

SOUTHERN HEIGHTS-BEECHMONT DISTRICT LANDSCAPES
Louisville
Jefferson County
Kentucky

HABS KY-206
KY-206

HABS
KY-206

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
SOUTHEAST REGIONAL OFFICE
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SOUTHERN HEIGHTS-BEECHMONT

HABS No. KY-206

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Olmstead Park System of Louisville was entered into the National Register on May 17, 1982. It consists of three urban parks connected by five parkways. Shawnee Park is 181 relatively flat acres located near the Ohio River in western Louisville. Cherokee Park has 409 acres of broad meadows, large trees, and Beargrass Creek located in eastern Louisville. Iroquois Park is 667 acres of steep hills and dense forest in southern Louisville. Connecting the parks are Algonquin, Eastern, Southwestern, Northwestern and Southern Parkway (see attached map). Southern connects Iroquois to Eastern and Algonquin Parkway to the north. Boundaries of the parkways are limited to right of way extent, which is 150 feet on Southern Parkway and 120 feet on the other four parkways. The shortest parkway is Southern at 2.6 miles and the longest, Southwestern, is 4.1 miles. Acreages vary from 48.47 acres on Southern to 59.64 on Southwestern.

In traveling the Southern Parkway there is a decided change in character at the Watterson Expressway. This break is a combination of the notable absence of large trees between Florence Avenue and Southern Heights and the change in scale traveling north and south from the Watterson. South of the Watterson from Southern Parkway is a broad tree-lined boulevard flanked by frontage roads and large residential lots. The Beechmont Historic

District, listed in the National Register, is located along this section of the Parkway. The finest section of the parkway is between Burkley and Southern Heights where large turn of the century Victorian homes with carefully landscaped lawns grace the wide spacious parkway. North of the Watterson the Southern Parkway narrows, the residences are newer, and the residential lots are smaller. At Central Avenue the Southern Parkway has become Third Street and decidedly urban in character with older Victorian row houses and a constricted roadway.

Historic Context and Significance

On May 6, 1890, the Louisville Board of Parks Commissioners, having gained approval of the General Assembly, began buying land for establishment of a public park system. In June of 1891, they contacted the renowned park architect, Frederick Law Olmstead, for his recommendations. The commissioners and Olmstead envisioned three large suburban parks connected in one system by a series of connecting, broad, tree-lined boulevards. Olmstead urged that each park retain and accentuate its individual character. This idea has been honored and today each park continues its own contribution to urban relief and escape. Shawnee Park gives us space to walk and breathe, Iroquois Park provides a primitive and pristine escape, and Cherokee a combination of natural features and broad open meadows.

Prominent local citizens active in promoting the park movement included Charles Hermany, chief engineer at the Louisville Water Works, and Andrew Cowan. By 1892 Shawnee, Iroquois, and

Cherokee were purchased in their present form and the parkways, totaling 25 miles, were finished in the 1930's.

The Olmstead Park System is significant as an example of the active nineteenth century park and boulevard movement. The park system also represents the work of Frederick Law Olmstead (1822-1903) considered this nation's first and most comprehensive environmental planner and the "Father" of American Landscape Architecture. His list of accomplishments is impressive: Central Park in New York, Franklin Park in Boston, Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, grounds and setting of the Capitol in Washington, the Campuses of Berkeley and Stanford Universities, the layout of the Chicago suburb of Riverside, and the general layout and landscaping of the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The Olmstead Park System is also significant as a continuing achievement of its intended purpose to provide a sylvan retreat amid growing urban pressures.

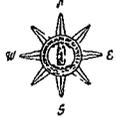
The Southern Parkway is significant as a linear park or tree-lined boulevard that connects into the Olmstead Park System of Louisville. The finer Victorian homes between Burkley/Southern Heights and the remaining mixed commercial residential portions of the parkway serve to historically date the boulevard movement and present the idyllic side of urban life.

The roadway portions of the Olmstead Park System act only as connecting links between the three mentioned parks. They were originally designed as parkways to tie these parks together with patterned, visually and aesthetically harmonious tree-lined boulevards. Only remnants of the original concept remain today.



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EXPLANATION AND USE OF MAPS
 This map is one of 27 sheets covering all of Jefferson County and of Bullitt, Hardin, Oldham, Shelby and Spencer Counties in Kentucky, and parts of Clark and Floyd Counties in Indiana. The maps are numbered 1 through 27, and each covers 5 minutes of latitude from north to south and 5 minutes of longitude from east to west. Each sheet has a coordinate grid with number designations from east to west and letter designations from north to south.
 Accompanying the maps is an index listing the names of roads, cities, unincorporated places, public buildings, schools and other points of interest. Following the name of each feature in the index is a letter combination for use in locating the feature on the map.
 Example: Broadway 3/K9 - 11/L15, Broadway being the name of a street beginning on Sheet 3 at N-S gridline K and E-W gridline 9 and ending at 11 at N-S gridline L and E-W gridline 15.
 The 5 minute grid is based on Polyconic Projection, 1927 North American datum. Control by USGS and USC & GS. Drafted and published by Kentucky Department of Transportation.



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