

**CULTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY – LANDSCAPES \* OLMSTED 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

<b>PROPERTY NAME</b> (Current/Historic) East Rock Park / East Rock Park		
<b>COUNTY</b> New Haven	<b>TOWN/CITY</b> New Haven	<b>VILLAGE</b>
<b>JOB NUMBER</b> <b>Primary:</b> 05313 <b>Related Job Numbers:</b> 03352, 05311, 05312, 05314, 05315, 05316		
<b>Landscape Type</b> <input checked="" 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 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		
<b>DATE OF ORIGINAL PROJECT:</b> 1914-1920; 1926-1931 <b>SUBSEQUENT PROJECTS:</b>		

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**DESIGNER(S) (primary)**

Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.

John Charles Olmsted

Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.

Other firm member(s): Edward Clark Whiting, F.B. Smith (photographer for many of the project album images - not mentioned in "Pioneers of Landscape Architecture")

Other notes: Whiting primarily involved at Pardee Rose Garden

Other Designers (prior to or following Olmsted project): Donald Grant Mitchell (pre-O.B.), Beatrix Farrand (post O.B.)

**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:

**Observations regarding features characteristic of Olmsted firm design**

Surviving features resulting from the Olmsted firm's design work is mostly along the Mill River Valley side of the park and include: Paths along the west side of the Mill River Valley side with access points down to river pathways at street crossings; Dam in the Mill River south of Willow Street, (nearer to State Street) to control flooding and tidal changes in the Mill River; Views and vistas from bridge crossing of the Mill River. Recommendations for the Elliptical Colonnade at the Pardee Rose Garden do not survive.

This is an important park project that Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. wrote many pages about in the 1910 Plan for New Haven. Like the Beaver Ponds Park work, the land associated with the Mill River below the East Rock was as much a "green" engineering project as it was a proposal for more park land that would complete a system around the growing city. His concern for scenic experiences were equal to his concern for the health of present and future generations.

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<b>I D E N T I F I C A T I O N</b>	<b>PROPERTY NAME</b> (Current/Historic) East Rock Park / East Rock Park (Job #05313)													
	<b>COUNTY</b> New Haven	<b>TOWN/CITY</b> New Haven	<b>VILLAGE</b>											
	<b>STREET AND NUMBER (and/or location)</b> Bounded by Davis, Orange, and Rock Streets; East Rock Road; Park Drive													
	<b>OWNER(S)</b> <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													
	<b>LAT/LONG COORDINATES</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Center Point <input type="checkbox"/> Polygon 41.321692, -72.904806													
	<b>PARCEL INFORMATION</b> <b>Acres:</b> 425 <b>PID(s):</b> 10043, 10053, 10057, 94, 10067 <b>MBLU(s):</b> 183 0443 00100, 184 0443 00200, 184 0528 00100, 2030-023-00-0000, 194 0484 00200													
	<b>USE (Present)</b> City park		<b>(Historic)</b> City park											
	<b>SURVEY TYPE</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Reconnaissance-Level <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Intensive-Level													
	<b>D E S C R I P T I O N</b>	<b>LANDSCAPE TYPE</b> (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 type="checkbox"/> Residential <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Institutional <input type="checkbox"/> Maritime <input type="checkbox"/> Green <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park- Active Recreation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park-Passive Recreation or Commemorative <input type="checkbox"/> Other – specify:												
		<b>DATE OR PERIOD</b> (Include source of date) 1914-1920; 1926-1931 (Olmsted Research Guide Online)												
<b>DESIGNERS</b> (Entities that created, designed, constructed, or shaped the landscape) Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., preceded by Donald Grant Mitchell and followed by planting done by Beatrix Farrand. Other members of the Olmsted Brothers firm include E. C. Whiting, and J. B. Smith														
<b>DESIGN SCOPE</b> (For designed landscapes, explain what work was commissioned) A comprehensive project that began with a multi-page argument in the 1910 Plan for New Haven for the area's protection from unsightly sprawl and to complete a park system around New Haven														
<b>LOCATION OF DRAWINGS/IMAGES/SOURCE MATERIAL</b> Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, Library of Congress – Olmsted Associates Resources														
<b>VISUAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY</b> (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"/> <b>Layout &amp; Spatial Relationships</b></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Water Features</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Circulation</b></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Drainage</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Topography</b></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Buildings/Structures/Objects</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Plantings/Vegetation</b></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Recreational Space</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Views &amp; Vistas</b></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other:</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Boundaries</b></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Design Style:</b></td> </tr> </table>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Layout &amp; Spatial Relationships</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Water Features</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Circulation</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Drainage</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Topography</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Buildings/Structures/Objects</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Plantings/Vegetation</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Recreational Space</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Views &amp; Vistas</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Boundaries</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Design Style:</b>
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<b>C O N D I T I O N</b>	<b>EXISTING CONDITION</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recognizable <input type="checkbox"/> Not Extant/Not Recognizable Changes: Further development of park lands		
	<b>POTENTIAL THREATS</b> <input type="checkbox"/> None Known <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure Improvements <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Onsite Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adjacent Development <input type="checkbox"/> Vandalism <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Overuse <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deferred Maintenance <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Invasive Vegetation <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental – specify: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Other – specify: _____		
<b>E N V I R O N M E N T</b>	<b>SETTING</b> (One sentence description) Park includes the land around East Rock as well as land along the Mill River in New Haven and Hamden.		
	<b>VEGETATION</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Maintained Open Land <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Natural Open Land <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Woodland/Forest <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wetland <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Specimen Plants <input type="checkbox"/> Other – specify: _____		
	<b>SLOPE</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Level/Nearly Level <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Moderate Slope <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steep Slope                      Elevation (ASML): 207-360'		
	<b>CONNECTICUT PHYSIOGRAPHIC PROVINCE (Eco-Region)</b> <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: Varied soils across this large park site.		
<b>H I S T O R Y</b>	<b>SUMMARY</b> (Provide a brief overview in this space. More detailed narrative can be attached.) East Rock was an important natural and cultural landmark in New Haven. See <i>Continuation Sheet</i>		
	<b>NATIONAL REGISTER RECOMMENDATION</b> <b>Entered by:</b> <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: Olmsted firm works needs to be added to nomination		
	NR Listed: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District-Contributing <input type="checkbox"/> District-Non-Contributing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Individual <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient Documentation		
<b>R E P O R T E D B Y</b>	<b>NAME</b> Lucy Lawliss	<b>ORGANIZATION</b> Red Bridge Group	<b>DATE</b> December 2021
	<b>ADDRESS</b> 2100 Green Street, San Francisco, CA 94123		
	<b>PHOTOGRAPHER</b> Lucy Lawliss	<b>DATE</b> September 16, 2021	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Permission to use photographs (public domain)
	<b>SURVEY METHOD</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site Visit/In-Person Walkover <input checked="" 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

CONTINUATION SHEET East Rock Park (#05313) / Bounded by Davis, Orange, and Rock Streets, East Park Road, Park Drive, New Haven

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY (Visual Assessment Summary)**

**Layout & Spatial Relationships:** The layout and spatial relationships are dominated by two prominent features: The East Rock and the Mill River and its protected valley. Roads and paths are in response to these two natural features and passive recreational opportunities dominate in the sloped and marshy areas. Where flat, well-drained land made it possible, there are several areas with active recreation including ballfields and playgrounds. A separate and important area on the east side of East Rock is the Pardee Rose Garden.

**Circulation:** The park circulation for both vehicular and pedestrian follows the terrain of the East Rock and the Mill River valley. The vehicular circulation are paved roads with most of the pedestrian circulation, particularly along the Mill River, is unpaved. A system of concrete sidewalks exists for the most part along the Mill River side of the park, but are noticeably absent along State Street, limiting access.

**Topography:** The steep topography of the East Rock defines the location and alignment of the park roads and walks as does the Mill River valley, which has more gently sloping banks along the river.

**Plantings/Vegetation:** The native vegetation of the area was reinforced by the Olmsted Brothers planting plan of 1921 and primarily concentrated along the Mill River valley section of the park.

**Views & Vistas** The two primary views and vistas are to and from the East Rock and the Soldiers and Sailors Monument at the summit, and views and vistas along the Mill River.

**Drainage:** Drainage through the tidal Mill River valley was of great concern to Olmsted Jr in the 1910 Plan for New Haven. Based on his long experience with parks in the Boston area and other coastal cities, he strongly recommended a dam at State Street, which seems to have happened to control the trash and debris that would come into the area with every high tide. This “green” engineering was an aspect of the Olmsted’s firm work that still needs to be fully understood and has long gone unappreciated, both the work of the Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. generation, as well as that of the sons.

**Buildings/Structures/Objects:** The National Register nomination does a good job of summing up the number and condition for the historic buildings and objects.

**Recreational Space:** On the very few flat, well drained parcels associated with the park, there are a number of active recreation spaces that have largely been developed post-Olmsted’s work.

**HISTORICAL NARRATIVE**

A 1997 National Register of Historic Places district nomination was done for East Rock Park recognizing the contributions of Donald Grant Mitchell, Olmsted Brothers, and Beatrix Farrand. To quote from the nomination’s history:

A group of prominent citizens, including President Noah Porter of Yale College, Simeon Baldwin, Donald Grant Mitchell, and Henry T. Blake, led the effort to establish the park. Yale and several other landowners donated property, and with considerable encouragement the city acquired East Rock through eminent domain. Because of widespread public concern about the city’s ability to own and manage the park, the Connecticut General Assembly chartered the East Rock Park Commission in 1880 to hold the land as an independent, non-political entity, but in 1889 the commission was reconstituted as the New Haven Commission of Public Parks. Acquisition of park land continued until the 1930s, when East Rock Park reached its present size.

The park commission implemented plans prepared by Donald Grant Mitchell. His designs focused on East Rock itself. Within about ten years, most of the road system was in place, with sections named

**CONTINUATION SHEET East Rock Park (#05313) / Bounded by Davis, Orange, and Rock Streets, East Park Road, Park Drive, New Haven**

after donors who included some of the city's most influential citizens. The earliest road, Farnam Drive, dates from 1884. Erection of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument in 1887 was the culmination of a widespread desire to mark the summit of East Rock appropriately and honor war dead. Further improvements and changes have occurred over time.

Olmsted Brothers' plans in the 1920s resulted in modifications to the course of Mill River and the creation of the playing fields at Rice Field (1921) and Blake Field (1933). The Pardee Rose Garden, a gift of William S. Pardee, dates from 1922. More recent improvements include the Ralph Walker Hockey Rink (ca.1978) in Blake Field and the ca.1976 redesign of College Woods to offer a park ranger station and new playground facilities. The city has reclaimed some park land for other purposes. In 1956 the city took 33.5 acres at the corner of Orange Street and Mitchell Drive for construction of Wilbur Cross High School. Other land along Mitchell Drive subsequently was filled for parking lots serving adjacent factories. A serious threat to park integrity occurred in the 1960s, when the State of Connecticut planned to build a highway connector through the park along Mill River. Citizen protests, which included 1964 legal action by the "Save Our Park Committee" against the state highway commissioner, stopped the plans, although the park did lose 7.6 acres for Interstate 91.

The only thing to be added to this nomination's history are the important related discussion made by Olmsted Jr. about East Rock Park and Mill River in the 1910 Plan for New Haven and that this park was one of six park projects that came out of that Plan and Report.

Another project in this job file is the consultation of Olmsted Brothers on the East Rock Rose Garden (today known as the Pardee Rose Garden) on the east side of East Rock Park. Edward Clark Whiting was asked to come and visit an existing rose garden—donated by William S. Pardee, a New Haven lawyer and businessman, in honor of his mother—that according to Whiting's site visit report of November 23, 1926, had been "laid out on a sloping plane." The visit's conclusion was for the City to send a more detailed base map of existing conditions and Whiting would sketch up several options and "submit with a report covering our [Olmsted Brothers] recommendations."

A letter to Mr. Thomas Woolsey, President of the Park Commission, on January 13, 1927, has Whiting apologizing for his slowness and encloses "under separate cover blueprints of two plans and three watercolor sketches" to address what Whiting writes "just missed being one thing or another" and offers that the "central accent" be either a "simple roofed temple appreciably smaller in plan than the scheme you were considering; or it should be a series of columns or other architectural objects placed around the edge of a fair sized open space forming the heart of center of the rose garden." Whiting prefers the latter solution and explains that the temple is too formal for a "garden scheme which, though formal in plan, is quite free in its relation to grades and to adjacent elements of the landscape." By August, Whiting has received a letter from Woolsey that they "have adopted the idea of detached columns linked together by chains and set about an oval space in the center of the 'East Rock' rose garden." From the correspondence and drawing files, the columns were installed, and the garden upgraded with Whiting's suggestions, but according to the [www.ctexplored.org](http://www.ctexplored.org) website "the rose garden was redesigned and simplified in the 1970s and a central feature was removed.

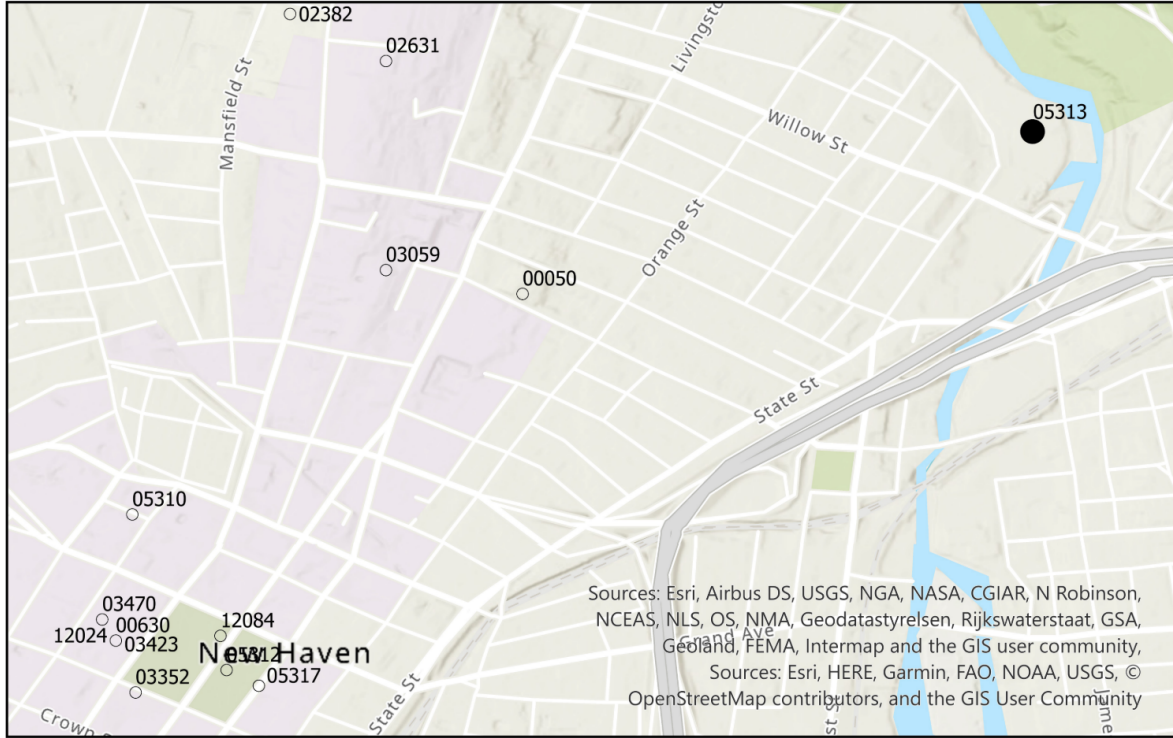
**REFERENCES**

National Register of Historic Places District nomination: East Rock Park. 1997.

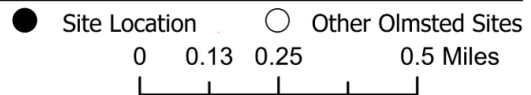
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**GRAPHICS**

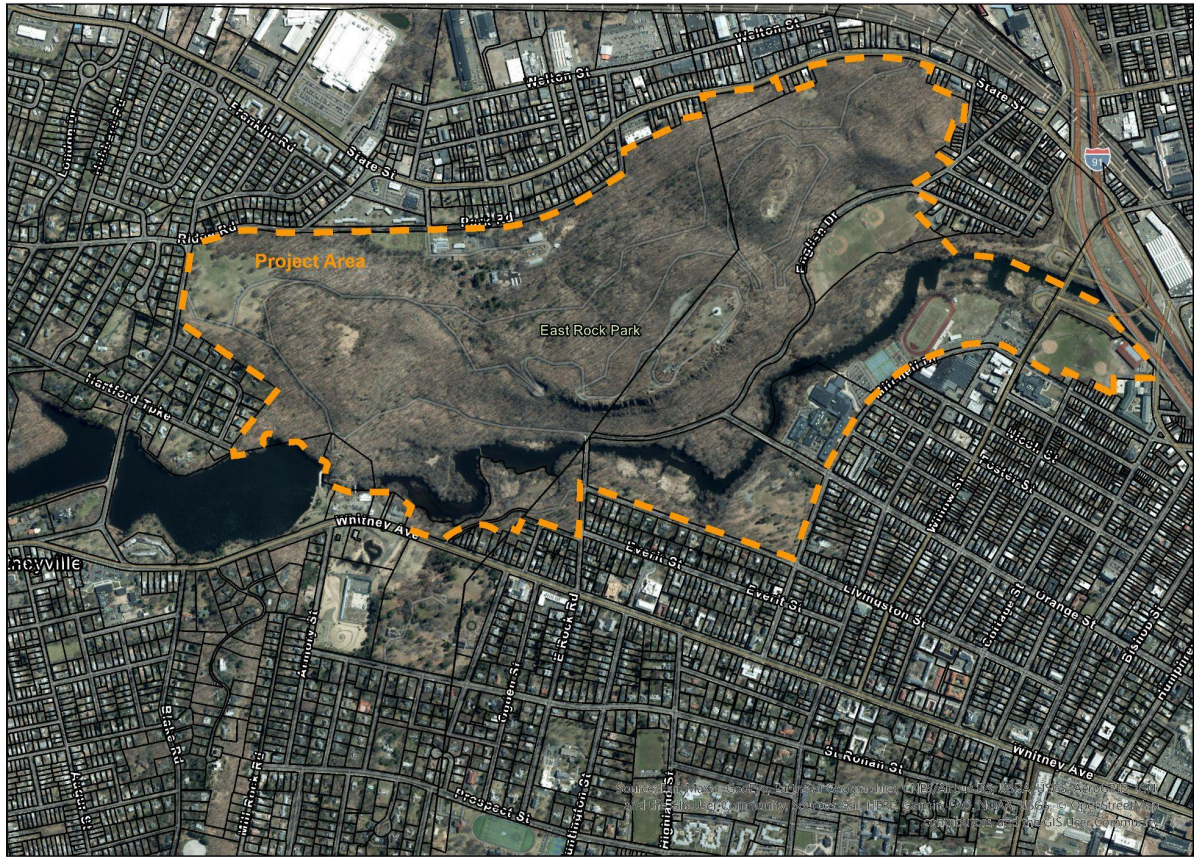


JOB: 5313 LOCATION: New Haven

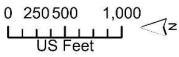


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JOB: 05313    LOCATION: New Haven    PROJECT: East Rock Park



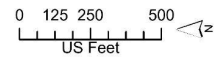


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JOB: 05313 LOCATION: New Haven PROJECT: East Rock Park North

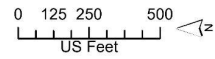


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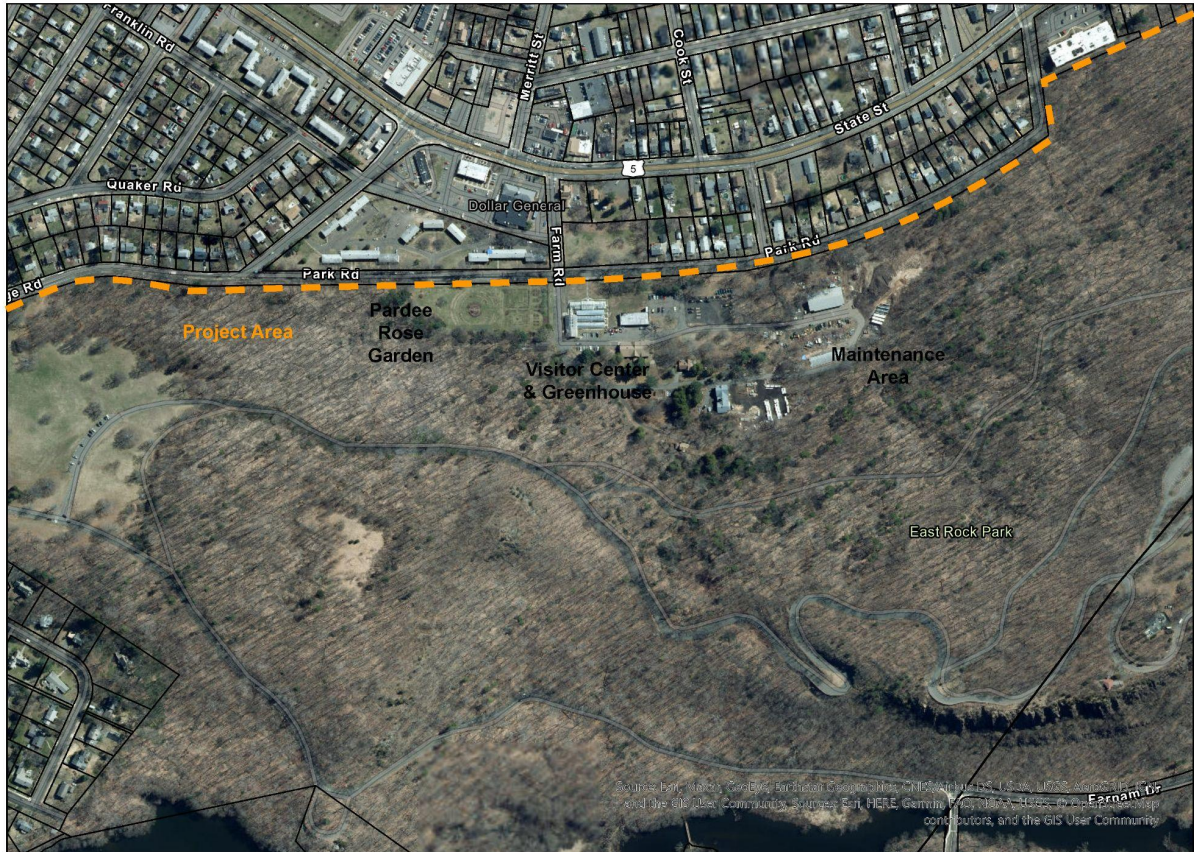


JOB: 05313    LOCATION: New Haven    PROJECT: East Rock Park South

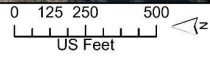


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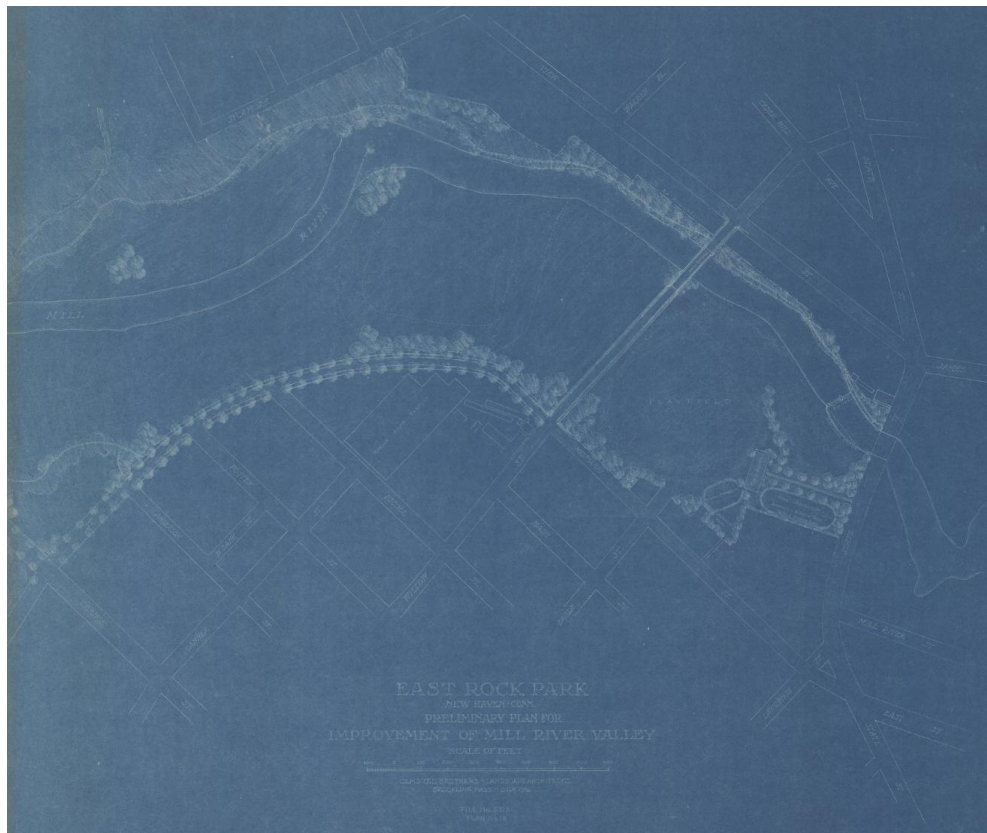
JOB: 05313 LOCATION: New Haven PROJECT: East Rock Park North



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Plan of East Rock Park, unattributed, undated. (Source: courtesy Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site)



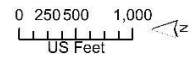
East Rock Park, Preliminary Plan for Improvements of Mill River Valley, 1916, Olmsted Brothers Landscape Architects. (Source: courtesy Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site)

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JOB: 05313 LOCATION: New Haven PROJECT: East Rock Park



Contemporary aerial photograph overlaid with historic plans of East Rock Park. (Source: Kevan Klosterwill)

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View looking northeast from a bridge above Mill River to East Rock.



View of the underside of a picturesque bridge over the Mill River.

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View looking northwest along a pedestrian trail along the Mill River.



View looking northwest along the Mill River.

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View along the pedestrian path along the Mill River.



View into East Rock Park Road at Park Entrance at Whitney Avenue.



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Pedestrian entrance to East Rock Park's Pardee Rose Garden.



View looking south at Pardee Rose Garden sign and glass house.

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View looking north into Pardee Rose Garden from entrance road.

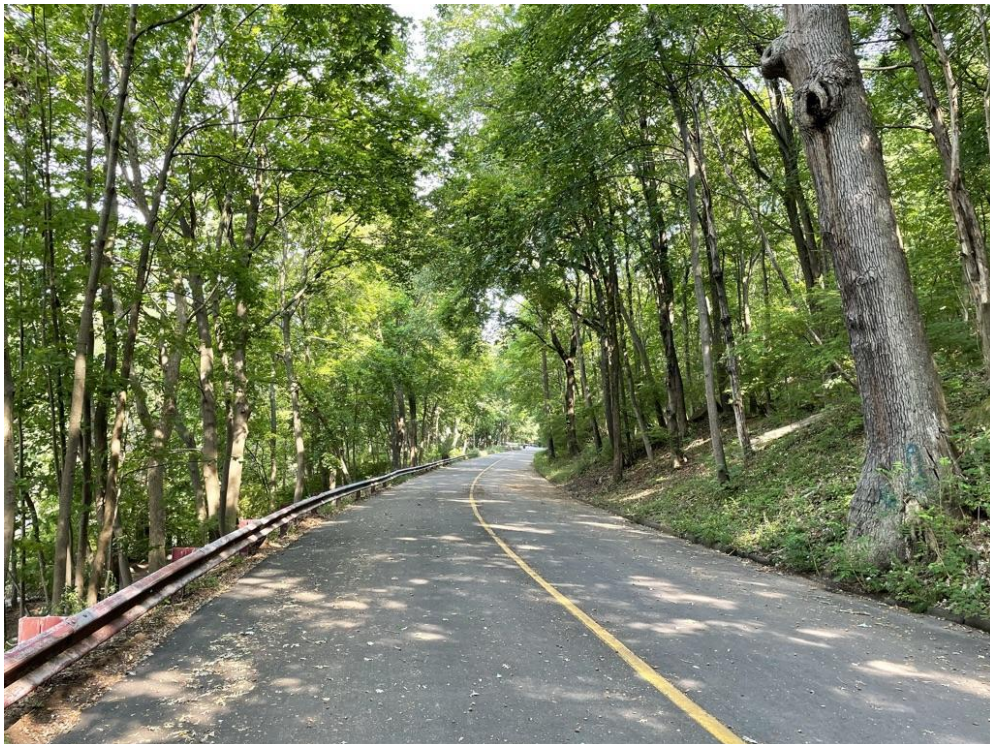


View looking south into the Pardee Rose Garden maintenance area.

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View looking west into park entrance road from State Street.



Characteristic view looking west along an East Rock Park, park road.

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View looking north to the State Street dam that Olmsted Jr. proposed as a way to control the water of the tidal Mill River.