

Cambridge Public Library A gift of the California philanthropist Edward Hastings Rindge, a Cambridge boy who inherited \$3 million in 1887 and moved to California, where he bought the Spanish land grant that included Malibu. Rindge also gave Cambridge its City Hall and the original Rindge Manual Training School. The library is about to undergo major renovation and rebuilding, including 2 significant public art projects.

Sumner Road Named after William Hyslop Sumner, who purchased land here shortly after graduating from Harvard in 1799. Sumner dedicated himself to developing Noodles Island (East Boston), however, and finally sold his Cambridge land, still vacant, about 1840. Sumner Tunnel is named after him.

Francis Ave This area was formerly the Shady Hill Estate owned by Charles Eliot Norton. Its development was tightly controlled to please wealthy homeowners. Today's residents include John Kenneth Galbraith, Abby Rockefeller, Henry Louis Gates, and others. Julia Child used to live here.

Radcliffe Quad These dormitories were built away from the original Radcliffe Yard because girls originally lived with families. By the time the school decided it was ok to build dorms, the only open areas were several blocks away.

Avon Hill A single architect for a clientele of successful Boston businessmen designed most of the houses on Washington Ave. This area, especially at the top of the hill, was built relatively late because it was previously impossible to get gravity-propelled water up to the higher elevations of the hill. (See Reservoir Road, below)

Richdale Ave Location of the first Co-Housing project in Cambridge. (The second one is on Harvey Street, which we'll pass later.) The small brick building at the end of the street is the former home of Hews Pottery, founded in the 1750s, which claimed to be the oldest continuous business in the US. (It later moved out of town and then folded a few years ago.) The firm failed soon after moving out of town and switching from clay to plastic pots.

Cogswell The developer had to legally agree to keep the route through this area open for public use in exchange for increasing the density of the buildings.

Walden St. In the middle of the bridge is a plaque with an image of a Winslow Homer woodcut of a view from this spot of the stockyards that used to be located in Porter Square (hence the origin of "Porter House Steak.")

Pemberton Street Pass by "Brickworker/Ballplayer" by David Judelson, on the corner of Pemberton and Haskell Street. This is a tribute to those who worked in the brick factories, and a recognition of its subsequent use as a ball field.

Yerxa Road Underpass Just before turning onto Yerxa Road, note the underpass under the RR tracks. It is in disrepair now, but will soon be totally rebuilt and the site of beautiful public art, making the ramp to the tunnel wheelchair accessible and installed with the artwork of Randal Thurston. This tunnel bridges the two neighborhoods on either side of the tracks.

Middlesex and Cedar Streets New location of the Benjamin Banneker Charter School.

Cedar & Harvey Streets...to Rindge Ave As you cross Rindge Ave onto Cedar Street, there is public art by Jane Goldman at the north side of that intersection consisting of pavers placed in quilt patterns around the base of the trees. Then further up Cedar Street there is Williams Park on the right, with granite bollards sandblasted with butterfly images by William Reimann.

In the 1840s, this area was a Trotting Park – a horse-racing track. After the 1850s, housing was built for Irish immigrants working to dig up clay in the nearby pits (e.g. Jerry's Pit next to Russell Field) for use in the local brick works. Sherman Street was formerly called Dublin Street as recognition of their numbers. After the Irish, the area filled with French Canadian immigrants who came to do the same hard labor. They built one of the few French-language Catholic Churches in the area on Harvey Street, which only closed about 10 years ago.

Linear Park off Mass Ave This follows the old Mass Central RR line, which went from North Hampton to Boston.

Danehy Park & St. Peter's Field These were formerly clay pits. By the 1950s they were dug to about 30 feet deep. But the business was increasingly marginal. In 1952 one of the clay faces collapsed, burying the old steam shovel used for digging and killing the driver. The business closed and the city used the pits to dump garbage, which eventually got to be about 30 feet above ground level. The trash repeatedly caught (or was set) on fire, producing polluting smoke and awful smells, until dumping ceased in 1971. When the Red Line tunnel was built to extend the subway from Harvard Square to Porter, Davis, and then Alewife, the T covered Danehy with about one million cubic feet of dirt and rock. The area was then capped with clay, special pipes were built to capture the methane gas still being produced, and it was all turned into a park – which is slowly subsiding as the garbage continues to decompose.

At the top of Danehy Park, where the "Galaxy" disc is located, the artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles has continued her "Turnaround/Surround" project with new sculptural thrones just installed last month. Note that you travel over a "Glassphalt" path which the artist did a dozen years ago.

Fresh Pond This was the location of one of the nation's earliest ice cutting & shipping industries. In the 1790s, a summer hotel was located on the peninsula (Kingsley Park). Nathaniel Wyeth, the son of the owners, invented the tools and technology needed to cut ice and keep it stored for shipping. The Charlestown Branch Railroad was built in 1840 specifically to carry the ice to the harbor, from which Fresh Pond ice was exported to Caribbean, Mediterranean, and Indian ports on specially insulated sailing vessels. The industry survived until the 1920s when home refrigeration began to make it obsolete. Fresh Pond was the city's water supply since the 1840s. But while the city owned the water rights, it didn't own the surrounding land. Development in the late 1800s threatened the water quality so the city bought the surrounding area in 1920, simultaneously convincing the state Legislature to change city boundaries so that the sections of the pond that used to lie in Belmont and Arlington were now under the full ownership of Cambridge.

Huron Ave area When a streetcar company wanted to electrify its tracks on Brattle Street in 1890, the influential residents forced the company to abandon the line and build tracks on Mt. Auburn and the newly laid-out Huron Ave instead. Huron Ave became Cambridge's streetcar suburb.

Reservoir Street. Huge granite blocks formed a reservoir on the top of the hill here. Water was pumped up from Fresh Pond using a Worthington Steam Pump (made by a Cambridge company, and the origin of Worthington Street), which then allowed most homes in the city to be gravity fed – an exception was the highest parts of Avon Hill. A standpipe was finally built above the reservoir in a successful attempt to feed water to the top of Avon Hill. The reservoir was abandoned when the Water Board constructed the Payson Park reservoir in 1896, and the land was sold for building lots. A section of the reservoir foundation still exists on Reservoir Street.

Highland St. This is one of the pricier streets in the city, home to Alan Dershowitz, Yo Yo Ma, and others. It is located on the south side of the same small glacial moraine that winds its way up to Avon Hill. This section has particularly good views, sun, and drainage – which made it very attractive for the rich families that wanted to be near the Brattle Street area when the original Brattle Street estates were being divided up.

Memorial Drive River frontage was mostly industrial until about 1900. Sewage run-off from the city created severe pollution, which baked on the tidal flats in the summer. There were several malaria outbreaks. The area at the foot of Sparks Street is still known to older residents as "The Marsh;" recent Irish immigrants settled there in the 1850s. The city took the entire riverfront by eminent domain in 1892 and finished Memorial Drive (along with a new state sewer system) by 1914. (The Marsh chapter VFW building, now located next to the BB&N bridge, was started by veterans who lived in this area.) Harvard alumni started secretly buying riverfront property near Harvard Square in 1902 and then turned it over to the college, which completed the River House dorms in 1932.

Flagg St. W.E.B. DuBois rented a room here when he attended Harvard because he wasn't allowed to live in the college rooms.

Riverside Neighborhood/Franklin St. Another marshy area, collecting water running off the high ground of Mass Ave. and Putnam Ave. Hoyt Field was a tidal pond and a tidal mill along the river (where the gas station next to Riverside Press Park is now located) captured the energy of the flowing water as it went back at low tide. Some of the houses built around the entrance to Hoyt field off Western Ave near Howard St slant backwards because their foundations are still sinking into the soft land.

On Franklin Street, there is a new "pocket park", Franklin Street Park, which used to be a concrete pit and is now a beautiful park with a sculptural gateway, fence, and other elements by artist Murray Dewart.

Cambridgeport Neighborhood: Pleasant, Magazine, Brookline Francis Dana, first US ambassador to Russia and Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Court, acquired this area in the 1790s. He organized the construction of the first bridge directly to Boston in 1793 (on the site of the Longfellow Bridge), which led to the construction of Hampshire Street, Broadway, Concord

Avenue, Main Street, Western Avenue, and River Street across the Colonial landscape. Dana also laid out the long, straight Pleasant, Magazine, and Brookline streets going down this glacial moraine, and sold house lots on them. East of Brookline Street the ground dips and was originally a tidal marsh.

Lansdowne to Pacific From the 1890s to about 1910, where the NECCO building now stands used to be the end of a large velodrome – a bicycle-racing track, called the Charles River Park. The Stanley Steamer was demonstrated here. The velodrome owners tried to interest the precursors of the Red Sox to move here, but after an exciting late season surge they lost out in a heart-breaker. So NECCO bought the land and built its candy factory on the northern slice.

Washington Elms & Newtown Court In the mid-1930s, this predominately African American neighborhood was demolished in a pre-West End effort at "slum clearance." The housing projects were built in 1937-41, and then rebuilt in the 1990s.

One Kendall Square Broad Canal originally came all the way to here. Several rubber manufacturers had their plants in this area. The name, One Kendall Square, is a hopeful developer's misnomer of the old Boston Woven Hose & Rubber plant; the real Kendall Square is far, far away at the T station.

Harrington-Wellington Neighborhood: Donnelly Field This area was the site of an early effort at "neighborhood stabilization" – the strategy that followed the repudiation of "urban renewal" after the West End fiasco. Local streets were rebuilt. Homeowners were given loans for remodeling. The park was improved. It is now a very stable, heavily Portuguese neighborhood. The park was created in 1900 when the city was also taking the riverfront. It was created because there was no other public open space east of Sennott Park in mid-Cambridge.

Brickbottom The Miller's River came through here, fed by a spring flowing from what is now Sacramento Field, a brook coming down from the Porter Square area, and run-off from Somerville's hills. The area was marshy and subject to tidal flooding. Slaughterhouse waste from 350,000 hogs per year was dumped into the river in the 1870s, causing a public controversy that generated some of the first anti-pollution legislation in Massachusetts. This neighborhood was the original focal point for Italian immigrant housing in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

East Cambridge East Cambridge was developed by Andrew Craigie as a planned community around Craigie's Bridge (now the Charles River Dam) beginning about 1810. The well-connected Craigie induced the Middlesex County commissioners to relocate the courthouse and jail from Harvard Square, laid out Cambridge Street, and attracted industries to settle on the edge of the neighborhood. The higher ground was developed with housing in the 1840s.

Credits

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