

CULTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY – LANDSCAPES * OLMSTED PROJECT COVER SHEET

Please submit completed form to: Architectural Survey Coordinator
State Historic Preservation Office, Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development
450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 5, Hartford, CT 06103

I D E N T I F I C A T I O N	PROPERTY NAME (Current/Historic)		
	Wadsworth Mansion at Long Hill / Col. Clarence S. Wadsworth Mansion and Estate, The Cenacle		
	COUNTY	TOWN/CITY	VILLAGE
	Middlesex	Middletown	
	JOB NUMBER		
Primary: 00035 Related Job Numbers: 03359			
Landscape Type			
<input type="checkbox"/> Park, Parkway, Recreation Area. Scenic Reservation <input type="checkbox"/> City/Regional Plan, Improvement Project <input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision, Suburban Community <input type="checkbox"/> College/School Campus <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds of Residential Institution <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds of Public Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Estate / Homestead <input type="checkbox"/> Cemetery / Burial Lot / Memorial / Monument <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds of Commercial / Industrial Building <input type="checkbox"/> Country Club / Resort, Hotel, Club <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds of Church <input type="checkbox"/> Arboretum, Garden <input type="checkbox"/> Exhibition, Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Miscellaneous			
DATE OF ORIGINAL PROJECT: 1900-1901			
SUBSEQUENT PROJECTS: 1921-1922			

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DESIGNER(S) (primary)

- Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.
- John Charles Olmsted
- Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.
- Other firm member(s):

Other Designers (prior to or following Olmsted project):

Repositories consulted with source materials

- Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site; Olmsted Archives (online albums)
- Library of Congress
- Olmsted Online (OlmstedOnline.org)
- National Archives and Record Administration
- Connecticut State Library
- Hartford History Center
- Other: Wadsworth Mansion website: <https://www.wadsworthmansion.com/>

Observations regarding features characteristic of Olmsted firm design

Col. Clarence Wadsworth engaged Olmsted Brothers Landscape Architects to provide landscape planning and design guidance for his summer retreat property in Middletown in 1900. In 1901, the firm prepared a planting design as well as a grading study related to initial siting of the house with a commanding view to the south, an entrance drive, edged by stone piers, and an arrival court in front of the house, and service area, all part of an approach and arrival sequence envisioned by the Olmsted firm. The firm was also later engaged to design a nearly mile-long carriage drive referred to as the Long Lane Approach Drive, or Sextanoid. Near the house, the approach drive is edged by stone walls and oak tree plantings. With the entrance drive and stone piers, oval turnaround in front of the house, plantings along the driveway and near the house, and the trace of Long Lane Approach Drive and associated walls, drainage features, and plantings surviving, the property appears to retain a good deal of integrity for the design features proposed by the firm.

While the property retains much evidence of the original Olmsted design, it also underwent some change over the years based on subsequent ownership and use as a religious retreat center between 1947 and 1984 known as the Cenacle. The property has been subdivided and is now smaller than the original estate. The south lawn and the associated view from the mansion, framed by rows of evergreen tree plantings, appear to be a later addition not designed by the Olmsted firm. The property now includes

Department of Economic and
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parking and other contemporary access and interpretation features added by the city of Middletown, Connecticut, to accommodate visitors and events. Acquisition by the city ensured protection of the property, which had declined and was at risk of being lost by the mid-1990s.

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	COUNTY Middlesex	TOWN/CITY Middletown	VILLAGE											
	STREET AND NUMBER (and/or location) 421 Wadsworth Street													
	OWNER(S) <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUNICIPAL <input type="checkbox"/> STATE <input type="checkbox"/> FEDERAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRIBAL <input type="checkbox"/> EASEMENT City of Middletown; operated by the Long Hill Estate Authority													
	LAT/LONG COORDINATES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Center Point <input type="checkbox"/> Polygon 41.536407, -72.675695													
	PARCEL INFORMATION Acres: 103.5 PID(s): MBLU(s): 27 29-2 28													
	USE (Present) Interpreted historic site, available for event rentals		(Historic) Residential estate											
	SURVEY TYPE <input type="checkbox"/> Reconnaissance-Level <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Intensive-Level													
	D E S C R I P T I O N	LANDSCAPE TYPE (Check all that apply) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Designed <input type="checkbox"/> Vernacular <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural/Ethnographic <input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Linear <input type="checkbox"/> System/Multi-Site <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Residential <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Institutional <input type="checkbox"/> Maritime <input type="checkbox"/> Green <input type="checkbox"/> Park- Active Recreation <input type="checkbox"/> Park-Passive Recreation or Commemorative <input type="checkbox"/> Other – specify:												
		DATE OR PERIOD (Include source of date) 1900-1901; 1921-1922 (Olmsted Research Guide Online)												
DESIGNERS (Entities that created, designed, constructed, or shaped the landscape) Olmsted Brothers Landscape Architects														
DESIGN SCOPE (For designed landscapes, explain what work was commissioned.) The property was designed as a residential estate to be used during the summer season. The then 500-acre estate featured formal gardens, well-managed forests and pastures, and was conceived as a working landscape.														
LOCATION OF DRAWINGS/IMAGES/SOURCE MATERIAL Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site; Library of Congress; Long Hill Estate														
VISUAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY (Check boxes for the qualities that are key features of this landscape. If attaching descriptive narrative, consider these categories.) <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Layout & Spatial Relationships</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Water Features</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Circulation</td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Drainage</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Topography</td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Buildings/Structures/Objects</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plantings/Vegetation</td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recreational Space</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Views & Vistas</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Other:</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Boundaries</td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Design Style: Country Place Era</td> </tr> </table> <p>Surviving features include the house in its historic location, an entrance drive and approach road, arrival court, plantings around the house, and views from the house across the lawn to the south. Olmsted plans provided guidance for siting of the house, grading, circulation features, and plantings.</p>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Layout & Spatial Relationships	<input type="checkbox"/> Water Features	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Circulation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Drainage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Topography	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Buildings/Structures/Objects	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plantings/Vegetation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recreational Space	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Views & Vistas	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Boundaries	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Design Style: Country Place Era
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C O N D I T I O N	EXISTING CONDITION <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recognizable <input type="checkbox"/> Not Extant/Not Recognizable Changes: The property has been subdivided from 500 to 103 acres. Vista south of the mansion edged by evergreen trees designed later. Parking, lighting, and signs added later.		
	POTENTIAL THREATS <input type="checkbox"/> None Known <input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure Improvements <input type="checkbox"/> Onsite Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adjacent Development <input type="checkbox"/> Vandalism <input type="checkbox"/> Overuse <input type="checkbox"/> Deferred Maintenance <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Invasive Vegetation <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental – specify: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Other – specify: _____		
E N V I R O N M E N T	SETTING (One sentence description) Wadsworth Street extends through a generally residential neighborhood, with some institutional properties to the southeast and northeast. Mercy High School is to the west, but screened by evergreen tree plantings.		
	VEGETATION <input type="checkbox"/> Maintained Open Land <input type="checkbox"/> Natural Open Land <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Woodland/Forest <input type="checkbox"/> Wetland <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Specimen Plants <input type="checkbox"/> Other – specify: _____		
	SLOPE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Level/Nearly Level <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate Slope <input type="checkbox"/> Steep Slope Elevation (ASML): 240'		
	CONNECTICUT PHYSIOGRAPHIC PROVINCE (Eco-Region) <input type="checkbox"/> Northwest Highlands <input type="checkbox"/> Western Uplands <input type="checkbox"/> Western Coastal Slope <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Central Valley <input type="checkbox"/> Eastern Coastal Slope <input type="checkbox"/> Eastern Uplands Soil Description: Dominated by Wethersfield loam soils, well drained.		
H I S T O R Y	SUMMARY (Provide a brief overview in this space. More detailed narrative can be attached.) Long Hill Estate was developed by Col. Clarence S. Wadsworth following his acquisition of a 500-acre property in 1900. Wadsworth engaged the Olmsted Brothers Landscape Architects to lay out the estate property, including an entrance drive, the siting of the house, and plantings. Following Wadsworth's death in 1941, the property was subdivided and used as a religious retreat.		
	NATIONAL REGISTER RECOMMENDATION Entered by: <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended Eligible (Criterion <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D) <input type="checkbox"/> Not Eligible <input type="checkbox"/> Not Evaluated Explanation: The property is part of the Wadsworth Estate Historic District, the landscape contributes NR Listed: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District-Contributing <input type="checkbox"/> District-Non-Contributing <input type="checkbox"/> Individual <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient Documentation		
R E P O R T E D B Y	NAME Liz Sargent and Maeve Corcoran	ORGANIZATION Red Bridge Group	DATE December 2021
	ADDRESS 2100 Green Street, San Francisco, California 94123		
	PHOTOGRAPHER Liz Sargent	DATE September 13, 2021	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Permission to use photographs (public domain)
	SURVEY METHOD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site Visit/In-Person Walkover <input type="checkbox"/> Drive-through/Windshield <input type="checkbox"/> Digital Review Only		

ATTACHMENTS (Include the following items in the PDF)

- Location Map Site Map Photographs with captions Historic Images (if applicable)
 Narrative Description of Property Historical Narrative of Property References

Forms containing sensitive Information may be withheld from public disclosure (CGS 1-210)

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY (Visual Assessment Summary)

Layout & Spatial Relationships: The Wadsworth mansion is approached via a paved entrance drive, referred to as the “North Fork,” that arises from Wadsworth Street. The tree-lined drive terminates in an oval turnaround and arrival court located in front of the principal façade of the mansion. Service drives extend around the house to the east and west. A portion of the Long Lane Approach Drive, also designed by the Olmsted Brothers Landscape Architects in 1921, referred to as the “Sextanoid,” is located northeast of the mansion. Within the contemporary property is a 1,100-foot-long section of the road, much of which is bordered by mortared stone walls and mature white oak trees.

A formal garden edges the house to the west, while a long narrow lawn edged by evergreen tree plantings extends to the rear (south). A grass tennis court edged to either side by lattice frames supported by classical columns is east of the lawn. The tennis court is also edged to the east by a Classical tennis pavilion. The western service drive is also edged by a stone wall. Mature tree plantings frame the circular turnaround and landscape northeast of the house.

Circulation: The nearly one-half-mile-long paved entrance drive and circular turnaround in front of the house is the principal circulation feature in use on the property today. The service drives that extend east and west from the driveway turnaround provide access to parking areas, a garage, and maintenance areas. The eastern service drive continues past a parking area as an unpaved route. The western service drive transitions from asphalt to gravel once it reaches the visitor parking area that edges the south lawn. A concrete walk leads from the front of the house around its west side, and continues to the visitor parking area. Short paved spurs lead from the parking area to the walk. The historic route of the Long Lane Approach Drive is a hard-packed earth route edged by stone walls and tree plantings.

Topography: The mansion is sited on a high point of the property. The site is relatively level, although the topography generally descends to the southeast.

Plantings/Vegetation: Evergreen trees present on the property include pine, eastern red cedar, and Southern magnolia. The trees frame the entrance drive as well as the oval turnaround. Evergreen tree plantings also frame the vista across the south lawn. There is also a grove of beech and maple trees near the house likely planted based on Olmsted firm designs, as well as native woodland shrubs such as rhododendron and mountain laurel that edge the driveway. The trees that line Long Lane Approach Drive are white oaks.

Views & Vistas: Linear views occur along the entrance drive as it passes through a wooded area. Once near the mansion, the views are directed towards the house. The long vista to the south of the house framed with evergreen tree plantings was not likely proposed by the Olmsted firm.

Drainage: Openings at the base of the stone wall that edges the Long Lane Approach Road are part of the stormwater management system that allows water to drain from the road.

Buildings/Structures/Objects: The main house is a Classical Revival style mansion built between 1909 and 1917. The mansion is composed of a central block with a projecting pavilion and columned portico. Two story wings flank the main block. There is also a modest Classical temple-fronted tennis pavilion, and a small stuccoed concrete block two-car garage that has a flat roof. Lattice supported by Classical columns edges the grass tennis court. There are metal urns in the formal garden west of the house. A stone wall edges the parking area that is interpreted as a feature that pre-dated establishment of the estate. Stone piers are located along the entrance drive near its intersection with Wadsworth Street that were likely part of the Olmsted firm design.

Recreational Space: The grass tennis court is the only recreational feature observed. It is no longer used.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

In 1900, three years after marrying Katharine Fearing Hubbard, Col. Clarence S. Wadsworth acquired several parcels of land near Middletown, Connecticut, as part of a plan to establish a large summer retreat. Eventually amassing a nearly 600-acre property, Wadsworth established “Long Hill” estate with a Classical Revival mansion as the centerpiece. The mansion was designed by architect Francis Hoppin of the New York firm of Hoppin & Koen. Hoppin, who studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, also designed The Mount, Edith Wharton’s home in Lenox, Massachusetts. Based on a newspaper article published in 1995, “When Col. Clarence Wadsworth built his imposing Long Hill mansion, he spent more time planning, fussing and fuming over the landscaping than he did on the imposing Beaux Arts building. It took the turn-of-the century lawyer, linguist and environmentalist eight years to build his house, completing it in 1917. He spent nearly 20 years thrashing out a landscaping plan with the nationally renowned Olmsted Brothers firm of Boston.”¹

Wadsworth also engaged the Olmsted Brothers to develop plans for a “working landscape,” as well as “well-managed forests and pastures,” in addition to more formal estate features to include formal gardens.² The Olmsted Brothers were asked to provide expertise on “laying out of an improvement scheme for Long Lane, a road leading from [the estate] to the City of Middletown,” and the siting and orientation of the mansion and its approach drive. The plans prepared by the Olmsted Brothers Landscape Architects, principally John Charles Olmsted, included topographic surveys, grading studies, and planting plans that included formal gardens near the mansion. The Olmsted plan supported Wadsworth’s goal of “making an extensive forest plantation north, northwest, and northeast of the house site with a view to securing shelter and a sense of shelter and eventually a background of woods to obviate the lonely, bald effect which a house on an open hill would have.”³ Beginning in 1900, the Olmsteds began oversight of the planting of thousands of trees and shrubs in order to convert former pastures and orchards into woodlands with a naturalistic appearance that complemented the more formal design around the mansion. Plans show work completed in the 1920s on the Long Lane Approach Drive, a route that Wadsworth and the Olmsteds laid out through extensive discussion. The route was approximately 1 mile long and connected Long Lane at Wadsworth Street with the mansion. It wound through pasture, orchards, and newly-planted forests.⁴ Near the mansion, the road was lined with stone walls and oak trees.

After Wadsworth’s death in 1941, the property was subdivided with several parcels sold off. The property was subsequently managed by the Rockfall Corporation, a charitable foundation created by Wadsworth before his death. The foundation was intended to further his interests in conservation and forestry. Later, another 130 acres of the property was given to the State of Connecticut to establish Wadsworth Falls State Park. In 1947, the property was acquired by the Religious of our Lady of the Cenacle, serving as “a retreat and welcoming retreat in its secluded setting,” for the next 40 years.⁵ Known at the time as “The Cenacle”, the Mansion offered a place of shelter, and was used for mediation and religious instruction available to the wider community. During this period, the estate was sold off in parcels, reducing the size to its current 103.5 acres. The main building was enlarged through the construction of sizable wings on the west and north elevations. The property was sold again in 1986 to a series of developers. The land “turned out to be unsuitable for small-lot development,” and “the Mansion was considered a negative asset” to buyers.⁶ With no plan for development, the property was abandoned, and the land and buildings were subject to vandalism, fire, and deterioration, and the property was eventually obtained by the banks.

Preservationists and conservationists urged the City of Middletown to seek a way to salvage the property and adapt it for public use. The City of Middletown purchased the estate on June 30, 1994. Since purchasing and

¹ Bill Daily, “Foundation gives grant for Long Hill estate plan,” *Hartford Courant* (August 3, 1995), 47.

² “Wadsworth Mansion,” available at <http://www.wadsworthmansion.com/> (Accessed October 13, 2021).

³ Project correspondence, Library of Congress.

⁴ Interpretive sign at the Wadsworth Mansion property.

⁵ “Wadsworth Mansion.”

⁶ *Ibid.*

CULTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY – LANDSCAPES * OLMSTED PROJECT

CONTINUATION SHEET Wadsworth / Long Hill Estate (#00035) / 421 Wadsworth Street, Middletown
obtaining the property, the city has worked to repair the house and address other condition issues on the property. Following completion of work on the house and grounds in December 1999, the Wadsworth Mansion and Long Hill Estate was opened to the public. It now serves as a center of historical interpretation, cultural activities, and can be rented for events.

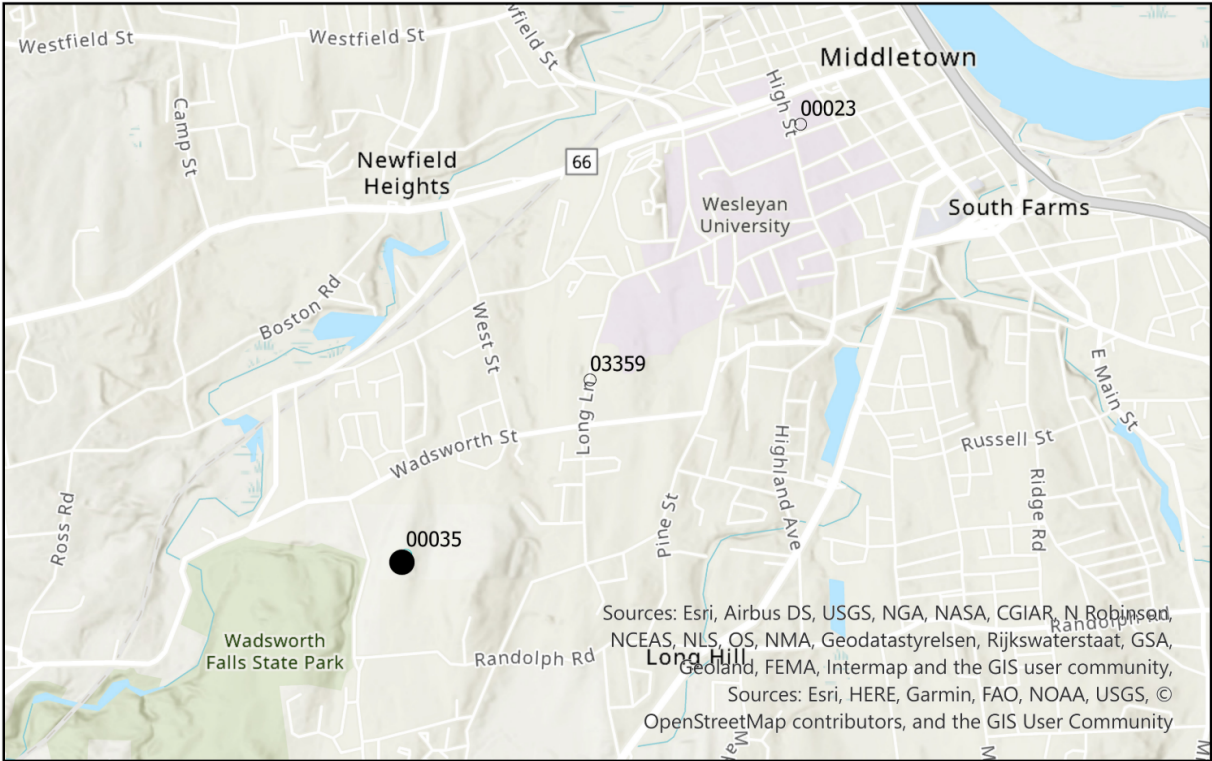
REFERENCES

Cunningham, Jan. "Long Hill." National Register of Historic Places Nomination. US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, January 19, 1996.

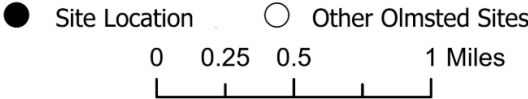
Daily, Bill. "Foundation gives grant for Long Hill estate plan." *Hartford Courant*. August 3, 1995, 47.

"Wadsworth Mansion." Available at <http://www.wadsworthmansion.com/> (accessed October 13, 2021)

GRAPHICS

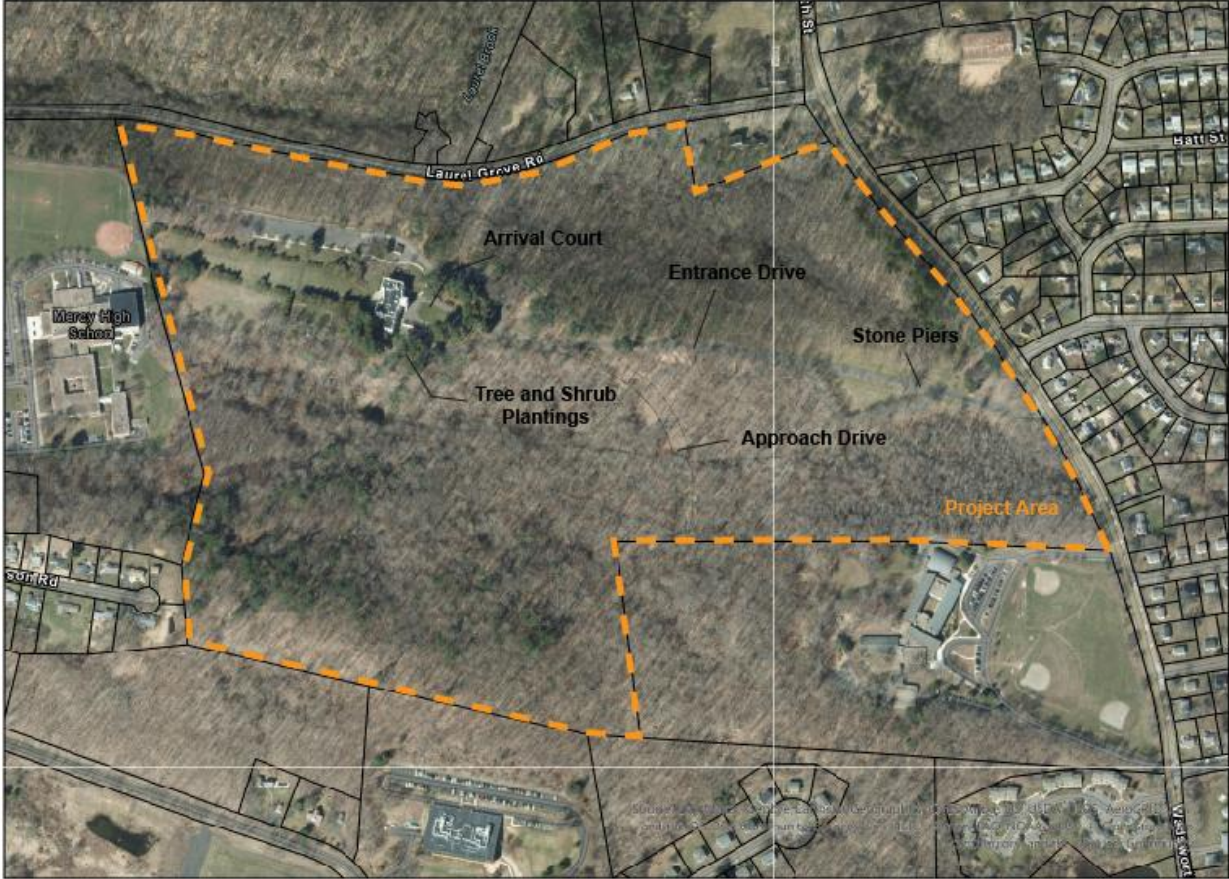


JOB: 00035 LOCATION: Middletown

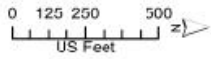


CULTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY – LANDSCAPES * OLMSTED PROJECT

CONTINUATION SHEET Wadsworth / Long Hill Estate (#00035) / 421 Wadsworth Street, Middletown

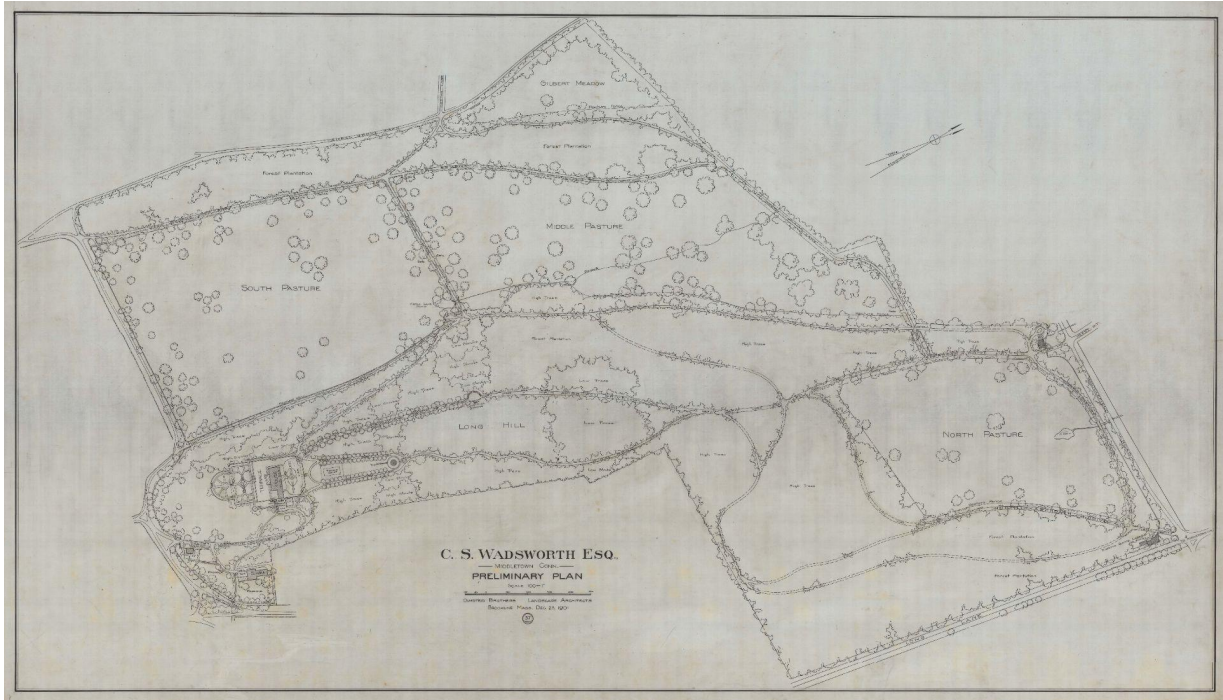


JOB: 00035 LOCATION: Middletown PROJECT: Long Hill Estate

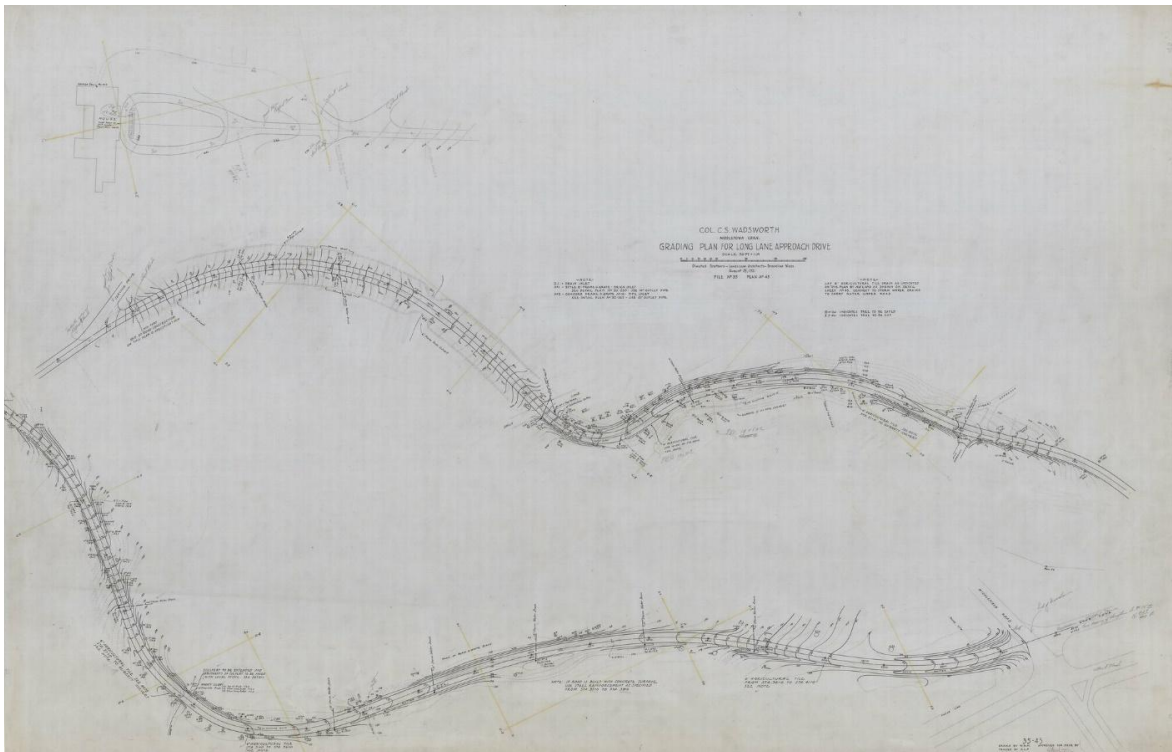


CULTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY – LANDSCAPES * OLMSTED PROJECT

CONTINUATION SHEET Wadsworth / Long Hill Estate (#00035) / 421 Wadsworth Street, Middletown



Preliminary plan for the property, 1901 Olmsted Brothers Landscape Architects. (Source: Courtesy Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site)



Grading plan for Long Lane Approach Drive, 1921, Olmsted Brothers Landscape Architects. (Source: Courtesy Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site)



Ca. 1935 view along the entrance drive showing the stone piers present today and extensive tree and shrub plantings no longer extant. (Source: uncredited)



View south along the entrance drive leading to the Wadsworth mansion from Wadsworth Street edged by stone piers. (All photographs taken by authors in 2021 unless otherwise noted)

CULTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY – LANDSCAPES * OLMSTED PROJECT

CONTINUATION SHEET Wadsworth / Long Hill Estate (#00035) / 421 Wadsworth Street, Middletown



View south of the mansion from the turnaround that terminates the entrance drive.



View southeast of a formal garden that edges the mansion to the west.



View southeast of the tennis pavilion, lawn tennis court, and rose trellis plantings near the mansion.



View northeast along the south lawn edged by evergreen tree plantings to form a vista.

CULTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY – LANDSCAPES * OLMSTED PROJECT

CONTINUATION SHEET Wadsworth / Long Hill Estate (#00035) / 421 Wadsworth Street, Middletown



View southwest across one of the contemporary parking areas near the mansion.



View northeast along the Long Lane Approach Drive trace edged by stone walls and white oak trees.



Detail of the stone wall along the Long Lane Approach Drive with a drainage outlet designed at the base to manage stormwater flow.



View northeast along the stone wall that edges the visitor parking area and an associated interpretive sign.