

## Payson Park

Payson Park is a late 19<sup>th</sup> century residential subdivision located in the southern part of Belmont, near the Watertown line and the Cushing Square commercial center. It is bounded on the south by Trapelo Road, on the west by Common Street, and on the north and east by Payson Road. Most of the land was developed between 1886 and 1920 and thus, the area includes homes in a wide variety of styles including the Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, English Revival and Craftsman.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century John P. Cushing, a wealthy Boston sea merchant, owned a 150-acre country estate here. The mansion Cushing constructed was reportedly designed by Asher Benjamin and was named “Bellmont”. When the Town of Belmont was incorporated in 1859, it took its name from Cushing’s estate (minus one ‘L’).

After Cushing’s death in 1862, Bellmont was sold to Samuel Payson, a textile manufacturer. In 1886 Payson sold the property to the Payson Park Land Company. The mansion and fifteen acres of land became the Belmont School for Boys, a boarding school. The school constructed a chapel nearby in 1892. The Chapel was given to the town in 1930 and has served as the Benton Branch Library since that time. The Belmont mansion was torn down in 1929. The land not associated with the school was developed by the Payson Park Land Company in three stages.



*Benton Branch Library, 75 Oakley Road*

# Payson Park . Belmont

## HOUSE LOTS FOR SALE

Payson Park is strictly a residential district. Lots run in size to suit purchasers, and are sold on easy terms of payment. The time to buy that lot of land you are to build on for a home is now, as land values are increasing in this vicinity.

The land is high and dry, and commands a most beautiful view of the surrounding country. One cannot fail to be impressed with the desirability of this locality as a place of residence.

Come and see what we have to offer.

Mr. F. L. Smith, the agent, may be found at his home, 46 Cushing avenue, on the property, every day after 2 p. m.

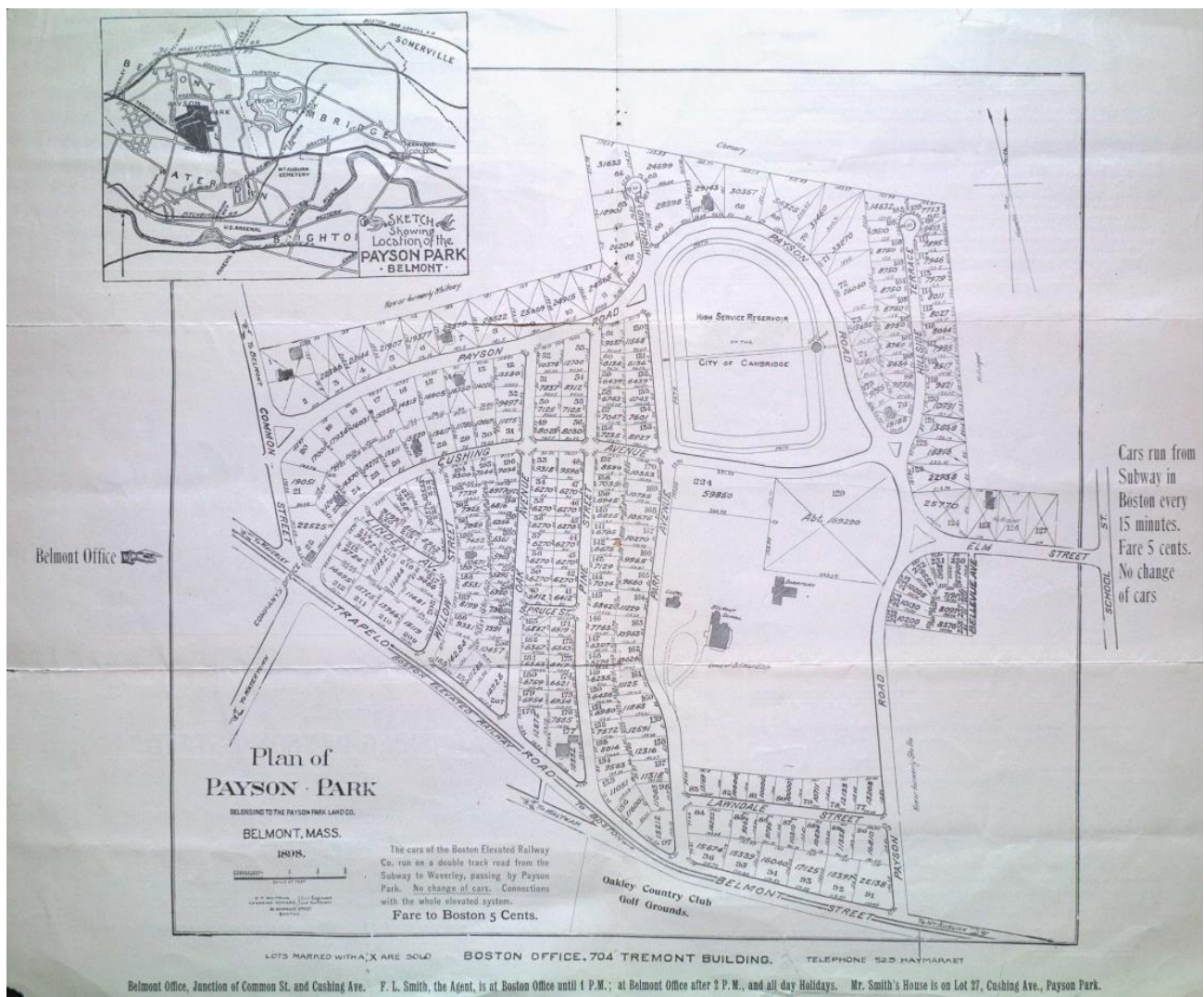
## Payson Park Land Co.

6 Beacon St., Room 601

BOSTON

Boston Tel., Haymarket 2540

Belmont Tel., Belmont 67-4



*Plan of Payson Park, 1898*

In 1888 Payson Road and Elm Street were laid out although construction took place gradually and continued into the 1920s. All of the houses on Cushing Avenue, Oak Avenue and Willow Street date to 1889 and Oak Avenue and Willow Street were completed by World War I. Additional streets – Linden Avenue, Pine Street, Acorn Street and Spruce Street were laid out in 1903 and were developed by 1917. Oakley Road, Lawndale Street and Hillside Terrace were also laid out in 1903 but construction on these streets extended over a longer period of time.

Developers emphasized Payson Park's easy access to Boston with cars leaving Subway and Bowdoin Square every fifteen minutes for Payson Park. The Boston Elevated Railway Company ran cars to Waverley, passing by Payson Park. Electric cars also connected with the Fitchburg and Massachusetts Central Railroad at Mount Auburn and Waverley Stations.

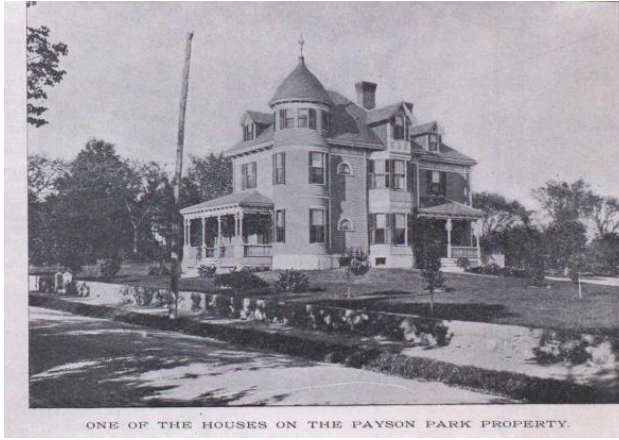


*Ca. 1900 view of Oak Avenue from Payson Park Land Company brochure*

Because Payson Park was developed over a number of years, a wide variety of styles popular in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century are represented.



The earliest houses constructed include examples of the Queen Anne and Colonial Revival styles.



*410 Common Street (in 1898 brochure)*



*410 Common Street (today)*



*20 Cushing Avenue (in 1898 brochure)*



*20 Cushing Avenue (today)*

Although the Payson Park neighborhood is primarily composed of wood-frame structures, there are several masonry structures which stand out. The brick house at 48 Oakley Road was built in 1908 in a Colonial Revival style. It was the home of James McArdle, a well-known Boston contractor, and includes a brick stable to the rear. In 1912, the family moved next door to a similar brick Colonial at 38 Oakley that McArdle also built.



*48 Oakley Road*

Constructed in 1908, the house at 34 Cushing Avenue is a good example of the Craftsman style and is of special interest for its construction technique. It was featured in the publication *Concrete Cottages*, issued by the Atlas Portland Cement Company in 1910. The outside walls were constructed of concrete reinforced with steel and the house originally had a red slate roof.



*34 Cushing Avenue*

The house at 34 Oak Avenue is an unusual brick, flat-roofed single-family dwelling constructed in the early 1920s by a successful Cambridge masonry contractor, Henry McGahey, as a retirement home.



*34 Oak Avenue*

The two-family dwelling at 58-60 Oakley Road was constructed in 1915 for Everett Benton who owned the Belmont School for Boys and the former Bellmont Mansion. It is located across the street from the Benton Branch Library and is also constructed of rubble with stucco and half timbering above. It was occupied for few years by Colonel Benton's daughter Dorothy who was married to Edward E. Wood, Jr.



*58-60 Oakley Road*



The Payson Park neighborhood also has a number of good examples of other eclectic early 20<sup>th</sup> century styles including the English Revival, Craftsman and Bungalow.



*60 Oak Avenue*



*186 Payson Road*



*72 Cushing Avenue*



*210-212 Payson Road*

Although single-family residences predominate, there are also some unusual two-family dwellings as well. Notable examples include 210-212 Payson Road as well as a number of duplexes on Chester Road.

After the Belmont Mansion was razed in 1929, Alexander Marvin built a number of houses on Preble Gardens, Essex, Old Middlesex and Indian Hill Roads, reportedly using bricks from the boundary walls of the old estate. The buildings were designed by Newton architect, Hawley Morton.



*4 Essex Road*



Not all of the historic resources in Payson Park are residential. The Payson Park Reservoir was constructed by the City of Cambridge on Pequossette Hill between 1894 and 1897. The 163-acre parcel is owned by the City of Cambridge and the reservoir holds 43 million gallons of drinkable water.



*Payson Park Reservoir*

Local religious structures include the Payson Park Congregational Church, constructed in 1915 according to designs by architects Newhall and Blevins. The Gothic Revival Belmont Methodist Church at 421 Common Street was built in several phases over 17 years. Our Lady of Mercy Roman Catholic Church at 399 Belmont Street was demolished in 2010.



*Payson Park Congregational Church, 351 Belmont Street*