

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

SEP 15 1989

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Western Promenade
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Bounded by W. Promenade, Valley St. & Maine Med. Center not for publication
city, town Portland vicinity
state Maine code ME county Cumberland code 005 zip code 04101

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>1</u>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____
		<u>2</u>	<u>1</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Carol S. [Signature] SHPO 9/8/89
Signature of certifying official Date
Maine Historic Preservation Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Alton Byer Entered in the National Register 10/16/89
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Landscape/Natural FeatureLandscape/Park

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Landscape/Natural FeatureLandscape/Park

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

No Style

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/Awalls N/A

roof N/Aother

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Located at the western end of the Portland peninsula, the Western Promenade rises 120 feet from the base of the escarpment. The park land totals 18.13 acres. The city purchased the first parcels along the promenade in 1836-1837; the last parcels were acquired in 1905 by Mayor James Phinney Baxter. The linear park is bounded by the Western Promenade to the east and south, Maine Medical Center to the north, and Valley Street to the west. Views from the Western Promenade take in a large area of countryside and the Presidential Range, nearly 70 miles away in New Hampshire. The Western Promenade abuts the residential Western Promenade Historic District, listed in the National Register on February 16, 1984. The appearance of the Promenade today is largely the result of the design efforts of William Goodwin, City Civil Engineer, and the Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects.

Improvements to the Western Promenade paralleled those made to the Eastern Promenade. The Eastern Argus (July 13, 1836) reported, "... the western end of the city is to be ornamented in like manner. A drive is to be constructed from Bramhall's Hill over to Vaughan's Bridge in a similar style of magnificence."

The 1876 Birds-eye-View of Portland illustrates that like the Eastern Promenade the north-south drive was bordered by a row of trees.

William Goodwin, City Civil Engineer, was very committed to improving Portland's parks (see Deering Oaks N.R.N.). On December 2, 1878, Mr. Goodwin presented a paper entitled "Our Public Grounds." In it he described the condition of the Western Promenade.

The immediate approach to the plain of the Promenade is rougher and more uncouth than any piece of country road you will find within 10 miles of Portland. The Promenade is 2,100 feet in length from Bowdoin Street to Arsenal Street. Upon this there are no improvements except that Mr. Brown has set out and cared for good trees along the sidewalk.

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Goodwin went on to recommend that the approaches to the Promenade, Danforth, Bowdoin and West Streets be widened and flattened with a double row of trees. He also noted that the Western Cemetery would soon be abandoned and that it could be subsequently utilized as a ramble. "This would be one of the most attractive features of our public resort" ("Our Public Grounds"). Goodwin concluded his report by saying, "The work can never be wholly finished. But it can be begun in a small way and carried on gradually as the City is able." The City Reports indicate that, as Goodwin predicted, year-by-year, improvements were carried out.

In 1879 Goodwin reported that the grading of West Street was completed from the Promenade to Chadwick Street, a distance of 292 feet. The street was designed with ten foot sidewalks and an esplanade of equal width and a forty foot street with edgestones and paved gutters bordering the drive. The esplanades were planted with grass and eighteen elms; a row of nine on each side. In 1915 the esplanade was built from Bowdoin Street to Vaughan Street. It was seeded with grass and lined with sixty rock maples.

The wall and terrace at Prospect Point at the head of Bowdoin Street was constructed in 1885. In 1888, a large ornamental bed with a broad path around it was installed at the head of West Street.

Goodwin's resourcefulness with limited funds, civil engineer talents, and aesthetic sense are illustrated in his solution for reclaiming the steep western bank described in his report to the city in 1872.

The details of work done on the western Promenade comprise the filling, shaping and turfing of the large gulch in the face of the hill oposite the head of Pine Street, and a smaller one nearby, in the former of which tree pairs of ^ braces of 10 X 10 inch timber, with a spread at the base of 30 feet, were set with the butts buried under the tree-roots and the apex pointing up the hill. Buried against the upper side of these were lime casks filled with stone and gravel, with earth in the top of each, serving as vases for shrubbery if ever required for the purpose. On the day succeeding the completion of this work a very heavy rain occurred, and soon after several others without any damage to the slope.

Many improvements had been made to the Western Promenade when in 1904, at the direction of Mayor James Phinney Baxter, the Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, were hired to prepare a plan for the Promenade and link it to a Portland Parks System.

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The Olmsted Brothers plan was prepared by John C. Olmsted with Henry Vincent Hubbard. Consistent with Goodwin's design scheme, the Olmsted plan sought to maximize views, improve pedestrian and vehicular traffic, and provide a link to Deering Oaks (see N.R.N.). In the Olmsted design a double row of regularly spaced trees line the Western Promenade from the northern entry at Bramhall Street to the southern end at the intersection of Vaughan and Danforth Streets. Only one formal element was included in the plan; at West Street a terrace and shelter was proposed.

Within the boundaries rambling paths were proposed and the planting of shrubs and irregularly placed trees along the lower path exiting at Valley Street. At this point, outside the boundaries of the Promenade, regularly spaced trees defined the link along Valley and Portland Streets to the Deering Oaks.

Many features of the Olmsted plan were not executed including the shelter and terrace at West Street, the development of the lower walk with entrances from lower Danforth Street and the Western Cemetery.

Despite the inability of the city to carry out the designs proposed for the Western Promenade, the site maintains its original design objective. That is, to provide uninterrupted views of the surrounding countryside. There is one contributing site, one contributing structure and one non-contributing structure.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Landscape Architecture

Period of Significance

1836 - c. 1920

Significant Dates

1836

1878

1905

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Goodwin, William C.E.

Olmsted Brothers

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The scenic value of the Western Promenade was recognized early on in Portland's urban history. Located at the western end of the city with views of the White Mountains, the site is significant primarily as an early example of a recognized and preserved scenic landscape. The Promenade is part of the proposed Portland Parks System as developed by the Olmsted Brothers in 1905. It is eligible for nomination to the Register under criterion C for its landscape design.

Initial acquisition of the parcels comprising the Western Promenade was made in 1836 following a campaign to promote the need for publicly-owned open space in what was becoming an increasingly urbanized area. Judging from the following excerpt of a letter published in the Eastern Argus on June 2, 1836, public opinion strongly supported the idea:

Messrs. Edwards. As our city authorities are now agitating the very popular subject of a Mall, park or Promenade, for the ornament of the town as well as for the health and pleasure of its citizens, and as a committee is now engaged in looking up an eligible spot for this purpose, allow me to make one or two suggestions in furtherance of this desirable project. I do not intend to show its utility, or the necessity of the measure. Those points are as apparent to the reasons and good-sense of the community, as are the rays of this morning's sun to the bodily eye. My intention is merely to present, for the reflection of our city authorities two sites, one each at the extreme end of the town, both admirably adapted for the object. First, "Bramhall's Hill" where a delightful Promenade or Park can be made, running along the brow of the hill, from the Arsenal to the new Cemetery, affording a pleasant and picturesque view of the country for miles around, with all variety of hills and dales, of plains and waters, villages and farm houses, requisite to romantic scenery and a delightful landscape.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

City of Portland Auditor's Report. Portland: Ford & Rich, Printers. 1878-1930.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 18.13

UTM References

A 19 | 396880 | 4833760
 Zone Easting Northing

C 19 | 397480 | 4832850

B 19 | 397080 | 4833830
 Zone Easting Northing

D 19 | 397000 | 4832680

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property of 18.13 acres occupies the City of Portland tax map 64-E-24.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary embraces the entire parcel of land historically associated with the Western Promenade.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth Igleheart, Architectural Historian

organization Maine Historic Preservation Commission date July, 1989

street & number 55 Capitol Street telephone (207) 289-2132

city or town Augusta, state Maine zip code 04333

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Subsequent work on the park consisted of the construction of a tree lined drive for viewing the panorama, features that were clearly evident in the 1876 Bird's-eye-View of Portland.

Largely through the efforts of city civil engineer William Goodwin, the importance of the Western Promenade was reaffirmed in the late nineteenth century. In a paper entitled, "Our Public Grounds," which he presented on December 2, 1878, Goodwin described the significance of the Promenade:

... Little has been done for the improvement of our advantages of situation, for encouragement of open-air exercise, and for social out-of-door intercourse, those prime motors of public cheerfulness and neighborly good-fellowship. Our streets are attractive, but they are for many of us only thoroughfares between our homes and our posts of duty, and so we turn for recreation to our "high places" [Eastern and Western Promenades], where are revealed distant prospects unrivaled in variety of grandeur and beauty.

For the duration of his tenure, many of Goodwin's ideas about the use and design of this landscape were carried out. Portland's favorable natural setting continued to be commented upon in the early 20th century.

...no city in this country can boast of two such prominent outlooks as our Eastern and Western Promenades, and it is hard to decide which is more beautiful. For a day view, Fort Allen Park, with its every-changing scenery, is a drawing card to our summer visitors, but for a quiet hour late on a pleasant summer afternoon, say about sunset, the Western Promenade has charms known to only a few of the residents of Portland but is appreciated by the summer tourists, who flock there for the splended view they get of the White Mountains and the gorgeous sunsets, which cannot be rivaled even by the blue skys of Italy (Auditor's Report, 1907).

James Phinney Baxter, Mayor of Portland for six non-concurrent terms beginning in 1893, recognized the social and aesthetic value of the parks and was a prime force in their development. When he was unable to convince the city to purchase nine acres belonging to the Brown estate at the southwesterly slope of the hill, Baxter arranged an exchange and the parcel was added to the park. In 1905, the Olmsted Brothers were hired by Mayor Baxter to prepare a design for the Western Promenade and link it to the proposed Portland Parks System. John C. Olmsted was the partner in charge. Henry Vincent Hubbard, apprentice with the firm, was also involved (see Eastern Promenade, N.R.N.).

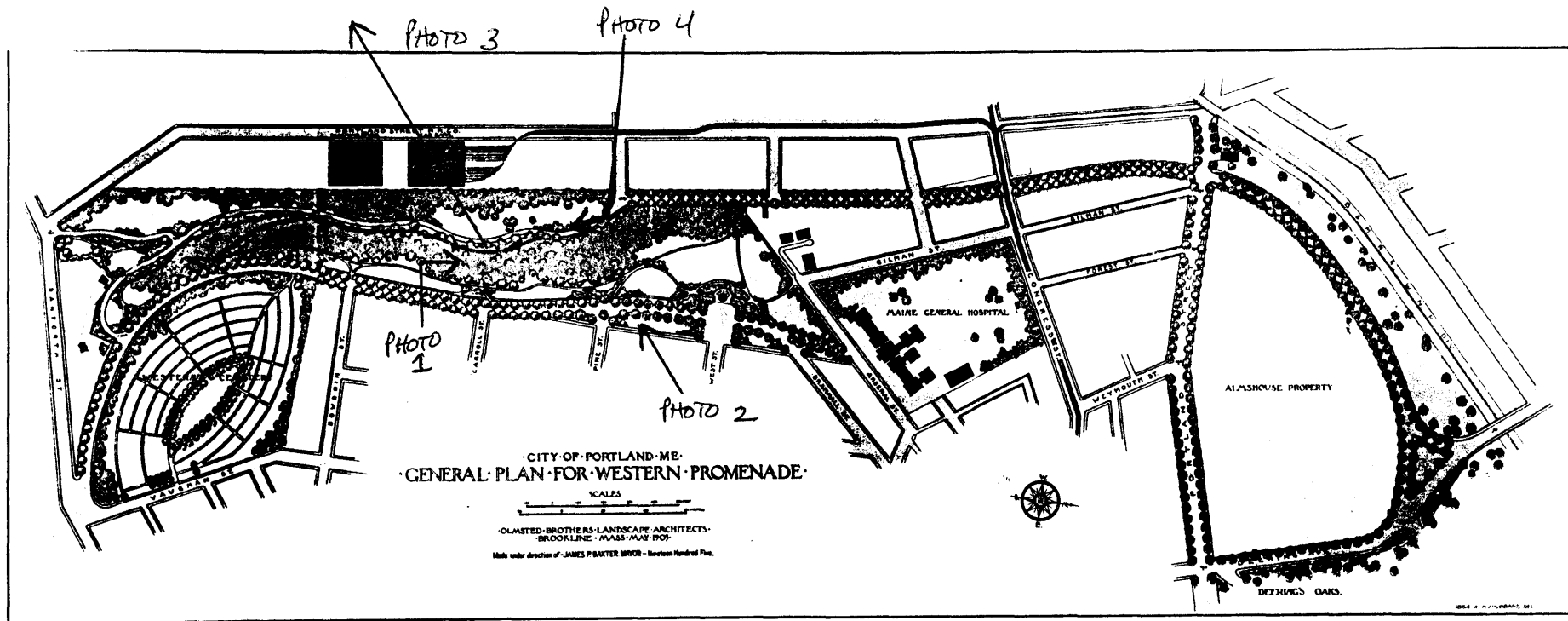
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Unlike the Olmsted design for the Eastern Promenade, the Western Promenade was laid out primarily as a ramble with a drive at the summit of the escarpment. No structured recreational activities were proposed in the design. Perhaps the size of the site would not allow for ballfields, playgrounds, tennis courts, etc., without obstructing the views. In addition, the neighborhood may not have required such facilities. The Western Promenade is Portland's most fashionable residential area, with large houses on generous lots. Until 1915 the area was dominated by Bramhall, the J. B. Brown estate. Olmsted's plan appears to have responded to both the site and the needs of the neighborhood.

The Western Promenade remains significant today by providing visitors and residents of Portland with a publicly-owned and maintained site from which to take in the magnificent views of the countryside and the White Mountains. Although increased development has changed the view immediately to the west, the Promenade retains the purpose and intent for which it was initially developed and preserved.



WESTERN PROMENADE
Portland, Maine