

AICP STUDY GUIDE

Episode 22: Back to School

And welcome to the 22nd episode of The Very UNofficial AICP Study Guide Podcast. I'm Jonathan Miller, and thank you so much for joining.

First, for real, sorry for the delay in getting this one out. As I'm sure you all can identify, life gets busy and I had to pivot to some personal things and other things that actually help pay the bills; whomp whomp.

Anyways, as a friendly countdown reminder, April 30th is the deadline for registering for the exam, and the exam window opens the day after that. So, you have about 39 days - or a little over a month - so let's hop to it eh?

Last episode (which feels like forever ago at this point), we covered Daniel Burnham's 1909 plan of Chicago and the Wacker's Manual of the Plan of Chicago which wasn't written by Wacker at all, but was actually written by Walter Moody. If you need clarification on that, go back an episode. Side note, I'm actually taking a weekend away to the Windy City this weekend, so I'll try and get some photos of some of the highlights.

This week though, we're building on the academics of Wacker Manual where the Wacker Manual of the Plan of Chicago was maybe the first grade school level textbook on planning. What about the first college class? Or department? Or major textbook? Well? We'll take it from the top and travel to one of the premier ivy league schools in the City on a Hill.

(1:46)

If you didn't guess, to find (possibly) the first college course in urban planning, we have to go to Harvard and their Urban Planning program. Kidding!

So, there was no urban planning program. In fact, no one really had one at that time. Some colleges may say that they did, but this really means that they kind of talked about it sometimes in some other classes. Remember, we are still really in the profession's infancy. So as we should all be aware, what profession did urban planning come out of? Right, landscape architecture.

So bear with me here through this one. My parents were not able to buy me into Harvard, so I imagine some of these details may be a little off; finding the references was a little challenging.

Now, despite some conflicting claims, Harvard's Landscape Architecture Program was started in 1900 by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. Yes, him again. And side note, if you get a question on landscape architecture, just say it was Frederick Law Olmsted or Olmsted Jr.; seems like a pretty decent bet. Anyways, Junior establishes the Landscape Architecture Program and served as the chair until 1908.

During this time he obviously taught classes as well and - as the champion of urban planning that we know him to be - he incorporated plenty of urban planning concepts into the curriculum there. In 1908 though, Olmsted called it quits as the chair of the Landscape Architecture Program. And this is where a guy named James Sturgis Pray enters.

(3:42)

Pray, a native Bostonian, graduated from Harvard in 1898 and immediately went to work with - of course - Olmsted Jr. and his brother at their firm as an apprentice. I imagine he must have made a pretty good impression on some level because it was only a few years later - in 1903 - that Pray joined Harvard as an instructor before gracing the ranks of the Harvard Professors in 1905; teaching right alongside Junior himself.

Fast Forward a few years to 1908 and Olmsted Jr. says, "I have way too much shit to do to worry about teaching this little shit kids" (at least that's I imagine him saying). I mean, we've all had those professors.

But anyways, this opened up the opportunity for James Sturgis Pray to take over for Junior as Chair of the Landscape Architecture Program.

(4:44)

So, Pray took over as Chair in 1908 and he wasted no time getting city planning more involved. Like Olmsted Jr., he definitely had been incorporating components of it into his classes, but in 1909 he actually created the first class - not just at Harvard, but anywhere - dedicated specifically to city planning. On top of that, he also started advertising amongst his peers that Harvard had a city planning specialization housed within the Landscape Architecture Program.

Pray ended up serving as Chair of Harvard's Landscape Architecture Program until 1928, and he even served as the Charles W. Elliot Professor of Landscape Architecture from 1914 until 1929 when he died. Full disclosure, I had no idea what in the hell that was, so I looked it up. Apparently, professors who are named Charles W. Elliot Professors are the who's who of their fields. So basically, city planning couldn't have asked for a better ambassador to inaugurate the profession's first class.

(5:57)

Meanwhile, the University of Illinois was navigating its own path to planning, and understanding how they got there is almost as important to understand as our profession's roots. To understand, let's add a little context.

This was the University of Illinois. Illinois. In the midwest, and what was the midwest known for (and still known for)? Yes, farming. After all, the University of Illinois is one of our Land Grant Universities. Subsequently, the University of Illinois had a pretty robust agriculture program which over the years kept adding in specialties.

In 1870, the Department of Ag became the College of Ag with two divisions: Agriculture and Horticulture/Fruit-Growing. So, sure. In 1899, the horticulture program was given its own dedicated department which kept adding on divisions over the next several years like, Vegetable Crops in 1902, Floriculture in 1908, and in 1912, Plant Breeding and Landscape Architecture. And there she is.

So, with a brand new Landscape Architecture Division, the University of Illinois in 1913 looked to Harvard and said, "I see what you're doing over there. You have a dedicated class to City Planning? Well, we have a dedicated professor of civic design. What's up now?" Disclaimer: I don't know if Illinois actually looked at Harvard and got all weird about one-upping them, but they were the only two colleges at that time offering classes in City Planning. So, there's that.

Anyways, they went ahead and hired Charles Mulford Robinson as the first professor dedicated to civic design/city planning. But, who was this Charles Mulford Robinson?

(8:13)

Well, he started out as just a journalist. His education was in writing, and he wrote for several papers and publications. Keep in mind too - if you've been following along - this period of the late 1800's was one where our cities were changing rapidly, and not always in the best ways.

So when Robinson toured Europe in the early 1890's, he saw advanced the European cities seemed to be compared to our American ones. So when the Chicago World's Fair opened up and he visited that, it just sparked a passion; like it did with a lot of people really.

So he wrote the book, "The Fair of Spectacle," and basically from that point on he dove into the world of planning. In 1901, he wrote about the City Beautiful movement in a book called, "The Improvement of Towns and Cities." He developed plans for Fort Wayne, Indiana, and even helped review some plans for parks in St. Joseph, Missouri. Then in 1913 he was hired as the first full professor of civic design.

Fun fact, his first classes in 1913 and 1914 put together a study of civic conditions in Champaign and Urbana, and the chapters were:

- Town Data
- Introduction
- Sanitation
- Railroad Transportation
- The Electric Railway
- The Main Traffic Streets
- Secondary Streets
- Street Trees
- The Parks, and
- Playgrounds

If you're feeling ambitious, a link to that full report that they put together is in the show notes.

(10:02)

So, we have our first course, and our first professor in city planning - two different schools, but whatever. So, what did they use as the textbook? Anyone? Because I don't know either.

Here's the thing - and I'm going to be straight with you here - for the exam you will need to know what the "first major textbook on city planning" is. Well, the answer - to make a long story short - is a book called, "Carrying Out the City Plan" by a guy with one of the sweetest names ever: Flavel Shurtleff. I don't even know if that's how you pronounce it, but that's what I'm going to go with.

Here's the rub though. For the life of me, I can't find what class or school this was a textbook for. I was always under the impression that a textbook was for a class; not just like a book with text. Because even then, it wouldn't have been the first. So, sure, it's their exam, so let's go with it. But, if anyone knows what school or class this was for - if it was for a class or school - let me know and I am more than happy to pass that along.

(11:20)

Textbook or no textbook though, it was still important. You see, our friend - Flavel Shurtleff - was an attorney in Boston because - well - only attorneys have names like Flavel Shurtleff. Anyways, Flavel was an attorney, and he ended up specializing in the legalities of planning.

Later on in life, he eventually became Counsel for the American Planning and Civic Association, and even taught Planning Legislation and Administration at MIT. And no, this was not the textbook for that class I don't think, because that class was in 1940. So there's that.

Regardless, he was an integral part of the profession. He helped plan the earlier conferences, and in 1914, he wrote this book, "Carrying Out the City Plan: The Practical Application of American Law in the Execution of City Plans." And of course, Olmsted Jr. pitched in as well by writing the introduction.

(12:29)

There you have it, some of academias firsts in planning. We had our first course in planning at Harvard with Professor James Sturgis Pray. We had our first dedicated professor of planning at the University of

Illinois Horticultural Program of all things, with Mr. Charles Mulford Robinson. And our first, 'textbook' in planning, "Carrying Out the City Plan: The Practical Application of American Law in the Execution of City Plans" written by none other than Attorney Flavel Shurtleff.

(13:10)

And with that, thanks again for joining me! If you have questions, or you know how or why "Carrying Out the City Plan" was a textbook and not just a book, feel free to reach out to me at theveryunofficialAICPGUIDE@gmail.com and I'll do my best to help out if I can, and pass along that information to everyone for you if you know.

For those who tuned in to our last episode - if wasn't last week, it was a while ago (sorry again) - our question was, "What was one of the main criticisms of the Plan of Chicago and - ultimately - the Beaux Arts style of planning as a whole"?

And that answer - in a nutshell - is that the focus of the plan, and the Beaux Arts style in general, placed a lot of importance on physical improvements. Critics said of the 1909 Plan of Chicago, that it was trying to create, "Paris on the Prairie", which is weird because to me, that is not a bad thing.

If you want to play along this week, our question is "What year did James Sturgis Pray initiate the first course on City Planning"

Anyways, don't forget to subscribe to this podcast on whatever platform you use for podcasts and feel free to sign up on the show's website so you can follow along with future episodes, help prepare for the exam and supplement all of your other study regimens. And share this out with any planners you know, and don't forget to leave a review either.

Next week - and I promise it will be next week - we are going to backtrack slightly. As we're moving along, we're starting to hit more of the legal stuff - including zoning. So, we'll go back and cover some of the early hits of zoning, like use limitations in San Francisco, the courts support of height restrictions, and restrictions related to future development in Los Angeles.

Thanks again everyone, 'till next time.

Links:

First Course in Planning:

<https://www.gsd.harvard.edu/landscape-architecture/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Sturgis_Pray

<http://urbanplanning.library.cornell.edu/DOCS/pray.htm>

First Chair of Civic Design:

<https://archon.library.illinois.edu/?p=creators/creator&id=146>

<https://urban.illinois.edu/history/>

<https://web.faa.illinois.edu/app/uploads/sites/2/2021/01/notesforstudyinc00univilli.pdf>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Mulford_Robinson

First Major Textbook:

<http://urbanplanning.library.cornell.edu/DOCS/shurtlef.htm>

<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/pdf/10.1086/252818>

