“So Near the Metropolis”—Lynn Woods, a Sylvan Gem in an Urban Setting

Elizabeth Hope Cushing

Having slowly and inexorably declined for the better part of a century, the City of Lynn’s 2,300-acre Lynn Woods Reservation now seems due for a dramatic reversal of fortunes.

_Lynn Woods has served as an important source for municipal water and as a community recreation area for more than a century. But the woodland and water reservation of more than 2,000 acres has significance well beyond its value for the City of Lynn, Massachusetts. The story of the creation of this forest park and its reservoirs is intimately tied to the emergence of national trends in natural area conservation, regional landscape planning, recreation and American attitudes towards the wilderness. While the Woods have been neglected or abused for many years, the qualities that inspired the late nineteenth century citizens of Lynn to create this progressive municipal park still exist and merit careful nurture for future generations._

In 1985 the Massachusetts Legislature appropriated thirteen million dollars toward the restoration of twelve parks in Massachusetts that Frederick Law Olmsted designed. In doing so, the Legislature set in motion an ambitious and farsighted course of action intended, in part, to set a precedent for other states with Olmsted-designed parks, as well as to create a structure—the Olmsted Historic Landscape Preservation Program (a part of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management)—that would facilitate further restoration of Olmstedian and other important open spaces in Massachusetts. Among the cities chosen to receive funds, Lynn, Massachusetts, was awarded over two million dollars to restore two areas: High Rock, a three-acre park in the middle of the city, and the Lynn Woods Reservation, a tract of land at the outskirts of the metropolis covering approximately twenty-three hundred acres of undulating woodland and containing four bodies of water used as reservoirs by the City of Lynn.

Enormous historical significance is invariably attached to the early settlement of such Massachusetts towns as Hingham and Ipswich, Cambridge and Boston. Yet many towns, founded at very nearly the same time as they, have meandered into the twentieth century all but unknown beyond their own boundaries. Such a town is Lynn, Massachusetts. Situated some eleven miles northeast of the State House in Boston, Lynn nestles in a curve of the North Shore. Originally it stretched six miles along the shore and five miles inland, into a rich, undulating woodland known as the Lynn Woods.

The written history of the Lynn Woods dates back to records of the Pawtucket Indians’ using the area as a hunting ground and the settling of the Lynn area by Europeans in 1629. The forest lands were held in common at that time for the use of the entire community for the gathering of timber and fuel. Fortunately for posterity an early resident of Lynn, William Wood, returned to England and published a book in 1634 entitled New England’s Prospect. In it he describes the waters in the forest streams of Lynn as “far different from the waters of England, being not so sharp but of a fatter substance, and a more jetie color, it is thought there can be no better water in the world.” Wood went on to describe in detail the kinds of wood that were garnered from the forest and the uses to which the wood was put, resorting even to verse:

Trees both in hills and plaines, in plenty be,
The long liv’d Oake, and mournfull Cypris tree.
Skie towering pines, and Chestnutes coated rough,
The lafting Cedar, with the Walnut tough:
The rozin dropping Firre for mafts in ufe,
The boatmen feeks for Oares light, neate grewne fpreuze,
The brittle Ash, the ever trembling Afpes,
The broad fspread Elme, whose concave harbours waifes,
The water fpungie Alder good for nought,
Small Elderm by th’ Indian Fletcheres fought,
The knottie Maple, pallid Birch, Hawthornes,
The Horne bound tree that to be cloven fcornes;
Which from the tender Vine oft takes his fpoufe,
Who twinds imbracing armes about his boughes.
Within this Indian Orchard fruiteis be fome,
The ruddie Cherrie, and the jettie Plumbe,
Snake murthering Hazel, with fweet Saxaphrage,
Whose fpurnes in heere allayes hot fevers rage.
The Diars Shumach, with more trees there be,
That are both good to ufe, and rare to fee.

One of the earliest structures in Lynn Woods was a stone bridge built over one of the streams. The bridge became known as Penny Bridge and the stream as Penny Brook—for each man who used this convenient access to the Woods for fuel gathering was charged one penny until the bridge was paid for.

Wolves and Pirates Prowl Lynn Woods
In 1686 the white inhabitants of Lynn officially purchased the land they had settled on and the surrounding woodlands from the Native Americans for seventy-five dollars.
Agitation for the division of all common lands began in 1693, but it was not until 1706 that the Town Meeting voted to divide them among the landholders of the town.

Certain universal menaces drew the townspeople together in the Woods nonetheless: wolf pits, which exist to this day, although the authenticity of their use has been called into question, were supposedly dug in the early seventeenth century to confront the danger presented to livestock. As late as 1735 there are town records of two days in August being set aside for a general killing of wolves in Lynn Woods.

Probably the most significant remnant from the seventeenth-century period of the Woods involves their link with pirate lore and pirate treasure. The tale was often told of a ship anchoring near Lynn Harbor. Four pirates rowed ashore and left silver in exchange for handcuffs and leg irons made for them at the nearby Saugus Iron Works (Saugus was part of Lynn at that time). They then disappeared, only to return, purportedly depositing

An early map of Lynn, Massachusetts. Saugus was set off from Lynn in 1815. Naumkeag is now called Salem, and Winnisimet is Chelsea.
a treasure of great magnitude within a natural cave in a rocky portion of Lynn Woods. When they once again appeared, three of them were captured, tried, and hanged. The fourth, a man named Thomas Veal, escaped and hid in the natural cave where the treasure was buried. There he dwelt, periodically mending shoes for the people of the town in order to buy supplies, but chiefly secluding himself at his hideout. Several different versions of the pirate's life have been told, but in one respect they all concur. In the year 1658 there was an earthquake that shook Lynn severely. Thomas Veal was in his treasure cave at the time. The rock above splintered and fell in upon him, entombing Veal forever with his ill-gotten hoard. From that time onward the spot has been called Dungeon Rock. News of the buried treasure continued to echo through the years, creating a never-ending interest in the site.

The Woods continued to be used throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth century as it had always been—for fuel. A growing number of people, however, came to appreciate the forest for its sylvan beauty. Chief

![Penny Brook in Lynn Woods](image1)

Penny Brook in Lynn Woods, so named because it cost the early English settlers a penny to use a stone bridge that was built over the brook as a more convenient means of access to the Woods' supply of timber. The one-penny tolls financed construction of the bridge.

![Wolf pits in the Ox Pasture of Lynn Woods](image2)

Wolf pits in the Ox Pasture of Lynn Woods, reminders of New England's primeval wilderness. These were baited, stone-lined traps designed to catch wolves, which in colonial times were a common threat to people and livestock alike. One age-old tale tells of an Indian woman who fell into one of these traps and found herself face to face with an incarcerated wolf. According to the tale, the two spent the night in terror, cowering in their respective corners, until help arrived the next morning.
among these enthusiasts was a self-educated botanist by the name of Cyrus M. Tracy. A Lynn resident from his early youth, Tracy roamed the wooded areas of Essex County and recorded specimens of botanical and geological interest that he observed in his travels. In 1850 he formed the Exploring Circle with four other Lynn residents, a group dedicated to the exploration and recording of the plants, animals, and geological phenomena of the area. They made frequent field trips to the Woods to gather information, and each member was required to present papers and reports monthly to the Circle. Part of their charter included the measurement, exploration, and recording of areas of Lynn Woods previously little known to local residents.

The Spiritualists Take Up the Search
In 1851 another chapter in the history of the Woods opened as well. Lynn had become a gathering place for Spiritualists, an increasing force in the mid-nineteenth century. A man named Hiram Marble from Charlton, Massachusetts, felt himself called to the Lynn Woods to follow up on the legend of

At the end of a circuitous cart path leading from the town of Lynn to Dungeon Rock [in background], Hiram Marble and his son Edwin built a “prim little cottage... cozily situated on a sort of shelf.” They soon made a garden and transformed the cart path into a carriage road.
Dungeon Rock and its buried treasure. He purchased the Rock and five acres surrounding it, and fell to the task which was to consume all of his resources and the rest of his life: finding Thomas Veal's hoard. There is little doubt that it was his deep belief in Spiritualism that motivated him, for there was no reward and little gratification for this particular life's work. Marble consulted frequently with mediums, who would make contact with the spirits. The spirits, in turn, would guide him where to go next. For the first few months he lived alone at the site, digging straight into the hillside. Six months later fear of collapse made him discontinue that route and begin in a more circuitous manner. The bits of stone to be seen on the hillside to this day date from the blasting of that period.

Marble brought his family to join him, in particular Edwin Marble, his son, who worked all of his life as well to find the treasure. Together they built a house for the Marble family to dwell in. In the summer of 1855 they laid out a carriage way from the Rock to the town of Lynn. This road, according to the reminiscences of Charles O. Stickney, who visited the site in his youth, was a "rude, newly made road, now down a sudden and almost breakneck descent, now around the base of a hill, the sharp curve so narrow and sidelong as to threaten an upset, with partial openings affording glimpses of wild ravines and lovely dells." Stickney was in a horse and wagon, but today the road to the site remains steep and winding. Stickney and his friend saw a "prim little cottage... cozily situated on a sort of shelf," with Hiram Marble himself on the roof building a chimney. The Marbles opened the tunnel they were excavating to tourists in order to raise money for the project. A later visitor observed that above the grated door to the tunnel was a sign which read, "Ye who enter here leave twenty five cents behind." Edwin Marble himself took Stickney and his friend around, first inviting them into the house to view the museum, which incorporated the various products of the excavation, including a dirk, the hilt of a sword, and an ancient pair of scissors. Two pencil sketches of the pirate's cave, one with Veal's bones in full view, had been drawn by an invisible artist during a Spiritualist sitting at the house.

The Marbles worked on. In 1856 a woman medium, Nanette Snow Emerson, spent six weeks writing a book called The History of Dungeon Rock in order to raise funds for Marble's work. An intricate and fanciful version of the pirate's tale is woven. In describing the area around Dungeon Rock the medium gives an idea of the ancient, wild beauty of the spot. She also indicates Hiram Marble's intention for the site after he had recovered the treasure: "All this is to be revived again; the woodland to be laid out in groves, and parks and forest. . . ." In light of the fact that this was literally the naissance of the era of public parks in America, within two years of the competition for Central Park in New York City, this seems a generous and enlightened view for the space.

On November 10, Hiram Marble died, and Edwin Marble took over full responsibility for the excavation, which he continued until his own death in 1880. Hiram was buried in Charlton with his family, but Edwin chose to remain on the southwestern slope of the Rock. Because of the burial laws a mound of earth had to be placed above him. A large boulder serves as his headstone and fragments of rock, blown out by Edwin and his father, encircle his grave. After digging and blasting one hundred and seventy-four circuitous feet into the solid rock, neither man succeeded in his mission, and eventually the Rock was left abandoned by the Marble family. Another well known Lynn resident, the singer John Hutchinson, wrote of the Marbles' endeavor:

Hiram Marble told me he would either prove the truth of Spiritualism or dig its grave. So for many decades those earnest, honest men, whom the world may call mistaken, drilled and dug and tunnelled. . . . There [the tunnel] remains, an eloquent evidence of what men will do to prove their faith."
The Exploring Circle Digs In
During the period of the Marble residency the Woods were visited by the curious but also by nature enthusiasts. The Exploring Circle spent a great deal of time charting and investigating the area. In 1858 Cyrus Tracy published a book entitled *Studies of the Essex Flora*. In it he describes several spots in the large county of Essex, but he dwells lovingly upon the area of the Lynn Woods. He considered them botanically undiscovered: "Those who love pleasant and finely toned scenery have often found much satisfaction in this vicinity, and the culler of choice old histories and romantic legends has long esteemed it a productive field," but the botanist seemed to have overlooked it, being unable to believe "that a district so near the metropolis might contain some things worth looking for." Here Tracy hits upon one of the unique and valuable features of the Lynn Woods, both then and now. "So near the metropolis" is a theme that the reader must bear in mind, for it is one of the essential reasons that the Woods are so important to this day.

The Exploring Circle recorded the various botanical wonders they came across in their travels and kept watch for the biggest threat to the forest: fire. The people of Lynn from early days learned to dread the uncontrollable conflagrations which raced through the Woods, destroying acres of timber.

The Circle was interested in geology as well as botany. In 1858 a "Committee on Bowlders and Erratic Rocks" was formed. Because of ancient glacial paths Lynn Woods are strewn with gigantic boulders. Once again, thorough descriptions were given of unusual formations, frequently accompanied by Ruskinesque drawings of them. By the time of the Circle's peregrinations of the early 1860s, the original town of Lynn had been

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"Ruskinesque" sketch of a glacial erratic, a "rocking stone," in Lynn Woods. The Exploring Circle was interested in geology as well as botany, and in 1858 formed a "Committee on Bowlders and Erratic Rocks." This drawing was made by Stephen Decatur Pool in 1854.
Sketch of the "Big Cedar," which once grew on Cedar Hill in Lynn Woods. The sketch, which is preserved in the records of the Exploring Circle, was probably made by Stephen Decatur Pool in 1855.

divided into three communities: Lynn, Lynnfield, and Saugus. The vast woodland where they roamed remained primarily in Lynn, with sections in both of the other communities.

In 1869 Lynn suffered a trauma that had reverberating effects upon the community. A ferocious fire consumed a section of the factory district of the town. Officials felt it was time that Lynn faced the necessity of providing a better water supply, for the fire department had been hopelessly inadequate in the face of the disaster. Their first purchase of a water supply was in 1870—an abandoned mill pond in Lynn Woods known as Breed's Pond. A Public Water Board was formed.

**Water and the Floodgates of Development**

The development of the water sources of Lynn is of primary importance to the fate of the Lynn Woods for two reasons. By 1872 the Water Board was assuming the role of supplying all of Lynn's water. This meant that there was a rapidly growing need for water sources and water-storage facilities. The Lynn Woods had the pure streams so glowingly acclaimed by William Wood in 1634. It was a natural spot for damming and establishing storage basins, and the Water Board looked to four brooks in the Woods, Hawkes, Penny, Birch, and Beaver, to meet the demand. They wished to create four artificial ponds, or storage basins, for fire and for a general water supply. With this step the Public Water Board had to make roads in order to reach, establish, and maintain the new water sources. By 1873 a drive fifty feet wide and one and one-half miles long had been created around the Breed's Pond Reservoir. For the first time since white men had established the ancient cart paths, an inner section of the Woods had made more easily accessible to people.

The effect on the Lynn Woods was obvious. Suddenly land that had always been treated as too rocky and barren to be used was open to development. The alarm was raised for people who wished to preserve the sylvan setting so close to a growing town. A later park report states, "The Water Board's ponds and girdling roads punctured the Woods and exposed them to undesirable occupation."8

It is not surprising that Cyrus Tracy was the first person to recognize the threat to this unspoiled environment. The 1891 Lynn Park Commission report states:

> His call, his inner inspiration was to teach the people of Lynn that they had in the Woods "an asylum of inexhaustible pleasures." ... He led parties of enthusiastic naturalists to scenes of beauty and grandeur hitherto unseen, save by his eyes. He dedicated hilltops and glens with mystic rites.9

And that is exactly what he did. He established "Camp Days" in the forest and published notices in the local papers encouraging the citizens of Lynn to join the Exploring Circle in naming and dedicating various sites in the Woods with elaborate ritual, speeches, poems, and songs. Tracy himself would lead tours for the sake of "rambling, studying the splendid views, botanizing and the like," as an 1881 Lynn Transcript article describes it. Throughout the 1870s he endeavored to en-
By 1881 Tracy felt the threat to the Woods so intensely that he guided the Exploring Circle to the decision to insure the preservation of the Lynn Woods for posterity. After a great deal of consultation with the city government, on December 6, 1881, the "Indenture Adopted for the Purpose of Constituting the Free Public Forest of Lynn" was adopted. Tracy describes in the Records of the Trustees of the Free Public Forest the method used to establish the Indenture. He insisted that the current mayor sign the Trustees into acceptance as an official body connected with the town government. He felt, correctly, that without official status the Trustees of the Free Public Forest would never have been established as a permanent institution:

By [the mayor's] compliance, the measure was invested with the character of great public benevolence, and thus admissible, under the statutes, to become a perpetuity. And thus was secured the most important point of all; for if any plan for the preservation of a forest cannot be in its nature perpetual, it is at once liable to every kind of change and derangement, and simply remains a failure.11

Tracy considered the Lynn Forest the "ancient legitimate inheritance of the people of Lynn," a reference to its many years as common land, and he set about gathering land for the enterprise with unbounded zeal.

The Tide Begins To Turn
The nationwide park movement by this time was an established fact of American life. New York landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted was the reigning champion of urban open spaces—for the sake of aesthetic considerations to be sure, but also because he keenly observed that with the growth of cities, and the consolidated living arrangements which ensued, it would be psychologically necessary to ensure open spaces for the working people who could not otherwise escape from the dust and noise of the city. "Breathing room" became a ubiquitous cry, and by the 1870s the enlightened elements of society and politics were gathering forces to create a permanent park system for Boston. After numerous struggles the Park Act of 1875 was passed by the Boston City Council. That June, the voters of Boston gave the plan their approval. The first person the newly formed Park Commission called to advise them was Frederick Law Olmsted. Thus began a long association between Boston and the famous landscape architect and with his firm. In 1882 the Massachusetts Legislature passed a bill known as the Park Act which allowed municipalities of the Commonwealth to condemn and purchase lands within their boundaries for the purpose of establishing public parks. This act was to be used by many cities and towns of Massachusetts as the basis for their park program.

By 1882 the Trustees of the Free Public Forest were setting up their program in earnest. It is clear that they considered themselves to be pioneers in the effort to preserve forest lands in the tradition espoused by Elizur Wright, a Massachusetts man in the vanguard of forest preservation. Wright actually participated in one of the Camp Day rituals in the Lynn Woods. The Trustees published the Indenture in the newspaper and solicited donations of land and money. "The Trustees will come to you and urge you to act as benefactors to that which is, after all, only your own interest."12

Subscriptions slowly began to come in as the Trustees embarked upon their program for the betterment of the forest. During the 1880s they improved the roads and paths left from the days of fuel gathering and livestock holding. They made efforts to clear out underbrush and thicket, both for fire control and for better access to the forest. Signs, seats, and shelters were provided, but vandalism reared its ugly head, raising the need for a forest
patrol. By donation and purchase the Trustees acquired acreage in small bits.

By 1887 a prominent and wealthy citizen of the town, Philip A. Chase, had become involved in the forest's preservation. It was a fortunate day for the Lynn Woods when he did, for he was a tireless and enthusiastic supporter all his life. When the thirteen acres of the incomparably beautiful Penny Brook Glen, with its brook, rare and wonderful wildflowers, and seventeenth-century bridge, were about to fall into the hands of lumbermen it was Chase who rallied support to save it and raised the necessary money to buy it and the surrounding land. Next, he aided in purchasing Dungeon Rock and the area around it from the Marble heirs.

In 1888 the City Council of Lynn authorized the construction of a new reservoir, to be achieved by the damming of Hawkes and Penny Brooks. The new basin, a large one, was to be established in the center of the Woods, in an area known as Blood Swamp. The construction began at once and with it came a more serious threat to the sanctity of the Woods. The swamp was set much deeper into the Woods than Breed's Pond. A park report stated, "The construction of the water basin in Blood Swamp, and the road around it, made Lynn Woods more accessible and liable to human occupation. The gifts of land and money ceased."13

In November of 1888 the voters of Lynn were asked to exercise their franchise on the question of the 1882 Park Act. The resulting tally was in the affirmative, a resounding vote of confidence in the work already being done by the Trustees and a confirmation of commitment to the idea of public parks. This was the impetus needed for the park movement in Lynn. The Lynn Transcript of June 1889 argued strongly for the protection that only a public park could offer to the Woods:

The Park Act passed by the Legislature a few years ago,—and accepted by our city—was the beginning of a movement which if completed will secure results that are incalculable for the public good. The public parks are the breathing places of our great cities,—near and inexpensive retreats, where the tired worker can find rest and recreation. . . . We have within our forest domain a territory . . . capable of bringing benefits to future generations that can not be measured in money. For who can measure that social and moral education of communities, which is the outcome of a line of influences where nature and art unite in appealing to every sense of beauty, and where the moral instincts are quickened by the presence of every uplifting emotion, and by the absence of every debasing or sordid suggestion.14

Mr. Chase Makes His Move

Once again Philip A. Chase moved forward to a leadership role. He invited the Mayor and the City Council, the Water Board, park preservationists, and prominent citizens to the Woods, ostensibly to see the site of the new storage basin but actually to inspire enthusiasm for making Lynn Woods a public park. Among the speakers of the day was the Water Board chairman, who enunciated a theme that was to thread throughout the history of the Woods: the Lynn Woods' "beauty consists in its naturalness; leave it as nature has made it and we shall have a rustic resort, so unique in its character that Lynn will acquire a reputation from its Forest Park as it now has from its unrivaled shore and magnificent beaches."15 The mayor of the city was enthusiastic as well: "It is impossible to estimate the benefits to posterity that will accrue from this great enterprise. . . . [I]t behooves us to make further provision for the prosecution of this work by an annual appropriation for improvements."16 And make further provisions they did, for in July of 1889 city bonds worth thirty thousand dollars were issued to facilitate the implementation of the Park Act.

The Board of Park Commissioners was appointed in October of that year, with Chase serving as chairman. The first two acts of the Commission were to hire a surveyor and to establish a "Citizens Fund" for the Reservation. This fund eventually swelled to over twenty thousand dollars, thanks to the solicitation and enthusiasm of Philip Chase.
Chase, who later served as a commissioner on the Metropolitan Park Commission, had written earlier to Frederick Law Olmsted to seek his advice about how the Park Commission should best superintend the Lynn Forest. Olmsted visited the Woods in August, and wrote a few days later to Malden journalist and park advocate Sylvester Baxter. The two men were clearly working on methods to promote interest in the park movement and seeking ways to further their cause. This letter, with its promotional advice for Baxter, may well have been the inspiration for Baxter's 1891 *Lynn's Public Forest: A Handbook Guide to the Great Woods Park in the City of Lynn*.

In the letter the essence of Olmsted's philosophy for the park is distilled, and Olmsted allows himself a certain candor reserved for personal observation. He thought the forest "a continuation of the Middlesex Fells" and "a roving ground not for Lynn and the northern suburbs only but for the people of Boston"—important concepts to bear in mind considering how hard Charles Eliot later attempted to incorporate the park into the metropolitan system he created. Of primary importance to Olmsted was the question of maintaining the Woods in their present natural state:

It should be to Boston something like Fontainebleau to Paris and Richmond & Windsor to London. The townspeople of Lynn do not appreciate it, I judge. Probably want a park or public garden. It is, what is so much better, a real forest.

In November of the same year Philip Chase, in his capacity as chairman of the Lynn Park Commission, received Olmsted's formal recommendation for the forest. Olmsted first gave a brief definition of the principal elements of a park and stated:

The most striking circumstance of your property is that although near by populous and flourishing communities, much of it is in a state of undisturbed nature and as a whole it is in a singularly wild, rugged and rude condition... The reason it has been allowed to remain of such a character is found in the outcropping ledges and boulders and gravel with which its surface is strewn.

**Olmsted's Recommendations**

Those very qualities that had saved the site from development, however, made it impossible for Olmsted to envision a "park-like" character for Lynn Woods. He felt that "decorative features commonly seen in parks would appear fussy and impertinent, everywhere jarring upon the natural scenery." Olmsted's fear was that the impossibility of creating a traditional, formal park might prevent people from understanding Lynn Woods' value as a place for public recreation. He stressed that most communities did not have such a situation offered to them, for the wild parcels of land were usually taken up with industrial development or domestic architecture that were incompatible with wild areas.

The advantage of the setting of the Woods was that, being slightly outside the city, it could maintain its sylvan qualities, containing many points from which the city could not even be seen, "supplying a place of refreshing, and restful relief from scenery associated with the more wearing part of the life of the towns-people."

Olmsted felt that a relatively inexpensive program of management could be arranged. "What is mainly required is that a method of improvement shall be pursued steadily, systematically, continuously, for a series of years." Three main areas stood out for the process: to gradually thin the forest, allowing the most promising trees to grow properly; to introduce new vegetation at particular points, both to cover barren areas and to replace unhealthy plants growing in moist areas with plants better suited to such sites; and, lastly, to "enlarge, strengthen and emphasize a local character" by planting vegetation that increased that character and removing vegetation that detracted from it.

The Park Commission set to work at once to accumulate land and to put into effect the
wise counsel of Olmsted. By 1890 they had acquired nine hundred and ninety-six acres and by 1891 the total acreage was up to sixteen hundred. This rapid expansion of the public holdings in part resulted from the fact that the Park Commission often pooled its resources with those of the Water Board as the reservoirs required large areas of undeveloped land as watershed protection.

Roads and paths were cleared or built, thinning, lopping, and clearing of trees was an on-going process, partly to establish the incredible vistas for which the Reservation was famous. The views from high Lynn Woods hills extend for miles and drew visitors from miles around. Eventually towers for fire spotting were added to three of the hills which increased visitor interest in the spot. Public transportation in the form of trollies were brought from the center of Lynn to ensure access to the park for everyone.

Special features of interest such as Dungeon Rock, the wolf pits, Penny Bridge, and the bodies of water had to be protected as well as providing protection for the visitors. Horse sheds were built at Dungeon Rock (one of the great favorites of tourists), carriage turn-about were provided at important vistas, and wells were dug at various intervals.

The Park Commissioners took their responsibility to the Woods seriously, and the members were able to take a long view of the process of preservation. The foresight and wisdom of the following statement from the 1890 report of the Park Commission reflects a deep commitment to the park and to the community:

Whatever this city can do for the preservation of the forests, it is bound to do, not for the enjoyment of the living only, but for the generations that succeed us. Fifty years hence the population within a radius of ten miles of Boston, if the present rate of increase of large towns continues, will number not less than 3,000,000. These forest spaces for air and exercise, which can be provided today at such a trifling cost, will be of inestimable value to the large population which will seek relaxation and rest in Lynn Woods.

—Park Commissioners, Lynn, Massachusetts, 1890
A topographic map of the Lynn Woods Reservation, compiled for the Lynn Park Commissioners in 1892 and revised in 1910. The original map accompanied the Commissioners' report for 1892, which was the first report to contain a list of the Woods' animals and plants.
Because of their obvious and unusual far-sightedness, the Commissioners saw themselves as playing an important role in the forest-preservation movement:

The preservation of forests is becoming a question of vital interest to the whole country. The destruction of timber in the mountainous regions that make the watershed of our great rivers, has aroused the public mind to consider the consequences. In our small field we may show a public spirit, and bestow a care upon the forest around us, that may be a healthful example.14

The Lynn Woods Today—And Tomorrow
And so the great forest tract of Lynn Woods was established. I wish I could report that the initial support received by the Park Commission had continued unabated. Alas, as in the case of most public spaces, support diminished as the years went by, despite heavy use by the public and valiant efforts on the part of the Park Commission and Park Department to maintain the forest through the years. Eventually, this valuable tract of public open space reached the state of degradation it has come to today. It is fortunate that the Olmsted Historic Landscape Preservation Program chose Lynn Woods among its projects. All of the elements that made this Reservation such a treasure in the past still exist.

The restoration project is a fine beginning, but maintenance and—more importantly—a resurgence of interest from the public will be required to reinvigorate the site and bring it back to its former glory.
back to the position of prominence it deserves. As the Boston area becomes more and more populated, the words of the 1890 Park Commissioners' report will become even more prophetic. It is time that the Reservation again be a place of "inestimable value to the large population which will seek relaxation and rest in Lynn Woods."

If You Visit
It is important to realize that the present condition of the Lynn Woods Reservation bears little resemblance to that of its heyday in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Budget cuts and a general lack of interest have created the inevitable problems of overgrown vegetation, trash, and neglect. Vandalism and neglect are among the many issues that the City of Lynn and the Department of Environmental Management are working to eliminate so that the work of restoring the park to its original beauty, and the process of building an enthusiastic and committed constituency can begin. Even in its present condition the Lynn Woods Reservation is an unusually lovely place in which to walk (cars are not allowed because the roads are badly washed out in several places), but, as with any large tract of unsupervised land, it is wise to visit with a friend or small group.

Endnotes
1 Alonzo Lewis and James R. Newhall, History of Lynn: 1629–1864. Lynn: George C. Herbert, 1890, page 70.
2 Charles O. Stickney, "Pirates Home" in Lynn Woods:
7 Cyrus Mason Tracy, Studies of the Essex Flora. Lynn: Stevenson & Nichols, 1858, pages 5 and 6.
9 Ibid.
10 Lynn Transcript, 22 June 1880, page 2.
11 "Records of the Trustees of the Free Public Forest," 12 January 1882, page 7. The "Records" are located at the Lynn Historical Society.
14 "Our Public Park," Lynn Transcript, 7 June 1889, page 2.

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CORRECTION
The second sentence of the third paragraph of Mark Primack's article, "Twenty Years After: The Revival of Boston’s Parks and Open Spaces," in the Summer 1988 issue of Arildia (Volume 48, Number 3, page 10, text lines 25 and 26), should read: "Now, a century later, some sixty-eight percent of Boston's housing units are rented; most have no backyards. Twenty percent of the city's population lives in public or subsidized housing."