

# AICP STUDY GUIDE

Podcast

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## Episode 6: So It Begins

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And welcome to the sixth - oh my goodness - episode of the VERY UNofficial AICP podcast. I'm Jonathan Miller, thanks so much for joining us.

Last week we covered the history and development of the APA, from its inception - good movie - to now. This week, we're going to turn back the clock even farther to planning's colonial roots. We'll talk about the two big examples: Philadelphia and what was called, "The Holy Experiment," and Savannah and its historic squares. But first, let's cover what colonial planning is generally characterized as and why it came about, just to provide some context.

### (01:00)

Colonial planning really began with, well, the colonies. Ha, just kidding. You can actually trace colonial planning back to London - which should be obvious since its Colonial planning - and the style of planning that came out of a response to London's Great Fire of 1666.

I won't belabor this too much, but the Great Fire of 1666 lasted 4 days in London and burned - according to Wikipedia - an estimated 13,200 houses, or the homes of 7 out of 8 residents; which is not inconsequential.

Anyways, this guy named John Evelyn almost eerily foreshadowed the event a year earlier when he compared London to Paris. He basically called out London for using too much wood in its construction - and more importantly to us planners at least - being too congested through unplanned growth; so in not in so many words of course. I'm sure he used more eloquent old English vernacular.

So, this fire then. It sparks a movement to try and start planning out - ahead of time - where buildings will go in order to prevent over congestion. It also sparks a concept of including public squares which would provide additional separation and open spaces.

The government of Charles the Second, then went out and asked for some plans on how to rebuild the city. The submitted plans ended up that he ended up getting, ended up becoming the inspiration behind the development standards in "The Grand Model," that's what it was called; otherwise known as the plan for the newly founded "Province of Carolina," in the colonies in what is now the United States.

Now, the Province of Carolina really only partially went about with this plan, but the components that primarily came out of it were none other than streets laid out in a grid pattern, wide streets, and the inclusion of civic spaces. Does this sound familiar yet?

Well, it should, and it will

### (03:47)

Fast forward about 15 years to 1681 when King Charles the second decided to pay back a debt to William Penn's dad by giving land to William Penn - kind of weird giving a gift to his kid, but whatever - which would later become what we know now as the wonderous land of Pennsylvania. Penn, a quaker if you didn't know, wanted to use this to create a community that encompassed all of his quaker ideals; something

that hadn't really been done before, and it was something that he called his "Holy Experiment." Part of this holy experiment was town planning to create a healthier, green community.

Finding a location near the confluence of the Schuylkill - quick digression, I did have to google the pronunciation for that - the Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers. Penn used the lessons that he had learned from the - what should be now familiar - Great Fire of London, which was William Penn's hometown, to create a town plan designed to protect the future inhabitants from things like out-of-control fires and over congestion: A "green country towne," if you will.

So, he began planning out his utopia and laid out two roads - perpendicular to each other - and wide, like really wide roads, like 100-foot wide roads. Which for a time and place that didn't have cars and thousands and thousands of people seems a bit ridiculous, but it definitely served Philly well to grow in to.

Anyways, these two really wide roads - Broad and Market (Market was formerly known as High) - created a public square at the center, and essentially divided up the area into four quadrants. And what else would be better to have in each of these quadrants than an awesome green square.

So ultimately, Penn planned out a city when planning wasn't even really a thing yet; other than a budding idea on how it maybe would have helped prevent a devastating fire. P.S., don't tell that to Chicago. And this city focused on gridded Streets, wide streets, and public squares.

If you want to check it out on an aerial, you can google "Philadelphia City Hall," and click on the maps tab. It's a bit easier to recognize in the map view, so leave it there instead of the satellite view, but what you're looking at will be the original central square at the could-be intersection of Broad and Market; that's where the City Hall is.

If you zoom out a bit, you can see Logan Square in the northwest, Franklin Square in the northeast, Washington Square in the southeast, and Rittenhouse Square in the southwest. These are the original four squares; five I suppose if you want to include the center one where City Hall is.

Even so though, it is not the quintessential example of colonial planning. That doesn't happen for another - oh - 50 years or so, and several hundred miles south.

## **(07:39)**

The year? 1733. The place? Savannah Georgia.

She was founded by this British Soldier who did some other important things that we don't really care about in this context, but he was named, General James Oglethorpe.

Oglethorpe came out and said, "I have a plan." I don't think he actually said that, but I'm paraphrasing. So, he says, "I have a plan which you will eventually aptly name 'Oglethorpe's Plan, and that plan will lay out this awesome new town in a completely structured and organized fashion since I am a military guy, and military guys like things structured and organized. And also because Carolina had a pretty damn good idea on how to avoid over congestion by planning ahead."

From there, he laid out six wards; each ward identical to the next, and each contained a central square. Eventually, this plan was expanded to include a whopping 33 squares, although only 24 were actualized, with only 22 of those still remaining.

Anyways, each of these squares measured about 200 feet wide from east to west, with some variation in the north-south measurements. To the east and west of these squares were "Trust Lots," as they were called in the plan, which were originally meant to be where civic buildings were located. The corners of these wards were then referred to as tythings - it's an old English word - we obviously don't use these anymore, where residential lots were meant to be located.

Now, all of this is relatively fluid. Not all properties in tythings ended up being residential and not all trust lots ended up being civic structures, but regardless, the overall layout stuck and you can very easily see it in Google Maps or any other aerial, but Google will take you right there.

Just google, "Savannah Georgia." Again, click on the maps tab and zoom into the downtown area, especially near the river. Make sure you set it to satellite for this one for the more impressive aerial that really shows the layout.

I mean hell, the plan was even nominated to be a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1994. Oglethorpe's Plan was that kind of impressive for the time, which is maybe why almost every major city - especially ones which got their roots around the same time or shortly thereafter - followed similar layouts to Philadelphia and Savannah.

D.C., for example, was based in part off of Philadelphia. Cleveland, I know for a fact, followed suit. Most major cities, especially on the eastern half, were built around a public square with two major, wide cross streets, and a grid pattern extending outward with some of the squares created by the grid being reserved as a green, open square.

## (11:15)

And that my friends, is the story of colonial American planning. Not entirely of course, but the basics - the origins if you will - and if there's a question on the exam. I'd bet it would have to do with one of the things we talked about here.

For those of you who tuned in to the last episode and are, I'm sure, anxiously waiting: The answer to our episode question, "What two organizations combined to form the APA as we know it, and what year did they combine in?" is, the American Institute of Planners, or AIP, and the American Society of Planning Officials, or ASPO, and they joined forces to create the super planning organization, the APA, and the year for that was 1978.

For this week, your question is, "William Penn's Philadelphia Plan was the very rough physical planning part of his vision for the area. What did he call this overall effort?"

As always, all of the links for the references can be found in the show notes. If you have any questions that you want to follow-up on, feel free to reach out to me at [theveryunofficialaicpguide@gmail.com](mailto:theveryunofficialaicpguide@gmail.com).

Also, don't forget to subscribe to this podcast so you can follow along with future episodes, help prepare for the exam and supplement your other study regimens, and all that jazz.

Make sure you tune in next week. Thanks again, 'till next time...

## Links:

Great Fire of London:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Fire\\_of\\_London](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Fire_of_London)

The Holy Experiment:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy\\_Experiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Experiment)

The Grand Model:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand\\_Model\\_for\\_the\\_Province\\_of\\_Carolina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Model_for_the_Province_of_Carolina)

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania:

<https://billypenn.com/2019/10/27/william-penn-375-years-philadelphia-model-city-street-grid/>

<https://tclf.org/landscapes/william-penn-philadelphia-plan#:~:text=The%20plan%20was%20centered%20on,forming%20the%20grid's%20main%20axes.>

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~CAP/PENN/pnplan.html>

Savannah, Georgia:

<https://www.visitsavannah.com/article/savannahs-squares-and-parks>

<https://gallivantertours.com/savannah/squares-in-savannah/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Squares\\_of\\_Savannah,\\_Georgia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Squares_of_Savannah,_Georgia)