

Guilford



FMOPL Digest

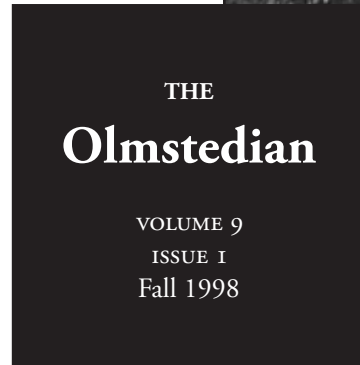
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With the success of Roland Park, Edward Bouton, President of the Roland Park Company, began to think about new projects that would expand the suburban planning initiatives started in the 1890s. As early as 1902, Bouton began a dialogue with the Olmsted Brothers that ultimately resulted in the development of large tracts of land into Guilford, which became one of Baltimore's most prestigious neighborhoods.

In the development of Roland Park, Bouton had come to rely upon the landscape design and planning expertise of the famous firm established by Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., and by this time carried forward by his son Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., and stepson John Charles Olmsted under the name the Olmsted Brothers Landscape Architects (OBLA). Frederick, Jr., often was the principal member of the firm in communication with Bouton, but

John Charles also played a role, and, of course, other members of the firm provided support.

Guilford became Bouton's next major undertaking, officially opened in 1913 as Baltimore's newest elite "suburban" development. Guilford consolidated the high standard of site planning begun in the earlier development and helped to determine the pattern of suburban growth on the city's northern edge. There were, however, several major differences that set apart the development of Guilford from that of Roland Park. The layout of Roland Park was greatly influenced by its steeply sloping hills and wooded settings. Guilford, by contrast, was built on gently rolling meadows and fields that demanded differences in the planning and design of streets and lots. In addition to topographic and landscape differences between the two, while Roland Park's plan



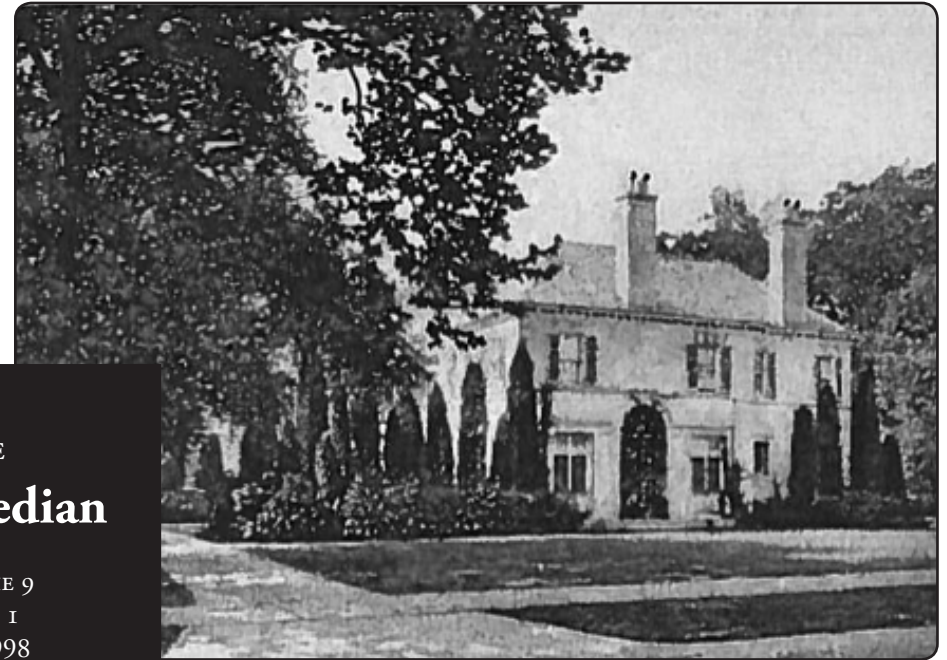
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A stately Guilford home and its lawn on Stratford Road. Photo from a brochure by Towson Nurseries, 1926.

was centered on the horse and carriage as the primary means for transportation, Guilford was designed to accommodate the automobile, thus creating a truly twentieth century development.

While Roland Park had been planned in relative isolation from any other development, Guilford needed to respond to its surroundings: Roland Park to the northwest, the growing Homewood campus of Johns Hopkins University to the southwest, and the mixed commercial growth along York Road to the east. The plan, developed by the Olmsteds, with Bouton's constant review and comments, answered the challenges in an inventive and

creative way that reflected the unique character of the site. It responded to Bouton's concept of Guilford as the gateway to Baltimore's most exclusive neighborhoods. At the same time, the plan created a transition between the heavily traveled commercial York Road and the diverse housing in Guilford and provided connection to Bouton's earlier development in Roland Park.

As Bouton began to consider the assembly of the large tracts of land to create Guilford, Johns Hopkins University was in the process of planning its North Baltimore campus on the Homewood estate. Fortunately, the Olmsteds were retained as design

consultants for the campus. They were also instrumental in creating University Parkway, which forms the northern edge of the university's campus and links it to Roland Park and Guilford. Along Charles Street, the Olmsteds planned a circle as the major entry to the campus, intersecting with Thirty-Fourth Street and Greenway to provide the principal connection to Guilford.

Within the development itself, the Olmsteds planned a series of roads that would afford circulation throughout the neighborhood in a hierarchy of boulevards, streets, lanes, circles, and squares. In doing so, the Olmsteds created a neighborhood

of variety and subtleties in the residential mix. Their plan conceived St. Paul Street as the major connection to the existing street grid of nineteenth-century Baltimore. Designed as a wide boulevard to be lined with large houses and wide lawns and landscaping, St. Paul Street headed northward in a gentle curve to create interest in the otherwise undistinguished landscape. This curving boulevard created a major break with the city's grid layout to the south and helped set the course of suburban development in America for the rest of the century. While not as wide as St. Paul Street, Greenway was also designed to be lined with major houses on large landscaped lots. At the foot of St. Paul Street and Greenway, the streetcar provided a convenient connection between the Roland Park Company developments and downtown Baltimore.

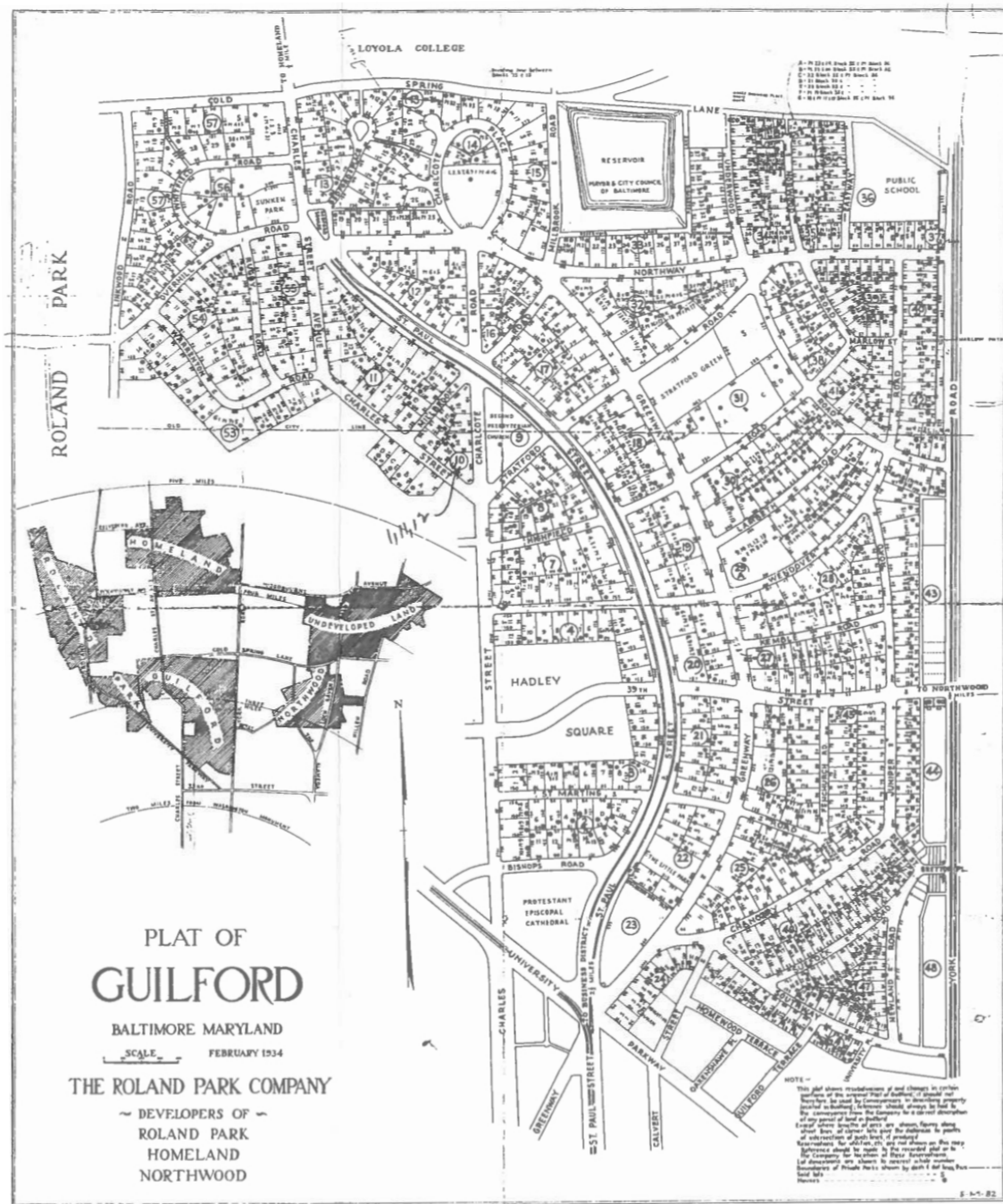
Within Guilford, the east/west streets are narrower than the north/south arteries, with smaller lots and houses set closer to the street to create a more intimate setting. As the streets reached the boundary with York Road, the Olmsteds again changed the format and layout of the development. Instead of single family lots fronting York Road, they created a series of landscaped courts facing the street. Around these courts, groupings of row houses were constructed to reflect similar development in the York Road neighborhood. Thus,

the hierarchy of streets, lot sizes and building types allowed the Olmsteds to create a neighborhood offering many different options for potential home buyers.

Within the hierarchy of the street layouts, the Olmsteds created a series of open spaces and pedestrian lanes. Chancery Square, one of the first areas of development in Guilford, presents an open public space that is the terminus of several converging streets. Scaled to the smaller lots of the eastern edge of Guilford, it acts as an effective device to connect divergent streets and to provide an amenity to the neighborhood. The Square, with its edges framed by duplex housing units, adds a unique level of interest in the design of public and private areas seldom seen in suburban residential land development.

In Guilford, the Olmsteds demonstrated their fully mature philosophies for suburban land development, establishing views and vistas, a hierarchy of circulation patterns, and a mixture of housing types and sizes. Their plan for Guilford both connected it to and protected it from neighboring areas. The creativity and thoughtfulness the Olmsteds applied to the project have made Guilford a model of development, one that still offers ideals that are as current today as they were over one hundred years ago.

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