open Square Mill when viewed from the station. On the other side of the tracks immediately behind the train station on Main Street stand the Holyoke Water Power building and a fire station, two nineteenth-century brick buildings whose ornament and rooflines distinguish them from the utilitarian mills.

Some early mill housing is visible to the east, including the 1848 Hadley Falls Company housing. Later tenements and brick row houses are sprinkled throughout the largely redeveloped neighborhood.

Barely visible from the station, because of the low crabapple trees, the 1925 Immaculate Church commands the opposite end of Ely Street. Built by the French Canadian Community a generation or two after their arrival, the lavish church is a monument to the success of the community, as well as to their god.

12. New Plan for Ely Street Park and the Train Station

Landscape

Trees provide shelter from sun and wind. Fragrant and colorful flowers attract people and butterflies. Berries and seeds nourish birds, which delight the eye. Beautiful green gardens make people feel better.xxxi Rather than design a landscape, as if on a blank slate, landscape architects shape the growing environment, creating beautiful, comfortable places that allow diverse life to flourish,
while accommodating human needs. The need for beauty and order, and the spiritual need to connect to the earth are more important than where to park the car. Too often in today’s landscape parking is seen as the most pressing concern. Historic landscapes additionally provide a connection to our heritage. In an urban or suburban environment, a beautiful landscape creates an image of human caring, and requires care to stay beautiful.

A healthy vital city full of people and activity is not incompatible with plant life, but urban conditions do place tremendous stresses on trees and plants. Large parks provide the best conditions for trees and species diversity, but not always the best conditions for people. A small pocket park can be an urban oasis, yet connected enough to the fabric of the city to be a social place. Large parks in urban areas often feel unwelcoming and empty, and can be dangerous.

In contrast to urban renewal of the mid-twentieth century, historic preservation is an important part of the revitalization of downtown neighborhoods. From Quincy Market in Boston, to the Canals and Mills of Lowell, historic preservation has maintained community character and served to strengthen the identity and unique quality of each place, while bringing new life and interest to nearly deserted places. Without maintenance, historic landscapes quickly lose character and the ability to connect to the past is diminished.
12.1 Design

The new design for Ely Street Park and the Holyoke Train opens the sight lines between the station and the 1925 Immaculate Conception Church at the opposite end of Ely Street. This shady linear park is separated from the neighbors by planting beds of shrubs and groundcovers that follow the historic street pattern. Existing and significant sugar maple trees weave in and out of the planting beds along the sides of the park, rather than a new planting of perfectly straight rows of young trees.

A round plaza reaches into the sidewalk from the Railroad yard. It is surrounded with a cut brownstone edge and paved in random ashlar granite, mimicking the rich masonry surface of the station. Some of the huge granite blocks can be removed from the north and south openings in the retaining wall, and reused to define the edges of the central stairway. Rough boulders hug the edges of all three sets of stairs.

The station is brought partially back to its original condition, by removing the concrete block addition, and the second floor in the center, to restore the vaulted open space and reveal the structure of the roof. The central space could serve a variety of community needs, from art shows, to concerts, to dances. In between the two front entrances to the building is an ideal place for a covered outdoor café.

The design plans for a bike trail to share the right of way with the Mount Tom Coal Train. A steel fence separates the track from the trail. Another fence separates the back porch from the trail, allowing access behind the baggage annex, which shares the property with the station.
12.1.1 Master Plan

fig.42. The master plan of the landscape design shows the linear nature of Ely Street park and the restored sight lines. A low planting bed blocks cars from entering. The sidewalks curve in to the central promenade. Crushed brownstone asphalt paves Ely Street Park and crosses the street. The park is lined with sugar maples. Red maples continue the line across the street. The curved accessible path through the railroad yard to the bike trail is paved in the same material. The north and south entrances are wide granite steps that climb at a gentle grade through the retaining wall openings to a path either in front of the station, or under the porch roof.
fig.43. Section AA illustrates the gentle granite steps at the southern entrance. The grade of the new circular plaza meets that of Ely Street Park. The relationship of the plaza to the semicircular steps up to the station is clear in Section BB.
12.1.3 Detail Plan

Fig. 44. Random ashlar granite paving, surrounded by brownstone trim relates the plaza to the station. Boulders and salvaged cut granite blocks define the edges of the semi-circular steps that lead to the covered entrances to the station.
12.1.4 Detail Sections

fig. 45. Café tables and chairs fit between the two entrances under the roof. The handicapped accessible entrance is visible to the right in detail section AA. Section BB illustrates the degree of enclosure provided by the shrubs and trees. Sightlines are protected by 3’ high shrubs and 10’ to the lower branches of the maple trees.
12.1.5 Axonometric Drawing

fig. 46. The axonometric drawing helps to clarify the relationship of various parts of the design into a coherent whole. All steps are wide enough for sitting on, providing the kinds of places that teenagers and others enjoy for meeting friends. A picturesque garden walk frames the station. A lawn and clumps of maple trees fill the northeast corner of the railroad yard.
13. Conclusion

The train station in Holyoke is a significant architectural monument of the late nineteenth-century. It was built during a time of tremendous growth and change in the American landscape.

Although we can lament the passage of the railroad age, the landscape of the railroad remains a resource for the twenty-first century. Rail corridors offer both recreational and transportation opportunities. Train stations are among the most important civic buildings in many cities and towns. When New York’s Pennsylvania station was built, it was heralded as the largest building since the pyramids. Its demolition in the 1960s galvanized preservationists in New York who established the New York City Landmarks Commission. Union Station in Saint Louis is one of the largest adaptive reuse projects in the country.

Many people consider Henry Hobson Richardson to be the single most influential American architect. The station is of tremendous interest in and of itself, and as a monument to American architecture, the railroad, and the industrial revolution. The Holyoke Railroad Station should be a cultural amenity for the city. As a centerpiece to a small park, it could shelter a wide variety of community activities. A landscape setting in the twenty-first century need not turn away from the past, nor should it attempt to replicate 1885 conditions. With new uses come new design considerations. However, the new design can help to illuminate the history of a place while serving the needs of today. The landscape design, for the Holyoke train station and Ely Street Park, in the spirit of the railroad
gardening program of Charles Sprague Sargent, Frederick Law Olmsted, and Henry Hobson Richardson for the Boston and Albany Railroad, provides a welcoming outdoor space for people to meet and gather, and a green place for trees and shrubs to flourish.

A plaza, visually related to the station by the paving pattern and circular form, connects to the neighborhood by reaching into the sidewalk. Colored pavement continues across the street and through Ely Street Park, so that the two parks are joined. Reclaiming the rail yard from a parking lot, a garden gives trees and shrubs ample room to sink down roots. The north and south stairwells are visual amenities at street level, where previously passersby were presented with an impenetrable granite wall. A strolling garden of shallow granite steps edged in woodland plants and boulders invites people in to explore. Rainwater falls from the roof and flows through rocky channels nourishing plants, yet stays away from walkways. Frederick Law Olmsted, Henry Hobson Richardson, and Charles Sprague Sargent were each men with an eye towards the future. With a little help, their vision can improve the quality of life in our time as well.
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Notes


vi Forsyth, Lu, McGirr “Plaza’s Streets and Markets”


viii Green, Holyoke


xi Czitrom, Hidden Holyoke

xii Mullin, Holyoke Master Plan

xiii Conversation with Carlos Vega of Nueva Esperanza, April 1, 2002.


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