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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in How to Complete the *Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

☒ New Submission ☐ Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

The Municipal Park System of Rochester, New York

B. Associated Historic Contexts

Early Public Landscape Traditions in Rochester (1789-1865)
Olmsted Parks in Rochester (1888-1900)
The Reform Park Movement in Rochester (1890s-1929)
The Recreation Park Movement in Rochester (1930-1965)

C. Form Prepared by

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D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR part 60 and the secretary of Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments)

Commissioner, SHPO 6/16/03

Signature and title of certifying official **Date**

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

State or Federal agency and bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register

Edson H. Beall 9.26.2003

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Table of Contents for Written Narrative

Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and the title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets in *How to complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

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Overview

In the early nineteenth century, Rochester, New York was a small young village in which parks and other facilities for public recreation were an unheard-of luxury. A few small city squares that had been created for other purposes were inconsistently maintained as the city's first public landscapes. By 1888, just 70 years after its incorporation as a village, Rochester had become a booming city whose wealth, foresight, and progressive social climate made possible the hiring of the country's preeminent landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted, to design an ambitious park system. By World War II, this nucleus of public squares and Olmsted-designed pleasure grounds had developed into a comprehensive municipal park system with dozens of large and small parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers spread throughout the city.

Rochester's park system grew out of a wide variety of factors, including the growth and prosperity Rochester experienced due to the Erie Canal and the city's strong tradition of social progressivism and activism. Perhaps most influential was the city's nineteenth-century horticultural and landscape tradition; the parks maintained a strong emphasis on horticulture throughout the period of significance (1811-1951). The system is significant both for its role in the development of the city and as an outstanding example of an American comprehensive municipal park system. The system is also significant for its association with Frederick Law Olmsted and the Olmsted Brothers firm. Elements within the park system exemplify the important eras in the growth of the city and in nationwide park planning trends, from the early pioneer squares to the reform parks and recreation centers of the early twentieth century.

This multiple property documentation cover form presents the local and national context in which the municipal park system of Rochester should be interpreted. This document draws heavily from *The Designed Historic Landscapes of Rochester, New York: An Historic Context Statement*, by Susan Maney O'Leary, written as a project of the Landmark Society of Western New York and the Historic Landscape Preservation Committee in 1997-98. Considerable information on national and statewide contexts and property types has been adapted from the Multiple Property Documentation Form for the Historic Designed Landscapes of Syracuse, New York, particularly in Section F; the organization of the document is also based on this example.

Early Public Landscape Traditions in Rochester (1789-1865)

National and New York State Developments

The settlement of western New York occurred as the American population spread westward in the early nineteenth century. The first tentative settlements in the area that would become Rochester appeared in the very late eighteenth century, followed by permanent settlements early in the nineteenth century. At this time, western New York was seen as a remote wilderness, not easily accessed by waterways or overland routes.

In an era when undeveloped land was plentiful, Americans in the early Republic did not place a priority on conserving open space for public enjoyment. Such a concept was unheard-of even in Europe, where the first publicly owned parks would not be developed until the early 1840s. Although large parks were not found in American cities, small open spaces, usually in the form of the public square, were a common part of American town and city planning starting in the colonial period. Small public squares could be seen in the remarkably ordered plans of Savannah and Philadelphia, while the prototypical New England village incorporated an open green often surrounded by churches and public buildings.

As "westward-moving Americans got down to the serious business of creating towns, there was no room for greens and churches in the middle of the town."[1] Settlers of frontier areas such as western New York were typical in that they focused their energies on basic survival amid conditions that could be harsh. Although most settlers in western New York came from New England, the town green

[1] Peirce F. Lewis, "The Northeast and the Making of American Geographical Habits," in Michael P. Conzen, ed., *The Making of the American Landscape* (New York, HarperCollins*Academic*, 1990; New York: Routledge, 1994), 100.

tradition was not consistently conveyed to settlements there or in other frontier areas. In western New York, settlements typically developed around a prominent intersection rather than a public space. Communal spaces that were set aside addressed utilitarian needs, such as burial grounds. Individual owners of large tracts of land did on occasion set aside undeveloped parcels as an amenity to attract residents or for other purposes, and some of these later came to be considered public space.[2]

Rochester's Origins and the First Public Squares

Native American tribes used the land along the Genesee River in the vicinity of Rochester for many centuries prior to European settlement, and influenced the landscape in important ways. The region that ultimately became the city of Rochester was primarily a hunting ground, with settlement by the Seneca and other tribes limited to temporary campsites, seasonal hunting grounds, and other uses. These left physical evidence, but not in the form of formal or designed landscapes.[3]

In the early pioneer days, beginning with the European settlers who established the earliest settlements in what would become Rochester and Monroe County in the late 1780s and 1790s, followed by more permanent communities in the 1800s and 1810s, life in Rochester was focused on physical and economic survival. The types of formal landscapes seen around this period at the estates of wealthy, well-established landowners farther east, such as Mount Vernon and Monticello in Virginia, Gore Place in Waltham, Massachusetts, and the Derby residence in Salem, Massachusetts, were not developed in the frontier area of western New York.[4]

Surrounded by undeveloped land, the settlers had no reason to designate specific landscapes for preservation or improvement as scenic reservations. They did, however, need to set aside public space for one essential purpose: the burial of the dead. Of the several burial grounds established by the early pioneers, three survive: one at King's Landing (remnants of which may be seen off Lake Avenue near Ridge Road), the Rapids burial ground on at what was then the edge of the community at the foot of Brooks Avenue, and Charlotte Cemetery in that neighborhood (originally an independent village) where the Genesee River empties into Lake Ontario. Other early burial grounds included a two-acre site near the present intersection of Monroe Avenue and Alexander Street and the West Burying Ground, which was originally established on Sophia Street and was later moved to Buffalo Street (now West Main Street[5]). These grounds had a distinctive landscape character in accordance with their purpose as the resting place of the dead. They were simple in their overall organization and detail, however, and were not formally designed to the extent that the later Mount Hope cemetery was (see below).[6]

A second type of early public space in Rochester was the public square. Like the early burial grounds, these open spaces were not conceived as "parks" for recreational use, but instead were a manifestation of the settlers' practical needs as they created their new community. Early European settlement centered on Rochester's great natural asset: the Genesee River, its rapids and waterfalls perfectly suited to providing power to the early milling industry. Three competing settlements in and adjacent to what is now the downtown area of Rochester, all sited to take advantage of this natural power source, vied for the opportunity to become the nucleus of development in the region. The men who established these settlements anticipated that wherever the courthouse was constructed,

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[2] More detail on state and national landscape design trends may be found in Landscape & Prospect, *The Historic Designed Landscapes of Syracuse, New York,* National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1994. Because of the broader scope of that document, it contains information not directly relevant to the development of municipal parks, but nonetheless presents useful information on the early American landscape tradition.

[3] Blake McKelvey, *Rochester: The Water-Power City, 1812-1854* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1945) (hereafter McKelvey, *Water-Power City)*, 7-9.

[4] Susan Maney O'Leary, *The Designed Historic Landscapes of Rochester, New York: An Historic Context Statement* (Rochester: Landmark Society of Western New York and the Historic Landscape Preservation Committee, 1997-98), 1-2, 4.

[5] The West Burying Ground was ultimately replaced by the City Hospital, which was built in the 1860s and later became Rochester General Hospital.

[6] Richard O. Reisem. *Mount Hope: America's First Municipal Victorian Cemetery (*Rochester, New York: privately published, 1994), 5-6.

residential and commercial development would follow. For this reason, the three major tracts of land that were laid out along the Genesee provided both milling operations and a large public square intended to be the site of a future courthouse.[7]

The settlement that ultimately became the center of the city was that of Colonel Nathaniel Rochester, who laid out village lots in 1811 on a parcel known as the "Hundred-Acre Tract" that he had purchased with two partners, Colonel William Fitzhugh and Major Charles Carroll in 1803. This tract was centered on the intersection of a main highway (Buffalo Street, now Main Street), which was laid out leading west from the newly constructed bridge crossing the Genesee River, and a major cross-street, first called Mill Street and later Exchange Street. (This intersection, which quickly became the major business center in the community, was known beginning in the early nineteenth century as the Four Corners.) A one-acre lot west of this intersection, along Buffalo Street, was set aside for a courthouse.[8] Dr. Matthew Brown and his brother, Francis, also laid out a property in 1811 with the hope of attracting settlement. Their 200-acre tract was located just north of the Hundred-Acre Tract, along the west side of the Genesee River. A public square, designated as the site of a future courthouse, was at the center of the development. The third major early development was established in c. 1817 by Elisha Johnson, who laid out his 80-acre tract on the east side of the Genesee River with a public square (also intended for a courthouse) as one of its major features.[9]

Colonel Rochester's designated courthouse location ultimately was the one selected, but the lands set aside by the other competitors were retained as open squares, becoming the city's earliest public spaces. The Brown brothers' square became Brown Square, while Johnson's became Washington Square. These early public spaces and their successors in the Canal era (see below) predated the city's municipal park system, and ultimately became valued elements in that system.

The First American Boomtown and the Precursors of the Park System

The construction of the Erie Canal, which occurred in the Rochester region between 1821 and 1824, reshaped the landscape and turned the small village of Rochester into the nation's first major boomtown. The Canal, planned in part as a way to make New York City the "greatest commercial emporium in the world,"[10] created a continuously navigable route from Lake Erie to the Hudson River, thereby connecting New York City with the fertile agricultural lands around the western Great Lakes. In the process, the Canal made the northern and western parts of New York State accessible for settlement and commerce. Towns and villages sprung up at significant sites, such as the places where the Canal route crossed pre-existing roads or waterways. One such waterway was the Genesee River. Only one feasible crossing of this river was identified in the pre-construction surveys: north of the southernmost waterfall within what was then the village of Rochester.[11] The crossing, located where the Broad Street Bridge crosses the Genesee River today (the bridge today incorporates an earlier aqueduct), brought the canal just south of the Four Corners intersection in Colonel Rochester's Hundred-Acre Tract, ensuring that this would be the nucleus of the growing community.[12]

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[7] O'Leary, 4-6.

[8] Blake McKelvey, *Rochester on the Genesee: The Growth of a City* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993) (hereafter McKelvey, *Rochester on the Genesee)*, 5.

[9] McKelvey, *Rochester on the Genesee*, 21; and Clark Patterson Associates et al., *City of Rochester Small Parks and Squares* (Rochester: Prepared for the City of Rochester, [1994]).

[10] DeWitt Clinton, quoted in Richard O. Reisem and Andy Olenick, *Erie Canal Legacy: Architectural Treasures of the Empire State* (Rochester: The Landmark Society of Western New York, 2000), 10.

[11] The terminology regarding the falls can be confusing, but the falls referred to here are what were known as the "rapids," which disappeared in the early twentieth century when the level of the river south of the city had to be raised to create an even level with the new Barge Canal crossing south of the downtown area.

[12] McKelvey, *Water-Power City*, 65-66. The original aqueduct was replaced in 1842; this second structure survives as the bottom deck of what is now the Broad Street Bridge. In the 1920s, after the Canal route was moved south of the city, the upper tier of arches was built atop the aqueduct to accommodate automobile traffic. A subway line occupied the canal bed in the lower level from the 1920s until 1956.

The Canal began to affect the economies of the regions through which it passed while it was still under construction, creating demand for various goods and services for the canal builders along the entire route.[13] The prosperity that came to the western New York region during construction was amplified when the waterway opened as far west as Rochester in 1823 and statewide in 1825. New businesses, new residential areas, and a huge growth in population quickly followed the opening of the canal. Rochester had 5,000 residents when the Erie Canal opened in 1825, 9,200 when the city charter was signed in 1834, 20,000 in 1840, and 48,000 at the outset of the Civil War.[14] Unranked among the 61 "urban places" in the United States in 1820, Rochester leapt to a ranking as the 25th largest "urban place" in the nation in 1830. By 1840, Rochester was the 19th largest city in the country, and it remained among the 25 largest cities through the end of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth.[15] The 880-percent rate of growth Rochester experienced between 1818 and 1830 was unprecedented in American history.[16]

During this period of rapid population growth, new residential areas were created, and in some cases their proprietors reserved small areas for public use. Caledonia Square (also known as Plymouth Park and Lunsford Circle), Franklin Park (Schiller Park), Madison Square (Susan B. Anthony Square), Wadsworth Square, and Jones Square, were all set aside in this manner, joining the two earlier squares, Brown Square and Washington Square. These spaces were later donated to the city as public spaces. By 1837, there were 11 of these public spaces, of which the seven listed above survive in some form to the present day.[17]

In addition to spurring the residential development of Rochester, the canal spawned new enterprises related to shipping and travel, including barrel making, boat building, and the hotel business. But it was the milling of wheat into flour that set Rochester apart as the "Flour City," from which 200,000 barrels of flour were shipped via the canal in 1826. Twenty years later, 700,000 barrels were produced by at least twelve mills powered by the Genesee River and its waterfalls.[18] While flour would remain central to Rochester's economy for much of the nineteenth century, the national depression of the 1830s prompted manufacturers to explore new industries. Rochester's mills were still a dominant force in the flour markets nationwide, but local business leaders ventured into an increasing diversity of industrial production, developing prominent manufacturing facilities such as boat yards, lumber mills, cooper shops, carriage and furniture factories, and handcraft shops.[19]

One of Rochester's most notable designed public landscapes had its origins during this period. The expanded population and a series of catastrophic epidemics in the 1830s led the city's Common Council to consider a much larger and more rural site for the city cemetery. Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts (1831) provided a national model for a preferred type of burial ground, the rural cemetery. Rochester's own example, Mount Hope Cemetery, was established in 1838 as the first American rural cemetery planned, developed, and maintained by a municipality.[20] Mount Hope Cemetery eventually was expanded to include 200

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[13] Blake McKelvey, "Rochester and the Erie Canal," *Rochester History*, Vol. 11, Nos. 3 & 4 (Rochester: Rochester Public Library, 1949).

[14] Joseph W. Barnes, "Historic Broad Street Bridge and the Erie Canal Sesquicentennial, 1825-1975," *Rochester History*, Vol. 23, No.3. (Rochester: Rochester Public Library, 1975), 13

[15] "Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States: 1790 to 1990," United States Census, Population Division Working Paper No. 27, June 1998, http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027.html, Accessed 3 January 2002. The document includes detailed definitions of "urban places" at various points in time.

[16] McKelvey, *Water-Power City,* 71.

[17] All of the squares were put under the control of the Park Commission in 1894 by an action of the city's Common Council, making them an official part of the park system. Many of these spaces were redesigned in the early twentieth century by the Olmsted Brothers (the sons of Frederick Law Olmsted, who continued in partnership after their father's retirement and death). See Clark Patterson Associates et al. for detail on the squares relandscaped by the Olmsted firm.

[18] Barnes, 13.

[19] O'Leary, 6-7.

[20] Earlier examples of the rural cemetery type, such as Mount Auburn, were private ventures.

acres and is still active today.[21] As in other cities, the cemetery, designed in the mid-19th century Romantic style, provided not only a burial place, but also a beautiful landscape that the living could enjoy. In the absence of similar spaces designed for recreation, the cemetery became a popular destination for picnickers and others who wished to experience fresh air, natural and exotic vegetation,[22] and unstructured recreational activities such as walking. The presence of this beautiful space heightened residents' awareness of a need to create places designed to provide recreational opportunities to city dwellers.[23]

The Flower City: Rochester's Nineteenth-Century Horticultural Industry

Just before Mount Hope Cemetery opened and in the years immediately following, several events in the 1820s and 1830s heralded the emergence of the horticultural industry in Rochester. The horticultural industry thrived on the same conditions as the flour industry: fertile soil, Lake Ontario's ameliorating effect on temperatures, and the relative ease of shipping goods nationwide via the Erie Canal. The confluence of these factors created an ideal environment for the development of this industry, which in turn helped to create a high level of awareness of both horticulture and landscape design among Rochester's residents.

The industry got its start in the early days of the young village. Seeds were advertised for sale as early as 1820, and the Monroe County Horticultural Society was established in 1830. Another early indicator of the increasing importance of the local horticultural industry was the establishment of an important publication, the *Genesee Farmer.* Founded in 1831 by Luther Tucker, the *Genesee Farmer* published horticultural information as well as the catalogs for the early nurseries, thus serving to both promote and inform these local businesses. Naaman Goodsell edited the *Genesee Farmer* and established a nursery on Buffalo Street near the Four Corners. Several nurserymen, including Patrick Barry and James Vick (see below), later edited and wrote for the *Genesee Farmer.* These events set the stage for the development of Rochester's national reputation in the nursery and seed industry in the mid- to late-nineteenth century.

Rochester was fortunate to have talented nurserymen to shepherd the industry to national prominence, giving Rochester the nickname of the "Flower City" by the middle of the century. Asa Rowe's Monroe Garden and Nursery was the first commercial nursery established in Rochester (1833). Of the numerous successful and profitable nurseries in the area, the most notable was the Mt. Hope Botanical and Pomological Gardens (later known as Mt. Hope Nurseries), which grew out of the 1840 partnership of German immigrant George Ellwanger (1816-1906) and Irishman Patrick Barry (1816-1890).[24] The company's success was built on a reputation for accurately labeled, high-quality stock, and for having the greatest assortment of fruit and ornamental plants available. Ellwanger and Barry continually imported new propagating stock from Europe as they sold fruit trees to pioneers heading west.

Ellwanger and Barry's Mt. Hope Botanical and Pomological Gardens was in the forefront of a new trend in the 1840s: the creation of

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[21] Reisem, *Mount Hope,* 13-14.

[22] Nurserymen George Ellwanger and Patrick Barry (discussed in Section C, below) promoted the sophisticated horticultural character of Mount Hope Cemetery when they donated 50 shade trees, including European purple, fernleaf, and weeping beeches, Nikko fir, Caucasian spruce, Norway maple, and variegated sycamore maple trees, to the cemetery at its tenth anniversary in 1847. These specimen trees complemented the magnificent old red, black, and white oaks and other trees preserved as the original forest on the site was only partially cut to prepare the cemetery for burials. See Reisem, *Mount Hope,* 10.

[23] For an interesting discussion of the horticultural industry and Mount Auburn Cemetery as precursors to the parks movement and Olmsted park plans in Boston, see Cynthia Zaitzevsky, *Frederick Law Olmsted and the Boston Park System* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 15-17.

[24] Patrick Barry, who trained at the Prince Nursery in Flushing, was considered the leading authority on fruit cultivation after the publication of his book, *The Fruit Garden,* in 1851. Horticultural historian U.P. Hedrick called George Ellwanger the "dean of American commercial horticulture" for his life service improving and promoting nursery standards and introducing new varieties to the market. Both men contributed to the city by their civic duties (serving on boards and committees) but ultimately made their most significant contribution to the city's future at the end of their long history together by donating twenty acres of land to form the nucleus of the park system in 1888.

ornamental display grounds and arboreta within nursery grounds. Whereas earlier commercial nursery enterprises gave little consideration to the arrangement or display of plant materials, these new displays, along with illustrated catalogs produced by seedsmen to show grown plants and their optimal arrangements in garden layouts, provided homeowners with suggestions as to how to use plants from the nurseries in their own gardens. Publications by horticulturists "often became the homeowner's gardening 'bibles,' influencing taste and garden design during the great national horticultural awakening of the later Victorian decades."[25] The nurserymen also provided examples of landscape design trends in their private gardens.[26]

Ellwanger and Barry were the most prominent of the Rochester area horticulturists, but others, including James Vick, Charles F. Crosman, Joseph Harris, Charles J. Brown, and more, also established significant nursery and seed businesses, contributing to Rochester's national importance in the industry. Rochester nurseries sold more than a half-million dollars worth of nursery stock in 1854. In March of 1856 the *Genesee Farmer* stated that "more nursery trees are grown in Monroe County than in all the United States."[27]

The growth of Rochester's horticultural industry coincided with growing interest in residential and garden design nationwide during the industrial expansion of the mid- to late-nineteenth century. As a large middle class developed, more and more people had the time and money to improve their domestic surroundings. Nineteenth-century pattern books influenced middle-class taste, providing information on theory and design as well as specific house and landscape plans. The first such book was *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening Adapted to North America,* by Andrew Jackson Downing (1841). Downing's book, the first in America to approach the subject from an artistic, rather than horticultural, point of view, was highly successful at inspiring interest in residential landscape design. Popular books later in the century included *Beautifying Country Homes* (Jacob Weidenmann, 1870), and *The Art of Beautifying Suburban Home Grounds* (Frank Scott, 1881). The house and garden became realms where the middle-class homeowner could display fashionable taste and wealth. By providing examples of landscape displays in their nurseries and in their own gardens just as this trend was taking root, the local horticulturists had a profound and lasting effect on the awareness of landscape design among Rochester residents. This level of appreciation set the stage for high expectations of landscape quality in the public parks established later in the nineteenth century.[28]

Progressive Social Trends in Rochester

Rochester's strong tradition of progressive political activism and enthusiasm for social movements also helped to set the stage for the creation of the park system in the late nineteenth century. Rochester was known as "a hotbed of 'isms,'" starting with the city's population boom of the 1820s and 1830s and continuing through the end of the nineteenth century.[29] Early manifestations of this local

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[25] O'Leary, 12.

[26] The best surviving example of a nurseryman's private garden in Rochester is Ellwanger Garden, planted by George Ellwanger in 1867. Three generations of Ellwangers maintained the garden before it was bequeathed to the Landmark Society of Western New York in 1982. Now operated as a museum, it reflects its roots as an arboretum and display garden. See O'Leary, 25.

[27] U.P. Hedrick, *A History of Horticulture in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950; Portland, OR: Timber Press, 1988), 245.

[28] Rochester's nurseries came into the path of new development beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, as the city expanded. Ellwanger and Barry began dividing their land in 1856, when they formed the Ellwanger and Barry Realty Company to subdivide part of their land into affordable housing for nursery workers. The subdivision of nursery grounds into housing developments continued into the twentieth century, and explains why many streets and neighborhoods are named for either nurserymen (the Ellwanger-Barry and Browncroft neighborhoods, Vick Park A and B, etc.) or plants (Linden Street, Mulberry Street, etc.). Despite urban expansion into nineteenth- and early twentieth-century nursery grounds, the horticultural industry in Rochester has survived until the present day; the most notable example is the Harris family, which began in the horticultural business when Joseph Harris started a seed business in 1879. The family business lasted 100 years, until the seed portion of the business was sold to the Celanese Corporation; the family still runs retail garden centers in the Rochester area.

[29] McKelvey, *Water-Power City,* 282.

spirit were in the form of religious movements and religiously motivated social causes. The Erie Canal brought so many fervent religious revivals to the region that the Canal corridor came to be known as the "burned-over district." Religious activities such as foreign missions, Bible distribution efforts, and campaigns for Sabbath observance began in the early nineteenth century and continued through the middle of the century.

These religious movements fed into a wider variety of progressive social activities by the middle of the nineteenth century. The 1850s were:

> a period of intense reform activity in Rochester, New York. Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Frederick Douglass and Amelia Bloomer were working tirelessly to gain public support for several separate reform movements: temperance, women's rights, and anti-slavery. Writing, lecturing, addressing a few supporters or a mass convention, these individuals were shaping the strategies and public discourse of reform.[30]

Rochester also experienced a strong tradition of charity and philanthropy. One of the best examples of the city's early development of charitable institutions is the Female Charitable Society, one of the first women's organizations in the nation. Established in 1822, the Society began by promoting visits to the sick, and expanded into a wide range of other charitable activities. Among its other accomplishments, this group ran the City Hospital (constructed on the site of the old West Burying Ground) from the time it opened in 1864 until it was taken over by a Board of Lady Managers, appointed by the Society, in 1875. Many more charitable organizations were established even as Rochester boomed from a small village to a thriving Canal city. Among the causes the proliferating charities addressed were education, children's welfare (especially that of orphans) and relief for the destitute. Many of the charities were run by either women's groups or church congregations.[31]

While not all of Rochester's residents were active in these social and philanthropic causes, the fact that so many prominent citizens were involved in these activities created a climate of acceptance of new and forward-looking ideas. Many of these progressive leaders were among those who developed an early interest in another new approach to enhancing the quality of urban life, initially considered quite innovative: the creation of public parks.

Olmsted Parks in Rochester, 1888-1900

State and National Trends: The Park Movement

It was not until the creation of Central Park in New York City in 1858 that an American city had a dedicated public park, established as a means of bringing some form of the nation's natural wilderness into the middle of a large city. Designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, Central Park was a tremendous popular success even before its completion, prompting residents of other municipalities nationwide to clamor for the creation of large public parks in their cities as well.[32]

Proponents of parks nationwide were motivated by a variety of concerns. Some, interested primarily in improving urban life, perceived the provision of pastoral open spaces that were open to the public as one solution to the problems they saw in American cities. Better physical health, relief from tedious working conditions, a respite from urban surroundings in rapidly industrializing cities, an appreciation for nature, and an opportunity to interact with other people of all social classes were among the benefits park

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[30] Anne C. Coon, "The Magnetic Circle: Stanton, Anthony, Bloomer and Douglass," *Rochester History* LVII, No. 3 (Summer 1995): 3. These reformers became nationally prominent in their movements, often working together and supporting one another's causes. Most famously, Rochester was the location where Frederick Douglass published his abolitionist newspaper, the *North Star* (later called *Frederick Douglass' Paper),* beginning in 1847, and where Susan B. Anthony was arrested for voting in 1872.

[31] See Blake McKelvey, "Historic Origins of Rochester's Social Welfare Agencies," *Rochester History* IX, Nos. 2 & 3 (April 1947); and McKelvey, "A History of Social Welfare in Rochester," *Rochester History* XX, No. 4 (October 1958).

[32] Laura Wood Roper, *FLO: A Biography of Frederick Law Olmsted* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 144.

advocates expected city dwellers to enjoy when parks were created. They promoted these first parks as ideal places for unstructured, wholesome recreation, including strolling, picnicking, field games, canoeing and the like. Proponents viewed these public spaces, stylistically known as pleasure grounds, as a contrast to other popular public venues of the day, such as beer gardens and amusement parks, which were commercialized and considered by many to be of questionable morality.

Other advocates saw the establishment of parks as a means to advance the residential and commercial development of their cities. It quickly became clear that the creation of a park boosted land values in the surrounding area, and business people sometimes anticipated being able to profit either directly from land speculation or more generally from the expansion of desirable urban areas. In addition, parks could improve the urban environment by replacing undesirable uses such as informal dumping grounds, squatters' residences, or former industrial sites, or by filling in sites that were unusable for other purposes due to conditions such as rocky terrain or poor soil.[33]

Frederick Law Olmsted and the Emergence of the Field of Landscape Architecture

Frederick Law Olmsted (1822 - 1903) is widely recognized as the father of the profession of landscape architecture in the United States, and was a key figure in the pleasure ground movement. He was instrumental in the late-nineteenth century transformation of the field of "landscape gardening," which had essentially involved the design of flower gardens for the estates of wealthy people, into a broader field whose practitioners were professionals akin to traditional architects. Olmsted believed that because designed landscapes served an important social purpose, they should be accessible to the general public, not just the wealthy. Having established his reputation through the design of one site in particular, Central Park, Olmsted went on to work on many other types of sites nationwide. The designs and theories he developed for urban parks, residential communities, institutional campuses, national parks, and private estates were extremely important, both for their influence on the new field of landscape architecture and for their impact on the development of the communities in which they were implemented. In addition, his proteges became the first professionally trained landscape architects in the country, and went on to be prominent advocates for the field through their own careers.

Until the early nineteenth century, landscape gardening (as the emerging field was then known) was primarily a European profession limited to the design of private grounds. In the 1840s, two new parks in England became the first European landscapes specifically designed as pleasure grounds for the general public. Victoria Park, in the East End of London, was formally created in 1842 to provide open space in a crowded and impoverished urban neighborhood. Designed by architect James Pennethorne, this park was extremely significant in the growing movement to provide public parks. Birkenhead Park, in Liverpool, was designed by Joseph Paxton beginning in 1843. This park was profoundly influential on Frederick Law Olmsted, who visited it in 1850. While there, Olmsted noted the irony that the United States, for all its democratic ideals, had no counterpart to Liverpool's "People's Garden," where all classes of people were welcome to enjoy the park as equals.[34]

One aspect of Frederick Law Olmsted's significance is in his role in the design of the first public park in the United States, which also was an important milestone in the formation of the profession of landscape architecture. Following close on the heels of the two new parks in England, the State of New York passed the First Park Act in 1851. This legislation led to the creation of Central Park in Manhattan. Olmsted had a long and often difficult association with this new park. In 1857, shortly after the acquisition of the barren land for Central Park, the nine commissioners of the park selected Olmsted over several other applicants as the park superintendent, in charge of clearing the land, constructing the park, and managing the park police. Shortly thereafter, the park commissioners decided to abandon the plan for the park drawn in 1856, and announced a competition for a new design. Architect Calvert Vaux asked Olmsted to collaborate with him on a design, and their plan, "Greensward," won the competition. Olmsted and Vaux had very few precedents from which to draw, but still managed to create a design that was highly acclaimed before it was completed and enormously influential on the urban parks movement nationwide. While not all aspects of Olmsted and Vaux's plan were

[33] Cranz, 159-63.

[34] Norman T. Newton, *Design on the Land: The Development of Landscape Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 223-232.

implemented, the result of their work was a remarkable urban park that provided a variety of landscape experiences and became one of the most beloved features of Manhattan. It was while they were designing Central Park that Olmsted and Vaux first used the term "landscape architects" to describe themselves, thus creating the name by which the profession would be known.

With the success of Central Park, Olmsted – sometimes working with Vaux, sometimes working on his own, and sometimes as part of a firm – found himself much in demand as other cities strove to emulate the success of New York's park. His practice expanded from the design of individual parks to include the design of entire urban park systems, institutional campuses, subdivisions, and private estates. Over the course of his long career, Olmsted worked on dozens of projects all across the United States. Some of his most prominent projects included Prospect Park in Brooklyn, the U.S. Capitol Grounds in Washington, D.C., the park systems of Buffalo, Boston, Rochester, and Louisville, the Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina, and the campuses of Yale University, Stanford University, Trinity College, Smith College, Cornell University, the New York State Asylum for the Insane in Buffalo, and the Hartford Retreat for the Insane.

Olmsted was also influential in his work with the nation's first state and national parks. As a leading member of the Yosemite Commission, Olmsted prepared a set of recommendations for the land, and his vision for the huge public reservation influenced the management philosophy ultimately adopted at this and other national parks.[35] Olmsted emphasized that the government should pursue two main goals in its treatment of scenic reservations: make the spectacular scenery of the reservations accessible to the public and protect the natural environment from development and damage. While his specific recommendations for Yosemite in 1865 were not carried out, they influenced the later work of his son, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., who helped to write the legislation creating the National Park Service. Beginning in 1869 (coinciding with his work on the park system for Buffalo, New York), Olmsted was a leader in the movement to preserve the natural scenery of Niagara Falls, which had been encroached on by industry and private tourist attractions. He coordinated a campaign in the 1870s and early 1880s to raise public awareness of the issue and to pressure officials in New York State to acquire the land beside the falls as a public reservation; these efforts were finally successful in 1885 when the New York State Legislature appropriated the necessary money for the acquisition of the land as the Niagara Reservation, the first state park in the United States. In 1887, Olmsted and Vaux presented a report on their preferred treatment of the landscape, emphasizing naturalistic plantings and unobtrusive but safe overlook points. These highly public events were surely inspirational to park advocates in Rochester, who were actively promoting the creation of a park system at the same time Olmsted was working in Niagara Falls.[36]

Olmsted was enormously influential on the profession of landscape architecture through his own work, but his direct influence on those young landscape architects who worked in his office was at least as important to the profession's growth in practitioners and in prestige. These men, particularly Charles Eliot, John C. Olmsted, and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., are considered the first in their profession to have received professional training, and became committed advocates for the field.

Charles Eliot decided at a young age that he wanted to become a landscape architect, and quickly found that there was no formal academic training available. He became an apprentice in Olmsted's office in 1883, and established his own practice in 1886. Eliot rejoined the Olmsted office (which then became known as Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot) in 1893, and was a significant contributor to the firm's work and to the field of landscape architecture, particularly in his writings about the creation of a metropolitan park system in Boston, until his death at the age of 37.[37]

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[35] The Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Big Tree Grove were withdrawn from the public lands and ceded to California by President Lincoln in 1864, to be held for public use; 1,500 square miles of forest surrounding the valley and grove became a National Park in 1890; Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove were added to the National Park when California ceded control over these areas to the federal government in 1906.

[36] Roper, 378-82 and 395-97; see also Niagara Frontier State Parks & Recreation Commission, "The Niagara Reservation – An Historical Perspective,".at the website of the Niagara County Department of Planning, Development & Tourism, www.niagara-usa.com/pages/historyfacts.com, accessed 3 September 2002.

[37] Newton, 318-32.

Olmsted's legacy was carried on even more importantly by his stepson, John C. Olmsted, and son, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. John C. Olmsted was a full partner in the firm by 1884, ultimately becoming senior partner, a position he held until his death in 1920. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., joined the firm in 1895, and was senior partner from 1920 to 1950. Under the leadership of both of the younger Olmsteds, the firm continued the same type of work at a consistently high level of quality. John C. Olmsted, the older of the two, worked on a variety of important projects including campus plans, residential subdivisions, public institutions, and parks and park systems. The Seattle park system was one of his most important projects. In addition, John C. Olmsted was often the member of the firm who worked on the ongoing implementation of the firm's designs for a given project (as was the case with the Rochester park system). Although Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., did not become part of the firm until around the time of his father's retirement, he became an important landscape architect in his own right. He was named to the Senate Park Commission (McMillan Commission), a group of four of the country's most important design professionals who created a new plan for the city of Washington, D.C., in 1901. He also worked on parks in and around Washington and elsewhere, residential communities, city plans (including a plan for Rochester), and scenic reservations such as Yosemite, Niagara Falls, and Acadia National Park. Influential spokesmen and promoters of the profession, both of the younger Olmsteds were founding members of the American Society of Landscape Architects.

Frederick Law Olmsted's Design Principles

Over the course of his lengthy career, Frederick Law Olmsted demonstrated a sophisticated grasp of landscape design and articulated many different design principles. Certain overarching principles remained constant in his urban park designs, from his earliest work in Central Park to his later park designs in Rochester and Louisville.[38]

Olmsted's urban parks were intended, first and foremost, to contrast with the city. Like other advocates of the pleasure ground movement, Olmsted firmly believed that access to nature could be physically and psychically restorative to city dwellers. He stated that landscapes with the right combination of characteristics could "refresh and delight the eye and through the eye, the mind and spirit." Olmsted was convinced that this restorative process could only work subconsciously, through exposure to an environment that appeared to be totally natural, even if it was actually manipulated to some degree. Therefore, "unnatural" designed elements such as elaborate flower beds or clearly exotic specimen plantings that drew attention to their artificiality would hinder rather than enhance the therapeutic value of exposure to the landscape.[39] Olmsted's specific park design principles all served to advance this basic purpose of providing a socially beneficial, soothing, and restorative environment.

Olmsted identified three landscape types that were appropriate to public parks and that could induce the beneficial effects of access to nature: the pastoral, the picturesque, and the sublime. Each created a different emotional impression on the visitor. Pastoral landscapes, which Olmsted believed could foster relaxation, created an impression of unity and harmony. These combined gently rolling topography, meadows, trees, and water features. The second type was the picturesque, which Olmsted saw as more rugged, incorporating bold land forms and vegetation that appeared to be untamed. These landscapes, Olmsted felt, could inspire the viewer to contemplate the mystery and grandeur of nature. Landscapes classified as sublime, the third major type, were even more breathtaking than the picturesque, featuring unique and awe-inspiring natural wonders. Olmsted believed that the sublime could not be designed or enhanced by humans, but was present at such spectacular natural features as Niagara Falls, where the only role of the landscape architect was to provide safe access to the scenery.[40]

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[38] These principles are described fully in many works on Olmsted's career; two of the most useful are Bruce Kelly, Gail Travis Guilet, and Mary Ellen W. Hern, *Art of the Olmsted Landscape* (New York: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission and the Arts Publisher, Inc., 1981) and Charles Beveridge and Paul Rocheleau, *Frederick Law Olmsted: Designing the American Landscape* (New York: Universe Publishing, 1998).

[39] Olmsted, Vaux & Co., "Report of the Landscape Architects," 24 January 1866, in *Brooklyn, New York, Park Commissioners, Annual Reports . . . 1861-1873*, Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, cited in Beveridge and Rocheleau, 31.

[40] See Beveridge and Rocheleau, 34-36; and Marjorie Wickes and Tim O'Connell, "The Legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted," *Rochester History* L, No. 2 (April 1988): 7.

Olmsted selected the landscape effect he sought for each specific site based on the natural topography. When he designed park systems, as in Rochester, he recommended the acquisition of several sites that naturally contained diverse landscape types, so that the system as a whole could provide varied experiences. This was important because Olmsted strongly believed that each park should have its own design theme, and that different landscape styles should be separated, never mixed. Olmsted wanted every element at every scale, such as plant selection, road and path location and design, water features, architectural elements, and so on, to contribute to the overall effect he sought to achieve. He defined a park as "a single work of art, and as such subject to the primary law of every work of art, namely, that it shall be framed upon a single, noble motive, to which the design of all its parts, in some more or less subtle way, shall be confluent and helpful."[41] Olmsted also wrote:

> A park is a work of art, designed to produce certain effects on the mind of men. There should be nothing in it, absolutely nothing – not a foot of surface nor a spear of grass – which does not represent study, design, a sagacious consideration & application of known laws of cause & effect with reference to that end.[42]

This was an essential aspect of Olmsted's work that was frequently misunderstood or ignored, both within his lifetime and after his death, as various constituencies sought to eliminate or alter elements of his designs.

Olmsted selected sites with appealing natural features suggestive of the picturesque or pastoral type, and then enhanced these to create the precise effect he sought. He aimed to achieve a pleasing balance between land, vegetation, and water effects, altering any or all of those features as needed, but everything was to be done so that an inexperienced viewer would believe he or she was looking at a landscape that was virtually untouched by human hands. For example, Olmsted described his method of selecting plants as being similar to the process by which plants were selected in nature. Native plants were always appropriate, and exotic plants were always to be avoided. Nonnative plants could, however, be selected if they were in some way "fitting" to the site. His arrangement of these plants was always intended to look spontaneous and wild, never manicured.[43] Paths and carriage drives, usually separated from one another for greater safety and to avoid the distractions caused by dangerous intersections, were sinuous, following the topography, never straight.

These elements, each of which was individually designed to look natural, were also considered in terms of how the visitor would experience them as he or she moved through the landscape. Paths and roadways in an Olmsted park were not merely utilitarian means of moving around, but were central to the way Olmsted intended people to experience his landscapes. Someone walking or riding on the paths or carriage drives would experience "a series of landscape passages located and designed in strict sequence."[44] He or she would see an ever-changing progression of vistas, each designed with a specific visual and psychological effect in mind. There was always something more to explore, the possibility of another scene always lying just around the next bend in the winding road.

Walking and riding were intended to be the primary means of enjoying an Olmsted park. Other activities, such as sports, musical performances, and dining, were intended to be confined to areas at the edges of his parks, where they would not distract those engaged in contemplation of the scenery or detract from the unified effect Olmsted sought. Even in these peripheral areas, any built elements were designed so that they were subsumed within the landscape rather than standing out as dominant features. More importantly, within a park system, Olmsted advocated providing recreational facilities in small parks "so distributed through a large town that some

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[41] Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, "A Review of Recent Changes and Changes Which Have Been Projected, in the Plans of the Central Park," January 1872, cited in Kelly et al., 9.

[42] Frederick Law Olmsted, cited in Beveridge and Rocheleau, 48.

[43] Beveridge and Rocheleau, 38-39.

[44] Frederick Law Olmsted to H.G. Stebbins, "Examination of the Design of the Park and of Recent Changes Therein." February 1872, cited in Kelly et al., 28.

one of them could be easily reached by a short walk from every house," and keeping them out of the major pleasure ground parks altogether.[45]

While he believed parks should primarily be used for restful contemplation of nature, Olmsted recognized that there were benefits in having a place where people could congregate as a community.

> That scenery which would afford the most marked contrast with the streets of a town, would be of a kind characterized in nature by the absence, or, at least, the marked subordination of human influences. Yet, in a park, the largest provision is required for the human presence. Men must come together, and must be seen coming together, in carriages, on horseback and on foot, and the concourse of animated life which will thus be formed, must in itself be made, if possible, an attractive and diverting spectacle.[46]

This view was related to Olmsted's belief in the value of parks as part of a democracy. He strongly believed that parks should be accessible to all people. He was particularly concerned about poor urban dwellers who lacked the time or money to travel away from the city, and expressed a special concern about lower-class women's need for parks, as he felt these women were particularly in need of opportunities to relax and experience something new. At the same time, he felt it was important that parks serve the interests of wealthier people, which he expected would happen as proximity to parks made adjacent residential areas particularly desirable. Olmsted believed that the availability of scenic parks where the wealthy could enjoy riding in their carriages might help keep the upper classes in the city. By addressing the interests of both the wealthy and the lower classes, Olmsted hoped his parks would serve as places where people of all social classes could meet and mingle.[47]

The Creation and Design of Rochester's Municipal Park System

Rochester's Pro-Parks Movement

The men and women who advocated for the creation of a municipal park system in Rochester represented a diverse spectrum of interests: humanitarians, business leaders, philanthropists, public health advocates, and outdoor enthusiasts all contributed to raising awareness of the need for extensive public spaces. While these people approached the issue from varied perspectives, they all saw a need to augment (and, in some cases, replace) Rochester's limited recreational outlets with dedicated parks and/or elegant landscaped boulevards.

Among the most visible proponents of the creation of a park system in the mid to late nineteenth century were the growing numbers of outdoor enthusiasts. Outdoor recreational activities began to proliferate in and around Rochester during the period from the 1840s to the 1860s. The recreational facilities and organizations that existed prior to the formal establishment of the city's park system were generally geared toward specific activities, such as fishing, bathing, hunting, and horseracing. A few picnic groves, a fisherman's lodge, dressing booths at the beach, and a few racetracks were among the limited recreational facilities built in or just outside the city before the Civil War. Rochesterians interested in outdoor activities could play in one of two cricket clubs established in 1847, enter a sportsmen's association organized in 1849 for excursions to the Thousand Islands and other locales, join one of a number of baseball teams founded in the 1850s and 1860s, or row crew with the Resolute Regatta Club created in 1858. These and several other organizations established in the mid-nineteenth century reflected the growth in leisure time, a new interest in outdoor activities, and enthusiasm for community events. As Rochester historian Blake McKelvey noted,

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[45] Frederick Law Olmsted, "Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns, American Social Science Association (Cambridge, Mass.: Riverside Press, 1870), 1-36; cited in S.B. Sutton, ed., *Civilizing American Cities: A Selection of Frederick Law Olmsted's Writings on City Landscapes* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1979), 73-74.

[46] Frederick Law Olmsted, cited in Beveridge and Rocheleau, 47.

[47] Beveridge and Rocheleau, 45-46.

> Three significant aspects of this recreational activity began to emerge before the Civil War. On the one hand the players acquired a new conception of physical fitness, a new appreciation for leisure, discovered the merits of teamwork, and began to re-evaluate life's objectives. Although the number who shared in the new forms of physical exercise was limited, crowds of spectators were attracted out to sunny fields where they felt the challenge of new loyalties, enjoyed new uses for leisure and new escapes from personal frustrations.[48]

Many of these recreational pursuits were abandoned during the Civil War, although some activities continued, providing an escape from the realities of war. After the Civil War, baseball games resumed, as did excursions to lakefront resorts and picnic groves. Resorts and amusement parks along Lake Ontario, such as Ontario Beach Park and White City (also known as Windsor Beach) on Lake Ontario in Charlotte and Glen Haven on Irondequoit Bay, were becoming increasingly popular in the 1880s, as train lines offered an inexpensive way for city dwellers to enjoy the cooler air along the waterfront.[49]

Sports enthusiasts who sought better venues for their new hobbies were joined by reformers and business leaders in their advocacy for parks set aside for public use. Dr. Edward Mott Moore, a local physician, was convinced that outdoor recreation offered immense benefits. His family was one of the first in Rochester to spend summers at Lake Ontario. Bishop Bernard McQuaid, first bishop of Rochester, meanwhile, was involved in humanitarian causes, most notably education, and was also in favor of the provision of public facilities for sports. Councilman George W. Elliott was a leader among a group of progressive businessmen who favored reducing city debt burdens by developing land at the outskirts, thereby increasing the tax rolls. As chairman of the Common Council's parks committee, he proposed the development of a system of parks linked by a parkway encircling the city. Similarly, nurserymen such as George Ellwanger and Patrick Barry, then involved in subdividing their nursery grounds into attractive housing lots as urban development spread, supported the creation of public parks as an amenity that would raise property values.

For all of these varied reasons, a number of notable citizens were united behind the idea of creating public parks in the post-Civil War era. As interest in the concept grew, Dr. Moore and other local residents visited Buffalo, New York City, and other cities on the forefront of park development and returned to urge their fellow Rochesterians to establish their own unified park system.[50] Most members of the Common Council and many other citizens, however, were very reluctant to spend tax money on the establishment of parks.[51]

Two offers of donated parkland in 1883 brought the growing wave of interest in parks to the forefront. The first offer came from D.D.S. Brown of Scottsville, who proposed to donate 30 acres at the western edge of the city if it could be named Lincoln Park and improved within two years. While the Common Council accepted the offer, it did not fulfill Brown's requirements by improving the park within the stated time period, resulting in the retraction of the gift. The land was ultimately developed commercially.[52] Also in 1883, Ellwanger and Barry offered 20 acres around the city water reservoir to the city for the development of a public. On October 2, 1883, the Common Council adopted a resolution to appoint a five-member committee to confer with Ellwanger and Barry on the terms of their donation. The Council was politically divided and unable to reach a decision to accept the land until public pressure convinced them to vote to do so in 1887. The budget reported for the committee in 1886 – which included total receipts of $500.25 and expenditures of $488.45 – pales in comparison with the massive responsibilities the city was soon to undertake when the new park system was inaugurated.[53]

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[48] Blake McKelvey, "Rochester Learns to Play: 1850-1900," *Rochester History* VIII (July 1946): 4-6.

[49] These resorts were often owned by the train companies and were used as enticements to encourage people to use the rail lines; Ontario Beach Park, for example, was owned by the New York Central Railroad.

[50] Blake McKelvey, *A Growing Legacy: An Illustrated History of Rochester's Parks* (Rochester: Monroe Reprographics, Inc., 1988) (hereafter Mckelvey, *Growing Legacy),* 13.

[51] Blake McKelvey, "An Historical View of Rochester's Parks and Playgrounds," *Rochester History* XI, No. 1 (January 1949): 1-24.

[52] McKelvey, *Growing Legacy*, 13.

[53] *Proceedings of the Common Council,* 1883-84, 213; 1885-86, 52, 328, 403.

The Establishment and Early Work of the Parks Commission

In April 1888, despite continuing opposition from the Common Council, which remained unwilling to spend public funds on park acquisition or improvements, park advocates convinced the state legislature to create an independent Board of Park Commissioners (generally called the Park Commission). Councilman George W. Elliott and others drafted legislation passed by the state legislature authorizing the independent commission "to float bonds for $300,000 and to finance the purchase and development of desirable lands for a park system, which would be maintained with charges to the city not to exceed $20,000 a year."[54] The Park Commission operated independently of the city government, which continued to oppose its creation. Twenty-one members were appointed to the Park Commission, which first met on May 7, 1888. At that meeting, Dr. Edward Mott Moore, who was to continue to play an important role as a prominent park supporter until his death in 1902, was elected president. Among the park commissioners' first actions was to contact their counterparts in Buffalo, which had begun the development of its extensive park system in 1868. The Buffalo park commissioners had two important pieces of advice: hire a professional landscape architect, and acquire land as soon as possible, before rumors of future park locations could drive up land prices.[55]

In the fall of 1888, the Park Commission heard reports from five landscape architectural firms and individuals. Four of these reports – those of Calvert Vaux and Samuel Parsons of New York City (a joint report), William Webster of Rochester, William S. Edgerton of Albany, and H.W.S. Cleveland of Minneapolis, were published in the *Proceedings of the Common Council* for 1888-89. Frederick Law Olmsted gave his report orally, and his recommendations were not recorded as part of the published *Proceedings*. The four published reports were all strikingly similar, suggesting that the Park Commission had provided the designers with specific instructions, and may have directed their attention to particularly desirable or potentially available parcels during the designers' brief visits to the area.

The land north of downtown Rochester that became Seneca Park figured largely in all four published reports, with the landscape architects extolling the dramatic beauty and unspoiled nature of the gorge scenery. All four urged the Park Commission to act quickly to preserve this land before it was encroached upon by development, and to make it a centerpiece of the new park system.

Another point of emphasis in all the reports was the hilly land surrounding the reservoir, in what would become Highland Park. Because this area had already been donated, there was no question that this would be part of the new system. The landscape architects noted that the hillside below the reservoir could be improved with shrubs, trees, and carriage drives, and some suggested enlarging the area to be improved as a park, possibly linking it with the nearby Pinnacle Hill.

Three of the four published reports also suggested reserving land for a park in what would become the area of Genesee Valley Park.[56] The three proposals for this area diverged slightly in the exact size and location of the proposed park, but agreed that the general area provided scenery that would complement the more rugged park proposed to the north.

The landscape architects expressed a common desire to preserve the scenery of the Genesee River. Rochester's earliest settlers had recognized the scenic quality of the river, but necessity forced the pioneers to focus on the river's great waterfalls as the means to power mills and other early industry. By the end of the nineteenth century, as new forms of power made it possible for industries to be located away from the waterfalls, the opportunity arose to finally open up the river for recreational use and appreciation. The

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[54] McKelvey, *Growing Legacy,* 13-14.

[55] *Report of the Board of Park Commissioners of the City of Rochester, N.Y., 1888 to 1898* (Rochester, 1898), 19-20; *The Public Parks of the City of Rochester, New York, 1888-1904* (Rochester, 1904), 13-16; and Blake McKelvey, *Rochester: The Flower City, 1856-1890* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1949) 265-67.

[56] The one report that did not suggest a park in the site of what became Genesee Valley Park was that of H.W.S. Cleveland, who proposed a park in southwest Rochester west of Genesee Street, where the neighborhood that became known as the 19th Ward ultimately developed instead.

landscape architects were essentially encouraging Rochester's leaders to seize the opportunity to acquire lands along the river and preserve the scenic quality of the gorge.

In addition to these recommendations, individual proposals contained various suggestions for other parks or parkways. The proposals by Edgerton and by Vaux and Parsons pointed out that nearly the entire existing landscape around Rochester consisted of rolling land that would be suitable for drives, walks, and playgrounds, and declined to single out individual locations for additional parks. Noting that he had spent very little time in Rochester, Cleveland provided mainly general advice about park design, inviting the Commissioners to send a representative to Minneapolis to see the park work he had done there. Webster, who was most familiar with local conditions, provided the most detailed recommendations, including the proposal of a semicircular parkway network that would connect the reservoir (now Highland Park) to the northernmost park (now Seneca Park) via a broad loop around the eastern edge of the city.

Concentrating on the river was desirable not only from an aesthetic point of view, but also as a means to keep costs down, which was clearly a concern for park commissioners. Scattered throughout the four published reports were references to the cost of the various proposals. The landscape architects pointed out that concentrating the system near the Genesee River was economical not only because steep banks should be inexpensive but also because the city need not pay for the water, so the waterside parks would automatically appear larger. They also suggested that landowners might be willing to donate part of their land in the interest of raising the value of their adjacent property, and noted that the city already owned the reservoir and some of its surrounding land. In addition, several of the landscape architects noted that the best landscape treatment would involve minimal construction, which would also help to keep the costs down.[57]

As the report of Frederick Law Olmsted was transmitted orally, and was not recorded in the written records of the Park Commission, it is impossible to determine what it was about his proposal, evidently quite similar to the others, that persuaded the Commission to select him. Certainly they were already predisposed to choose his firm, as the Executive Committee had previously tried to do so; in addition, the Commissioners had seen his work in Buffalo and were evidently impressed. Olmsted's style, with its emphasis on the enhancement of natural features rather than the introduction of high-maintenance features, must have appealed to the Commissioners' need for economy.[58] All of the other consultants, influenced by Olmsted's illustrious work over the previous 30 years, proposed a similar approach, but perhaps the Commissioners felt most comfortable with Olmsted and his proven success in Buffalo and elsewhere.

Frederick Law Olmsted and the Rochester Municipal Park System

In designing the park system for Rochester, Olmsted focused on the three sites highlighted in the various consultants' reports to the Park Commission: the area along the river north of Lower Falls; the area in the rolling pastoral terrain south of the city, and the land surrounding the municipal reservoir. Olmsted was particularly interested in the first two sites, as they incorporated the river, a dramatic water feature, yet were completely different in character. The land around the reservoir presented a situation that was less typical of Olmsted's work, as the natural topography did not include water, which Olmsted considered an essential element in his landscape designs.[59] Since the land had already been donated by Ellwanger and Barry, the inclusion of this land in the system was not to be disputed, even though it did not fit Olmsted's usual criteria for the selection of a park site.

As in all of his parks, Olmsted's approach was to consider the natural features of a site and respect the "genius of the place," choosing a different landscape treatment for each park in keeping with its natural character. The existing terrain formed the inspiration for the landscape treatment; subtle changes in topography, new and enhanced plantings, and sensitively placed built features such as roads, walkways, and buildings were used to turn the existing landscape into a work of art.

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[57] *Proceedings of the Common Council,* 1888-89 (Rochester, 1889), 462-71.

[58] Beveridge and Rocheleau, 33.

[59] Wickes and O'Connell, 11; and Kelly et al., 25.

Olmsted's approach to the Rochester park system exemplifies his technique in dealing with any landscape. While he could, on occasion, turn an undistinguished plot of land into a stunning composition, as was the case in many parts of Central Park, he much preferred to work with the type of terrain he found in Rochester, which was perfectly suited to the picturesque and pastoral ideals. Each of the Rochester parks exemplifies Olmsted's skill in employing the subtle variations of the pleasure ground type. When designing a park system, such as Rochester's, Olmsted preferred that each individual component have its own internally consistent design logic, so that as a group the parks would provide a variety of pleasing and psychologically restorative ways to experience nature.

Each of Rochester's three Olmsted-designed parks is a significant example of a mid-nineteenth century pleasure ground. As a whole, the system is significant, because it illustrates many of the design principles Olmsted developed over his long and prominent career, and that served as touchstones for his contemporaries; in addition; the system is an excellent example of Olmsted's large-scale public projects. As Olmsted himself noted, the Rochester park system, with more than 600 acres, represented the first time that a city of Rochester's size had "entered upon so large an undertaking 'in the "park" way.'"[60]

Implementation of the Olmsted Park Plans in Rochester, 1888-1900

Olmsted was selected by the Rochester Parks Commission in October 1888 to develop a park system over a period of three years for a fee of $5,000. Even before the plans for the parks were finalized, the Parks Commission began acquiring land, prepared topographical plans and other survey work, and started the preliminary grading and clearing. This work was supervised by Calvin C. Laney, a civil engineer hired by the Parks Commission as the Superintendent of the Parks in 1889. In this capacity, he was in charge of assisting the Olmsted firm with the onsite work and implementing Olmsted's designs as they were completed.

The park Olmsted designed for the land donated by Ellwanger and Barry came to be called Highland Park. In Olmsted's design, the park had two main functions: it was to be an arboretum, as Ellwanger and Barry had stipulated when they donated the land, and a vantage point for viewing the city. Principal spaces in Olmsted's design were the Pinetum, a collection of coniferous trees on the north slope of the hill designed as a classic winding Olmstedian park drive; the Meadow, an open area with edges defined by surrounding masses of shrubs and trees on adjacent slopes; the Pinnacle, a prominent hill topped by a circular pavilion designed by Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge in collaboration with Olmsted as a viewing platform and administrative center; and the Shrub Collection, on the south side of the hill, which included naturalistic masses of common shrubs surrounded by rarer specimens planted singly or in small groups. Olmsted suggested that shrubs form the majority of the horticultural collection at Highland Park because their low height would not block the vistas.[61]

The park south of the city, originally known as South Park, came to be known as Genesee Valley Park. This park encompassed gently rolling terrain along the Genesee River that epitomized Olmsted's ideal pastoral landscape. In keeping with Olmsted's desire to minimize the impact of built elements, recreational facilities, including boathouses and athletic facilities, were grouped on the west side of the river while the east side of the park was designed to retain a tranquil character with minimal interruption. An open meadow encircled by a gently winding carriage drive was a key feature in this pastoral composition; the romantic rural quality of the meadow was enhanced when the city provided a herd of sheep, at Olmsted's suggestion. Near the meadow were a deer park and picnic grove.

Seneca Park, as the park in the dramatic river gorge north of the downtown area came to be known, was designed as a linear park, encompassing the steep banks on both sides of the Genesee River extending approximately three miles from north to south. As he had

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[60] Beveridge and Rocheleau, 94.

[61] Highland Park has been expanded since its creation; sections of the current park west of South Avenue and south of Highland Park were added later and were not part of the Olmsted design. For more on the landscape of Highland Park, see Patricia M. O'Donnell, Charles A. Birnbaum, and Charles Eliot Beveridge, *Pinetum Drive, Highland Park, Rochester, NY: Historic Designed Landscape Research & Assessment Report,* Prepared for Monroe County Parks, n.d.; and Monroe County Parks Department, et al., *Highland Park Historic Landscape Rehabilitation,* 10 November 1994.

done at the Niagara Reservation, Olmsted sought to provide safe access to the river scenery while protecting that scenery from destruction. Olmsted designed a continuous system of paths and drives along the edge of the gorge, with overlook sites to take advantage of the best river views and occasional paths descending to the water's edge. The forested gorge banks were to be supplemented with lush plantings that would enhance the density and variety of vegetation and prevent erosion while minimizing the threat of rock falls or other hazards to people descending into the gorge. In two locations above the rim of the gorge, one on the east side and one on the west, the park widened to encompass natural tablelands where the landscape effects were broader and more open, incorporating meadows, lawns, picnic groves, and water features.

It appears that work progressed most quickly at Highland Park. The circular hilltop pavilion was dedicated in September 1890 as the Children's Pavilion. Roads and walks were also constructed during the 1890s, but the most attention was paid to collecting and arranging plants, particularly evergreens and shrubs. By 1897, there were 1,100 varieties of shrubs alone in Highland Park; in 1898 the Park Commissioners reported that there were 109 species and varieties in the Pinetum alone. Highland Park was already drawing thousands of visitors a year, particularly when the most spectacular plant varieties were in bloom, and the Commissioners focused increasingly on providing the showy plants that most park visitors preferred, as opposed to nonflowering plants that were primarily of interest to specialists. The lilacs in particular were early public favorites; in 1897, for example, the Park Commission noted that park attendance was particularly large when the 100 varieties of lilacs in the park were blooming. The highest estimated attendance on a single day in 1898 was approximately 3,000.[62]

The Park Commissioners also made substantial progress on implementing the designs for Genesee Valley Park, generally in accordance with the original Olmsted plans. Planting began right away in 1889; in that year alone, 62,500 trees were planted along the railroad line and along Westfall Road; 10,500 shrubs and 10,000 willows were planted in the forest and along the river, and over 200 trees were planted along the drives and river banks.[63] The work of planting, thinning, grading, seeding, and construction of recreational and other amenities continued through the decade, so that by 1898 the Park Commissioners could report that "the planting, a matter of primary necessity, has been essentially accomplished," although roads and bridges remained to be constructed.

Work in Seneca Park progressed more slowly than at the other two parks, due to difficulties encountered in obtaining the land and delays in the completion of the Olmsted plans. Work in the park began in earnest in 1891, and by the end of the decade most of the key features of the Olmsted plan, including the overall planting layout, the artificial lake in what was then called Seneca Park East, the roads and paths, and the refectory, were built in the areas where the city was able to acquire the land.

The Reform Park Movement in Rochester, 1890s-1929

By the early 1900s, the Olmsted designs for Highland, Genesee Valley, and Seneca Parks had substantially taken form , and during the first three decades of the twentieth century, Rochester's municipal park system experienced its heyday. The parks came to maturity during a period when parks were thriving nationwide, even as social and recreational ideals were undergoing a transformation. Rochesterians thronged to the parks year-round, to stroll, drive in carriages or automobiles, admire horticultural displays, picnic, swim, fish, boat, ice skate, sled, listen to concerts, or attend popular annual festivals. To accommodate activities not anticipated in the original design, changes in keeping with the prevailing ideology were planned and/or executed in the system's three large pleasure grounds and in some of the existing small parks and squares. The park system expanded with the addition of four major new parks, two new small parks, two street malls, and dozens of playgrounds.

State and National Developments: Shifting Trends in Park Ideals

By the late 1890s, the pleasure ground concept – in which parks were intended to provide city residents with a restorative experience reminiscent of the rural countryside – was beginning to lose popularity nationwide as a new theory of parks' social functions emerged.

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[62] Rochester Board of Park Commissioners, *The Public Parks of the City of Rochester, New York, 1898-1904* (Rochester: Board of Park Commissioners, 1904), 45-48.

[63] Rochester Board of Park Commissioners, 1904, 22-23.

This new ideal, expressed in the Reform park movement, was one aspect of a widespread progressive social reform movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, aimed at countering the negative effects of urbanization and industrialization. Activists such as Jacob Riis and Jane Addams chronicled and worked to end poverty, child labor, and other social ills associated with urban life. The related new ideal emerging among park leaders and organizers held that parks could contribute to the improvement of society by promoting social goals such as citizenship, productivity, hygiene, cultural education, and cooperation.[64]

This new park ideology, which dominated park advocates' thinking during the early twentieth century, was related to broad social changes of the era, as park historian Galen Cranz noted:

> In the early 1900s larger incomes, earlier retirement, shorter work weeks, and longer vacations left more people with more time on their hands . . . One main line of reform thinking, which persisted well beyond the 1930s, was that this gap of free time generated a demand for increasing recreational service, and during the first three decades of the century demand in itself justified the sudden creation of municipal facilities, beaches, golf courses, stadiums, tennis courts, and picnic areas. Generally, for its advocates the reform park was a moral defense against the potential for chaos that they perceived in this new abundance of free time, just as the pleasure ground had been an antidote to the old lack of free space. Spare time, in short, was a threat to society. It could be as easily spent in the saloon, the dance hall, and the picture show as in the church, the YMCA, and the library, unless reform advocates competed to channel time their way.[65]

The new park theory was manifested in new park programming. The "park leaders, play directors, and efficiency-minded experts in recreation" who promoted the new approach generally acted under the assumption that typical park users – children and working-class men – needed organized activities to structure their free time.[66] Reformers were particularly concerned about the health and moral education of urban children, and wished to promote their proper development. Children's natural instincts for play were to be channeled into supervised games and activities taught by leaders who could emphasize fairness and citizenship. This early focus on children broadened to include activities geared to people of all ages. Activities such as organized athletic tournaments, folk and social dancing, festivals and pageants, crafts such as miniature yacht and model airplane construction, gardening programs, and concerts proliferated. These activities were supervised and highly structured to maximize their educational value.

The structured activities that reform park advocates favored required a new conception of park design. An ideal Reform park would measure between 10 and 40 acres. It would be formally and symmetrically arranged, its organization the antithesis of the picturesque, meandering layout of the earlier pleasure grounds. The topography would be flat, with gravel surfaces for easy maintenance, and the park's boundaries would be fenced. At the center of the park would be a field house, containing separate locker and gym facilities for men and women, flanked by outdoor playground equipment. The emphasis of such a park would be on the creation of a sense of order, structure, and practicality.[67]

Another park design ideal was the playground, a new type during this period. Reform park ideology held that areas specifically designed for small children should be generously distributed throughout a city, particularly in dense urban neighborhoods. Although play areas began appearing as early as the late 1860s, it was not until 1890 that Boston became the first city in the United States to dedicate an official playground. New York City followed suit with the creation of the Small Parks Commission in 1898; Chicago officially authorized playground creation in 1901. Official and unofficial playgrounds were established in Boston, New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, New Haven, Providence, and San Francisco before 1900. The Playground Association of America was founded in 1906, demonstrating a high level of national interest.[68]

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[64] Cranz, 59-99.
[65] Cranz, 62.
[66] Cranz, 61.
[67] Cranz, 87-93.
[68] Cranz, 63.

Nationwide, the Reform park ideal led to the proliferation of relatively small parks and playgrounds in urban neighborhoods where they were more accessible to the average city dweller than the pleasure grounds, which often could be reached only by carriage. In addition, elements of the new park style were commonly inserted into existing pleasure grounds. Newly popular facilities and features of the Reform park, such as playgrounds, baseball and football fields, golf courses, museums, field houses, restaurants, bandstands, and patriotic statuary, were difficult to reconcile with the ideal of the pleasure ground as a landscape designed to look as if it were virtually untouched by human hands. Sometimes the new facilities were relatively unobtrusively sited at the edges of the existing parks, with sensitivity to the original design. In many cases, however, new elements provided in accordance with the new park ideal were inserted wherever there was room for them, often disregarding the original landscape design as utility was valued more highly than pastoral beauty by park administrators.[69]

The Olmsted firm was undergoing a transition during the early part of the Reform period. Because of the office's daunting workload, junior members of the firm were taking on increasing responsibilities for design work and for supervising the implementation of the firm's designs. In 1895, his health and memory declining, Frederick Law Olmsted., Sr., retired, leaving the firm in the very capable hands of his proteges. John C. Olmsted in particular took on a leadership role; Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., who had only recently joined the firm, also developed into a leader. As it moved into the twentieth century led by a new generation, the Olmsted firm sought to balance new Reform Park trends with the aesthetic and social principles of its founder.

The Reform Park Movement in Rochester

Changes to Rochester's Olmsted Parks in the Reform Park Era

The Rochester park system was designed and developed just as the Reform park philosophy was taking hold nationwide. In the newly created pleasure grounds, the tension between Olmsted's design intent and the new approach was apparent from the very beginning. Olmsted intended the large parks to protect and provide access to varied types of scenery, but the Park Commissioners increasingly wanted the parks to furnish recreational amenities popular with park users. The Park Commissioners' attitude was perfectly summarized in their 1911 report, in which they noted that "it has been the purpose of the Park Commission to make the parks of Rochester not simply beautiful pictures, which would serve the people in a passive way, but to make them active agencies for social service."[70] The Park Commissioners noted that concerts of classical music performed by the park band were being used to educate the taste of Rochester residents, while at supervised playgrounds children were "mothered and fathered and . . . taught to play and many other good things." Lessons in sewing and industrial arts, nature, reading, sports, and music were common features in the playgrounds, including the playgrounds in the large parks. A growing zoo in Seneca Park was also seen as a valuable instructional tool, as were the other zoo facilities that developed later in the era in two new parks: Edgerton and Durand-Eastman Parks.[71]

Festivals, concerts, classes, and other special events brought thousands of visitors to the three parks on a regular basis. These organized activities for large groups of people reflected the reform park ideal that parks should promote values such as community spirit, patriotism, cultural appreciation, and good citizenship. The popularity of public events at the parks was first demonstrated in 1901, when three bands performed a total of 18 times, nearly all at Seneca Park and Genesee Valley Park. The concerts were paid for by a combination of Park Commission funds and subscriptions collected by the Rochester Chamber of Commerce. In 1902, the Park Commission paid for 19 concerts, and the Chamber of Commerce paid for several additional performances. One concert in Seneca Park that year was paid for directly by the Rochester Railway Company, which hoped to boost ridership. In 1903 the number of concerts at the three parks climbed to about 40, most of which were held at Seneca and Genesee Valley Parks. That year, an official Park Band was organized under the leadership of Theodore Dossenbach, who came from a noted musical family. Dossenbach led the Park Band until his death in 1924, when is brother Hermann took over for the next 21 years. By 1910, the Park Band was holding 80 concerts during the season.

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[69] Cranz, 85-87.

[70] Rochester Board of Park Commissioners, *Rochester Park Commission: The 1911 Report* (Rochester: Board of Park Commissioners, 1911), 29.

[71] Rochester Board of Park Commissioners, 1911, 34-35.

The band concerts formed the backbone of a vigorous schedule of annual events in the parks. Two such events that were extremely popular in the early twentieth century were the water carnival held at Genesee Valley Park each July, and the music festival held at Seneca Park every August. The Park Commissioners noted that between 50,000 and 100,000 people attended these events, including not only residents of the Rochester area but visitors from outside the region. The water carnival was primarily a celebration of the river, with music, lights, and competitions among brightly decorated and lit canoes. More directly related to the reform park interest in encouraging civic virtue was the music festival, which featured patriotic songs, selections from classical operas, and Christian hymns. Annual celebrations of May Day, Indian Day, Lilac Festival, Children's Day, and others also drew huge crowds.[72]

As the trend toward providing ever-larger and more structured activities in the parks grew in the early twentieth century, the Park Commissioners requested assistance with designs for bandstands, pavilions, sports facilities, and other new additions to the parks to accommodate new interests. Typed records of John C. Olmsted's visits to Rochester in the 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth century show that he was repeatedly asked for advice on a wide variety of topics as the Park Commission sought to balance between the original pleasure ground designs and the increasing demand for Reform facilities.

Initially, the Olmsted firm's correspondence with Rochester park officials was exactly in conformance with pleasure ground philosophy. When the Olmsted firm (then Olmsted, Olmsted and Eliot) was asked to review blueprints of a proposed pavilion for Seneca Park, for example, the firm's response, written in February 1894, exemplified the "pleasure ground" ideal:

> [The architect of the pavilion] should understand that the building should not be designed to be a pretty thing in itself but to be a part of the scenery of the park, and that anything which attracts attention to itself by reason of its color or its decorations, and draws attention away from the surrounding verdure must be considered . . . decidedly impertinent and objectionable. The idea should be, therefore, to make the building as simple, quiet and subdued in color and design and as low and inconspicuous as the necessary requirements of convenience will permit, and any such building of necessarily large size should be placed where it will be unobtrusive. If it is desirable to have shelters on important points of view and where they will also be (in the nature of the situation) conspicuous, it is desirable that they should be small and low, and they would preferably therefore be isolated structures separated from the extensive provisions for public comfort which the present building is intended to provide.[73]

As leadership of the firm passed to the new generation and as Reform Park concepts gained in popularity, the firm's work in Rochester, as elsewhere, reflected changing trends. Although he tried to ensure adherence to the aesthetic ideals of his stepfather, John C. Olmsted was thorougly attuned to Reform Park theory, in its ideological and practical aspects, and tried to help with the sensitive integration of newly popular park facilities into Rochester's park system. For example, in a letter responding to a query from Laney as to the appropriate size of running and bicycle tracks, and whether these were likely to be short-lived fads or lasting interests, John C. Olmsted revealed a detailed knowledge of the requirements of the various sports and provided some guidance as to their implementation in Rochester. As one scholar has described it, the Olmsted firm under the leadership of John C. Olmsted was "reflective of the aesthetic tenets of his stepfather, yet responsive to the new social, economic, and political demands of twentieth-century cities,"[74] and the firm's continued work in Rochester demonstrates this perfectly.

Specific facilities were constructed in each of the parks to accommodate the new reform-oriented activities. In Seneca Park, a swimming hole, playground equipment, a golf course, and baseball fields were the major new athletic and play facilities added to the park. John C. Olmsted gave advice on the swimming hole site (Calvin Laney selected the site but asked Olmsted's opinion) and the

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[72] Rochester Board of Park Commissioners, 1911, 30-34.

[73] Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot to A.R. Selden, 19 February 1894, cited in Environmental Design & Research, Patricia O'Donnell, and Charles E. Beveridge, *Seneca Park Master Plan* (Rocheser: Prepared for the County of Monroe and the City of Rochester, November 1990) 3.

[74] Arleyn Levee, "Olmsted, John Charles," in Charles A. Birnbaum and Robin Karson, eds., *Pioneers of American Landscape Design* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000), 283.

location of restrooms, but at one of his visits found that the golf course and baseball fields had been installed without his input. The park was also the site of a zoo, beginning with the construction of a 9-foot-tall bird house and several other pens for small native animals in 1897. These early pens were essentially temporary caged areas where small animals, particularly native mammals and birds with a small collection of more exotic species, were housed. Olmsted first commented on these pens in 1901, noting that "it is very cheap-looking, but affords much amusement to visitors."[75] Genesee Valley Park, with its more level terrain and the existing recreational facilities planned by Olmsted, seemed to experience the most pressure for athletic facilities, and boat houses, baseball fields, a swimming pool, tennis courts, a golf course, bicycle and running tracks, and bicycle paths were the major new elements. John C. Olmsted was involved in the siting and design of most of these elements. The best example of the Olmsted firm's continued involvement in the planning and design of Genesee Valley Park occurred when the firm was asked to assist the Park Commission in planning for the rerouting of the Erie Canal, which was to take the waterway directly through the park. John C. Olmsted bemoaned the splitting of the park into two sections, but helped to minimize the disruption and tried to ensure that the Canal would be an asset to the park. Highland Park, the smallest of the three, was not easily adaptable to new park facilities due to its sloped terrain and small size; the move to respond to park users' heightened increase in more active forms of recreation mainly took the form of providing increasingly showy plant displays. The major new facility was the Lamberton Conservatory, constructed in 1911.

The Olmsted firm's involvement in the Rochester municipal park system ended when the Park Commission was abolished in accordance with a 1915 bill. The responsibility for maintaining and improving the city park system was given to a new Department of Parks, which, as an agency within city government, lacked the Park Commission's independence. After this point, much of the work of developing the parks was done internally by city staff rather than by outside consulting architects. Fortunately, the city staff in charge during the reorganization included a number of men with extensive experience in the park system who generally continued to follow the principles that had guided the Park Commission. Alexander B. Lamberton, named the second president of the Park Commission after the death of Dr. Moore in 1902, was retained as Commissioner of Parks; other key staff members who stayed on and made lasting contributions were William S. Riley, Calvin C. Laney, John Dunbar, and brothers Bernard and Patrick Slavin. These men led the continued development of the major parks, but were most notable for their efforts in the development of the new city parks acquired in this era (see below).

Rochester's Small Parks and Playgrounds in the Reform Era

Reform-era trends in park programming and design were manifested particularly well in the city's smaller parks and playgrounds. The importance of the small Reform or neighborhood park in this period was expressed in the 1911 *City Plan for Rochester,* created by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., architect Arnold W. Brunner, and "traction expert in consultation" Bion J. Arnold. In Part III of that report, concerning the city's park system, the first section is dedicated to "Neighborhood Parks." These parks were to be within easy walking distance ("a distance so insignificant that it will not deter the little child, or the tired mother with a baby, from going to the park for half an hour's recreation when the chance comes") of every family in the city. Reflecting prevailing ideals of reform park composition, the authors noted that small parks should provide the following features:

> (1) Sheltered lawns and sand heaps where small children can romp safe from the dirt and danger of the street; (2) sufficient areas properly designed for the outdoor games and gymnastics of boys and girls and young men and women, accompanied by

[75] The zoo was largely seasonal in nature, with monkeys and birds being moved to a zoo annex in the former No. 8 School on St. Paul Street during the winter of 1902-03; in following years, these tropical animals lived in the annex year-round. The collection of mammals in the park was intended to be limited to those indigenous to the region, while certain migratory and exotic birds that could tolerate the climate were also to be kept at the zoo. After the Park Commission acquired the site that was known as Exposition Park (later Edgerton Park; see below) in 1911, this site became the primary winter home for the non-native animals, who joined a collection of animals kept at Edgerton Park all year. A third, 200-acre zoo was located at Durand-Eastman Park (see below) from 1919 until 1962. See *The Public Parks of the City of Rochester, New York, 1898-1904,* 64, 78, 89; Lloyd E. Klos, *A Resident's Recollections* (Interlaken, N.Y.: Empire State Books, 1989), 95; John C. Olmsted, "Rochester Parks," 11 November 190[1?], Manuscript Collection, Library of Congress; and "Reminiscing Rochester: The Other Zoo We Used to Have," *Democrat & Chronicle* (Rochester), 3 July 1999.

ample opportunity for indoor and outdoor bathing; (3) shaded walks and comfortable seats where mothers may sit and watch their children play, and where, on evenings or holidays, the people of the neighborhood at large may listen to a band concert, or merely rest or stroll amidst refreshing and spacious surroundings of green foliage and lawns; and (4) a central building or group of buildings, with indoor gymnasiums, baths, model sanitary arrangements, a branch of the public library, and sufficient rooms for concerts, lectures, club meetings, and similar social gatherings.[76]

Small parks and playgrounds were at the heart of the Reform park movement in Rochester, as was the case nationwide, because they offered the best opportunity to incorporate the program and design goals of the reformers. In Rochester, this desire to bring Reform parks to every city neighborhood took two forms: the redesign of existing small squares and parks, often with Reform goals in mind; and the creation of new small parks and playgrounds.

Rochester already had several appropriately sized neighborhood parks: the early-nineteenth century squares. These were inconsistent in appearance, prompting the city to recreate them as expressions of new design trends. Because of their ongoing work with Rochester's major parks, the Olmsted firm was hired to provide new designs for the city's existing small parks and squares and for land newly acquired by the city for public spaces. These small parks and squares were an important part of the Olmsted park system, supplementing the major parks by providing easier access to parkland within neighborhoods across the city. Olmsted and his successor firms, although best known for large park designs, also designed small neighborhood parks like these in other cities, including New York City, Louisville, Buffalo, Baltimore, and Chicago.[77]

Most of the Olmsted firm's designs were commissioned for existing parks in the city. In the 1890s, the firm prepared plans for Brown Square, Jones Square, Caledonia Square (then known as Plymouth Park, subsequently as Lunsford Circle), Franklin Park (Schiller Park), and Washington Square. The firm designed either new or revised plans for Brown Square, Jones Square, and Madison Square (Susan B. Anthony Square) in 1901-10. The firm also prepared designs for two squares acquired by the city in the early twentieth century: Riley Triangle (Anderson Park) and the Maplewood Grove.[78] In addition, the Olmsted firm sent plans for two street malls: Seneca Parkway (nominated as part of the Seneca Park East and West nomination) and Lake View Parkway. (These two street malls are considered part of the municipal park system because, unlike many other similar street malls, such as those on Oxford Street, Portsmouth Terrace, and Hazelwood Terrace, they were developed specifically as park land. The other street malls in Rochester were built by subdivision developers to enhance their new residential neighborhoods, and therefore were private, rather than municipal, undertakings.)[79]

The firm's designs for the existing parks replaced the traditional system of diagonal and rectangular forms with plans that utilized curvilinear patterns and more varied plantings than had been present. In the new parks and parkways, the firm took a similar approach, favoring curvilinear pathways and varied plantings. The designs were regular, organized, and frequently symmetrical, although not rigidly geometric.[80]

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[76] Arnold W. Brunner, Frederick Law Olmsted, and Bion J. Arnold, *A City Plan for Rochester: A Report Prepared for the Rochester Civic Improvement Committee, Rochester, N.Y.*, (Rochester, 1911), 33.

[77] Clark Patterson Associates, et al., 1-20.

[78] The city purchased the land of Maple Grove, which had long been an informal picnic area, from George Ellwanger in settlement of a lawsuit in 1903. Subsequently, the city received the land just to the south, along Driving Park Avenue, where the Maplewood Rose Garden was developed. Because the Olmsted firm was working for the Park Commission in a consulting capacity at the time, the firm prepared a plan for Maple Grove in 1904. The rose garden was at least partially in place by 1911. See *The Rochester Park Commission: The 1911 Report* (Rochester, N.Y.).

[79] Wadsworth Square may also be an Olmsted design, although research has not proven a connection between the curvilinear "X" pattern of the walkways, typical of the Olmsted firm's designs for the Rochester squares, and the Olmsted firm. See Clark Patterson & Associates, *Small Parks and Squares*.

[80] Three of the small squares designed by the Olmsted firm retain substantial integrity to this era of their history: Madison Square (Susan B. Anthony Square), Jones Square, and Washington Square. In these parks, the paths remain intact, and vegetation, street

Coinciding with the Olmsted firm's work in the small parks and squares, Rochester's playground movement came to the forefront of public awareness in the early twentieth century. In February 1902, a talk was held at the Brick Church Institute "about the necessity of playgrounds for the children of Rochester especially for the congested sections." One suggestion made during the discussion was that Brown Square, one of the early squares landscaped by the Olmsted firm, would be a suitable location for a playground. This idea moved forward quickly, being accepted by the Parks Commission in May 1902. In 1903, Brown Square became the city's first official playground. New facilities, including a brick shelter, toilets, a wading pool, swings, teeters, basketball apparatus, and other playground equipment, were added. Rochester's reformers had adopted the view that playgrounds were meant to provide structured moral training, as a pamphlet describing the city's early parks shows:

> During [the 1903] season satisfactory results could not be obtained on account of the lack of supervisors, who could teach the children how to play and how to respect the rights of each other. So that while this was the season of the enacting of the playgrounds it was not until the summer of 1904 that the children were taught systematic playing.[81]

Following the creation of the city's first playground at Brown Square, the city acquired additional small parcels throughout the city for the creation of playgrounds. Thousands of children spent time in the playgrounds, where they participated in structured activities:

> Doubtless the most obviously direct social service of the parks is done through the playgrounds. At Brown Square, where there are facilities for indoor work, this continues through summer and winter. All the playgrounds are supervised, which means that the children there are mothered and fathered and are taught to play and many other good things. There are lessons in sewing and raffia; there are lessons in industrial work, and there is nature study, reading and story-telling. There are interplay-ground athletic meets and ball games; and concerts on the home grounds. At Brown Square, Washington Playground, and Hartford Street – inner playgrounds in the congested district –there are 12,000 children a week in summer on the average; and sometimes 2,500 on a single day.[82]

The number of playgrounds in Rochester grew through the 1910s. In 1915, the Bureau of Playgrounds and Recreation was created as part of the city's Park Department, taking control of the playgrounds and associated activities formerly divided among the Park Board, the Board of Education, and the Engineering Department. During the first year of this organization, the Bureau assigned a principal to each playground as the person taking primary responsibility for maintenance and programming, assisted by between one and five additional staff members, as well as eight special sewing, basketry, Boy Scout, dancing, library, and nature study instructors who conducted programs at all or several of the playgrounds. The Bureau organized athletic and skill competitions among the different playgrounds (with points deducted for "swearing, unsportsmanlike conduct, smoking, and malicious mischief") and organized schedules for rotating activities at the various sites. The 1916 report noted that 411,647 children (over 8500 per day) used the playgrounds in the summer of 1915, with thousands participating in folk dancing, sewing, basketry, scout work, hiking, and other activities. Recommending that the city establish at least two new field houses and four new playgrounds, the Superintendent of Playgrounds and Recreation, Robert A. Bernhard, summed up the purpose of Rochester's playground program by noting that:

> The same sense of duty should impel the municipality to provide recreational activities which prompts it to provide schools. The perfection of body and spirit is accomplished largely during periods of recreation. Most of our social evils can be traced directly or indirectly to impropriety in the quest of happiness. To prevent vice, crime, delinquency, imbecility, inebriety,

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furniture, and other elements are generally in keeping with the character of the Olmsted firm's design, although the elements themselves are not necessarily original. Two of the parks, Riley Triangle (Anderson Park) and Franklin Park (Schiller Park) were reduced in size by expressway construction and do not substantially reflect the Olmsted firm's designs. Brown Square, which took on added significance as a model playground in the city (see below) also does not retain substantial elements of the Olmsted firm's design.

[81] "The Origin of the Permanent Establishment of Playgrounds in the City of Rochester," undated manuscript at the Rochester Public Library, Local History Division.

[82] Rochester Board of Park Commissioners, 1911, 34.

> disease, etc., it is necessary to attack the source from which they come. We lead future citizens into happiness, through the development of their bodies, minds and spirits, making so far as we are able with the material at hand the finest type of American.[83]

By 1929, there were 29 playgrounds in the city of Rochester, a figure that includes 10 playgrounds on school property, one on private property (at the University of Rochester, accessible to city children during summer vacation), and seven in the large city parks.

Rochester's New Parks in the Reform Era

The Reform Era also witnessed an expansion in the number of large parks under the supervision of the Parks Commission. Four substantial parks were added to the system: Durand-Eastman Park and Cobbs Hill Park in 1908, Exposition Park (now Edgerton Park) in 1911, and Ontario Beach Park in the early 1920s.

In 1907, Dr. Henry Durand, an accomplished local surgeon, convinced George Eastman, founder of the Eastman Kodak Company, to purchase land adjacent to Durand's lakefront estate in Irondequoit so that the two could together donate a major new park to the city. All told, the gift, made final in February 1908, encompassed 512 acres, including a substantial amount of beach land. The Olmsted Brothers firm provided design advice on the location of roads, grading, and a dam in 1908. Durand-Eastman Park was dedicated in 1909, and continuing development of the landscape took place over the next two decades, as the soil was improved, streams were dammed to form picturesque lakes, and tens of thousands of trees and shrubs were planted. After the Olmsted Brothers firm provided guidance on the landscape layout, implementation and further elaboration of the plan was done to the designs of Bernard Slavin, as assistant superintendent of parks from1910 to 1926 and superintendent from 1926 to 1942. A self-taught horticulturist, Slavin took a particular interest in Durand-Eastman Park, which, of the parks acquired during this period, offered the most diverse natural landscape and needed the most extensive horticultural treatment. An article describing Slavin's many accomplishment in discovering and nurturing new plant varieties noted:

> In 1908, when it was put into the hands of Slavin for development, it included 75 acres of natural woods and the rest "God knows what," in his own words. Abandoned farm lands, weedy fields, steep banks, raw cuts where roads had gone through, became the problem of Barney Slavin.
>
> The new park was a desolate sight. Slavin remembers that a member of the then-functioning Park Commission, composed of city leaders, viewed the sorry domain with him and remarked: "I don't know why you bother with it, Barney. You'll never make anything out of it."[84]

Slavin turned this barren area into a lush, naturalistic arboretum very much in keeping with Frederick Law Olmsted's picturesque aesthetic. The park flourished in the 1910s and 1920s, with the development of a nine-hole golf course in the mid-1910s (expanded to 18 holes in the 1920s, and redesigned by famed golf course designer Robert Trent Jones in the 1930s), a popular vacation camp for boys, a refectory, a large bathhouse with 1000 lockers, and a zoo. As was the case in the city park system overall, Durand-Eastman Park suffered when park appropriations were drastically reduced in the 1930s, but the park experienced an even more devastating blow when a flood-control dam built on the St. Lawrence River in the early 1940s raised the level of Lake Ontario and put the beach underwater.[85]

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[83] Bureau of Playgrounds & Recreation, *First Annual Report of the Bureau of Playgrounds & Recreation, Department of Parks, City of Rochester* (Rochester, 1916).

[84] Elisabeth Keiper, "Woody Plants Unique and Notable in the Rochester Parks; A Survey and Appraisal of the Work of Bernard H. Slavin." *Journal of the New York Botanical Garden* 48, No. 576 (December 1947), 269-279. In RVF2, Parks: Durand-Eastman, Local History Division, Monroe County Public Library.

[85] Reimann.Buchner Partnership, *Durand Eastman Park, Rochester, Monroe County, New York: Final Report, Comprehensive Plan, n.d.* [mid-1980s], 11. See Catherine Salber, "Henry Strong Durand," *Rochester History* LXI, No. 2 (Spring 1999), for an overview of Durand's life and brief information on his relationship to the park.

Cobb's Hill Park was developed around a new city reservoir in a former quarry. The park was located in the southeast quadrant of the city on a prominent glacial hill. In 1908, the same year that the city began construction of the 144-million gallon reservoir, George Eastman donated 15 acres of land around the reservoir for the creation of a public park. Local residents donated money for the purchase of an adjacent forested area, now known as Washington Grove, and the city purchased additional land, for a total of 61.5 acres. The park was located just south of the Erie Canal and the eastern widewaters, a broader section of the canal. The primary intention behind the creation of the park was to provide an opportunity to view the city and region from atop the prominent hill. Plans created by the Olmsted Brothers for the reservoir area guided the plantings, grading, circulation system, and location of small buildings. Additional facilities in keeping with park Reform Park trends soon followed, including tennis courts, a winter skating shelter, and ball fields. The size of the park was expanded in 1922 after the creation of the Barge Canal system moved the canal's route south of the city, making extensive amounts of land available for other uses; the city purchased the old right-of-way near the park as well as the eastern widewaters, which now resembled a small pond. The right-of-way continued to be used as a transportation corridor, carrying the city's short-lived subway and then the Eastern Expressway (Interstate Route 490), and the widewaters and surrounding area became part of Cobb's Hill Park.

In 1911, the city acquired an unusual site as additional parkland in the city's northwest quadrant, at the intersection of Emerson Street and Dewey Avenue. This park, first called Exposition Park and now known as Edgerton Park, was originally the site of the Western House of Refuge, a reformatory school for boys (girls were admitted beginning in 1876) where juvenile delinquents were provided moral and literary instruction. The 42-acre site was filled with substantial residential and school buildings. The focus of education changed to technological instruction in 1886, when the institution was renamed the State Industrial School. In 1902, the institution began its move to a rural site in Rush, south of the city of Rochester. The move was completed by 1907, and the facility in Rochester was closed. In 1911, the city purchased the site and renamed it Exposition Park, removing the walls around the property and the administration building, and erecting new facilities such as a peristyle and bandstand. The park was conceived as a major cultural center for the city, with space for the Museum of Arts and Sciences (precursor of today's Rochester Museum and Science Center), a library branch and office space, and the Rochester Historical Society, as well as a bandstand, zoo, aquarium, buildings for industrial exhibits, a restaurant, midway, and large playground. These elements were added by a variety of designers and did not conform to an overall site or landscape plan. Expositions and other special events were held each year until 1938, when Depression-era cuts to private and public funding brought these events to an end. The buildings associated with the reform school and with the park's early development were gradually lost, with the exception of one former wing of the school that became an assembly hall for the expositions, then was used as a gymnasium before becoming part of a recreation center.[86]

The last major park added to the system was developed on land purchased by the city in 1920. Ontario Beach Park in Charlotte, at the mouth of the Genesee River, encompassed a beach, providing free bathing facilities for Rochester's population. The area had long been a popular recreational destination for Rochester residents and visitors from elsewhere. The village of Charlotte and its adjacent beach became easily accessible when a railroad connected the village to downtown Rochester in 1853. Commercial attractions at the beach began to develop in the Civil War era when Marty McIntyre built a restaurant by the beach; to encourage a variety of pursuits, he rented out boats, fishing equipment, and bathing suits, and provided changing tents for bathers. Restaurants, hotels, and cottages developed in the 1860s and 1870s. To build ridership, the New York Central Railroad, which ran a line to the beach, purchased four acres of beachfront property in the mid-1880s and rented it to the Ontario Beach Improvement Company. The company built the Hotel Ontario and amusement concessions, opening in 1884. The beach and surrounding area gradually developed into "the largest, most extensive and most popular amusement park in Rochester," coming to be known as "the Coney Island of Western New York." The main attraction from about 1885 to 1907 was the carousel, but before the 1907 season, about half a million dollars worth of new rides and attractions were added, making the amusement park more popular than ever. The park featured rides such as "Slide the Bumps," "Helter Skelter," and "The Whip," as well as exotic architecture, large hotels, food stands, and an auditorium and band shell.

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[86] See Sean Kirst, "An arts center in Edgerton," *City Newspaper* (Rochester, N.Y.), 10 January 1985; Sean Kirst, "The cradle of culture," *City Newspaper* (Rochester, N.Y.), 12 April 1984; Bob Marcotte, "What was the Museum of Arts and Sciences?" *Democrat & Chronicle* (Rochester, N.Y.), 12 January 1998; and Arch Merrill, "Edgerton Park's Early 'School' – Leg Irons, Barred Windows," *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle,* 29 August 1965.

Attendance of 70,000 was normal on a hot summer weekend, with stunts and concerts drawing particularly large crowds. The park thrived until 1919, when it closed, its buildings and rides having suffered in the late 1910s from a lack of maintenance and from several fires.[87] The City then purchased the park, demolished all of the rides except the carousel, and, in keeping with the principles that typically guided park development in the Reform Era, substituted what could be seen as more wholesome recreational pursuits – in this case, swimming, bathing, and picnicking – for the commercial activities. Research suggests that the design for the park developed gradually as the city transformed the commercial site into a public park, with no single designer responsible for the overall look of the park.

With the addition of Ontario Beach Park in the 1920s, the system encompassed a truly wide variety of landscape types. Rochester's unique geology, topography, and relationship to natural water features still formed the basis for the system, along with the principle of providing convenient park access to city dwellers of all classes. Particularly notable was the continuation of Rochester's strong horticultural tradition as an essential component of the park system. Leaders of the park system included several men with notable training or interest in horticulture. John Dunbar, born in Scotland, was a horticulturist trained in England who supervised the initial development of Highland Park before rising to the position of superintendent of parks in the early twentieth century. Bernard Slavin was a self-trained horticulturist who had begun his career in the park system in 1888 as a 16-year-old laborer, was in charge of the development of Durand-Eastman Park as deputy superintendent of parks from 1910 to 1926, and succeeded Dunbar as superintendent in 1926. Patrick Slavin, Bernard's brother, became director of the parks department in 1928. With parks leadership so attuned to Rochester's association with horticulture, it was no wonder that visitors continued to flock to Rochester to view the parks, particularly the well-established collection at Highland Park and the developing arboretum and landscape design at Durand-Eastman Park. Bernard Slavin's efforts at Durand-Eastman Park were particularly notable during this period. He acquired seeds and cuttings from Rochester's other parks and from collections elsewhere to develop a notable collection of plants, which he arranged so naturalistically that a newspaper account of a visit from Frederick Leissler, the assistant director of the University of Washington Arboretum in Seattle, noted that "the essential beauty of the native woods has been concentrated and heightened here but so skillfully that it scarcely reveals the hand of man, Mr. Leissler remarked."[88]

A 1928 article in the local *Democrat & Chronicle* noted the distinctiveness of Rochester's park system near the end of this phase of the parks' development, stating, "The Rochester parks have individuality and personality, and have gathered up with the years something of the rugged character of the men who have been most instrumental in developing them."[89] Well-appreciated by the public as a whole, the parks were enjoying an unprecedented level of popularity and support (with an annual maintenance budget of $443,702 in 1928).

The Recreation Park Movement in Rochester, 1930-41

The final major phase in the physical development of Rochester's municipal park system was in the 1930s. During this period, despite drastic cutbacks to the city park budget, Federal work relief programs funded maintenance and construction work in the parks, which proved to be the last of the major park improvement projects. This period coincided with another nationwide shift in attitudes toward the purpose and management of urban parks, as the theory that parks should be active mechanisms to improve human welfare gave way to a greater emphasis on the efficient provision of facilities and services to meet increasing demand for leisure activities. While Galen Cranz described the entire period from 1930 to 1965 as a single era in park planning, for purposes of this study, it is more useful to divide the period into the Depression Era, 1930-41, and World War II and After (from 1941 until the end of the twentieth century).

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[87] Victoria Schmitt, "Once Upon A Carousel . . . In Rochester," *RMSC Focus,* undated clipping in Landmark Society files, 12-17; and "P.S.: On the beach," *Upstate Magazine,* 24 June 1984.

[88] "Durand Scene Unexcelled, Expert Says," *Times-Union* (Rochester, N.Y.), 20 October 1936.

[89] "Distinct in Park Group," *Democrat & Chronicle* (Rochester, N.Y.), 15 April 1928.

State and National Developments: Recreation-Era Park Theory and the Great Depression

Park historian Galen Cranz described the period from 1930 to 1965 as the "Recreation Era" in American urban park history. During this period, the first half of which was a time of Depression and war, park managers no longer emphasized the potential of city parks to instill moral and civic virtues in park users. Leading park administrators such as Robert Moses, appointed as park commissioner in New York City in 1930, and C.P. Keyser, president of the American Institute of Park Executives, made no secret of the fact that they did not subscribe to the reform view. As Moses said in his first annual report as parks commissioner, "We make no absurd claims as to the superior importance and value of the particular service we are called on to render, and we realize that budget making is a balancing of comparative needs of numerous competing agencies."[90]

Instead of seeking to justify park expenditures based on the parks' function in improving society, park administrators increasingly expressed the belief that the provision of parks and park facilities was simply accepted as an appropriate governmental function. In this view, urban neighborhoods were expected to include parks, along with shops, schools, residential streets, and so on. As Cranz notes,

> The implicit message of such statements was that "the service" needed no particular justification, that park facilities were an expected feature of urban life. Park officials around the country adopted this attitude, repeating the claim that they no longer had to justify parks and that recreation had been accepted as an essential of life, like health, education, work, and religion. "Basic" [and] "universal" were almost as frequent as "essential" in describing the new ideologically denuded status of parks.[91]

The very term "recreation," which came into common use in many cities in the 1930s, reflects the view of many park administrators that they were fulfilling a demand rather than providing a social service aimed at particular social groups. Moving away from the Reform park's emphasis on "play," which implied a children's activity, and more particularly away from the type of supervised play that sought to educate children, the concept of "recreation" was inclusive of all ages and activities. The Recreation park specifically aimed to include middle-class and adult park users, not just the children and the urban poor the Reform park targeted. Cranz argues that an "emphasis on leisure" – on filling people's hours outside of work with activity for activity's sake – replaced the "ideology of reform." Unlike the Reform park philosophy, the Recreation ideology did not offer park administrators a clear sense of direction in park programming and design.

Part of the rationale behind this attitude, particularly in the early part of the period, was that park commissions were forced to contend with economic conditions that severely reduced their budgets. The justification for funding them, therefore, had to be unassailable. During the Depression, one strategy was to portray parks as "useful for employing large numbers of people and channeling potentially disruptive energies into constructive work."[92] Federal, state, and local relief programs often funded park maintenance and improvement activities. Park systems Dallas, Philadelphia, Chicago, Milwaukee, San Francisco, and especially New York City were expanded and amplified during this period. Within municipal park systems, projects such as parkways, zoos, botanical gardens, parks, and beach improvements were particularly popular.[93]

Park programming in the 1930s reflected the new economic realities, the new approach to park philosophy, perceived demands, and the influence of major world events. Depression-era activities often aimed to boost the morale of unemployed workers by providing pastimes, such as games and crafts, and/or maintenance or construction work. Large community events of all kinds – from Rhododendron Week in San Francisco to Easter sunrise services in Chicago – remained popular in this era. Social and folk dancing

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[90] New York City, Department of Parks, *Six Years of Park Progress* (1940), p. 3, cited in Cranz, 101.

[91] Cranz, 101.

[92] Cranz, 105.

[93] Phoebe Cutler, *The Public Landscape of the New Deal* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 10, 21-27.

were also promoted as suitable park activities during the Depression, when they were considered means to keeping otherwise idle people busy.[94]

With austerity budgets in place, the most common sources of funding for park programming, construction, and maintenance projects were the state and federal work-relief programs. Park projects were seen as an appropriate use of workers from programs such as the Works Progress Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps. State and national parks received the largest share of funding and manpower from these programs, setting an example for similar activities, at a smaller scale, at municipal parks.

Construction projects undertaken under the auspices of the various Depression-era work relief programs displayed certain common physical characteristics. Large projects, such as those at larger municipal parks, state parks, and national parks and forests, were characterized by elaborate engineering, the use of indigenous materials, and rustic references to Arts and Crafts ideals. Inspired by the efforts of park designers in the pleasure ground era to ensure that their modifications to the natural landscape were as unobtrusive as possible, the architects and landscape architects who designed these major park improvements developed a characteristic rustic style. Landscape architects at the National Park Service were particularly influential in developing what was considered an appropriate style for modernizing park facilities in keeping with the desired park character.[95] National and state parks in particular featured such distinctive elements as low fieldstone walls, log-cabin or similar construction, and simple wood picnic and restroom shelters. Projects were typically designed to integrate built features into the landscape, minimizing the distinction between built and natural features. Some projects focused on training people in traditional trades and materials. In other cases, industrially produced materials imitated natural, hand-crafted ones, as at Shenandoah National Park, where a shingle mill produced concrete tiles simulating wood shingles.[96] Large-scale, labor-intensive engineering projects, such as the construction of dams, were often undertaken in an effort to employ large numbers of workers.

At the municipal park level, designs were often less extensive than the massive projects undertaken by federal relief workers at state and national parks, but could utilize some of the same principles. New design elements in large municipal parks were commonly scaled-back versions of the type of rustic design elements found at state and national parks, and labor-intensive engineering projects similar to those undertaken by state and national relief workers were sometimes undertaken even in municipal parks. At the level of small neighborhood parks, playgrounds, and individual projects within parks, park designers were constrained by minimal budgets and compelled to work quickly due to uncertainty about the future availability of funding. Emphasizing a park's social function, not its aesthetic impact on its surroundings, designs at this scale were typically formal and relied on inexpensive materials that were easy to use and maintain. This resulted in a high degree of reliance on standardized plans that could be executed promptly and inexpensively; plans were often recycled from the projects undertaken in the Reform era, resulting in highly ordered spaces featuring classical design elements.[97]

Rochester's Municipal Parks in the Great Depression

The Great Depression resulted in drastic reductions to Rochester's city park budget. Rochesterians' reactions to the economic crisis were mixed; there was a strong divide between those who favored welfare spending, including programs to put the unemployed to work, and those who preferred deep budget cuts. Efforts were made in both directions as the national crisis worsened in the early 1930s. The salaries of municipal employees were cut repeatedly, and cultural institutions, including the local museum, the library system, and the parks department were among the areas affected most deeply. In 1932, City Manager C. Arthur Poole enacted deep budget cuts that required nearly all parks employees to be laid off.

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[94] Cranz, 115-116.

[95] Ethan Carr, *Wilderness by Design: Landscape Architecture & the National Park Service* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 7.

[96] Reed L. Engle, "Shenandoah: Not Without the CCC," *Cultural Resource Management* 21, No. 1 (1998), 22.

[97] Cutler, 15-22.

While parks represented a target for budget-cutting, they also presented an opportunity for employment through the many work-relief programs instituted at the local, state, and federal level. Patrick Slavin, who became city parks director in 1928, managed to obtain assistance from state and federal relief programs, including the Civil Works Administration (CWA), Works Progress Administration (WPA), Temporary Emergency Relief Administration (TERA), Emergency Work Bureau of Rochester and Monroe County, and National Youth Administration (NYA). Thousands of local men and women were employed through these types of programs in the Rochester area. For example, the Emergency Work Bureau of Rochester and Monroe County employed 16,000 people; the Civil Works Administration employed 6,500 as of November 1934; and 2,100 local boys were serving in Civilian Conservation Corps work camps by January 1934.

Parks projects were some of the most common outlets for these labor programs nationwide, and the same was true in the Rochester area. Together with volunteers, who took on some of the functions the city could no longer handle (such as event coordination and promotion[98]), workers employed through the relief programs enabled the parks to stay open and to function at a basic level even after nearly the entire city park staff was laid off. Some of the men and women hired through these programs worked as playground supervisors, youth program coordinators, and maintenance workers, enabling at least some of the parks and playgrounds to remain open.

Other temporary workers were responsible for construction in the parks. Construction projects undertaken under the auspices of the relief programs included major buildings and structures (such as bandstands at Highland and Ontario Beach Parks and an observation tower and refectory at Cobbs Hill Park), smaller structures (picnic shelters, comfort stations, tables, grills, benches, and pavilions throughout the system), and landscape improvements (beach improvements, the enlargement of the Maplewood pond, the construction of a swimming pool at Seneca Park, and changes at Cobbs Hill Park around Lake Riley, including the construction of Norris Road, new plantings, and changes to the lake itself). Designs of the major projects were less innovative than the arts and crafts-inspired designs associated with this era at state and national parks, displaying an interest in classical architecture (seen, for example, in historic photographs of the Cobbs Hill refectory and observation tower). Smaller-scale construction and landscape projects, meanwhile, reflected the era's typical attention to natural materials and labor-intensive engineering (the earth-moving projects undertaken at Durand-Eastman Park in this era are good examples).

The Recreation Park Era in Rochester, 1941-65

World War II marked the end of the park improvement programs undertaken during the Great Depression. After a hiatus in park acquisition and development during the war and in the immediate post-war period, these activities were resumed in the later 1950s and 1960s. At this time, the developments of the second half of the twentieth century, currently less than 50 years old, do not demonstrate exceptional significance. The year 1951 marks the end of the period of significance for the park system; this date encompasses the period when the development and cultural significance of the parks flourished in the first half of the twentieth century. In the future, after sufficient time has passed, parks developed in the post-war period, or alterations to existing parks made during this period, may be reevaluated.

State and National Developments: Municipal Parks During and After World War II

Rochester's situation paralleled that of many municipal parks in the United States during and after World War II. Projects undertaken during the Depression had usually sought to blend with or enhance the existing character of the parks. Many structures and landscape designs in the major parks during that era had harmonized with the original pleasure ground concept. Where individual projects sought a different aesthetic expression, they were nevertheless intended to be artistic statements in their own right. During and after World War II, changing aesthetic ideals and severely constrained budgets required a different approach. Projects in the parks were designed with utility, rather than beauty, in mind. In addition, parkland was often seen as "free" land for projects such as subsidized housing or expressway construction that were not related to park use, programming, or aesthetics.

[98] McKelvey, *Growing Legacy*, 41.

While the new approach to park administration had its roots in the Depression, when budgets and staffing levels were severely curtailed, funding sources were still available through work-relief programs to allow high-quality park improvements to be made during that period. Wartime government budgets, however, eliminated all but the most vital expenses. Ordinary maintenance and expansion were generally not considered high-priority items.

Park programming could be justified only to the extent that it supported the war effort. Municipal parks sometimes pressed into service as the sites of training activities, morale-boosting rallies and other patriotic events, victory gardens, day-care centers for the children of defense workers, or even housing of soldiers or prisoners of war.

Shrinking budgets and rising construction costs required park departments to minimize construction and labor costs. To accomplish this, park departments nationwide relied increasingly on standardized park elements with minimal maintenance requirements. Paved surfaces were common due to their practicality for multiple uses and their easy maintenance. Modern architectural materials, such as concrete and cinderblock, were preferred over the Arts and Crafts aesthetic of the 1930s because they were inexpensive and easily maintained. Landscapes were often modified to improve safety, or the impression of safety, by, for example, removing dense understory shrubs and creating open, well-lit areas. Architectural and landscape designs were typically motivated by practicality rather than aesthetics. This approach, necessitated in part by austerity budgets during World War II, prevailed even after the end of the war, when park budgets were decreased while construction costs rose sharply. Park construction boomed again in the 1950s, when many local park systems added new playgrounds and small parks, often in conjunction with slum clearance and public housing projects, and the emphasis on efficiency, standardization, and ease of maintenance continued. Although the total amount of money spent on parks nationwide increased, park expenditures as a percentage of municipal budgets decreased in the postwar era, falling from 5% to 4.6% of municipal expenditures nationwide between 1955 and 1970.[99]

War, Recovery, and Rochester's Park System

Rochester's park and planning leaders adopted the Recreation era view of park theory during this period, as was expressed in a document created by the City Planning Commission in the late 1940s:

> One of the major considerations in the development of a master plan of a city is provision for adequate recreational facilities. No longer is recreation thought to be an agreeable luxury, but rather a necessity for the health and well-being of citizens, young and old.[100]

Despite the recognition of the importance of the parks, however, demographic and economic changes challenged the park department's ability to continue the high quality of park development that had characterized the system through the 1930s.

The city of Rochester, which had expanded in a series of annexations from the 1810s to the 1920s, annexed its final parcel in 1926. As the city filled its permanent borders, there were no longer large parcels of land available for additional park development within city lines, and no more major parks were acquired after the acquisition of Ontario Beach Park.

Beginning in the 1930s, drastic reductions in city parks appropriations meant that park maintenance and improvement could no longer be high priorities, as they had been earlier in the century. While state, federal, and local relief programs made possible one last phase of significant park development in the 1930s, the end of those programs and the onset of World War II made further improvements to the parks impossible in the 1940s, as the city remained unable to fund large expenditures on wartime austerity budgets. Out of necessity, park maintenance and improvement was primarily driven by utilitarian concerns, a philosophy that continued after World War II as budgets remained low. Some construction was undertaken in the parks after World War II, such as improvements to the Maplewood Rose Garden in the 1940s and early 1950s and a new picnic and ice-skating shelter in Lower Maplewood Park in the mid-1950s.

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[99] Cranz, 122-123 and 176-177.

[100] City of Rochester Planning Commission, *Public Recreation in Rochester* (Rochester: City Planning Commission, 1949), 1.

General lifestyle changes during this period affected the popularity of the parks, which in turn impacted the city's ability to place a high priority on the maintenance and development of the city park system. The advent of the automobile made areas beyond the city limits – including state and county parks – more easily accessible to city and suburban residents. The automobile also changed the way park users visited the parks. Rather than riding a slowly moving carriage or walking through a park, visitors could now drive quickly through parks, an activity better suited to larger parks with extensive road systems. The unanticipated demands of the automobile forced physical changes to the parks as well. Genesee Valley Park was perhaps the most directly affected, as more roads were built and existing roads were widened. Some of this widening occurred as a result of repeated repaving, particularly since the roads did not have curbs.[101] As park users who had previously arrived by mass transit started to drive to the parks, parking areas were added throughout the system, particularly around popular attractions such as the Seneca Park Zoo, the golf courses in Durand-Eastman Park, and the recreational complex in Genesee Valley Park.

The development of the Monroe County Park System, beginning with the creation of Ellison Park on land donated to the county in 1926, reflects new population and transportation trends. By the onset of the Depression, the county system also included Churchville, Mendon Ponds, Hamlin Beach[102], and Powder Mill Parks. The system continued to grow after World War II, adding new parkland as Rochester's population spread outward through suburban growth. In 1961, the city and county came to an agreement whereby the County assumed responsibility for the operation and control of the city's major parks, with the exception of Cobbs Hill Park.

Some of the city parks were subjected to changes during the second half of the twentieth century that were detrimental to their historic character. The location of public housing developments in municipal parkland was one particularly egregious example of parkland, particularly the original "pleasure ground" parks where landscape design was intentionally subtle, being perceived as free land available for public purposes other than recreational use. Expressways built through Genesee Valley Park (I-390) and Seneca Park (Route 104, which traverses the Veterans' Memorial Bridge) were also examples of this attitude toward the parks. Less intrusive changes to the parks in the late twentieth century, such as the construction of unsympathetic maintenance buildings and recreational facilities, also suggested that concerns for utility were considered more important than the preservation of historic landscape characteristics.

By the 1980s and 1990s, however, a local resurgence of interest in the historic character of the parks coincided with a national awakening of interest in historic landscape in general and Frederick Law Olmsted in particular. Perhaps the best example was the restoration of Seneca Park, which occurred after the landscape was heavily damaged during a severe ice storm in 1991. The million-dollar landscape project involved careful study of the original character of the park and painstaking efforts to ensure that new plantings, pathways, and other features were in keeping with Olmsted's design. Another example is the movement to replicate the pavilion that graced the summit at Highland Park from 1890 until it was demolished in the 1960s.

[101] Projects in the later twentieth century returned roads in Genesee Valley and Seneca Parks to their original alignments and narrowed them, adding curbs to prevent inadvertent widening and off-road parking.

[102] Hamlin Beach Park was acquired by Monroe County in 1928 and became a State Park in 1938.

F. Associated Property Types

Note: This section draws heavily from portions of the excellent Multiple Property Documentation form "The Designed Historic Landscapes of Syracuse, New York."

PROPERTY TYPE: PUBLIC SPACES

I. DESCRIPTION

Definition:
An area of public land within a settlement designed primarily for civic, economic, and/or utilitarian purposes and managed today as part of the municipal park system.

Subtypes and Landscape Features:

Public Square A planned public open space (generally less than 10 acres) within a settlement, often with adjacent residential, commercial, or civic buildings, designed to accommodate civic functions, commercial activities, and/or passive recreation.

Environment: Located within a settlement, often at or near the center.

Setting: Usually surrounded by dense concentrations of civic and commercial or residential buildings. May be associated with a specific civic or commercial activity.

Natural Systems and Features: Typically a flat or sloping site. Natural topography and/or vegetation may be present.

Buildings and Structures: Typically not present as original features, but later additions such as gazebos, restrooms, and information booths may occur.

Vegetation: If present, generally lawn with shade trees, often including ornamental trees, shrubs, and flowers.

Spatial Organization: Varies. Can be highly geometric or organic, usually in response to immediate context. Designed to accommodate a flexible program of activities. May be a single open space, or contain subspaces and/or focal points connected by pedestrian paths and separated by planted areas.

Circulation: Pedestrian circulation accommodated by paved pathways or broad paved areas. Sometimes the entire space is paved to allow unrestricted pedestrian movement. Vehicle access prohibited or highly controlled.

Water Features: Fountains common in later examples.

Furnishings and Objects: Visual focal points such as monuments, sculptures, and flag poles, often present. Benches, lights, trash receptacles are common. May include other furnishings and objects related to specific activities.

Street Mall: An open space formed either at the juncture of two or more major vehicular streets or, more often, as the median of a parkway.

Environment: Typically urban.

Setting: Usually in the median of a road.

Buildings and Structures: Generally no buildings or structures.

Vegetation: May be laid out in a formal organization to reinforce basic spatial geometry. Can include flower beds, grass areas, shrubbery, and specimen trees.

Spatial Organization: A confined, geometric space, typically symmetrical. Space is most often linear and bounded by traffic lanes on either side.

Circulation: Vehicle circulation occurs around the perimeter, although in long parkways, medians are divided at regular intervals by lanes designated for turning vehicles.

Water Features: Not generally present.

Furnishings and Objects: Furnishings such as benches and lighting are common.

II. SIGNIFICANCE

Public squares have been an important part of many human settlements for centuries. Drawing on precedents going back as far as ancient Greece, Spanish and English settlers in North America often incorporated a central open square or plaza into the designs of their new communities. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Savannah, Georgia, and New Haven, Connecticut, are particularly notable for their orderly grid plans with regularly spaced open squares. Other American settlements, particularly smaller towns and rural settlements, sometimes developed central open spaces in a more informal manner, often in response to a utilitarian need.

Some of the Rochester's public squares are significant for their association with the city's early settlement and with the pioneers who laid out the first tracts that became the city's earliest residential and commercial neighborhoods. As described in Section E (Statement of Historic Contexts), the first public squares in Rochester were laid out by men who acquired sizable tracts, which they then subdivided and attempted to promote. These early developers predicted that the location of the courthouse would determine which of the competing settlements would prevail as the future city center, and each set aside land in an effort to attract the courthouse. After one of the squares – the one set aside by Colonel Nathaniel Rochester – was selected as the courthouse location, the others, which came to be known as **Brown Square** and **Washington Square,** remained as open space that was ultimately transferred to city ownership. Later, as the Rochester area boomed during the Canal era, the creators of new residential areas created small public spaces as amenities. **Caledonia Square, Franklin Park, Madison Square, Wadsworth Square,** and **Jones Square** came about in this manner. These public spaces are associated with the city's original settlers and earliest residential neighborhoods. All of the squares became part of the park system in 1894 when the Park Commission was given control over their maintenance and development. Small public spaces developed in the first half of the nineteenth century are potentially significant under National Register Criterion A for their association with the initial settlement and development of the city of Rochester, and may be significant under Criterion C if they retain elements of an early landscape design.

The small squares that were later redeveloped by the Olmsted firm, as described in Section E, are significant primarily for their design. Most of the squares have been redesigned several times in accordance with changing park design principles. Several of the squares retain evidence of the designs implemented around the turn of the twentieth century, when the Olmsted firm sought to integrate the existing public spaces with the park system and to introduce fashionable design elements. In addition, the firm provided designs for new spaces acquired by the city, including the **Maplewood Rose Garden** and **Maple Grove** area and **Riley Triangle.** Those small squares that retain elements of the Olmsted design, or designs by other notable firms, are potentially significant under National Register Criterion C as the work of a prominent designer.

In the later nineteenth century, other types of public spaces developed. Most notable in this area was the parkway or boulevard, a street divided by a landscaped central median, called a street mall. This type of road was frequently adopted by developers of elegant subdivisions who viewed beautiful parkways as an amenity that would attract upper-class residents and boost property values. Frederick Law Olmsted and other park planners of the late nineteenth century advocated the use of parkways as a means to connect

parks into an entire system; a notable example was Boston's park system, dubbed the "Emerald Necklace," which was conceived as a ring of parks and parkways.

In Rochester, developers of such streets as Arnold Park, Rundel Park, and Sibley Place adopted the street mall design in their subdivisions in the 1860s and 1870s. While these streets were soon lined with fashionable residences, lending certain neighborhoods a particularly elegant and parklike atmosphere, these and similar ventures by developers were isolated efforts, and did not represent part of the park system. Perhaps inspired by the success of these streets in attracting upper-middle class residents, some members of the Park Commission initially envisioned the municipal park system as a network of parkways that would open new areas to high-quality residential development. The Commission was persuaded to focus on developing parks before the parkways, but the concept of a ring of parkways was not abandoned. Certain elements of the parkway plan were put into place, notably **Seneca Parkway** and **Genesee Park Boulevard**. The ring was never completed, but those boulevards that were created with the intention of linking the parks remain as evidence of certain city leaders' early, ambitious vision. Designed by the Olmsted firm, Seneca Parkway in particular fulfilled one of the early commissioners' goals, in that it became the spine of a neighborhood known for its high-quality residences.

Small parks and parkways associated with the effort to ring Rochester with boulevards are potentially eligible under Criterion A, for their role in the development of the city, and Criterion C, for their design and, as appropriate, for the role of prominent landscape architects or other designers. Other small spaces owned by the city, such as traffic islands or small parks at intersections, could also be considered eligible if they were designed as part of the park or parkway system and retain elements of their original design.

III. REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

Public Squares
A. Public squares must be a public open space set aside within an early settlement to accommodate a range of civic functions; property may have been set aside for construction of a public building, which did not occur.
B. Property must exhibit integrity of location, design, materials, and feeling as noted in requirements that follow.
C. Surrounding architecture or adjoining site-specific land use from the period of significance should be present.
D. Visual focal points such as monuments, sculptures, flag poles and fountains can be present.
E. Public squares can be the work of a master landscape architect, planner, or engineer.
F. Elements of spatial orientation and circulation relating to the period of significance should be present.

Street Malls
A. Street malls must have been designed as part of an envisioned network of parkways planned as part of the municipal park system.[1]
B. Property must exhibit integrity of location, design, materials, and feeling as noted in requirements that follow.
C. Layout should be regular, and may be strictly symmetrical.
D. Specimen plantings, benches, street lights, or other features can be present.
E. Surrounding architecture or adjoining site-specific land-use from the period of significance should be present.
F. Street mall can be the work of a master landscape architect, planner, or engineer.

PROPERTY TYPE: PLEASURE GROUNDS

I. DESCRIPTION

Definition:
A distinct open space of emphasized scenic, naturalistic design and sufficient scale (generally +50 acres) to provide escape from the surrounding urban environment. Design rooted in clearly articulated social philosophy, i.e., availability of natural beauty ensures

[1] Street malls designed as private ventures to enhance residential subdivisions, while potentially significant, do not fall under the auspices of the present study.

mental and physical health of all levels of society and raises urban life to a higher level of civilization. Individual elements are subordinated to overall design. Generally serves a large portion of a community.

Landscape Features:

Environment: Generally located within or immediately adjacent to a densely populated urban area.

Setting: Usually defined by a recognizable border area and land use patterns different from the park itself.

Natural Systems and Features: Usually varied natural or modified topography including rolling hills and broad spaces of greensward. Steep hills, ravines, stone outcroppings, etc., may be present and emphasized for scenic qualities.

Buildings and Structures: Generally in a rustic or other picturesque style and located to integrate into surrounding naturalistic landscape. Social gathering spaces may feature more classical designs. May include entrance gates, bridges, gazebos and various shelters. Site engineering systems are important.

Vegetation: Usually profuse, massed and layered plantings of native material varying in color and texture. Planted as screens at property boundaries. General absence of individual specimens, except in horticultural/arboretum areas.

Spatial Organization: Includes both natural and social activity areas. Usually asymmetrical in natural areas with some axial alignment in social gathering spaces. General irregularity of line and mass. Planned contrasts in sense of scale of adjacent spaces. Variety of internal and external views and vistas with spaces laid out to provide a sequential experience.

Circulation: Generally a curvilinear system of roads and paths planned with some reference to natural topography except in gathering spaces which may exhibit more formal, straight roads and walks. Routes for various circulation modes and activities may be separated with overall system integral to spatial organization. Materials may be both natural and fabricated.

Water Features: Usually present as prominent design elements. May include fountains, ponds, lakes, cascades, rivers, falls, and/or streams, either natural or constructed.

Furnishings and Objects: May be present in great variety including fences, benches, urns, sculptures, etc.

II. SIGNIFICANCE

Large public parks were unknown in the United States until the creation of Central Park in New York City in 1858. Frederick Law Olmsted, the man most responsible for the initial development of landscape architecture as a profession in the United States, was inspired by the naturalistic landscape style then in vogue in England, and particularly by Birkenhead Park, one of two public parks created in the 1840s in London's crowded neighborhoods. In partnership with English architect Calvert Vaux, Olmsted devised a plan for Central Park that eschewed formal, visibly manipulated design in favor of a style that was meant to imitate and amplify nature. This new style of park, called the pleasure ground, became extremely popular. Pleasure grounds designed by Olmsted and his followers were expansive, usually located near the periphery of urbanized areas where land was easily available, and featured undulating terrain, sinuous road and path networks, and plantings arranged in informal masses rather than geometric flower beds. Anything that could interrupt the impression of naturalness, such as buildings or recreational equipment, was to be minimized and subservient to the overall landscape effect. The Romantic style that characterized these parks was usually expressed in one of two fashions: the picturesque, where the terrain was rugged and dramatic, or the pastoral, which featured gently rolling meadows and tranquil water features. These parks were designed as an antidote to crowded urban conditions. Park advocates believed that urban workers would achieve psychic restoration through contact with nature, and that designers could amplify these effects by enhancing natural topography and vegetation. (See Section E, Statement of Historic Contexts, for more detail on the early parks movement and Olmsted's career and design principles.)

Rochester's three major pleasure ground parks, **Genesee Valley, Highland,** and **Seneca Parks,** are the product of an ambitious effort by progressive leaders in Rochester to provide local residents with a world-class park system. Influenced by the renowned local horticultural industry, the example set by successful park efforts in other cities (particularly nearby Buffalo and Niagara Falls), the growing local interest in outdoor recreational activities, the perception that parks would stimulate profitable urban development, a strong local current of social progressivism, the opportunity created by technological changes to recapture some of the Genesee River's natural beauty, and the existence of the small public squares and an excellent landscaped rural cemetery, certain civic leaders devoted a great deal of energy to creating a system of parks and parkways in the "Flower City." (The factors that influenced Rochester's park movement leaders are described in more detail in Section E, Statement of Historic Contexts). After several years of struggle, in which the park advocates were pitted against conservative civic leaders averse to large expenditures, an independent Park Commission was created in 1888 with the authority to purchase and develop parkland.

The Commission sought the advice of a number of landscape architects, ultimately hiring Frederick Law Olmsted and his firm to develop the parks. Olmsted designed three parks, each with a different character: Genesee Valley Park, representing the pastoral landscape style; Seneca Park, representing the picturesque; and Highland Park, developed as an arboretum in keeping with the donors' stipulated conditions. The process by which the park system was developed, and the original design character of each park, is described in more detail in Section E. All three parks were excellent examples of the pleasure ground park type. In each, a single conception for the park guided the plan for every element within it. While individual pleasure ground parks were created by Olmsted and his followers in many cities, only four had entire park systems designed by Olmsted: Buffalo, Boston, Rochester, and Louisville. The physical development of Rochester's park system began in the late 1880s and continued through the early twentieth century, supervised by local park administrators with ongoing assistance from Olmsted's successor firm under the leadership of John Charles Olmsted.

Attractive residential areas developed around all three of Rochester's pleasure ground parks in the decades following their construction. Originally considered remote from the city, the parks became integral features in fairly densely developed urban areas. As their designer intended, they provided tranquil surroundings within the city and were greatly admired for their beauty by local residents and visitors alike. The parks were also the sites of extremely popular community festivals, holiday celebrations, concerts, and other events. Rochester's horticultural tradition, established in the city's renowned commercial nurseries in the early- to mid-nineteenth century, was continued within the parks, as park superintendents trained in horticulture propagated and popularized various species. This activity is particularly associated with Highland Park, designed as an arboretum, but has had a strong influence on the high quality and rich variety of vegetation found in all three of the Olmsted parks and in later parks added to the system.

Rochester's pleasure ground parks are significant under National Register Criterion A, for their association with the social and physical development of the city of Rochester in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They are also significant under National Register Criterion C, as excellent examples of the Romantic landscape style of the late nineteenth century, and of the work of master landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted.

III. REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

Pleasure Ground

A. Property must be a public open space originally intended to provide relief from urban congestion through a design emulating nature.
B. Property must exhibit integrity of location, design, materials, and feeling as noted in requirements that follow.
C. Planned spatial sequencing related to the period of significance must be exhibited.
D. Circulation system must be generally curvilinear, integral to spatial organization, and related to the period of significance.
E. Topography must be varied and related to the period of significance.
F. Plantings must exhibit varied, massed, and layered patterns related to the period of significance. Arboreta or other notable collections of plants, reflecting local horticultural history, may be present.
G. Various water features related to the period of significance can occur.
H. A variety of buildings, structures, and furnishings generally in a rustic or other picturesque style can occur.
I. Property can be the work of a master landscape architect, landscape gardener, or engineer.

PROPERTY TYPE: REFORM PARK

I. DESCRIPTION

Definition:
A distinct open area designed to implement the Progressive political ideal of influencing moral development through structured recreational activities, often planned by social workers. Generally serves a neighborhood, often a working-class district; larger examples may serve an entire community.

Landscape Features:

Neighborhood Park: A small park or playground, generally 10 to 40 acres, designed to serve its immediate urban neighborhood.

Environment: Generally located in densely populated urban areas with site selection sometimes determined by population statistics and standard minimum space required for various organized activities.

Setting: Usually defined by a recognizable border area and land use patterns distinctly different from the park itself.

Natural Systems and Features: Predominantly large areas of flat topography to accommodate playing fields. Areas of more varied topography may be present.

Buildings and Structures: Generally includes a field house or other large central building and a variety of recreation and/or exercise apparatus. Other buildings and structures related to the period of significance may include dance halls, pool houses, amphitheaters, zoos, etc.

Vegetation: Usually decorative rather than naturalistic with trees as perimeter plantings and shrubs and flowers as edging for buildings and entrances. Plantings may accentuate linearity of park design. Vegetable and/or other specialized gardens may be present.

Spatial Organization: Generally simple, open, geometric layout, often symmetrical rather than complex spatial sequencing. Often some screening of vistas to surrounding urban environs.

Circulation: Generally linear system of roads and paths, often organized along a formal axis leading from a central building to surrounding playing fields and other facilities. Materials generally fabricated rather than natural.

Water Features: May be present, usually as swimming or wading pools.

Furnishings and Objects: Usually present in great variety including fences, benches, play equipment, light fixtures, signs, etc.

Large Reform Park: Sizable open space (usually 40 or more acres), often created to supplant existing commercialized recreation use, intended to be accessible to a population drawn from the surrounding region. Represents a transitional park type, combining elements of the earlier pleasure ground ideal with features common in the neighborhood reform parks.

Environment: Generally located in or at the outskirts of densely populated urban areas with site selection often determined either by donation or by municipal efforts to supplant existing commercial use.

Setting: Usually defined by a recognizable border area and land use patterns different from the park itself.

Natural Systems and Features: Central activity areas usually predominantly flat, with nearby areas of varied natural or highly manipulated topography.

Buildings and Structures: May contain rustic or picturesque elements, and/or monumental, classically inspired designs, typical of the colonial revival or classical revival styles. May include entrance gates, bridges, gazebos, and various shelters.

Vegetation: May include decorative plantings, in social activity areas, and naturalistic plantings, in more naturalistic areas. Trees may be used as perimeter plantings and shrubs and flowers as edging for buildings and entrances. Plantings may accentuate either linear or sinuous character of park design, as appropriate. Specialized gardens, such as arboreta, may be present.

Spatial Organization: Includes both natural and social activity areas. Usually asymmetrical in natural areas with some axial alignment in social gathering spaces. Often some screening of vistas to surrounding urban environs.

Circulation: In social activity areas, generally linear system of roads and paths, often organized along a formal axis leading from a central building to surrounding playing fields and other facilities. In naturalistic areas, a curvilinear system of roads and paths planned with some reference to natural topography. May include circulation elements designed for automobile or public transportation.

Water Features: May be present as swimming or wading pools, natural water features, and/or constructed water features.

Furnishings and Objects: Usually present in great variety including fences, benches, play equipment, light fixtures, signs, etc.

II. SIGNIFICANCE

The Reform Park movement began to supplant the Pleasure Ground trend in the late nineteenth century. Progressive social reformers, concerned about the well-being of the poor, particularly poor children, perceived playgrounds and other small parks as the ideal solution to many urban ills. Children who were otherwise often unattended were particularly expected to benefit from easy access to supervised areas where they could play and learn at the same time. Activities in reform parks were highly structured, with trained instructors teaching children games, crafts, and other activities aimed at providing moral and civic instruction. These early efforts to provide socially beneficial activities for children were expressed in the creation of playgrounds in cities throughout the country, particularly in the first three decades of the twentieth century. The reform movement also grew to encompass adult activities, although the primary emphasis remained on children. Reform parks at the neighborhood scale, typically 10 to 40 acres, were distributed throughout the city, particularly in low-income areas, so that every neighborhood could have access to park activities and facilities. Features and programming typical of the reform park were also adopted within existing pleasure grounds, often in areas at the existing park's periphery or in central gathering spaces.

In Rochester, the reform park mentality was developing just as the pleasure grounds were being built. As a result, there was considerable pressure to include new facilities, most of which were unimagined in the original Olmsted plans, in the pleasure grounds as they were developed. In some cases this was done successfully, often with the input of John C. Olmsted, Frederick Law Olmsted's stepson, who took a leadership role in the firm as his stepfather approached retirement and after his death. In other cases, new park features contrasted with the pleasure ground design, to varying degrees. The influence of the reform park movement was seen more directly in the proliferation of playgrounds during this period and in the redesign of the small parks and squares by the Olmsted firm (see above). Reformers agitated for, and achieved, the creation of small parks throughout the city; the first playground was established at Brown Square in 1903, and by the end of the reform era, Rochester had 29 playgrounds.

In addition to the small neighborhood-oriented reform parks that are most typical of the movement, the municipal park system acquired four sizable new parks in this era: Cobb's Hill, Durand-Eastman, Edgerton, and Ontario Beach Parks. Edgerton Park, while larger than the typical neighborhood park and drawing from the community as a whole for the major events held there, was the most similar to the classic reform park in its amenities. Ontario Beach Park had long been a popular amusement park and resort area, which the city transformed into what reformers would consider a more wholesome, family-oriented attraction focused on bathing, with a few concessions and a carousel remaining as remnants of the park's earlier incarnation as "the Coney Island of Western New York." The

transformation of a commercialized site into a free, easily accessible, family-friendly park was typical of the attitudes and strategies of reform park advocates. Cobb's Hill and Durand-Eastman Parks were both donated to the city, and both were initially developed largely in keeping with the earlier pleasure ground style, with input from the Olmsted firm. Longtime parks employees supervised the development of these parks in accordance with the park system's traditional emphasis on horticulture. The four large parks represent something of a transition or overlap between the pleasure ground ideal and the new reform park sensibility.

Reform parks in Rochester, including both the small neighborhood parks and the large parks, are potentially significant under Criterion A for their association with social and political movements and the development of the city of Rochester in the early twentieth century, and under Criterion C, as examples of a new era in park planning and design. Parks and park elements associated with the Olmsted firm may also be significant as the work of an accomplished landscape architecture firm.

III. REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

Neighborhood Park
A. Property must be a public open space originally designed to afford recreational opportunities to a neighborhood district.
B. Property must exhibit integrity of location, design, materials, and feeling as noted in requirements that follow.
C. Layout must be generally formal and geometric and related to the period of significance.
D. Topography must be predominantly flat and the circulation corridor generally linear.
E. A field house or other large central building related to the period of significance can occur.
F. A great variety of furnishings and objects can occur.
G. Property can be the work of a master landscape architect, horticulturist, or engineer.

Large Reform Park
A. Property must be a public open space originally designed to afford recreational opportunities to the community as a whole.
B. Property must exhibit integrity of location, design, materials, and feeling as noted in requirements that follow.
C. Layout may be formal and geometric or naturalistic, or may combine elements of both approaches.
D. Topography may be varied, including both flat and rugged terrain.
E. Buildings or structures designed in either rustic or classical styles may occur; these may be sited in prominent locations in deliberate contrast to the natural surroundings.
F. A great variety of furnishings and objects can occur.
G. Property can be the work of a master landscape architect, horticulturist, or engineer.

PROPERTY TYPE: RECREATION PARK

I. DESCRIPTION

Definition: A distinct open area, generally under 10 acres, designed as a multiple use facility to efficiently provide a variety of recreational opportunities for a small neighborhood community.

Landscape Features:

Environment: Generally located in densely populated urban areas, sometimes connected with schools or housing developments as part of larger city planning efforts.

Setting: Usually defined by a fence separating park from its context and/or by land use patterns distinctly different from the park itself.

Natural Systems and Features: Predominantly large areas of flat topography accommodating a variety of recreational activities.

Buildings and Structures: Often numerous, varied in function and noteworthy for manmade construction materials, particularly concrete, cinder block, brick, and tile.

Vegetation: Minimal plantings, generally confined to linear perimeter plantings of trees, with understory and flower beds noticeably absent.

Spatial Organization: Generally informal spaces. General absence of scenic views and vistas or distinctive patterns and sequencing.

Circulation: Generally linear system of roads and paths. Large paved areas to accommodate multiple recreational uses. Often extensive paved areas for parking.

Water Features: May be present, usually as swimming or wading pools or water slides.

Furnishings and Objects: Often includes standardized design elements (benches, fences, curbs). May include prefabricated, brightly colored play equipment. Chain link fencing common. Often extensive signage occurs as means of organizing park activities.

II. SIGNIFICANCE

The Recreation Park era represented a new approach to park theory and design. Rather than believing parks could be the engines of social reform, park advocates who subscribed to this new theory viewed parks as simply being essential components of urban neighborhoods. Parks fulfilled a demand for recreational opportunities, much as commercial areas fulfilled a demand for shopping. While the theory behind parks was consistent throughout the recreation park era (1930-65), programming and construction trends changed throughout the era in response to national events. During the Depression, labor-intensive park improvement and maintenance projects were commonly undertaken by workers employed through federal, state, and local work-relief programs. Park programming provided activities for the unemployed, such as crafts classes. During World War II, construction projects came to a halt, but parks remained the preferred sites for morale-boosting events, victory gardening, physical fitness programs, and other events targeted to boosting the war effort.

In the post-war period, city parks had to contend with minimal budgets, competition from state and national parks and other sites newly accessible by automobile, new types of entertainment available through television and other media, and demographic changes wrought by the automobile, particularly the move of many middle-class and upper-middle-class families to the suburbs, away from city parks. Utilitarian concerns dictated park design during the era, as labor-intensive construction projects using indigenous materials in rustic styles during the Depression gave way to minimalist landscape and architectural designs using materials chosen for their ease of maintenance.

In Rochester, notable activity occurred within the parks during the Depression era, with workers participating in various work-relief programs constructing new park facilities ranging from buildings to picnic benches. Park projects undertaken during this era may be significant under Criterion A, for their association with Rochester's response to the Depression, and/or under Criterion C, as examples of Depression-era design and construction. This period of activity slowed considerably with the entry of the United States into World War II in 1941, as was the case in park systems nationwide at a time when municipal expenditures that did not advance the war effort ceased. No parks or park developments that are now fewer than 50 years old appear to have exceptional significance in accordance with National Register Criteria Consideration G. It is possible that in the future, parks and park developments that are now fewer than 50 years old may be evaluated and found to be significant examples of recreation-era parks and park facilities.

III. REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

Recreation Park

A. Property must be a public open space originally designed as a multiple use recreational facility.
B. Property must exhibit integrity of location, design, materials, and feeling as noted in requirements that follow.
C. Spaces must be generally flat, open, and unadorned often including both paved and turfed areas, with a notable absence of complex spatial patterns.
D. Equipment must occur in a variety intended to accommodate multiple forms of active recreation.
E. Property can be the work of a master landscape architect or engineer.

G. Geographical Data

The City of Rochester, Monroe County, New York

H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

The multiple property documentation of the Rochester Municipal Park System grew out of an effort by the Landmark Society of Western New York and the Historic Landscape Preservation Committee to document the designed historic landscapes of Rochester, New York. A Historic Context Statement on this topic was written by Susan Maney O'Leary in 1997, and revised in 1998. This document presented extensive landscape history for Rochester and the surrounding area in the context of state and national developments. A theme that is present throughout this context statement is Rochester's notable role in the creation and design of public landscapes. On the basis of this document, additional research, and consultations with State Historic Preservation Office staff, the municipal park system of the city of Rochester was selected as an appropriate subject for a multiple property documentation listing. Other types of public landscapes, notably state and county parks, were also considered, but it was determined that the city's municipal park system was the most appropriate subject because of the system's ambitious scope, notable examples of landscape design, and historic significance.

Once the scope of the multiple property listing was determined, several additional sources were extremely valuable in identifying the most significant properties, contexts, and property types. The city maintains various databases and reports on parks and open spaces, which were useful in identifying those properties with significant natural and cultural features and the age of various parks and open spaces. Because the list of city-owned parks and open spaces was well defined in these city records, it was not necessary to perform additional survey work for the purpose of identifying properties, although site visits were useful in determining the integrity of various parks and open spaces.

Historic contexts and property types were adapted from a number of written sources. The context statement for the designed historic landscapes of Rochester identified a number of contexts and property types relevant to landscape development in the region generally; many of these specifically dealt with or substantially related to public parks. In addition, a book by Galen Cranz entitled *The Politics of Park Design: A History of Urban Parks in America* presented a national framework for the development of public parks and park systems that proved well suited to the development of parks in Rochester. By combining the frameworks established in these two sources with more in-depth research, it was possible to view the park system as developing in a series of overlapping phases, each of which relates to one or more specific property types: the initial development of the small parks and squares, the development of the pleasure grounds that formed the nucleus of the park system, the expansion of the park system and new progressive park planning and design trends reflected in reform-era parks, and the completion of the park system under Depression-era work relief programs of the Recreation park era.

The requirements for integrity were developed based on the typical characteristics of the property types in Rochester and elsewhere. Some of the parks and other public open spaces in the park system will not meet the integrity requirements due to alterations that have disrupted their historic landscape design and function, but many should be found to meet the integrity requirements for the appropriate property types.

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