

99000350

PROPERTY NAME Beardsley Park and Zoological Gardens, Bridgeport, CT

United States Department of the Interior

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Beardsley Park

Other Name/Site Number: Beardsley Park and Beardsley Zoological Gardens

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 1875 Noble Avenue Not for publication: NA

City/Town: Bridgeport

Vicinity: NA

State: CT County: Fairfield

Code: 001 Zip Code: 06610

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: x
Public-local:
Public-State: x
Public-Federal:

Category of Property

Building(s): x
District:
Site: x
Structure: x
Object: x

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

4
1
2
1
8

Noncontributing

8 buildings
1 sites
4 structures
 objects
13 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: NA

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

PROPERTY NAME

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4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

John W. Shannahan 01/25/99
Signature of Certifying Official Date
John W. Shannahan, Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register _____
- Determined eligible for the _____
National Register
- Determined not eligible for the _____
National Register
- Removed from the National Register _____
- Other (explain): _____

Bob Savage 3/18/99
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: LANDSCAPE Sub: park, zoo _____

Current: LANDSCAPE Sub: park, zoo

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification:

LATE VICTORIAN/Queen Anne

MODERN MOVEMENT/Post Modern

Materials:

Foundation: STONE, CONCRETE

Walls: WOOD/weatherboard, shingle
CONCRETE

Roof: STONE/slate, ASPHALT

Other Description: _____

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Beardsley Park and Beardsley Zoological Gardens occupy 181 acres in the northeast section of the City of Bridgeport. The grounds run in a northeasterly direction for about 1.2 miles from Glenwood Park on the south to the Trumbull town line on the north, averaging approximately 1,000 feet in width. The boundary on the northwest is the highway for State Routes 25 and 8, while the boundary on the northeast is composed of East Main Street (SR 127) and Noble Avenue. See resource map, Figure 1. Terrain is gently rolling, with Lookout Point in the zoo the highest point at 135 feet above sea level.

The zoo historically was part of the 181-acre park, owned by the City of Bridgeport, but when the city sold the property in 1993, Beardsley Park and Beardsley Zoological Gardens became separate entities. The park is owned by the State of Connecticut and maintained by the Bridgeport Parks Department under contract to the state. The 56-acre zoo is owned by the Connecticut Zoological Society and operated as Beardsley Zoological Gardens. The zoo is located toward the south end of the park (Figure 3).

Park Landscape

Beardsley Park was designed by the Frederick Law Olmsted office as a rural park, emphasizing gently rolling landscapes, naturalistic planting, curving roadways, and few intrusions. It was created as open space for passive use.

The main entrance of the park at its southeast corner is opposite 1850 Noble Avenue. Inside the park, the road turns right, to the northeast, with Bunnell's Pond, which is

within the park's boundary, on the left (northwest) and park buildings and the zoo on the right (northeast). Vegetation in this section of the park consists of a dense grove of beech, oak, and hemlock trees east of the road and a wide greensward to the west. The greensward, approximately 250 feet long, slopes down to Bunnell's Pond, a city reservoir (Photograph 3).

In the middle section of the park, north of the zoo, the road begins three curves forming three loops, each with greensward, which extend to the northern boundary. Vegetation in the first area is mature pine, arborvitae, and oak trees. On the east are a double row of linden trees and a grove of dogwood. The middle loop is the site for two baseball fields along with groupings of oak and hemlock. An *allee* of white birch trees is the highlight of this area (Photograph 8). The upper loop contains three baseball diamonds in an expansive lawn punctuated by large oak and pine trees (Photograph 9).

Park Architecture

The first structure inside the park is the bridge to the southwest which connects the mainland to an island close by in Bunnell's Pond. A pedestrian bridge, it was constructed in 1921 to the design of Joseph W. Northrup. It forms a single-span semi-elliptical arch of cut granite blocks, 34 feet between piers (Photograph 2).

The first building in the park, called the Casino because of alleged resemblance to frame casinos in general, is on the east side of the roadway. The Casino's dominating architectural feature is its tall enveloping hipped roof which is truncated at the top and flares out at the eaves on all four sides. The design is supported by the turned balusters and sawn brackets of its wraparound porch in the Queen Anne style, as well as the imbricated shingles on the south side elevation. The overall effect is Rustic. This is the oldest building in the park, dating from 1884. Report of the Board of Park Commissioners in the *Municipal Register of the City of Bridgeport* for 1887, p. 154, gives disposition of first-floor space as: public room, retiring room for women and children on the south, three to four rooms for family use mid way, and closets for men and boys at the north. Recently renovated, the Casino now serves as offices for the Connecticut Zoological Society and the Beardsley Zoological Gardens (Photograph 4).

Up the hill behind the Casino, to the east, stands another frame resource, called the P.A.L. Building because the Bridgeport Police Athletic League holds several public events there annually, including a Christmas sale. The vertical wooden siding and slender bargeboards, while probably not original, give the building the look of the late 19th or early 20th century, as did the heavy wooden shingles which were recently replaced due to severe deterioration (Photograph 5).

Next on the main roadway are two gable-roofed brick barns whose ages are not documented, but whose loading doors, segmental-arched windows, and stone sills suggest a date of ca.1900. The barns continue in use as garage and storage space.

The Setzer Memorial Bridge, 1918, spans another park roadway north of the zoo but far to the east, near East Main Street. 116 feet long by 28 feet wide, it is larger than Island Bridge, but the two are of the same general design, consisting of arches constructed of granite blocks (Photograph 7).

Zoo

The grounds of the Beardsley Park Zoo occupied 33 acres in the park from about 1922 to 1993. Then, in a change of ownership from city to Connecticut Zoological Society, the line demarcating the zoo from the rest of the park was redrawn, moving 23 acres to within the zoo's boundary (Figure 3). In 1994 a new entrance to the zoo was built at the south, re-orienting pedestrian traffic. The carousel was added at this time. Visitors now approach the zoo from a new parking lot through new entrance buildings (Photograph 10), then proceed north past the greenhouses, around to the right to the carousel, and farther north for the New World Tropics Building and more than 30 animal exhibits.

Although the zoo has been in existence in its present location since 1922, most of its present buildings and structures are less than 50 years old, as described in the Inventory below. An exception to this general statement is presented by the greenhouses, which are older. Their complex consists of a central small 1-story brick building used as a headhouse (Photograph 13), flanked by apparently identical glass houses (Photograph 12). The brick building, 1897, predates the zoo and is thought to have served as a potting shed for horticultural activities of the park. Its half-timbered gable ends and roof overhang qualify it for the Queen Anne style. The south greenhouse was erected in 1922 at the time the zoo was started, although the function of the greenhouse was not zoological. It has the appearance typical of Lord & Burnham greenhouses, and is confirmed by the archivist of Lord & Burnham records to have been made by that firm (New York Botanical Garden letter, August 1, 1997). The greenhouse's structural members are cypress and steel. Corrosion has caused extensive deterioration of the metal components, perhaps putting the building beyond repair. In contrast, the north glasshouse, 1968, is aluminum construction and in good condition. A nameplate inside identifies the maker as "Ickes-Braun Glasshouses, San Jose, Calif., Chicago, Ill, and Ontario, Canada."

Beardsley Statue

An 1899 bronze figure of the donor of the parkland, James W. Beardsley, is located immediately at the park entrance, close to Noble Avenue. It is the work of the sculptor Charles H. Niehaus. The figure stands on a high granite pedestal with his left foot forward, dressed in trousers and frock coat, open weskit with lapels, four-in-hand necktie, and stiff collar. He carries an overcoat and grasps a large soft hat. The condition of the pedestal, being granite, is good, while the bronze figure, although it appears to be structurally sound, is badly stained with black crusts (Photograph 1).

Inventory

The letters C and NC indicate whether the resources are considered to be Contributing or Non Contributing to the architectural and/or historical significance of the park and zoo. Dates are taken from the Historic and Architectural Resource Survey of Connecticut Municipal Parks and the Beardsley Zoo Master Plan. Each entry is counted as one in the Number of Resources, Item 3.

Beardsley Park

Resources are arranged geographically starting at the principal park entrance at the intersection of Noble Avenue with Crown Street and continuing to the northeast.

- C ca.1881 Frederick Law Olmsted, landscape architect. Site of 181 acres.
- C 1899 James W. Beardsley. Bronze figure on granite base. Charles Henry Niehaus, sculptor; Gorham Co. [*sic*], foundry. Solid plinth supports base of pedestal which is topped by cyma reversa and torus moldings as transition to dado. Lettering on dado is IN MEMORY OF/JAMES W. BEARDSLEY/DONOR OF BEARDSLEY PARK/ERECTED BY THE/PEOPLE OF BRIDGEPORT/MDCCCCIX. Greek key in granite cornice. Above, edge of bronze base of figure's first stage is cyma reversa enriched with egg-and-dart molding. Figure, standing with left foot forward, is dressed in trousers and frock coat, open weskit with lapels, four-in-hand necktie, and stiff collar. Carries overcoat and grasps large soft hat. Condition of pedestal and figure good except for black stains on bronze. (Photograph 1)
- C 1921 Island Bridge, Joseph W. Northrup, architect. Connects to island in Bunnell's Pond. Single-span semi-elliptical cut-granite bridge, 34' between piers. 3'/4'-high parapets capped with granite coping. (Photograph 2)
- Bunnell's Pond. 900' x 3,000' lake along northwestern edge of park, formed by dam in Pequonock River. City reservoir. (Photograph 3) River continues northerly along park boundary. (Not designated C or NC and not counted at Item 3.) Dam and falls at south end of pond are in Glenwood Park.
- C 1884 Pavilion/Casino. Faces west across roadway from Bunnell's Pond. 1-story frame Queen Anne/Rustic building covered with clapboards. High truncated hipped roof flares out over porches. Wraparound porch has turned posts connected by square pickets between upper and lower rails. Most windows covered with plywood. Porch roof overhang supported by series of brackets in rhythm of heavy console over each post followed by two slender brackets. Two hipped-roof dormers in broad front roof slope. Imbricated shingles and large hipped-roof dormer on south side elevation. Painted red with cream and green trim. (Photograph 4) This building, P.A.L. Building, and Brick Barns are inventoried as part of park, their historic status, although now they are within boundary of zoo grounds.
- C ca.1900/1920 Frame Barn/P.A.L. Building. 1-story gable-roofed U-shaped building sited on top of rise behind Pavilion/Casino and Brick Barns. Two parallel east-west sections joined at west by lower gable-roofed north-south connector, which forms U. Front (east) elevations of two parallel sections have two windows at first floor and

one in gable end. Vertical siding. Projecting roofs covered until ca.1996 with heavy deteriorated shakes; raking eaves embellished with narrow scalloped bargeboards. Painted red with white trim. Used by Police Athletic League for Christmas Village sale and several other public events each year. (Photograph 5)

- NC ca.1990s 1-story frame concession stand, on west side of road near turn into zoo.
- C ca.1900 Brick Barns. Face west toward roadway and pond. South barn: 1 1/2 stories high, under slate gabled roof. First floor of front elevation filled by four overhead doors. Second floor has two central flat-arched windows flanked by loading doors. Small peaked cross gable over each loading door. Single plain chimney in front of ridge line at north wall. North barn: 1-story building under asphalt-shingled gable roof. In front elevation, single window to north and group of three to south, southernmost of which has been made into a door. Windows are segmental-arched and have stone sills. Central cross gable has gable end treated as a pediment and wood-shingled sides. In south elevation, row of four small segmental-arched windows high up, perhaps for horse stalls. Rear roof slope deteriorated. (Photograph 6)
- C 1918 Setzer Memorial Bridge. Spans a park road north of zoo, close to East Main Street. Granite cut-stone arched bridge 116' long x 28' wide, with height of arch 22'. Arch formed by voussoirs and keystone. Parapets capped by rusticated granite blocks. (Photograph 7)
- NC mid 20C 5 baseball diamonds. Non-contributing site within the overall boundary of the park. (Photograph 9)
- NC mid 20C Restrooms. 1-story flat-roofed brick building.

Beardsley Zoological Gardens

The resource is a complex of 56 acres incorporating several dozen buildings and structures located on a rise northeast of the Brick Barns, northwest of the Frame Barn/P.A.L. Building. A black chain-link fence sets the Gardens off from park. In the following tabulation, resources are arranged geographically starting at the new entrance at the south end of the zoo, proceeding north past the greenhouses and east to the carousel, then north and northwest to the animal exhibits. See Figure 4.

- NC 1995 Entrance, Schoenhardt Architects, Inc., architects; Landscape Architectural Design Associates, landscape architects. Parking lot of several sections separated by grassy areas with curving edges and walls. Steps lead up to entrance buildings consisting of ticket kiosk flanked by rest rooms and Visitor Welcome Center. Textured, colored cinder-block building material under half-pyramidal roofs which project from abutting towers. (Photograph 10)
- NC 1995 Animal Hospital, Dombroski Wicco Architects, architects. 1-story building in two sections of gable roof and pyramidal roof constructed of textured concrete block colored red. Front elevation of main section dominated by overscaled entrance in contemporary Colonial Revival mode. Many roof windows on sides and rear. Census: 7 birds, 4 animals. (Photograph 11)

- C 1897, 1919, 1968 Greenhouses. Two long glasshouses with gable roofs curved at connection with concrete knee walls. (Photograph 12) Glass painted. Small central 1-story Queen Anne brick building with slate gable roof, half-timbered cross gables, and segmental-arched door and window openings, 1897. (Photograph 13) Southern Lord & Burnham greenhouse section, 1922, in deteriorated condition. Northern greenhouse section, 1968, carries nameplate of "Ickes-Braun Glasshouses, San Jose, Calif., Chicago, Ill, and Ontario, Canada."
- NC 1990 Trading Post. 1-story log cabin gift shop on concrete foundation. Porch posts are tree trunks.
- NC ca.1970 Jungle Canteen. 1-story gabled- and hipped-roof concession stand. Vertical wood siding.
- NC ca.1975 Maintenance Garage. 1-story frame and concrete block gable-roofed building with board-and-batten siding.
- NC 1995 Carousel Building, Joseph Gambino, architect. Tall 1-story tent-roofed polygonal building. Steel beams radiate from central round monitor to support metal-covered roof. Siding is wooden shingles, not painted, and clapboards. Old stone steps leading up from new parking area suggest earlier, unknown historic function. Smaller section to northeast used for events. (Photograph 14)
- NC ca.1956, ca.1975, turn of century. Carousel. Mechanism is 1956 replica of work by Alan Hershell, bought from Springfield, Massachusetts, mall. Horses and chariots, ca.1975, are fiberglass reproductions of Hershell designs. Restored original horses from late 19th/early 20th centuries, some from Pleasure Beach amusement park, Bridgeport, are displayed as museum exhibit along peripheral wall, showing work of several carvers, including Carmel & Illion. (Photograph 15)
- NC 1992 Peacock Pavilion, Dombroski Wicko Architects. Open wooden bandstand with columns and arches in Neo-Classical Revival mode. Tongue-in-groove cedar ceiling.
- NC 1955 New World Tropics Building, Fred C. Anderson, architect. Rehabilitated for Rain Forest exhibit, 1992, Herbert Reimer, architect. 1- and 2-story brick building with stepped gable end over front entrance framed in dressed stone. (Photograph 16)
- NC 1960s-1990s More than 30 bird and animal cages, houses, sheds, habitats constructed in variety of materials. Farmstead. (Figure 4) Most have been built or refurbished in past two years, housing 118 species, 264 specimens. American Alligator exhibit, for example, built 1994. River Otter habitat is older installation, 1969 (Photograph 17).

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally:___ Statewide: x Locally:___

Applicable National Register Criteria: A x B___ C x D___

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A___ B___ C___ D___ E___ F___ G___

Areas of Significance: Period(s) of Significance Significant Dates

<u>LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE/</u> <u>ARCHITECTURE</u>	<u>1875</u>	<u>1947</u>	_____
<u>SOCIAL HISTORY/URBAN</u> <u>DEVELOPMENT</u>	<u>1875</u>	<u>1947</u>	_____

Significant Person(s): James W. Beardsley

Cultural Affiliation: NA

Architect/Builder: Frederick Law Olmsted, Olmsted Brothers, Joseph W. Northrup

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

Summary

Beardsley Park is a good example of a rural park of the type for which Frederick Law Olmsted established his national reputation as a landscape architect. The typical tree-buffered ring road runs around the perimeter of the park. Secondary roads, following the gentle natural contours, lead to open lawns surrounded by natural plantings. These characteristic Olmstedian features are in large part well-preserved. The Beardsley Zoological Gardens at first (1922) were an intrusion in the park but have now have assumed significance in their own right as the only remaining zoo in Connecticut.

Beardsley Park reflects the social history of Bridgeport because from the time of the gift of the parkland, when it was a farm in a rural area, it has been developed into an urban pleasure ground for city dwellers, become the site of the state's only remaining zoo, and in recent years been saved by state action of a type unbeknownst at the time it was founded.

Social History and Urban Development

James W. Beardsley, a successful farmer and cattle dealer, initially gave his native city approximately 100 acres of land for a park in 1875. At first, the location was considered too remote for use by city residents, but ca.1881 Frederick Law Olmsted was asked to submit a plan (Figure 2) which was largely followed and effectively determined the general layout of the park as it exists today.

Beardsley Park is significant historically because it is the third oldest park in Bridgeport, whose sobriquet is "The Parks City." When James W. Beardsley (1820-1892), a lifelong farmer, made his first gift of land for a park in the late 1870s, Bridgeport's only parks were Seaside Park, built soon after the Civil War, and Washington Park, a residential square, both near the center of the city. The Common Council's initial reaction to the idea of a third park, on the periphery of the city, was that the proposed tract was too remote for use by city residents. But the council soon decided that the gift was sufficiently attractive to be accepted. By resolution dated March 25, 1878, the Common Council expressed "heartfelt thanks" for the "magnificent gift" (Orcutt, p. 799). Beardsley followed up with a second deed May 24, 1881, bringing to 151 the total acreage of his philanthropy.

Beardsley made his gifts on the condition that the city undertake expenditures to develop the park, but the first several years saw little action. Noble Avenue was extended to the park; in the 1881 *Municipal Register*, pp. 82-84, the Board of Park Commissioners reported only \$512 spent on roads and cleaning up. The 1882 report, p. 92, however, said that walks and drives had been developed to the "layout of Frederick Law Olmsted [*sic*]." Orcutt, p. 799, fn. 3, quotes a report from Landscape Architects F.L. and J.C. Olmstead [*sic*]. Nevertheless, in 1885, p. 131, Beardsley Park was listed at no value while the valuation of Seaside Park was set at \$250,000 and Washington Park at \$100,000.

The 1886 *Municipal Register*, p. 129, showed payroll expenditure of \$8,906 for Beardsley Park, while Frederick Law Olmsted received \$700. The 1886 *Register* also printed the first report of the superintendent, O.C. Bullard (died October 28, 1890). He described construction of a drive, following the plans of Frederick Law Olmsted, from the Noble Avenue entrance through the park, much as it exists today, toward a proposed concourse on Walker Hill, perhaps the present location of the zoo. Rhododendrons, mountain laurels, and azaleas were planted. The value of the park was reported at \$60,000, p. 238. A notation in 1891 commented that the proposed horse railroad would bring the park within reach of a much larger portion of the city's population.

On June 30, 1905, Bunnell's Pond dam broke, to be replaced by the present structure and present configuration of the lake. Other improvements in 1916 brought an Anne Hathaway lookalike cottage, the gift of the Bridgeport Art League. An Ann Hathaway Cottage was a popular feature of the romantic times, often included in fashionable parks of the era. It was located near an open air theater where Shakespeare's works were performed. In the same year a nine-hole golf course and clubhouse were opened in nearby space south of Bunnell's Pond (not part of the Olmsted plan shown by Figures 2 and 3) now the separate Glenwood Park, where golf gave way to baseball diamonds and an ice-skating facility in 1942.

The 1916 valuation of Beardsley Park was \$500,000, *Register*, p. 604, while Washington Park was still carried at \$100,000 and Seaside Park at \$1,000,000. The city-paid-for improvements contemplated by donor Beardsley had indeed occurred.

Beardsley Zoological Gardens, officially established in 1922, got its start with arrival of the first exotic birds in 1919. The first greenhouse soon followed, but continued to serve the entire park, not just the zoo where it is located. The zoo grew incrementally over the years to 33 acres and 1,000 animals. In 1955 a one- and two-story brick building, to the design of Fred C. Anderson, was proposed for animal quarters, offices, and a caretaker's apartment. It was completed the following year at a cost of \$250,000. In 1992 the interior was re-built into a Rain Forest exhibit, Herbert Reimer, architect, and the installation re-named New World Tropics Building. In 1987 the zoo was accredited by the American Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

Overall financial crisis experienced by the City of Bridgeport in the early 1990s led to sale of Beardsley Park pursuant to historically unprecedented action taken by the Connecticut General Assembly. The state bought the park, except for 56 acres, and contracted with the City of Bridgeport Parks Department to maintain it. Such change to ownership and financial support by the state represented full swing of the pendulum from James W. Beardsley's private philanthropy to full public financing and responsibility.

The 56 acres not purchased by the state were designated for the zoo, an increase from 33 acres occupied by the zoo to that time. After several years of negotiations, the Connecticut Zoological Society, a private organization incorporated in 1984 to support the zoo, in 1997 became the owner. The state has continued to support the zoo, providing most of the funding for a \$5,000,000 capital construction program since 1993. Visitation at the zoo, 300,000 in 1968, is now 150,000 and growing. Zoos at other Connecticut city parks, for example, Keney Park in Hartford, Hamilton Park in Waterbury, and Hubbard Park in Meriden, have all closed.

Landscape Architecture and Architecture

Beardsley Park is significant because it is a good example of a late-19th-century urban park, designed in mid-career by the premier American parks designer, Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903). A large urban "country" park, Beardsley Park features are characteristic of the natural or rural style. Meandering roadways laid out in harmony with the typography, plant masses designed to appear as natural scenery, and peripheral plantings which block out the sights and sounds of the surrounding city are all typical Olmstedian solutions.

The intent of the design was to provide urban residents with opportunity to experience a natural environment no longer available within the city. Fein cites Beardsley Park as a distinguished example of Olmsted's "large 'country' parks planned to serve a variety of recreational activities for an entire city" (p. 30).

Plants were selected not for their individual merit but for how they would function in a mass, to define space. The intention was not to present the landscape in an ornamental or formal manner, but instead in a natural way to follow the spirit of the rural landscape that was rapidly being lost to development. The designers did their job well; today people do not view the park as designed space, believing instead that the natural landscape was preserved.

During the early years of Beardsley Park's development, Frederick Law Olmsted took into partnership his nephew and stepson, John Charles Olmsted (1852-1920), as evidenced by the fact that the 1884 preliminary plan is signed F.L. and J.C. Olmsted. Before retirement in 1895 of the senior man, his son Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. (1870-1957), joined the firm. Charles Eliot of the Olmsted office also visited the site during the planning stage, commenting on the difference in design approach between F.L. Olmsted and the Park Commissioners (Stevenson, p. 364). Olmsted Brothers, as the office came to be known, provided the 1904 developed plan for Beardsley Park.

While the Olmsted office was associated to a greater or lesser degree with the design of more than 30 parks in Connecticut, Beardsley Park stands out for several reasons. First, it was designed early enough in Frederick Law Olmsted's career to receive his personal attention, initially, as well as that of his colleagues as the firm became larger. Also, the entire space of Beardsley Park is Olmsted designed, as contrasted with Hubbard Park, Meriden, where only a small fraction of the total acreage is the work of the landscape architect. Keney Park, Hartford, is a far more wild and rugged landscape, and was primarily the work of partner Charles Eliot. Goodwin Park, Hartford, as originally designed and built was similar to Beardsley Park, but Goodwin Park's integrity has been flawed by replacement of the meadow with a golf course. In addition, Beardsley Park was a product of the years when Olmsted was laying out the Boston park system, and reflects a similar approach to urban planning. Finally, Beardsley Park is the only Connecticut Olmsted park cited by both Fein and Stevensen.

As befits a park devoted to naturalistic landscapes, there were few buildings in the early history of Beardsley Park, and they were primarily utilitarian. The high-hipped-roof frame structure, now called the Casino, provided basic shelter for visitors. The brick barns were necessary for storage and care of work animals and equipment. The stone bridges, also a requirement, were designed with appropriate use of segmental arches executed in granite blocks. The Island Bridge, constructed in 1924, shows on the 1884 Olmsted plan, demonstrating an ongoing commitment by the park managers to the Olmsted plan.

The Casino is mentioned in the early records. The *Municipal Register of the City of Bridgeport* for 1885, p. 131, reports the construction of a pavilion pursuant to George Turney's contract in the amount of \$2,251. \$20 was paid to an anonymous source for the plans. Total cost was \$2,820. The *Register* for 1887, p. 154, states that the building was moved to a location "not too far from the entrance." A new cellar was built, with a door to the tool room. "With the dormer windows," the account continues, "a second story will be available." These words appear to give positive identification of the existing building, qualifying it as a documented component of the park from its earliest years.

The architect of the Island Bridge, Joseph W. Northrup (1861-1940), is the only architect known to be associated with the early history of the park. He began his career in the office of George Keller (1842-1935), Hartford's leading 19th-century architect, before starting his own practice in Bridgeport in 1885. One of his major commissions was the 1905 remodeling of City Hall, designed in 1853 by Alexander Jackson Davis (1803-1892).

The park originally intended to be large expanses of natural scenery now accommodates both active as well as passive uses, a common transformation for rural parks. Baseball diamonds are now prominent in the north of the park, and the zoo in the south.

Many new buildings in the zoo have been sensitive to historical precedent: the 1968 glasshouse replicates the 1922 Lord & Burnham structure in appearance; the Maintenance Garage is sheathed in board-and-batten siding reminiscent of 19th-century practice; the Trading Post has tree-trunk porch columns as does the ca.1900 Caretaker's Cottage at Hubbard Park, Meriden; and the Carousel Building is in the traditional shape seen at Lake Compounce, Southington. The new Animal Hospital and entrance buildings do not follow precedent but rather express contemporary design trends in the Post Modern period. The number of new zoo buildings raises the number of non-contributing buildings to a high level, but they are concentrated on a small part of the acreage and continue a function which was started there in 1922 and is now the only zoo in the state.

James W. Beardsley Statue

The James W. Beardsley Statue is significant artistically because it is a good example of a late-19th-century naturalistic memorial figure, appropriate for a naturalistic park. In addition, the realism of the stance and clothing is balanced by the classical features associated with late-19th-century Neo Classicism, such as the cyma moldings and Greek frieze of the pedestal. Since the base of the pedestal and the base of the figure feature the same cyma reversa profile, conjecture suggests that the sculptor of the figure and the designer of the pedestal communicated or perhaps were the same man.

Charles Henry Niehaus (1855-1935) was one of the leading sculptors of his time. After studying in Munich and Rome, he received gold medals at the Pan American and St. Louis expositions. His works include John Paul Jones in Washington, D.C., James Augustus Garfield in Cincinnati, and the Astor Memorial Doors, Trinity Church, New York. In Connecticut, he designed the eagle for the War Memorial, Worthington Ridge, Berlin. The Beardsley monument is specifically mentioned by Laredo Taft, p. 547.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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Stevensen, Elizabeth. *Park Maker: A Life of Frederick Law Olmsted*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1977, p. 384.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- Previously Listed in the National Register.
- Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
- Designated a National Historic Landmark.
- Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: # _____
- Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other: Specify Repository: _____

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATAAcreage of Property: 181

UTM References: Zone Northing Easting Zone Northing Easting

A	18	<u>4564720</u>	<u>652740</u>	B	18	<u>4564280</u>	<u>652840</u>
C	18	<u>4563440</u>	<u>652620</u>	D	18	<u>4563080</u>	<u>652230</u>
E	18	<u>4563120</u>	<u>651740</u>	F	18	<u>4563940</u>	<u>652320</u>

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary of the Beardsley Park and Beardsley Zoological Gardens is shown by the dashed line on the resource map.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary is drawn to encompass the land given to the City of Bridgeport for a park in the 19th century by James W. Beardsley and modest adjustments made in the early 20th century.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: David F. Ransom, Consultant, reviewed by John F.A. Herzan, National Register Coordinator

Org.: Architectural Historian

Date: July 1997

Street/#: 334 Avery Heights

City/Town: Hartford

State: CT

ZIP: 06106

Telephone: 860 953-8626

List of Photographs

David F. Ransom took Photograph 1 in 1994, Photographs 4-6, 10-17 in July 1997. Photographs 2, 3, 7-9 were taken by W. Phillips Barlow in 1994. Photographs are keyed on the resource and zoo maps. Negatives are on file at the Connecticut Historical Commission.

Photograph 1

James W. Beardsley Statue
View northwest

Photograph 2

Island Bridge
View west

Photograph 3

South Greensward
View north

Photograph 4

Pavilion/Casino
View south

Photograph 5

Frame Barn/P.A.L. Building
View southwest

Photograph 6

Brick Barns
View east

Photograph 7

Setzer Memorial Bridge
View west

Photograph 8

White Birch *Allee*
View northeast

Photograph 9

North end of park
View northeast

Photograph 10

Zoo Entrance
View south

Photograph 11

Animal Hospital
View northeast

Photograph 12

Greenhouses

View northwest

Photograph 13

Potting Shed

View southwest

Photograph 14

Carousel Building

View southwest

Photograph 15

Carousel

View northeast

Photograph 16

New World Tropics Building

View north

Photograph 17

River Otter Habitat

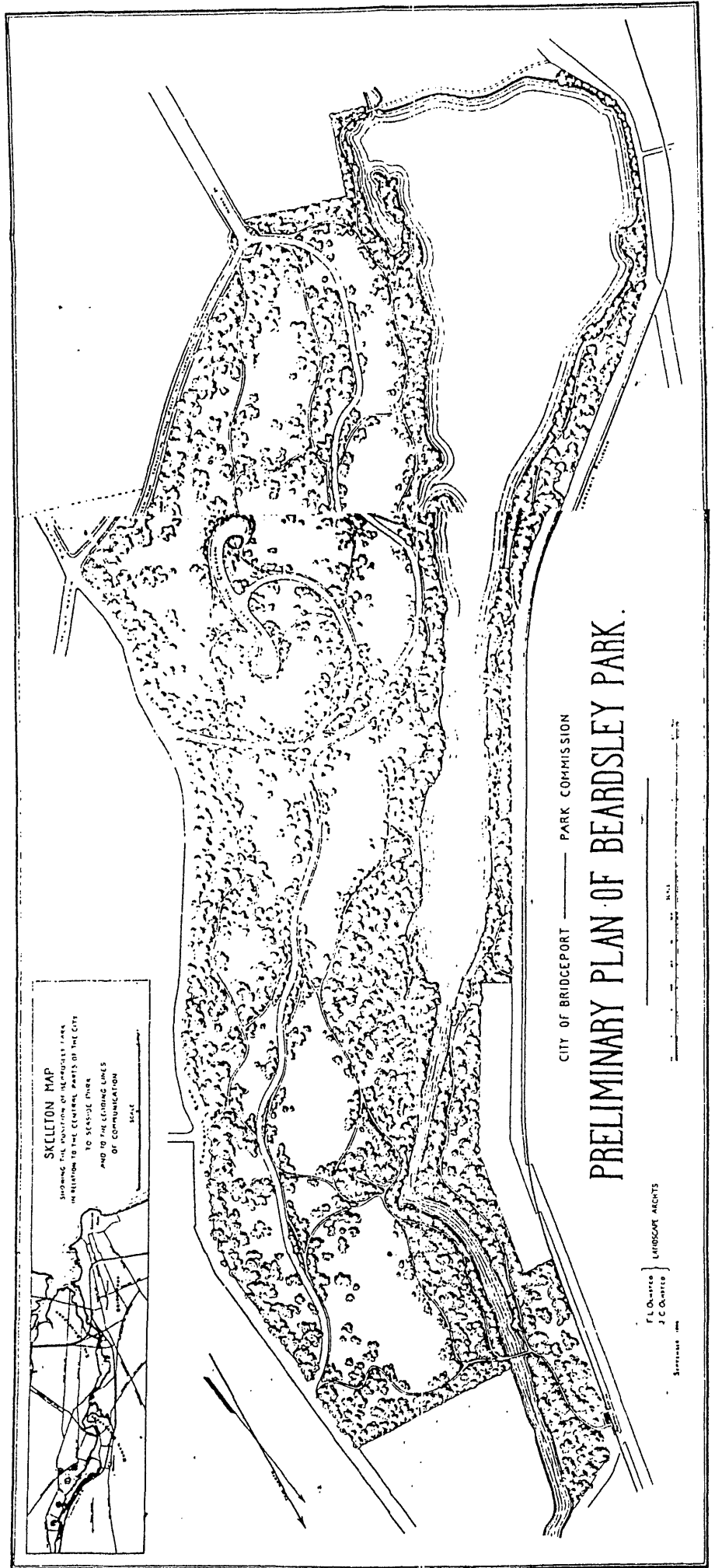
View north

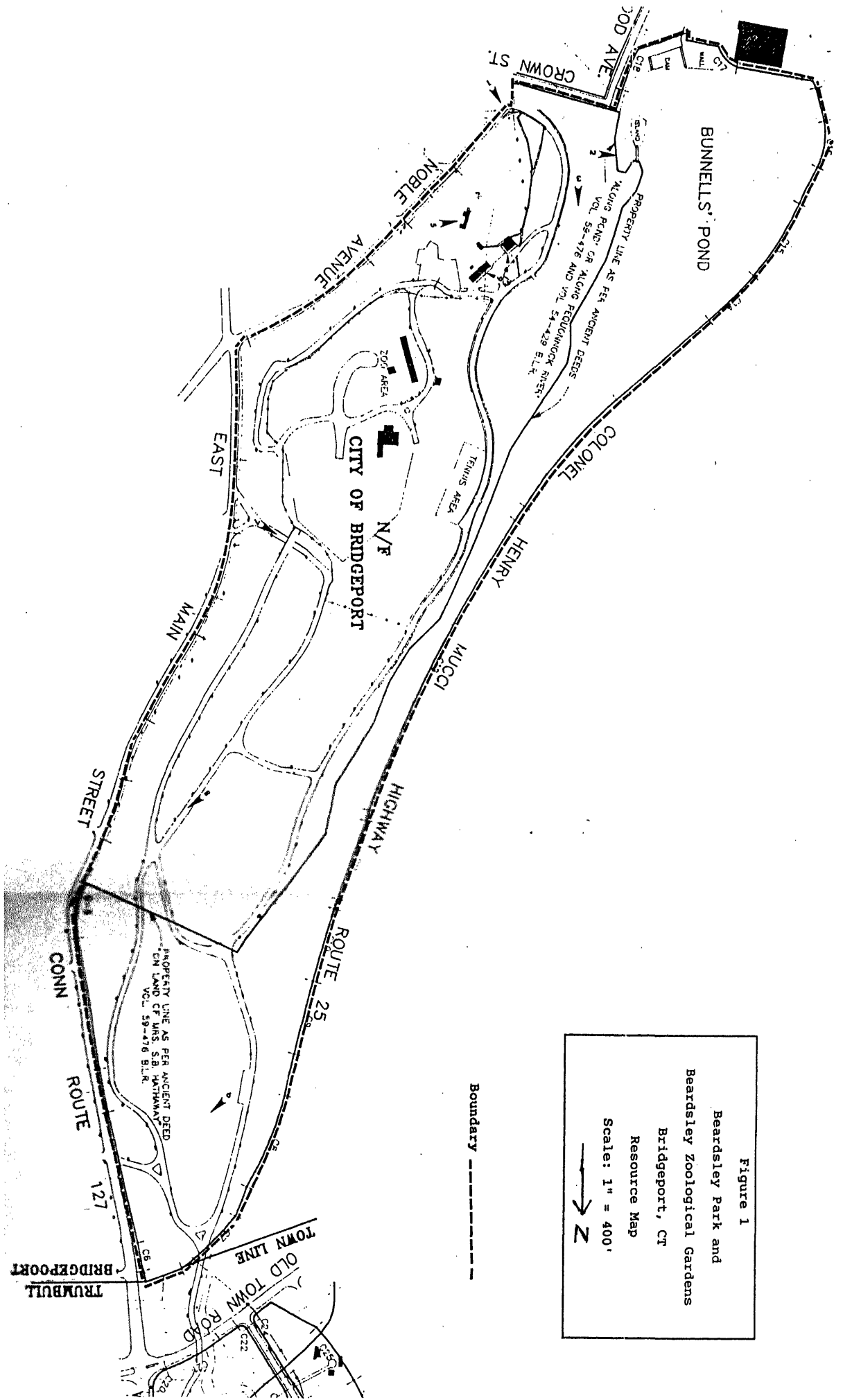
Fein, Albert. *Frederick Law Olmsted and the American Environmental Tradition*. New York: George Braziller, 1972, p. 33, fig. 44.

Figure 2

Beardsley Park
Bridgeport, CT
Olmsted 1884 Plan

44. Preliminary Plan of Beardsley Park, 1884, F. L. and J. C. Olmsted, Landscape Architects. "The want of Bridgeport is a simple, rural park."





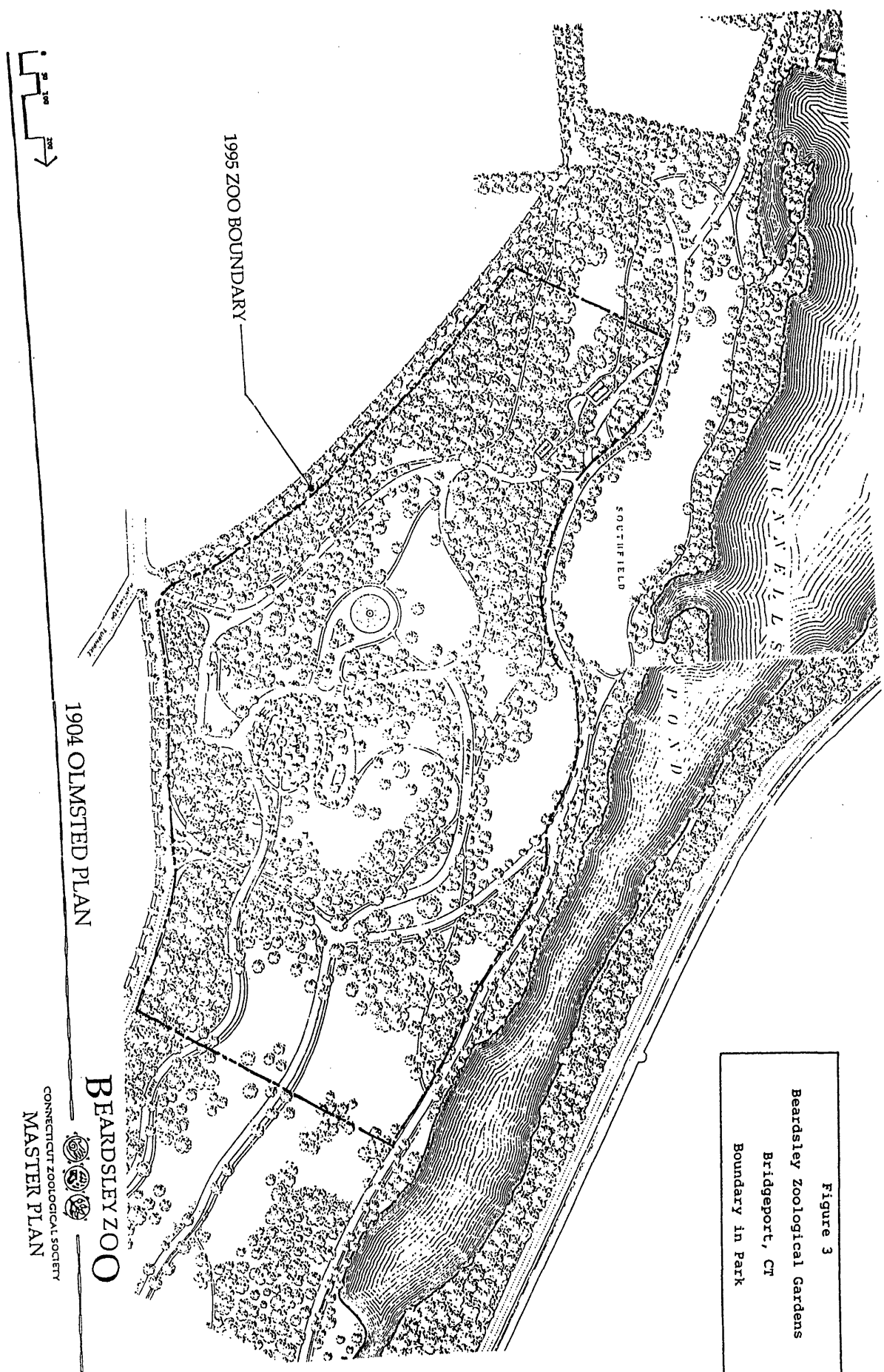


Figure 3
 Beardsley Zoological Gardens
 Bridgeport, CT
 Boundary in Park

- ### Animal Exhibits
1. Siberian Tiger
 2. Canada Lynx
 3. Spectacled Bear
 4. American Alligator
 5. Sandhill Crane
 6. River Otter
 7. Wetland Exhibit (Turtles/Aquatic Birds)
 8. Pronghorn Antelope
 9. Bison & White-tail Deer
 10. Monk Parakeet
 11. Black - Tailed Prairie Dog
 12. Llama & South American Capybara
 13. Rhea
 14. Waterfowl
 15. North American Porcupine
 16. Screech Owl
 17. Navajo Churro Sheep
 18. Red Tail Hawk
 19. Tamworth Pig
 20. Barn Exhibit
 21. Reptiles of Connecticut (See Text for Animal List)
 22. Araucana, Silkie & Dominique Chickens
 23. Poultry Building
 24. Dexter & Scotch Highland Cows
 25. Goats
 26. World Tropics Building (See Text for Animal List)
 27. Red Wolf
 28. Timber Wolf
 29. Andean Condor
 30. Bald Eagle

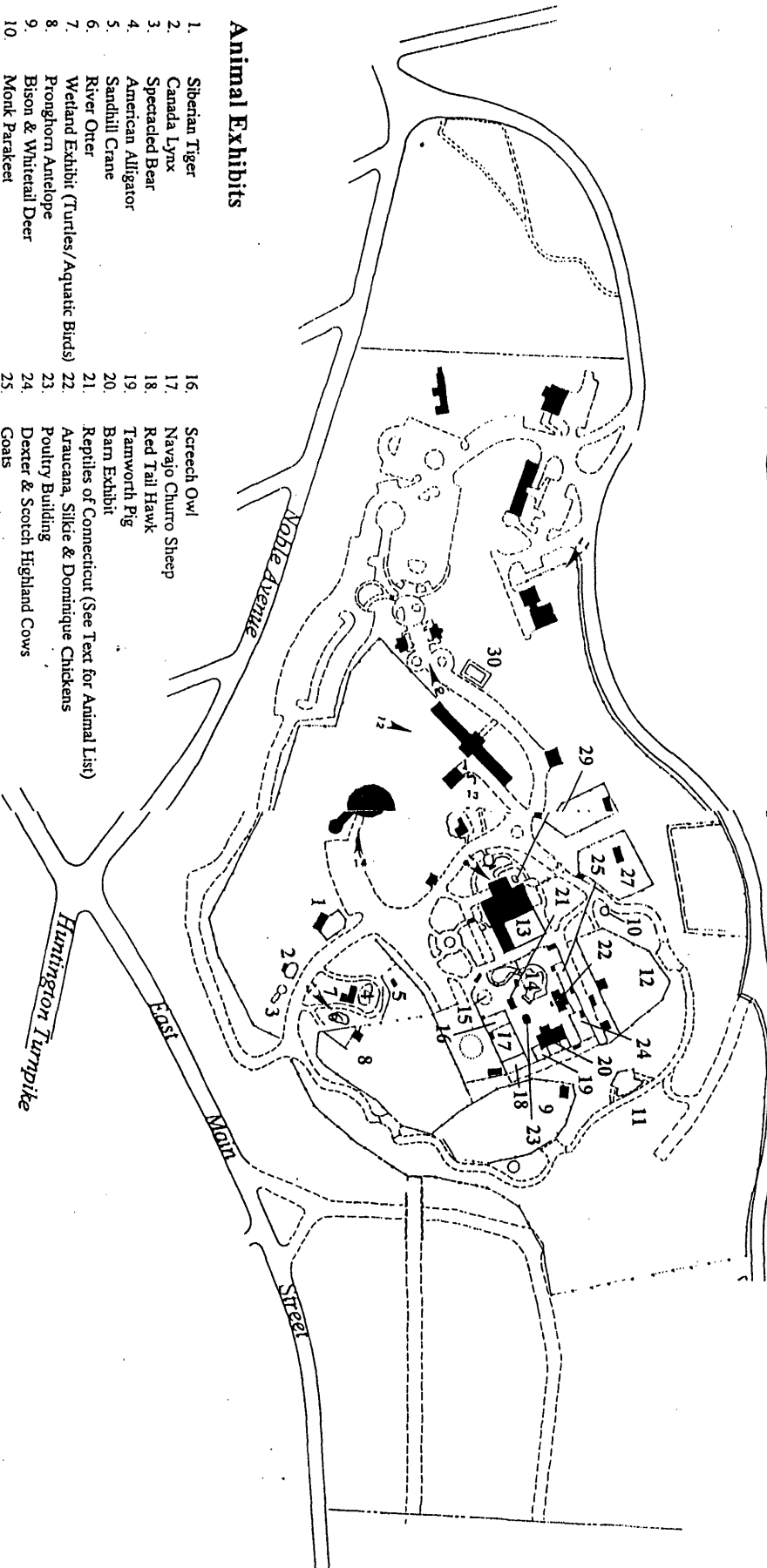
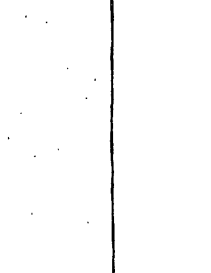
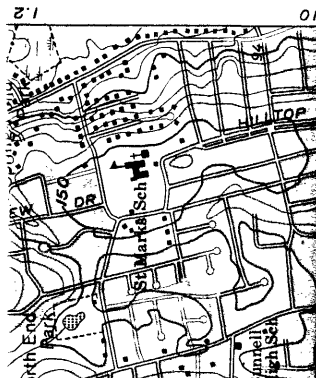


Figure 4
Beardsley Zoological Gardens
Bridgeport, CT





Beardsley Park and
Beardsley Zoological
Gardens
Bridgeport, CT

- UTM References
- A 18/4564720/652740
 - B 18/4564280/652840
 - C 18/4563740/652620
 - D 18/4563080/652230
 - E 18/4563720/651740
 - F 18/4563720/652320



0.2 MI. TO INTERCHANGE 33
NEW HAVEN 13 MI.

