

AICP STUDY GUIDE

Podcast

Episode 25: Baby Planning's Book of Firsts

And welcome to the 25th episode of The VERY UNofficial AICP Study Guide Podcast. I'm Jonathan Miller and thank you so much for joining.

25! That is quite the milestone. So really - I know I say it every time - but really, thank you.

Anyways, we really are coming down to it. April 30th, the deadline for registering for the exam - and beginning of the exam window - is a little over 2 weeks away. 16 days to be exact. Remember though, breathe, relax, do some yoga, go for a run, whatever you need to keep your nerves down because I promise you, stressing out won't help. It's like trying to race on a rocking horse, no matter how much you do it, you aren't going to get anywhere.

Last episode we got to the beginnings of Regional Planning, including the book 'Cities in Evolution' from our friend Sir Patrick Geddes. We covered some regional agencies and commissions like the first Regional Planning Commission and first regional plan.

This week we're pausing on our timeline for some house cleaning. If you haven't noticed (and I hope you have), we've sort of been working through the timeline of planning systematically. I mean we've jumped around some to keep some of the like topics together. But still.

Unfortunately, this means we skipped over a few topics that just really didn't fit it neatly with the other episodes. So this week? We're going to be a bit random and look through our Baby Planning Book of Firsts.

(1:59)

So, our first random - well, first - takes us out to the Steel City; Pittsburgh in 1907. But let's sort of set the stage first.

We never pointed it out specifically I don't think - maybe a brief note here and there - but the 1900's was a big period of reform. In fact, the era between the late 1890's-ish and the late 19-teens-ish was known as the Progressive Era.

Under Teddy Roosevelt we went heavy on conservation and natural resource policies and cities at the time were going through huge growth spurts. Jacob Riis and the reformers over in New York were shining lights on horrible living conditions; industrialism was booming.

Basically, America had reached a point where we paused and said, 'Ok ok ok, hold up a second. We need to make sure we slow down and fix some of these issues that keep popping up because we're moving too fast.'

To help with that, The very newly created Russell Sage Foundation in New York decided to take on probably one of the more ambitious studies up to that time: surveying the entire city of Pittsburgh.

So, why Pittsburgh?

Well, Pittsburgh at that time was the 5th largest city in the United States, and was a massive industrial hub. Considering the Russell Sage Foundations goals were the improvement of social and living conditions in the United States of America, and Pittsburgh was a large industrial city facing rough living conditions for immigrants, it was a pretty logical starting point.

So over the next year and half they surveyed everything - and I mean everything. It makes the data behind comprehensive plans look like half-ass attempts. Of course, this was all done with a team of seventy people, all on the ground doing the investigating in "railroad yards and mill towns, sweatshops and great manufacturing plants, in courts, hospitals, and settlements.

The survey itself was headed up by a reformer and journalist named Paul Kellogg and was published by the Russell Sage Foundation in six volumes:

- 1) Women and the Trades,
- 2) Work-Accidents and the Law,
- 3) The Steel Workers,
- 4) Homestead: The Households of a Mill Town,
- 5) The Pittsburgh District: Civic Frontage, and
- 6) Wage-Earning Pittsburgh.

So what came out of it? Well, the Pittsburgh Study in 1907 - the First Comprehensive City Survey - ended up helping reforms like developing employer liabilities, ending 12-hour work days and 7-day work weeks for the steel workers, and generally improving working conditions.

(5:13)

So, let's turn the page now to another planning first, which means we have to head over to Hartford. Now breakfast's come and go, but Hartford - the Whale - They only contribute to planning once, maybe twice in a lifetime.

And if you don't know what movie that was ripped from, google around and find out. For real.

In all seriousness, they may have contributed more than once or twice, but what we're concerned with here is that they formed the first permanent planning commission in the US. We've had other planning commissions for sure, but these were temporary. Really I should have changed the movie quote to, 'Planning Commissions come and go, but Hartford - the Whale - they created a permanent one.

But why? What was the catalyst here?

Nothing. The most apt answer is nothing.

We've seen time again, X happened so Y was the response. Growth pushed residents to nuisances so we prohibit uses, shoddy apartments are built so improve building regulations. In this case, it was more of a casual "what-if" moment in 1907.

Up until then, Hartford wasn't a lot different from other places. It grew up pretty quick and subsequently was a little out of order, but I guess no one was really raising a big stink about it. The city had already established setbacks and ways to regulate land uses, but a forward thinking super citizen - the President of the Municipal Art Society said, 'If there was a commission to which a plan, approved by the Council, could be referred for further consideration and recommendation as to the time when such a plan could economically be carried out, ideas of value might be saved, and impractical ideas eliminated.

Well no shit, I'll be damned.

Apparently, Hartford thought it was a fantastic idea because literally, later that month, the city asked the State of Connecticut to approve a Commission on the City Plan. And just like that, the first permanent planning commission in the U.S. was created.

(7:34)

That's just a commission though, what about a citizen organization? Aw, planning's growing. For this one, we head to the midwest and the great state of Ohio.

There isn't too much background here. In the 19-teens we're really getting into the growth spurt of planning. We've had regional approaches, we've had the popularization of planning in the City Beautiful movement, we've started zoning and regulating, and we're meeting nationally to talk about it. Obviously, citizens getting together to discuss all of these is next on the list of milestones.

So in 1919, the Ohio State Conference on City Planning was put together for 'the interchange of ideas upon, and to promote the cause of, city, town, and regional planning in the state of Ohio'. And this Conference ended up becoming an organization. In fact, it ended up becoming the Ohio Chapter of the APA, and the State of Ohio did a great job. Except wait, it wasn't the State of Ohio that put it together.

In fact, it was a politician named Ernest Bohn - a pivotal figure in public housing - and an attorney, Alfred Bettman; and we'll get back to him in a second.

So, since the State of Ohio itself really had nothing at all to do with the formation of this conference and subsequent organization, it made the 1919 Ohio State Conference on City Planning the first statewide citizen's organization on planning.

But, back to Alfred (not Batman's Alfred) though that would be awesome. Like a City Planner Batman's Alfred - Alfred Batman - Bettman. Coincidence? I think not ...

(9:27)

It sounds super ridiculous, but in a way, a City Planner Batman's Alfred maybe isn't too far off. Alfred in Batman is a major supporting actor and so is Alfred Bettman to just planning in general I guess.

While not technically a planner - at least not trained as one - Bettman was, like we just mentioned, one of the founders of the Ohio State Planning Conference on City Planning in 1919. He also successfully won the Euclid v. Ambler case, but that's for another time. And, Bettman helped write the Standard State Zoning Enabling Act, but again, that's for another time.

At least as far as our First's are concerned, Bettman led the efforts for the first City-wide Comprehensive Plan: the 1925 Official Plan of the City of Cincinnati ...

(10:32)

Bettman didn't do it himself though. Obviously a planner from Hungary - Ladislav Segoe - and George Ford and Ernest Goodrich from the first planning consulting firm (which we will talk about in a few episodes when we get to the City Efficient movement); they helped too.

Like most Comprehensive Plans the goal was long-range planning, and was broken into two parts really: Zoning and Capital Improvements.

Mostly, Bettman's idea here was to prevent corrupt politicians from making civic decisions to benefit themselves - or donors or whatnot - which unfortunately is like a lot of them today. In total, there were 18 chapters (not including the Forward and Appendices of course). We had:

- Community Development
- Building Zones
- Subdivisions and Housing
- Thoroughfares
- Downtown Traffic
- Transit
- Rapid Transit
- Railways (apparently very heavy on transportation)

- Waterways and Flood Control
- Parks and Playfields
- Schools and Play-Yards
- Public and Semi-Public Buildings and Tracts
- Street Structures and Appearance
- Garbage and Refuge Disposal
- Financing Improvements
- Administration
- Comprehensive Plan and Program, and finally
- Immediate Program to meet Deficiencies.

Sounds a lot like some of the stuff we cover in ours, so it seems like the Comprehensive Plan hasn't evolved too much since 1925.

(12:15)

And there you have it, some of Baby Planning's first steps.

First, we reminisced on the first City Survey in Pittsburgh, then we went Hartford for the first Permanent Planning Commission.

Then we looked back on the first citizen planning organization in Ohio that started as a conference in 1919, and capped it all off with the First Comprehensive Plan.

Well, thanks again for joining me! If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to me at theveryunofficialAICPGUIDE@gmail.com and I'll do my best to help out if I can.

For those who tuned in last week, our question was "What three regional authorities came together to create Boston's Metropolitan District Commission"?

And that would be the Metropolitan Sewerage Board, the Metropolitan Water Board, and the Metropolitan Parks Commission.

If you want to play along this week, our question is "In what year and where was the first permanent planning commission formed".

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, we're going to stay back in early 1900's and dig a little deeper into the Garden City Movement , and subsequently, the New Town Movement and Greenbelt Cities.

Thanks again everyone, 'till next time...

Links:

1907 First Comprehensive City Survey (Pittsburgh):

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

https://www.russellsage.org/sites/all/files/Kellogg_The%20Pittsburgh%20District_0.pdf

<https://exhibitions.library.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/css/social-survey/the-pittsburgh-survey>

<https://www.russellsage.org/about/history>

First official, local, and permanent planning board (Hartford, CT in 1907):

https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1017&context=cssp_archives

1919 Ohio Planning Conference (First citizens organization):

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

<http://www.ohioplanning.org/aws/APAOH/pt/sp/history>

Alfred Bettman:

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

1925 First American City to endorse a Comprehensive Plan (Cincinnati):

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

https://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/sites/planning/assets/File/1925%20Official%20Plan%20of%20the%20City%20of%20Cincinnati.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3X-Ht1xo92UMt5nuj5A1Ds876rN_jJ-ZM4WzfXvY9tYC3-LM4U6yWAeaU