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# PINE BANK

Although many of the parks, places, and private residences designed by Frederick Law Olmsted reflect nature shaped dramatically by the human hand, it was at Jamaica Park that the real landscape architect was Mother Earth. Crafted not so much with shovels and surveying equipment but rather by the slow drag of glaciers, Jamaica Pond's natural perfection brought out a side of Olmsted that people are not as familiar with: Olmsted the conservationist. Here, standing under the overhang of pine and hemlock that, "darkening the water's edge", brought "beauty in reflections and flickering half-lights," stood not the man who moved earth and blasted rock to create Central Park, but instead the philosopher who gave words to the belief that the government had an obligation to protect the untouched beauty of America in future national parks such as Yosemite. With this philosophy in mind, Frederick Law Olmsted left Jamaica Pond the least changed of all the parks in the Emerald Necklace.

Prior to it becoming part of the Emerald Necklace, Jamaica Pond was used in a variety of ways. First as a water source, eventually becoming an economic tool used in the production of ice – a process that contaminated the pond's water. It also was used for recreation in a variety of ways: fishing, swimming and especially skating in the winter, saw people from across the city come to visit the pond. Bostonians from all backgrounds could gather and enjoy the water. Over time however, the accessibility for all Bostonians to get to Jamaica Pond was curtailed as the rich began buying the property around the pond for summer homes. This caused the value of the surrounding land to skyrocket. In fact, the land outside of Jamaica Pond became so expensive that when the Park Commissioners were looking to buy land for the modern Jamaica Park (Jamaica Pond taking up about half the area of the park), they were only able to buy a small ring around the water, along with the property of the Perkins family.

Overlooking the pond, this estate, known as Pinebank, saw three generations of the family build three separate houses, each constructed upon the wreck or the burnt-out ruins of the last. After incorporation into the park, the Pinebank mansion served multiple purposes: from a restaurant, to Boston's first children's museum, to a location to exhibit the works of the city's new and emerging artists. After more than a century of serving Boston and after being gutted by multiple fires, defaced by vandalism, and left to the whims of nature, the Pinebank mansion was placed on the list of the top ten most endangered historic places. Eventually, after much debate, it was demolished in 2007. It is now commemorated by a granite memorial that traces the home's outline.

With so much history existing in a home such as Pinebank, do you think the decision to tear it down goes against Olmsted's idea of conservation, or does the existence of the home in the first place contradict the landscape architect's philosophy of emphasizing Jamaica Pond's natural, rather than man-made, beauty?

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