

# FRANKLIN PARK COALITION BULLETIN

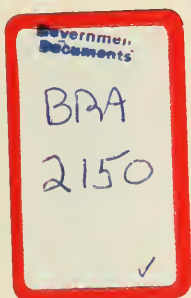


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## Two Walking Tours of Franklin Park



FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH

The 99 Steps in the Wilderness section of Franklin Park.  
Completed by 1892.

## A Brief Franklin Park History

Franklin Park was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, America's preeminent landscape architect, as the hub of his huge Boston Park system. Construction of this system began in 1879 in the Back Bay Fens. Franklin Park's plan was completed in 1885 and construction of this Park, containing at that time 527 acres, was started in the spring of 1885. Work continued for 13 years.

The plan comprises several interlocking landscape elements: a 100-acre wood, a 30-acre playground, a 220-acre meadow, a formal entranceway and a manmade pond. Surrounding most of this is a broad carriageway, Circuit Drive, and several miles of walkways.

The Park's centerpiece is the Country Park Meadow, now the golf course, and this can be seen in all its magnificent breadth from Schoolmaster Hill, one of three drumlins in the Park.

The architectural features were originally kept to a minimum. Three handsome bridges, two of them carriage bridges, were designed by the famous firm of H. H. Richardson. These bridges are the Forest Hills Entrance bridge (1895), and the Scarborough Pond Foot and Carriage bridges (1893).

John Olmsted, Frederick Law Olmsted's stepson, contributed the handsome Ellicott Arch (1889) and the Schoolmaster Hill terraces (1890).

The major addition to Franklin Park is the Zoo, built on the formal entranceway called the Greeting between 1911 and 1930. Parks Commissioner Robert S. Peabody, a notable Boston architect and friend of the Olmsteds, guided the project to realization.

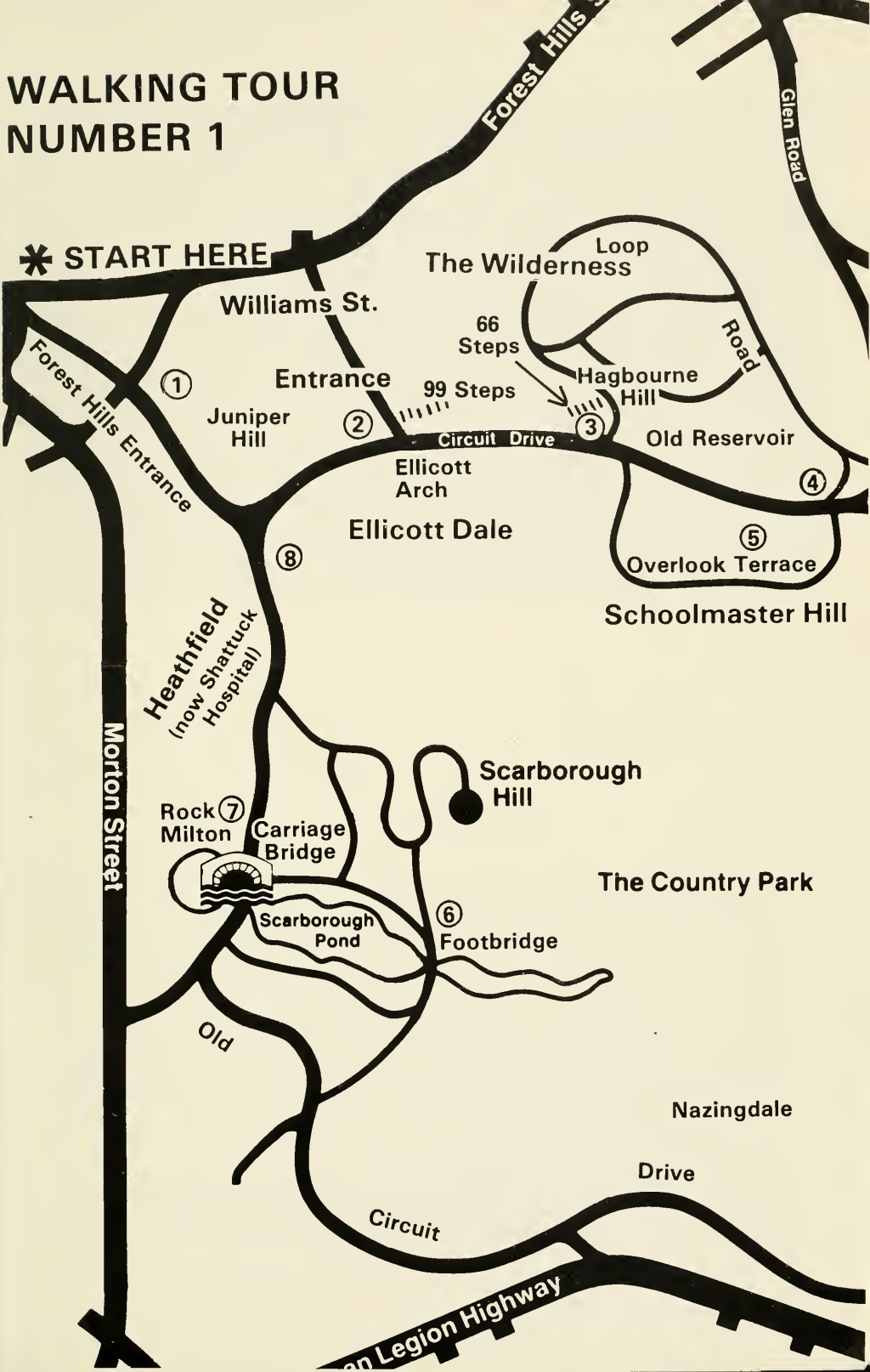
In 1905 John Olmsted spoke before the American Society of Landscape Architects about the Boston Park System. "As an illustration of park designing, Franklin Park is probably the best piece of work by Frederick Law Olmsted."

Franklin Park, together with the Boston Park System, has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 1971. Franklin Park was designated a Boston Landmark in 1980.



Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903) painted by John Singer Sargent in 1895. The original hangs at Biltmore, in Asheville, North Carolina. Biltmore's grounds were landscaped by Olmsted between 1890 and 1895 and are one of his greatest achievements.

# WALKING TOUR NUMBER 1





## Walking Tour Number 1

Begin at the corner of Forest Hills Street and the Arborway across the street from the FOREST HILLS ENTRANCE of Franklin Park.

1. Follow the sidewalk over the FOREST HILLS ENTRANCE BRIDGE. Notice how low and unobtrusive this bridge is from the Park. This is because Olmsted wanted to achieve a completely relaxing, natural appearance in his manmade landscapes; the architecture was kept low key. The Forest Hills bridge was completed in 1895 from plans by Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge. Originally, the bridge had stone and iron gates which closed the Park at sundown, but the gates were removed by the Park Department in 1901.

Go left, following the footpath which is often used by horseback riders, over JUNIPER HILL. You are now in a 100-acre woodland which stretches nearly three-quarters of a mile. Olmsted planned the WILDERNESS--an old Roxbury name for this part--as a typical New England wood.

2. The footpath will take you to the WILLIAMS STREET FOOT ENTRANCE at ELLICOTT ARCH. Joseph Ellicott's big white house sat nearby. Ellicott sold his house and land to the City of Boston in 1883 for Franklin Park. Thick shrubs cleverly hide a drainage pipe which empties into a carefully-made brook. This brook drains the highlands of the Wilderness and especially ELLICOTT DALE which is low and often wet.

Turn right and you'll face ELLICOTT ARCH, a huge, puddingstone-faced arch designed by John Olmsted and completed in 1889.



Ellicott Arch

Ellicott Arch carries foot traffic under busy Circuit Drive. It is part of a manmade boulder-faced causeway which carries the road above the Wilderness.

Face the Arch and on your right is a weed-choked depression which marks the site of ELLICOTT HOUSE, a small, boulder building designed to house changing-rooms for tennis players, completed in 1895 and destroyed by fire some years ago.

To the left are the 99 STEPS. These are slab steps of puddingstone which carry park visitors gently up into the Wilderness, which is quite rocky at this point. The steps were completed by 1892.

Go through the Arch and look out onto Ellicott Dale, originally planned for lawn tennis but today used as a ball field and for track meets.

Continue your walk through the Wilderness by following the 99 Steps to

3. HAGBOURNE HILL. In front of the Hill is LOOP ROAD which winds through the upper third of the Wilderness and was finished in May, 1891. Stone slab steps lead up to a small overlook on Hagbourne Hill. The steps lead to a level just below the boulder overlook and a footpath goes off to the right around the Hill and out to Circuit Drive. You should go left to the OVERLOOK which was planned to display Ellicott Dale in the foreground and the Blue Hills in the distance. Tall trees obliterate the view today.

Near the Overlook is a popular picnic area shaded by sweet-smelling pine trees. If you look closely enough to the right, a few feet away from the terrace, you'll see manhole covers carefully hidden around rocks and grasses. There are four of these which mark the edges of a large reservoir--entirely underground--planned by Olmsted to irrigate Frank-



Loop Road in the Wilderness. Bridle path is on the right.



Park's huge meadow. The reservoir contains 851,000 gallons and was completed in 1895. Water is piped in from Jamaica Pond.

West of the Overlook are high rocks which provide a grand view of Jamaica Plain. If you walk west and follow Loop Road to your left you'll come to SUNSET ROCK, the highest elevation in Franklin Park. The trees here are short and scrubby because they are unprotected from high, cold winds during the winter and because the topsoil has eroded away. As you approach Sunset Rock you'll cross two parallel walks separated by a median strip of grass and shrubs. The inside walk is the original bridle path, but horses today use both walks.

Go back to the picnic area and follow Loop Road out of the Wilderness. As you go out, you'll see on the left two gnarled Ironwood, or Blue Beech trees which are nearly two centuries old.

4. Pause a minute at the edge of the Wilderness and look out over the country park meadow. Olmsted is ingenious, in his design of the walks, in the way he takes you from one landscape feature to another: a woodland to a meadowland. You'll notice across Circuit Drive a large clump of trees to the left and the slope of SCHOOLMASTER HILL to your right. Loop Road deliberately comes out at this point so the park visitor can get a long view of the meadow. The trees and the hillside frame this view and invite the visitor into the meadow. This is one of the finest views in Franklin Park.

Cross Circuit Drive and follow the footpath to the top of Schoolmaster Hill. Schoolmaster Hill is at the approximate center of Franklin Park. Olmsted designed a long, low puddingstone terrace along the brow of the Hill to set off majestically the centerpiece of Franklin Park: the 200-acre COUNTRY PARK

MEADOW. In the distance is Great Blue Hill, the central peak of the 3,000-acre Blue Hill Reservation. Nowhere in metropolitan Boston is there a view such as this. Olmsted chose this site for Boston's central park because of this great meadow. The terrace is always cool and quiet and the view always refreshing. It's a good place to rest a while on your walk.

Schoolmaster Hill is named for Ralph Waldo Emerson, who lived here between 1823 and 1828; a plaque set in 1896 on an enormous puddingstone rock commemorates this fact. This rock anchors the 1892 terrace designed by John Olmsted. At the other end of the terrace nestled low on the highest part of the Hill is the SCHOOLMASTER HILL OVERLOOK SHELTER completed in 1893. The tile roof was burned by fire some years ago. Walk through the Shelter and you'll come to a grassy plateau. This is the site of a puddingstone quarry used to build Franklin Park and other parts of the Park System. It was filled in in about 1970.



Scarborough Pond.

Schoolmaster Hill is noted for the fine stand of red cedars on its eastern slope. These were planted in 1900.

Proceed down the Hill and cross the Country Park Meadow. Turn back and you'll notice that the terrace and Shelter are nearly invisible. Olmsted was careful to preserve the natural quality of the Hill. The oaks were planted to disguise the Shelter which otherwise would have stood out too boldly.



Country Park Meadow, now used as a golf course.

Go around the slope of Scarborough Hill and walk through a lovely stand of beech trees to the edge of

6. SCARBOROUGH POND. Scarborough Pond and its neighbor Scarborough Hill are named after John Scarborough, the original owner of this land and one of Roxbury's earliest settlers in 1640. The Pond was a later addition to Olmsted's plan, added in 1891 and completed in 1893. It is completely manmade. The large copse of beeches--one of Olmsted's favorite trees--was planted in 1899.

Go to the left and walk over the lovely granite footbridge. This was completed in 1893

and designed by Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge. Pause at the bridge and look over NAZINGDALE to your left and across the Pond to your right. Take your time and follow the foot-path around the Pond to the CARRIAGE BRIDGE. You'll notice the high banks of Circuit Drive on your left. This segregation of the two ways is a classic Olmsted touch to save pedestrians from the bustle and dust of the Drive. Excavation for the Pond supplied fill for the buildup of Circuit Drive at this point.

The Carriage Bridge is built of red granite and also is designed by Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge. It was completed in 1893. Ahead of the Carriage Bridge is an enormous rock ledge called

7. ROCK MILTON. Rock Milton is the anchor for Scarborough Pond and it forms a lovely reflection in the Pond. The MORTON STREET ENTRANCE, blocked to exclude motor vehicles, is to the left. The trees between the Entrance and the Rock were planted thinly here so that the Pond and Carriage Bridge could be seen from Morton Street: a window into the Park. Behind Rock Milton is the Lemuel Shattuck Hospital which sits on the 17 acres of HEATHFIELD--originally part of Franklin Park. The Hospital was built in 1954. A gentle footpath led from Heathfield to the summit of Rock Milton, but the Hospital's construction destroyed it. So now the only way to the top is the hard way up a dirt path just beyond the bridge. It's worth the climb, though. In early spring and late Fall, one can see quite a lot of the Pond. Olmsted planned and the city built a small wooden gazebo on top of the Rock which is, sadly, long gone.

Climb down Rock Milton and turn left onto Circuit Drive and follow it to the tennis courts. To the right is Scarborough Hill Drive which



winds its way up to the crown of Scarborough Hill, built in 1890.

Walk a little farther and to your right the lawn sweeps down to Ellicott Dale. At the intersection of Circuit Drive, turn right and walk up to a beautiful pine-covered hill.

8. This is the RESTING PLACE. A lone bench is a nice place to rest and you can look up to a patch of green on Scarborough Hill. Resting Place is so named by Olmsted because Revolutionary War soldiers, returning to their homes in Roxbury and Dorchester from Lexington and Concord, stopped for the night here. An old Indian trail which cut through the Park property ran where the sidewalk is now.

Go back to Circuit Drive and follow the sidewalk out of the Park to where you began.



The lawn in front of Resting Place near the tennis courts of Franklin Park.







## Walking Tour Number 2

1. This walk begins in front of the Franklin Park ZOO. The magnificent Gate to the Zoo faces PEABODY CIRCLE and the BLUE HILL AVENUE ENTRANCE to Franklin Park. Peabody Circle is named in honor of Robert S. Peabody, famed Boston architect and Park Commissioner. It was during his term as Park Commissioner that the Boston Zoological Garden was built in Franklin Park after more than twenty years of discussion about a Zoo.

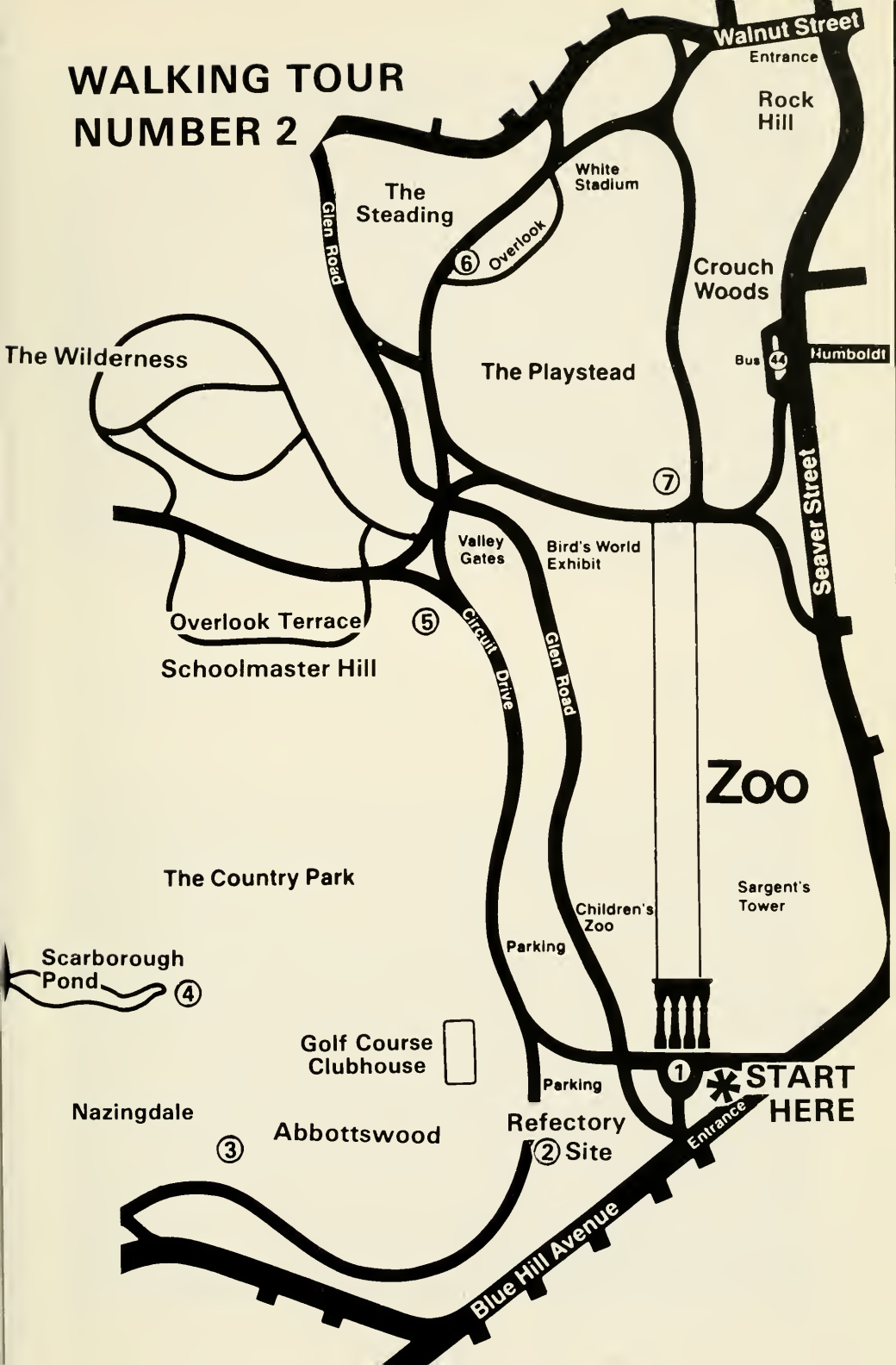
The Blue Hill Avenue Entrance is the front door to Franklin Park. Iron and stone gates were built here and at the Forest Hills Entrance to shut the Park at night. They were taken down in 1901. (The Park Department had never closed them!).

Stand in front of the Zoo and look to your right at a stone shelter. This was built as a streetcar waiting room and is a part of Franklin Park. Streetcars would turn around at the rotary and proceed on to Mattapan or return to Roxbury exactly as the MBTA buses do today. Across the street from the shelter is the grand Franklin Park Theater with its copper crown, built in 1914. It is one of the last of the decorative movie theater facades left in Boston. Today the building is used as a church.

The Franklin Park Zoo was designed in 1911 by Arthur Shurcliff, an apprentice of Frederick Law Olmsted. The first phase of the Zoo's construction was done between 1912 and 1917 and included the Birds' World and the Flying



# WALKING TOUR NUMBER 2





Peabody Circle and the Franklin Park Zoo Entrance.

Cage (both 1912). The huge Gate was built in 1917. The two smaller Gates with their shallow stone reliefs were added in 1934.

Olmsted designed the site of the Zoo as a broad promenade which he called the GREETING. It was the only formal element in Franklin Park, made up of straight walks lined with elms. The Greeting was where park visitors would meet their friends and begin a day in Franklin Park. Olmsted had originally planned that the Greeting would include a DEERPARK, MUSIC COURT and LITTLE FOLKS' FAIR (the last a children's playground). These were never built because the Park Department changed the plan in 1896. The site of the proposed Deer-park is now being built up as a one-acre Tropical Forest Pavilion, begun in 1978. There was a fine Rose Garden, opened in 1927, on that site.

If you turn to the left you'll see a road which comes out to Peabody Circle. This is Glen Lane, which stretches three-quarters of a

mile to Sigourney Street. Completed in August 1893, Glen Lane was planned as the transverse road for Franklin Park for all non-Park traffic. It also separates the Park into two main uses: active and passive. Olmsted described the Greeting and the adjoining Playstead as the "ante-park", completely separate from the more natural sections of the Park. The ante-park was for formal walks, sculpture and active sports. A high, thickly planted berm of trees between Glen Lane and Circuit Drive serves as a buffer between the two parks of Franklin Park.

2. Cross Circuit Drive to the top of REFECTORY HILL. Now a weed-choked lot, this is the site of the grand Refectory, completed in July 1894 and, regrettably, destroyed in April 1976. It was designed by the firm of Hartwell-Richardson and sat on a huge boulder terrace designed by the Olmsted firm. It used to be possible to see from the Hill a view across the Country Park Meadow to the treeline of the Wilderness and the hills of Jamaica Plain. Walk down the Hill and follow Old Circuit Drive, left, around ABBOTTSWOOD.



Aerial view of the "ante-park." Blue Hill Avenue

On your right is a row of benches set around an old stone water fountain. This is called MOTHER'S REST. It is located not far from a small foot entrance into the Park at the corner of American Legion Highway and Blue Hill Avenue. It was deliberately built close to this entrance for mothers and their families to relax in the cool shade on summer days. To the right, not far from Mother's Rest, is the site of an ancient spring long used for drinking water by nearby households. Proceed a little farther, past Mother's Rest, and on your right is

3. NAZINGDALE, a broad swath of bright green meadowland that stretches from Abbottswood to SCARBOROUGH POND. Olmsted named this Dale after Nazing, England from whence the first Roxbury residents came in the 1630s.

Nazingdale is also part of the Franklin Park golf course. Golf was introduced to Franklin Park in 1896. It seems to have been a spontaneous project originally, but golf became so popular that in 1901 the Park Department laid out and managed a 9-hole course. The Olmsted firm was unhappy with this addition, because they felt golf monopolized too much Park for too few people. The present golf course was relandscaped in 1915 and 1922. The golf course clubhouse, the low brick building you saw from Refectory Hill, was built in 1949 and rebuilt in 1979 after a fire.

Proceed over Nazingdale to the edge of Scarborough Pond. This is a manmade Pond built in 1893. It was much larger originally. You'll notice two trees standing in Nazingdale; the pond extended between those two trees but was filled in to make the new golf course. The Pond was very narrow at this point and boulder footbridges crossed it in two places.

Today Nazingdale is a very popular picnic area and playground for neighborhood families and youngsters.



At the Pond, turn around and face the long row of trees which borders American Legion Highway; you walked through these trees near Mother's Rest.

These four rows of trees, all planted in 1900, form a dense screen to keep the city out of the Park. From the golf course and especially from Schoolmaster Hill (see Walk Number 1) this long edge of the Park is a solid wall of green. Olmsted used this technique frequently in his Parks to allow a completely restful, natural experience in them.

Walk diagonally across the golf course. On your left is Schoolmaster Hill (described in Walk Number 1). Near Circuit Drive is a stand of trees and shrubs where you might want to relax a while after the arduous walk across undulating meadow.

In front of you is an intersection where Glen Road meets Pierpont Road at the



Boys playing on the banks of Scarborough Pond.  
Nazingdale is in the background.

5. VALLEY GATES. Walk over on the left side of the Gates. On your left is the woods of the Wilderness section of Franklin Park. Turn around and take in the broad sweep of the Country Park Meadow which you just walked through.

The Valley Gates were the third pair of stone gates which closed the Park at dusk. What remains are two of four stone buildings completed in 1889. A pair in the center connected by wrought iron gates were removed in 1901. The two remaining structures give an idea of what the Forest Hills and Blue Hill Avenue Gates looked like many years ago.

The Valley Gates also separate the passive from the active parts of Franklin Park. If you walk through the Gates a few hundred feet and turn around, you'll see how Olmsted reinforced this segregation by building the land into a bottleneck at this point. Well planted high ground flanks the Gates so that there is no question that you're in a different section of Franklin Park.

This section is called the PLAYSTEAD and it comprises a 30-acre playing field. The Playstead--dedicated in June 1889--was the first section of Franklin Park to be completed. Olmsted was wise to recognize the growing popularity of active sports in American life, and he provided as much space for sports as the topography allowed. The Playstead was the only real flat space on the site. But even 30 acres was not sufficient and Olmsted urged that the city purchase more land for sports near Franklin Park. In 1894, the Park Department purchased 100 acres about one half mile from the Park, along Blue Hill Avenue, specifically for sports. They called it FRANKLIN FIELD to show its relation to Franklin Park. The Field was laid out by the Olmsted firm and was an immediate success with Boston residents.

The difference between the Playstead and Franklin Field was that the Playstead was for schoolboy sports and the Field for collegiate age and adult sports, as Olmsted carefully explained.

Proceed to your left and follow Playstead Road from the Valley Gates. You'll see a set of steps on your right. Climb these steps and walk around the PLAYSTEAD OVERLOOK. This is an 800-foot long boulder platform, as high as 8 feet from the ground of the Playstead. It was completed in the spring of 1889 and took a year to build.

The Overlook is one of Olmsted's most ingenious designs in Franklin Park. It disguises a homely rock outcrop which puzzled Olmsted. He chose to create a huge stand for spectators at the games below. On its deck are puddingstone slab seats, originally fitted with oak slats. Two rustic stone water fountains were built, one of which remains intact.



Glen Road as it separates the Wilderness from the Playstead. This section was completed in 1892.





The Playstead. White Stadium is in the background.

The flight of stone steps and chimneys are all that remains of the PLAYSTEAD OVERLOOK SHELTER which was the only building in Franklin Park designed by Frederick Law Olmsted himself (indicating his great interest in the Playstead as a design concept reflecting a change in American recreation) in 1889. The basement of the Shelter contained lavatories and lockers for the players and was entered through a stone arch built into the platform; if you walk around the base of the platform you can see it. The Shelter was destroyed by fire in 1946. Three years later, White Stadium was built, swallowing up over half of the playing fields.

Return to Playstead Road and in front of you are the rocks and trees of the STEADING, a section of the Park which Olmsted had reserved for Park Department headquarters, which were never built.

Retrace your steps and follow Playstead Road around to the rear of the Zoo.

You'll see the Flying Cage in the Zoo on your right, and a pair of enormous statues, their backs toward you.

These statues were carved by Daniel Chester French in marble, in 1884 and 1885, for the Post Office and Subtreasury Building in Boston's Post Office Square. When this huge French Second Empire building was destroyed



in 1927 to make way for the present McCormick building, the statues and their original granite bases were removed to the rear of the Zoo. Representing "Science" and "Industry", they arose from models now on display in French's summer studio Chesterwood, in Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

Turn around, and in front of you is

7. LONG CROUCH WOODS. Two roads go off to your right. One goes to Humbolt Avenue and the furthest road ends at Elm Hill Avenue. The Humbolt Avenue Entrance is also called Old Trail Road. This is where an ancient Indian Trail went through the Franklin Park tract and for centuries was a Shawmut Indian hunting trail. Old Trail Road leads to a streetcar turnaround (now used for MBTA buses) built into the Park.

Long Crouch Woods is noted for its great puddingstone outcrops and ledges at its farthest end. The name is associated with the site dating from its years, until the late 19th century, as the estate of the Sargents, an old Roxbury family of whom the last occupant of the estate was Lucius Manlius Sargent.



The Playstead Overlook Shelter in a photograph taken in 1892. Only the chimneys and stone steps remain.

Although the tour ends here, feel free to stroll through Long Crouch. The old bear dens, built in 1912 when the Woods was part of the Zoo, still stand at the edge of Rock Hill overlooking Seaver Street. At this end of Long Crouch is the WALNUT AVENUE CARRIAGE ENTRANCE and FOOT ENTRANCE, a short walk from Egleston Square, Jamaica Plain.

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Horseback riding on the original bridle path which runs along Circuit Drive near the Valley Gates.

BACK COVER PHOTOGRAPH

Aerial view of Franklin Park looking southwest.  
Seaver Street is in the foreground.

The first walking tour of Franklin Park ever held was sponsored by the Victorian Society, New England Chapter on May 30, 1976. It was led by a member of the Franklin Park Coalition. The Coalition has led two or three walks a year since that date, including another tour for the Victorian Society in 1978. These two walking tours have been refined over this time and are each about two hours long, with two short breaks.

Take your time, wear sensible shoes and have fun.

