

AICP STUDY GUIDE

Podcast

Episode 15: A Company Town, a White City, and a Garden City Walk Into a Bar...

And welcome planners, to the fifteenth episode of the very unofficial AICP podcast. I'm Jonathan Miller, and thank you all so much for joining.

And this is it. Exam time is upon us.

Now is the time where you hit the topics you are the most unfamiliar with, and basically mentally prepare. I can't emphasize that enough.

Know what you should do the day before the exam? Unplug from the material; watch a movie, go out to dinner, go for a hike, whatever. Just spend some time not reading or working on planning stuff.

If you try to jam too much in, I promise you, you will burn out and hit the mental wall. So avoid it. You got this.

That said, I'm going to do my part for you and make this the last episode of this round of the AICP exam. Don't worry though, we'll pick it back up in December for the new round of applications.

So, we'll end this round with a topic more specific to planning, or at least, the kind of stuff that got most of us into planning.

At the end of the 1800's we started to see planning theories, or methods, of planning emerge. In 1880 we got the start of the model company town, Pullman, Illinois. In 1893, we got the Columbian Exposition, or Chicago World's Fair as most people know it. And as I'm sure you all know, that started the City Beautiful movement.

And, at the end of the century we get Ebenezer Howard's book, "Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform," A.K.A., "Garden Cities of Tomorrow." And that helped spark the Garden Cities Movement, obviously.

But, let's start with Pullman.

(02:00)

So, Pullman, Illinois. Aptly named after the man, and the company, that provided its origins.

George Pullman moved to Chicago in his early days and made a boat load of money raising Chicago buildings in order to construct a sewer system...and it was that money that he used to start his passenger car business.

In 1864, George Pullman constructed his first luxury sleeping car called, "The Pioneer." You see, before Pullman's luxury sleeping cars, the railroad passenger cars were pretty cramped - which super wealthy people hate. So, obviously, there was a definite market for Pullman's product.

Fun fact, "The Pioneer" actually carried Lincoln's body from D.C. to Springfield, and notoriety of that kind helped his luxury sleeping car concept take off. And in 1867, The Pullman Palace Car Company was

founded.

The business model slightly changed though. Over time he developed other high end luxury train cars. These train cars were too expensive for the railroads to buy, so he actually monetized the whole business model by leasing them out and providing the staff for them: Full-service.

And, business was booming. So much so, that he decided to construct a full-fledged town to house his workers, and provide all of the necessities.

Why? Well, to prevent disgruntled employees and attract more skilled employees. Both of which, in the service of increased productivity. So in 1879 Pullman bought up 4,000 acres of land south of Chicago, and in 1880, construction began.

(03:57)

In 4 years - by 1884 - Pullman was complete. She had 1,000 homes; each with gas, water, sewer (more amenities than cities had), front and back yards, and daily trash removal. She had parks, open spaces, a library, shops, and of course, the factories where the employees worked.

The architect, Solon Beman, designed all of this in Queen Anne style, with arches for accents on non-residential buildings, and everything was constructed with brick. Sounds like a dream right?

Well, it came with a cost too. Pullman managed everything, and charged for it. None of the housing within Pullman was able to be purchased. They were all for rent only, and set for a 6% return, of course.

And that's aside from the utter lack of privacy. Renters could be evicted at any time for any reason, and they were subject to random inspections.

In fact, saloons were banned, town meetings were banned, and Pullman even decided which books the library had in circulation.

(05:15)

"There are monotony and surveillance on the inside. Pullman may appear all glitter and glow, all gladness and glory to the casual visitor, but there is the deep dark background of discontent. Which it would be idle to deny." At least that's how the Chicago Tribune described it in 1888.

While the town was beautiful from the outside, the inside was very Orson Wells 1984. At least that's the impression I get, but there was also a perfect storm of events waiting to bring forth some change.

In 1893, as the Chicago World's Fair was ramping up, the U.S. was on the verge of a financial recession. And that economic struggle showed in the rail industry which had, to a degree, over-extended itself.

The financial struggles resulted in decreased orders with the Pullman company, and subsequently, that meant layoffs and reduced hours. Unfortunately though, Pullman didn't reflect that in his rents and since rent was deducted straight from the paycheck, people weren't left enough money to even eat.

Now, simultaneously there was the existing malcontent with how the town was run, and then also in 1893 at the Chicago World's Fair, the American Railway Union or ARU formed.

This allowed the Pullman workers to strike in 1894 and though the ARU weren't initially on board, they came around, and organized an industry-wide boycott of Pullman Cars by all railway union workers.

Now, I'll keep this part short, but it's super interesting so you should definitely read up on it, but the strike and boycott got wildly out of hand really quickly.

Basically, the federal government got involved, trying to impose an injunction on the boycott as a threat to interstate commerce. U.S. Marshalls and Army troops were deployed to the Chicago railyards where fights broke out with workers, leaving dozens dead.

Ultimately, the strike was disbanded and Pullman continued his authoritarian rule of Pullman until he died in 1896. By 1898, the Illinois Supreme Court ordered the Pullman Company to sell all non-industrial land with residents given the first right of refusal.

After a period of decline, Pullman was designated a National Historic Landmark District in 1970.

(07:47)

Let's go back though to 1893, not too far away from the growing tensions in Pullman, to Chicago. Now, I know we're all planners, so this shouldn't be too new to anyone, but.

The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, or Chicago World's Fair as it's better known, was meant to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus, and it was also the brain child of a guy you all know: Daniel Hudson Burnham.

Now Burnham was an architect in Chicago, and actually helped shape the first buildings that we called skyscrapers, but anyways.

Burnham and his partner at the time, John Root, were in discussions to design the World's Columbian Exposition when unfortunately, Root passed away.

So, Burnham took on the lead role of designer and head of construction, and what did he do for assistance with designing all of the buildings?

He reached out to a dream team of architects: Richard Hunt, George Post, Louis Sullivan, and of course, none other than our landscape architect friend: Frederick Law Olmstead.

(09:05)

This group of remarkable individuals had met about what style to design the fair in. Originally, it was intended to be more modern, but they actually settled on a classical revival style with romanque and renaissance buildings that highlighted the Beaux-Arts style of architecture.

These buildings featured symmetry, columns, and copious decorative exteriors; statues and raised first stories.

In probably one of the first physical planning efforts regarding building placement...these extraordinary buildings were organized around gardens, lakes, a mile-long central boulevard. I want to note this too as a fun little story.

So, if you weren't aware - which you probably are - the 1893 Chicago World's Fair is also known as, "The White City." I mean, people were just in love with it.

All of the buildings - with their revival architecture - were white, and just glowed under the newly invented electric incandescent lights. But the white of the buildings was actually a relatively haphazard result.

You see, the buildings weren't actually planned to all be white from the get-go, but time and money pressures were mounting. So, in the lead-up to opening day, Burnham made the decision that all buildings would get a simple white stucco treatment. There just wasn't the time and money to put into finishing them off the way they were planned, and that seemed to work out pretty well.

Anyways, this combination of architecture and orientation of buildings captured visitors hearts. So much so, that after the fair, Burnham made a pretty decent living creating plans for other cities: The 1903 Group Plan in Cleveland, help on the 1901 McMillan Plan in D.C., and a 1905 Plan for San Fransisco just to name a few.

And these all fell into an urban planning philosophy that we call: City Beautiful.

(11:24)

So, what is the City Beautiful movement? In short, the City Beautiful movement was the idea that by designing a city with aesthetics in mind, you could instill civic pride and morals into the community.

You see, at the time - and remember, this was 1893 - we were in the heyday of the dumbbell tenement and deplorable living conditions. Seeing this beautiful, magical, white city instilled a lot of civic pride for Chicagoans, and left a lot of visitors wishing their cities did the same.

It made the citizenry prideful of their cities, made them want to do better: Be better.

And hence, the theory that design in city planning was tied – inseparably - to civic pride and engagement. And how did City Beautiful achieve this?

Through ornate details in Greek revivalist architecture, grand boulevards, and pedestrian plazas; basically, large civic open spaces.

It didn't have to be large natural parks either. Google "Cleveland Public Square," and you'll see what I mean. It's just a large square in the center of downtown. As part of the Cleveland Group Plan, this was meant to be the center of the most important buildings.

That's the grandiosity of the City Beautiful Movement.

Not everyone was a fan, including the heralded Jane Jacobs, but we'll cover City Beautiful a little more in-depth, including its opponents, another time.

On the other hand though, there was another movement gaining some traction at the same time: The Garden City movement.

(13:14)

The Garden City movement's beginning is largely credited to - and follow me here - a 1902 book called "The Garden Cities of Tomorrow," which was written by a guy named Ebenezer Howard. And that book is actually just the revised and re-released version of his book from 1898, "Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform."

So, who was this Ebenezer Howard? Was he an architect? Landscape Architect?

Well? None of the above. He was the son of a baker, turned stenographer, turned attempted-farmer, turned-back stenographer.

His last stenographer stint though was transcribing the British Parliament, and he spent a lot of time reading about social reform; including our friend Henry George's, "Progress and Poverty."

Ultimately, these experiences and readings informed his view of what a utopian community could be. To him, a better blend of cities and country.

(14:31)

So first, let me get this out of the way. If you google around for Ebenezer Howard, you'll see a lot of references to Ebenezer Howard the urban planner. But it's more Urban Planning Theorist Ebenezer Howard. His theory being Garden Cities.

Anyways, ultimately the book, "Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform," and subsequently the revised version, "Garden Cities of Tomorrow," painted a picture of a utopian town where the benefits of cities and country were blended together. These Garden Cities had the opportunities, high wages, and entertainment activities of cities, but also had the fresh air, cheap rent, and picturesque nature of the country.

These concepts were brought out in his famous "Three Magnets" diagram, with each magnet representing the town, the country, and the town-country. In a nutshell, the magnets of town and country highlight the pros and cons of each, and the list under the town-country magnet is just a compilation of the pros of both.

Beauty of nature, social opportunity, low rents, fields and parks, high wages, plenty to do, etc., etc., etc.

(15:52)

The more famous diagram though is the one that looks like it would be painted on the floor of some satanic ritual. I really mean no offense by that, but it kind of does. The entire diagram is circular and divided into six equal wedges of sorts. It has the central city in the middle with a population of 58,000.

Outside of that are six open areas where social services and open spaces are; like the Home for Inebriates, the Insane Asylum, two areas for reservoirs, large farms, and a forest.

Those are enclosed by the inter-municipal railway which connects the peripherals of six smaller town clusters - each with a population of 9,000 - and the centers of these clusters are connected by a inter-municipal canal.

In between all of these are open spaces, forests, farms, waterfalls, quarries, and colleges. Now I know you've seen the picture of what I'm talking about. It should be noted that Ebenezer Howard never intended the Garden Cities to be literal circles. This diagram was really just intended to be an example, but Garden City advocates apparently liked the symmetry, I guess, because the circle concept followed it.

The first Garden City, Letchworth, was actually developed shortly after the re-release of the book. But again, we'll cover Garden Cities more specifically later on.

(17:48)

So, what did we learn today?

Well, we talked about the failed experiment of the first company town, Pullman, Illinois. Although over time, to be fair, she did rebound. The failings were more of a result of the way it was governed; the physical part was actually really good. Like award winning good.

We also covered – briefly - Daniel Burnham, the 1893 Chicago's World Fair, and the birth of the City Beautiful Movement.

Side note, next time you're looking for a good book to read - if you haven't already - check out "Devil in the White City." It's about the infamous serial killer at the time, but also tells the story of Daniel Burnham and the development of the 1893 World's Fair. It really is an amazing story.

Then, we covered Ebenezer Howard and his Garden City concept that he wrote about in his one and only book in 1898, "Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Reform," or better known under its 1902 rerelease name, "Garden Cities of Tomorrow."

(19:07)

And there you have it. That's the brief stories of Pullman, Illinois, the Chicago World's Fair and City Beautiful, and the start of Garden Cities.

If you want to know more about it, which as planners you absolutely should; links to all of the information used in putting this episode together is in the show notes.

And for those of you playing along at home, our question last week was, "What was the first national park, and when was it established?" This was a little trickier, but only because it wasn't even the topic of the episode. Regardless though, that would be Yellowstone National Park, and that was established

in 1872.

If you want to play along this week, our question is going to be, "What was the first Garden City?"

Now, for the answer to that you'll have to follow us on Instagram or Facebook. Since the exam window just started, I'll be taking a short break to let you all focus on the things you need to, including taking a needed breather.

If you have any questions or comments, go ahead and email me or send me a message through the website, Instagram, or Facebook. Also, go on and click subscribe for this podcast on whatever platform you're using, or sign up on the show's website so you can be a better planner moving forward.

You're done with your study regimens and off towards certification, but learning is a lifelong process. Like Albert Einstein said, "Once you stop learning, you start dying." So, stick with us, and keep on learning.

If you know any planners who are ramping up for the next round of the exam, or know someone who finds this type of stuff interesting: Share it out, leave a rating. You got nothing to lose.

And finally, and most importantly: Good luck everyone!

You got this, and in all seriousness, send me a message to let me know how you did, what tripped you up, what was easy, and I'd love to give some shout outs to all the newly minted AICP's when we pick back up.

Thank you for letting me be part of your journey to certification. It's been way too much fun, 'till next time.

Links:

Pullman, Illinois

<http://www.pullmanil.org/town.htm#:~:text=The%20model%20industrial%20town%20of,of%20Pullman's%20Palace%20Car%20Company>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pullman,_Chicago

<https://www.history.com/news/5-famous-company-towns>

<https://www.nps.gov/pull/learn/historyculture/a-brief-overview-of-the-pullman-story.htm>

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

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<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/chicago-worlds-columbian-exposition-1893/>

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City Beautiful

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

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/City-Beautiful-movement>

<https://www.nypap.org/preservation-history/city-beautiful-movement/>

Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garden_Cities_of_To-morrow

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

<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2014/dec/05/ebenezer-howards-three-magnets>