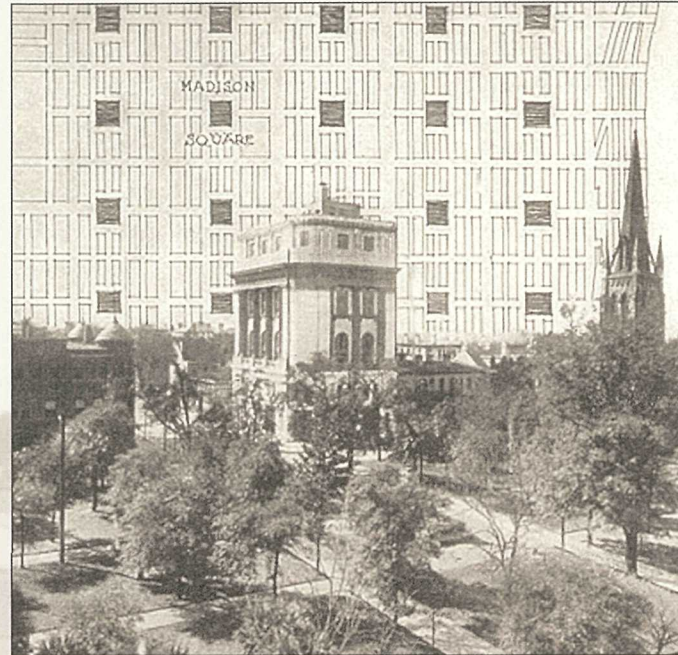


HALS

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY



Madison Square historic plan and photograph, Savannah, Georgia, c. 1910, (*Parks*, George Burnap).

What are historic landscapes?

Historic landscapes range from thousand-acre rural farms and ranch complexes, to several acre urban plazas and parks, to a residence with a yard of less than one-acre. Like historic buildings, historic landscapes reveal aspects of our country's origins and development through their form, features, and the way they were and are used. In fact, almost every historic property has a landscape component. Imagine a historic residential district without sidewalks, lawns, and trees; an agricultural complex with buildings but no fields, garden plots, or hedgerows; a densely populated city with no park system or plazas; or a Native American settlement with no gathering place, irrigation systems, or animal corrals.

Cover Photo: (Top) Ebey's Prairie, Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve, Washington 1985
(Bottom) Governor Gore's Garden, Waltham, Massachusetts, Historic American Landscapes and Garden project, 1934 (HABS/HAER image)

Why should we care about historic landscapes?

Historic landscapes are typically "invisible" to both the public and the policy makers. Hence, like many historic properties, America's historic landscapes are subject to loss and change through inappropriate use, development, vandalism, and natural forces such as flooding. When historic landscapes are publicly identified as significant, unique resources they become "visible" and can be incorporated into local, state, and federal planning and recording processes. Documentation of historic landscapes through research, photography and drawings is crucial to their preservation. We must act now to record our landscape legacy before it is too late.

What is happening to our landscape legacy?

The evolutionary nature of historic landscapes makes them fragile and highly vulnerable to loss and alteration. Over one million acres of farmland is lost to sprawl each year. The rolling splendor of scenic parkways is disturbed by road widening projects. Modernization and redevelopment threaten to undermine historic industrial landscapes. Alteration and updating of urban centers impacts the park and plaza master works of landscape architects from the late-1800s to today. Neighborhood parks and estate landscapes are impacted by incompatible development. The collective story of these places needs to be captured and documented for future generations.

Documenting our landscape legacy: The Historic American Landscapes Survey

In an effort to preserve, protect and interpret America's significant and threatened historic landscapes, the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), the National Park Service (NPS) and the Library of Congress (LOC) are cooperating to develop the Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS) program.

HALS is modeled on two existing historic resource documentation programs: the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER). Since its establishment in 1934 to comprehensively document historic American architecture, HABS has recorded over 28,000 structures and made those records publicly available through the Library of Congress. HAER was established in 1969 as a response to an increased appreciation for significant sites, structures and objects associated with the development of engineering and industry. HAER has recorded over 7,500 engineering and industrial sites to date. Today's growing interest in historic landscape research, planning and stewardship, underscores the value of a similar program devoted to historic landscape documentation.



Modern landscape design at the Miller Garden, Columbus, Indiana, Dan Kiley, Landscape Architect, 1955.

The intent and focus of HALS

Recognizing the value of landscape documentation, the National Park Service established HALS as a permanent federal program in October 2000. HALS will build on the HABS and HAER documentation traditions, while expanding the range of stories that can be told about human relationships with the land. HALS will document the dynamics of landscapes, as HABS and HAER have documented unique building and engineering structures and systems. Although the HALS program has officially been established, the effort to comprehensively develop the program—strategically and financially—is in its infancy and needs your support.

Teams of students and interested professionals in landscape architecture, architecture, planning, horticulture, and related disciplines will conduct fieldwork for HALS as short-term projects. Guided by HALS documentation specialists, the participants will record significant historic landscapes nationwide through measured and interpretive drawings, large-format photography, written narrative and other documentation techniques. The results will not only document significant landscapes, but will instill a greater understanding of the relationship between land and history for the participant and the related community. Promoting this critical ethic among future stewards and design professionals mirrors ASLA's own stated purpose: "The advancement of knowledge, education, and skill in the art of landscape architecture." Through its existing documentation programs, HABS and HAER have educated thousands of professionals over the past 50 years; the intent is the same for HALS.

The location, duration, and complexity of HALS projects will be determined on the basis of historical significance, landscape type, state of endangerment, and potential partnership opportunities. HALS will work with the ASLA, state, local and national preservation organizations, academic institutions and other interested parties to develop projects and explore funding possibilities for both short and long-term documentation efforts.

DOCUMENTING AMERICA'S
LANDSCAPE HERITAGE

How you can assist HALS

The ultimate goal of HALS is to be financially supported through private donations, partnerships, and federal funding.

Write your Congressman, talk to your local politicians about historic landscapes and ask them for Congressional funding for HALS. Make the funding of HALS a known issue. Connect HALS to open space preservation, transportation, sprawl—politicians understand these issues.

Until such time as public funding is secured, the immediate focus of HALS is to raise funds and establish partnerships to assist with further program development. Donations will be used to support sustainable funding efforts and landscape documentation projects.

Make a tax-deductible donation to HALS. Write a check to “HABS/HAER Foundation” with the memo line noting “HALS Donation.” Send to:

HALS Donation
HABS/HAER Foundation
National Building Museum
441 F Street, NW, Suite 312
Washington, DC 20001-2728

Partnerships between HALS, private practice firms, academic institutions, and like-minded preservation and landscape organizations will benefit all parties. Standard documentation methods will be developed, landscape preservation professionals will be educated, and long-term relationships will be established.

Consider the role that your firm, university or organization could play in the development of HALS. Could they sponsor a documentation project? Assist with fundraising? Offer support services?

HALS



Past landscape documentation efforts



Step 1. Conduct historic research for the entire site, and then undertake fieldwork to document the existing conditions.

While HALS is the first permanent federal program to focus on historic landscape documentation, it is worth noting that examples of landscape documentation already exist. Since the early 1900s landscapes have been recorded at local, state, and federal levels, but never systematically.

Beginning in the 1930s, the Garden Club of America undertook an inventory and documentation of “gardens and gardeners of the American colonies and the Republic before 1840.” This effort led to the publication of the seminal two-volume *Gardens of Colony and State*. Interest in Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., and his park legacy instigated the 1983 Massachusetts Association for Olmsted Parks effort to document the history, design and existing conditions of parks planned by Olmsted Sr., his son and stepson, and their successor firm in thirty-seven states. By 1984, the ALSA Historic Preservation Open Committee developed a model survey form to assist with historic landscape survey and documentation. Landscape recording efforts have occurred on local and statewide levels, typically emphasizing specific landscape types and being completed either under the direction of a state historic preservation office or with the assistance of community volunteers, university faculty, students, and specialized consultants. Some examples of these local and state efforts include the landscapes of Syracuse and Rochester, New York; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Kansas City and St. Joseph, Missouri; Chicago’s Burnham Plan; and Pierre L’Enfant’s plan for Washington, D.C.

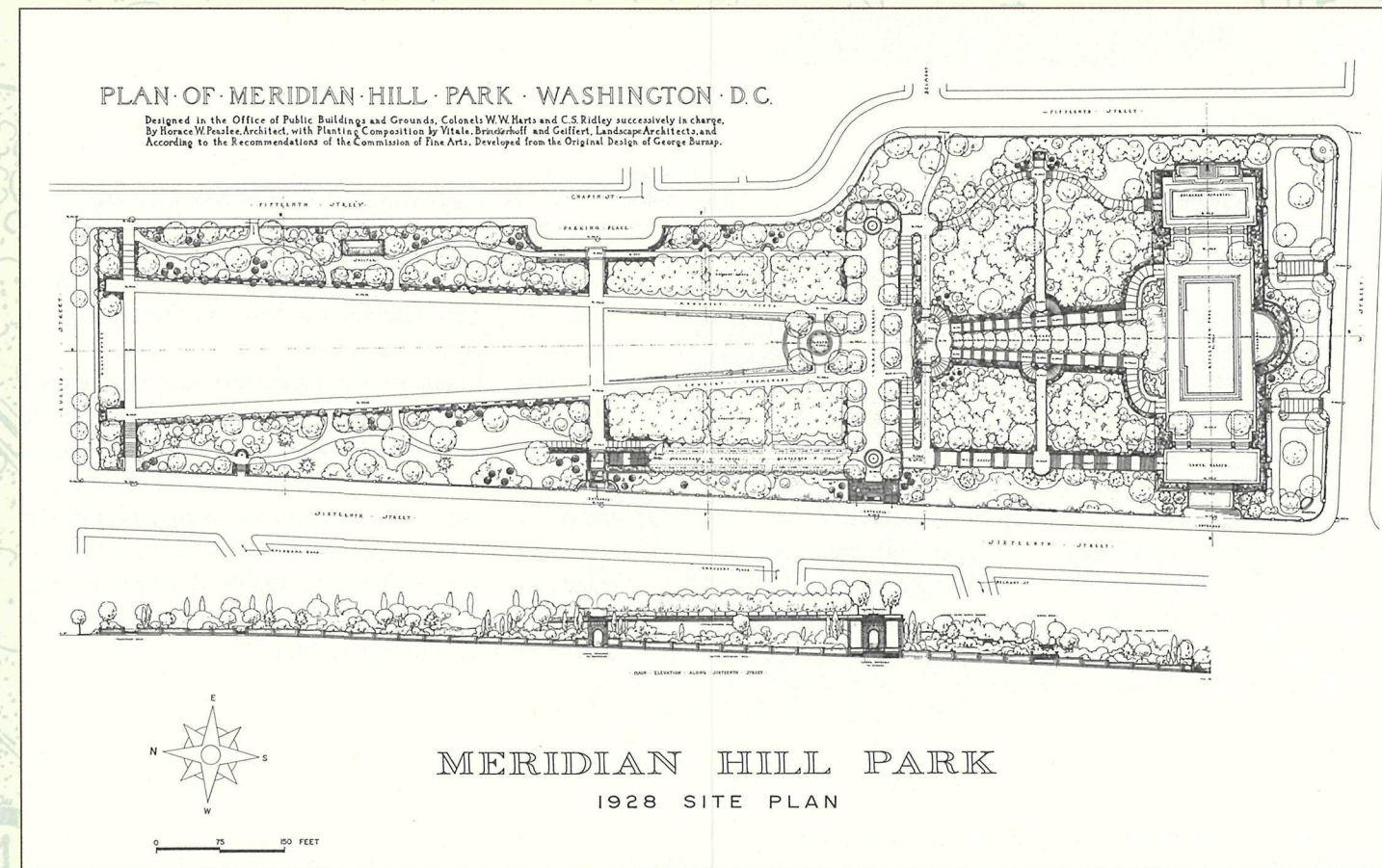
At the federal level, both HABS and HAER have produced some historic landscape records, while undertaking their

primary documentation of historic structures and engineering resources. Simultaneous to the Garden Club of America efforts, ASLA members worked with HABS in the 1930s on the Historic American Landscape and Garden Project, recording over 40 historic gardens in Massachusetts. Other HABS historic landscape documentation projects include recording Meridian Hill Park and Dumbarton Oaks Park in Washington, D.C and the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis. Since the 1980s, HAER’s Roads and Bridges Documentation Project increasingly has incorporated aspects of historic landscapes into their recording projects. HAER projects notable for their historic landscape content include road and bridge documentation in Acadia National Park, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Sequoia National Park, the Blue Ridge Parkway, and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway. Private organizations,

following HABS/HAER standards, have donated their landscape documentation efforts to the HABS/HAER collection including records on the Jens Jensen Studio and Landscape and the Joseph Fry Farm Landscape.

Since the early 1990s, the NPS Park Cultural Landscapes Program has established the Cultural Landscapes Inventory, which has begun to identify and document all historically significant landscapes within the 386 parks of the national park system.

HALS will draw upon all of these past efforts to develop an inclusive and systematic approach to landscape documentation, standards and guidelines.



Step 2. From field notes, prepare site plans and details. Meridian Hill Park, Washington, DC, 1928 (HABS/HAER drawing).



Step 3. Comprehensively document the site using large format photography. Antietam National Battlefield, Virginia, 1985 (HABS/HAER image).

For further information or to offer suggestions, contact the ASLA Historic Preservation Professional Interest Group, Subcommittee on HALS (hals@asla.org); or visit their website (www.asla.org/members/pigroups.cfm).

You may also find further information on the National Park Service HALS web page (www.cr.nps.gov/habshaer).

Much of the existing HABS/HAER documentation can be viewed via the Library of Congress’s Built in America web site (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/>).

Credits

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