

Project #1 Process
Temporal and Spacial Diagrams

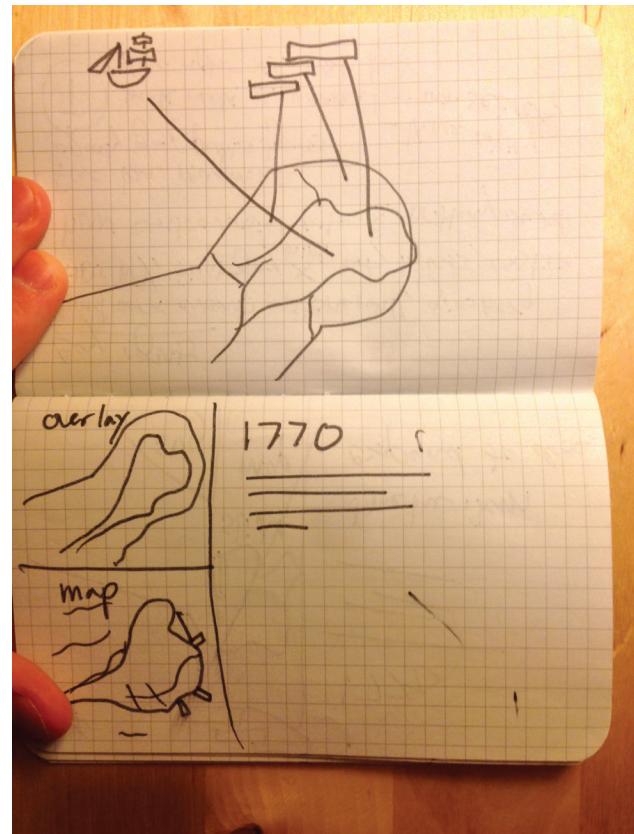
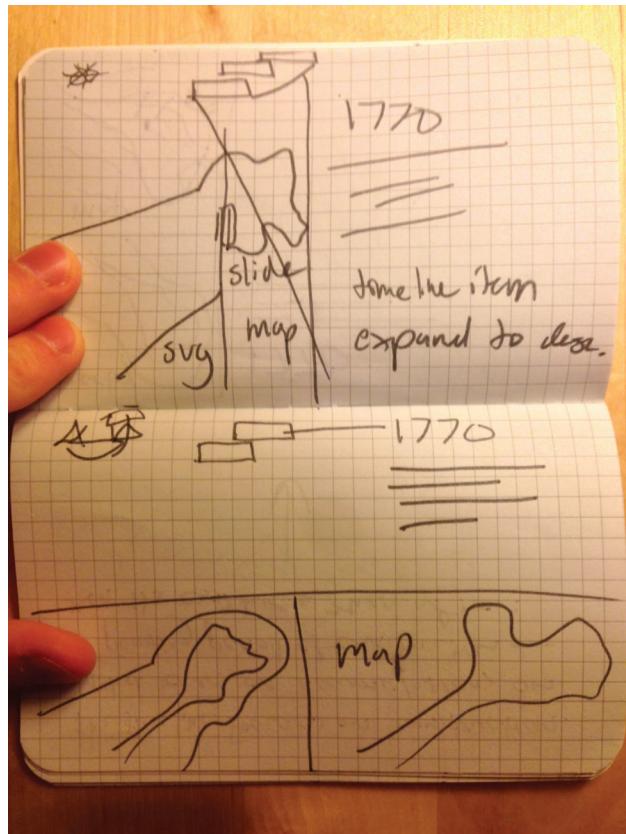
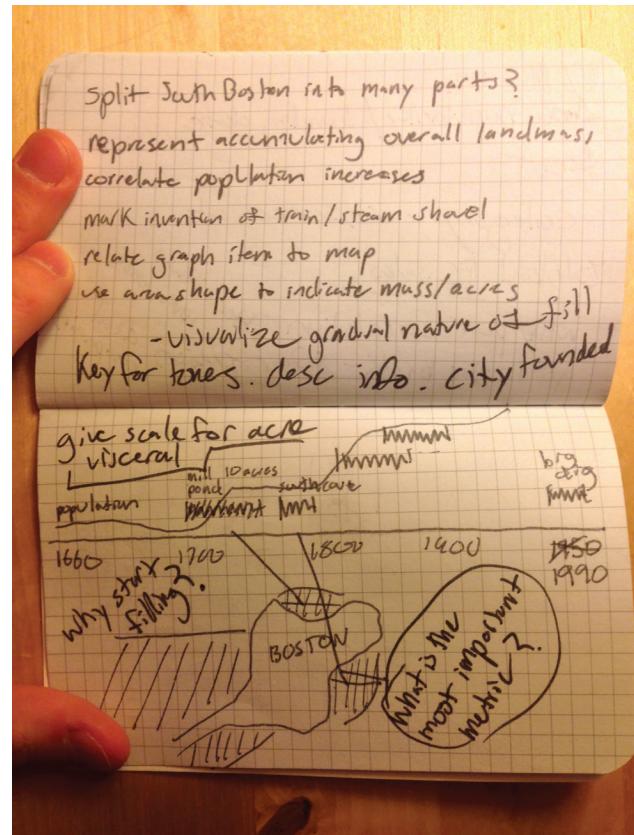
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Bostonian history has interested me for a long time – telling some of the city's story for this project felt like a natural choice.

Some of the more interesting things that happened to Boston were the land reclamation projects during the 19th century. Over the course of around 100 years, Boston filled in enough marsh land to triple its size.

My project's goal is to inform users textually about the context of each major project, and to give them a visceral sense of scale and duration. Using an interactive medium is a good way to execute these goals.

Using a map was an obvious choice – integrating a timeline and contextual information was the design challenge.



I began by creating an isolated, non-interactive timeline chart.

Some sections like "South Boston" were actually multiple projects with pauses in-between.

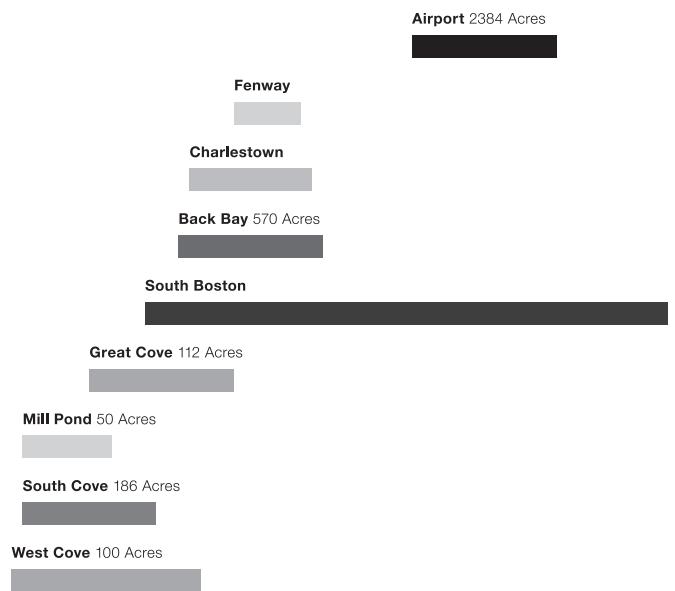
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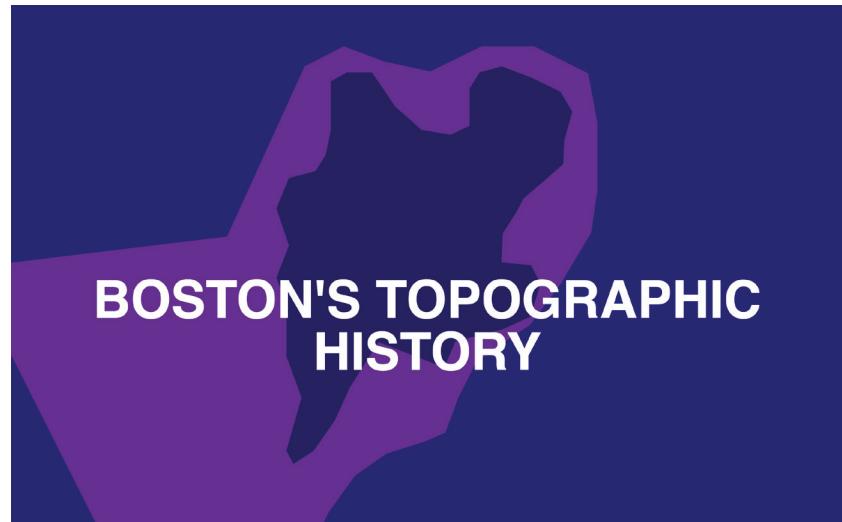
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1907

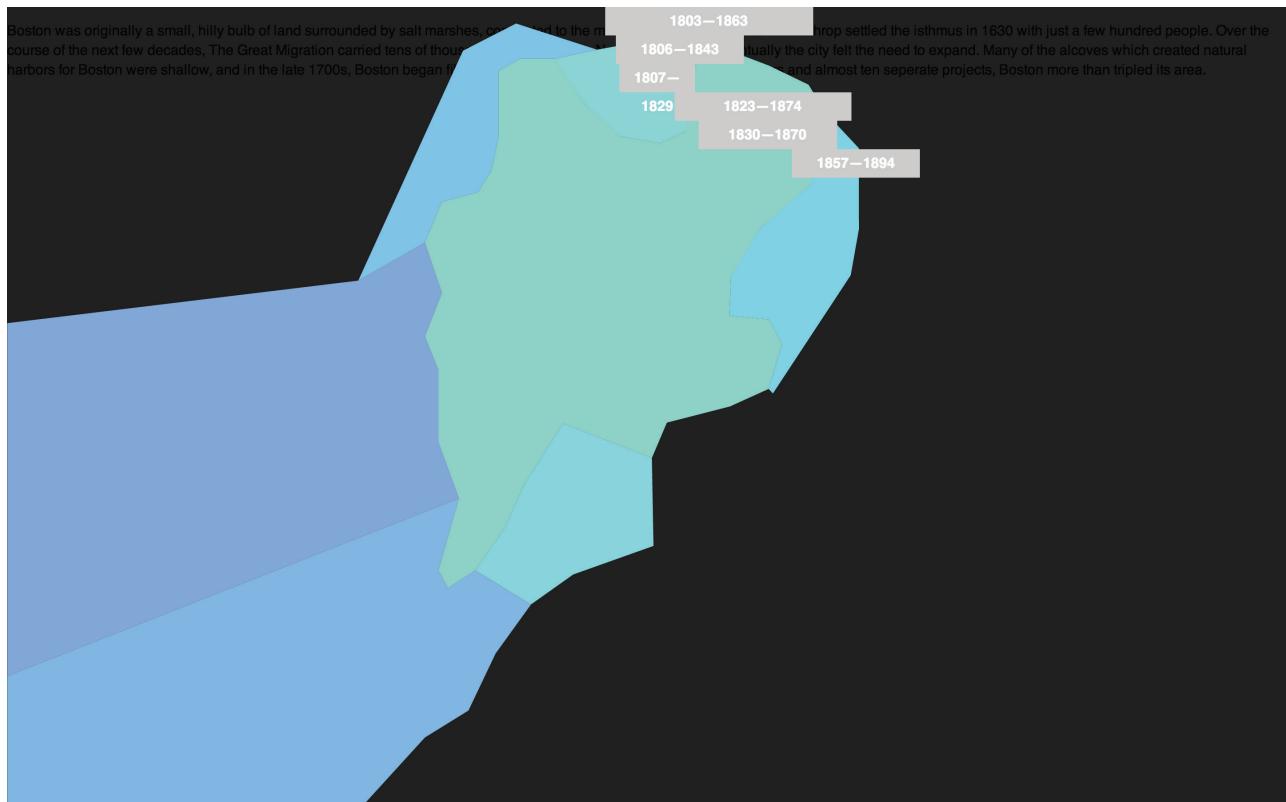
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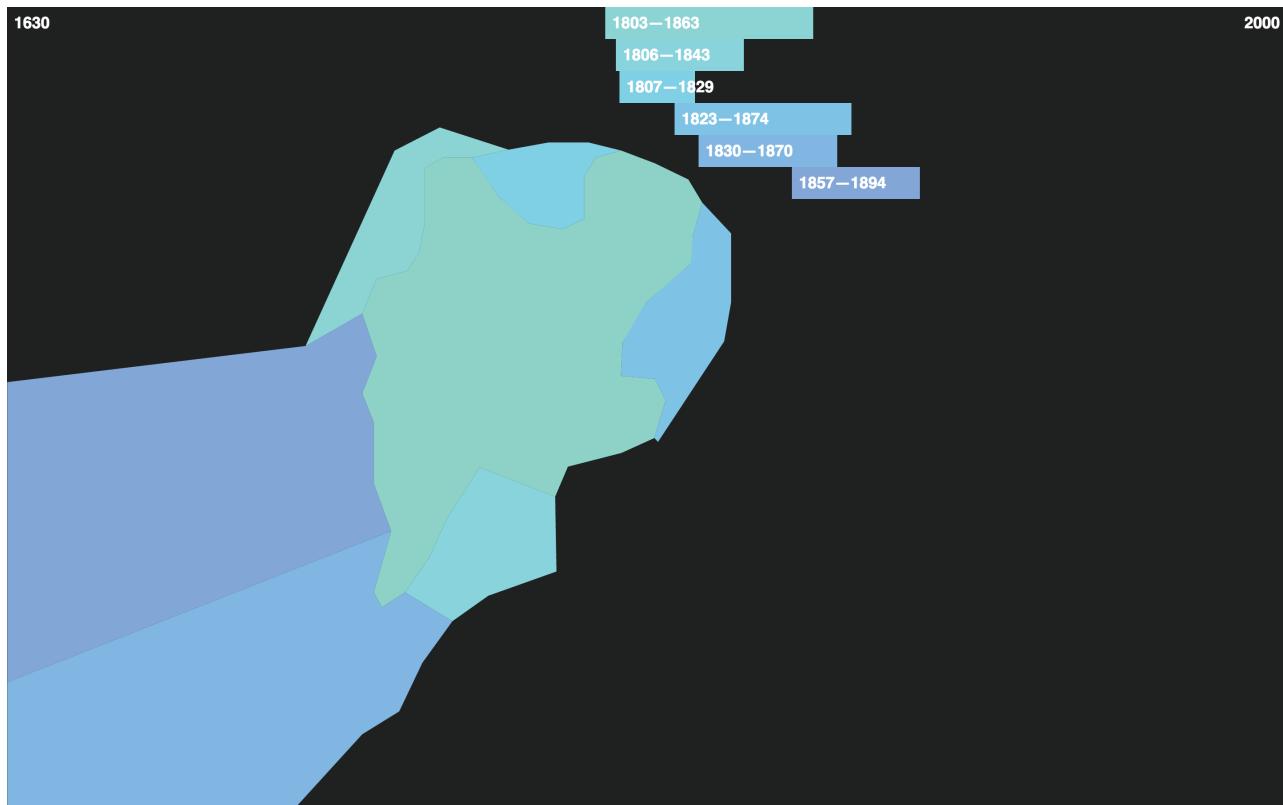


Next, I tested the viability of an interface centered around a clickable map.



Then I created the timeline within the same interface, overlaying the items on the map.

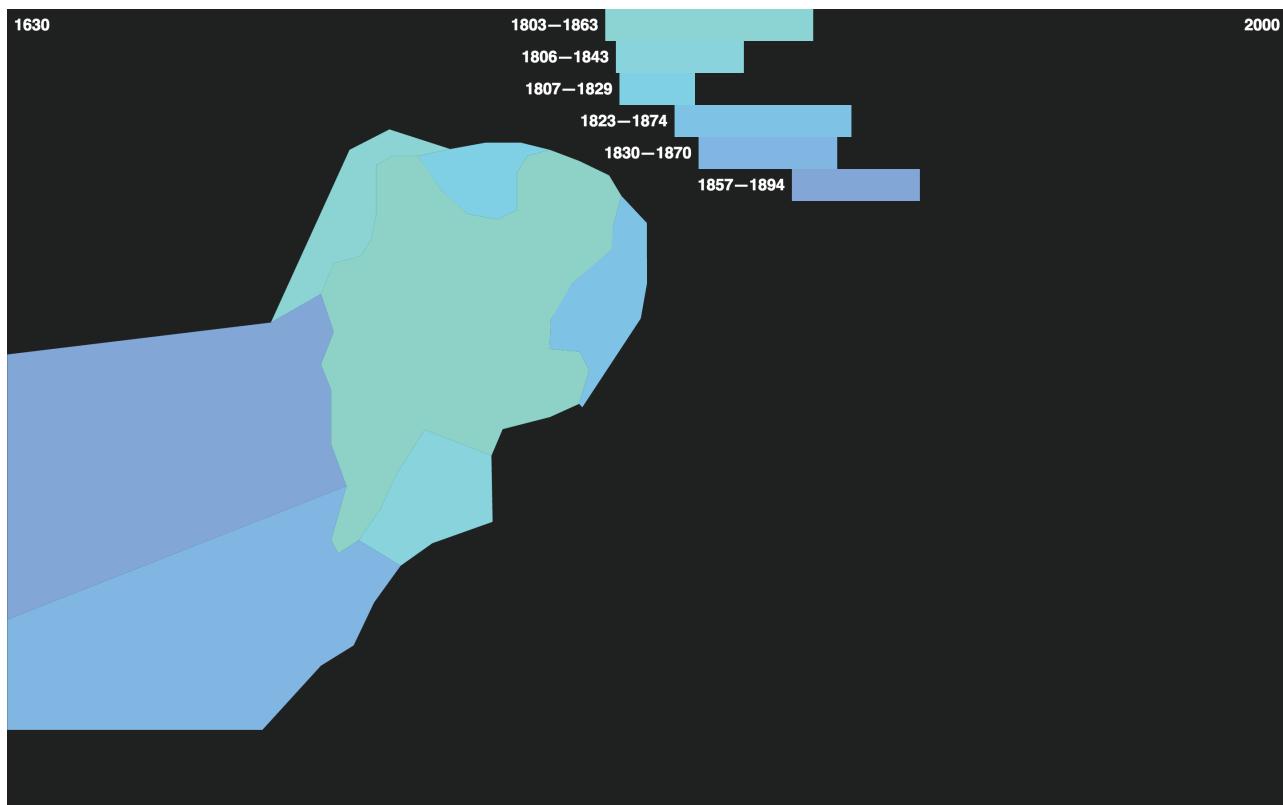




I sized every piece of text and image relative to the browser viewport – every screen has appropriately sized elements.

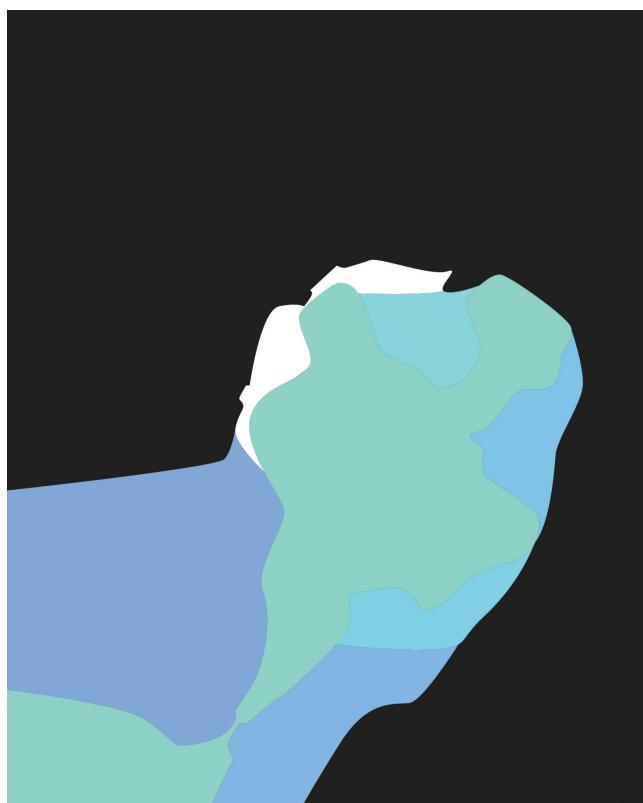
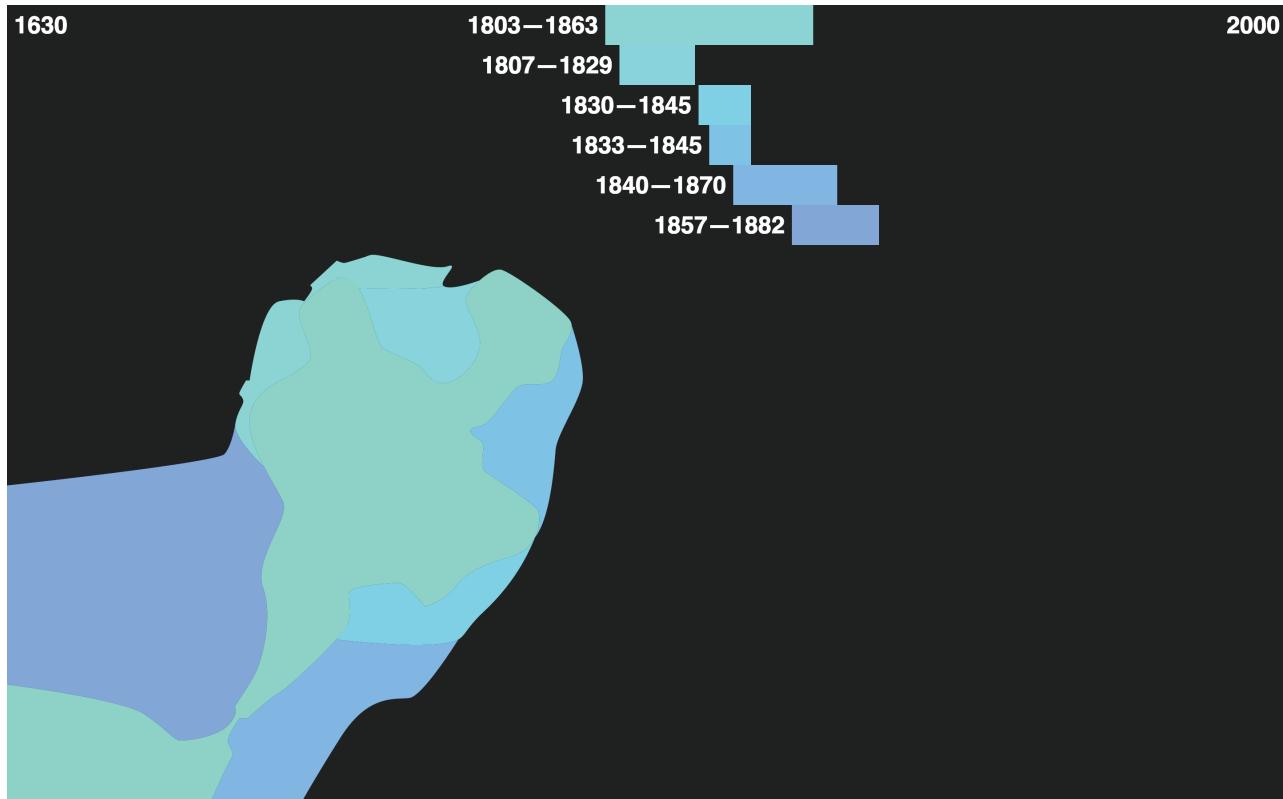
I chose colors that form a gradient from old to new, based on the HSLA color formula – each new landfill project has a rotated hue, but the same saturation and lightness as the rest of the colors.

I narrowed the represented regions down to the first six areas in Boston proper.



I refined the map, and added historical maps in-line with the context for each landfill project.

I moved the labels outside of their graph item counterparts, to increase legibility.

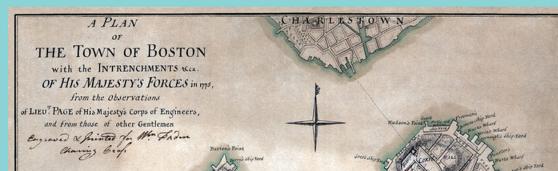


1803–1863

West Cove

One of the earliest land reclamation projects in the city, starting almost at the same time as the Mill Pond reclamation effort (and overlapping it geographically), the filling of the West Cove created the flat, west side of the modern Beacon Hill neighborhood.

This is what Boston looked like before any land reclamation

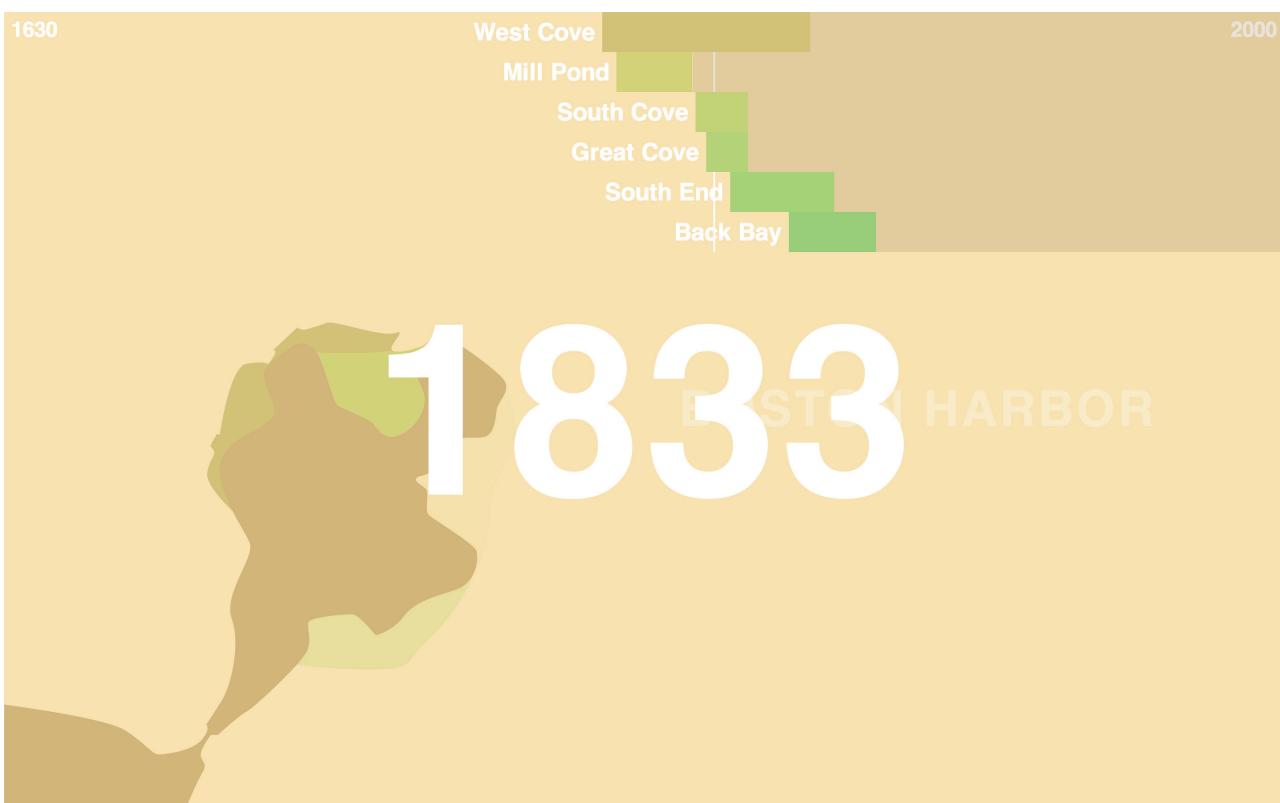
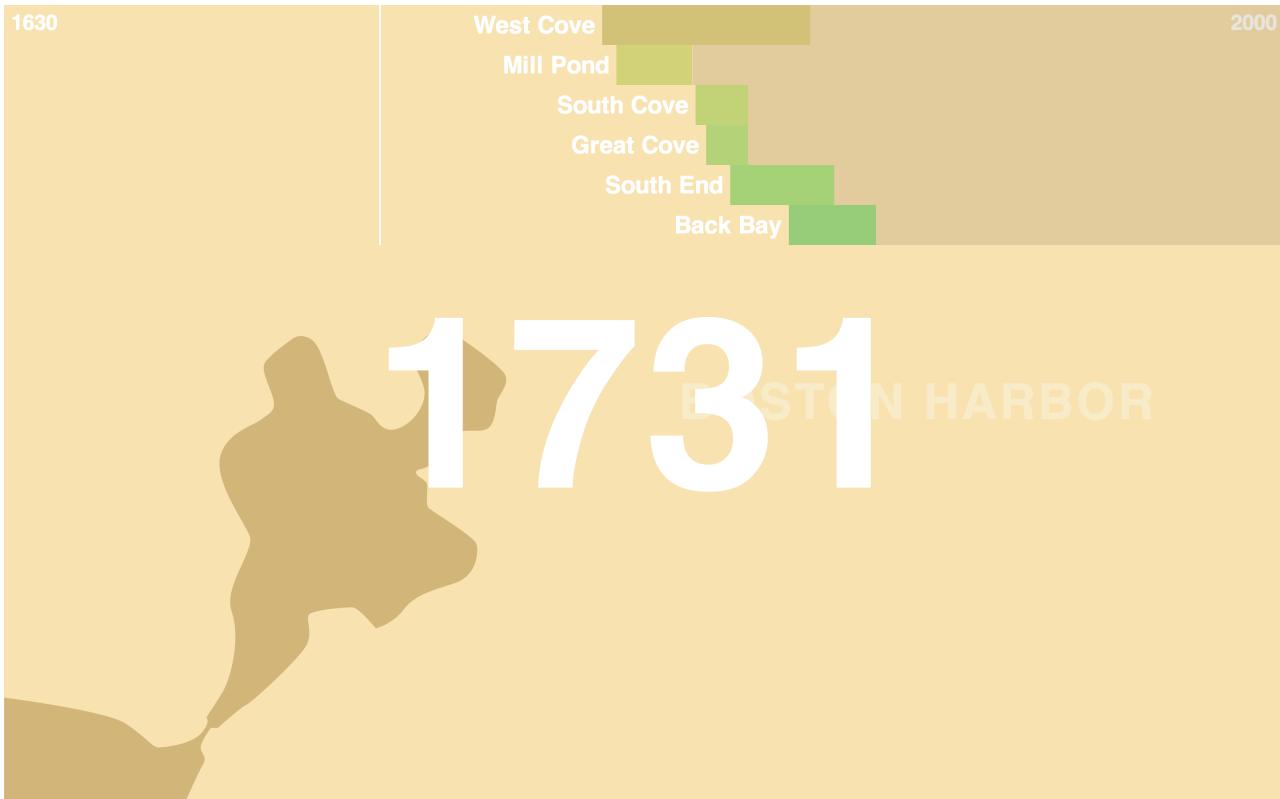


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I changed the color to an earth-tone, and added an indicator in the harbor that the surrounding area is water.

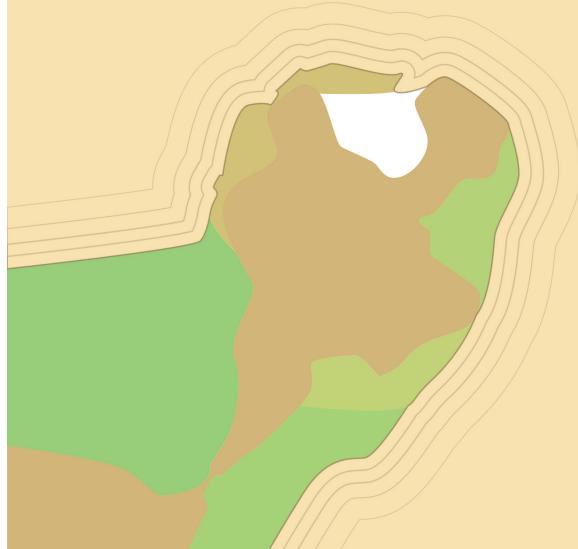
Because a landfill project is adding something permanent to the city, I continued each landfill graph line after its construction process, to represent the accumulation of acreage.

I added an initial “play through” animation, which demonstrates the concurrent development of each project, and their sequence in relation to one another.



To allow a user to better compare the historical maps to the illustration, I moved the maps out of the text, and into an overlay that can be toggled.

[Overlay a map of Mill Pond in the process of being filled](#)



Mill Pond

1807—1829

Mill Pond had been dammed and milled since the first wave of settlers. By the late 1700s, the water had become stagnant and smelly due to trash dumping from the mill. This was Boston's first landfill project — before trains, before steam shovels, before steel supports. Workers cut down the hills of Beacon Hill and moved that soil into the artificial pond — after more than 20 years of continuous work, it was filled.

[Close](#)

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The finished website can be viewed at
ehmorris.github.io/boston-topographic-history

The code and change log can be viewed at
github.com/ehmorris/boston-topographic-history

This process book is set in
Aperçu, designed by the
Colophon Font Foundry.