

PH0011771

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	
COUNTY:	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
APR 11 1973	

1. NAME

COMMON:
National Zoological Park

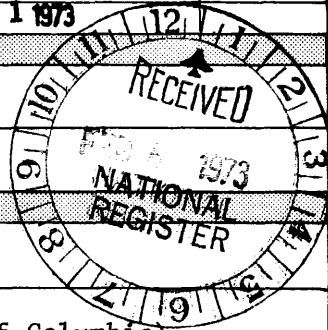
AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
Main Entrance, 3000 Block of Connecticut Avenue, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN:
Washington (Congressman Walter E. Fauntroy, District of Columbia)

STATE: District of Columbia CODE: 11 COUNTY: District of Columbia CODE: 001



3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) ZOO
Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No			

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
United States of America (Jurisdiction, Smithsonian Institution)

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
Recorder of Deeds

STREET AND NUMBER:
6th and D Streets, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:
Washington District of Columbia 11

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Proposed District of Columbia Additions to the National Register of Historic Properties Recommended by the Joint Committee on Landmarks

DATE OF SURVEY: March 7, 1968 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
National Capital Planning Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:
1325 G Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:
Washington District of Columbia 11

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The National Zoological Park was established by an Act of Congress in 1889, and 166.3 acres were subsequently purchased. By 1900 the Zoo's size had increased to "about 170 acres" due to three successive additions on the park's southwestern edge bordering Cathedral Avenue. In fiscal 1921, the park acquired a long coveted 5-2/3 acre section of land in the present Connecticut Avenue entrance area, and in 1923 it purchased another 8,000 feet to protect the Adams Mill Road entrance. The next and most recent major boundary change was a loss of about ten acres in 1966 for Beach Drive. However, the deed for this land has not been changed, so officially the park's acreage remains 175 acres, although its real present size is 165 acres (see accompanying map for park boundaries).

The present Zoo site was chosen because of its picturesque character--its rugged terrain with numerous hills, and its location in Rock Creek Valley. While over the last half century many structures have been erected which impinge upon the landscape, the area still retains its rugged and green magnificence and the alternating views from the valleys and hills provide great visual excitement. The exhibition area is located in the northern half of the park and the southern portion is lightly built upon.

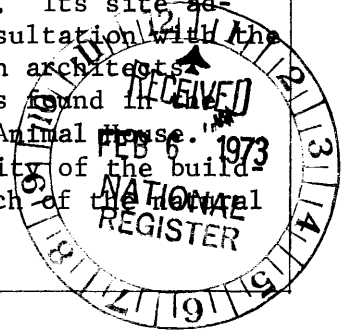
Due to a lack of sufficient funds, the need for easy accessibility from the sparsely developed surrounding area, and the rugged nature of the terrain, the initial Olmsted plan centered development in the relatively flat area of the northeastern portion of the park where the lion house now stands. As Olmsted's instruction stated that funds were not available for a detailed comprehensive plan, but that the initial construction should as much as possible fit into a "consistent scheme for the future," one cannot state with certainty that this single concentration of exhibition buildings was the ultimate ideal of the Olmsted firm in the 1890s. However, the firm did urge in 1892 that "the hardy grazing animals particularly should have the most ample possible paddocks," and the early Olmsted plan did call for extensive pastures on the upper valleys on the Connecticut Avenue side of the park. The thesis that the original concentration of buildings was intended to be a permanent element in the park's design is reinforced by the layout in the Zoo master plan by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., at the turn of the century. In this plan the centralizing of the main exhibition buildings in the area of the existing buildings is retained.

The lion house (initially known as the "Principal Animal House" and later the "Carnivora" house) was the first major building in the Zoo, completed in 1892 from a design by W.R. Emerson of Boston, Massachusetts. The next permanent building constructed was a 35' by 65' brick elephant house, completed in 1903 and demolished in 1938. The original plans for this building had to be altered due to a lack of money.

The final exhibition building constructed in this early period was the present monkey house (then known as the "New Mammal House"). Its site adjoining the "Principal Animal House" was selected after consultation with the Olmsted firm. Completed in 1906 from a design by Washington architects Hornblower & Marshall, it was built of "the same gray gneiss found in the region of Rock Creek Park" that was used in the "Principal Animal House." The use of this indigenous building material and the proximity of the buildings indicate the aim of the Olmsted plan to preserve as much of the original

(Continued on Form 10-300a)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



6. SIGNIFICANCE

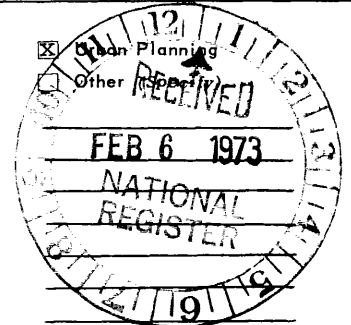
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian | 16th Century | 18th Century | 20th Century
 15th Century | 17th Century | 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1889 established

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Science |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | |



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Joint Committee on Landmarks has designated the National Zoological Park a Category II landmark of importance which contributes significantly to the cultural heritage and visual beauty of the District of Columbia. The Zoo was planned by F.L. Olmsted & Co., the most important landscape architectural firm in history, and its location in the spacious and picturesque Rock Creek Valley marked an important departure from the nineteenth century practice of confining zoological collections to limited areas. The Zoo was an integral part of the Olmsted firm's other Washington efforts--the design of the Capitol grounds, the 1901 McMillan Commission Plan, and the street extension plan for the area surrounding the Zoo. In addition to its important place in the history of physical design, major scientific investigations, such as S.P. Langley's experiments in aerodynamics, are also a significant part of the Zoo's history.

The Rock Creek area was chosen as the site of the zoological collection because of its natural beauty, and the Olmsted firm's plan with its curving path system respected the area's natural grandeur. The history of the design of zoos has barely begun to be written; consequently, a definitive statement on the National Zoological Park's place in the history of zoo design is not yet possible. However, the National Zoo did precede the founding of the New York Zoological Park and Munich's Hellabrun Zoo, and thus may have been the first major zoo in its own spacious, landscaped setting.

While the National Zoo's enclosures did not incorporate the revolutionary design of Carl Hagenback's 1907 moat and pit barriers (instead of bars and fences), its 1890's unsuccessful attempt to locate the bear dens in a natural rock quarry and its successful location of beavers in a creek tributary where they could engage in their natural activity of building dams marked a significant departure from the nineteenth century menagerie mentality. Previous zoo enclosures had stressed the architectural grandeur of the cages and had ignored the animals' needs. This attempt at utilizing, not just preserving, the natural landscape was repeated in other animal enclosures and was a guiding principal in the early years of the National Zoo's existence.

The impetus for this new design orientation probably came from the unique aim of the National Zoological Park; it was created primarily not for the entertainment of people, but for the preservation of endangered animals indigenous to the United States. The United States, according to zoo historian James Fisher, had earned the distinction of being the first nation to assume "responsibility for wild nature" by establishing Yellowstone Park as a wild-life preserve in 1871, and the National Zoo was intended from its inception

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Fisher, James. Zoos of the World. Aldus Books. London. 1966.
 Hancocks, David. Animals and Architecture, Praeger Publishers. New York 1971.
Olmsted Associates Papers. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division.
 Smithsonian Institution. Annual Reports, 1888-1970
National Zoological Papers, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

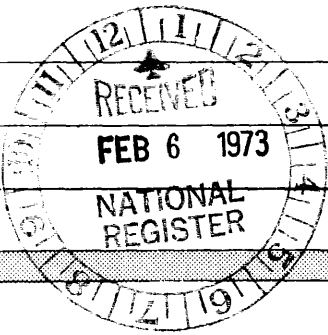
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	LATITUDE				LONGITUDE				
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	38°	55'	55"	77°	03'	24"			
NE	38°	56'	06"	77°	02'	53"			
SE	38°	55'	32"	77°	02'	32"			
SW	38°	55'	21"	77°	03'	03"			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **165 acres**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Leonard H. Gerson, Urban Historian
 ORGANIZATION: **National Capital Planning Commission** DATE: **June 20, 1972**
 STREET AND NUMBER:
1325 G Street, N.W.
 CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE: **District of Columbia** CODE: **11**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION **NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

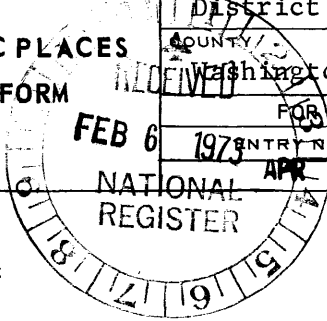
As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:
 National State Local
 Name: *Leonard H. Gerson*
 Title: Deputy Mayor-Commissioner
 Date: _____

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.
Robert M. Utley
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
 Date: 4/11/73
 ATTEST:
Wm. J. Buckley
 Keeper of The National Register
 Date: 4-3-73

10-76-200
 18/382920/4310000
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COUNTY Washington	
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7. Description - National Zoological Park

landscape as possible. The design of the present monkey house is also distinctive because of the use of natural light from a glass roof to illuminate the cages, an idea that Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., got on his European tour.

The Zoo's administration has always been located in its present building, Holt House. This building, designated a Category II landmark by the Joint Committee on Landmarks, stood on the property when the Zoo was established and was renovated in the 1890's to serve its new purpose. Its architecture was praised by the Olmsted firm in 1903 as "an example of a style in which the surface of the roof is not an important feature, which is well identified with the locality, which is economical of construction, and which can be made very agreeable in a quiet, refined way, not clashing with its surroundings or unduly striking the attention."

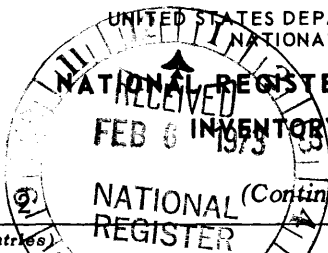
The above few buildings were not capable of housing the Zoo's growing population which by 1910 had reached 1,424 specimens, and temporary exhibition halls had to be built; however, due to a lack of capital improvement funds these temporary structures often became permanent fixtures, such as the antelope house which was built in 1898 and not torn down until 1968. While this lack of indoor exhibition space greatly distressed the Zoo officials, it did result in limiting the Zoo's built-up area; and thus the natural beauty of the site was preserved.

The Smithsonian-Chrysler Expedition in the mid 1920's increased the size of the Zoo's collection by almost 1/3 and obviously provided the impetus for new Congressional appropriations--\$49,000 for a new bird house which was opened in 1928, \$220,000 for the present reptile house which was opened in 1931. The initial plan for the bird house was done by Howland Russell, and completed by the District's municipal architect A.L. Harris; Harris probably also designed the reptile house.

Public spending in the Depression era led to the greatest capital improvements program in the Zoo's history. Under the direction of zoo architectural consultant, Edwin H. Clarke, the Public Works Administration completed the present small mammal house, an addition to the bird house, most of the present elephant house and other construction projects in 1937. The present zoo restaurant, completed in 1940, was the last of the zoo's W.P.A. projects.

While considerable effort went into the design of the bird and reptile houses, there is no discussion in the annual zoo reports of how the overall layout of the park was being altered by the building program in the late 20's and 30's. The Olmsted plans (those of the 90's and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr's plan of the early 20th century) had concentrated the zoo's exhibition halls in the northeastern section of the Zoo, but this later construction eliminated the zoo's former centralized design and created a weak linear pattern in the whole northern section. A suggested centralized layout by W. Levandowski (dated 1930) can be found in the microfilm files of the National Capital Planning Commission, but no mention of it is made in the annual zoo reports. It is fortunate that the Levandowski plan was ignored, for its baroque style clashes terribly with the site's hilly terrain.

(Continued on Form 10-300a)



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In the Zoo's next building program in the 1960's this linear pattern was extended to the Connecticut Avenue entrance with the building of the delicate hoofed houses, the hardy hoofed stock complex, and the great flight cage, which won a citation for excellence from the American Iron and Steel Institute. While this section had been used for exhibiting animals for many years, it had been an area dominated by paddocks for deer, goats, etc., and thus was relatively open. Today, the only exhibition area of the Zoo where one gets a sense of the natural environment is the path leading from the bird house to the seal pond, and occasional views from other locations. The 1960's, however, did see a major improvement in the natural landscape due to the elimination of autos running through the center of the park and the moving of Rock Creek Parkway to the zoo's perimeter with a connecting tunnel under Holt House.

A new Zoo master plan, done in the early 1960's, did not meet with the approval of the Fine Arts Commission and a new plan is now being completed. This plan proposes that the exhibition area be extended southward along Rock Creek, and in doing so, it aims to retain and utilize the area's natural beauty.

8. Significance - National Zoological Park

to be part of this program. The Smithsonian's Secretary, S.P. Langley, wrote that the Zoo "is intended to have in connection with other and remote national parks in the West a representation of all our North American animals...and it is situated in the national capital to serve as a constant object lesson of what Congress may do." This statement was made in a decade which the American people felt marked "the closing of the frontier" and the dominance of a new, urban, industrialized society; the Zoo's animals were to remind the Capital City's visitors of the disappearing American wilderness.

The Zoo was not meant to be an isolated element in Washington's development. As early as 1874, Frederick Law Olmsted had suggested a park along the Rock Creek Valley and the present Rock Creek Park was founded a year following the establishment of the National Zoo; the 1901 McMillan Commission Plan considered the Zoo to be a "distinctly specialized" part of the park system. The Zoo, however, was intended as more than the local zoological gardens--it was from its beginning intended as a showcase for American wildlife and for the numerous gifts which our government received from all over the world. Finally, the Olmsted firm was involved in the mid 1890's with the extension of the street system on the Zoo's eastern border, and probably was involved in the extension of the streets on the Zoo's western border. The curvilinear pattern of the streets adjoining the Zoo reflects the Olmsted firm's involvement, and future research may reveal that the Zoo was the key organizing element in the design of that residential area.

The National Zoological Park is also noteworthy because of the significant scientific research which was pursued within its confines. S.P. Langley, the Smithsonian's Secretary and a pioneer in aerodynamics, conducted careful experiments on the flight of a buzzard in the Zoo. Frank Baker, the Zoo's superintendent from 1890 to 1916, completed one of the best accounts of the history of anatomy ever written, during his tenure at the Zoo.

