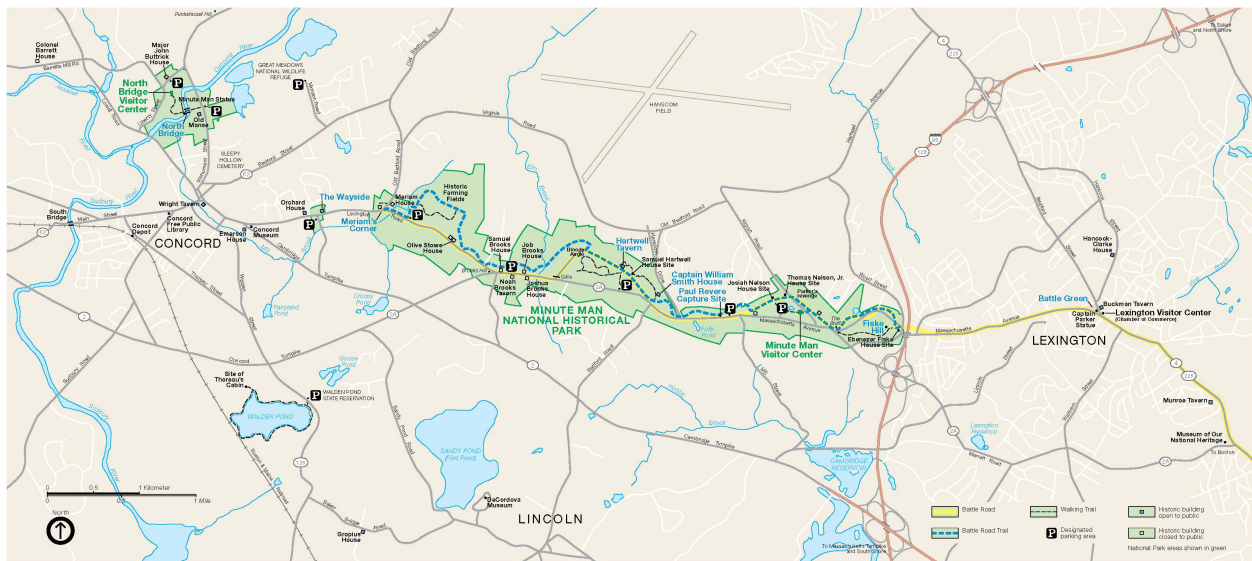


Minute Man National Historical Park: Research and Design for the “Battle Road” Entrance and Visitor Center Areas

Introduction

This studio will research and analyze Minute Man National Historical Park, and will then propose design ideas for the eastern entrance area of the Battle Road Unit.

The studio will address two outstanding needs for landscape design thinking at the park today: 1) the entrance at the east end of the park lacks a significant sense of arrival at a national park and of entering a historic landscape; and 2) the principal interpretive experience and orientation to the park at the Visitor Center does not engage visitors with the surrounding landscape features—Battle Road, Fiske Hill, etc.—located in the east end of the park.



Minute Man National Historical Park consists of four discontinuous areas (“units”) about sixteen miles northwest of Boston in the towns of Concord, Lincoln, and Lexington. The Battle Road unit of the park is the largest, about 849 acres, and includes four miles of the Battle Road, the route between Concord and Boston (originally Bay Road) along which Colonial “minutemen” militia and British troops fought on April 19 (Patriots Day), 1775. The battle is considered the initiation of hostilities—the “shot heard ‘round the world”—that began the American Revolution.

In 2006, National Park Service (NPS) landscape architect Deborah Dietrich-Smith provided this historical overview of the park for a Cultural Landscape Inventory of the Battle Road Unit.

Historical Overview:

For at least one thousand years prior to European settlement, Algonquian people planted crops and fished along the Musketequid River (Concord River) in what would become known as the Concord Plantation. In the winters, Native American men hunted game in the vast woodlands surrounding the river. Using fire, they managed the woodlands to promote easier hunting and traveling, and to increase production of edible fruits and nuts. By the 1630s, diseases introduced by early European settlers had decimated the Native American population within the present-day Battle Road Unit.

In 1635, a handful of Puritan families ventured inland sixteen miles to settle within the newly established Concord Plantation. In 1640 the town of Cambridge extended west to the Concord Plantation's eastern border, and the newly settled land was known as Cambridge Farms. In 1713, Cambridge Farms separated from Cambridge, becoming the town of Lexington. The town of Lincoln was formed in 1754 and its boundaries included portions of Concord and Lexington.

Settlement within the present-day Battle Road Unit occurred along the Bay Road (Battle Road), the primary east-west road connecting the Concord Plantation and Cambridge Farms (later the towns of Concord, Lincoln, and Lexington) to Boston. Agricultural fields in the early to mid-seventeenth century were commonly held in large tracts a distance from the farmhouse. Farm production was subsistence based, each family producing enough food for personal consumption and perhaps a small amount for local trade. As the century progressed, the common field system began to dissolve and agricultural fields were clustered closer to the farmsteads. By 1775, tilled fields, pastures, and meadows divided by fences and stone walls occupied most of the acreage along the Battle Road. Intermixed were small woodlots, orchards, farm buildings, taverns, and a number of small home-based businesses.

In response to growing colonial resistance and the stockpiling of arms, British General Thomas Gage ordered the confiscation of colonial arms supplies in Charlestown, Cambridge, and Salem, and then finally in Concord. Two colonists, Paul Revere and William Dawes, aware of the impending seizure, rode ahead of the British troops during the early hours of April 19, 1775 to warn Concord of the British advance. In Lexington, the men were joined by a third rider, Dr. Samuel Prescott. Near an opening to a pasture in Lincoln along the Bay Road (Battle Road), British officers captured Paul Revere. Escaping, Dawes headed back to Lexington while Prescott pressed on to Concord to spread the alarm. After a clash between British Regulars and colonists in Lexington, the Regulars advanced to Concord where they occupied the town center and seized control of the town's two bridges. Seeing smoke rising from the center of town, colonial militia and minutemen who had assembled in a field overlooking the North Bridge, descended to the bridge to confront the British. Shots ensued, men on both sides fell and the overmatched British troops retreated to the center of town.

From a ridgeline north of Concord Center, militia and minutemen watched the British troops as they reassembled and began their twenty-mile march back to Charlestown. At Meriam's Corner,

where the Old Bedford Road and the Bay Road (Battle Road) intersect, the colonists confronted the outnumbered British Regulars in what would become the first of many skirmishes along the Battle Road between Concord and Charlestown. Fighting from behind trees, stone walls, and buildings, the colonists persistently assaulted the retreating British troops, engaging them in several skirmishes within the present-day Battle Road Unit at sites known as Brooks Hill, the Bloody Angle, the Hartwell farms, the Nelson farms, the Bluff, and Fiske Hill. After passing out of the present-day Battle Road Unit, the scattered British troops reassembled in the center of Lexington and then proceeded east, continuing to be assaulted by colonial militia and minutemen until they reached the safety of Charlestown.

The war would continue until the treaty of Paris was signed in 1783, and many of the men who fought in the opening day of the American Revolution would serve in additional battles, including the siege of Boston.

In the early 1800s, Middlesex County straightened the Battle Road, by-passing portions of the historic road to provide a more direct route to Boston, and subsequent road improvements decreased the grade of the road by reducing hilltops and filling low-lying areas. The improved road allowed farmers to more efficiently carry goods to market, fueling a change from subsistence to commercial farming. Introduction of railroad lines in the mid-nineteenth century also accelerated this change. No longer able to compete with inexpensive grain brought east by train from the Midwest, Battle Road farmers began to specialize in perishable products easily transported to regional urban markets, which were in need of farm goods to sustain a growing workforce in textile mills and factories. The landscape reflected these changes as large tracts of fancy fruit orchards, vegetable gardens, and dairy herds were plentiful along the Battle Road during this time. While the road remained a viable transportation route, the railroads also profitably transported goods to regional markets.

By the 1880s, most descendants of the earliest Battle Road settlers had left their ancestral farms, many leaving for the promise of more fertile land in the west. While some of the farms reverted to woodland, others were cultivated by European immigrant farmers. Transportation between the towns and Boston was further enhanced in the 1890s when large portions of the Battle Road were improved and incorporated into Massachusetts's first state highway system. The road bed was regraded and resurfaced - improvements that allowed for maximum use by new modes of transportation. By the end of the century, horse-drawn carriages and wagons were joined by bicycles and motor cars. The train and the motor car brought increasing numbers of tourists and commuters to the Battle Road countryside. Drawn primarily by the North Bridge battleground, tourists also visited four monuments and markers commemorating the events of April 19, 1775, placed by the towns along the Battle Road in the 1880s and 1890s (Bluff Hill Monument, Hayward Well Monument, Meriam's Corner Monument, and the Paul Revere Capture Monument). The efficiency of commuting resulted in the most profound and lasting landscape change within the present-day Battle Road Unit. With the new residents came new homes, businesses, and residential roads. While a number of farms remained under cultivation, many more reverted to woodland. Farmers that remained adapted to the new environment, taking advantage of increased road traffic to sell their produce from small roadside stands.

The first concerted effort to preserve historic sites along the Battle Road occurred in 1924, when a commission appointed by the governor of Massachusetts proposed acquisition of land along the Battle Road as part of a proposed memorial in honor of the 150th anniversary of the opening day of the American Revolution. Unfortunately, the memorial was never established and suburbanization of the historic agricultural fields proceeded at a rapid rate, especially after World War II. Adding to the suburban congestion was activity associated with the Hanscom Air Field, an Air Force base and high-tech research center, located just north of the present-day Battle Road Unit. This development brought more traffic as well as needed services to the area.

Public Law 86-321 established Minute Man National Historical Park on September 27, 1959. The law resulted from the efforts of the Boston National Historic Sites Commission, a commission appointed in 1955 by the federal government to investigate the possibility of establishing a coordinated program between federal, state, and local governments to preserve the most important colonial properties in and around Boston.

The Battle Road Unit landscape is not only the result of centuries of cultural landscape evolution, but it is also a product of forty-five years of park development and historic landscape rehabilitation. **The mission of the park “has been to approximate the cultural environment that existed in 1775 and preserve and interpret individual resources that contribute to understanding the events of the Battle of Lexington and Concord.”**

Assembled from hundreds of individual agricultural, residential, and commercial tracts, the landscape includes historic features, such as houses, barns, stone walls, fields, and roads dating from the seventeenth century to the early twentieth century. Non-historic features include twentieth-century vegetation, roads, a few remaining residences associated with suburban development, and National Park Service (NPS) features added for interpretation and visitor use.

The Battle Road remains the central landscape feature. The NPS has rehabilitated several portions of the road by prohibiting vehicular traffic, removing asphalt, rebuilding adjacent stone walls, and rehabilitating portions of the surrounding landscape. Unfortunately, large sections of the historic road underlie Route 2A, a fast-paced two-lane commuter route which connects communities to the west with Boston and also provides direct access to the Hanscom Airfield and Air Force Base.

THE STUDIO

The Battle Road Unit (849 acres) of the park includes about four miles of the original Battle Road route, and is located at the eastern end of the park. The area encompasses the road from Meriam's Corner in Concord, through Lincoln, to Fiske Hill in Lexington. These and other sites within park boundaries were sites of significant fighting on April 15, 1775.

A number of landscape and structural rehabilitations have been completed since the creation of the park in 1959 with the goal of revealing, restoring, and interpreting the landscape as it might have looked in 1775. This unit also includes the park's main Visitor Center, completed in the 1970s, and a series of significant historic structures and buildings from the Colonial period, including "witness structures" that were present in 1775. The Battle Road Trail, which follows much of the original route and is the principal means of visitor experience, runs through agricultural landscapes, wetlands, and forests.

Minute Man National Historical Park attracts about one million visitors a year from all over the United States and abroad. It is also a significant local resource for the suburban towns around it. The Battle Road Unit, because of its location, serves as the main entrance to the park from the east. The cloverleaf interchange on Route 128 (I 95), and the fact that Boston is to the east, made it the logical site for the main park Visitor Center.

This studio will address the issue of new design within the context of a nationally significant cultural landscape: Minute Man National Historical Park. **The studio program will require you to envision and represent appropriate strategies and designs for the future of the Battle Road Unit of the park, and to specifically address the arrival and initial interpretive experience of over one million visitors a year.**

Required Reading

Foundation Document, February, 2015. Minute Man National Historical Park.

Cultural Landscape Report, Battle Road Unit, Minute Man National Historical Park. Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation.

Long Range Interpretive Plan, May, 2015. Minute Man National Historical Park.

OTHER to be made available.

Specific Requirements for Studio Work

PART ONE: Documentation and analysis of the cultural landscape (Two weeks, work in three groups)

Work at both at a regional and site scale. The Route 2A corridor should be analyzed as a whole, and the studio site—the east end of the Battle Road Unit between Fiske Hill and the Paul Revere arrest site—should be analyzed and presented in detail.

The products of the first two weeks are to include conceptual sketches and diagrams and GIS mapping describing:

- The (cultural and natural) landscape systems of the corridor
- A graphic history of changing landscape conditions
- Analysis of current use, patterns of use, character of visitor experience
- An accounting of any studies or plans by the National Park Service or others

Work will be done in two groups:

1) The Battle Road Corridor: Analysis and graphic representation of the historical conditions of larger Battle Road corridor, roughly Colonial era to present, including changing agricultural uses, settlement patterns, historical transportation, and changing spatial characteristics and visual quality. Your plans, sections, and perspectives, based on various historical sources, should show how the corridor has evolved over time and how its relationship to surrounding towns and the region has changed.

Documentation and analysis of both natural and cultural systems and their evolution over time. Sources will include historic maps and current GIS data. Final plans and diagrams generated by hand, through geo-referencing historic maps in GIS, and through rendering in Illustrator or equivalent.

Your research will require acquiring and scanning historic plans and photos from various sources and geo-referencing digital scans in Arc GIS to better understand how the current landscape relates to the conditions of the past. Repeat photographic studies should be possible.

2) Current Context and Visitor Experience: Analysis and graphic representation of current conditions. Plans, sections, and perspectives should show current conditions and uses, and the urban context. Political boundaries, town zoning, density and other maps, including demographics of towns and adjacent neighborhoods. Current GIS data and photo views will be sources.

Group Two will also document and analyze current visitor facilities and experience. Circulation (pedestrian and vehicular) studies, inventory of significant views and the most salient “moments” or experiences that most define the visitor’s interaction with the site. Where and how does arrival currently occur, and what are the most important interpretive opportunities? What constitutes a brief visit, a day-long visit? How is the park typically used by local residents??

FINAL PRODUCT, PART ONE

The studio as a whole will produce a digital presentation of the historical evolution, significance, and regional context of Minuteman National Historical park, with an emphasis on the Battle Road Unit, and specifically on the east entrance and Visitor Center areas.

To do this, the studio as a whole must adopt, from the beginning:

- Standard scales for entire study area and more detailed studio site;
- Standard graphic conventions for individual diagrams and for composed sheets;
- Final InDesign template for two-week presentation (to be used for final as well).

PART TWO: Proposed schematic-level public landscape designs (Four weeks, individual and/or small group work)

There are numerous ways of defining the site you will design, either as an individual or in a small group during Part Two of the studio. We will discuss in class what an appropriate definition of your site may be. There are several specific sites which should be considered as potential studio projects, and there are other possible sites and strategies that may come up as part of your research.

There will be suggested parameters for all studio projects, to assist you in making quick progress in your schematic designs. All projects should:

- Address and reorganize circulation on the site;
- Keep Route 2A as a through road (although it may be altered and re-designated);
- Keep the Visitor Center building, although it should be significantly altered.

There are also overall goals for all studio work in Part Two. All projects should:

- Address the experience of arriving at the park and the initial experience of the landscape through the reorganization of circulation, spatial organization, views, etc.;
- Must revitalize the primary interpretive experience of the park by reorganizing the relationship of the Visitor Center to surrounding landscape features, including Battle Road and Fiske Hill. This may require significant alterations to the VC;
- Establish the regional context, including connections or relationships to recreation or ecological corridors, neighboring zoning regulations, etc., where appropriate.

FINAL PRODUCTS, PART TWO

Individual students or small groups will produce physical sheets of scaled plans, sections and views, as well as digital versions of their work for the final studio workbook.

The Studio should continue to use (where possible) standard scales for entire study area and more detailed studio site; standard graphic conventions for individual diagrams and for composed sheets; final InDesign template for two-week presentation (to be used for final as well).

Specific requirements (numbers of drawings, etc.) will be determined with studio critics.

GENERAL GOALS FOR ALL STUDIO WORK

- Create strategies for envisioning the future of Minute Man National Historical Park;
- Expand the interpretation and appreciation of the heritage landscape of the Battle Road corridor;
- Present visualizations of future decisions that result in positive and appropriate new design of the entrance and Visitor Center areas at the east end of the park;
- Show regional ecological and recreational connections;
- Improve landscape ecological functions;
- Create sustainable, accessible, and beautiful design at both a large and a detailed scale

SCHEDULE AND REQUIREMENTS

WEEK 1

Monday, October 24

Meet in studio, Introduction

Research and reading assignments; unpacking data and readings

Wednesday, October 26

Meet in studio

Friday, October 28

SITE VISIT: Meet Margie Coffin Brown at the park, details TBA

WEEK 2

Monday, October 31

Desk crits of preliminary visualizations of research and analysis

ON WALLS AND DESK: Pin up base maps, site photos (edited and manipulated in Photoshop), large scale printouts of historic maps of importance to you, etc.

ON YOUR COMPUTER: Everyone should have GIS database working on their laptops, and be able to perform basic functions, especially georeferencing of historic maps. We will also go over

reading assignments, discussion of heritage landscape documentation and analysis methodology, existing zoning, and other regulations.

Wednesday, November 2

Desk crits of preliminary visualizations of research and analysis

Friday, November 4

PIN UP of Part One Work and Discussion of sites for Part Two

Saturday, November 5

Field trip with Jack Ahern and Ethan Carr to NYC. Sign up in LARP office (optional)

WEEK 3

Monday, November 7

Final selection of sites, development of alternative proposals

Wednesday, November 9

Desk crits of preliminary Part Two designs

Friday, November 11

HOLIDAY

WEEK 4

Monday, November 14

Desk crits of preliminary Part Two designs

Wednesday, November 16

Desk crits of preliminary Part Two designs

Friday, November 18

SITE VISIT: Back to Concord

WEEK 5

Monday, November 21

NO CLASS THANKSGIVING WEEK

WEEK 6

Monday, November 28

Finalize Part Two designs, prepare studio presentation

Wednesday, November 30

Finalize Part Two designs, prepare studio presentation

Friday, December 2

Finalize Part Two designs, prepare studio presentation

WEEK 7

Monday, December 5

PIN UP of Final Design Projects

Wednesday, December 7

Preparation of STUDIO WORKBOOK

Friday, December 9

Preparation of STUDIO WORKBOOK

Week of December 12, Final Reviews, Schedule TBA

Course Learning Objectives

- Further develop landscape research and design ability, building on tools and activities of previous studios
- Learn the basic theory, procedures, and regulations for landscape design in the context of cultural landscapes
- Address and resolve a set of issues and problems relating to new design in the context of a significant cultural landscape

Grading

- Class participation, effort, and involvement: 40%
- Pin ups and interim reviews: 20%
- Final review: 40%

SOME SOURCES OF DATA

[Websites, other...]