

**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) Beaver Ponds Park / Beaver Ponds		
<b>COUNTY</b> New Haven	<b>TOWN/CITY</b> New Haven	<b>VILLAGE</b>
<b>JOB NUMBER</b> <b>Primary:</b> 05314 <b>Related Job Numbers:</b> #03352, 05311, 05312, 05313, 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> 1917-1921 <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, J. B. Smith (status with firm unknown)
- ☐ Other notes:

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:

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

Surviving features resulting from the Olmsted firm's design work include: General establishment of a park in this location using the "Beaver Ponds" as an organizing feature; Vehicular and pedestrian circulation, particularly Fournier Street; Active recreation (track and basketball courts) proposed for what is not De Gale Field, which is laid out for baseball/softball fields; Views and vistas from Fournier Street at Bassett and Willis Streets to the West Rock.

Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.'s observations of the area, as he wrote in the 1910 *Plan for New Haven* (Plan and Report), contrasted with what others saw as a "wretched, dirty, hopeless boghole." Olmsted saw the area as far from "hopeless" and thought it could be improved in a "thorough and systematic way." And that is what Olmsted and Whiting proceeded to do as one of many park plans completed for the city of New Haven in association with the Plan and Report. They helped to establish the original boundaries of the park, which went as far south as Goffe Street and took in an active recreation area with ballfields and tennis courts that is now called DeGale Field and Wexler Triangle. Other separate projects that have since taken Beaver Ponds Park land away from the original concept are Hillhouse High School, Bowen

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Field, Southern Connecticut State University, King-Robinson Inter-District Magnet School, and New Haven Animal Shelter. Despite these changes, there is a park that reflects the “thorough and systematic” thinking and planning that is characteristic of Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.’s work and that of the firm under his direction.

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I D E N T I F I C A T I O N	<b>PROPERTY NAME</b> (Current/Historic) Beaver Ponds Park / Beaver Ponds – Playground (Job #05314)		
	<b>COUNTY</b> New Haven	<b>TOWN/CITY</b> New Haven	<b>VILLAGE</b>
	<b>STREET AND NUMBER (and/or location)</b> Crescent and Fournier Streets		
	<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 41.328442, -72.939896		
	<b>PARCEL INFORMATION</b> <b>Acres:</b> 103.2 <b>PID(s):</b> 20849, 20852 <b>MBLU(s):</b> 322 0389 00100, 323 0429 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>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:		
	D E S C R I P T I O N	<b>DATE OR PERIOD</b> (Include source of date) 1917-1924 (Olmsted Research Guide Online)	
<b>DESIGNERS</b> (Entities that created, designed, constructed, or shaped the landscape) Olmsted Brothers Landscape Architects			
<b>DESIGN SCOPE</b> (For designed landscapes, explain what work was commissioned) Layout and development of Beaver Ponds Park is the result of a discussion of the area in Olmsted and Gilbert 1910 plan for the City of New Haven. The plan included an area south to Goffe Street			
<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.)  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 48%;"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Layout &amp; Spatial Relationships</b>  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Circulation</b>  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Topography</b>  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Plantings/Vegetation</b>  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Views &amp; Vistas</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Boundaries</b> </div> <div style="width: 48%;"> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Water Features</b>  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Drainage</b>  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Buildings/Structures/Objects</b>  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Recreational Space</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other:</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Design Style:</b> </div> </div>			

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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: Many areas of the park have been taken for schools and other facilities		
	<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 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) Beaver Ponds Park is northwest of the city, in a low area not far from West Rock Ridge State Park		
	<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 type="checkbox"/> Level/Nearly Level <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Moderate Slope <input type="checkbox"/> Steep Slope    Elevation (ASML): 25'		
	<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: Site dominated by Udorthents, Catden and Freetown, and Penwood soils, with varied drainage.		
<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.) Beaver Ponds Park was an area discussed in the 1910 Plan for New Haven. See <i>Continuation Sheet</i>		
	<b>NATIONAL REGISTER RECOMMENDATION</b> Entered by: Lucy Lawliss <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recommended Eligible (Criterion <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D) <input type="checkbox"/> Not Eligible <input type="checkbox"/> Not Evaluated Explanation: NR Listed: <input type="checkbox"/> District-Contributing <input type="checkbox"/> District-Non-Contributing <input type="checkbox"/> Individual <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient Documentation		
<b>R E P O R T E R I N F O R M A T I O N</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, California 94123		
	<b>PHOTOGRAPHER</b> Lucy Lawliss	<b>DATE</b> September 13, 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 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

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

**Layout & Spatial Relationships:** Beaver Ponds Park was created out of several parcels in an area the Olmsted was asked to look at in the 1910 Plan for New Haven. In addition to the original 93.3 acre park, the Plan called for a Beaver Brook Parkway to connect West River Parkway and West Rock Park (now West Rock Ridge State Park). The parkway was not part of this park work. The land was being purchased by 1910 and the Plan calls for boundary roads, soon to be under construction, to be pushed away from the ponds to allow for naturalistic slopes to be graded between the park ponds and the roads. The 1910 plans feature illustrations of the Muddy River grading between Boston and Brookline that had been accomplished in the development of the system of parks in Boston that was as much environmental engineering as it was park work. The similar unhealthy conditions at the Beaver Ponds Park, referred to by locals as “dirty and boggy” had many of the same issues and they were ones that the firm had dealt with in the past.

The Olmsted file includes a photograph album of the landscape in 1917 taken by Edward Clark Whiting and they give a wonderful picture of how open, and agricultural the landscape was at the time.

The city purchased land on both sides of the Beaver Ponds complex of water, wetlands, and sloping land up to Sherman. It is interesting to see in the park correspondence and plans that the limits of Beaver Ponds Park extended as far south to take in what is today De Gale Field—which Olmsted Brothers illustrate with ballfields by 1917.

**Circulation:** The Beaver Pond Park circulation has been greatly altered if it ever existed. Fournier Street did not exit directly onto Crescent Street but split at a triangular island and came into Crescent Street at two locations, proposing a well planted border between the park circulation and the boundary streets. The southbound piece of this proposed park road would seem to exist as the today’s park entrance at Fournier Street just east of its intersection with Crescent. The Sherman Avenue edge of the park would seem to exist as planned with the exception of a park entrance road that curves into the park south of Barrett Street. This area is not the passive park as planned but has two ball fields that are accessed from the higher Sherman Avenue side of the park as well as a police station with parking that exists in this area off Sherman Avenue.

The north end of the park on both sides of the pond exhibit the greatest amount of circulation change with park roads being eliminated as a result of the development of Southern Connecticut State University on the north west side of the park and the magnet school on the northeast side.

**Topography:** The low areas around the park were improved and planted and provide the park feel intended by the plan. A steep bank follows Sherman Avenue and there is not visual or physical access to the park from this side.

**Plantings/Vegetation:** Extensive planting is proposed in association with park road development and in general the park is in wooded cover except for areas that are kept open with active recreation ballfields.

**Views & Vistas** The distant views and vistas were to the West Rock, which is a prominent feature on the northwest side of New Haven. Some of these views are still possible from fields near the magnet school in the northeast region of the park. Although limited, there are several places to get views of the beaver ponds that give the park its name, but none survive along Sherman Avenue and only a few places are kept open along Fournier Street and along the park entrance road that starts on the south side of Fournier Street.

**Drainage:** The low, boggy area associated with the beaver ponds is where much of storm water runoff in the area goes, although the dense vegetated edge would help slow the water down before it reaches the ponds. There was no evidence of erosion on any of the surveyed area banks.

## CONTINUATION SHEET Beaver Pond(s) Park (#05314) / Crescent and Fournier Streets, New Haven

**Buildings/Structures/Objects:** The primary structures at the park are associated with the Bowen Field and it would seem the original stables are incorporated into that maintenance complex. A sketch of an arched bridge crossing the beaver ponds is in the park file and would seem to match a bridge at Fournier Street, although its location is not identified on the plan.

**Recreational Space:** There are scattered recreation areas around the park, and it was interesting to see from the plans that De Gale Field was once part of the larger Beaver Ponds Park. The Bowen Field complex of practice fields, a track and stands, although on former park lands, would seem to be a separately managed city park. There are also a couple of baseball fields accessed from Sherman Avenue on the east side of the park, and a rugby field and ballfield in the northwest corner of the park. It would appear that few, if any, of the original open meadow survive as passive recreation areas.

**HISTORICAL NARRATIVE**

Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.'s observations of the area, as he wrote in the 1910 *Plan for New Haven* (Plan and Report), contrasted with what others saw as a "wretched, dirty, hopeless boghole." Olmsted saw the area as far from "hopeless" and thought it could be improved in a "thorough and systematic way." And that is what Olmsted and Whiting proceeded to do as one of many park plans completed for the city of New Haven in association with the Plan and Report. They helped to establish the original boundaries of the park, which was as far south as Goffe Street and took in an active recreation area with ballfields and tennis courts that is now called De Gale Field and Wexler Triangle.

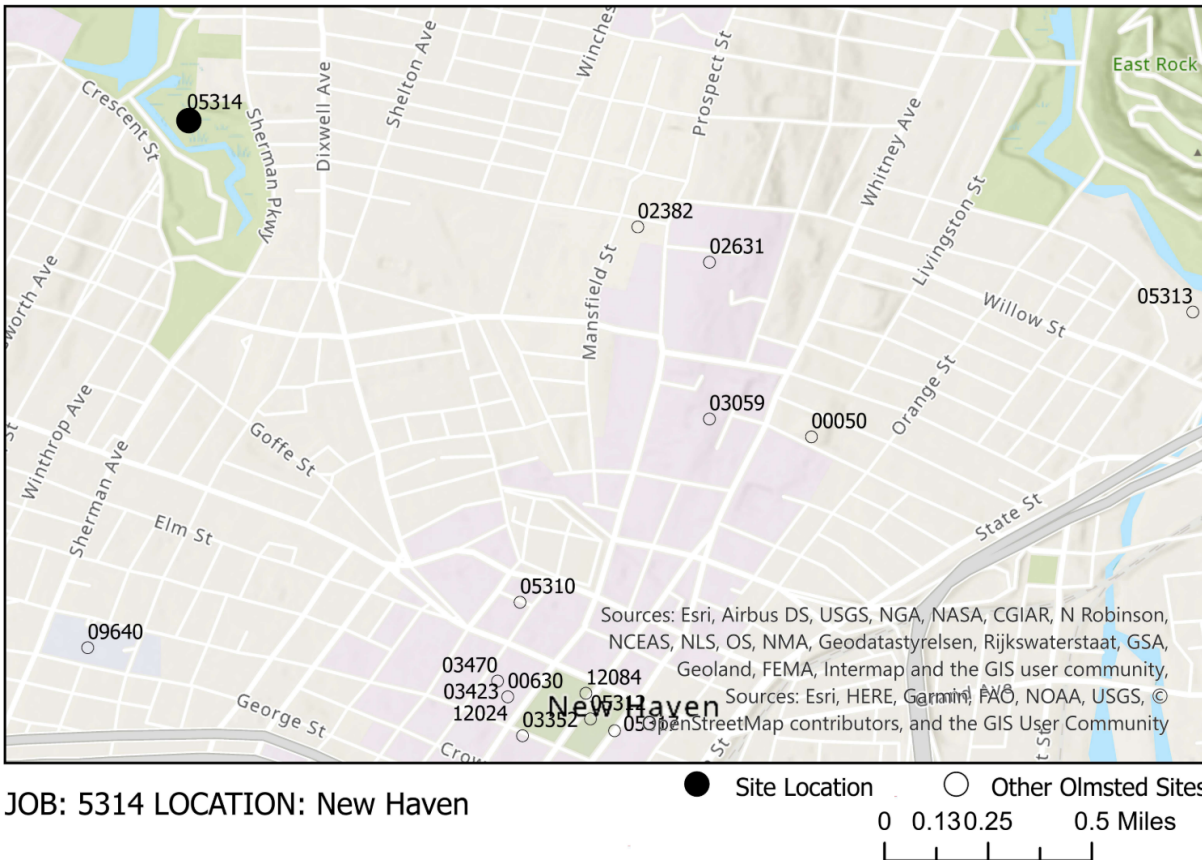
From the correspondence, Olmsted Brothers is asked to assist in developing the boundaries of Beaver Ponds Park (the original "s" at the end of Ponds seems to have been dropped at some point, but it was also found to be used by the Urban Resources Initiative as recently as 2020) with an immediate need to set a boundary and to locate stables. The master plan for the park shows the stables in the approximate location of the Bowen Field complex and would seem to be incorporated into the building group at Crescent St.

In addition to the Bowen Field complex, which took land for a track, stands, practice fields and parking, the park lost land to Hillhouse High School, Southern Connecticut State University, King-Robinson Inter-District Magnet School, and New Haven Animal Shelter. Despite these takings and changes, there is still a park that reflects the "thorough and systematic" thinking and planning that is characteristic of Olmsted Jr and the firm under his direction. Fournier Street appears to have been part of the park design and still exists and there are still places in the park to enjoy views and vistas of the ponds and the distant West Rock, which is now incorporated in West Rock Ridge State Park.

## CULTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY – LANDSCAPES \* OLMSTED PROJECT

CONTINUATION SHEET Beaver Pond(s) Park (#05314) / Crescent and Fournier Streets, New Haven

### GRAPHICS





# CULTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY – LANDSCAPES \* OLMSTED PROJECT

CONTINUATION SHEET Beaver Pond(s) Park (#05314) / Crescent and Fournier Streets, New Haven

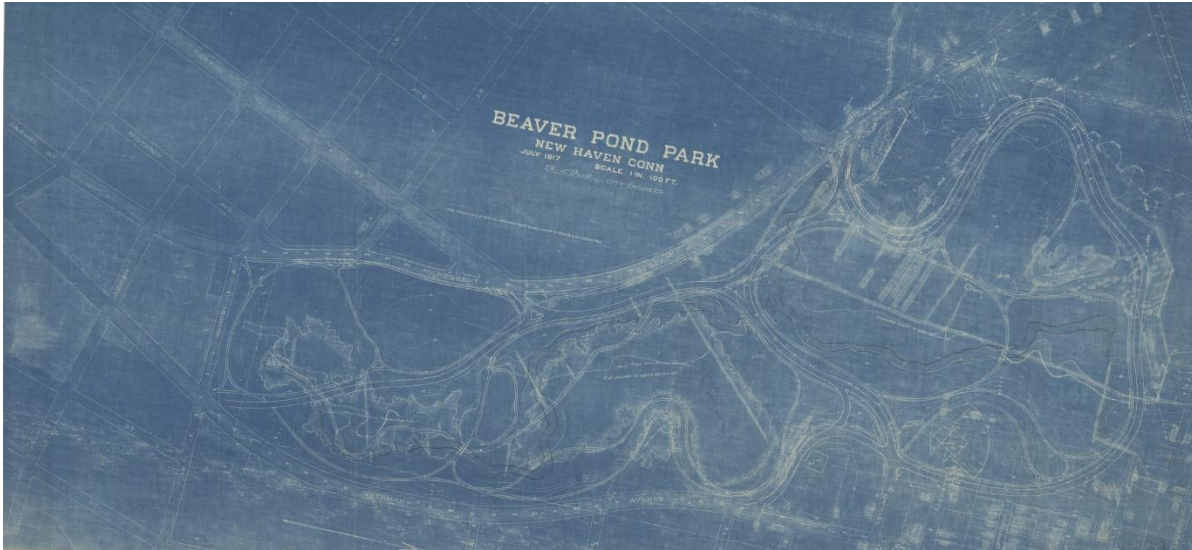


JOB: 05314 LOCATION: New Haven PROJECT: Beaver Pond Park

0 125 250 500  
US Feet



CONTINUATION SHEET Beaver Pond(s) Park (#05314) / Crescent and Fournier Streets, New Haven



Beaver Pond Park, New Haven City Engineer, 1917. (Source: courtesy Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site)



Beaver Pond Park, Rough Study Mainly for Planting Masses, 1921, Olmsted Brothers Landscape Architects. (Source: courtesy Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site)

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CONTINUATION SHEET Beaver Pond(s) Park (#05314) / Crescent and Fournier Streets, New Haven



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0 125 250 500  
US Feet

Overlay of historic plan on a contemporary aerial photograph. (Source: Kevan Klosterwill)





View looking west to West Rock from just below Fournier Street. (All photographs taken by the author in 2021 unless otherwise noted)



View looking north across open field from Fournier and Willis Streets with magnet school in the distance.



**CONTINUATION SHEET Beaver Pond(s) Park (#05314) / Crescent and Fournier Streets, New Haven**



View looking southeast into existing “entrance” to park with park sign. This is also the area in which the Friends of Beaver Ponds Park seem to be working as volunteers.



View looking across pond from Beaver Ponds Park entry road from Fournier.





View looking south into back area of Bowen Field complex. Beaver Ponds Park entry road ends at this fence/gate. Soccer/football field, track, and other active recreation facilities exist near Bowen Field.



Bowen Field complex maintenance/entrance facilities at Crescent Street. Part of this complex was the location of the historic stables – first building to be added to Beaver Ponds Park.





Ballfields, path, mature trees are all part of what today is known as De Gale Field, at Goffe Street and Sherman Avenue. This area was an active recreation zone originally laid out at the south end Beaver Ponds Park by Olmsted Brothers.



Another view looking west to beaver pond from Fournier Street.