Beyond City Beautiful:
Interpreting Cultural Landscapes at the International Rose Test Garden and Laurelhurst Park in Portland, Oregon

Lindsay Tran
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BEYOND "CITY BEAUTIFUL"

INTERPRETING CULTURAL LANDSCAPES AT THE INTERNATIONAL ROSE TEST GARDEN AND LAURELHURST PARK IN PORTLAND, OREGON

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ABSTRACT

Historical interpretation (alternately referred to in this research as "heritage interpretation and "public interpretation") often limits the narratives that are highlighted for public consumption in places of historical importance. I argue via discussion of cultural landscape theory and material rhetoric (the idea that discourse is material, i.e. that beyond content, the format of a piece of communication carries a rhetorical power of its own) that such limitations are a choice, not an inevitability—especially with cultural landscapes, which thanks to their relationship with time are historic resources of a particularly dynamic character. Treating public parks as cultural landscapes that evolve over time, rather than as historic sites wedded to a discrete period of significance, allows for a more flexible interpretation of their historical meaning. When parks are treated as cultural landscapes, their significance to many people and many groups throughout history presents as a coherent narrative, rather than a haphazard and seemingly unrelated collection of events. Using the inductive process of grounded theory as a methodological approach, I critically examine the extant interpretive infrastructure in two case studies, Laurelhurst Park and the International Rose Test Garden. I explore the material form of each park's historical interpretation as a series of rhetorical choices, and then suggest expansions based on each park's respective history and the material rhetoric of the existing interpretive infrastructure.

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Cover images courtesy of the Katherine Dunn estate (bottom right) and Portland Parks & Recreation (bottom left)

INTRODUCTION

The trees are bare on a dreary winter's day in Laurelhurst Park in southeast Portland, but the landscape is buzzing with activity. Dogs frolic in the off-leash area; small groups stroll or jog along the meandering asphalt pathways. A person in a thick coat stands before a sign scrawled with graffiti. They spray the panel, then scrub it vigorously with a sponge. A bearded individual sits on a bench under a meager ray of sunshine and absently strums a guitar. Children stand around the pond, exclaiming over the ducks and sometimes teetering precariously over the water for a closer look.

Some of the activities described above were anticipated by Laurelhurst Park's designers, the Olmsted Brothers landscape architecture firm and Portland parks superintendent (1908-1914) Emanuel Tillman Mische (E.T. Mische). The longevity of these uses is closely tied to the physical properties of the park's landscape, and the same uses are discussed in the park's interpretive infrastructure—the materials, both digital and physical, that narrate the park's history to the public.

Public interpretation of a historic landscape reflects a narrative or narratives that have been cultivated and curated over time by a community with a cultural, emotional, or financial investment in the landscape. At the same time, heritage interpretation rarely reflects all possible stories that can be told about a historic resource. For this reason, interpretive material needs to be critically examined, especially when it comes to public spaces that are by their nature open to many uses and many users.

As public spaces, city parks are generally accessible avenues for interpretation. A park's real level of accessibility depends on several factors, and multiple cases both historic and contemporary can be pointed to as examples of public parks' inaccessibility. The fact

remains however that parks are open public spaces, a quality that theoretically creates a more accessible interpretive venue than a busy street corner downtown, a National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) plaque in front a private residence, or a museum. By virtue of being public spaces, public parks are available to diverse users, which often implies a change in both form and use patterns.[1] When multiple communities use a park simultaneously, these uses can conflict with or supplant each other. Additionally, not every use of a landscape leaves behind visible evidence or depends on physical infrastructure in an orthodox way. Rather, the uses are layered on top of each other, drawing upon the landscape in ways that may or may not be discussed in extant historical interpretation.

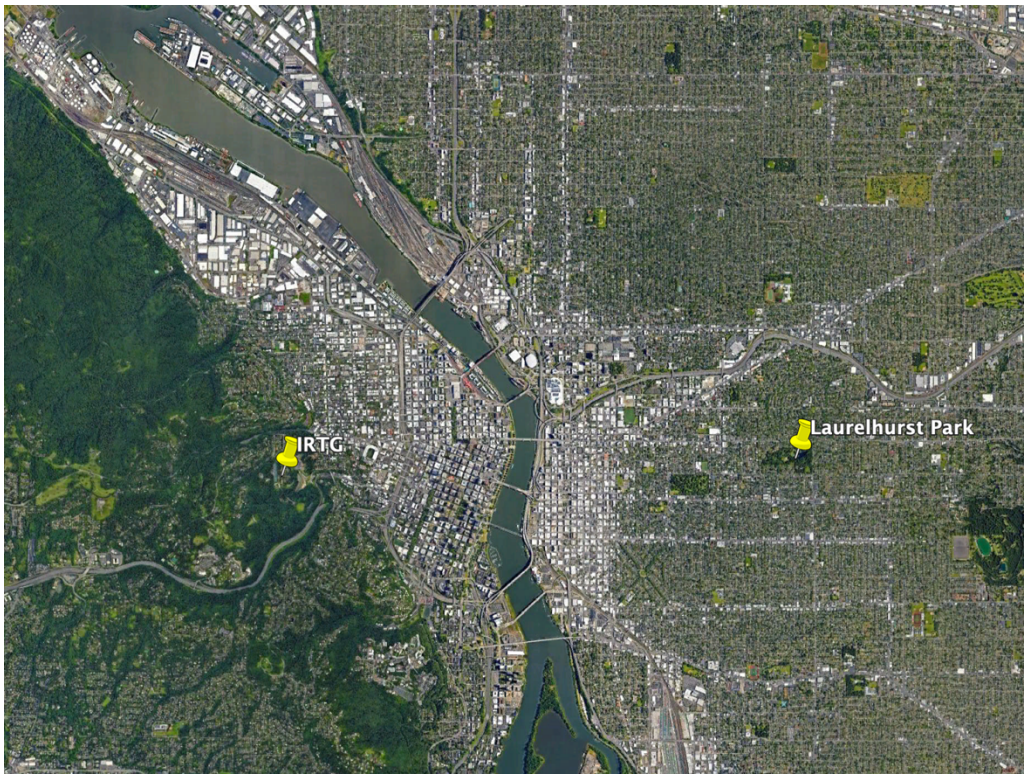

Figure 1: The International Rose Test Garden (IRTG) sits in the hills of Washington Park on the west side of the Willamette River, while Laurelhurst Park sits on the east side of the river. Base image Google Earth

[1] J.B. Jackson, "The American Public Space," in *The Public Face of Architecture: Civic Culture and Public Spaces,* ed. Nathan Glazer and Mark Lilla (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 287.

I posit that while Laurelhurst Park and the International Rose Test Garden both host interpretive infrastructure that represents and highlights narratives contemporaneous with Portland's City Beautiful period, this infrastructure does a demonstrably poorer job of highlighting narratives that demonstrate each cultural landscape's "multiple, coexisting texts" or "competing fragmentary expressions."[2] In the interests of affording regulatory protections to cultural landscapes, historic preservation as a field favors "theories of landscape that regard it as a material thing," a "material thing" that retains observable similarities to its past appearance. But "such survival is the result of stasis, occurring only when there has been little change to a building or landscape over time."[3] Cultural geographer Julie Riesenweber makes this remark in relation to historic preservation's traditionally inflexible understanding of integrity (which is discussed later under the "data analysis" section), but her observation relates just as aptly to addressing the need for more expansive interpretation of cultural landscapes.

The all-pervasiveness of rhetoric is used in this research as a foundation for examining the material manifestations of public interpretation in cultural landscapes. Heritage interpretation is not an impartial collection of facts, but a subjective presentation of a narrative. As such, heritage interpretation is a rhetorical phenomenon, and is the result of several choices made regarding theme, language, and presentation. I evaluate the material properties of each case study park's interpretive infrastructure as a series of rhetorical choices, where the interpretation's location, format, material, and inclusion of

[2] Paul Groth, "Frameworks for Cultural Landscape Study," in *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes,* ed. Paul Groth and Paul Bressi (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 7.
[3] Julie Riesenweber, "Landscape Preservation and Cultural Geography," in *Cultural Landscapes: Balancing Nature and Heritage in Preservation Practice,* ed. Richard Longstreth (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 29.

images reflect stakeholder interests and cater to discrete audiences. I then propose historical interpretation for each park based on the park's history and less conspicuous narratives associated with the landscape. Treating public parks as cultural landscapes that evolve over time, rather than as historic sites wedded to a discrete period, allows for a more flexible interpretation of their historical meaning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review is divided into three thematic sections that support investigation of the research questions. The first section relates to establishing a historic context for the City Beautiful movement, as this provides a baseline of comparison for expanded interpretive themes. The second section includes literature that builds a theory of cultural landscape and how a cultural landscape derives its meaning or significance from both design and use. The last section addresses literature that establishes the importance of public interpretation at historic sites and describes interpretation as a series of rhetorical choices.

While this research draws on a variety of primary and secondary sources, the literature review, in the interest of addressing themes, debates, and gaps in existing academic research, is confined to secondary resources. These secondary sources include scholarly books, articles, NRHP nominations, and historic contexts. Primary sources are discussed in later sections where their analysis is most pertinent. The sources for uncovering the landscape's significance are used in an iterative way—meaning that they were referred to several times over the course of the research as the thesis developed and were also analyzed under multiple lenses (relating, for example, to both City Beautiful

history and cultural landscape theory). Primary sources such as news clippings and archival resources are interwoven throughout the case study section.

City Beautiful Movement

In *The City Beautiful Movement,* American history scholar William H. Wilson delivers a thorough and critical overview of the movement's manifestations throughout the United States. The book's four sections explore the general origins and ideology of the movement, the design of early City Beautiful parks, the design of later City Beautiful parks, and the legacy of the movement on a national level. Intrinsic to the historic context for this research is Wilson's analysis of City Beautiful ideology, wherein he refutes two popular and reductive portrayals of City Beautiful advocates at work throughout the United States: that of good Samaritans who acted solely for the collective benefit, and that of capitalist barons who weaponized public spaces to solidify inequalities along lines of class and race.

"The City Beautiful Movement and Civic Planning in Portland, Oregon 1897-1921" Multiple Property Submission (hereafter referred to as a Multiple Property Document or "the MPD," per the most recently established nomenclature for similarly structured NRHP nominations) establishes a context for assessing the influence of City Beautiful ideology on Portland's built environment. The document's main tools for assessing this influence are the Olmsted Plan of 1903 and Edward Bennett's Greater Portland Plan of 1912. The MPD also provides a typological breakdown and integrity guidelines for assessing the eligibility of Portland's City Beautiful resources for the NRHP.

Joan Hockaday's *Greenscapes: Olmsted's Pacific Northwest* describes in detail John Charles Olmsted's creative relationship with Oregon's landscapes. His impressions of the varied landscapes throughout the state translated into imaginative park designs that

adhered to his father Frederick Law Olmsted's general design tenets, but that were also distinct to the Pacific Northwest. This specific interpretation of John Charles Olmsted's work process contributes to a more complete historic context.

Sources discussing Portland's broader history of park development include two historic contexts produced by the city of Portland, "City of Portland: Civic Planning, Development, & Public Works, 1851-1965" and "Open Space and Park Development, 1851-1965." The first of these contexts establishes a chronological history of Portland's urban development, including a chapter on public planning and Progressive Era politics from 1900-1930. This source helps to contextualize the discussion on the larger City Beautiful movement in Portland. The second historic context, "Open Space and Park Development, 1851-1965," focuses specifically on parks and reserves, and includes a chapter on trends in parks acquisition and development during the City Beautiful era.

In *The Legacy of Olmsted Brothers in Portland, Oregon*, local historian William Hawkins discusses the long-range history of Portland's parks, extending his discussion beyond the City Beautiful era. Hawkins' discussion of the City Beautiful movement mirrors in less detail much of what is in the MPD. Hawkins' work contributes value to this research with more detailed descriptions of individual parks than those included in the two historic contexts discussed above. Further information on both case study parks (Laurelhurst Park and the test garden) came from several entries in the Oregon Encyclopedia, park information pages on the city of Portland's website, and NRHP nominations for Laurelhurst Park and the Washington Park Reservoirs. These sources all helped to provide detailed descriptions of landscape characteristics and helped to contextualize the histories of both landscapes.

Additional sources contribute as much to the discussion of cultural landscapes and public interpretation as they do to the development of the historic context. In *The Politics of Park Design: A History of Urban Parks in America,* Galen Cranz offers a sociological history of parks development in the United States. Cranz outlines four models that in her estimation dominated park design, each for a period of thirty to thirty-five years between 1870 and the present day: Pleasure Grounds, Reform Parks, Recreation Facilities, Open Space Systems, and a new emerging addition, Sustainable Parks. She argues that the shape and use of parks is influenced by a specific social problem on people's minds at the time. Cranz' work helps to flesh out the historic context for this research in that she clearly indicates how park use and design respond to societal change. Her focus on use changes contributes to the argument for assessing parks as cultural landscapes that call for broader historical interpretation that accounts for evolving uses over time.

In her article "Urban Public Parks, 1840-1900: Design and Meaning," Hilary Taylor unpacks how the design of nineteenth-century parks reflects the aspirations and achievements of the time. Taylor analyzes how the debates and values of the mid- to late-nineteenth century are embodied in the design and layout of Victorian public parks. These debates include the design tenet of *rus in urbe,* or the countryside introduced into the city; inclusion of specimen trees and plants for scientific exhibition; the "ennoblement" of nature via art; and the park as "an image of a virtuous society."[4] Many of these same debates carried over into the Progressive Era and found purchase in the design of City Beautiful parks–and consequently, in the ways that they are interpreted for the public today.

[4] Hilary A. Taylor, "Urban Public Parks, 1840-1900: Design and Meaning," *Garden History* 23, no. 2 (1995): https://doi.org/10.2307/1587078, 213.

In his master's thesis, "Portland's Olmsted Vision (1897-1915): A Study of the Public Landscapes Designed by Emanuel T. Mische," Kenneth Guzowski focuses on the park designs executed by Mische during his tenure as park superintendent in 1908-1914. Guzowski identifies "what is historic" in these parks and offers treatment recommendations for the preservation of these features.[5] Guzowski assesses a City Beautiful park's primary historic value as a resource emblematic of Olmstedian design principles. While this point is uncontentious, the phrase "what is historic" as used in the abstract suggests that park elements not native to the City Beautiful era may be construed as somehow less historic or less significant. The intellectual contradictions of this position, especially when preservationists are actively seeking to engage with history in a more holistic and interdisciplinary way, illustrates the need for work that analyzes public parks as dynamic cultural landscapes subject to shifting uses and layered significance over time.

Cultural Landscapes

Several disciplines have longstanding investment in how cultural landscapes are defined. The literature reviewed for this research demonstrates these interdisciplinary concerns. From cultural geography and public history to historic preservation and ecology, academics and professionals across multiple fields have emphasized the need for a more holistic conception of cultural landscape.

In the introduction to the multi-author volume *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes* (1997), Paul Groth discusses the seminal influence of writer and *Landscape* magazine editor John Brinckerhoff Jackson ("J.B. Jackson") in the field of cultural landscape studies.

[5] Kenneth Guzowski, "Portland's Olmsted Vision (1897-1915): A Study of the Public Landscapes Designed by Emanuel T. Mische in Portland, Oregon" (master's thesis, University of Oregon, 1990), Proquest (1341372), 4.

Jackson promotes the phenomenon of the ordinary or vernacular landscape as worthy of study and focuses less on formal design and high architecture than he does on the interactions of people with their everyday surroundings. Groth acknowledges that cultural landscape theory as a field has evolved beyond Jackson's initial concepts and enumerates several tenets that he himself considers to be foundational to the field. These include the importance of "ordinary, everyday landscapes"; the worthiness of both rural and urban landscapes as subjects of study; the importance of recognizing both universal patterns and local diversity; the need for accessible, "popular" writing styles to reach as broad an audience as possible; the intrinsic interdisciplinarity of the field; and the primacy of visual and spatial data.[6]

The most recent scholarship on cultural landscapes pursues a broader understanding of the term "cultural landscape" across diverse fields. Sources referenced for this research include "Cultural Landscape Theory and Practice: Moving from Observation to Experience," a chapter by Julian Smith in the multi-author volume *Understanding Heritage: Perspectives in Heritage Studies* (2013). Smith observes that cultural landscapes, unlike historic landscapes, exist just as much, if not more so, in the "cultural imagination" as they do in the physical world. Despite widespread recognition among cultural heritage professionals that landscape characteristics like land use and traditional practice may not always create physical traces, the methodology these professionals employ continues to rely on physical evidence of practices, rather than the practices themselves, as proof of their importance.

[6] Groth, "Frameworks for Cultural Landscape Study" in Groth and Bressi, *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes,* 3-15.

Also of note are a selection of conference papers presented at the Fourth National Forum on Historic Preservation in 2004, which were published as *Cultural Landscapes: Balancing Nature and Heritage in Preservation Practice* and edited by architectural historian Richard Longstreth. In "Landscape Preservation and Cultural Geography," cultural geographer Julie Riesenweber describes historic preservationists' responsibility to evaluate and interpret cultural landscapes in a more holistic way. She asserts that longstanding methodologies from the field of cultural geography can help historic preservationists to expand their own understanding and treatment of these landscapes. In the same volume, Robert Melnick asks in "Are We There Yet?" whether the codification required for regulatory protection of cultural landscapes primes cultural resource professionals to overlook or misunderstand a landscape's complexity.

Two sources provide some intriguing insights on how to conceptualize cultural landscapes as a phenomenon of both space and time. In her article "Time and Landscape" published in *Current Anthropology* in 2002, anthropologist Barbara Bender asserts that landscape is "time materializing," and that that in contemporary Western discourse (also a problematic concept that she evaluates), all definitions of landscape incorporate the idea of "'time passing.'"[7] She acknowledges that different types of time—e.g. linear, seasonal, ceremonial, global, local, "clock time"—are not mutually exclusive, but exist in tandem with one another *in a subjective way.* "Subjective" here does not refer to cultural relativism, but to Bender's observation that while landscape and time do exist outside of human understanding, their existence as *concepts* is inextricable from politics, social relations (of

[7] Barbara Bender, "Time and Landscape," *Current Anthropology* 43, no. S4 (2002): S103, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/339561.

class, race, gender, etc.), and historical particularities.[8] Bender uses three case studies in rural England and northern Ireland to illustrate the methodological challenges for cultural landscape studies that arise from time being a social construct.

The second source that explores the interstices of time and landscape is Helen Erickson's master thesis in landscape architecture, "The Factor of Time in the Analysis and Interpretation of Cultural Landscapes," which happens to also be concerned specifically with landscape interpretation. Erickson argues that change is as much a defining characteristic of the landscape as any discrete physical feature associated with the determined period of significance for the landscape, or with the later or earlier uses that have left the most visually predominant traces on the landscape. Like Bender, Erickson includes three case studies (the Faraway Ranch and Tucson Community Center, both in Arizona, and the "topography of terror" no-man's land in occupied Berlin after WWII) to illustrate how methodologies for interpreting landscapes can be expanded, enriched, or otherwise altered to better reflect the quality of change over time.

Rhetoric and Historical Interpretation

Two sources are used to establish the nature of rhetoric and material rhetoric. Firstly, the ontology of material rhetoric is explored in a blog article in an online national directory of graduate- and doctoral-level degree programs in academic fields related to communication. Ben Clancy provides an overview of material rhetoric's development as a field of scholarship from the 1980s onwards. Clancy explains how material rhetoric challenges the status quo in rhetorical studies, specifically, "the idea that persuasion can be

[8] Bender, "Time and Landscape," S104.

analyzed through textual analysis alone."[9] They review different interpretations of "what it means for rhetoric to be material," and then offer in-depth analysis of the three main types of materialist scholarship: "research focused on the importance of context, criticism that explores the materiality of discourse, and rhetorical criticism interested in how the material operates rhetorically."[10] My research on historical interpretation draws primarily on this last type of scholarship—how materials and their visual, tangible, or otherwise physical qualities carry rhetorical power.

In *Democracy's Lot: Rhetoric, Politics, and the Places of Invention,* Professor Candice Rai contends that the rhetoric of democracy expresses itself not only via language (in speeches, manifestos, etc.) but via space and the ways that people use space to assert themselves and enact their struggles with each other. Rai employs the case study of Wilson Yard, an empty lot in a Chicago neighborhood known for its ethnic diversity and history of social upheaval (which continues today in the form of gentrification). Rai's focus on the "rhetorical force" of public spaces speaks particularly well to the ways that people have used city parks in Portland, whether as emblems for civic boosterism or as gathering points for public demonstrations. Pier Park in north Portland was the site of a longshoremen strike in 1934, and Dawson Park (as discussed in the "motivation of study" section) served as the departure point for a civil rights march in 1963. In 2020, both Laurelhurst Park and Peninsula Park hosted public protests after the murder of George Floyd.[11]

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[9] Ben Clancy, "Material Rhetoric," *Topics in Rhetorical Studies* (blog), *Masters in Communication,* accessed March 20, 2023, https://www.mastersincommunications.com/research/rhetorical-studies/material-rhetoric.

[10] Clancy, "Material Rhetoric."

[11] Suzette Smith and Justin Yau, "Amid Nightly Protests, Pipe Bombs Explode in Laurelhurst Park," *Willamette Week*, August 10, 2020, https://www.wweek.com/news/courts/2020/08/09/amid-nightly-protests-pipe-bombs-explode-in-laurelhurst-park; "Parks in Context: A Community History of Peninsula Park," *Public*

In other sources, historical interpretation is itself established as a rhetorical exercise. National Park Service (NPS) consultant Freeman Tilden wrote *Interpreting Our Heritage* in 1957, a short book recognized as a seminal guide on how to create and present historical interpretation. Though Tilden does not use the word "rhetoric" to describe historical interpretation, he does present interpretation as an art, a skill, and a tool—all words that apply just as easily to the way people use rhetoric in everyday situations. In an article published by the International Association for Research on Textbooks and Educational Media (IARTEM), Iben Jørgensen uses rhetoric to evaluate the collective cultural memory created and evoked by heritage sites. She focuses on the "mediated rhetoric" of these sites, mediated rhetoric being specified as websites and digital exhibits. Jørgensen takes as a case study the website for New Lanark, a historic cotton-mill company town and heritage site in Scotland. She indicates how elements including photographs, other visual elements, and the foregrounding of specific topics helps to establish rhetorical agency, positioning the heritage site as an ideological or identity-shaping text with a crafted awareness of its audience's desires and preconceptions. [12] Finally, in the introduction to *Heritage Keywords: Rhetoric and Redescription in Cultural Heritage* (2015), Kathryn Lafrenz Samuels homes in on two concepts that are often at odds: cultural heritage itself as a kind of rhetoric or "persuasion"; and the rhetoric of cultural heritage, or the use of "certain binding words for heritage, e.g. cultural property, intangible heritage, authenticity" to

History PDX: A Project of the Portland State University History Department, July 18, 2022, http://publichistorypdx.org/2022/07/18/parks-in-context-a-community-history-of-peninsula-park.

[12] Iben Brinch Jørgensen, "The Face of the Factory Girl: Educational Rhetoric in the Mediation of an Historical Place," *IARTEM E-Journal* 4, no. 1 (August 4, 2011): 2, 13, https://doi.org/10.21344/iartem.v4i1.779. Jørgensen discusses how the tourist brings their own social context, personal nostalgia, and other preconceptions to their experience of the website. In this way, the visual rhetoric of historical interpretation (e.g. iconic photographs) can have multiple and sometimes opposing rhetorical effects—the effect intended by the interpreter, and the effect experienced by the audience.

codify and standardize the field of cultural heritage.[13] Lafrenz theorizes that rather than being an insurmountable limitation, the "coded" language of cultural heritage is simply a symptom of the language's provisional nature; cultural heritage is in fact a flexible and ever-evolving field.[14]

In a similar vein, Neil Silberman argues in his chapter in *Understanding Heritage: Perspectives in Heritage Studies* (2013) for an understanding of heritage interpretation as a kind of discourse. He emphasizes the importance of the nonprofessional stakeholder in developing interpretation of heritage sites (cultural landscapes are not specifically called out). He references the use of hermeneutics, or the study of how language is interpreted, to help reimagine what constitutes "successful" historical interpretation. Though professional interpreters may feel that their success lies in convincing the audience of "correctly" understanding their message, Silberman views the audience as being more active participants. Audience members use their own perspectives to process interpretive material, and as such may have an experience in a cultural landscape that "adds, meshes, or clashes with their personal understandings of human nature and history."[15]

[13] Kathryn Lafrenz Samuels, "Heritage as Persuasion," in *Heritage Keywords: Rhetoric and Redescription in Cultural Heritage,* ed. Trinidad Rico and Kathryn Lafrenz Samuels (Denver: University Press of Colorado, 2015), 4.
[14] Lafrenz Samuels, "Heritage as Persuasion," 5. Though Lafrenz Samuels continues to focus on rhetoric as a discursive phenomenon, she also points to its flexibility and malleability as a tool. She points out that rhetoric can be used not only to enforce the status quo, but also to "[transform] prevailing heritage vocabularies, [encourage] alternate meanings, and [innovate] new technologies."
[15] Neil Silberman, "Heritage Interpretation as Public Discourse: Towards a New Paradigm" in *Understanding Heritage: Perspectives in Heritage Studies*, ed. Marie-Therese Albert, Roland Bernecker, and Britta Rudolff (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 24.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This section details the methodological system and theoretical concepts used to direct the research. Inspiration for the research is discussed in the section on "motivation of study." Grounded theory and its various constraints are elaborated upon as a methodological approach, and two theoretical frameworks—cultural landscapes theory, and the theory of material rhetoric—are related to the research topic of historical interpretation.

Motivation of Study

Impetus for this study came from an interest in exploring the practice and logistics of interpreting historic landscapes. Public interpretation is an integral step in historic preservation, as it can, when carried out effectively, help the public understand the importance of historic preservation. My choice to focus on public parks as a subject of historical interpretation is a personal one, as parks throughout the city—Mt. Tabor, Laurelhurst, Forest Park, and Wilshire—are places I have visited almost every day since moving to Portland in 2021 for graduate school. Parks are one of the few places within walking distance of my home where I have been able to relax and take a break from the sensorial overload of the city.

Ongoing efforts in Portland to expand historical interpretation in at least two city parks provide precedent for this research. Thanks to impetus from community stakeholders, Dawson Park in the Albina neighborhood in north Portland already incorporates broad interpretation that considers the park as a cultural landscape with diverse uses and meanings that have shifted over time. From the early-twentieth century through the 1960s, the vast majority of African American Portlanders lived in Albina due to

redlining policies that restricted the sale of homes or land to non-White consumers in other parts of the city. In the 1950s and 1960s, urban renewal projects in Albina that included the development of I-5, the unrealized expansion of Legacy Emanuel Hospital, and the construction of the Memorial Coliseum, displaced people from their homes.[16] Although many families now live much farther east, the neighborhood's public parks still act as vital recreational spaces for the Black community.[17]

Among these parks is Dawson Park, a two-acre area at the northwest corner of North Stanton Street and North William Avenue, dedicated in 1921 at the tail end of the City Beautiful movement. With the input of community stakeholders, the interpretive infrastructure was overhauled to better reflect the many ways that the Black community has used Dawson Park since the late 1940s.[18] Robert Kennedy gave a speech here in 1963 before a civil rights march, for example, and the park hosted a thriving neighborhood market for years. Twelve boulders inscribed with the names of important people and events were installed in the park. The oldest extant piece of historical interpretation in Dawson Park is the Hill Block Building cupola. The rooftop ornament was salvaged and relocated to the park in 1978 during anticipatory demolition for the Legacy Emanuel expansion project.

Dawson Park's interpretive infrastructure serves two purposes and two audiences; it is both educational for the public at large and community-affirming for Portlanders of

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[16] Cathy Galbraith et al. "African American Resources in Portland, Oregon, from 1851 to 1973," Multiple Property Submission National Register Nomination, 2020, https://www.portland.gov/sites/default/files/2020-09/mpd_final.pdf, E-12, E-32.
[17] Casey Parks, "North Williams Gentrified. Its Park Didn't. How Dawson Park Survived as a Black Hub," *Oregonian*, September 10, 2016, https://www.oregonlive.com/portland/2016/09/dawson_park_gentrification_por.html.
[18] Portland Parks & Recreation, "Dawson Park," website of the City of Portland, accessed May 14, 2023, https://www.portland.gov/parks/dawson-park.

African American and Black descent. The interpretation at Dawson Park provides an example of interpreting uses of the cultural landscape that have less to do with the park's particular design, and more to do with the park's setting, location, and relationship to a specific community.[19]

Broader interpretation has also been installed at Peninsula Park thanks to Professor Catherine McNeur, the Portland State University Public History Lab, and their 2022 collaboration with the Friends of the Peninsula Park Rose Garden. In the wake of the 2020 Black Lives Matter marches and vigils that started in Peninsula Park, the Friends sought to expand the park's historical interpretation to better represent how different communities have used the park in various ways over time. McNeur's students drew upon several resources to extract narratives from the park's past that have been neglected or unrecognized by White, upper-class history. They compiled this new interpretation into a zine available to parkgoers digitally and physically at the park visitor center. McNeur asserts that interpretive infrastructure at other Portland parks could benefit from similar thematic expansion.[20] In an effort to contribute to this conversation, I chose to focus my research on the material rhetoric of the interpretation, rather than its thematic content. The goal, however, is the same—to expand upon the narratives presented to the public about the meaning and the historical importance of Portland's public parks.

[19] Portland Parks & Recreation, "Dawson Park Improvements Phase 2," website of the City of Portland, August 26, 2022, https://www.portland.gov/sites/default/files/2022/2022_0826-public-outreach-event.pdf.
[20] "Parks in Context," *Public History PDX.*

Research Question Development

What began as an inquiry into the interpretive themes addressed in City Beautiful-era parks across the city has evolved into an examination of the rhetorical properties of extant interpretation at two City Beautiful-era parks, Laurelhurst Park and the International Rose Test Garden.

RQ1: What are the rhetorical properties of [the park's] interpretive infrastructure?

RQ2: Where and how can the interpretive infrastructure be expanded to narrate a more complete history of the park as a cultural landscape?

My consideration of rhetoric extends to the interpretation I propose for each park based on each park's evolving use and meaning in the context of Portland's history. Examining the rhetorical properties of historical interpretation constitutes the "theoretical sampling" phase of research. I realized the need for analyzing the interpretation from a rhetorical perspective when it became clear that a mere summary or overview of the interpretive *themes* alone would not be enough to set the stage for an engaging discussion on why historical interpretation matters in cultural landscapes. Additionally, I realized that limiting the case studies to two parks instead of half a dozen, as initially planned, would allow for more in-depth discussion and analysis, given limitations on time and resources over the course of the research. These same limitations inspired several constraints described in the research parameters.

Methodological Approach: Grounded Theory

This research adopts grounded theory as a methodological approach. In grounded theory, the systematic gathering and interpretation of data helps the researcher to discern patterns. The subsequent grouping of these patterns into larger categories allows the researcher to draw conclusions that are "grounded" in the initial data set. These conclusions may provide clear answers to the hypothesis but may just as likely serve as a conduit for further questioning and exploration of the research topic. Hence, the "conclusions" drawn from the research may themselves be more of a theoretical vehicle than they are definitive answers to any given question.[21]

Although explanatory graphics in many academic papers belie the circular trajectory of generating a grounded theory, the process is not a linear one. Gathering data is the starting point of the research, and the articulation of a theory is the culmination of the process, but both these steps and all the interim steps can happen at any point, and often happen over and over as the researcher retraces their steps and returns to the field to explore their ideas more deeply.[22] Themes and patterns are identified inductively, meaning that the specifics (data points) precede the generalizations (patterns, themes, and theory). Inductive reasoning differs from deductive reasoning in that the latter takes as its goal the testing of a theory rather than the generation of a theory. Though inductive reasoning is

[21] Helen Noble and Gary Mitchell, "What Is Grounded Theory?" *Evidence-Based Nursing* 19, no. 2 (April 1, 2016), https://doi.org/10.1136/eb-2016-102306, 34; Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis* (London: SAGE Publications, 2006), 2.
[22] Noble and Mitchell, "What is grounded theory?" 35; Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory,* 10.

not necessarily a less linear process, grounded theory makes use of the "constant comparative" method, which entails making comparisons at every stage of the research process. For this reason, grounded theory is a less efficient but arguably more thorough approach than methods more commonly associated with quantitative research.[23]

In the 1960s, grounded theory was developed by academics in the social sciences to handle qualitative data in a systematic and presumably more "credible" way. At the time, the growing preference for methodologies that "legitimized reducing qualities of human

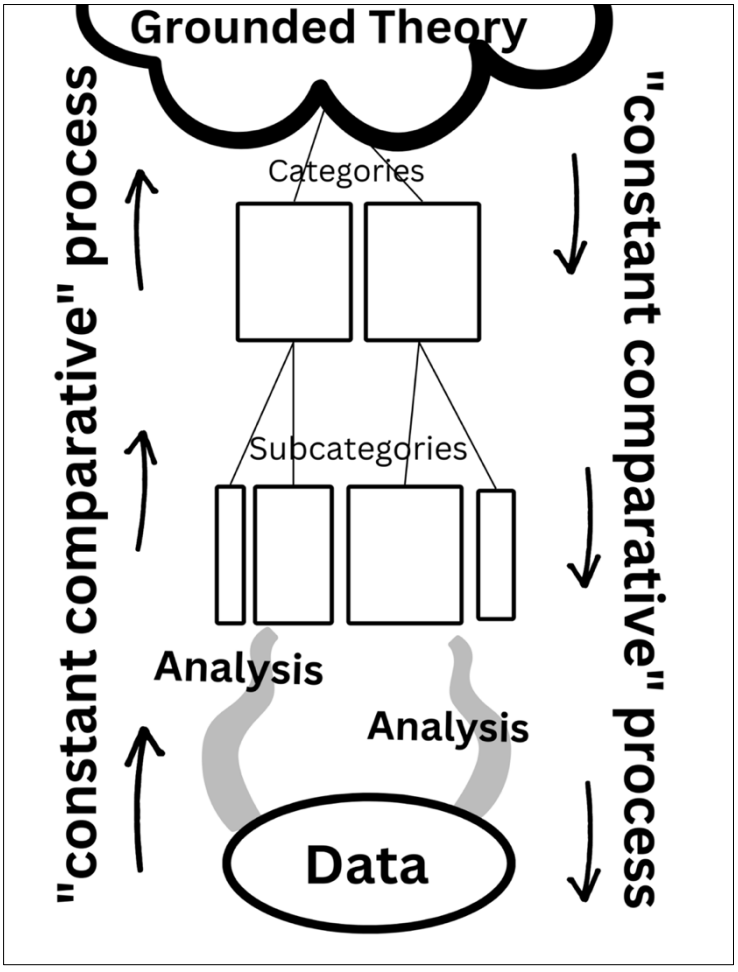

Figure 2: Grounded theory involves a "constant comparative" treatment of the data, which entails periodic revisitation of both the data and the researcher's conclusions.

[23] Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory,* 5.

experience to quantifiable variables" also meant that the scientific, legitimate researcher adopted a stance of impartiality, objectivity, and distance from the research topic. The interpretation (i.e. the construction of meaning) necessary for dealing with qualitative data was increasingly viewed as impressionistic, unsystematic, and methodologically unsound. Sociologists Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss wrote *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967) as a challenge to prevailing perceptions on qualitative research. They advocated for an epistemological reconsideration of qualitative research, and most importantly, offered practical guidelines for conducting qualitative research in a systematic way.[24]

Today, the legitimacy of grounded theory as a methodology is widely recognized and applied in both qualitative and mixed method studies in the social sciences. Qualitative research is an especially fruitful application, as the analytical strategies used in grounded theory allow for discerning patterns that may otherwise remain obscured. Data collection and analysis happen at the same time and continue through all subsequent stages of research. The researcher may only realize their need for additional data and detail once they have begun conceptualizing the new theory. This step of grounded theory is called theoretical sampling. Additional data must also be collected and interpreted in a systematic way, but with the added goal of supporting or refuting the categories identified in the previous analysis. Research questions are also adjusted as the theory builds upon itself and the researcher narrows and deepens their focus. The categories themselves also become

[24] Charmaz, 4.

more "theoretical" as research progresses, as tentative ideas for themes become more complex with additional layers of analysis.[25]

Research Parameters

Research parameters are intended to manage the scope of the research in light of anticipated constraints and unanticipated challenges. Similarly to the research questions, the parameters evolved as limitations and opportunities arose during the research. Key research parameters include the following:

1) Selection of the two case study parks was based on their affiliation with the City Beautiful movement in Portland. Laurelhurst Park is one of only two city parks in Portland listed in the NRHP, so documentation of its City Beautiful history is extensive and well-established. The International Rose Test Garden is not listed in the NRHP but is included in a Portland Parks Intensive Level Survey (ILS) commissioned by the city in 2006. The ILS describes the test garden as being potentially eligible under the MPD, and primary-source literature provides evidentiary support of the garden's alignment with City Beautiful ideology.
2) The interpretive infrastructure analyzed was limited to infrastructure that is apparent to the public, "apparent" being defined here as locatable online with a simple search engine inquiry, or visible to the casual parkgoer who visits the park with little to no preexisting knowledge of the park's history or the City Beautiful movement. Though the words "apparent" and "visible" bring

[25] Charmaz, 3.

up the question of how to define accessibility for park visitors with first languages other than English, or diverse physical and cognitive abilities, discussion of accessibility in this respect is beyond the scope of this project.

3) Discussion with individuals associated with each park was limited to the goals, successes, and challenges of interpretive projects. Explicit discussion of the interpretation's rhetorical elements was avoided to maintain the integrity of field observations made before these informal interviews. Using data culled from informal interviews would compromise the aim of this research, which is to experience the interpretive infrastructure's rhetoric at face value, without additional interpretation or explanation. Discussion with stakeholders who have extensive knowledge or personal investment in extant interpretive infrastructure could have compromised my theoretical sensitivity in the research, the point of which is to assess through my own experience, analysis, and review of the literature, the rhetorical character of the interpretation available to the public.

Data Collection and Analysis

In grounded theory, data analysis also goes by the term "qualitative coding." The coding process involves the separating, sorting, and synthesizing of data gathered during the data collection step of research. Coding entails "attaching labels" to discrete data segments that describe what each piece of data is about.[26] In the context of this research, the data points are the physical attributes of the interpretive infrastructure (visuals,

[26] Charmaz, 3.

materials, format, and location within the landscape). The "codes" or categories derived from analysis of these attributes helped to inform the organization of the subcategories, which include intended audience, the benefits and shortcomings of the interpretation's design, and signified meaning of the interpretation in the context of the landscape's history (and Portland's history in general).

Data collection occurred both in the field and online. Interpretive materials about the parks were located via search engine queries and following links from individual park pages on the City of Portland website, Friends of the Washington Park International Rose Test Garden website, and the Laurelhurst Neighborhood Association website. Online data collection was ongoing throughout the research process to ensure a thorough review of available materials. Fieldwork occurred over several sessions between December 2022 and February 2023. Time spent in the field lasted from an hour to three hours per session, depending on the focus of the data collection (locating interpretive infrastructure; observing park uses; sketching for site mapping; evaluating landscape characteristics). Laurelhurst Park was visited on December 12, 2022, February 5, 2023, and February 7, 2023. The IRTG was visited on December 14, 2022, February 17, 2023, March 1, 2023, and April 29, 2023.

Data analysis occurred in part through the writing of the landscape characteristics section for each case study park. Following the parameters outlined in NPS publications about the treatment and evaluation of cultural landscapes, I experienced the parks through a critical lens and made connections between the park's history and its extant landscape characteristics that may not have occurred to me otherwise. This step in the data analysis helped to bolster my argument for reading public parks as cultural landscapes with broad

interpretive potential across time. For the purposes of evaluating how extant interpretation at each park treats the theme of City Beautiful history, this research required an evaluation of the City Beautiful elements still present on the landscape. The MPD details which aspects of integrity must be demonstrated to merit inclusion in the NRHP.[27] The MPD however does not treat parks as cultural landscapes, so does not draw the connection between the aspects of integrity per National Register Bulletin 18 for all historic resources, and the 13 landscape characteristics detailed in Preservation Brief 36 for cultural landscapes. To better understand the rhetorical nature of the extant historical interpretation in each park, this research draws an explicit connection between the landscape characteristics and the aspects of integrity as defined by the NPS.

As a practice and a theory, historic preservation treats the built environment as the point of departure for establishing a narrative about the past. NPS guidelines for the evaluation of cultural landscapes are informed by this overarching precept. While the historical significance of the landscape is not itself limited to its observable features, the "integrity" of the landscape must reflect the appearance of the landscape during the period of significance to be considered eligible for inclusion in the NRHP. Secretary of the Interior (SOI) standards mandate attributing a discrete and demonstrable historic significance to any historic property listed in or determined eligible for the NRHP. As defined by the NPS in the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, this historic significance must manifest in at

[27] Lutino et al. "The City Beautiful Movement and Civic Planning in Portland, Oregon 1897-1921," Multiple Property Document National Register Nomination, 2000, https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/GetAsset/NRHP/64500499_text, F-26. Aspects of historic integrity that must be demonstrated include integrity of location, design, setting, materials, and association. The aspect of design is especially important, as Olmstedian design must be apparent, even if the park was not mentioned by Olmsted Brothers in their 1903 or 1907 parks reports. The authors also note that regular replacement or maintenance of play equipment or park vegetation ought not be equated with a loss of integrity.

least one of four ways as described in the footnote below.[28] Moreover, this significance must be demonstrated by what are called the seven aspects of integrity, which are the resource's properties both tangible (material, design, workmanship, location, and setting) and intangible (association and feeling).[29] Cultural landscapes generally allow much more flexibility when assessing their integrity than do other historic resources like buildings. Landscapes are dynamic, sensitive to gradual and systemic change, and are expected from the onset to evolve over time.[30]

The public does not recognize historic "significance" and "integrity" in the same way as cultural resource professionals. Individuals and communities value landscapes for uses and meanings not conveyed by either of these concepts as defined by the National Park Service (NPS). Riesenweber describes the general public's investment in a landscape in this way: "what is important is not that which is unique and monumental, fits into some canon, or has remained unchanged *but that which most decisively shapes how we view and interact with the world*."[31]

[28] National Park Service, "National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation," 1990, 2. Historic properties must be significant for: association with events that have a made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; association with the lives of persons significant in the past; embodiment of distinctive architectural qualities; or a demonstrated potential for yielding important historical or prehistorical information. These definitions are not verbatim.
[29] National Park Service, "National Register Bulletin 15," 44.
[30] Riesenweber, "Landscape Preservation," 29.
[31] Riesenweber, 30. Emphasis is mine.

The limitations of evaluating historic resources for their significance and integrity have been amply discussed in both the academic and professional realms of historic preservation. I do not intend to limit my own evaluation of historical interpretation in Portland's public parks to a rehashing of this debate. The interpretive potential of the cultural landscape interests me more than critiquing historic preservation's shortcomings as a discipline. Suffice to say that when interpretation of a landscape is limited to only that which is readily visible or explicitly recognized in an NRHP nomination, the cultural landscape's richness of meaning risks getting overlooked.

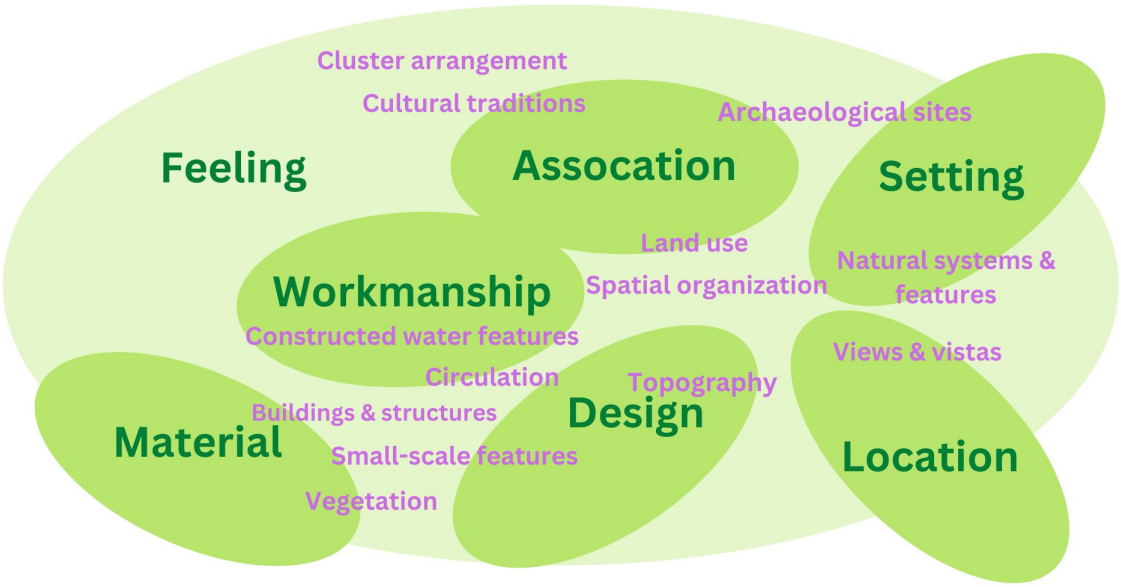

Figure 3: The relationship between the 13 landscape characteristics (in pink) and the seven aspects of integrity (in green) is dynamic and subject to interpretation.

Theoretical Sensitivity

Characterized as the researcher's individual insight, theoretical sensitivity helps the grounded theory researcher to understand the data, imbue it with meaning, and sort data by its relevance as the developing theory grows more refined. Influences on theoretical

sensitivity include a review of the literature; personal and professional experiences of the researcher; and the analytic process itself, which develops according to the research focus.[32] A major component of my own theoretical sensitivity is my prior knowledge of and respect for Katherine Dunn's writing, and a belief in the value of providing the public with engaging historical interpretation about her life and work. While grounded theory discourages development of a theory before all data is gathered and analyzed, it does as a methodology consider the difficulty in avoiding theoretical preconceptions.[33]

THEORY: CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

This part of the theoretical framework concerns cultural landscapes: the conceptual development of cultural landscape theory; overlapping or conflicting understandings of cultural landscapes across disciplines; the need to recognize both intangible meanings and the passage of time in cultural landscapes; and the anatomy of the NPS' regulatory definition of a cultural landscape.

The Development of a Concept

Discussion of the everyday landscape as a social phenomenon worth examining dates back in the United States to J.B. Jackson and his *Landscapes* magazine, first published in 1951.[34] Jackson asserts that "the landscape is not a work of art," but rather a social construct resulting from human activity upon an environment.[35] Jackson valued ordinary landscapes as much as, if not more than, carefully designed landscapes. His methodology

[32] Noble and Mitchell, "What is grounded theory?" 35.
[33] Noble and Mitchell, 35.
[34] Groth, "Frameworks," 2.
[35] Groth, 21.

also involved combining visual data with information gleaned from his other senses (smell, touch, and sound). Jackson was in turn influenced by cultural geographer and "Berkeley school" founder Carl Sauer, who as early as the 1920s espoused several research methodologies now intrinsic to cultural landscape assessment.[36] Sauer recognized the importance of social forces upon the landscape but maintained a focus on landscape as an array of visible, material forms. Cultural geographer Denis Cosgrove expanded upon Sauer's interpretation, interpreting landscape as something more than the sum of its material elements.[37] Riesenweber picks up this idea and runs with it, asserting that "by placing concepts such as significance and integrity firmly within the realm of socially constructed meaning, recent geographical thought challenges historic preservation's assertion that materiality carries historical authenticity. *This position also suggests that the preservation movement itself is socially constructed."*[38]

Cultural landscapes are obviously recognized by cultures all over the world, but academic discussion on the nature and significance of cultural landscapes centers around the questions that ostensibly preoccupy more leaders in the Western world intellectually, if not emotionally: how can the wellbeing of marginalized and oppressed communities be better protected? How can the effects of climate change on historically important landscapes be mitigated? A landscape is not only a material site, but also an epistemology, "a way in which Europeans have represented to themselves and to others the world about them and their relationships with it." [39] This is not to dismiss the importance or complexity

[36] Groth, 13.
[37] Riesenweber, "Landscape Preservation," 26-27.
[38] Riesenweber, 29-30. Emphasis is mine.
[39] Riesenweber, 26.

of the discussion around cultural landscapes, but rather to present the cultural landscape itself as a social and political phenomenon.

What everyone seems to still agree on is that a cultural landscape is an encounter between humans and the natural world. (The dichotomy between the natural world and humanity is a given in all the reviewed literature. There's debate about the soundness of this basic dichotomy, but this question is beyond the scope of this research.) What is not always explicitly discussed however is the cultural landscape's inherent quality to allow for and anticipate change in a way that other resource typologies do not. The symbiotic relationship between time and space in a cultural landscape is what lends the latter its dynamic quality, as explained by landscape architect Garrett Eckbo in the 1960s.[40] It should also be noted here that the discussion of time's effects on cultural landscapes are rooted in a Western philosophy of time, and thus do not encompass all possible understandings of what constitutes a cultural landscape.[41]

This is not to say that defining a period of significance for a public space or for any cultural landscape is unnecessary. Assigning a period of significance is essential to ensuring a resource's protections under cultural resource regulatory systems at every level of government. It is simply meant to assert that a period of significance with a discrete start date and end date limits our perception of a landscape, because a landscape exists as much in our imaginations and memories as it does in physical space.[42]

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[40] Helen Breslich Erickson, "The Factor of Time in the Analysis and Interpretation of Cultural Landscapes" (master's thesis, The University of Arizona, 2012), https://repository.arizona.edu/handle/10150/263192,12.
[41] Bender, "Time and Landscape," S105.
[42] Julian Smith, "Cultural Landscape Theory and Practice: Moving from Observation to Experience" in *Understanding Heritage: Perspectives in Heritage Studies*, ed. Marie-Therese Albert, Roland Bernecker, and Britta Rudolff (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 57.

Regulatory Definition

The idea of the "cultural landscape" is not a new one, but in the context of federal regulation, it presents as a novelty. That it took nearly 30 years after passage of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 for the NPS to recognize the cultural landscape as a significant historic typology speaks not only to the innate challenges of preserving historic resources in general, but also to how contentious and unorthodox the very concept of "cultural landscape" is within the field of historic preservation.

Per NPS guidelines, a cultural landscape is "a geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein, associated with a historic event, activity, or person, or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values."[43] To apply this definition to municipal parks built during the City Beautiful movement, this definition needs to be broken down into its elemental parts and adapted to the context of the parks' design and ideological origins.

For purposes of the NRHP, the "geographic area" of the city park cultural landscape consists of its legal property boundaries. Compared to other cultural landscapes that may be larger, less clearly defined, or deriving historic significance from use patterns over an extended period, city parks for regulatory purposes tend to have strict and visually identifiable boundaries.

"Cultural and natural resources" in city parks are identifiable from among several landscape characteristics enumerated by the NPS in their publications regarding cultural landscapes. These 13 characteristics include natural systems and features, land use,

[43] Charles Birnbaum, Preservation Brief 36, "Protecting Cultural Landscapes: Planning, Treatment, and Management of Cultural Landscapes" (Washington, D.C: National Park Service, 1994), 1.

cultural traditions, spatial organization, circulation, topography, views and vistas, constructed water features, vegetation, archaeological sites, cluster arrangements (the grouping of buildings or other material features in the landscape), small-scale features, and buildings and structures. The NPS defines landscape characteristics as "the physical expressions of both tangible and intangible aspects of a place that have either influenced the history of a landscape's development, or are products of its development."[44] Some NPS publications distinguish between processes and components on the landscape; the first four characteristics (natural systems, land use, spatial organization, and cultural traditions) are called processes, whereas all other characteristics are deemed components. Yet other NPS publications distinguish between intangible characteristics (natural systems, land use, cultural traditions, spatial organization, circulation, cluster arrangements) and tangible characteristics (topography, views and vistas, constructed water features, vegetation, archaeological sites, small-scale features, buildings and structures). For purposes of this research, the difference between process and component will not be specified in the landscape descriptions for the case studies, nor will the difference between tangible and intangible characteristics be emphasized. This simplification of the landscape characteristics analysis helps to keep discussion focused on interpretation rather than on the minutiae of the physical landscape. [45]

"Association with a historic event, activity, or person" is usually derived from the park's relationship to the wider City Beautiful movement and its political underpinnings, or from the park's embodiment of Olmstedian design principles. Within the bounds of a NRHP

[44] "Cultural Landscapes 101," website of the National Park Service, accessed February 15, 2023, https://www.nps.gov/articles/cultural-landscapes-101.htm.
[45] "Cultural Landscapes 101."

nomination, these two conditions line up respectively with criteria A and C (respectively, "[association] with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history," and "[embodiment of] the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction"). These two measures represent two of the four criteria used to evaluate the historic significance of historic landscapes per NPS standards.[46] For select parks, including Laurelhurst Park in Portland, significance stems from both criteria. The "exhibition of cultural or aesthetic criteria" is tied up in both criteria A and C. City Beautiful parks are part of a manipulation of the built environment that reflects the concerns of a particular moment in American history––the moment being when a critical mass of civic leaders across the country subscribed to the idea that living conditions in dense urban areas could be improved with the addition of public spaces designed for mental restoration and physical recreation.

THEORY: MATERIAL RHETORIC AND HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION

This part of the theoretical framework concerns the relationship between the theory of material rhetoric and the theory and practice of heritage interpretation. In this research, extant interpretation is assessed for its rhetorical properties, and proposed interpretation is conceived of in rhetorical terms. Analyzing heritage interpretation as a form of rhetoric is a methodological choice to help frame the discussion of both the existing and suggested interpretation at both case study parks. Historical interpretation is not always discussed in

[46] Timothy Keller and Genevieve Keller, National Register Bulletin 18, "How to Evaluate and Nominate Designed Historic Landscapes" (Washington, D.C: National Park Service, n.d.), 6.

rhetorical terms—in fact, a vast amount of literature on heritage interpretation focuses mostly on thematic expansions in the interest of making interpretation more inclusive and less representative of a hegemonic history (e.g. White, cis, male, middle- or upper-class). Theme or content is of course itself a rhetorical property, as theme speaks to both who is creating the interpretation and who is consuming it. Theme, however, is only one rhetorical property among many. Physical properties like location, format, and material may also interpreted rhetorically, and together constitute a material context that can help to make a piece of historical interpretation more persuasive. In other words, "rhetorical appeals are not simply transmitted through a given medium; the medium of persuasion is indissociable from the message."[47] All rhetorical elements, both textual and material, play a part in framing the public's experience of a historic place. Or, as the cultural geographers James and Nancy Duncan assert when describing landscapes as "texts of concretized ideologies," "texts are not 'innocent.' […] They are not transparent windows through which reality may be unproblematically viewed."[48] As a rhetorical text in both textual and material ways, heritage interpretation is not innocent, either.

Heritage Interpretation as Rhetoric

When a visitor engages with historical interpretation, no matter what that interpretation's form—a fiberglass panel, an in-person tour, or a digital exhibit—they typically do not question or critically consider the way in which the interpretation is presented. When complaints surface about the appearance of interpretive infrastructure, they are framed less as questions of rhetoric than they are as questions of convenience and

[47] Clancy, "Material Rhetoric."
[48] Riesenweber, "Landscape Preservation," 27.

accessibility. (Both these qualities are part of the larger issue of material rhetoric.) Rhetorical elements noticed by visitors could include the presence or absence of visuals, the amount of text, or how the physical material of a plaque or panel affects the interpretation's legibility or its conspicuity on the landscape. Evaluating heritage interpretation through the lens of material rhetoric simply allows for a more academic discussion of what are frankly very straightforward and visually apparent qualities that most visitors already appreciate on a consumer level.

It's also important to note that in the contexts of this research, landscape characteristics in and of themselves do not figure as part of the interpretive infrastructure. "Reading" a landscape is a common practice, but not in the way as practiced by professionals in historic preservation, landscape architecture, archaeology, and other related fields. Humans have historically read landscapes for the sake of locating resources, identifying threats, and exploring a terrain's suitability for human use–habitation, farming, and hunting, among other uses. Attention to one's surroundings wouldn't be an unusual or difficult behavior for the typical visitor to engage in while in the test garden–although as a society we have fallen out of the habit for many reasons that cannot be adequately described within the contexts of this research.

At the same time, the typical visitor, however curious or enthusiastic, cannot reasonably be expected to appreciate the nuances of the test garden's landscape as would a professional who sets out to "read" a landscape for its historical elements because they have been trained to do so. This is not to dismiss the intellectual capacities of the typical visitor to the test garden, nor to suggest that heritage professionals have superior ways of perceiving the landscape. But if observational skill is innate, analytical skills are often not–

these must be honed through training, education, and practice, and it cannot be assumed that any given visitor to the site has access to or interest in the tools and habits required for reading landscapes in the way that heritage professionals do. To bridge the gap between the public's observational powers and the elements that convey the test garden's status as a cultural landscape, effective heritage interpretation is essential. And for this interpretive infrastructure to be maximally impactful and helpful to the greatest number of visitors, the interpretation's material rhetoric requires as much consideration and planning as its thematic content.

In each case study, extant interpretive infrastructure is evaluated for the material properties that contribute to its rhetorical power. These properties include the following attributes: location; material; format (physical or digital); and visual elements. These attributes were inspired in part by the "rhetorical situation" described earlier, and in part by the physical properties assessed in a sign inventory included in Appendix B of a 2012 Portland Parks & Recreation interpretation strategy report; this inventory was written in 2010 by intern Lisa Frank under the supervision of senior planner Emily Roth. The five elements of the rhetorical situation–purpose, writer, audience, content, and context–are never visually apparent, but they can all be inferred from a visual analysis of the interpretive infrastructure, paired with a knowledge of the interpreted site's historic context.

Similarly, the four visually apparent qualities considered in the inventory–content, appearance, condition, and location–convey rhetoric through their material being. They are properties that, while not explicitly encompassed in Aristotle's definition, prove rhetorical within the context of interpretive infrastructure. These four qualities were synthesized

from several principles determined in this report to be intrinsic to the quality of an interpretive sign. The goal of the 2012 sign inventory was to assess any given sign's "effectiveness," which can be restated as a combination of how visually attractive the sign is and to what degree the sign's physical properties help or hinder in conveying an intended message.[49]

What Is Rhetoric?

In philosophical and professional contexts, rhetoric is understood to be the communication choices made by a speaker or writer with the intent to persuade an audience of their position. Aristotle defined rhetoric as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion."[50] This definition in and of itself is a neutral one, but as popularly used and understood today, the word has several negative connotations. Rhetoric is associated with coercion, manipulation, and dishonesty, or at best, "mere words, flowery language, vacuous discourse, or utilitarian strategies of persuasion."[51] When a politician, for example, is described as speaking with *langue de bois* ("wooden tongue" in French, a pejorative expression used to describe eloquent yet evasive speech), at issue is their perceived unwillingness or inability to grapple with the problems that impact the lives of their constituents. Their rhetorical style may be full of tautologies, inappropriate metaphors, and a tendency to gloss over nuance using a multitude of tactics. A politician's rhetorical skills and choices can help to convince their audience of the

[49] Lisa Frank, Appendix B in "Interpretation Strategy: Media Format," by Brett Horner et al., city of Portland website, January 2012, https://www.portland.gov/sites/default/files/2020/interpretation-strategy-2012.pdf.
[50] "Quotations on Rhetoric," website of University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, accessed June 2, 2023, https://uwm.edu/rhetorical-leadership/program/quotes-on-rhetoric.
[51] Candice Rai, *Democracy's Lot: Rhetoric, Politics, and the Places of Invention* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2016), 5.

politician's credibility, competency, and aptitude for leadership. Their rhetorical style however can just as equally prevent them from achieving this goal. Based on how they communicate–their word choice, body language, tone, and formality or lack thereof–critics and supporters alike will find grounds to portray them in a multitude of ways: aggressive, ineffectual, sincere, level-headed, etc.

All things considered, the impact of any rhetorical output depends as much on the audience as it does on the speaker. A communication style appreciated and welcomed by one audience might be deemed distasteful or dishonest by another. For this reason, consideration of one's audience and their motivations prove integral when devising an effective rhetorical strategy. Both the audience and the speaker (or writer) are elements in the "rhetorical situation," a term used to describe and encapsulate all the elements that must be considered when analyzing any piece of communication for its rhetorical nature or effectiveness.

What Is Material Rhetoric?

The understanding of "rhetoric" as described above considers language (written or spoken) as the most influential element in a piece of communication. This makes sense given the Aristotelian origins of the term. Although it is up for debate what Aristotle meant exactly when he said that man is not the only "political animal," but by far the most complex and advanced one, many scholars have identified the ways that humans use speech as the principal reason for our advantages over other species. Though the reasoning for this argument is circular and flawed, its focus on spoken language as the most effective

form of communication seems an appropriate reason for the popular association of rhetoric with speech.[52]

In the 1960s, poststructuralism and Marxist philosophy challenged what was characterized as the discursive idealism of the traditional school of thought on rhetoric. Poststructuralism takes as one of its core tenets that language is not inherently powerful, but rather derives its power from the relationship between the speaker (or writer) and their audience. In virtually all relationships, there is a power differential that affects how we communicate with each other. Therefore, language cannot be taken at face value and "nothing is what it says"—in other words, nothing means what it purports to mean once you consider two important elements: who is saying it, and whom it's directed toward.

"Discursive idealism" refers to the assumption that it is through discourse (or language) that we build our understanding of the world, and that in this way, we also create the world. The world as we know it is a product of our understanding.[53] Material rhetoric does not necessarily call this a misguided assumption, but certainly an incomplete one. Analyzing rhetoric in this way leaves people with the perception that language is the most important rhetorical element of any given piece of persuasive communication. What this analysis ignores, scholars of material rhetoric argue, is the role that non-linguistic and even non-human properties play in persuasive communication. One popular focus of material rhetoric analysis is that of memorials and monuments. The materials, colors, surroundings, visuals, and layout of a space all influence how people experience the message at a place of memory. From these two examples—memorials and monuments—it

[52] Refik Güremen, "In What Sense Exactly Are Human Beings More Political According to Aristotle?" *Filozofija i Drustvo* 29, no. 2 (2018): 170–81, https://doi.org/10.2298/FID1802170G.
[53] Clancy, "Material Rhetoric."

is not hard to make the jump to heritage interpretation as a general field, whether the subject of interpretation is removed from its context (as in a museum) or embedded in its context (as upon a cultural landscape.) In a time when we consume information from screens in unprecedented amounts and communicate virtually more often than we do in-person, evaluating the non-human attributes of a piece of communication becomes an even more urgent exercise–not only because of the rise in AI-generated content and the pervasiveness of social media, but also because of the ecological impacts of digital communication.[54]

Like all rhetoric, material rhetoric does not aim to "convince the audience logically about a specific version of the past. Instead, the various rhetorical elements [visuals, physical material, geographic location] lead us to pay attention to and cooperate in constructing certain identifies of place, and of ourselves as audience."[55] Material rhetoric consists of elements that exist in the physical world and in this respect has a quality of visual objectivity. But material rhetoric is still no less imbued with unspoken agendas than any other type of rhetoric.

Freeman Tilden and the Craft of Interpretation

While contracted with the NPS as a cultural consultant, Freeman Tilden wrote a book that aimed to synthesize his experience in developing historical interpretation into a set of iterative, teachable principles. In *Interpreting Our Heritage,* he avoids defining

[54] Clancy, "Material Rhetoric"; Dustin Edwards, "Digital Rhetoric on a Damaged Planet: Storying Digital Damage as Inventive Response to the Anthropocene," *Rhetoric Review* 39, no. 1 (January 27, 2020): 58–72, https://doi.org/10.1080/07350198.2019.1690372, 67.
[55] Jørgensen, "The Face of the Factory Girl," 17.

"heritage interpretation," explaining that such a wide-ranging concept cannot be reduced to a single definition. That being said, he does provide what he calls a "dictionary definition" to satisfy any hypothetical critics: "An educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information."[56] Other terms Tilden employs to characterize heritage interpretation are "elective education," "a public service," "a growth whose effectiveness depends upon a regular nourishment by well-directed and discriminating research," and "the revelation of a larger truth that lies behind any statement of fact."[57] Tilden organizes his insights into six principles:

1) Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something with the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile;
2) Information, as such, is not interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based upon information. But they are entirely different things. However, all interpretation includes information;
3) Interpretation is an art, which combines many arts, whether the materials presented are scientific, historical, or architectural. Any art is in some degree teachable;
4) The chief aim of interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.

[56] Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957), 33.
[57] Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage,* 25-33.

5) Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part and must address itself to the whole man rather than the phase;
6) Interpretation addressed to children (say, up to the age of twelve) should not be a dilution of the presentations to adults but should follow a fundamentally different approach. To be at its best it will require a separate program.[58]

Much of what Tilden observes is so well-integrated into interpretive programing today that it feels overwrought to extract any of these elements as discreet "principles" that merit sustained analysis. It may strike anyone, including professional interpreters, as needlessly complicated that the craft of interpretation be described in such a theoretical way–we're used to hearing it being described as storytelling, a ritual used for so long by humanity that we often take storytelling for an intuitive capacity rather than a skill acquired through practice and habit. Tilden also describes interpretation as "storytelling," so doesn't deny this aspect of the practice; he just seeks to codify the *how* and *why* of the stories' framework.[59]

Tilden and Rhetoric

It's interesting that Tilden published *Interpreting Our Heritage* in 1957, right around the time that poststructuralist thought was destabilizing the traditionally discursive way of thinking about rhetoric. With his laser focus on the importance of language, Tilden is concerned with nothing if not discursive idealism. (He does acknowledge the importance of other rhetorical aspects of interpretive infrastructure, listing "composition" and "location"

[58] Tilden, 18.
[59] Tilden, 55.

as important factors in an audience's receptiveness to a piece of interpretation.) [60] Though Tilden does not explicitly mention the term "rhetoric," several of his principles are concerned with rhetorical questions: who is my audience, and what do they want? How can I present my message persuasively? What is the context? What is on the audience's minds, and what is affecting their lives? How can I tweak the delivery to reach different audiences more effectively? Tilden comes closest to addressing the issue of rhetoric in Chapter 8, "The Written Word," when he itemizes the key elements of an interpretive text. He describes it as common error for an interpreter to start with the question, "'What is it I wish to say?'" It is too early to ask this, Tilden asserts; instead, a better question is, "what would the prospective reader wish to read? And what can I say, in brief, inspiring, and luring terms about this area in language that he will readily comprehend?"[61]

Tilden's last sentence about the need to write in language that "[the audience] readily comprehends" sounds condescending, which is an interesting rhetorical choice on his part. But the fact remains that Tilden is not incorrect. Though the interpreter (or writer, or speaker) may have a message they ardently wish to get across to their audience, the message has no chance of making the desired impact if delivery isn't carefully considered. Of course, this isn't always something that can be controlled; some messages, depending on their content and the audience, never have a chance of landing well. But that is the challenge faced by interpreters, and by speakers and writers in general, in virtually every piece of work: what is my motivation for controlling this message's impact, and how can I

[60] Tilden, 90-98.
[61] Tilden, 92.

do it? In this way, an interpreter always considers their own desires, along with the desires of their audience.

What does the audience want to know, anyway? This is in itself a difficult question to answer. In public interpretation, there are always multiple audiences with diverse histories, value systems, and investments in a specific place. What one audience wants to know or expects to hear may not line up with what everyone wants to know to hear. Or the audience's desire may not be explicit; it is rather implicit in how they express their values by their interactions with their environment and people around them. Maybe an even better question to ask when developing interpretation would be, "How can the audience's expectations be subverted, and their knowledge expanded in unexpected ways?" The visitor may through their own experience and perspective come to understand something about a historic place or cultural landscape wholly unanticipated by the interpreter, yet directly facilitated by the latter's work. This may be part of what Tilden means when he describes interpretation as an act of provocation.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

The historic context for this research focuses on the manifestations of the City Beautiful movement in Portland around of the turn of the twentieth century. The general history of the Olmsted Brothers and the evolution of Olmstedian design principles

intersects with the narrative of the City Beautiful movement and the formative years of the public park system in Portland.

Olmsted Brothers

Credited as the father of modern American landscaping, Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. (FLO) established practices and a landscaping philosophy that initiated the American parks movement and later informed the evolution of the City Beautiful movement. His sons John Charles Olmsted and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. eventually succeeded him as directors of the firm. FLO designed Central Park in 1857 in New York with his partner Calvert Vaux. Central Park is recognized as the first urban landscape park in the United States, thanks in large part to the intentional design forwarded by the two landscape architects.[62] Six hundred acres (the size of Central Park) seemed excessive for a parks system at the time, but FLO writes that by 1870, the amount of land reserved for parks had tripled with public demand for more.[63]

In his essay "Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns," FLO expounds upon his beliefs in why public parks are necessary to city infrastructure. He observes that American cities were growing haphazardly, and plans, where they existed, were based on existing property lines and speculator interests rather than the interests of residents. Streets, buildings, railcars, and other elements of the built environment went up as needed, with

[62] Setha Low, Dana Taplin, and Suzanne Scheld, *Rethinking Public Parks: Public Space & Cultural Diversity* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 20.
[63] Frederick Law Olmsted, "Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns," in *The Public Face of Architecture: Civic Culture and Public Spaces,* ed. Nathan Glazer and Mark Lilla (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 259.

little regard to the need for future population growth.[64] It was a reactive approach to development rather than a proactive one.

FLO draws an analogy between the house and the city, and in this way argues for a separation of spheres—namely, a separation between commercial and residential zones. He notes that in medieval times, tradesmen lived under the same roof as their shops, but that this custom has since changed, with homes now standing on their own apart from places of business. In discussing the "conditions of corruption and of irritation, physical and mental" that commercial spaces have on urban citizens, he asks: "Now that our towns are built without walls, and we can have all the room that we like, is there any good reason why we should not make some similar difference between parts which are not likely to be dwelt in, and those which will be required exclusively for commerce?"[65] Although parks obviously go up in commercial as well as residential areas, the idea of designing any part of the city to make the environment more livable, rather than expediting commercial processes, was a novel idea. FLO presents parks as the natural next step up from tree-lined streets for the aesthetic and infrastructural improvement of the city. In providing facilities for people's pleasure, FLO aims to also assuage the mental state of citizens whose behaviors are conditioned by "the devouring eagerness and intellectual strife of town life."[66] He also does not fail to mention the more quantitative and fiscally interesting benefit

[64] Olmsted, "Public Parks," 235-237.
[65] Olmsted, 237.
[66] Olmsted, 244.

of public parks: they make the city more appealing to visitors, which both supports commerce and increases the taxpayer base by attracting new residents.[67]

The Olmstedian Landscape

FLO delineates several traits that a large public park must have to fulfill its role as a restorative space. These include adequate size to shield the park user from the noise and view of the surrounding city; separation of spaces for different types of recreation; and strategic placement of "artificial objects" to balance infrastructure for organized recreation with the public park's "true purpose" to support public wellbeing.[68] Today, this sounds like a false dichotomy—recreation and relaxation are deemed an essential part of mental and physical health, and not mutually exclusive from "public wellbeing."

Although FLO was staunchly against incorporating playgrounds into his designs, he describes open public spaces as necessary for "spiritual restoration." This term sounds vague and unfounded in scientific observation from a twenty-first century perspective. But by mid-nineteenth century standards, when the idea of *miasmas* (foul odors that were themselves carriers of disease) was still firmly entrenched in the medical field, and the social effects of overcrowding in cities were only just beginning to be perceived (let alone measured), FLO's call for some sort of relief from urban living conditions was prescient. He observes that by 1870 that the financial advantages of living in cities were compelling

[67] Olmsted, 256.
[68] Olmsted, 256.

people to leave rural America in droves. At the same time, he asserts that living conditions in cities at the time were harmful to people on physical, mental, and spiritual levels.[69]

One of the key tenets of Olmstedian design is the planning ahead for park development. FLO advocated for adopting a proactive strategy that anticipates urban growth, rather than building parks after a neighborhood has already developed beyond its infrastructural capacity. Planning is so central to the philosophy of modern urban planning that it sounds disingenuous to call the principle out as an innovation. But when FLO was working, proactive planning was an innovative concept, especially in the American West, where an overriding perception of limitless space influenced how speculators acquired land and planned—or didn't plan—for population growth.

Olmstedian landscapes fall into one of two aesthetic categories, picturesque and pastoral. Picturesque landscapes incorporate and highlight natural elements already present on the landscape, such as streams, rocky outcroppings, and wooded areas. Though picturesque landscapes are also heavily modified by intentional design, they do not reflect their planned nature as readily as other designed landscapes.[70] In Portland, an example of a picturesque landscape is Forest Park, where natural streams crisscross the landscape and re-grading has been limited. Per FLO's philosophy, picturesque landscapes are intended to incorporate more visual variety and to provide for multiple or changing experiences as a visitor moves through the landscape. Pastoral landscapes, on the other hand, are built "as a specific antidote to the artificiality of the city."[71] Central Park is a prime example of the pastoral landscape. Large clearings, expanses of flat, still water, and a relatively flat

[69] Olmsted, 233-234.
[70] *Olmsted and America's Urban Parks* (PBS, 2011).
[71] *Olmsted and America's Urban Parks*.

topography all combine to make the parkland appear "bigger than it actually is," which in theory augments the beneficial effects of the park on the visitor's psyche and health.[72] Although Laurelhurst Park retains native Doug firs and integrates heavily-planted areas to divide the park into distinct sections, its numerous clearings and constructed pond make it more of a pastoral landscape than anything else.

City Beautiful Movement Formation

In 1903, the American League for Civic Improvement (ALCI) and the American Park and Outdoor Association (APOAA) combined forces to create the American Civic Association (ACA). The ACA is recognized as the entity that promulgated City Beautiful projects in a widespread and semi-organized way across the United States. The City Beautiful movement started coalescing around the end of FLO's life and incorporates many principles and practices that transcend Olmstedian landscape philosophy. Nevertheless, the movement remains heavily propelled by Olmstedian principles, the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893 in Chicago; and the motivations and membership of the ACA. [73]

The most crucial difference between Olmstedian philosophy and the City Beautiful movement comes down to differing opinions on whether the American city could be saved from itself. FLO believed cities to be not just unhealthy, but unattractive: from an aesthetic standpoint, the city was beyond redemption. Meticulously-planned parks were people's closest semblance to an escape from their intolerable surroundings. City Beautiful advocates, on the other hand, held that the city could be *made* beautiful through civic improvement projects. This belief, more than any specific reform or social issue, was their

[72] *Olmsted and America's Urban Parks*.
[73] Lutino et al. "The City Beautiful Movement," E3-E6.

raison d'etre.[74] Both FLO and the ACA encouraged the participation of nonprofessionals in civic planning decisions. Although practicing landscape architects and park superintendents constituted a large part of the ACA's membership, "sympathetic laypersons" were instrumental in raising funds and promoting projects to the public.[75]

Many critics argue that the motives of these "sympathetic laypersons"—the business owners, philanthropists, and industrial leaders in favor of civic improvement projects—cannot be taken at face value, as FLO proclaims. In his 1897 address to the APOAA, John Charles Olmsted describes his views on the purpose of large public parks and their benefit to the public. He emphasizes several different design principles that dictated how the parks were to be used. His very diction in this speech reveals a certain level of paternalism that undergirds Olmstedian rhetoric.[76] Recent scholarship has produced more critical readings of the City Beautiful movement and of how parklands in the early twentieth century were acquired, designed, and managed. According to many critiques, problematizing park design as a social phenomenon helps to illustrate how City Beautiful advocates used parks development and other civic improvement projects for their own personal financial gain.[77]

In *The City Beautiful Movement* (1989), American history scholar William H. Wilson questions this genre of criticism as potentially misplaced. Attributing the movement's

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[74] Lutino et al., E11.
[75] Lutino et al., E6.
[76] Like father, like son. Both FLO and John Charles Olmsted made assertions and used descriptors that drip with paternalist condescension. "The lives of women and children too poor to be sent to the country, can now be saved in thousands of instances, by making them go to the Park." In his 1897 address to the APOOA, John Charles Olmsted lamented that "there are many workers in a city who suffer more or less from nervous strain, though often they are not fully aware of it." John Charles Olmsted, "The True Purpose of a Large Public Park," *Reprints*, Winter 2010, https://www.olmsted.org/storage/documents/Reprints_Winter_2010_Vol_12_No_2.pdf, 4.
[77] William H. Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 83.

overwhelmingly White and upper-class advocates with motives of social control, Wilson argues, is to adhere to preconceptions of sociopolitical determinism based on the former's race and class. He explains that while City Beautiful rhetoric may have alluded to sweeping, transformative aspirations, with the inevitable paternalistic stroke, the reforms achieved were quite modest: building playgrounds at neighborhood parks, implementing street cleaning schedules, and centralizing city services such as trash collection. And lest scholars point to even these small reforms as evidence of wealthy community leaders acting to strip lower-class citizens of political agency within their neighborhoods, Wilson points out that all City Beautiful projects happened only with public support in the form of votes. Voters are the deciding party on the approval of bonds, which provide the public funds required for municipal infrastructural projects. Moreover, Wilson remarks that reforms aimed at centralizing bureaucracy do not automatically impede local autonomy, as neighborhood authority and "small-scale democracy" continued to be exercised by voters during the City Beautiful era.[78] He adds that the proponents and opponents of City Beautiful reforms did not divide neatly along class lines—many of the movement's most vocal opponents were cut from the same upper-class cloth as its staunchest advocates. Wilson ultimately asserts that "interclass arguments over park facilities" are not so much evidence of a classist and

[78] Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement,* 76. Wilson does not provide specific examples of what he means by "small-scale democracy," though it's reasonable to infer that he's referring for one to union organizing within a neighborhood or ethnic community.

racist agenda as they are evidence that the decision to spend public funds on public parks was a democratic process that happened in a relatively transparent way.[79]

This is all to say that there are competing perceptions of the origins and consequences of the City Beautiful movement. On one hand is the longstanding presentation of the City Beautiful movement as an admirable and well-meaning achievement by upper-class White business leaders and politicians in the early twentieth century. On the other hand is an understanding of the City Beautiful movement as a force of social destruction and exclusionary policing of the urban landscape: uprooting Black and Brown communities from their homes, and preemptively excluding these same populations, then and now, from benefitting from the parks in the same way that White Americans do.[80] And somewhere in the middle is Wilson's position: the Progressive politics of the time engendered inequity as a matter of course, and the contradictions of the City Beautiful rhetoric stem primarily from this context, rather than from an agenda specific to the City Beautiful movement.

"Portland Parks Plan"

In 1903, Olmsted Brothers accepted a commission from the City of Portland to provide roadmaps for two ambitious projects: the site development for the 1905 Lewis & Clark Exposition, and the design for a city-wide parks system. John Charles Olmsted came to Portland in the summer of 1903 to draw up the plans. Though he did it remarkably efficiently—executing plans for both projects in only three weeks—his time in Portland

[79] Wilson, 76-77.
[80] "Democracy for Whom? Contextualizing Social Reform Movements of Olmsted and his Peers," Good for Whom? Olmsted, Parks, and Public Good, accessed May 25, 2023, https://sites.google.com/view/contextualizing-olmsted200/home/democracy-for-whom?authuser=0.

apparently left its mark on his creative spirit. He was immersed in the verdant native vegetation of the Willamette Valley and was especially enamored of the views of Mount Hood and Mount Saint Helens from the elevations of City Park (today's Washington Park). The juxtaposition of a still relatively wild environment with the recognizably urban architecture of the city's business district was startling to a man from the East coast, and Olmsted's recommendations to the Portland Parks Board for expansion of their system reflect what an impression this contrast left on him.[81]

To maintain an Olmstedian aesthetic while paying homage to Portland's existing landscape, John Charles Olmsted recommended planting a mix of native and imported vegetation throughout each park. He also called for an interconnected parks system in east Portland, with greenways linking the parks to one another along major arterial thoroughfares like Burnside Street. Finally, he advised the city to speedily acquire parkland before the inevitable rise in property values. John Charles Olmsted appreciated Portland's downtown in two ways: first for the relative impressiveness of its architecture; and second, as an indication of the immense growth just over the horizon for Portland.[82] FLO expressed a similar rationale for a city acquiring land as early as possible, while it was still cheap: "It

[81] Lutino et al. "The City Beautiful Movement," E14-E15; Joan Hockaday, *Greenscapes: Olmsted's Pacific Northwest* (Pullman, Washington: Washington State University, 2009), 8-11.
[82] Portland Park Board, *Report of the Park Board, Portland, Oregon, 1903, with the report of Messrs. Olmsted Bros., landscape architects, outlining a system of parkways, boulevards and parks for the city of Portland*, Portland, OR: The Board, 1903, 19-64.

must be remembered, also, that the Park is not planned for such use as is now made of it, but with regard to [its] future use..."[83]

E.T. Mische and Implementation Woes

In the wake of the Lewis & Clark Exposition and with John Charles Olmsted's master plans in hand, a coalition of park advocates and business owners lobbied for the passage of a $1 million bond issue for park development. By June 1907, John Charles Olmsted was called upon again to write a revised parks report for Portland's park commissioners in June 1907; this second iteration of the report included budget proposals for the $1 million public bond that voters had recently approved by a narrow margin.[84] By 1907, however, property values had increased so sharply thanks to Portland's population boom, especially on the east side of the Willamette River, that Olmsted recommended against his initial idea of an interconnected parks system.[85]

Emanuel T. Mische–a protégé of Frederick Law Olmsted, and the landscape architect charged with executing the Olmsted Brothers' vision for Portland's park system–was nominated by John Charles Olmsted in 1908 for the position of parks superintendent.[86] Mische set out to implement Olmsted's acquisitions proposal as outlined in the second Portland Parks Report of 1907. Mt. Tabor was the keystone park in east Portland and was to be complemented by several smaller parks east of the Willamette.[87] Parklands acquired

[83] Portland Park Board, *Report of the Park Board,* 1903, 255.
[84] William Willingham, "Open Space & Park Development 1851-1965," 2010, https://www.portland.gov/sites/default/files/2020/open-space-and-park-developement-1851-to-1965-2010.pdf, 11.
[85] Hockaday, *Greenscapes,* 18; William Willingham, "City of Portland Civic Planning, Development, & Public Works, 1851-1965," 2009, https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/8907/Portland_Civic_Planning_Historic_Context_2009.pdf, 25. Portland's population more than doubled between 1900 and 1910, from approximately 90,000 to over 207,000 residents.
[86] Guzowski, "Portland's Olmsted Vision," 174.
[87] Hockaday, *Greenscapes,* 18.

in this first phase eventually became Kenilworth, Ladd (Laurelhurst), Mt. Tabor, Sellwood and Peninsula Parks.[88]

The funding from the $1 million bond ran out by 1910, and voters rejected a second $2 million bond issue in both 1912 and 1913. These financial obstacles prompted a pause in land acquisition and a failure to implement the sweeping infrastructural improvements called for in the 1912 Bennett Plan. All the same, Mische and the Park Board continued to install new construction in the newly-built parks, including Firwood Lake and improved pathways at Laurelhurst Park.[89]

A geographic division between east and west Portland also proved a political division when it came to parklands investment. Portlanders on the east side of the Willamette River, where most of the residential growth was concentrated, supported the acquisition and development of neighborhood parks. On the west side of the river, where land proved scarce between an expanding downtown and already-dense (and often affluent) residential districts, landowners were less receptive to parks expansion.[90]

In 1917, voters approved a yearly tax of 0.4 mill for the acquisition and development of playground parks, the first of which had been built in Portland as early as 1906.[91] Voter desire for playgrounds aligns with the national trend of the playground

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[88] Christine Curran, "Laurelhurst Park" National Register Nomination, 1999, https://catalog.archives.gov/id/77848404, section 8, page 9.

[89] Carl Abbott, *Portland in Three Centuries: The Place and the People* (Corvallis, Oregon: Oregon State University Press, 2011), 85; Willingham, "Open Space & Park Development," 15-16; William Hawkins, *The Legacy of Olmsted Brothers in Portland, Oregon* (Portland, OR: self-published, 2014), 69. Edward H. Bennett was the associate of Daniel Burnham, who had planned infrastructural overhauls in Chicago and San Francisco. *The Greater Portland Plan of Edward H. Bennett* included recommendations for improving Portland's transportation system to handle higher auto traffic. Bennett suggested making Burnside Street into a major east-west arterial, with connections to the Park Blocks and an "elaborate terminus" at the entrance to Washington Park.

[90] Hockaday, *Greenscapes*, 18.

[91] Willingham, "Open Space & Park Development," 12-22.

movement, which paralleled the City Beautiful movement but whose advocates pushed for, among other things, parks centered on active (e.g. playgrounds, organized sports) over passive recreation (the Olmstedian landscape parks that encouraged walking, picnicking, and more low-key activities).[92] The Sellwood Park YMCA was acquired the same year and converted into the Sellwood Community Center by 1920. The International Rose Test Garden, the second case study for this research, was also developed in 1917. In 1919, voters finally approved a second bond issue for land acquisitions and parks improvements, and the city promptly purchased seven additional sites in 1920 (Buckman Field, Creston Park, Irving Park, Johnson Creek Park, Rose City Golf Course, Rose City Park, and Wallace Park).[93]

CASE STUDY NO. 1: LAURELHURST PARK

Acquired by the city of Portland in 1909 under the name "Ladd Park," Laurelhurst Park sits in a lower corner of the Laurelhurst historic district in southeast Portland. The original park footprint totals 26.81-acres and extends east-west from Southeast Thirty-third Avenue to Southeast Cesar E. Chavez Boulevard, and north-south from Ankeny Street to Oak Street. The park's main entrances are at the corners of Southeast Ankeny Street and Southeast Cesar E. Chavez, the corner of Southeast Oak Street and Southeast Cesar E. Chavez, and on Southeast Ankeny (two entrances). Nine secondary entrances connect with SE Cesar E. Chavez (one), Southeast Oak four), Southeast Thirty-third(two) and Southeast Ankeny (two).[94]

[92] Lutino et al. "The City Beautiful Movement," E21.
[93] Willingham, "Open Space & Park Development," 22.
[94] Curran, "Laurelhurst Park," section 7, page 1.

Laurelhurst Park earned designation to the NRHP in 2001 in the area of Landscape Architecture for significance under criterion A, for its association with the City Beautiful movement, and under criterion C, for its embodiment of Frederick Law Olmsted's design principles. Laurelhurst Park also meets the registration requirements for a Neighborhood Park as outlined in the City Beautiful Multiple Property Submission prepared for the City of Portland in 1999.[95]

Extant Interpretation

Overall, Laurelhurst Park's extant interpretation focuses on the Olmstedian design expressed in the park's landscape characteristics, the importance of which is expressed in the NRHP nomination for the park. The interpretation also aligns with the history of the Laurelhurst neighborhood at large, the significance of which is expressed in a separate NRHP nomination for the Laurelhurst historic district prepared in 2018. The map on the following page indicates the location of extant interpretation in the park. The large pink circles indicate standalone pieces of interpretive infrastructure (a NRHP plaque and a

[95]Lutino et al. "The City Beautiful Movement," F26. As discussed earlier on page 28, registration requirements for the NRHP are based on the aspects of integrity as defined by the NPS. "To qualify for listing, nominated properties must be intact examples of the following subtypes: 1) urban or neighborhood parks and 2) rural or suburban parks. Urban or neighborhood parks are the more numerous of the two subtypes and will thus compose most nominated properties. Eligible resources must have integrity of location, design, setting, materials, and association. Normal maintenance or replacement of park features such as play equipment or original plantings should not detract from the property's integrity. Heavy use as well as safety issues pertaining to certain kinds of play equipment or facilities can require the replacement or update of park features so that original features may not be fully intact. In some cases, original plantings may have been replaced due to variables such as disease or later unavailability of plantings."

bulletin board), and the small pink squares indicate the location of concrete tree markers, which are concentrated along the park's walking paths.

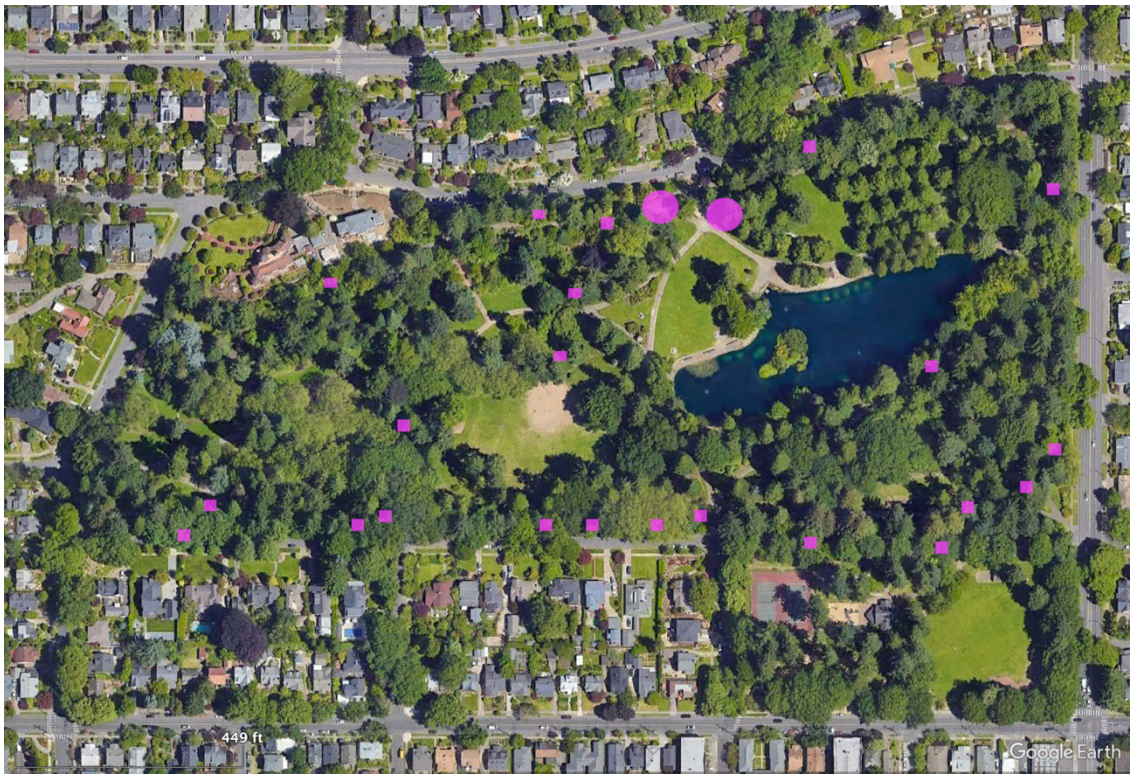

Figure 4: In situ extant interpretation (pink) at Laurelhurst Park, spring 2023. Base image Google Earth

Element	**Location**	**Material**	**Format**	**Visuals?**
Bulletin Board	Main entrance	Composite, plastic	Physical	Y
Tree Markers	Throughout park	Concrete, Metal	Physical	N
NRHP Plaque	Main entrance	Stone, Metal	Physical	N
Walking Tour	N/A	N/A	Digital	Y

Table 1: Extant historical interpretation at Laurelhurst Park, spring 2023

Bulletin Board & Laurelhurst Tree Map

Just southeast of the Ankeny Street comfort station stands a cork bulletin board with a locking plastic shield to protect its contents from the elements. This board is the most visually prominent interpretive infrastructure in Laurelhurst Park, as it stands at the park's main entrance, is elevated above the ground, and unlike the other interpretive elements discussed below, does not seem built to blend into its environment. The 45-inch x 35-inch board sits in a frame of gray composite material that stands 78 inches tall. A bulletin board has two benefits as a material form for interpretive infrastructure. It is physically present in the park (highly visible, but with all the entailed vulnerabilities to the elements and graffiti) and offers more flexibility in changing out materials than a more permanent fixture.

Figure 5: The bulletin board is located prominently at the main entrance of the park, February 2023

Included on this bulletin board are several informational items for visitors: emergency contact phone numbers; contact for personnel at the city parks department; guidance for interacting with ducks; dog park etiquette; and volunteer opportunities with various organizations. The main interpretive element on this bulletin board is a tree map of Laurelhurst Park, created in 2009 by the Center for Spatial Analysis and Research at Portland State University. The map focuses on the trees found in Laurelhurst Park, denoted by symbols for deciduous trees, coniferous trees, and individual species found abundance. The latter include Western red cedar *(Thuja plicata*), Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), Grand fir (*Abies grandis*), Giant sequoia (*Sequoiadenddron giganteum*), London planetree (*Platanus x acerifolia),* Linden (*Tilia dasystyla*), and Western red oak (*Quercus rubra*). (The map lists the trees' common and Latin names; both are included here to convey more accurately the rhetoric of the interpretation). Below this key and the park map is a list of 110 additional species. Text below the key clarifies that the tree map is a "snapshot" of the park's vegetation as of summer 2008, and explains that trees regularly die, fall, or are removed for different reasons. This short paragraph is the closest that the park's historical interpretation comes to explicitly acknowledging Laurelhurst Park as a dynamic landscape undergoing constant change.

The tree map is in conversation with concrete tree markers discussed below and offers visitors a physically interactive way of exploring the park's trees. The back of this map contains a short historical text about Laurelhurst Park, but since the map's reverse side is neither visible on the bulletin board nor readily available online, this part of the map will not be discussed as a part of the park's interpretive infrastructure.

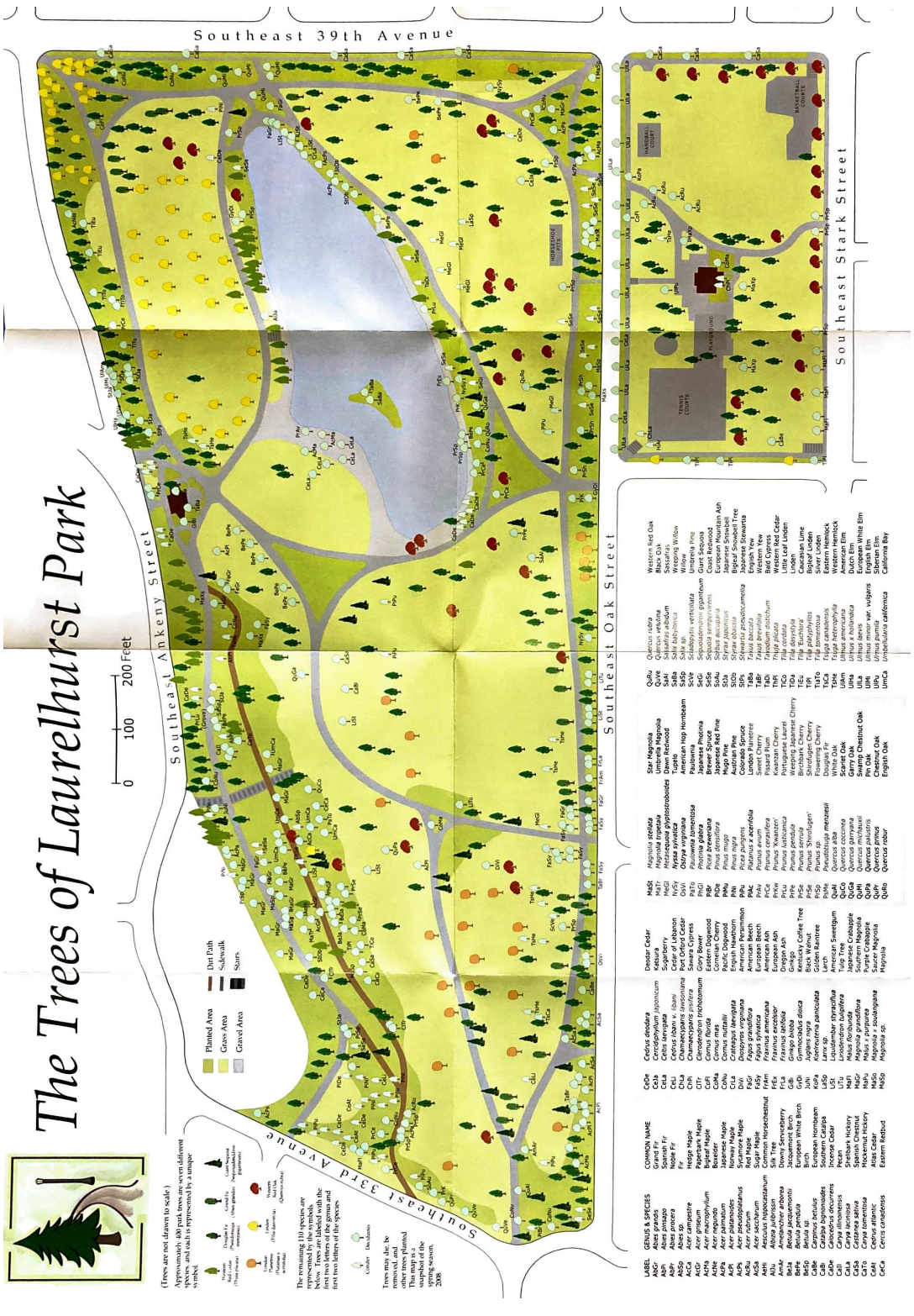

Figure 6: Tree map of Laurelhurst Park in summer 2008.
Courtesy of Center for Spatial Analysis and Research at Portland State University

Tree Markers

Concrete markers with metal plaques are found at the base of trees throughout the park. These markers are rectangular in shape and are buried in the earth to various depths so that the angled end with the metal plaque remains exposed. Scattered throughout the landscape are approximately 25 tree markers (one is affixed to the trunk of the Katsura tree in the southeast corner of the park by the horseshoe pit). Of these 25 markers, two are completely missing the metal plaques listing the tree's name and three are otherwise in a state of disrepair. A blank marker not included in the count has been dug up and abandoned in the vegetation in the southwest corner of the park.

Figure 7: Tree markers throughout the park are conspicuously low to the ground and blend with their surroundings, spring 2023. The markers are buried in the earth to a considerable depth (see right image of exposed marker).

The physical properties of these markers connote both permanence (concrete material, buried in the earth) and harmony with the landscape (they are inconspicuous, being at ground level and blending into the colors of their surroundings). Despite their damage, these markers exhibit most aptly the parks department's ambition to support interpretive infrastructure that does not disrupt the visual integrity of a landscape. [96]

[96] Frank, Appendix B in "Interpretation Strategy," Horner et al.

National Register Plaque

Also located near the park's main entrance on the west side of the comfort station is a boulder with a bronze plaque that explains Laurelhurst Park's historic significance as recognized in the NRHP. This boulder is roughly 42-inches wide and 21-inches tall, and blends in (perhaps too) harmoniously with its surroundings, set in the earth and underneath a bush in a planted island at the intersection of two paths. When leafed out, the bush obscures the marker even more.

Figure 8: The boulder bearing the NRHP plaque sits on a planted island and is obscured by vegetation for much of the year, February and May 2023

The bronze plaque reads: "This property has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, February 2001. In 1903, John Olmsted identified this 30 acres on the William Ladd farm as a future park. In 1909 it was acquired by the city of Portland. Called Ladd Park, it was designed in 1910 by Portland park superintendent Emanuel Mische in the Olmsted naturalistic style. Renamed Laurelhurst Park in 1912 and completed in 1916, it featured lighted pathways, landscaped

areas, Firwood Lake, and the Ankeny Street comfort station. Laurelhurst Neighborhood Association, July 2006."

Again, the use of stone and metal as materials lend a sense of permanence and significance to this piece of interpretation. Like the tree markers, the boulder blends into its surroundings, and the lack of images on the plaque make it even more inconspicuous upon the landscape. Despite this interpretation's subtle presence, the location near the park's main entrance adds to its rhetorical weight, conveying the message that the park's origins and early years constitute a significant period in the park's history.

Walking Tour

Besides the QR code on the bulletin board linking to the tree inventory map on the city website, the walking tour of Laurelhurst Park is the only digital interpretive material linked specifically to Laurelhurst Park. Though a neighborhood group's website describes the tour (both PDF and audio) as available on the website of the Laurelhurst Neighborhood Association (LNA), the links to these documents could not be located on the LNA website at the time of writing. A PDF of the walking tour was uploaded to a local real estate website, but the audio tours appear irretrievable. The difficulty of locating the tour online impacts its rhetorical effectiveness as a part of the park's interpretation.[97]

Created by Amelia Shields, at the time of writing a student at Grant High School, the printed tour is available to download and constitutes the second half of a larger walking tour of the Laurelhurst historic district. The tour includes 11 stops within the park

[97] Erika George and Kari McGee, "New Walking Tour Explores History of Laurelhurst," The Living Room Blog, website of Living Room Realty, September 17, 2019, https://www.livingroomre.com/education/new-walking-tour-explores-history-of-laurelhurst; "A Walking Tour of Laurelhurst," website of *Historic Laurelhurst,* July 25, 2019, ttps://www.historiclaurelhurst.com/single-post/2019/07/28/a-walking-tour-of-laurelhurst.

boundaries, including one in the park annex across SE Oak Street. A color map of the park indicates the location of the stops, which are each contextualized with a description of the pertinent history and historic photographs. Stops include Rhododendron Hill, the comfort station, Firwood Lake, Plateau Meadow/Heritage Tree #160 (the Katsura tree thought to be planted in the 1950s), the Park Annex, the Franz Brothers' Homes (on SE Oak Street, outside the park boundaries), Picnic Grove, Broad Meadow, Children's Lawn, and Concert Grove. The tour totals six pages, and includes photo credits, information about the author, email contact, and a social media hashtag.

of Frederick Law Olmsted. John Olmsted's plan for a park system in Portland identified locations for thirty-seven park projects encompassed within a proposed system of neighborhood parks, suburban parks, scenic reservations, city squares, parkways, and boulevards, and included among its recommendations the purchasing a swampy, forested corner of William S. Ladd's dairy farm.

At the time, the city was focused on the upcoming Lewis and Clark Exhibition, to be held in 1905, and the extraordinary rise in land values due to the exhibition prevented the Park Board from realizing Olmsted's plan for the Ladd farm or for any of the other thirty-six proposed park sites. It wasn't until October of 1909, under the direction of Superintendent Emanuel T. Mische, that the Portland Park Board purchased the section of land that would become Laurelhurst Park from the Laurelhurst Company for $92,482.10.

Emanuel Mische brought a remarkable range of experience and skill to the Portland Park Board. Born in Syracuse, New York, he attended the Missouri Botanic School before enrolling in the Bussey Institute—the horticulture school of the Arnold Arboretum in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts—in 1894, receiving a scholarship in 1896 to attend the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, England, and going to work for Olmsted Brothers in 1898.

During his eight years with Olmsted Brothers, Mische absorbed the philosophies that inspired the work of the Olmsted family. Mische was heavily influenced by the Olmsted technique of dividing neighborhood parks into sections for different types of uses. As originally designed, there were six major sections of land within the park: Concert Grove, Firwood Lake and the Children's Lawn, Plateau Meadow, Broad Meadow, Picnic Grove, and Rhododendron Hill.

The Park Annex across Oak street was added later.

Mische designed Laurelhurst Park to allow for different types of uses within each section. The sections each have their own distinct character and are separated from each other by the original concrete footpath system that circulates throughout the park.

Although Mische designed Laurelhurst Park in 1910, little more than debris clearing happened at the site that year due to funding shortages. Construction began in earnest in 1912 with the grading of walkways, the grading and seeding of lawns, and the installation of log steps. Like the rest of Laurelhurst, minimal grading was done to create the park, instead building the park around the natural contours of the land. ■

30) Rhododendron Hill

This hill contains what park designer Emanuel T. Mische described as the "steeper areas" of the park which were to be "devoted to arboreous and shrubby vegetation as an appropriate use of the ground and to add an enriching element and one lessening the cost of maintenance." Mische planted the area profusely with rhododendrons, azaleas, Western hemlock, and magnolias. The rhododendrons that lend the hill its name are concentrated in the center of the incline around a string of straight-run brick stairs that runs from the base of the hill to Ankeny Street.

31) Comfort Station

In 1914, Portland architects Whitehouse and Foulihoux designed a men's comfort station for Laurelhurst Park. The building faces Ankeny Street, marking one of the park's main entrances, and currently holds restrooms and the park's administrative office. It was designed as a simple version of the English Cottage style popular at the time (as can be seen in houses all over Laurelhurst).

32) Firwood Lake

Originally known by locals as Ladd's Pond, Firwood Lake, as it would come to be known, was not much more than puddle with the odd cluster of cattails—frequented by cattle for a drink, and schoolboys for a swim. Mische transformed the pond by deepening it and manicuring the grounds aroun it. Boomerang Island was added in 1955.

In early years (around 1918), the pond was patrolled by a white swan named General Pershing, who was said to keep little children from approaching too close to the water. The Park Bureau even went so far as to open a Matrimonial Bureau in 1919 to help find Pershing a mate. In later years, a black-beaked, black-toed swan named Big Boy took over.

For a time in the 1920s and 30s, the Rose Festival Queen's coronation took place in the pond on floating boats and decorated rafts, drawing thousands of onlookers.

Ice skating on Firwood Lake

13

Figure 9: Shields' walking tour includes a park map, written content, and historical photos. Images courtesy of Amelia Shields

Of the extant interpretive material available to the public, this walking tour represents the most cohesive history of the park's evolution. Different periods in the park's development are discussed, including the changing wildlife in the pond, the acquisition of the park annex in 1921-22, and association with the Rose Festival throughout the 1920s

and 1930s. Historic photos serve to illustrate the diverse ways that Portlanders have used the park's amenities over the decades; the choice to include numerous photos and a map of the park contributes to the tour's accessibility and effectiveness as a piece of interpretation. The primary focus however remains on the park's early history, which is reflected in the rhetorical choice to align the tour's stops with locations explicitly related to the park's original design.

Historic Background

When parks superintendent Emanuel T. Mische began implementing Olmsted's 1903 proposal for the development of Portland's city park system, Laurelhurst Park, originally known as Ladd Park, was among the first five parks acquired by 1909. Civic leader William S. Ladd, twice mayor of Portland and founder of the city's first bank, passed away in 1893 and left a significant estate to his son William M. Ladd. Included in the assets was Hazel Fern Farm, a 486-acre farm and dairy in east Portland. In 1908, the settlement of Ladd's estate resulted in Ladd selling the Hazel Fern Farm to the Ladd Estate Company, a firm established by himself and his brothers to manage their inherited land holdings. In October 1909, the Portland Park Association under Mische's leadership bought the southeast corner of Hazel Fern Farm for $92,482.10.[98]

Ladd privately hired Olmsted in 1906 to help with the design of a new streetcar suburb on the site of Hazel Fern Farm. John Charles Olmsted's personal involvement in the Laurelhurst suburb's design proved instrumental to its final form. Though Olmsted Brothers was ultimately not contracted to build the plans they had designed, Olmstedian

[98] Curran, "Laurelhurst Park," section 8, pages 9-10.

principles play out in the neighborhood's curvilinear layout, tree-shaded streets, and overall park-like atmosphere.[99] As an early streetcar suburb of Portland, Laurelhurst was one of several outlying districts that served as a middle-class retreat from the urban center. Laurelhurst was especially distinguished in this regard for the inclusion of covenants in the land deeds that prohibited sale to buyers of African American, Asian or Asian American descent.[100]

By 1920, Laurelhurst consisted of 700 homes, and the following years would see the addition of a public school, along with a playground addition to Laurelhurst Park (outside of the original park footprint on the far side of Southeast Oak Street—remember that the playground movement was still going strong at this point, and east Portland's population was exploding). By 1935, only 10% of the land formerly known as Hazel Fern Farm remained undeveloped. In 1949, racial covenants were deemed unconstitutional in the state of Oregon, but by this time, the die was cast for Laurelhurst's demographics and for its image to the rest of the city.[101]

Landscape Characteristics

Of the 13 landscape characteristics denoted by the NPS as key to establishing the integrity of a cultural landscape, Laurelhurst Park exhibits at least eight characteristics. Intangible characteristics include natural systems & features; circulation; spatial organization; topography; vistas; and land use. Tangible characteristics include buildings &

[99] Curran, section 8, page 9.
[100] Abbott, *Portland in Three Centuries,* 80-84.
[101] Abbott, 84.

Figure 10: Preliminary plan for Laurelhurst Park, October 1910. All present main areas of the park are named. Note the series of small ponds throughout the west half of the park—these were never developed. Courtesy of Multnomah County Library

structures; vegetation; and constructed water features. The NRHP does not assess landscapes for any of these specific characteristics; landscapes are evaluated in terms of the seven aspects of integrity like any other historic resource. The eight landscape characteristics that apply to Laurelhurst Park fit neatly under the denoted aspects of integrity listed in the 2001 NRHP nomination. These aspects include location, design, setting, materials, and association.

Design (circulation, spatial configuration, topography, constructed water features, vistas)

Laurelhurst Park's circulation system closely follows the original circulation pattern of Mische's 1910 plans (see figure 10). All main paths are represented in the original plans and comprise a loop around the park's perimeter, with intersecting paths through the park's center that help to divide the park into its seven distinct areas. (Interestingly, Mische anticipated how use of the park would result in wear and tear on the landscape; instead of intersecting in straight lines, all walking paths through the park meet in triangles to prevent pedestrians from shortcutting across the grass.)[102] The undulating, curvilinear paths create mini-vistas within the park, as the pedestrian rounds a corner, ascends or descends in elevation, or emerges from behind a wall of vegetation. The park's seven main areas include Concert Grove, Firwood Lake, Children's Lawn, Plateau Meadow, Broad Meadow, Picnic Grove, and Rhododendron Hill.[103] These areas reflect the preliminary plans for the park, and so demonstrate the integrity of the landscape's spatial configuration.

Mische was so enamored of the old Doug fir trees just outside the park as proposed by John Charles Olmsted, he elected to expand the park's footprint to include these trees.

[102] Curran, "Laurelhurst Park," section 7, page 2.
[103] Curran, section 7, page 2.

Figure 12: The old-growth firs shown in the background are original to the park and were retained by Mische as part of his design, November 2022

Figure 11: Meandering paths at Laurelhurst Park contribute the park's internal viewsheds and the sense of discovery that FLO liked to cultivate in his designed landscapes, November 2022

The fir grove stands in what is now Laurelhurst Park's southeast corner, the highest elevation area of the park. Mische was adamant that the rest of the park's layout be a harmonious response to the focal point created by the Doug firs already standing in the park's highest elevated area. Laurelhurst Park's natural topography received minimal re-grading under Mische's direction, which resulted in a design subject to the tract's natural topography–largely flat through the center, almost like a valley, with higher slopes in the northwest corner and along the south edge. This topography, along with the abundantly planted trees, helps to hide views of the adjacent streets and so contributes to the feeling of an interior park shielded from the surrounding urban environment.[104] FLO recognized the importance of both interior views and scenic vistas in what were called "scenic reservations," areas of 100 to 1000-plus acres.[105] Though Laurelhurst Park is not large enough to be a scenic reservation, the creation of a "series of enclosures" with the circulation system and the ensuing focus on interior views stands out as a key landscape characteristic.[106]

Materials (buildings & structures, vegetation, constructed water features)

From the towering Doug firs in the southeast corner of the park, to Rhododendron Hill on the north slope below Ankeny Street, Laurelhurst's predominant landscape characteristic remains the Olmsted-inspired planting scheme that incorporates a variety of trees, shrubs, flowering pushes, and smaller perennial flowers. The park contains over 100 species, some of which are original to the park's initial development under Mische in 1910.

[104] Curran, section 8, pages 10-11.
[105] Guzowski, "Olmsted's Portland Vision," 129.
[106] Guzowski, 170.

Mische included both native and non-native species, though many of the latter were imported from the southeastern United States and have not survived to the present.

Nonetheless, the sheer diversity of plant species in the park and their relative planting to each other reflects the original design principles envisioned by Olmsted and executed by Mische, who had a "fascination for diversity."[107] Native tree species include Western redcedar, Western hemlock, vine maple, Sitka spruce, red alder, Port Orford cedar, Pacific yew, Pacific dogwood, Oregon white oak, Oregon myrtle, Oregon ash, Noble fir, mountain hemlock, incense cedar, Grand fir, Douglas-fir (Mische planted 265 in addition to the 100 he left intact throughout the park), Cascara buckthorn, and Bigleaf maple.[108] Nonnative species include American beech, American elm, American hophornbeam, American yellowwood, Northern white-cedar, Ashe's magnolia, Austrian black pine, bald cypress, Bigleaf snowbell, Bird cherry, black oak, black tupelo, black walnut, blue Atlas cedar, Brewer spruce, Camperdown elm, cedar of Lebanon, coast redwood, Colorado blue spruce, common hackberry, common horsechestnut, Cornelian cherry, crape myrtle, cucumber magnolia, Dawn redwood, Deodar cedar, Eastern dogwood, Eastern white oak, English laurel, English oak, English yew, European beech, European hornbeam, European larch, European mountain ash, European white birch, flowering plum, giant Sequoia, Harlequin glory bower, Japanese flowering cherry, Japanese maple, Japanese snowbell, littleleaf linden, largeleaf linden, London plane tree, magnolia, Norway maple, Northern red oak, ornamental crabapple, paper birch, Tibetan cherry, Portuguese laurel, scarlett oak, silver linden, southern magnolia, sugar maple, swamp white oak, sweetgum, and sycamore

[107] Curran, "Laurelhurst Park," section 7, page 5, and section 8, page 10.
[108] Andy Meeks, "A tree walk through history in Laurelhurst Park," Friends of Trees website, April 9, 2010, friendsoftrees.org/blog/a-tree-walk-through-history-in-laurelhurst-park.

maple.[109] Flowering bushes and perennials include the rhododendrons, fuschia, daphne, forsythia, daffodils, and hellebore.[110]

Per Olmstedian design principles, the buildings in Laurelhurst Park are subordinate to the natural elements of the park's landscape.[111] The only building within the original park is the Ankeny Street comfort station, designed in 1914 by Portland architects Whitehouse and Foulihoux and standing just inside the park's north entrance on Ankeny Street. Clad in green-painted stucco, the cross-gabled single-story building remains visually discreet on the landscape thanks to its size and color. The comfort station's English cottage style, with vergeboards and boxed eaves, also help it to blend into the overall pastoral aesthetic of the park.[112]

Firwood Lake is the park's only constructed water feature, occupying a great portion of Laurelhurst Park's eastern half. The lake is surrounded by a lush mix of deciduous and coniferous species, many of which date back to the original planting scheme of 1913-1914.[113] The lake's inclusion in the park design is indicative of yet another Olmstedian design principle, the incorporation of still or running water elements into a park's design. These elements could either be pre-existing at the site or could be added during the engineering part of the project. In the case of Laurelhurst Park, the addition of Firwood Lake to the park's landscape contributes to the park's overall pastoral ambiance.

[109] Portland Parks & Recreation, "Park Tree Inventory Data," website of the City of Portland, accessed May 25, 2023, https://www.portland.gov/trees/get-involved/treeinventory#toc-data-reports-and-maps.
[110] Curran, "Laurelhurst Park," section 8, pages 10-11.
[111] Curran, section 8, page 15.
[112] Curran, section 7, page 2.
[113] Curran, section 7, page 3.

Figure 13: The Ankeny Street comfort station is the only building inside the park's original footprint, November 2022

Figure 14: Firwood Lake dominates the east side of Laurelhurst Park and is home to a healthy population of waterfowl, November 2022

Throughout the park's history, Firwood Lake took on additional designed elements that reflected changes in park use. A rock staircase with railings, along with railings along the terraces at the lake's east end, were added in the 1920s and 1930s to improve accessibility.[114]

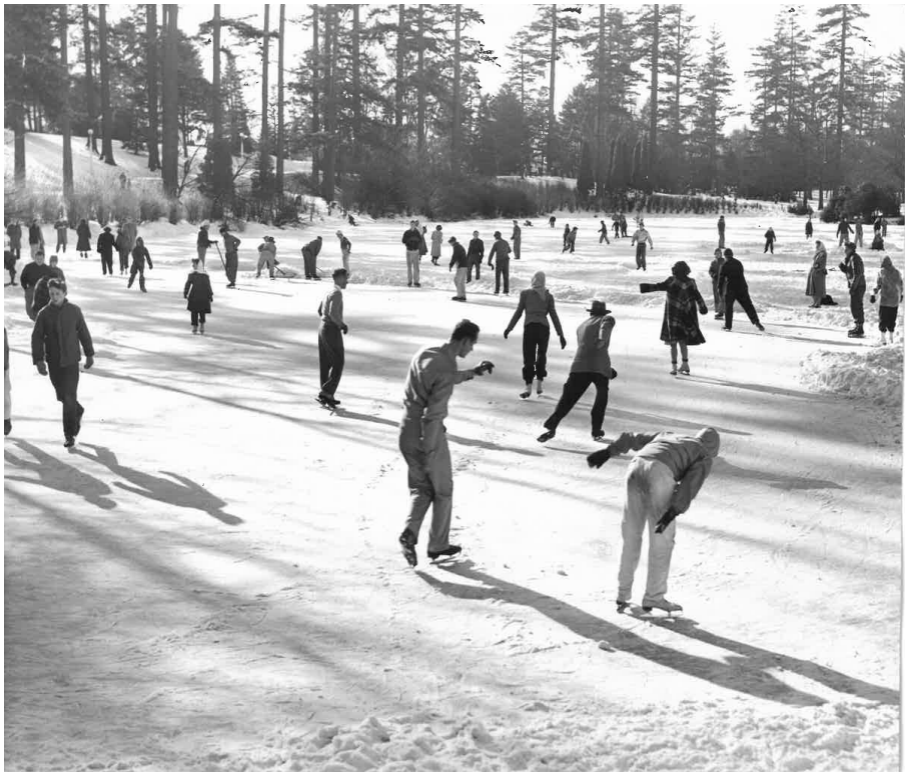

Figure 15: In earlier decades, Portland winters occasionally dropped to temperatures that supported a skating rink on Firwood Lake. Here, parkgoers in 1949 enjoy a rare wintertime diversion. Image courtesy of Oregon Historical Society Research Library

Association (land use)

The seven sections of Laurelhurst Park retain the names bequeathed to them by Mische in his original design. As an ensemble, these sections—Concert Grove, Rhododendron Hill, Picnic Grove, Broad Meadow, Plateau Meadow, Children's Lawn, and

[114] Curran, "Laurelhurst Park," section 7, page 3.

Firwood Lake—constitute a major feature of Laurelhurst Park's design and play into the integrity aspect of association. The separation of these areas spoke to the use patterns encouraged by Olmstedian design, and the extant interpretation largely reflects this aspect of the park's history. The envisioned use patterns were associated with the middle class at the time, i.e. recreation of a more passive nature (as opposed to active recreation like team sports, and certainly as opposed to protests, camping, or activities at odds with how FLO envisioned public parks serving a community). The MPD makes no mention of how continuity of use patterns might contribute to a park's eligibility for the NRHP–or, for that matter, how a change in use patterns might or might not detract from said eligibility.

Though the mention is not extensive, the NRHP nomination for Laurelhurst Park does hint at changing use patterns over time. The authors mention Park Superintendent Keyes' purchase of a city block on the south side of Oak Street in 1921-1922. This block was acquired for the express purpose of building a playground, rec center, wading pool, and tennis courts. Relegating these recreational elements to a newly-acquired one-block area helped to retain the park's original design–a turn of events that ultimately contributed to Laurelhurst Park's historic integrity as determined by the MPD and its ultimate listing in the NRHP.[115]

INTERPRETIVE POTENTIAL

The possibilities for expanded historical interpretation at Laurelhurst Park are plentiful. Though the Olmstedian design of Laurelhurst Park was intentionally left intact when the city acquired the annex property, this early-1920s expansion ties Laurelhurst

[115] Curran, section 8, pages 13-14.

Park to the nationwide "playground movement," which sought to require additional recreational facilities in public parks. Another possibility for public interpretation lies at Firwood Lake, which was used for ice-skating from the park's beginnings through the 1980s, and which was also the testing grounds for a wildly unsuccessful "Adopt a Duck" program attempted by the city parks department.[116] Once the ambition, however, is articulated as expanding the interpretive infrastructure in a way that uniquely distinguishes Laurelhurst Park in the context of Portland history, the options narrow. Portland is of course not distinct among cities for its stunning displays of class disparity, but Laurelhurst Park is certainly distinct among Portland parks for reflecting so neatly in such a contained space conditions of both class privilege and the lack thereof.

Rhetorical Implications

As indicated by the playground advocates from the Sunnyside Men's Business Club, Laurelhurst Park has been a public space since its inception. Geographically, it feels encapsulated within the labyrinthine street grid of the Laurelhurst suburb, a community that was developed with the intent of maintaining its geographic, racial, and socioeconomic distinction from other parts of the city. This apparent encapsulation though is nothing more than symbolic. To give just one example, the decline in property values, the ascent of the counterculture, and the hippies' move from Lair Hill to Laurelhurst Park in the 1960s indicates how the neighborhood is not an impervious bubble—it is and always has been a part of the city.

[116] Portland Parks & Recreation, "Laurelhurst Park," website of the city of Portland, accessed May 25, 2023, https://www.portland.gov/parks/laurelhurst-park.

The selection of Laurelhurst Park for this first case study has much to do with the predominant reputation that the Laurelhurst neighborhood has in Portland history and in Portland politics today. Historically, Laurelhurst is perceived as having been spared the infrastructural and social upheavals that have transformed other parts of the city. Whether or not this image reflects reality is a different question, but it's not the question at stake in this research. Juxtapose this with Laurelhurst Park as a visual "flashpoint" of the entire city's ongoing homelessness crisis, and the changes made to the park's infrastructure in response to longstanding encampments at the park's boundary. It is through the intersection of these two phenomena that the importance of interpreting Laurelhurst Park

Figure 16: A section of SE Oak Street was in early 2023 incorporated into the park as a pedestrian-only zone with a small skate park and other recreational amenities. Incorporating this block-long section of the street into the park's footprint extends to this section of street the city ban on camping in municipal parks, November 2022

as a public space both within the Laurelhurst neighborhood and in Portland at large becomes clear.[117]

"A minor, unsettling segment": Hippies in Laurelhurst Park

At the end of the summer of love, the *Oregonian* ran an article on Laurelhurst's newest residents, whose presence in the neighborhood was not appreciated by everyone. Lair Hill Park in southwest Portland was recognized as the focal point for the city's hippie community. But in the summer of 1969, some people began to gather in Laurelhurst Park on a regular basis when Lair Hill was anecdotally taken over by motorcycle gangs and "peddlers" (i.e. drug dealers). Characterized as "shop-worn teeny-boppers" seduced by the promise of an existence unfettered by the constraints of consumer culture, these young hippies ("for lack of a better word") told the reporter that they did not use drugs, and that witnessing increased drug use was in fact what had compelled them to leave Lair Hill. Longtime residents of Laurelhurst were not convinced by the claims of this "minor, unsettling segment" of Portland's population. One resident admitted, "'I can't say they've done anything wrong, so far […] But they can't be up to any good, either.'" In this same article, police described the landscape of Laurelhurst Park with its shrubbery and winding paths as being more conducive than Lair Hill for drug-related activities.[118] Even before the

[117] Jenny Young, "Pickleball Courts to Replace Homeless Camps at Laurelhurst Park," website of KOIN 6 News, November 1, 2022, https://www.koin.com/news/pickleball-courts-to-replace-homeless-camps-at-laurelhurst-park; KATU Staff, "Lost Ground: Investigation Examines Effects of COVID-19 on Portland's Homeless Crisis," website of KVAL News, February 25, 2021, https://kval.com/lost-ground-katu-documentary-2021; Rebecca Ellis, "Laurelhurst Residents Pressure Portland City Lawyers to Remove Homeless Camp near the Park," *Oregon Public Broadcasting*, September 19, 2022, https://www.opb.org/article/2022/09/19/portland-oregon-street-camping-homelessness-laurelhurst-park-tents-trees.

[118] Early Deane, "Hippies Leave Lair Hill for Laurelhurst Park Area," *Oregonian,* September 4, 1969, NewsBank.

September 1969 article, several dozen Laurelhurst residents spoke against the licensing of a pool room kitty-corner from the park at the corner of Southeast 39th Avenue (now Southeast Cesar E. Chavez Boulevard) and Southeast Stark Street; their fear was that the business would attract the "so-called hippie element" and would place children in danger when they walked to and from school.[119]

Hippies Leave Lair Hill
For Laurelhurst Park Area

Figure 17: In September 1969, The Oregonian *ran an article on the feelings of Laurelhurst homeowners regarding the appearance and behavior of young parkgoers or "hippies (for lack of a better word)." Courtesy of* NewsBank

While some Laurelhurst residents expressed dissatisfaction with the hippies' presence, decrying how their presence "[inhibited] the use of the park," not all Portlanders felt similarly. One *Oregonian* reader wrote to the paper, "Unfortunately or fortunately (however you look at it), Laurelhurst is a public park. The word public means everyone,

[119] "Poolroom Plan Ires Laurelhurst Park Residents," *Oregonian,* March 21, 1969, NewsBank.

even though they don't have calluses on their hands, or have their hair long or what."[120] This quote captures the essence of why this period in Laurelhurst Park's history merits being addressed in the park's interpretive infrastructure: Laurelhurst Park is and always has been a public space, in addition to (and transcending) its status as an Olmstedian landscape and one of Portland's most prominent links to one of the most prestigious names in American landscape architecture.

Material Properties

Considering the material rhetoric of the park's extant interpretation, any new historical interpretation ought to be just as inconspicuous upon the landscape. Using

Figure 18: Most tree markers in Laurelhurst Park are placed within eyesight of the paved walking paths, May 2023

[120] John Osterberg, "Calluses?" *Oregonian*, September 21, 1969, NewsBank.

materials that harmonize with their surroundings, as well as considering placement that does not disrupt viewsheds but also stands a good chance of being seen. In the interests of all these priorities, an appropriate location for interpretation about Laurelhurst Park in the late 1960s would be on plaques along the walking paths, like the markers already installed, but in a different shape or different material as a way for the public to visually distinguish between the two "narratives" (trees of the Olmstedian landscape, and hippies of the late 1960s). The advantage of this form would be accessibility, as park visitors are already accustomed to seeing the tree markers, and many visitors' uses of the park confines them to the paths. In either case, it would be up to a stakeholder group and/or Portland Parks & Recreation to determine the exact material, number, and installation of these plaques.

CASE STUDY NO. 2: INTERNATIONAL ROSE TEST GARDEN

One of eleven test gardens across the country associated with the American Rose Growers Society (AGRS), the International Rose Test Garden (hereafter referred to as "the IRTG" or "the test garden") sits within the bounds of Washington Park in southwest Portland. The first site was developed in 1917 and sat on the slope above the current test garden, either in the present parking lot or where the tennis courts are located today on SW Kingston Avenue. City landscape architect Florence Holmes Gerke designed the test garden's present site, which officially opened in 1924. The new test garden was expanded to include additional sub-garden areas and an amphitheater, all aimed at a broader recreational use for residents and visitors.[121] The IRTG is not listed in the NRHP, although a draft nomination was prepared in 1985.

[121] Portland Parks & Recreation, "Washington Park," website of the city of Portland, accessed May 26, 2023, https://www.portland.gov/parks/washington-park.

Florence Holmes Gerke (1896-1964) was the first female landscape architect to practice in Oregon and was one of only four known women in the country practicing professional landscape design when she designed the test garden. Born in Portland, she obtained her degree in "landscape gardening" from Oregon Agricultural College (now Oregon State University). Gerke began her career during WWI as a contractor for the federal government at an airbase in Washington. She traveled and studied in Europe after the war, began but did not finish a program at the Cambridge School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture in Boston, and returned to Portland where she started her own practice. In 1922, she married horticulturalist Walter H. Gerke, with whom she established a firm and worked on several highly visible landscaping projects throughout the state, including Dammasch State Hospital in Wilsonville, the headquarters of the Bonneville Power Navigation Project on the Columbia River, and Lloyd Center in Portland.[122]

While contracted as Portland's city landscape architect, Gerke designed the plans for the International Rose Test Garden and Washington Park Amphitheater in 1921, presumably with considerable input from the test garden's first curator Jesse A. Currey and the parks bureau. Gerke also served as the garden editor for *The Oregon Journal,* the same paper that Currey wrote for until his death in 1927. Holmes was an inspiration and occasional mentor to up-and-coming women in the field, including Elizabeth Lord and Edith Schryver, who would themselves become well-respected landscape architects after establishing a firm in Salem. Gerke's work was well-regarded not just by her peers, but by

[122] Valencia Libby, *The Northwest Gardens of Lord & Schryver,* Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2021, 60-62.

the public. Shortly after the development of the test garden, she was quietly commissioned by the city government of Scappoose to design their city parks system. [123]

If the test garden were to be nominated or determined eligible for the NRHP, an appropriate historic significance would encompass both Gerke's contributions to its design and the test garden's material contribution to Portland's image as the "City of Roses," a branding effort that aligns closely with the motivations, principles, and period of the City Beautiful movement.

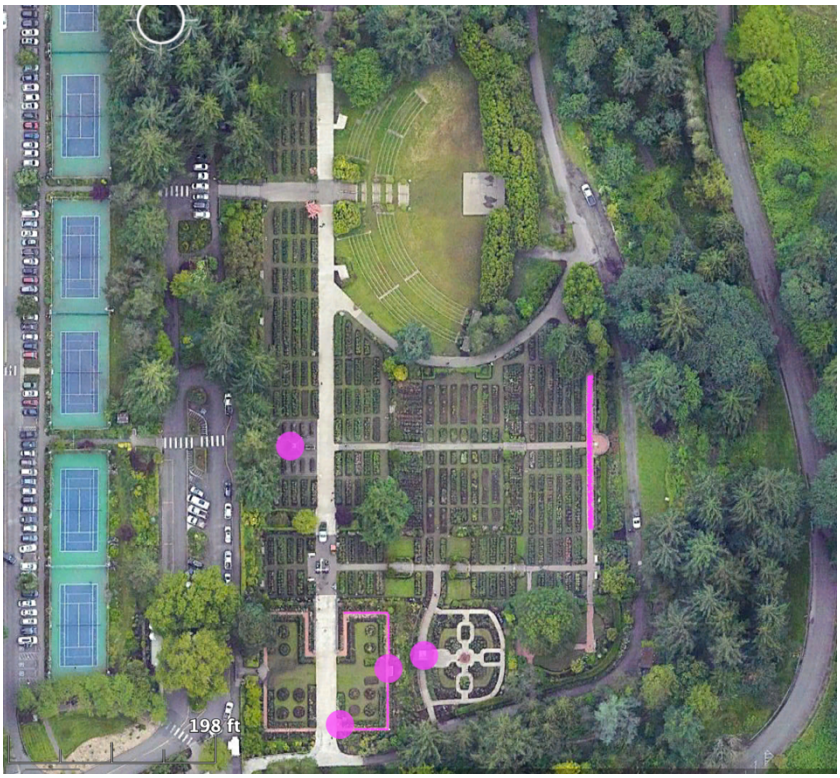

Figure 19: Extant interpretation (in pink) at the test garden is scattered throughout the landscape but concentrated at the south end in the Royal Rosarian and Gold Medal sub-gardens. Base image Google Earth

[123] Libby, *The Northwest Gardens, 60-62;* Ibid.; "Town Hall Gossip: Gleaned by the Gossiper," *Oregon Journal*, September 16, 1923, NewsBank.

Extant Interpretation

The interpretive elements described below are listed in order of location in the garden, starting at the southwest corner and proceeding clockwise around the garden. Online interpretive materials are described last, not for lack of importance, but because they cannot be described as "visible" on the landscape. Since the focus of this research is on the interpretation of cultural landscapes, which themselves are overwhelmingly assessed in visual terms, the *in situ* interpretive infrastructure is the format most accessible to the greatest number of people when moving through the landscape.

Element	**Location**	**Material**	**Format**	**Visuals?**
Royal Rosarian Statue	Royal Rosarian Garden	Bronze	Physical	Y
Jesse A. Currey Bench	Royal Rosarian Garden	Stone	Physical	Y
Kiosk	West entrance	Wood, plastic	Physical	Y
Queen's Walk	Bottom terrace	Bronze, brick	Physical	N
Self-Guided Tour	N/A	N/A	Digital	N
QR Codes	N/A	Metal, plastic	Digital	Y
Volunteer Tours	N/A	N/A	N/A	N

Table 2: Extant interpretation at the test garden comes mostly in physical, in situ form.

Royal Rosarian Statue

Dedicated in 2011, the Royal Rosarian statue in the southwest corner of the test garden is the third bronze statue erected in Washington Park. The Royal Rosarians donated the statue to the city to mark the centennial of the Royal Rosarians' founding.[124] The statue depicts a man dressed in a suit and tie, wearing a brimmed hat and lifting his arm as though greeting visitors descending the staircase at the south end of the garden. The statue sits in the Rosarian sub-garden on a concrete pad along the promenade. Inset in the brick is a bronze plaque that summarizes the history of the relationship between the Royal Rosarians and the City of Portland.[125] On the brick walkway adjoining the statue's pad are nine-inch square bronze plaques, each inscribed with the names of the organization's past Prime Ministers (or presidents).

Although the statue's bronze color makes the five-feet, eight-inch statue a harmonious feature in the garden, the statue's location on the promenade and at the base of an entry staircase contribute to its overall visual impact. The statue's interpretive function in the IRTG derives from its location and its explicit connection with an organization intimately connected with the garden's early history. The statue itself functions as a visual marker, and the text on the plaque, though relatively brief, asserts the Royal Rosarians' importance to the City of Portland. The text on the plaque is difficult to

[124] Mary Hottle, "Royal Rosarians Unveil Bronze Statue to Mark Upcoming Centennial Year," *Oregonian*, October 9, 2011, https://www.oregonlive.com/portland/2011/10/royal_rosarians_unveil_bronze.html.
[125] The plaque reads: "Since 1912 the Royal Rosarians have served as the Official Greeters and Ambassadors of Goodwill for the City of Portland. This statue marks the 100 years of service to the City of Portland. Wearing their white suits that have not changed in a century, they tip their straw hats to salute visitors. The Royal Rosarians have traveled worldwide spreading their slogan, 'For You a Rose in Portland Grows.' Along the pathway in the Royal Rosarian Garden are the Prime Minister's plaques. Adjacent to each plaque is the rose under which the Prime Minister was knighted. Royal Rosarian Jesse A. Currey was the founder and first rose curator of the International Rose Test Garden. Donated by the Royal Rosarians to the City of Portland on October 9, 2011 Bill Bane, Portrait Sculptor."

read, partly due to the small font size and normal wear on the plaque's surface, but also due to the plaque's positioning at the statue's base.

The cultural landscape of the IRTG serves as an evocative setting for this statue. Though arguments could be made for the relevance of other areas of the city, such as in front of City Hall, the statue's current surroundings imbue it with a thematic resonance that might not find purchase if it were located elsewhere. In this case, the statue's location at the

Figure 20: The Royal Rosarian statue greets visitors at the south entrances to the test garden, March 2023

test garden entrance constitutes a rhetorical property. The prominent location effectively conveys an impression of the Royal Rosarians' important role in the establishment of the test garden. Upon closer consideration of the text on the statue's accompanying plaque, the explicit theme of the statue seems to be on the relationship between the city and the Royal Rosarians, rather than the Royal Rosarians ongoing involvement with the test garden. But if

the statue itself is taken as the signifier, the signified meaning (by the statue's location near two garden entrances and its visual distinctiveness on the landscape) is that the Rosarians (by way of their relationship with Currey) were instrumental in establishing the test garden. The test garden's importance to Portland's history also conveys the importance of the Rosarians to Portland's history. The entire IRTG itself thus becomes a symbol of the relationship between the city and the Royal Rosarians.[126]

[126] Clues to the rhetorical focus on this relationship are found in the diction of the history described on the plaque: repetition of the term "City of Portland" three times in five sentences; description of the Royal Rosarians' role as Portland's "Official Greeters" and providers of "100 years of service" to the City. Though generally the term "City," when capitalized, refers specifically to city government, it is unclear in this context whether "City of Portland" refers only to the government or to Portland as a metropolitan entity.

Figure 21: The Royal Rosarian statue plaque and the Prime Minister plaques invite visitors to examine the garden's pathways at close range, March 2023

Jesse A. Currey Memorial Bench

At approximately ten feet long by three feet tall, the Jesse A. Currey memorial bench at the back of the Royal Rosarian sub-garden incorporates the least amount of text of any physical interpretive element in the garden. Dedicated by the Royal Rosarians in 1936, the concrete bench bears a low-relief profile of Jesse A. Currey in an engraved circular inset. The inscription below this portrait reads: "Jesse A. Currey/1873-1927/Originator of Portland International Rose Test Garden 1917." The bench appears to have been partly replaced at some point, as the seating section of the bench is noticeably darker and more moss-covered than the bench back and arms. The bench was installed in 1956; its unveiling by the Royal Rosarians was accompanied by a band concert and attended by both the present and former mayors of Portland.[127]

Memorials constitute interpretive infrastructure insofar as they serve to link a landscape to a particular person or event. Even when memorials serve a dual role as recreational infrastructure (e.g. the Currey memorial taking the form of a bench), they remain part of the interpretive infrastructure for their role in relaying the landscape's story. As a piece of historical interpretation, the bench thematically supplements the text at the base of the Royal Rosarian Statue. Currey's role in the Royal Rosarian Society is not explicitly mentioned in the bench inscription, so the material and textual rhetoric of this piece of interpretation focuses on the test garden more than it does the Royal Rosarians' broader civic role.

The bench's concrete material sets it apart from the brick walkway in front and the thick boxwood hedge behind. Though it does stand out more from its surroundings than do

[127] "Bench Memorial to Be Unveiled," *Oregonian*, June 11, 1936. NewsBank.

the other wood-slat, metal-frame benches throughout the IRTG, this memorial bench is notably less conspicuous than the statue due to its location off the main promenade. Visitors must walk through the Rosarian Garden to reach the bench, and when roses are blooming in summertime, the bench is less visible from the promenade.

Figure 22: The Jesse A. Currey memorial bench fills both an interpretive and functional role in the garden, inviting visitors to sit and contemplate the Royal Rosarian Garden while reading about Jesse Currey. March 2023

Information Kiosk

Installed by the Beach family in 1978, the same year the Beach Fountain on the test garden's promenade was dedicated, the approximately 15- feet high information kiosk sits at the bottom of the middle main staircase into the garden from the parking lot. The kiosk has concrete footings, a shake (wood shingle) hip roof, and four panels with visuals and text set behind clear plastic shields, one on each side of the structure. The west panel

presents a brief history of the test garden with historical photos. Descriptions of each sub-garden are below, accompanied by contemporary photos. A FAQ section includes twenty questions and answers regarding garden operation and the roses. Below this, the Peninsula Park rose garden and Ladd's Addition rose garden are mentioned as worthy of a visit. A colorful informational sticker about protecting pollinators conceals what appears to be a small map of Washington Park.

The south panel displays a vicinity map of Washington Park. Most of the map is in gray and white, except for points of attraction that are numbered and highlighted in green. Short summary descriptions of each highlighted area take up the panel's lower half, and a legend indicates the presence of recreational infrastructure like restrooms, parking, playgrounds, and picnic areas. Surrounding roads appear in white are labeled by name, and the trails and railway that traverse the park are indicated by dark lines.

The east panel displays a printed color map of the test garden with an inventory of roses and their location in the garden; this inventory is updated yearly per the test garden's policy of continually changing out specimens according to their commercial availability and growing success in the test garden. Sub-gardens are color-coded (there are seven distinct sections according to this map), and additional recreational infrastructure like the picnic area and restrooms are noted. This panel also includes a list of "rose type definitions," including climbing rose, David Austin rose, floribunda, grandiflora, hybrid tea, landscape, mini, polyantha, shrub, and tree.

The north panel summarizes the results of the 2019 Portland Rose Awards and the 2019 Gold Medal Awards; text accompanies the photo of each winner. Each rose is

described by class, hybridizer, the distributor who provided the garden with the rose, and a short physical description. The rose's disease susceptibility and bed location are also noted.

The strongest aspect of the kiosk's material rhetoric is its location at a main entrance. Other rhetorical aspects of the kiosk could be improved to take advantage of its location, such as the inclusion of a visual timeline of the garden's history, larger historical photos, and possibly an interactive element or visual guide to help visitors identify the different rose types detailed on the east panel.

Figure 23: The information kiosk includes four panels with informative text, historical photos, and maps of the test garden and Washington Park. Clockwise from top right: Kiosk, view southwest; north panel; east panel; south panel; west panel (facing the main entrance into the test garden). May 2023

Queen's Walk

On the test garden's lowest north-south thoroughfare sits the Queen's Walk, a brick pathway inset with square bronze plaques bearing the names of Rose Queens throughout Portland's history since 1907, elected from among the city's high-school students during the Portland Rose Festival in June (aptly enough, the first Queen was named "Flora"). The

Figure 24: The Queen's Walk runs along the east edge of the test garden, March 2023

eight-inch square plaques (set in 13-inch square concrete tiles) reveal disruptions to the festival's continuity: a six-year break from 1907-1914, (other breaks). These breaks constitute an opening for interpretive expansion for curious visitors: what was happening in the world that prevented the Rose Festival from going forward? Connecting the landscape in this way to broader events outside the garden's boundaries help the public

understand a little bit more what a cultural landscape is–not just a physical space made up of natural elements, but a space that derives meaning from its interaction with society.

Gold Medal Garden Plaques

Labeled on Gerke's plans as the area dedicated to "old-fashioned" roses, the Gold Medal Garden sits on the middle terrace, directly below the Rosarian Garden. The Gold Medal Garden was designed and named in 1969 to house cultivars that have won the Gold Medal Award given annually by the Portland Rose Society since 1919. Gold Medal winners are scored for the same qualities as test roses but are selected from among established cultivars that are performing well throughout the entire test garden. A gazebo donated by the society in 1992 sits at the west edge of the garden. Low brick steps lead from the gazebo to a non-historic brick fountain on a concrete terrace bordered by rose beds.

Bronze plaques with the names of Portland Rose Society presidents line the brick wall leading to and from the gazebo. These plaques date from 1889 to 2021, and each is 6 inches by 3 inches. Integrating the plaques into the gazebo's wall resembles the choice to embed the Jesse A. Currey memorial into a bench. Interpretive infrastructure can double as functional infrastructure, which in best-case scenarios makes the interpretation easier to access, but also less conspicuously itself on the landscape. In the case of the gazebo plaques, the interpretation risks getting overlooked because of its placement below the sightlines of

upright adults. An explanatory plaque about the award program is posted on the interior wall of the gazebo, also below eye level.

Figure 25: The Gold Medal Garden's interpretive infrastructure is concentrated around the gazebo and exedra underneath. Clockwise from top left: gazebo and brick wall; Gold Medal plaque; Rose Society president plaques, each 6-inch by 3-inch in size. Included among these plaques is Georgiana Pittock's, who founded the Portland Rose Society in 1889 and helped to sustain the organization through and beyond her lifetime, May 2023

Self-Guided Tour

Available on the website of the Friends of Washington Park International Rose Test Garden, the self-guided tour is the most comprehensive history of the test garden available to the public. The tour is broken up into ten locations throughout the garden, beginning at the accessibility ramp by the Royal Rosarian Garden, proceeding clockwise through the entire test garden, and ending inside the Gold Medal Garden. In line with this organization, the tour's content is broken up geographically rather than thematically. Bulleted lists under

each sub-garden name present historical contexts for the prominent features in each area and are preceded by short walking directions in italics. An explanation of the testing process is included under "Stop #5: Testing Roses." This tour does not make use of images, which may make it less attractive to some readers.

Figure 26: Scattered throughout the test garden south of the amphitheater are ten markers for the self-guided tour available on the Friends of the International Rose Test Garden website, March 2023

QR Codes

The most recent addition to the test garden's interpretive infrastructure is a collection of 200 markers associated with specific cultivars throughout the garden. Initiated by city horticulturalist and garden curator Rachel Burlington, these new markers include the rose's name and a QR code that provides visitors with a link to a product page on the Edmunds Roses website, with information about the cultivar and its growing

conditions. This interpretation aligns less with the garden's history and more with its role as a display center for newly available varieties that visitors may be interested in purchasing.

As with all digital interpretation, accessibility is an issue. While non-physical interpretation helps to keep it from being too noticeable on the landscape, digital

Figure 27: About 200 QR code markers are scattered throughout the test garden's beds, March 2023

interpretation also can only be accessed by visitors with smartphones. Visitors must also know ahead of time that the interpretation exists for it to be useful on their visit; coming across it on their visit, as they would with a plaque or a printed brochure, is not likely, unless the digital interpretation is accompanied by physical infrastructure, like the QR code markers.

One advantage of digital interpretation is that more information can be presented in a way that does not interrupt the landscape and requires less maintenance than physical infrastructure.[128] Rhetorically speaking, digital interpretation is often developed to make information more accessible and to appeal to a broader audience. In practice, however, the rhetorical effects are anything but guaranteed–everything is dependent on the audience, their available technological tools, and how personally motivated they are to access the interpretation.

Historic Background

Though fieldwork for this case study focuses exclusively on the IRTG, a historic context for the garden's significance includes discussion of Washington Park's development and significance, as the cultural landscape of Washington Park has influenced the use patterns of the IRTG as a component landscape within the boundaries of a larger landscape. Washington Park's status as a retreat from the chaos of downtown has ensured that the IRTG holds as much (if not more) recreational value for casual parkgoers as it does scientific and economic value for horticulturalists.

In 1871, the city of Portland bought 40 acres from Amos and Melinda King for use as a municipal park. The 40-acre property sat on a hill between Canyon Road and what is now West Burnside Avenue. The land was named City Park, and renamed Washington Park in 1912.[129] Today, Washington Park has expanded to 410 acres and encompasses several smaller attractions, many of which themselves constitute discrete historic structures, objects, and sites within Washington Park. These additional sites include the Oregon Zoo

[128] Frank, Appendix B in "Interpretation Strategy," Horner et al.
[129] Hawkins, *The Legacy of Olmsted Brothers in Portland, Oregon*, 30.

(1888), Hoyt Arboretum (1922), Japanese Garden (1967), World Forestry Center (1971), and the Holocaust Memorial (2004). Washington Park also includes seven statues and fifteen miles of recreational trails, some of which connect with the walking trails in Forest Park, the largest city park in the United States located northwest of Washington Park.[130]

In 1894, the city built two reservoirs as part of the gravity-fed Bull Run Water System in Washington Park. Along with four reservoirs at Mount Tabor Park in southeast Portland, Washington Park's reservoirs supplied Portland with drinking water for several decades. Reservoirs No. 3 and No. 4 sit in the eastern part of Washington Park and, along with a collection of contributing buildings, structures, and objects, constitute a historic district nominated to the NRHP in 2003. Until the establishment of Mount Tabor Park in southeast Portland in 1909, City Park was Portland's largest public green space.[131]

Portland's relationship with roses began decades before the concept of a test garden took root. The longevity of this relationship further supports the argument for the test garden's significance to the City Beautiful movement in the early-twentieth century. Georgiana Pittock founded the Portland Rose Society in 1889, the year after she held a rose-growing competition as a church fundraiser. In preparation for hosting the Lewis & Clark Centennial and American Pacific Exposition and Oriental Fair in 1905, popularly known as the Lewis and Clark Exposition, the city planted hundreds of imported Madame Caroline Testout roses along several main thoroughfares.[132]

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[130] Portland Parks & Recreation, "Washington Park," https://www.portland.gov/parks/washington-park.
[131] Cascade Anderson Geller, "'Washington Park Reservoirs Historic District' National Register Nomination," 2003, https://catalog.archives.gov/id/77850851, section 7, page 1.
[132] Hockaday, *Greenscapes,* 21.

City Beautiful advocates salivated over events like the Lewis and Clark Exposition: such occasions provided an opportunity to highlight a city's metropolitan prowess, paired with a good reason to spend money on improving public infrastructure. At the Lewis and Clark Exposition, Portland mayor Harry Lane called for the next big-scale civic event in the form of an annual Rose Festival. The annual Rose Festival began two years later, with a parade that showcased Portland's electrified trolley system. In 1911, a group of Portland businessmen founded the Royal Rosarians, an organization with the express purpose of promoting the Rose Festival and the city in general. All three organizations–the Portland Rose Society, the Rose Festival, the Royal Rosarians–continue to be active agents in maintaining Portland's image as a center of rose growing and promoting the city's attractions to visitors.[133]

Support for a test garden in Portland appears in the historical record as early as 1913, when Reverend George Schoener espoused the civic and economic benefits of a garden dedicated to horticultural experimentation. A well-respected amateur horticulturist whose signature hybrids continue to be cultivated today, Schoener resided south of Portland in Brooks, Oregon, where he served as the parish priest at the Church of the Assumption. In a letter to Robert Dieck, Portland's Commissioner of Public Works, Schoener explains that the installation of a major horticultural garden in Portland ought not to be regarded by the city government as a "curiosity and luxury," but rather as an investment in the economic vitality of the entire state.[134] Schoener calls out western

[133] Erika Weisensee, "Portland Rose Festival," *Oregon Encyclopedia,* accessed February 14, 2023, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/portland_rose_festival.
[134] December 4, 1913 Letter to Robert Dieck, Parks and Recreation—Subject Files—Plantings Correspondence, [AF/32582], City of Portland (OR) Archives.

Oregon's mild climate and varied topography as elemental to the area's favorable growing conditions. He goes on to offer several apparently unsolicited opinions on the required elements of a viable horticultural garden in Portland. Noteworthy among these components include a size of at least 200 acres, a diversity of terrain and soil types, and the inclusion of various shrubs, flowers, and trees to showcase the commercial value of the state's native plant species.[135]

As far as the roses, Schoener focuses his attention on those species native or naturalized to Oregon. For Schoener, the hybridization of "our grand species" represented a market of untapped potential for the state's economy. Native Oregon rose hybrids are attractive to "fancy [gardeners]" across the country, Schoener argues, offering a homegrown substitute for the Asiatic species commonly imported for hybridization purposes. Native hybrids would also enable Oregon producers to bring to the market such products as the Rosa Olea fragrance, used in the production of rose oil and rosewater, along with rose hips for jams and candies. These two products do not seem too impressive in the context of Oregon's vast output of timber and agricultural products, but the rhetorical aim of Schoener's argument is to convince the commissioner of the garden's economic value. Schoener goes so far as to suggest Portland may be undeserving of its nickname, as popular appreciation for the rose's true potential was so severely lacking, in his opinion.[136]

Parks superintendent E.T. Mische faced initial pushback on the idea of a botanical garden in Portland. The Acting Secretary of the Department of Agriculture pointed out in

[135] December 4, 1913 Letter to Dieck, City of Portland (OR) Archives. Schroeder mentions the following native species as candidates for inclusion in the garden: Oregon grape, wild lilac, dogwood, oceanspray, arrowwood (not actually a native species of Oregon), wild currant, mock orange, and five evergreens, including the Port Orford cedar.
[136] December 4, 1913 Letter to Dieck, City of Portland (OR) Archives.

1914 correspondence to State Senator Henry Chamberlain that a field station in Portland would result in exposure to such a locally specific and abnormally favorable climate that the federal government would be misplaced in advocating for its development. The Acting Secretary pointed out in this same correspondence that the State Experiment Station in Corvallis allowed for testing of species suited for the entire region, and that establishing a federal test garden within such close proximity to Corvallis would be redundant.[137] Instead of giving up in the face of this well-reasoned opposition, Mische appealed to William Kerr, the president of the Oregon Agricultural College In Corvallis (today Oregon State University), asking for his expert opinion on the matter. In the same letter, he repeats Schoener's argument that the economic benefits of a test garden in Portland would be invaluable to the entire state. Such a garden would ensure that Portland maintained a competitive position against Seattle in the bid for the most metropolitan and visit-worthy city in the Pacific Northwest.[138] In 1915, the City of Portland approved the IRTG's development. The test garden officially opened in 1917 with sponsorship by the American Rose Society (ARS), who mandated that a Portland chapter of the ARS be founded to help with the garden's management.[139]

The test garden is popularly understood as being established to help fill the gap left by European test gardens forced to close during WWI. Some sources trace the first

[137] March 9, 1914 Letter to George Chamberlain, Parks and Recreation—Subject Files—Plantings Correspondence, [AF/32582], City of Portland (OR) Archives.
[138] Letter to George Chamberlain, City of Portland (OR) Archives; March 11, 1914 Letter to William J. Kerr, Parks and Recreation—Subject Files—Plantings Correspondence, [AF/32582], City of Portland (OR)Archives; William Robbins, "William Jasper Kerr (1863–1947)," July 19, 2022, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/kerr-william.
[139] George Baker, "Portland's Choice as Official Rose City Is of Huge Significance," *Oregonian*, March 4, 1917, NewsBank.

suggestion of a test garden in Portland to several years later, after WWI began.[140] It is notable however that the mission to "save" European cultivars, though repeated several times in historical interpretation regarding the test garden's origins, logically does not appear in the pre-war correspondence of Schoener, Currey, or Mische. Though the effects of WWI on Europe's stability may have provided additional impetus for finally establishing the IRTG, the concept and initial motivations for a test garden in Portland predate these events.

Figure 28: Royal Rosarians at the dedication of the first test garden in 1917. Currey is on the far left, and Schoener is third from left. Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society Research Library

[140] Chad Garland, "History in Bloom at Portland's Rose Garden," *Spokesman-Review* (Spokane, Washington), June 8, 2014, https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2014/jun/08/history-in-bloom-at-portlands-rose-test-garden. This article in a major newspaper in Spokane describes the test garden as having first being conceived of after the start of WWI.

As Mische was petitioning the federal government for a horticultural testing site, another champion of the IRTG was penning a regular home gardening article in *The Oregon Journal*. Jesse A. Currey, manager at Trussed Concrete Steel Company, was an avid gardener and a member of the Royal Rosarians at the same time as Reverend George Schoener (see figure 28). Given this intersection of circumstances, it's no surprise that Currey became an advocate for a horticultural garden in Portland. Currey was instrumental in selecting the original, much smaller site in Washington Park, at the present-day tennis courts that sit above the IRTG; this was the test garden's location from 1917 until 1924.

The site boasted rich clay soil and had ready access to plentiful manure from resident buffalo and elk at the zoo in Washington Park. The site was also chosen for its eastern exposure and resulting shelter from western sea-winds. Currey exclaimed over Portland's 200-day growing season; even the *way* it rained in Portland was exceptional–a light, enveloping mist, rather than destructive downpours. The site fit the bill for promoting to national and international visitors the natural beauty and metropolitan offerings of Portland. The IRTG's hillside location offered expansive vistas of Mt. Hood, with downtown Portland in the foreground. Both the favorable growing season and scenic views that sold Portland as a destination factored into choosing the site.[141] The calculation for the test garden's siting aligns particularly well with the City Beautiful ethos that informed Portland's civic boosterism at the beginning of the twentieth century; playing up a city's most attractive aspects was a core tenet of City Beautiful design.

[141] "National Rose Test Garden," Jesse A. Currey Papers, Mss 2803, Oregon Historical Society Research Library, Portland, Oregon.

Additions to the test garden over the years have impacted the landscape's character and use patterns. Although the Shakespeare Garden was not a part of the IRTG's original design, it has been a part of the garden since 1946, when it was relocated from the Crystal Springs Rhododendron Garden in southeast Portland. Test garden designer Florence Holmes Gerke oversaw creation of the first Shakespeare Garden at this location in 1927 and was contracted again in 1946 to design its replacement up in the IRTG. Gerke included the amphitheater in her original design for the test garden, but its infrastructure has been expanded over the decades. The amphitheater appears to have originally been a simple grass bowl in the north section of the test garden. Two sets of stone stairs descending from the promenade were added in 1930. Concrete stadium-like seating walls that hug the amphitheater's semi-circular form were added in 1975. A permanent stage was added in 1979. For several decades, the amphitheater was a popular venue for community plays, concerts (including Johnny Cash in the 1970s), and orchestral performances. Today, indoor venues with larger capacities have supplanted the Washington Park Amphitheater as performance spaces, although it continues to be used for a week at the end of each summer for outdoor concerts. Garden visitors still use the amphitheater for picnicking and relaxing, and the site can be rented from the city for concerts and weddings.[142]

[142] City of Portland, Historic Resource Inventory 0-482-00404, "Washington Park Amphitheater," Portland, Oregon: 1981; John Ross Ferrara, "Is the Washington Park Amphitheater Dying?" website of KOIN 6 News, October 23, 2022, https://www.koin.com/news/portland/is-the-washington-park-amphitheater-dying.

Figure 29: Florence Holmes Gerke's original plans for the expanded test garden, undated. Note the building at the south end in the present-day Royal Rosarian garden; this office/library/greenhouse space was never constructed. Image courtesy of University of Oregon Special Collections & Archives

Landscape Characteristics

At 725 feet by 400 feet, the IRTG is roughly rectangular in shape and covers approximately 4.5 acres on an east-facing slope in Washington Park. The IRTG is both a historic designed landscape in its own right and a component of the larger landscape of Washington Park. The test garden is bounded by SW Rose Garden Way to the west and north, and an unnamed service road to the east and south. Neighboring amenities include tennis courts and Portland Japanese Garden to the west. The west boundary of the garden is also delimited by a parking lot, a 1924 comfort station (or restroom), and a picnic area, all within the boundaries of the landscape. The boundary excludes the non-historic retail store, restroom, and pavilion to the southwest of the test garden. The test garden's design combines elements of naturalistic and rectilinear planning and is influenced by its location between two affluent neighborhoods, Arlington Heights (replete with winding roads and irregular block shapes) and King's Heights (an older neighborhood with a typical rectangular block plan).[143]

Unlike Laurelhurst Park, the International Rose Test Garden is not listed in the NRHP, nor has its eligibility for the NRHP been officially determined. The landscape characteristics described below, and their affiliation with different aspects of integrity, do not reflect evaluations that have been reviewed by the NPS. Rather, the description of the landscape characteristics at the rose garden draws upon a variety of other sources: a 1985 NRHP nomination that was drafted but never approved by the Oregon SHPO, inventories conducted as part of the 2006 ILS Portland Parks Survey, and my own observations in the

[143] Allen T. Denison, "Portland International Rose Test Garden" National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (draft), 1985, Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, section 7, page 1.

field. The below evaluation could be used in future efforts to determine the eligibility of the site for the NRHP, or as a foundation for a more comprehensive cultural landscape report.

Spatial organization, circulation (design)

The rose garden's overall spatial organization and circulation patterns have not changed dramatically in the past 50 years. Even in comparison to Gerke's original design, changes are minor and do not detract from the geometric layout of the garden. The test garden's three terraces allow for the demarcation of smaller sub-gardens within its boundaries. Sub-gardens include the Royal Rosarian Garden on the upper terrace, the Gold Medal Rose Garden on the middle terrace, and the Shakespeare Garden on the lower terrace. The official Test Garden and display gardens occupy the remaining sections of all three terraces, and an amphitheater takes up the test garden's northeast corner. All sub-gardens are further demarcated by planted slopes and pipe trellises, which serve to reinforce the test garden's geometric spatial organization.

The IRTG's circulation system largely follows the geometric rigidity of its layout. Two longitudinal paths cross the garden from south to north, and three cross paths descend the terraces from west to east, beginning at the three random-course ashlar flagstone staircases off the west parking lot and ending at the east-most longitudinal path. All cross paths are of exposed-aggregate concrete save for the flagstone staircases connecting the terraces. The upper longitudinal path, also known as the promenade, is of trowel-finished and exposed-aggregate concrete. It divides the upper terrace in half,

extending from the test garden's south boundary in the Royal Rosarian Garden to a grand entry staircase at the north boundary. The lower longitudinal path, of exposed-aggregate concrete and brick, extends from the Shakespeare Garden to an intersection with the northernmost cross path, which curves northwest around the southern edge of the amphitheater. This lower longitudinal path is bounded by a low stone wall to the east and contains the Queen's Walk, a bricked section of path set with square bronze plaques bearing the names of past Rose Festival Queens. Smaller circulation systems within some of the sub-gardens further facilitate access to the garden. Raised and in-ground beds throughout the garden are mostly rectangular in shape, approximately six feet in width and ranging from 12 to 40 feet in length. Beds in the Royal Rosarian Garden are circular and

Figure 30: The geometric rigidity of the flowerbeds is exhibited throughout the garden, March 2023

rectangular, and beds in the Gold Medal Garden are octagonal and square. The beds in the Shakespeare Garden are irregular in shape and surround the perimeter of the garden. Beds in the display gardens and test garden are rectangular.

Land use, views and vistas, topography (association, setting, feeling)

Despite some alterations and additions over the years, Portland's test garden has for the last century consistently fulfilled a dual role for the city: serving as an official testing and display ground for commercially available cultivars; and playing a key role in the city's image to visitors. The landscape's consistent land use as a recreational site open to the public reflects this dual role.

The terraced topography follows a downward slope lent by the test garden's location atop an 1894 landslide that rendered the site unsuitable for residential development; the site for the "new" test garden in 1924 was at the time of its selection already partially terraced from failed development efforts earlier on.[144] The physical evidence of the 1894 landslide constitutes a natural feature that has influenced the test garden's landscape. Total elevation change amounts to about 35 feet: the top slope at the parking lot sits at 450 feet above sea level, and the service road at the garden's east boundary sits at 415 feet above sea level.[145] Vistas considered in the site selection include

[144] Portland Parks and Recreation, "Washington Park Master Plan," 1981, website of the City of Portland, Oregon, https://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/article/448289, 7; Dennison, "Portland International Rose Test Garden," section 8, page 2.

[145] "Planting Plan Shakespearean Garden Washington Park," November 1945, Walter H. and Florence Holmes Gerke Landscape Architecture Drawings and Photographs 1934-1946, Coll 144, University of Oregon Special Collections and University Archives.

views of downtown Portland and Mount Hood to the east, although these views have been partially obstructed by tree growth around the test garden's perimeter.[146]

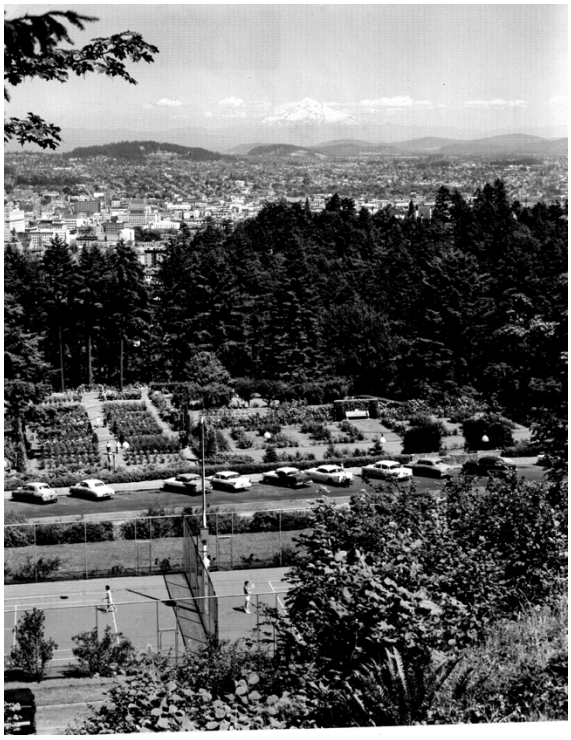

Figure 31: (left) The test garden as viewed from the hills to the west in a 1960 photo in the Oregon Journal. *Image courtesy Oregon Historical Society Research Library (right) The test garden's terraced topography dates to a stymied effort to develop the area for residential construction. Image courtesy Portland Parks & Recreation*

Vegetation, Buildings & Structures, Small-Scale Features, Constructed Water Features (material)

Of all the physical aspects of the test garden, the vegetation is the most important material element. The test roses rotate out every two to three years, and about ten to twenty cultivars throughout the garden are removed each year as they fall out of commercial distribution. To maintain the garden's appearance, disease and loss of vigor

[146] "National Rose Test Garden," 1917, Jesse A. Currey papers, Mss 2803, Oregon Historical Society Research Library.

will also result in a plant's removal. Curator Rachel Burlington estimates that between all these factors, but primarily due to that of commercial availability, the average rosebush lasts about seven years in the garden (apart from the heirloom specimens, including a "Grande Duchesse Charlotte" rose that was the AARS selection for 1943 and planted the same year by the Duchesse Charlotte of Luxembourg in a bed next to the Royal Rosarian Garden).

Apart from roses, there are several trees in the test garden, mostly concentrated around the perimeter to create a semi-formal separation from the surrounding parkland. Tree species include Douglas fir, Port Orford cedar, bigleaf maple, Amur maple, Norway maple, weeping willow, western redcedar, Kousa dogwood, Sawara cypress, ginkgo, incense cedar, Japanese cedar, magnolia, hiba arborvitae, thujopsis, Japanese maple, Italian cypress, Hinoki falsecypress, Japanese flowering cherry, Northern red oak, southern magnolia, and Hartweg's pine.[147]

Buildings and structures in the test garden are limited to a historic comfort station (1924) and the Washington Park amphitheater (1925). Above the middle entry stairway off the parking lot is the brick comfort station, which hosts two bathrooms on either side and the former curator's office in the middle, denoted by the gable-roofed extension that protrudes five feet from the west elevation. The 82 feet by 16 feet rectilinear building features rake-joint brick construction and a Hermosa tile hipped roof. Abundant mosses and vegetation coat the entirety of the roof.[148] The semi-circular amphitheater sits in a

[147] "Tree Inventory Project Web App," January 2021, website of the City of Portland, Oregon, https://pdx.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=b4671f4591144530b1c590731923b182.
[148] Drawing 1, Comfort Station, Rose Garden, Washington Park, Portland, Or. Plans, Mss 3104, Oregon Historical Society Research Library.

Figure 32: Clockwise from top left: picnic area at northwest corner of IRTG, historic comfort station in the parking lot, and the Washington Park amphitheater, March 2023

large bowl-shaped depression in the northeast corner of the garden, and features stone stairs, concrete seating walls, and a concrete stage.

Small-scale features scattered throughout the test garden include wood-slat benches on metal frames, exposed-aggregate cylindrical trash cans, and two drinking fountains (one non-historic fountain near the memorial fountain, and one apparently historic cast-iron fountain next to a bench outside the Shakespeare Garden). Benches are primarily placed beneath walls, underneath trees, and along walkways.

The main constructed water feature is the Frank Beach Memorial Fountain on a sunken area of the promenade just south of the middle staircase. Designed by artist Lee Kelly and made of stainless-steel posts arranged in squares, the fountain is accompanied by

Figure 33: Posing in front of the Frank Beach Memorial Fountain are historian Chet Orloff and an unidentified woman, likely his coauthor Norma Catherine Gleason, with whom he wrote Portland's Public Art: A Guide and History *(1986). Image courtesy of Oregon Historical Society Research Library*

two matching benches. The other constructed water feature, a non-historic brick fountain with a circular bowl, sits in the Gold Medal Garden.

INTERPRETIVE POTENTIAL

The cultural landscape of the test garden contributes an important narrative to Portland's history. Interpreting the history of the garden's origins provides visitors with an understanding of the IRTG's importance in the context of Portland's transformative growth at the start of the twentieth century. Although extant interpretation could be more explicit about the garden's importance in this respect (explicit mention of the City Beautiful movement and Florence Holmes Gerke are both noticeably absent), the framework for an

overhaul is already in place: existing interpretation focuses on the garden's early history and original design.

Of note however is that both Gerke and the City Beautiful link already fall within what would be considered by many historic preservationists to be the IRTG's most appropriate period of significance per NRHP precedent (even though NRHP language in National Register bulletins is quite flexible and can easily be used to justify wider periods of significance). Interpretation on the garden's later history is virtually absent. Including interpretive infrastructure on Portland writer Katherine Dunn and her relationship with the test garden in the 1970s pushes the envelope on the public's expectations of how this landscape has contributed to Portland history. This unorthodoxy is not only desirable from a rhetorical standpoint (Tilden's principle of "interpretation as provocation"); it also helps to convey the phenomenon of how a cultural landscape's meaning changes over time and transcends the rhetorical constraints (like a period of significance) placed upon it by the NRHP. While Dunn's association with the test garden does not align with the period of significance that would likely be ascribed to the test garden if it were nominated to the NRHP, her association is a significant one for Portland's history, and an important one to acknowledge in the context of discussing cultural landscapes for their inherent fluidity and intangible qualities.

Rose Testing: A Brief Explanation

A cursory understanding of rose cultivation is essential for understanding Dunn's interpretation of the landscape and the IRTG's significance to her celebrated cult novel *Geek Love.* Why are roses tested, and what does testing entail? New rose varieties, or cultivars, are tested to assess their commercial viability, which is measured by several

qualities including their disease resistance, fragrance, bloom abundance, bloom form, hardiness, bloom aging quality, and foliage proportion and attractiveness.

The process of creating new cultivars is called hybridizing, and traditionally involves manually cross-pollinating between two parent flowers that each have traits considered desirable (e.g. resistance to black mildew, abundant repeat blooming, or rich fragrance). More technologically precise genetic engineering techniques have been advanced in recent years, but the principles remain the same. Hybridizing has resulted in diverse growth habits that can be seen throughout the test garden and that all are a response to the original tea rose shrub's most undesirable trait: a weak "neck" that could not support the plant's large blooms and that allowed flowers to snap off or droop unattractively. Hybrid teas, the most classic-looking "rose" of all the hybrids, have longer stems that make them perfect for cut flowers. Floribundas are shorter than hybrid teas and boast a more abundant growth habit with multiple but smaller flowers clustered on their stems. The grandiflora is a cross between floribunda and hybrid tea, with the clustered flowers of the former and the large blooms of the latter.[149]

The IRTG is one of 11 national test sites associated with the American Garden Rose Selections (AGRS), a partnership between the rose industry and what was known as the American Rose Society (ARS) at the time of the test garden's founding. The ARS was succeeded by the All-American Rose Society (AARS) from 1943-2013. The AARS was in

[149] "What the Heck is the Difference Between Hybrid Tea, Grandiflora & Floribunda Roses?" Sunnyside Nursery (blog), June 11, 2018, https://www.sunnysidenursery.net/sunnyside-blogs/2018/6/11/what-the-heck-is-the-difference-between-hybrid-tea-grandiflora-floribunda-roses.

turn succeeded by the American Garden Rose Society (AGRS), a trial program that focuses more intensively on evaluating cultivars for their suitability to a specific growing region.[150]

Katherine Dunn (1945-2016)

Born in Garden City, Kansas, on October 24, 1945, Katherine Dunn had a difficult childhood that informed the themes of her writing. Dunn's father abandoned the family when Katherine was two, leaving his wife Velma Golly to care for their five children alone. Velma eventually remarried and the family moved several times before settling in Portland. Dunn endured physical abuse from her mother and left home when she was 17. Dunn's younger brother recalled their mother beating his sister over the head with a broom as Dunn walked out of the house for the last time. Dunn joined a traveling team of young con artists who sold overpriced magazine subscriptions; she eventually ended up passing a bad check and spent time in a Missouri county jail. She based her first published novel, a work of autofiction entitled *Attic* (1970), on this experience.[151]

Dunn described this period in her life as a fork in the road, "where my choices were a life of petty and extremely unglamorous crime, or getting my sh– together in a major way."[152] She came back to Portland and enrolled at Portland State College, paying her tuition by hustling pool around Portland. She eventually earned a full scholarship to Reed College, where she studied philosophy and psychology while writing *Attic.* In 1967, she took a trip to San Francisco, met an aspiring poet named Dante Dapolonia, and dropped out

[150] "Self-Guided Tour," Friends of Washington Park International Rose Test Garden, May 2018, https://waparkrosefriends.org/self-guided-tour; "Our Trial Gardens and Scoring System," American Garden Rose Selections website, accessed May 26, 2023, https://www.americangardenroseselections.com/learn-more.html.
[151] Douglas Perry, "How Katherine Dunn Survived Hard Times and Became a Literary Legend," *The Oregonian,* December 3, 2017, https://www.oregonlive.com/history/2017/12/the_rise_of_katherine_dunn_how.html.
[152] Perry, "How Katherine Dunn Survived."

of school. Dunn and Dapolonia traveled together through Central America and Europe; Dunn published a second novel *Truck* (1971) and gave birth to their son Eli in Ireland. Dunn and Eli returned alone to Portland in the mid-1970s, where Dunn rented a studio apartment in Nob Hill and supported Eli with a series of low-wage jobs: tending bar, waitressing, painting houses, and doing voice-overs for commercials. She worked two or three jobs at once, on top of volunteering at a food co-op in exchange for free groceries.[153]

Although both her published novels were panned by critics, Dunn persisted with her writing and established herself as a respected journalist. By 1981, she was penning a regular column in *Willamette Week* and freelancing for *The Oregonian* and the *New York Times.* She earned a reputation as an authority on professional and amateur boxing, which was rounded out by her own training as a boxer (a skill that came in handy in 2009 when she fended off a would-be mugger outside of a Trader Joe's in northwest Portland). Dunn won the 2004 Dorothea Lang-Paul Taylor Award for her newswriting.[154] She was so well-known for her journalism that *The Washington Post* called her Portland's "gonzo queen," as much for her prolific output as for her irreverent candor.[155] When Dunn interviewed Rajneeshpuram leader Ma Anand Sheela in 1988, she asked the mastermind behind Wasco County's most infamous spiritual cult, "If you're so smart, why are you in jail?"[156]

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[153] Perry, "How Katherine Dunn Survived."
[154] Perry, "How Katherine Dunn Survived."
[155] Angie Jabine, "Letters from Portland," *The Washington Post*, November 3, 1991, https:// www.washingtonpost.com/archive/entertainment/books/1991/11/03/letters-from-portland/9 1b16ca-6840-4ce4-9ea6-032de929e754.
[156] Aaron Mesh, "Thirty Years Ago, 'Geek Love' Author Katherine Dunn Scored a Jailhouse Interview With Rajneeshee Mastermind Ma Anand Sheela. Fireworks Ensued," *Willamette Week*, April 3, 2018, https://www.wweek.com/news/2018/04/03/in-1988-the-famous-portland-author-of-geek-love-sat-down-with-rajneesh-cult-mastermind-ma-anand-sheela-heres-what-happened.

Figure 34: Katherine Dunn in her twenties. Image courtesy of the Katherine Dunn estate

Geek Love (1989)

Journalism paid Dunn's bills, but it was her fiction that engraved her name on the American psyche. Dunn's third novel, *Geek Love,* won the Bram Stoker Award and was nominated for the National Book Award in 1989. Apart from its critical and popular acclaim, Dunn's novel is notable for going against the grain of contemporary mainstream publishing. Literary fiction in the 1980s was dominated by realism from writers like Saul Bellow, John Updike, and Philip Roth. Dunn's experiment with speculative fiction and her generous use of fantastical tropes came out of left field for the publishing industry.[157] *Geek Love* became a cult classic and has been in continuous print ever since its first publication. Dunn earned enough from her royalties to purchase a sprawling historic home in northwest Portland, with several rooms she rented out to fellow writers and other artists.[158]

Geek Love is the dark story of the Binewskis, a carny family doomed as much by circumstance as by their own choices. Parents Al and Crystal Lil experiment with cocaine, amphetamines, and radium to genetically "engineer" their children for use as sideshow attractions in the family business. The children who survive their substance exposure are Arturo, born with flipper-shaped limbs; Elly and Iphy, a pair of Siamese twins; Chick, a telekinetic but outwardly unremarkable boy; and the protagonist Oly, a hunchback albino dwarf who vainly strives after Arturo's affection even as her older brother grows increasingly abusive of the people around him. Arturo eventually grows a following of

[157] Caitlin Roper, "Geek Love at 25: How a Freak Family Inspired Your Pop Culture Heroes," *Wired*, March 7, 2014, https://www.wired.com/2014/03/geek-love.
[158] Aaron Mesh, "The Strange and Beautiful Life of Katherine Dunn, Portland's Beloved Geek," *Willamette Week*, May 17, 2016, https://www.wweek.com/arts/2022/12/10/the-strange-and-beautiful-life-of-katherine-dunn-portlands-beloved-geek.

"'normies'" who trail the Binewskis across the country and form what can only be described as a cult of self-mutilation. They agree to amputate their extremities one by one to resemble their beloved leader, whose arms and legs have been deformed from birth. Arturo promises his followers that their undergoing voluntary amputation will be what earns them transcendence on earth. At the time of narration–years after the cult has disappeared–Oly has moved to Portland to watch over her ailing mother and her own daughter, whose sole genetic mutation is a tail-like protrusion on her lower back, a physical trait that she exploits as a strip artist at a club downtown. All three women live in a dilapidated boarding house, but Oly's mother and daughter are unaware of their true relationship to Oly or to each other. Dunn uses a frame narrative to structure *Geek Love* by moving between the past and the present. As Oly recounts the story of the Binewskis, she also scrambles to protect her daughter from a quack surgeon hellbent on "fixing" young women's bodies to help them realize their full potential.

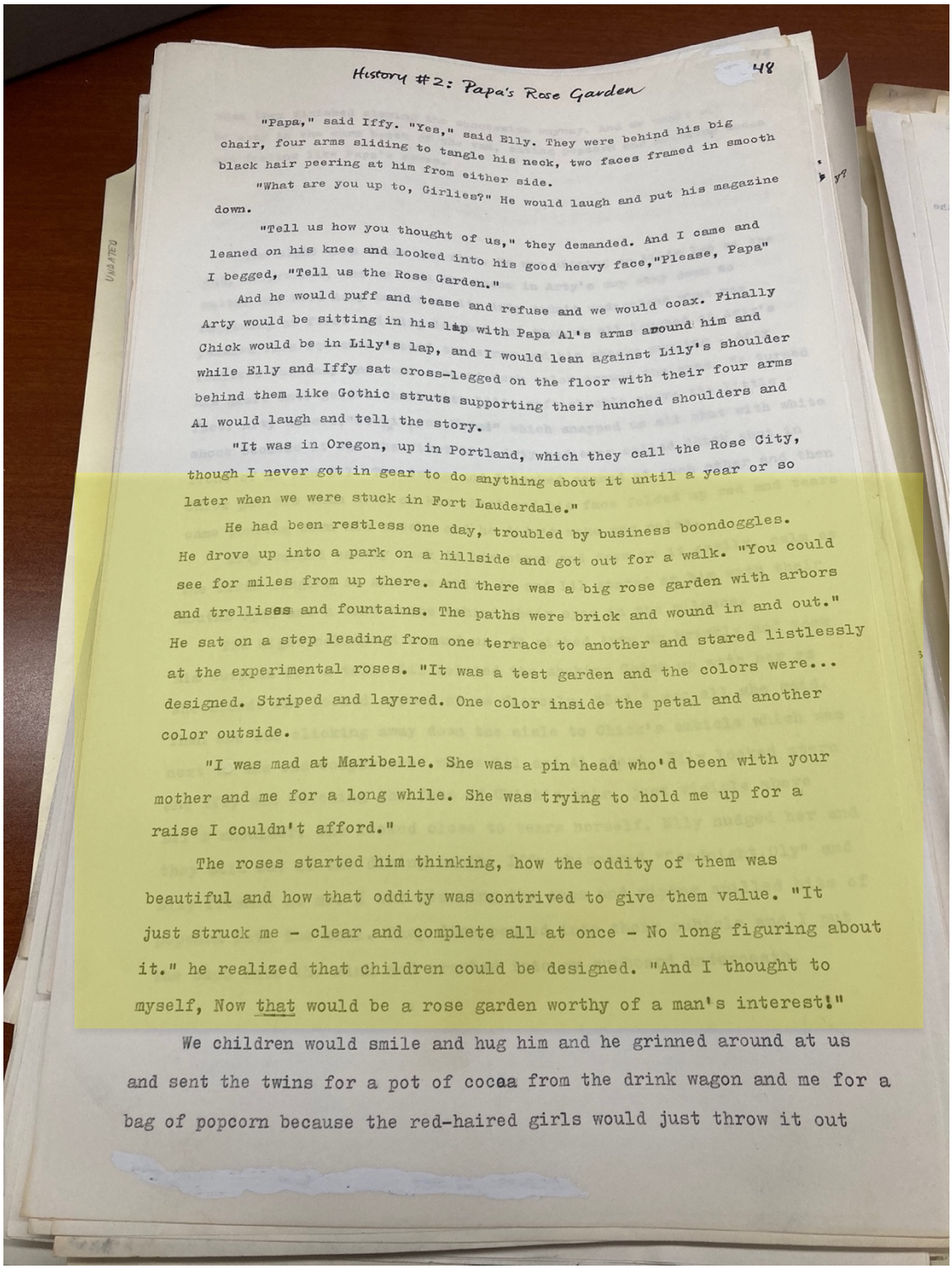
Dunn relates how she got the idea for *Geek Love* while walking in the International Rose Test Garden in the late 1970s. Eli did not want to join her, so she sat on the brick steps alone and contemplated the hundreds of roses that swept down the hillside, "each of which had been bred for very particular qualities…I started thinking about a topic that had engaged me for a long time, nature vs. nurture, and about the manipulation of genetic heritage. It occurred to me that I could have designed a more obedient son."[159] From that first inkling of an idea to publication, it took Dunn over a decade to finish the book, but as Dunn describes it, she was inspired while contemplating a landscape that had been

[159] Marlena Williams, "Katherine Dunn (1945–2016)," Oregon Encyclopedia, October 14, 2022, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/dunn-katherine.

conceived of and designed over 50 years earlier. Her thoughts about the landscape find expression in the first pages of *Geek Love,* when Papa Binewski narrates his own visit to his children (see figure 36).[160] In a clever nod to the novel's creative reading on genetic modification, a writer at *Portland Monthly* reflected upon Dunn's death that *Geek Love* "has no real precursors, and no real offspring."[161]

Figure 35: The Binewski children as conceived of by their parents. Courtesy of Laura Park

[160] Katherine Dunn, *Geek Love,* New York: Random House, 1989, 9-10.
[161] Fiona McCann, "Four Portland Writers Pay Tribute to Geek Love's Katherine Dunn," *Portland Monthly*, May 18, 2016, https://www.pdxmonthly.com/arts-and-culture/2016/05/portland-writers-pay-tribute-to-i-geek-love-i-s-katherine-dunn.



History #2: Papa's Rose Garden 48

"Papa," said Iffy. "Yes," said Elly. They were behind his big chair, four arms sliding to tangle his neck, two faces framed in smooth black hair peering at him from either side.

"What are you up to, Girlies?" He would laugh and put his magazine down.

"Tell us how you thought of us," they demanded. And I came and leaned on his knee and looked into his good heavy face,"Please, Papa" I begged, "Tell us the Rose Garden."

And he would puff and tease and refuse and we would coax. Finally Arty would be sitting in his lap with Papa Al's arms around him and Chick would be in Lily's lap, and I would lean against Lily's shoulder while Elly and Iffy sat cross-legged on the floor with their four arms behind them like Gothic struts supporting their hunched shoulders and Al would laugh and tell the story.

"It was in Oregon, up in Portland, which they call the Rose City, though I never got in gear to do anything about it until a year or so later when we were stuck in Fort Lauderdale."

He had been restless one day, troubled by business boondoggles. He drove up into a park on a hillside and got out for a walk. "You could see for miles from up there. And there was a big rose garden with arbors and trellisss and fountains. The paths were brick and wound in and out." He sat on a step leading from one terrace to another and stared listlessly at the experimental roses. "It was a test garden and the colors were... designed. Striped and layered. One color inside the petal and another color outside.

"I was mad at Maribelle. She was a pin head who'd been with your mother and me for a long while. She was trying to hold me up for a raise I couldn't afford."

The roses started him thinking, how the oddity of them was beautiful and how that oddity was contrived to give them value. "It just struck me - clear and complete all at once - No long figuring about it." he realized that children could be designed. "And I thought to myself, Now that would be a rose garden worthy of a man's interest!"

We children would smile and hug him and he grinned around at us and sent the twins for a pot of cocaa from the drink wagon and me for a bag of popcorn because the red-haired girls would just throw it out

Figure 36: Several early drafts and the final manuscript of Geek Love *contain a description of the test garden and its most distinctive feature. Courtesy of the Katherine Dunn estate*

Aftermath of Geek Love

Dunn ended her column at the *Willamette Week* after *Geek Love's* publication. But she continued writing regularly for the *Skanner,* kept reporting on boxing, and started work on *The Cut Man,* a sequel to *Geek Love* that she would never finish.[162] Dunn also worked with other freelance writers to establish Northwest Writers Inc. in 1986, a bargaining collective that offered dental insurance to its members.[163] She released two more works during her lifetime: *The Slice* (1989), her collected columns from *Willamette Week*; and a collection of her sports journalism, *One Ring Circus: Dispatches from the World of Boxing* (2009). Dunn taught in the creative writing program at Pacific University from 2013 until her death in 2016. She has had two posthumous publications, *On Cussing: Bad Words and Creative Cursing* (2019), and *Toad* (2022), a coming-of-age novel inspired by her time at Reed College. Dunn wrote *Toad* before *Geek Love* but set it aside indefinitely after failing to find an interested publisher. The manuscript was unearthed in 2019 from her archives at Lewis & Clark College and published in late 2022. Though Dunn has always had a cult following since *Geek Love,* the publication of *Toad* has helped to rekindle popular interest and demonstrates what an influential figure she remains in American literature.

Rhetorical Implications

Historical interpretation on Katherine Dunn contributes additional layers of meaning to the test garden's landscape in two major ways. First, such interpretation illustrates to visitors the test garden's continued importance throughout Portland's history.

[162] Angie Jabine, "Letters from Portland," *The Washington Post*, November 3, 1991, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/entertainment/books/1991/11/03/letters-from-portland/911b16ca-6840-4ce4-9ea6-032de929e754/.
[163] Jabine, "Letters," *The Washington Post.*

The test garden does hold considerable significance for its association with Portland's boom years in the early twentieth century, and for its affiliation with the Royal Rosarians, the Portland Rose Festival, the Portland Rose Society, and all these organizations' intertwined histories with Portland's image as "the city of roses." Like any cultural landscape, however, the test garden is dynamic and subject to changes in form and significance over time. The IRTG has been an intrinsic part of Portland's image for decades, and it is no small thing that Katherine Dunn drew inspiration for her creative work from the test garden. Katherine Dunn is a historical figure of such importance that the dearth of public interpretation about her in the city she called home is an intriguing oversight. Dunn's "use" of the test garden as a site of inspiration for her work serves to illustrate how the motivating purposes for the IRTG's construction–horticultural experimentation and municipal prestige–have paved the way for other uses that may not have been directly intended, but that nevertheless contribute to Portland's history in surprising ways. In a city historically recognized as having "an ungodly number of active writers," the overall dearth of public interpretation about this part of Portland's history is an interesting choice, to say the least.[164]

Granted, Dunn did pass away only seven years ago, but considering the imprint she left on American literature and on Portland's image (both earned and somewhat self-perpetuated) as a city that nurtures creative outcasts like it's a full-time job, it seems that seven years is an adequately healthy time to wait.[165] For comparison, children's author

[164] Jabine, "Letters," *The Washington Post.*
[165]Curt Hopkins, "The Ends of the Earth – How the Northwest Came to Be More than a Little Off-Center," *Seattle Times,* June 6, 1993, https://archive.seattletimes.com/archive/?date=19930606&slug=1705043; McCann, "Four Portland Writers Pay Tribute," *Portland Monthly*.

Beverly Cleary, still living and whose popular *Ramona* series was inspired by her childhood in northeast Portland, saw a citizen-funded sculpture garden go up in her name at a public park in 1995.[166]

Secondly, Dunn's own interpretation of the test garden's landscape provides an interesting perspective on genetic modification and could serve to further engage visitors in conceptualizing and understanding the practice of rose cultivation. When describing the practice and goals of rose cultivation, laymen-friendly vocabulary is not always a part of the delivery. Though the process of rose cultivation can be as simple as grafting a branch from one rose to the root graft of another, the science behind rose cultivation has evolved to a genetics-level discussion. Interpretive material on the origins of *Geek Love* may prove more accessible for visitors who are not familiar with genetic science, roses, or gardening in general.

Garden curator Rachel Burlington reports that among visitors' most frequently asked questions are, "What is a test garden? What does it mean to test roses?" These questions indicate public curiosity and an opportunity to make use of interpretation to provide an answer. Robert Schoener describes rose hybridization as a trade that "cannot be acquired at any school. It is personel [sp]. There are no textbooks for it neither [sp]. It means the application and experiments of theories, the Mendelian law of heredity, and [the] DeVries law of mutation [...] it must be known when and how will color change in seedlings to produce new shades."[167] Compare this with Papa Binewski's description of the roses' contrived oddity, and Dunn's literary experiment with writing characters whose

[166] Portland Parks & Recreation, "Grant Park," accessed April 30, 2023, https://www.portland.gov/parks/grant-park.
[167] December 4, 1913 Letter to Dieck, City of Portland (OR) Archives.

physical mutations are regarded as "freakish" rather than conventionally attractive. The idea of breeding a rose to be *less* attractive in all the expected ways–less fragrant, less colorful, less disease-resistant–seems absurd, but this is exactly the question of *Geek Love*: is genetic experimentation not inherently absurd and horrifying, regardless of the results?[168]

Lastly, Dunn's creative experience of the test garden's landscape is an unorthodox one. Experience, if used for creative production, could be construed as a type of "use" (if not by NRHP standards, at least in general; in the context of how "culture" is defined by the NPS, Dunn's use of the IRTG does not constitute a cultural significance, but her significance to American literature and to Portland history is clear).[169] Diverse uses are what make public spaces so compelling, and are also what makes cultural landscapes such fruitful vehicles for historical interpretation. Dunn's own reinterpretation of the test garden's most distinctive feature exemplifies the intrinsic complexities of understanding and defining cultural landscapes.

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[168] Not everyone appreciated *Geek Love*, as evidenced by a book review printed in *The Disability Rag* in 1989. Reviewer Mary Johnson criticized the novel not for the quality of Dunn's writing, but for the premise of the plot and the political opinions about disability rights and culture that Johnson presumed Dunn to hold. Similar opinions and criticisms can be considered in discussions about the form that interpretation would take. But these opinions and criticisms ought not to be used as grounds for altogether excluding interpretation about Dunn and *Geek Love* from the test garden. Geek Love Book Review by Mary Johnson, The Katherine Dunn Archives (OLPb164DUN), Lewis & Clark College Aubrey Watzek Library Archives & Special Collections, Portland, Oregon.

[169] Patricia Parker and Thomas King, "National Register Bulletin 38: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties," Washington, D.C: National Park Service, 1992, 1. NRB 38, currently under revision, acknowledges that while there exist many definitions of culture, "in the National Register programs the word is understood to mean the traditions, beliefs, practices, lifeways, arts, crafts, and social institutions of any community, be it an Indian tribe, a local ethnic group, or the people of the nation as a whole." This definition is meant to be broadly interpreted when evaluating any historic property for the NRHP, and the more detailed definition found in Appendix I of this same document may be helpful in evaluating the cultural significance of Dunn's work in the context of the cultural landscapes as defined by the NPS.

Material Properties

The simplest and quickest way of integrating interpretation about Katherine Dunn into the test garden would be to include mention of *Geek Love* on the summer walking tours conducted by volunteers. But based on the evaluation of the material rhetoric of the test garden's current interpretive infrastructure, interpretation of Katherine Dunn and *Geek Love* would be most effective in a physical form upon the landscape. The visual prominence of the Royal Rosarian Statue, along with the public affection for the Beverly Cleary sculpture garden in Grant Park, makes it clear that statues are an impactful and effective form of interpretation. The physical (or virtual) form that interpretation takes is an important rhetorical element to consider in the planning stages. Bronze sculptures of the four Binewski siblings–Oly, Arturo, Chick, and Elly and Iphy–would harmonize with the landscape's palette year-round and complement the Royal Rosarian Statue's material. At the same time, installing more statues in the garden might help to visually signal to visitors that the garden's significance to Portland history extends beyond the Royal Rosarians and the early twentieth century.

Interpretive plaques on Dunn's life, her creative work, and the origins of her idea for *Geek Love* would accompany the statues. Unlike the plaque on the Royal Rosarian statue, these plaques would be placed in the statues' arms, likely below standing adult eye level but not on the ground. This position would help to make the plaques easier to read from a variety of positions and might also help to mitigate some of the wear and tear from foot traffic.

The statues' specific location would also be an element of material rhetoric to consider. Placing the statues in the display gardens would help to avoid overshadowing the

specific organizations (the Gold Medal Garden with the Portland Rose Society and the Royal Rosarian Garden with its namesake organization). The statues need to be placed somewhere where they will not impede pedestrian movement on the lawn between the flowerbeds. They would ideally be situated in proximity to the testing beds, as Dunn describes that her inspiration for the novel came from considering "the manipulation of genetic heritage." A possible location is directly east of the information kiosk, flanking the central cross-path that leads down the staircase into the official Test Garden. The statues could be placed on concrete pads carved out from the lawn, like that occupied by the Royal Rosarian statue. This location would help to ensure visual prominence but also avoid impeding circulation.

Figure 37: (above) Proposed location of Geek Love *statues in the test garden, and (below) the Beverly Cleary sculpture garden at Grant Park, May 2023*

The statues' materiality and location would combine to create an *enthymeme*. An Aristotelean concept traditionally applied to the verbal tradition, an *enthymeme* is an incomplete argument wherein the listener is compelled to fill in the gaps, "a process of cooperation which can of course be used manipulatively."[170] This process can go both ways when the audience is treated as an active party in the interpretive process. Both interpreter and listener can point out areas of significance ignored by the other, and both parties rely on external information and personal perception when trying to "produce a convincing picture of a particular aspect of historical reality."[171] When paired with historical panels about Dunn and the origins and premise of *Geek Love,* the statues' location adjacent to the testing beds helps visitors to understand the significance of the IRTG both as a horticultural experimentation site and as an important cultural landscape in Portland.

The statues' location next to the Test Garden would fulfill two rhetorical purposes: it would serve to educate the public about Dunn and her writing; and, perhaps more importantly, it would help to provoke the reader's imagination in conceptualizing the significance, if not the detailed science, of rose cultivation. This last strategy would also help visitors understand more deeply the work and importance of the various civic groups affiliated with the test garden—the Dunn interpretation would enter into conversation with the existing interpretation, and in this way would help to highlight rather than overshadow the latter.

[170] Jørgensen, "The Face of the Factory Girl," 13.
[171] Silberman, "Heritage Interpretation," 24.

CONCLUSION

The following list is a brief how-to guide for considering the material rhetoric of a piece of interpretive infrastructure. Several elements of material rhetoric can be extrapolated from a piece of historical interpretation, but this research focused on four: location, format, material, and inclusion of visuals. The rhetorical implications of these four elements may be deduced via several questions, including but not limited to the following:

-Is the interpretation physical and in situ upon the landscape, or is it digital/virtual? How does its form affect its accessibility for different audiences?

-If the interpretation is physical, how does its material affect its readability? Its conspicuity on the landscape? Its durability?

-if the interpretation is physical, where is it located upon the landscape? Is it along a main path, or tucked away? Where is it located in relation to other pieces of interpretation?

-Does the interpretation include images? If so, how large are they in relation to the text? What kind of images (photographs, graphics, etc.)?

In the interests of transparency and clarification, I will note that my analysis in both case studies is not meant as a dismissal of the extant historical interpretation's importance, relevance, or accuracy. Though I critique the existing interpretation via the lens of material rhetoric, my own opinions garnered from research into the landscape's history also inform my analysis of the infrastructure's rhetorical implications and of its potentiality. Historian Hilary Taylor points out that "as a self-consciously public arena, the urban park, perhaps more than other kind of landscape, is redolent of the aspirations of its time."[172] By

[172] Taylor, "Urban Public Parks," 201.

extension, accurate interpretation of these landscapes ought to in part reflect the ideologies and aspirations that informed their initial design. While the word "ideology" has been rhetorically used as a political slur, an ideology is nothing more and nothing less than a system of beliefs and values.[173] Interpreting cultural landscapes as "texts of concretized ideology" is not an expression intended (in my view) to deride any one system of beliefs or values, but merely to recognize that ideology is inescapable and a formative part of every community and individual's worldview. This is all to say that interpretation of multiple histories ought not necessarily deny or overshadow any other history of the landscape. At the same time, these overlooked or excluded histories must also be represented in the interpretive infrastructure in ways that respect their own significance.

Neither Katherine Dunn's literary interpretation of the test garden, nor the tenure of the hippies at Laurelhurst Park, have left visible traces on the landscape that can be measured in any objective way. But each of these narratives constitute distinct events or uses that drew upon the respective landscapes of the test garden and Laurelhurst Park in different ways—moreover, they present as unorthodox or unexpected ways when compared to the customary definition of "use" by historic preservationists and professionals in related fields. Dunn's reading of the landscape at the test garden was directly informed by its status and ensuing design as an experimental horticultural site; and Laurelhurst Park's pastoral aesthetic, with its meandering paths, open clearings, and abundant vegetation, not to mention its distance from downtown, made it in many respects a more hospitable landscape for recreation than Lair Hill. The distinct landscape characteristics of each park in this way directly inform its uses. The methodological

[173] Riesenweber, "Landscape Preservation," 31.

approaches of historic preservation make it difficult to consider a cultural landscape as more than the sum of its parts, but both uses exemplify how the meaning of cultural landscapes does exceed what is immediately visible or most readily interpreted.

Creating historical interpretation is at its best a collaborative effort between community stakeholders and professional mediators with diverse areas of expertise. Heritage interpretation is not a product, but a process or discourse.[174] Stakeholders do not have to limit heritage interpretation to themes deriving from the NPS' methodology for evaluating landscapes. A cultural landscape's significance often transcends its physical attributes and the tangible attributes visible on the landscape. There is no systematic way of assessing significance not directly associated with physical attributes, simply because the nature of this type of intangible significance varies so much from place to place. Methodologically, such assessment involves a syntactical approach, layering the data uncovered in primary sources with the theories, analysis, and conceptual frameworks provided by secondary literature. What is clear though, as discovered through the research processes for the case studies discussed here, is that it takes time to uncover the histories of events that do not leave visual traces on landscapes, and that assessing the meaning of these events within a broader context takes even more time.

A relevant discussion to consider is the feasibility of expanding interpretive infrastructure. Existing logistical constraints, including budgetary priorities and stakeholder interest, must always be considered when implementing new interpretive projects. Portland Parks & Recreation has historically relied on stakeholders to provide the

[174] Silberman, "Heritage Interpretation," 30.

funding for much of the interpretive infrastructure.[175] In light of budget cuts that since 2019 have stymied the bureau's capacity to keep up with regular maintenance, stakeholder support of historical interpretation is more important than ever. As of the time of writing, thousands of park assets are going out of commission, representing more than $600 million in deferred maintenance. These assets include basic infrastructure like park lighting, which is presently getting removed from several parks with no funding or timeline to replace it.[176]

Voter-approved bonds and levies have been the traditional source of park development funds, but as discussed in the historic context for this research, bonds and levies are provisional and finite solutions. In March 2023, state representative Travis Nelson (D-Portland) presented HB3515 to the state legislature, a measure that would allow Oregon cities of more than 600,000 (i.e. Portland) to present a ballot measure that would establish a special municipal tax district for parks funding. Special tax districts are generally employed in rural areas without a significant tax base, but at the county level, the Multnomah County Library District provides a precedent in the Portland area.[177]

While historical interpretation falls at the bottom of the priority list in parks development, neglect of interpretive infrastructure comes at the cost of leaving the public in the dark about their community's history. Historical interpretation that considers more complex or subtle uses of the parks helps Portlanders and visitors understand their parks as dynamic cultural landscapes with multiple layers of meaning and uses. Consideration of

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[175] Horner et al. "Interpretation Strategy," 14.
[176] Claudia Meza, John Notarianni and Sophie Peel, "Idaho's Brash Move, Paying for Parks, and Winter Driving Fails," February 24, 2023, in *City Cast Portland*, produced by John Notarianni, podcast, 34:45, https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/city-cast-portland/id1655458573?i=1000601462241.;Katherine Cook, "City of Portland to Remove Hundreds of Lamp Posts from Parks Due to Safety Issues," website of KGW8 News,, March 17, 2023, https://www.kgw.com/amp/article/news/local/southeast-portland-removing-park-light-poles/283-5d60c735-8eb6-48c2-b4e6-a75b9ed202ce.
[177] Meza et al. "Idaho's Brash Move."

the interests, desires, and experiences of the multiple audiences who could consume the interpretation ought to be considered in the development of this interpretation, both thematically and materially.[178]

Interpreting cultural landscapes as layered, complex places that evolve over time, much like a piece of writing, speaks to the Duncans' stance that "texts are not 'innocent.' They are not transparent windows through which reality may be unproblematically viewed."[179] Framing cultural landscapes themselves as texts of fluctuation, transformation, and contradiction allows for a more accurate and holistic view of the past. Rather than maintaining a "purely curatorial perspective" and treating cultural landscapes as static sites with fixed meanings, historical interpretation ought to itself recognize the dynamic nature and layers of history in parks.[180] The value and impact of heritage interpretation derives more from perception than it does from facts. If, as geographer F. Pierce Lewis asserted, landscape is our "unwitting biography," then the interpretation of that landscape is our attempt to make that biography readable and engaging. [181]

[178] Jørgensen, "The Face of the Factory Girl," 13.
[179] Riesenweber, "Landscape Preservation," 27.
[180] Silberman, "Heritage Interpretation," 30.
[181] Groth, "Frameworks," 4.

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