Historic Wayside Signage for Greenway

Nature
The Lowell Cemetery is one of the oldest "garden" cemeteries in the United States. Established in 1841, it was meant to be a burial ground for the dead and a park-like retreat for the living.

Industry
Water-powered manufacturing started early on the lower Concord River. Here, eighteenth-century settlers built numerous dams and mills to saw lumber, grind grain, and card wool. In 1818, Moses Hale erected several buildings at Wamesit Falls to make gunpowder.

Community
With the growth of industry in the nineteenth century, Lowell attracted thousands of immigrants. The first large group of foreign-born came from England and Ireland, and waves of immigrants from other countries followed, often organizing their lives around a church.

“Who looks upon a river in a meditative hour, and is not reminded of the flux of all things?”
- Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nature (1836)
Greenway Sign #2

WAMESIT FALLS OVERLOOK

Nature

Where Wannalantur’s seventeenth-century palisade fort once stood, Rogers Fort Hill Park was established in 1886, on the site of the Rogers family farm. The formal paths and fountains of the park’s lower portion were designed by the Olmsted firm and completed decades later.

Industry

Starting as an overseer at Moses Hale’s gunpowder factory, Oliver Whipple married Hale’s youngest daughter and took over the business in 1821. That same year he also financed construction of the Wamesit Canal, which extended to its fall reach by mid-century and powered other mills and factories drawn to the area.

Community

Even as late as the 1920s, most of the residents in the Lower Concord River corridor—the Sacred Heart; Back Central, and Lower Belvidere neighborhoods—were either foreign-born or the children of foreign-born parents.

Parents of Massachusetts-Born Residents in Concord River Neighborhoods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1880</th>
<th>1920</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both Parents Foreign-Born</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Parent Foreign-Born</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Parents U.S. -Born</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Greenway Sign #3

**Nature**

Children growing up in Concord River neighborhoods played in local parks, vacant lots, and even abandoned mills. They also fished and swam in the river and canals, in spite of certain hazards. Dye waste turned swimmers fingernails various colors, and the water reeked of Nancy's waste.

"There was an old footbridge that went over the river down there, right in back of the mills... When I was a kid, you'd go up to Fort Hill Park and take that as a shortcut home... Over the years the water had washed boards away. It was just the metal structure. You'd have to kind of balance your way to walk across it. That's what we called the 'holly' bridge."

- Martin Lamoye, former Crowley Street resident

**Industry**

The Lowell & Andover Railroad was completed in 1874, branching off from the Boston & Maine below Lawrence Street and traveling a short path on what is now the Concord River Greenway. With this rail access, Perry Street finally saw the arrival of business and trade.

American Hick and Leather, located on the site now occupied by Bradford Industries, was one of the largest tanneries in the United States. It stood in 1930, and the buildings were licensed by the US in the 1980s. (photo right)

**Community**

In the 1890s, immigrants began to come to Lowell from the Azores, Madeira, and Cape Verde islands, as well as continental Portugal. Many of them settled in Back Central and, in 1907, they built their own church, St. Anthony's of Lisbon, on Central Street.

"The Portuguese always kept their homes very neat and clean. They had all different kinds of flowers, of course, but they also had grapevines, and they'd have the arches."

- Mary Ann Lichy, former Esquitos Street resident
Greenway Sign #4

Nature

Although River Meadow Brook and the Concord River once teemed with shad and alewife, by the nineteenth century, dams blocked fish runs and the waters ran heavy with industrial waste and domestic sewage.

Industry

The first mill at Maccic Falls was an iron works, built in 1791 by Nathan Ames on the west bank of the river. By the 1920s the site belonged to the Lowell Electric Light Company, which also opened a generating facility on the opposite bank, north of Rogers Street.

Community

Smaller in number than other immigrant groups in the area, Back Central’s Armenian population was still large enough to establish St. Varvarantz Armenian Apostolic Church in 1920, near Lawrence and Church Streets. Many of the immigrants’ children attended the nearby Goburn School, built in 1879.
Greenway Sign #5

Nature

Drawing on centuries of tradition, native inhabitants used the land along the Concord River to cultivate corn, beans, and squash together in the same field. Beans restored soil fertility; squash leaves shaded the ground, and corn stalks provided a scaffold for beans. Plant diversity also minimized the threat of insect pests.

Industry

Middlesex Falls was first dammed in the eighteenth century to power a grist mill and saw mill on the west bank. Later, in 1818, entrepreneur Thomas Hurd oversaw construction of a new dam as well as a power canal for textile manufacturing there. The Middletown Manufacturing Company produced woolen goods at this site until the early twentieth century but began renting its mill buildings in the 1920s as the textile industry declined. In 1956, the Warren Street property was converted into a parking garage.

Community

With the onset of immigration from southern and eastern Europe at the turn of the twentieth century, a flood of Polish and Lithuanian immigrants came to Lower Bickerland. Typically, the Poles attended Holy Trinity on High Street between Oak and Porter Streets, and the Lithuanians went to St. Joseph’s Lithuanian Church on Rogers Street.

“I was born in the Fayette Street area, and right behind the house where I lived was the river. … On the left was a French family, the Poirs. We were the Polish family, Rachael Stanowicz in the middle, and on the right I remember the Killorvan, the Irish family. And on the top of the inline we had a blank family, the Edmonds.”

- Mary Lou Laney, former Fayette Street resident

“Who looks upon a river in a meditative hour, and is not reminded of the flux of all things?”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nature (1856)
Greenway Sign #6

CONCORD RIVER GREENWAY

Nature

Until the mid-nineteenth century, there was an island in the Concord River, downstream from Middlesex Falls, that provided two good fishing places at either end. Wamgoit Indians and early white settlers caught shad, alewife, eel, and salmon there in great quantities, before dams and pollution decimated fish stocks.

Industry

Constructed in 1792 to facilitate the movement of people and goods around Pawtucket Falls, the Pawtucket Canal became part of an extensive power canal system used by Lowell’s textile mills. This included the Massachusetts Mills, built at the Merrimack and Concord River confluence in 1841, as well as the adjacent Prescott Mills, incorporated in 1844.

Community

During the end of the nineteenth century, an increasing number of immigrants came to live and work in Lowell, Irish, English, and Canadians made up the largest portion of foreign-born residents in the city’s Concord River neighborhoods, but many other ethnic groups were also represented, sometimes by only one person from a particular country.