Parkitect: Carl Freund and Organic Modernism in Cincinnati's Public Landscapes

Lucy Webb Hayes Nurses' Home (Walter Gilliam, Cincinnati, OH, N.R.List Feature, 1926) Photographed by Elizabeth Meyer, 2011

Cincinnati Architect Carl Freund (1881-1961) worked for the Cincinnati Park Board for three decades, from the 1920s, 1930s, and consultant for such years in a longterm period. Freund's contributions to the Cincinnati landscape are numerous and varied. Freund designed the

Mount Auburn Recreation Center (Mount Auburn, Cincinnati, OH, N.R.List Feature, 1928) Photographed by Elizabeth Meyer, 2011 - Photo has been cropped to remove the Cincinnati Skyline

Bond Hill Recreation Center (Bond Hill, Cincinnati, OH, N.R.List Feature, 1928) Photographed by Elizabeth Meyer, 2011 - Photo has been cropped to remove the Cincinnati Skyline

Bond Hill Recreation Center, Bond Hill, Cincinnati, OH, N.R.List Feature, 1928 - Photographed by Elizabeth Meyer, 2011

Although Brighton's Organic Modernism remained a partial outlier to Cincinnati public landscapes, Brighton's work certainly designed for an urban environment, such as the Mount Auburn Recreation Center, Bond Hill Recreation Center, Lucy Webb Hayes Nurses' Home, and Cincinnati Zoo Aquarium. Freund's work certainly tend to be small-scale programmatically unlike the Olmsted Brothers' work, which tended to be large-scale, regional-scale, and environmental in nature. Freund's work is also distinct with the landscape plans for Hamilton County's Cincinnati Nat Hamilton County Park District, Cincinnati Zoo Aquarium, Cincinnati Zoo Aquarium, Cincinnati Zoo Aquarium, Cincinnati and the Ohio River Valley.

Cincinnati Zoo Aquarium, Cincinnati, Ohio, N.R.List Feature, 1928 - Photographed by Elizabeth Meyer, 2011 - Photo has been cropped to remove the Cincinnati Skyline

Freund's designs for the park structures varied from an Ohio and Gothic, 1940s, Lucas Jean Cottage, Lucas Jean and Lucas Jean's "Brighton's Organic" conventions. From the mid-1940s through the 1960s, Freund-Jean's only attention to Brighton's organic principles. Brighton "Natural" architecture is characterized by:

1. The use of natural and local materials such as stone, brick and wood
2. Low, horizontal forms
3. Long, flat and horizontal roof lines
4. Integration of the building into its surroundings
5. Large windows with fenestration that mimic the surrounding landscape
6. Incorporation of the outdoor environment into the interior design

Freund's Lucas Jean Cottage (Lucas Jean, Lucas Jean, Cincinnati, Ohio, N.R.List Feature, 1940) - Photographed by Elizabeth Meyer, 2011

Lucy Webb Hayes Nurses' Home (Walter Gilliam, Cincinnati, OH, N.R.List Feature, 1926) Photographed by Elizabeth Meyer, 2011

The Organic Evolution of Freund's park buildings

Freund's Lucy Webb Hayes Nurses' Home (Walter Gilliam) in Bonnie Meyer, Freund designed the exterior of Brighton's buildings and Gilliam. This possibly is Freund's only, some, Brighton's Freund exterior, but a long, low, flat-roofed, tall, 2-story structure supported by wooden brackets and a wooden, long, low, flat-roofed, tall, 2-story structure with wooden brackets. Freund's Lucy Webb Hayes Nurses' Home (Walter Gilliam) in Bonnie Meyer, Freund

Lucy Webb Hayes Nurses' Home (Walter Gilliam, Cincinnati, OH, N.R.List Feature, 1926) Photographed by Elizabeth Meyer, 2011

Lucy Webb Hayes Nurses' Home (Walter Gilliam, Cincinnati, OH, N.R.List Feature, 1926) Photographed by Elizabeth Meyer, 2011

However, other influences can also present in the "Natural Brighton." An sculptural wooden bracket, a long, low, flat-roofed, tall, 2-story structure with wooden brackets, a long, low, flat-roofed, tall, 2-story structure with wooden brackets, a long, low, flat-roofed, tall, 2-story structure with wooden brackets

Pavilion, Bellevue Hill Park, Clifton Heights, Cincinnati, OH, by R. Carl Freund, 1955. Photograph by P. Snadon, 2009. From the University of Cincinnati Digital Collections & Repositories @UC Libraries

Adjoining this are mushroom-shaped pergolas intended for dancing. They have cantilevered, reinforced concrete roofs reminiscent of Wright's famous "lily pad" columns at the Johnson's Wax Headquarters in Racine, Wisconsin.

Pavilion, Bellevue Hill Park, Clifton Heights, Cincinnati, OH, by R. Carl Freund, 1955. Photograph by E. Meyer 2018. From the University of Cincinnati Digital Collections & Repositories @UC Libraries

Freund's miniature canopies rest on clustered, canted concrete posts and open to the sky through radiating-pattern apertures that allow light and water into raised planting beds below. The siting, daring structure, and bold geometric forms of this whimsical pavilion make it the equal of Frank Lloyd Wright's best small buildings.

Left: Pavilion, Bellevue Hill Park, Clifton Heights, Cincinnati, OH, by R. Carl Freund, 1955. Right: Johnson's Wax Corporate Headquarters, Racine, WI, by Frank Lloyd Wright. From the University of Cincinnati Digital Collections & Repositories @UC Libraries

Both Carl Freund and Frank Lloyd Wright died in 1959; Wright was 92 years old while Freund was only 57. Freund's numerous park buildings, always open to the public and serving thousands of Cincinnati natives and visitors each year, are the most popular expression of Wrightian-Organic Modernism in the city.

Partial List of Freund buildings in Cincinnati Parks:

• **1930, Seasongood Square Park Comfort Station** (a stucco-faced, circular building with conical roof, containing men's and women's toilets)

• **1936, Alms Park Comfort Station** (a cylindrical stone structure with conical roof, set into a hillside with women's toilets above and men's below)

• **1936, Burnet Woods Open Shelter pavilion** (in a valley-like setting; a long, low, hipped roof is supported on stone piers, with open truss work inside) *(discussed and illustrated above)*

• **1936, Fernbank Park Comfort Station** (a stone and wood-shingle roofed building in Arts and Crafts cottage style, with a symmetrical, cruciform plan, containing toilets)

• **1936, Mount Airy Forest Park, Pine Ridge Lodge** (a renovation of an 1869 farmhouse into an Arts and Crafts-style lodge; it is of two stories with stone walls and steep, gabled roofs of slate)

• **1937, Eden Park, Twin Lakes Comfort Station** (a small, stone structure with shingled roofs, in an Arts and Crafts cottage style, containing toilets)

• **1937, Eden Park, Concession Stand** (a small, square stone building with a hipped roof and an open, concession window in front)

• **1937, Kennedy Heights Park Shelter** (a one story brick building in a rustic, cottage style with a cruciform plan and hipped roof; one end of the cruciform is an open loggia with triple, square timber posts)

• **1939, Ault Park, Comfort Station** (a small, symmetrical, cruciform building of limestone with a wood-shingled hipped roof, containing toilets)

• **1939, Burnet Woods, Trailside Nature Museum** (original flat roof replaced with pitched roof in 1975; fieldstone, limestone and wood; log pergola at entrance; Art Deco / Wrightian features) *(discussed and illustrated above)*

• **1939, Mount Airy Forest Park, Ponderosa Comfort Station** (small, symmetrical, cruciform, hipped roof, stone, cottage-like building, containing toilets)

• **1940, Mount Echo Park, Open Shelter** (sited on the brow of Mount Echo with dramatic views of the Ohio River valley, this pavilion has a low, hipped roof that is anchored by and cantilevers from two, massive stone chimneys; Wrightian in its low-slung silhouette, its fireplaces, and its openness, this structure nonetheless has hints of the Arts and Crafts and Tudor Revival movements in its spiraling brick chimneys. Wright strove to eliminate all possible walls in his buildings and allow the roofs to suggest enclosure; this pavilion carries those goals to their extreme limits) *(discussed and illustrated above)*

1941, Fernbank Park, Pavilion (sited on the bank of the Ohio River, it contains an open loggia, rest rooms and other services, flat roofs and heavily rusticated masonry courses, and a boldly horizontal composition) *(discussed and illustrated above)*

• **1941, Inwood Park, Comfort Station** (a stone "cottage" with steep, gabled roofs and an inset porch; containing toilets)

• **1947, Fernbank Park Concession Stand** (a partially open pavilion with rusticated stone piers and walls, with a cantilevered concrete roof)

• **1948, Mount Airy Forest Park, Oak Ridge Lodge** (perched on the edge of a steep hill, this lodge combines multiple functions in a large, asymmetrical building, including a long assembly room with sets of double doors that open it into the surrounding landscape; a massive stone chimney containing outdoor and indoor fireplaces; an open shelter; and a circular seating area) *(discussed and illustrated above)*

• **1949, Mount Airy Forest Park, Colerain Avenue Waiting / Comfort Station** (a small building with an open loggia and rustic stone columns and walls that provides restrooms and a sheltered waiting area for park visitors arriving or departing by bus; it is covered by low, hipped roofs)

• **1949**, Mount Airy Forest Park, Lodge Road Comfort Station (a small, symmetrical, stone cottage-like structure with low, hipped roofs; contains restrooms)

• **1950, Mount Airy Forest Park, Stone Steps Shelter** (a low, symmetrical stone building with an enclosed center and open, loggia-like ends, its hipped roof supported on heavy stone piers)

• **1953, Mount Airy Forest Park, Arboretum** (a one-story brick building with low, cantilevered roofs and wooden loggias spreading into the surrounding gardens)

• **1954, French Park, Shelter** (a building with a V-shaped plan, each end containing open loggias supporting low, overhanging, hipped roofs on heavy stone piers; one wing contains a heavy stone chimney with fireplace)

• **1955, Eden Park, Park Board Administration Building** (a long, low structure of brick and stone built into a hillside site, it contains offices and meeting rooms for the Parks administration as well as storage for park vehicles and equipment; it has two levels, a cruciform plan, and low, gabled roofs with dramatic overhangs) *(discussed and illustrated above)*

• **1955, Bellevue Hill Park Pavilion** (a whimsical structure dramatically sited at the edge of a precipice on the former site of the famed Bellevue House and incline, this free-form stone building has a circular, domed core containing rest rooms, a concession window, and a small stage for bands; attached to it are flowing, concrete canopies with open, cut-out patterns supported on clustered columns above planting beds; the canopies created spaces for dancing and enframe dramatic views of the Cincinnati skyline) *(discussed and illustrated above)*

Other architects followed Freund's lead in using Wrightian-organic forms and materials for park structures; see, for example:

- 1937 Burnet Woods Pavilion by architect Arthur J. Kelsey
- 1949 McEvoy Park Pavilion by architect Joseph E. Stith (a one-time partner of Freund)
- 1956 Mount Airy Forest Maple Ridge Lodge by architects Felsberg and Gillespie
- 1965 Daniel Drake Park Shelter by architects Arend and Arend

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