

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

LINCOLN PARK LILY POOL

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Lincoln Park Lily Pool

Other Name/Site Number: Alfred Caldwell Lily Pool

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Fullerton Drive between Cannon and Stockton drives in Lincoln Park

Not for publication:

City/Town: Chicago

Vicinity:

State: Illinois County: Cook Code: 031

Zip Code:

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: ___

Public-Local: X

Public-State: ___

Public-Federal: ___

Category of Property

Building(s): ___

District: X

Site: ___

Structure: ___

Object: ___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

1

1

3

1

6

Noncontributing

___ buildings

___ sites

1 structures

2 objects

3 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 6

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: Historic Resources of Chicago Park District

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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.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

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
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain):

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: LANDSCAPE Sub: Park

Current: LANDSCAPE Sub: Park

7. DESCRIPTIONArchitectural Classification: LATE 19TH & EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/ Prairie
School**MATERIALS:**

Foundation: stone (limestone)

Walls:stone (limestone)/ wood

Roof: wood/ metal

Other: vegetation

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Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Lily Pool in Lincoln Park is the most fully realized surviving example of the work of landscape architect Alfred Caldwell. The disciple of renowned Prairie style landscape designer and conservationist, Jens Jensen, Caldwell "...imbibed deeply of Jensen's philosophy. A total respect for the processes of nature was the basis. The landscape architect was an artist, or more correctly a poet, who would interpret and reveal nature, by using its materials."¹

In 1936, while working for the Chicago Park District, Caldwell was asked to redesign a dilapidated Victorian lily pool in Lincoln Park. This project gave him the opportunity to create a quiet refuge for city dwellers that would, on a small scale, represent the natural history of the Chicago region. Caldwell suggested that "besides being a nature garden," the Lily Pool is "a geological statement."² He explains:

The landscape of all Chicago was once a lake formed by the melting ice of the Late Wisconsin Glacier. These dammed-up waters finally broke through the moraine ridge at the southwest extremity of the area. This surging torrent carved out the underlying strata of Niagara limestone. The present Des Plaines River, in part follows that channel; and the stone bluffs are a veritable statement of the natural forces that created the terrain of Chicago.³

The Lily Pool is a Prairie style garden in Lincoln Park. Designed by Alfred Caldwell, it was constructed by the Chicago Park District between 1936 and 1938. Today, the site retains very strong integrity.

Since its creation in the 1930s, generations of Chicagoans and visitors have considered the Lily Pool one of the city's loveliest places. A letter submitted to the *Voice of the People* in Chicago in 1938 described the Lily Pool as:

... a real garden in every sense of the word. Stone, as stone really is, cleft by falling water, wet and matted with ferns and moss, dappled by sun shining through tall, slim birch and maples. Stone ledges, creviced by hawthorne and sumach, real trees like our own woodlands. Farther along the magic path, under melting snow, a carpet of violet plants and how many more of our own real woodland wild flowers?⁴

The Lily Pool remained largely as Caldwell had designed it for several years. By 1946, however, the Chicago Park District had designated it an area for the Lincoln Park Zoo to exhibit pelicans, flamingoes and other exotic fowl, renaming the site as the Zoo Rookery. The wings of the birds were pinioned to keep the birds in captivity. The landscape slowly began to decline. Many of the birds destroyed plants; caused the erosion of lagoon edges; and their droppings collected in the pool. Further erosion occurred throughout the site because invasive trees such as mulberry, box elder, and buckthorn took root and created a dense canopy. As less sunlight came in, many of the original native shrubs and wildflowers died out. Heavy human foot traffic compounded these problems.

To correct the erosion problem and enhance the appearance of the space, the Chicago Park District conducted a

¹ Richard Guy Wilson, "Themes of Continuity: The Prairie School in the 1920s and 1930s," *Modern Architecture in America: Visions and Revisions*, eds. Richard Guy Wilson and Sidney K. Robinson (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1991), 202.

² Werner Blaser, ed., *Architecture and Nature: The Work of Alfred Caldwell* (Boston: Berkhaüser Verlag, 1984), 36.

³ Alfred Caldwell, "The Lily Pool, Lincoln Park" in *Alfred Caldwell, the Life and Work of A Prairie School Landscape Architect*, ed. Dennis Domer (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1997), 158.

⁴ Park Stroller [pseud.], "Voice of the People," *Chicago Tribune*, 1938.

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\$160,000 renovation of the site in 1966-68. At that time, the Chicago Park District did not address the problems that the birds or the invasive plants were causing to the site. Rather, the park district added thousands of tons of new stone as well as new site amenities that were not part of the original design such as lighting, split-rail fencing, additional cages, and a shed. The site remained the Zoo Rookery. The stone gave the ground level a stark appearance. Although the renovation did involve planting some native vegetation, invasive plants continued to grow in the area, and a dark and dense thicket of plant materials slowly emerged.

By the late 1980s, the Zoo kept fewer exotic birds such as pelicans and flamingoes on the site, and began placing more emphasis on North American waterfowl that could be wintered there. The landscape continued to decline. In the early 1990s, the Chicago Park District attempted to conduct a pilot restoration project by focusing on a small area of the landscape, removing invasive plants, and replanting Caldwell's palette. Unfortunately, there was no effort to gain community support, and after the park district received complaints about trees being removed the project came to a halt.

Finally in 1997, a non-profit organization, the Friends of the Lincoln Park (now Lincoln Park Conservancy), worked with the Chicago Park District to build community consensus and develop a plan to restore the historic lily pool. The Lincoln Park Zoo agreed to have the Chicago Park District retain management of the site as a naturalistic garden and haven for migratory birds. The Friends of Lincoln Park and Chicago Park District invested \$2.5 million in an award-winning rehabilitation that was undertaken between 2000 and 2002. The public-private partnership also resulted in a management plan that specifically addresses the unique issues related to this site, and a program to train docents who interpret the historic landscape. After the completion of the rehabilitation, the Chicago Park District officially renamed the site the Alfred Caldwell Lily Pool.⁵

The Lily Pool is a 3-acre fenced naturalistic garden that is located just south of Fullerton Avenue, west of Cannon Drive, east of the Lincoln Park Conservatory and Stockton Drive, and just north of the Lincoln Park Zoo. These are generally the same as the site's original boundaries with the exception of the expansion of the east and west fence lines. The east fence line was moved approximately 10' to the east during the 2000-2002 project work. The west fence line was moved at varying widths between 0' to 35' to the west. The park district moved the fence lines in order to plant dense vegetation at the east and west borders of the site. This was done to help alleviate noise problems and provide additional food and shelter for the large numbers of migratory birds that frequent the site.

Black metal wire fencing encloses the eastern and western sides of the Lily Pool. During the 2000-2002 project work, the new fencing replaced older chain link fence because it was more visually transparent and vandal-proof. The southern side of the Lily Pool is enclosed by part of the Lincoln Park Zoo fencing. A stone and wood Prairie style entry gate [1] and wall (known as the Fullerton gate) enclose the northern side of the site.

The Fullerton Gate [1] provides an entryway into the Lily Pool and allows the site to be closed and locked at night and during the winter months. The base of the entry gate wall is composed of Caldwell's characteristic stratified layers of limestone. The joints between stones are raked back to emphasize horizontality. Massive horizontal wooden beams rise above the stone base, extending beyond and framing the two entry doors. (Above this is some of the visually transparent black metal wire fencing.) The two massive entry doors are made of

⁵ In order to clearly describe the Lily Pool and show that it retains sufficient integrity to be listed as a National Historic Landmark, three corresponding plans are submitted: Alfred Caldwell's original plan, dated March 16, 1937 [A]; a survey of the site showing its conditions in July of 1986 [B]; and an existing conditions plan [C] prepared in May of 2001, shortly after the rehabilitation was completed. For convenience, features have been numbered in the order that they are discussed in the narrative. As some features were added in the 1960s and later removed, all numbers do not appear on each plan.

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diagonal planks of oak. The diagonal lines of the two doors meet forming an inverted v-shape. Adjacent to the frame, on both sides of the doorway, there are some delicate vertical wooden picket elements with horizontal rails. These are reminiscent of a Japanese screen. (This motif appears again along the edges of the Lily Pool pavilion.)

During the rehabilitation process all of the original entry gate wood was rotten and had to be replaced. There were some structural problems with the wooden elements, and the rehabilitation allowed for the installation of a steel framing system within the wooden elements that cannot be visually detected. White oak barn wood was used to match the appearance of the original, and all of the wooden elements were carefully replicated using original plans and photographs. All of the feature's stone is original and only needed cleaning, and minor repairs and tuck-pointing.

Caldwell originally designed a large Prairie style lantern to be installed in an opening in the stonework on the east side of the entry gate wall. He intended to execute the lantern in wood clad in copper; however, the park district eliminated this detail from the project. For years, the opening that had been intended for the lantern left a large space in the wall. Due to problems with people sneaking in the site from this opening, eventually it was filled with additional stone. As part of the rehabilitation, those replacement stones were removed. A new lantern [2] was produced and installed in the opening. Composed of epoxy enamel coated steel, the new lantern replicates the exact form and size of Caldwell's original design. The lantern is composed of a stack of horizontal elements, with a v-shaped form at the bottom, serving as the luminaire. The illumination shines down from the lower part of the lantern. When the Caldwell plans were replicated in coated steel, the restoration team decided to select a brownish color for the finish, rather than trying to emulate copper.

After one passes through the massive oak doors, the visitor has the sense of entering a secret world, far away from the noise and stress of city life. "Though removed only by a few steps from the man-made environment, the Lily Pool becomes a genuine refuge—a sequestered place of breath and quietude for man in the very midst of Chicago."⁶ Although the fenced-in area of the Lily Pool includes less than 3 acres of land, the landscape gives visitors the illusion that the site is much larger.

In the center of the site is the prairie river [3] an irregularly shaped lagoon that emulates melted glacial waters cutting through rock. Caldwell's mentor, Jens Jensen, included prairie rivers in his plans for many properties such as Chicago's Columbus Park (NHL, 2003) to represent natural rivers that once flowed through the unspoiled native landscape. The gently curved shape of Caldwell's prairie river adds to the illusion of a larger space. As one passes along the edges of the waterway, the views and scenery are continuously changing.

Originally, Caldwell edged some of the lagoon with slabs of limestone, and other areas were planted with native shrubs and trees. The center area provided a sun opening; another example of his interpretation of an element often used by Jensen. Caldwell planted native emergent and aquatic plants in and along the banks of the waterway. Over the years, however, as the landscape suffered decline, the site became too shady to support the lilies and other water plants. In addition, the 1966-68 renovation involved the installation of hundreds of new pieces of stone around the prairie river, paving areas that had been intended for plant materials. The recent project work involved removal of all stone added during the renovation and replanting the edges. The project also included dredging the lagoon and repairing the original clay liner. Tubs were set into the clay liner and sealed so that the water lilies could thrive without threatening the integrity of the clay liner. Because the rehabilitation involved removing buckthorn, box elder, mulberry and other invasive vegetation, the space is sunny again. Today, there is sufficient light to support water lilies as well as other aquatic and edge plantings that have

⁶ Richard Guy Wilson, "Alfred Caldwell Illuminates Nature's Ways," *Landscape Architecture* (September 1977): 412.

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been planted from Caldwell's original palette including blue flag iris, arrowhead, and pickerelweed. During the project, an aerator was installed to prevent stagnant water.

On the northwest side of the prairie river, Caldwell created a waterfall [4] composed of horizontal slabs of limestone. Similar to the manner in which Jens Jensen used waterfalls, this element was meant to represent the source of the prairie river. Describing the Lily Pool, Caldwell suggested that, "A body of water presumes a source. Hence the waterfall."⁷ This waterfall is composed of much larger pieces of stone than Jensen had used in his waterfalls. Explaining how the waterfall ties into the site's broad symbolism, Caldwell wrote, "Stone ledges of the waterfall show the horizontal stratification of the Niagara limestone. It was originally laid down as sediment on ancient beaches millions of years ago."⁸ The water flows gently over the beautiful and irregularly placed stones with weathered edges. Caldwell asserted, "This waterfall, as a work of art, is a celebration."⁹ The path adjacent to the waterfall includes gaps through which the water flows. These gaps, which had been filled years later, were recovered during the rehabilitation process.

Stone is a continuous element that unifies the composition and conveys Caldwell's metaphor for the geologic history of the Chicago region. In addition to the base of the Fullerton gate [1], and the waterfall [4], Caldwell used limestone to create a bird bath [5], ledges, paths, steps [6, 7, 8], a terrace adjacent to the pavilion and the council ring [9]. The bird bath is located on the western edge of the prairie river [3]. It is composed of stacks of limestone slabs. Considering the vast number of birds that use the Lily Pool as a resting place, the bird bath provides a useful function. Historically it had upper and lower inlets of water, providing two places in which birds could come in contact with water. Over the years, this feature deteriorated. The plumbing did not function, and much of the stone was missing and/or broken. During the 2000-2002 project, the bird bath was restored. Because there was no detailed original plan for this feature, the rehabilitation was based on historic photographs. Missing stone pieces were replaced, and all of the stone was carefully reset. Because the feature provided two water inlets, the Chicago Park District converted the upper inlet into a drinking fountain for people. This was done by simply changing the plumbing element with minimal change to the appearance of the bird bath [5].

The stone ledges, paths, and steps [6, 7, 8] throughout the Lily Pool were carefully rehabilitated during the 2000-2002 project. A major focus of this work was to remove more than 1500 pieces of stone that were added as part of the 1966-68 renovation. This process involved documenting and numbering every single stone, removing the added stones, and carefully resetting much of the original stone. The effort to remove the 1960s stone was an important part of recapturing Caldwell's original design intent. In 1942, Caldwell wrote that the;

river, in a sense, has cut a channel through limestone, and the ledges are intermittently revealed.... The entire garden is planted as a forest. A stone walk winds through the forest near the water's edge. Wildflowers cover the ground each side.¹⁰

Caldwell did not use the stone in a frivolous manner. Each of the stone elements provides a function. The ledges act as retaining walls along the slopes of the site. The paths and steps provide circulation. Caldwell softened the appearance of the stone by planting between crevices of the ledges, and allowing plants to creep between the joints of the limestone paths—creating the feeling of stepping stones.

Caldwell had never intended for the entire edge of the prairie river or areas between the stone path and the water

⁷ Caldwell, *Architecture and Nature*, 38.

⁸ *Ibid*, 40.

⁹ *Ibid*.

¹⁰ Domer, *Alfred Caldwell*, 158

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to be entirely paved with stone. This, however, is what occurred during the 1966-68 renovation project. At the time, the Chicago Park District's landscape architects chose this course of action because of the severe problems with erosion. In addition to eroded edges of the waterway and paths, some of the slopes on the east and west sides of the site suffered from severe erosion. Here thousands of new stones were added, creating a heavy and stark appearance along what had previously been subtly designed ledges. In many cases, the renovation involved lifting original stones and placing them on top of new stones. Due to this shuffling of old and new stones, the recent rehabilitation project involved a very careful process of identifying all original and replacement stones, removing 1960s stone, and resetting the older stones in their original configurations.

Another change that park district landscape architects made to the site in the 1960s was the removal of most of the stone path that originally extended along the east side of the prairie river [7] and the stone path leading to the original eastern entrance [8] of the Lily Pool at Cannon Drive. The park district removed these segments of the original path system to limit circulation within the site particularly within the areas favored by migratory birds. In addition to removing the original stretches of stone paths, the project included installing split rail fencing to keep people out of the area.

As part of the rehabilitation project, the Chicago Park District and the Friends of Lincoln Park conducted a series of focus group meetings to address a variety of issues that are critical to the Lily Pool. Among these was a focus group specifically addressing the accessibility issues. Group members included representatives of the Mayor's Office on Disabilities, lawyers who specialize in ADA issues, and disabled individuals. The focus group determined the rehabilitation should be conducted in a manner that would allow disabled people access to each of the major features of the Lily Pool. The resulting project involved some minor re-grading on the site of the original east path and installing a new accessible surface of compacted stone screenings [7] that meets with accessibility requirements.

To provide an accessible route to the council ring [9], as well as a linkage to the recreated stone path leading to the eastern entrance at Cannon Drive [8], the project team removed a portion of the original stone steps leading to the council ring [9] on its north side. Historically, there were stone steps leading to the council ring [9] approaching from both its north and south sides. The south side steps are completely intact. The lower case of the north side stone steps remain intact, only the upper 4 or 5 steps were removed to make way for the new ramp. The stone slabs of the new ramp beautifully match the original stone. However, unlike the original steps, the path and ramp meet with ADA requirements. During the 1960s, when the Cannon Drive entrance had been removed, the path on the south side leading to the Zoo [10] allowed heavy foot traffic in and out of the Lily Pool. All of this path's stonework has been fully restored. Today, however, Lily Pool visitors can exit through a turnstyle leading to the Zoo, however, Zoo patrons cannot enter from this turnstyle.

The council ring [9] sits on a ridge on the southeast side of the prairie river. The council ring, a circular stone bench, was one of Jens Jensen's favorite elements. While Caldwell included council rings in many of his plans for park work, this is the only one in the Chicago parks that fully followed his original specifications. He developed a series of council rings for Promontory Point, but to save funds, the park district executed these in concrete, rather than limestone. (In the 1980s, Caldwell supervised the replacement of the concrete benches with stone council rings at Promontory Point.) The Lily Pool council ring is, in effect, two solid adjoining half circles providing an opening for entering and exiting. In the center is a flat hearthstone. The 2000-2002 project included repairs to the council ring, such as tuck-pointing the stone, addressing eroded slopes along the edges of the council ring, and removing pavement from the floor of the council ring that had been added in the 1960s. To meet with the ADA, the project also involved slightly widening both openings between the two half circles to accommodate wheel chair access.

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In addition to the small number of steps removed from the north side of the council ring, a few steps were also removed from the path on the west side of the prairie river. Again, this was done to provide better accessibility, and to allow access to each of the major features of the Lily Pool. One of the site's premier features, which is located on the west side of the lagoon, is the pavilion [11] and its adjoining stone terrace [12]. The pavilion is an elegant Prairie style structure that is often erroneously attributed to Frank Lloyd Wright. The pavilion is composed of two pergola-like stone and wood shelters joined together by a horizontal wood beam. Architectural historian Richard Guy Wilson describes the pavilion and terrace in the following manner:

At the curve of the prairie river the limestone forms a terrace that supports two seating pavilions. Right-angled limestone walls push upward and outward, intersecting pergola roofs of long horizontals and short verticals of open and closed forms.¹¹

The roof's overhangs and cantilevered beams reinforce the sense of horizontality. Caldwell wrote; "The spreading horizontal structure is like a tree, rooted in a rock ledge."¹²

On the east side of the pavilion [11], adjacent to the waters edge, the stone ledges provide seating. There are also simple wooden seats extending along expanses of wooden vertical pickets with horizontal rails, a detail repeated in the entry gate [1]. Over the years, all of the original wooden elements of the pavilion deteriorated and rotted. During the rehabilitation process, it was determined that none of the wood was salvageable. Like the entry gate, due to structural problems, the wooden elements were reconstructed with steel reinforcement. None of the steel framework is visually detectable. The wooden elements were carefully replicated out of white oak barn wood based on original plans and photographs. All of the pavilion's stone elements are original, with the exception of a few stones that were damaged and needed replacement. During the rehabilitation, it was determined that 1960s stone had been added on top of the eastern portion of the stone terrace [12]. All of this was removed and the original terrace stone was repaired and replaced where necessary. The only other stones added were in a few areas near the low overhangs of the pavilion roofs. Rather than changing the height of the pavilion, some small stacks of matching stone were installed to keep people on the paths and prevent them from hitting their heads.

In the 1960s, when the Chicago Park District renovated the Zoo Rookery with the goal of continuing its use as a display for exotic birds, a shed [13] was constructed to provide a warming shelter for zookeepers and storage for nets, bird feed etc. The wooden structure was meant to emulate a log cabin. Along with all remaining birdcages and birdhouses, the shed was removed as part of the 2000-2002 project.

Beautiful vistas and views are afforded to visitors at various vantage points of the Lily Pool landscape. The natural site included glacial ridges along the east and west sides and a lower swale in the center. Alfred Caldwell's design took advantage of the landforms. He included dense plantings on the east and west sides with occasional sun openings and small clearings. He also used stone outcroppings and retaining walls to help stabilize the slopes, create interesting places to sit and climb, and areas between stones and crevices were planted with shrubs and perennials.

One of the most important aspects of the scope of the rehabilitation work was the removal of invasive and inappropriate plants and the replanting of the landscape. Before the 2000-2002 project commenced, the Lily Pool was primarily a forest of two types of non-native trees: box elder and white mulberry. In some areas the understory had also been taken over by invasive species such as European buckthorn and white poplar. The

¹¹ Wilson, *Modern Architecture in America*, 206.

¹² Caldwell, *Architecture and Nature*, 42.

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ground plane was devoid of vegetation due to the decades of erosion and excessive shade. There were only a few scattered specimens of higher quality trees such as hawthorn and birches that survived. The rehabilitation project included the removal of hundreds of undesirable trees. Caldwell's original plans were carefully studied and many of the species from his palette were planted. These include native trees such as maples, crabapples, birches, cottonwood, and hawthorns; and shrubs such as sumac, prairie rose, and elderberry. The project also involved planting the wildflowers and ferns that were so important to Alfred Caldwell. Dozens of varieties of perennials were planted based on the original plans including: columbine, shooting star, Joe-pye weed, sunflower, phlox, native violets, ferns, and trillium. Among the aquatic plants intended by Caldwell that were reintroduced at the Lily Pool are water lilies, iris, and arrowhead.

The Lily Pool is home to year round birds such as sparrows, cardinals and American crow. Other migratory birds that stop at the Lily Pool to rest and find food and shelter included heron, thrushes, warblers, hawks and owls. Many of these are considered rare or endangered. The rehabilitation project resulted in a diverse and healthy ecosystem that not only provides habitat for birds but also red fox, grey and fox squirrels, rabbits, reptiles, and insects. The prairie river was also stocked with rare and unusual native fish. The abundance of wildlife including birds, butterflies, and dragonflies (which are closely monitored) indicates that the Lily Pool has a vibrant and healthy ecosystem.

Today, the Lily Pool retains exceptionally strong historic integrity. Due to the thoughtful and well-documented rehabilitation of 2000-2002, the landscape clearly conveys its historic appearance. The inappropriate elements associated with the Zoo Rookery, such as the log shed, cages, and split-rail fence have been removed along with the thousands of stones that had been added in the 1960s. The recent project involved careful attention to detail. New elements such as identification and interpretive signage and trash receptacles have been installed outside the fence-line of the Lily Pool so as not to be visually intrusive. Only a small donor recognition sign has been installed inside the Lily Pool just east of the Fullerton Gate and donors who gave major gifts to restore specific features are recognized with small metal plaques.

The Chicago Park District and the Lincoln Park Conservancy have jointly adopted a management plan that provides a blueprint for maintenance and procedural issues to insure the long-term preservation of the site. It outlines specific roles and maintenance services that are provided by Chicago Park District staff members, contractors, the Lincoln Park Conservancy and volunteers. Among its specific recommendations are procedures for monitoring and removing trash and graffiti, weed and invasive species control, integrated pest management, and pond and water quality management. In addition to the revamped management of the site, the continued preservation and appreciation of the site are further insured by volunteers who help with site monitoring, invasive species removal, brush cutting etc. and volunteer docents who provide free interpretive tours to visitors. Along with the award-winning rehabilitation project, these activities have helped make the Lily Pool one of the most intact Caldwell-designed landscape in the nation.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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

Nationally: X Statewide: Locally:

Applicable National

Register Criteria: A X B C X D

Criteria Considerations

(Exceptions): A B C D E F G

NHL Criteria:

4

NHL Theme(s):

III. Expressing Cultural Values
5. architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design

Areas of Significance:

Landscape Architecture
Social History
Entertainment/ Recreation

Period(s) of Significance:

1936-38

Significant Dates:

N/A

Significant Person(s):

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect/Builder:

Alfred Caldwell (1903-1998)

Historic Contexts:

XVII. Landscape Architecture

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State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The Lily Pool is an exquisite hidden garden in Chicago's Lincoln Park that symbolically celebrates the natural and pre-history of the Midwest. In recent years, the Chicago Park District renamed this site the Alfred Caldwell Lily Pool, in tribute to its talented creator. Considered the last great Prairie style landscape architect of the twentieth century, Alfred Caldwell (1903- 1998) was also an accomplished planner, architect, teacher, poet and essayist. He was the disciple of renowned landscape architect and conservationist Jens Jensen. In addition to Jensen's impact on his life and work, Caldwell knew and was influenced by internationally acclaimed architects Frank Lloyd Wright and Mies van der Rohe, and urban planner Ludwig Hilberseimer. In 1936, Jensen described Caldwell as the nation's most "outstanding prospect as a landscape gardener."¹³ The Lily Pool clearly represents the fulfillment of Jensen's prediction.

Caldwell had long and illustrious design and teaching careers; however, until recent years his contributions were largely unrecognized. He designed dozens of impressive landscapes and structures and taught for a total of more than 35 years at the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT), the University of Southern California, and had a visiting professorship at Virginia Polytechnic Institute. Despite the large number of completed design projects and the thousands of students who were influenced by him, his work was largely ignored until recent years. In a 1977 article, architectural historian Richard Guy Wilson brought this oversight to light. He asserted that:

...as historians begin to inspect the [1930s] period it becomes increasingly obvious that certain strains of indigenous American creativity have been overlooked. Alfred Caldwell's work encompasses the broadest definitions of landscape architecture, an activity not simply of plant types and topography, but a vision and philosophy of man and nature that is at the core of the American dream.¹⁴

Since the publication of Wilson's article in *Landscape Architecture Magazine*, Alfred Caldwell slowly began to garner recognition. In 1984, Swiss architect and author Werner Blaser produced a book entitled *Architecture and Nature: The Work of Alfred Caldwell*. In this book that reflects, "anew on the environment as it is shaped by the hand of man,"¹⁵ Werner concludes that:

Recognition of Alfred Caldwell as a national figure is long overdue. Like that of Jensen, Sullivan, Wright, Mies and Hilberseimer, his life's work is a clear illustration of not what the world is but could be. Generations of students are indebted to him because of his teaching, principles, ideas, presence and humanity.¹⁶

This book, which was partially underwritten with a grant from the Canadian Centre for Architecture is written in English, German and French. Including numerous plans, drawings and renderings of Caldwell's work, as well as captions that he wrote himself, it began to establish an understanding of his contributions for an international audience.

¹³ This statement made by Jensen to Chicago Park District Superintendent George Donahue was included in correspondence from Donahue to Charles T. Landon, January 26, 1936 and is in the archives of the Dubuque Iowa Historical Society. It is referenced in "Alfred Caldwell: The Life and Work of a Prairie School Landscape Architect," 14.

¹⁴ Richard Guy Wilson, "Alfred Caldwell Illuminates Nature's Ways," *Landscape Architecture* (September 1977): 412.

¹⁵ Caldwell, *Architecture and Nature*, 12.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 154.

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In 1987, the Art Institute of Chicago interviewed Alfred Caldwell as part of its Chicago Architects Oral History Project. This added Caldwell to the ranks of an illustrious group of Chicago designers that includes Bertrand Goldberg, Lawrence Perkins, and Harry Weese. Some honors and other kinds of recognition followed. In 1988, Caldwell received an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Humane Letters and Science from the Illinois Institute of Technology. In 1991, Caldwell's work was included in an exhibition entitled "Prairie in the City: Naturalism in Chicago's Parks 1870-1940" at the Chicago Historical Society.¹⁷ Also that year, authors Richard Guy Wilson and Sidney K. Robinson included a detailed entry on Caldwell in their book entitled *Modern Architecture in America: Visions and Revisions*. The historic preservation committee of the American Society of Landscape Architects' presented Alfred Caldwell with an award recognizing his achievements in 1993.

Over the years, Caldwell wrote a substantial body of poetry and essays about his life, his relationship with his wife Geda, his philosophies and beliefs (often focusing on the inhumane way that cities were developing) and his work. Between 1974 and 1988, Caldwell produced "Atlantis and Return," an "autobiography of both prose and poetry," written in the third person.¹⁸ In 1997, Dennis Domer, a previous student of Caldwell's, published his professor's biography. It includes poems and essays written by Caldwell and letters to Jensen and Hilberseimer, along with an 83-page narrative history of Caldwell's life and work. Published the year before his death, this book provides a detailed understanding of Caldwell's design contributions, a rich chronicle of his ideas and philosophies and insight into his relationships. Domer considers Caldwell "one of the twentieth century's preeminent landscape designers."¹⁹ A 1998 obituary considers Caldwell a "landscape genius."²⁰

During his lifetime, Caldwell saw many of his beautifully designed landscapes and structures suffer neglect and deterioration and fall into a state of ruin. Sadly, this was a tremendous source of despair for him in the decades prior to his death in 1998. Since that time, the Chicago Park District and the Friends of Lincoln Park (now known as the Lincoln Park Conservancy) conducted a careful and thorough rehabilitations of one of his favorite projects, the lily pool. After the completion of the award winning \$2.5 million dollar rehabilitation, the Chicago Park District officially renamed the site in honor of its venerable designer. Today, the Alfred Caldwell Lily Pool strongly conveys the brilliant vision of its designer.

Born in St. Louis in 1903, Alfred Caldwell moved to Chicago with his family as a young child. He attended Chicago Public Schools, and at Lakeview High School he was greatly influenced by his science teacher Dr. Hermann Silas Pepoon. An accomplished botanist, Dr. Pepoon was the author of *An Annotated Flora of the Chicago Region*. One of Caldwell's favorite teachers, Dr. Pepoon "inspired him with the wonders of nature."²¹ Also at Lakeview High School, Alfred excelled in his studies in Latin, a talent that became useful in later years when he prepared detailed planting plans that included both Latin and popular names.

He was not from a wealthy family, however, Caldwell was determined to attend college. He held down a number of different jobs since about the age of nine. He sold newspapers, worked as an usher at a movie theater, and sold plants door to door. Having barely scraped together enough money for the tuition, Caldwell enrolled at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. He soon became disillusioned with school. Although he had registered for landscape architecture courses he was extremely dissatisfied with his classes. Caldwell told his fraternity brothers, "Its boring, its empty and there's no clear idea in the school, there's no clear idea in the students and there's no clear idea in me... I'm willing to endure anything dangerous, hazardous, of all kinds, a

¹⁷ The Chicago Historical Society, Chicago Park District, and Morton Arboretum sponsored the exhibition that was curated by Wim de Wit, Carol Doty, Julia Sniderman and William Tippens.

¹⁸ Domer, *Alfred Caldwell*, 85.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, jacket cover.

²⁰ Lee Bey, "Alfred Caldwell, Landscape Genius," *Chicago Sun-Times*, July 9, 1998.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

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hard life, but I am not willing to endure boredom.”²² Charles Tirrell, a landscape architect who was married to one of Caldwell’s relatives, had worked for Danish immigrant landscape designer and conservationist, Jens Jensen in the early 1910s.²³ Tirrell had often spoken to Alfred about Jensen. Caldwell told one of his landscape architecture professors, Betty McAdams, that he had great admiration for Jensen. As the university’s landscape architecture department then took a more conventional, Beaux Arts approach— vastly different from Jensen’s naturalistic design idiom— McAdams told Caldwell “you will not get very far in our department if you believe in Mr. Jensen.”²⁴

Caldwell quit school and soon eloped with his sweetheart— his cousin Virginia, who went by the nickname Geda. Alfred wanted to start his own landscape firm, but had no money, so he went to a real estate developer, George T. Donahue, and asked for help. Donahue agreed. He set Caldwell up in business and provided space in his Wrigley Building office. For the next year or two, the young designer worked on many small projects. Although he made enough money to purchase his first car, he was soon dissatisfied again. He later said:

I had thought I was going to accomplish something but when I looked at it hard enough I could see with these peanut little jobs that I got, it wasn’t anything. I never got in touch with the real problem of making a landscape garden... I thought, ‘This is not what I had in mind’.²⁵

In 1924, Charles Tirrell suggested that Caldwell should work for Jens Jensen, and arranged an interview. Caldwell drove to Jensen’s studio in Ravinia. When the secretary brought him in to the office, the first thing the great landscape architect said to the young man was “Are you any good?”²⁶ Before Caldwell could answer Jensen began a lengthy and eloquent speech. He described the beautiful way that sunlight shone on the trees outside of the window. He went on to talk “about waste in America, about how technology gives but also destroys, about the need to save the wetlands, the Everglades, and the prairies, and about how water was being poisoned with our own waste.”²⁷ The morning passed quickly, and Caldwell stayed to have lunch with Jensen. When lunch ended, Jensen told Caldwell he could begin working the following day. Alfred Caldwell was enthralled by what he had heard. “I went out in my flivver and I laughed and laughed, the tears rolling down my eyes. At last I had found a man, at last I had found a man!”²⁸

Jens Jensen provided the vision, education, and guidance that Caldwell had long been seeking. For five-and-a-half years, Caldwell served as one of Jensen’s superintendents, overseeing landscape construction. Jensen did not strictly adhere to plans. He regularly met with the superintendents on site and provided direction. Quite often, Caldwell and other superintendents had to make their own decisions in the field and Jensen would later come back and review the work. Caldwell worked on many private estates including several properties for Edsel Ford and the Harley Clark Estate in Evanston, IL. He learned first hand how native plants, sun openings, water and rock could poetically convey the spirit of Midwestern natural prairies. He observed Jensen’s ways of heightening the experience of each season, his masterful use of light and shadow, and planting selections and designs that would attract birds. He listened carefully as Jensen spoke about ecology, natural systems, and the

²² Alfred Caldwell, “Oral History of Alfred Caldwell,” Chicago Architects Oral History Project, interview by Betty Blum, Art Institute of Chicago, 1987, p. 18.

²³ Dennis Domer, “Cut from the Same Cloth,” *A Force of Nature: The Life and Work of Jens Jensen* (Chicago: City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Chicago Park District, 2002), 38.

²⁴ Alfred Caldwell, interview by Betty Blum, p. 19.

²⁵ Ibid., 24.

²⁶ Domer, *Alfred Caldwell*, 6.

²⁷ Ibid, 6-7.

²⁸ Alfred Caldwell, interview by Betty Blum, 27.

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need to conserve the region's undeveloped lands. According the Caldwell, Jensen "became the great symbol of my life."²⁹

During this period, Caldwell met another man who also proved to be a great influence, the famous Prairie School architect, Frank Lloyd Wright. While working on a job for Jensen in Wisconsin, Caldwell and his friend Bob Priest decided to go to Spring Green to meet Wright. At the end of this first visit, Wright said, "I'm glad that you boys came. We artists have to stick together."³⁰ Other visits followed. Sometime in the late 1920s, Wright asked Caldwell to come to Taliesin to join the fellowship and to help establish new gardens on the grounds. He said, "We will be true to architecture and we will be farmers."³¹ Alfred's wife Geda did not like the idea of the communal lifestyle and was put off by Wright's reputation with women. Although Caldwell turned down Wright's invitation to live at Taliesin, he did spend a couple of weeks there without his wife around 1930 when the Depression began slowing Jensen's workload.

In 1931, Jensen did not have enough work to keep employees, and Caldwell began contacting architects looking for small landscape design projects. He received a few commissions, but the nation's economic crisis had taken its toll on the building industry, and Alfred could barely support his family. George Donahue, who had set him up in business before, had been appointed as General Superintendent of Chicago's South Park Commission several years earlier. Caldwell reached out to Donahue once again. In 1933, Donahue hired Caldwell to assist on some projects that were funded by the Civil Works Administration (the federal relief agency that later became known as the Works Progress Administration).

In January of 1934, Donahue called Caldwell into his office and gave him information about a job opening for which Caldwell was well qualified. The Dubuque Iowa Park Board was looking for a superintendent to oversee park maintenance and improvements. The position would include development of a new park being funded by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Caldwell received letters of reference from Donahue and V.K. Brown who headed the South Park Commission's recreation department. He also had submitted a copy of an earlier letter of recommendation from Jensen in which he described Caldwell as a "genius."³² In his application, Caldwell explained his belief that he could accomplish great things by working for a smaller park district:

Partly out of the Jensen stimulus, I resolved several years past, to secure a superintendent's position in some smaller park system. I have certain ideas, long cherished, too difficult or impossible of achievement in a large system with its bureaucracies and affinities: In a small park, even with a little money to spend, relatively speaking, much might be done. It is out of the nature of things that the cheapest and nearest to hand properly understood, is the best and most beautiful. All ugliness is expensive— certainly expensive to build.³³

During Caldwell's interview in Dubuque, board members drove him to the 160 acre site intended for the park. They told him that they would hire an architect to design pavilions so that people could use the park even during the winters. After being offered the job, Caldwell said that he would only accept the position if he could design everything, including the pavilions. They told him that would be impossible, because they needed the building plans immediately. Caldwell later explained:

²⁹ Domer, *Alfred Caldwell*, 7.

³⁰ Ibid, 10.

³¹ Alfred Caldwell, interview by Betty Blum, 52.

³² Domer, *Alfred Caldwell*, 14.

³³ Alfred Caldwell to Charles T. Landon, January 24, 1934, quoted in Domer, *Alfred Caldwell*, 15.

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They let me off in front of this hotel and I went up the street and I found a store where I could buy a small drawing board, paper, a t-square, a triangle, and a pencil or two. I took it back and started to work. I laid it down about six o'clock the next morning. I worked continuously, all through the night until six o'clock and the phone rang at nine o'clock in the morning and they said, "We're in the lobby." I said, "One moment." I took it off the board and took it down to them. It was finished. [It was] the plan for the first building of this park.³⁴

They immediately hired Caldwell, providing a car so he could drive back to Chicago to pack up his family and move to Dubuque. Caldwell was extremely excited about the new job, especially the opportunity to design the new park and supervise the hundreds of workmen who would build it.

The design of Eagle Point Park, which Caldwell called the "City in a Garden," was "a conceptual realization of his fundamental belief in the unity of man and nature."³⁵ The site's natural attributes inspired the design. Caldwell left many areas of the park in their natural condition, simply removing vegetation for trails and clearings. His use of stone in the pavilions, council rings, and ledges of a prairie stream were evocative of the region's horizontally striated limestone outcroppings. Caldwell took full advantage of breathtaking views from the bluff, placing the council rings here, and nestling the park buildings into lower areas of the landscape. When President Franklin Delano Roosevelt visited Eagle Point Park, shortly before it opened, he declared, "This is my idea of a worthwhile boondoggle."³⁶

Despite the brilliance of Caldwell's design for Eagle Point Park, and his deep commitment to the project, Caldwell was not well liked in Dubuque. Some people criticized him for cutting down trees near the entry to the park; others said that he did not respond quickly enough to the park board's requests. One board member complained that he paid too much attention to details. Caldwell's biographer, Dennis Domer suggests that these were "only pretenses, rather than the real problem."³⁷ He asserts:

Caldwell was simply different— too different for Dubuque. He dressed differently, just as his mentors Frank Lloyd Wright and Jens Jensen did. He was too much for "the biggest small town in America," as Caldwell put it. Why a man from Chicago? In this small town in 1936, the park board eventually could no longer resist the pressure from the townspeople to put one of their own in charge.³⁸

In mid- January of 1936, while Eagle Point Park was still under construction, the park commissioners called Caldwell into their offices and fired him.

Alfred, Geda, and their two small children returned to Chicago by train, penniless. Desperate for a job and with few options because of the Great Depression, Caldwell called upon his prominent friend George Donahue once again. By this time, Donahue was in an even more powerful position than any of the previous times that Caldwell had asked him for help before. In 1934, due to the nation's economic crisis and the new opportunities for local governmental agencies to receive federal relief funds, Chicago's 22 independent park commissions were consolidated into the Chicago Park District. The South Park Commission had long been respected as the most progressive and largest of the city's park agencies. Edward J. Kelly who became the Mayor of Chicago in

³⁴ Alfred Caldwell, interview by Betty Blum, 61-62.

³⁵ Wilson, *Modern Architecture in America*, 203.

³⁶ Ibid, Letter from Caldwell to Richard Guy Wilson, December 9, 1976, 203.

³⁷ Domer, *Alfred Caldwell*, 19.

³⁸ Ibid.

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1933 had served as a member of the South Park Commission Board from 1924 to 1933. In 1926, Kelly's brother-in-law, George Donahue was appointed as General Superintendent of the South Park Commission. When the Chicago Park District was formed, Mayor Kelly appointed Donahue as the new organization's first General Superintendent. Caldwell contacted his powerful ally when he returned to Chicago in 1936. Donahue hired Caldwell as a senior landscape draftsman.

Reporting to the Landscape Division of the Engineering Department, Caldwell worked with many college-educated landscape architects, with whom he did not always see eye to eye. Luke Cosme, an engineer who sat near Caldwell suggested that: "everyone knew Caldwell was an uncompromising genius with a demanding personality who was best left alone to draw."³⁹ Alfred Caldwell was often frustrated with the bureaucracy and the challenges he faced in attempting to fully realize his brilliant plans. Cosme recalls that "everyone recognized Caldwell's ability, and though he was a loner and difficult to get along with, there was often a line of people leading to his desk."⁴⁰ In 1938, in hopes of a promotion to the position of landscape designer, Caldwell took a Civil Service Examination. On the bottom of his exam he wrote a note criticizing the test and its authors. In response to the note, his superiors failed him and he became ineligible for the promotion. Two years later, he retook the exam and received one of the highest marks.

Caldwell worked for the Chicago Park District from 1936 through 1940 with a few interruptions—he quit and/or was fired a few times, but the lack of opportunities during the Depression brought him back to the park district asking for his job back more than once. Despite his tumultuous relationship with the park district administration and his colleagues there, Caldwell accomplished much during these years. With the support of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the Chicago Park District conducted tens of millions of dollars of improvements in the parks. By 1937, the Chicago Park District had an administration and work force totaling nearly 10,000 employees.⁴¹ Because of his knowledge of plants, his wonderful design skills, and his ability to produce detailed plans at a relatively fast pace, Caldwell's superiors gave him many large and high profile projects.

Among his largest and most prominent assignments were planting plans for large areas of landfill in Burnham and Lincoln Parks, and designing a large part of Riis Park, on Chicago's northwest side. He knew that the opportunity to work on these projects was "a rare circumstance."⁴² The bureaucracy and restrictions stipulated by the WPA required that plans be produced at an unusually quick pace. Years later, Caldwell said:

Somebody would come down to where I was and say, 'we've got to have a list of the plants for Riis Park and the 55th Street Park. We've got to have them tonight.' I said 'but I haven't drawn the plans yet.' They said, "we've got to have the plant material.' Well I knew exactly what I was going to use. So I said, 'alright you come down in an hour and I'll have it for you.' Talk about doing things upside down. But I figured out the planting areas, kind of percentages where things were going and I got that real fast. Then I divided it by a certain coefficient and got the number of plants... So we bought the plants for these meticulous plans before they were even made.⁴³

The landfill projects in Burnham and Lincoln parks both included a vast peninsula jutting into Lake Michigan. The Burnham Park peninsula became known as Promontory Point and the one in Lincoln was named Montrose

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 27.

⁴¹ Chicago Park District Third Annual Report, 1937, p. 232-4

⁴² Alfred Caldwell, interviewed by Julia Sniderman and Robert Grese, January 31, 1987.

⁴³ Ibid.

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Point. Although both peninsulas were conceived prior to Caldwell's involvement, the landforms were well suited to his naturalistic style. Both sites were meant to provide urban dwellers refuge from the hustle and bustle of the city. Caldwell believed that the power of nature could be well conveyed on these landscapes sited at the edge of Lake Michigan.

Caldwell did all of the landscape improvements to the 500-acre Montrose Avenue and to the Foster Avenue Extension in Lincoln Park including the Montrose Point peninsula. Remaining true to Jensen's influence, Caldwell's plans conveyed a "naturalistic effect" with sweeping meadows, layered native plants, and winding paths.⁴⁴ The Lincoln Park Extension's planting palette:

...not only included native plum, crabapple and hawthorn trees, but also an evergreen shrub known as *Juniperus horizontalis*. While evergreens are often thought of as non-natives, this variety was known to grow naturally in Midwestern sandy areas... The extension plan scheme combined the shrub plantings with red maples on the Montrose Promontory to create a pleasing effect of dark green, while keeping the evergreens far away from the city street so they could be protected from smoke, grime, and dirt. An undergrowth of wildflowers and herbs not only complemented the naturalistic effect, but also acted as a ground cover eliminating the costly maintenance procedure of spading under the shrubs.⁴⁵

Years later, Caldwell reminisced about how much the public enjoyed the beautiful landscapes of native plants that he planted in the parks. He said that after planting "all these beautiful plants" that "the whole park was in blossom... people were astounded by the spring blossom. They had never seen anything like that."⁴⁶

Of all of Caldwell's Chicago park work, the redesign of a Victorian lily pool in Lincoln Park provided him with the greatest opportunity to fully convey his philosophies. In 1889, the Lincoln Park Commission's Superintendent John Pettigrew had the floral department install two artificially heated lily pools, including one just south of Fullerton Ave. and west of Cannon Drive. The "tender aquatics" were difficult to cultivate, and because these lily pools quickly became unsightly, they were often considered "Pettigrew's frog ponds."⁴⁷ The hour-glass shaped pond and its surrounding landscape were completely dilapidated when the park district asked Alfred Caldwell to completely redesign this area of Lincoln Park. This project allowed Caldwell to create the kind of quiet and introspective space that he believed city dwellers needed. It was also an opportunity to create a site symbolic of a natural Midwestern landscape.

In a 1942 essay, Alfred Caldwell wrote:

The garden of Lincoln Park was planned as a sanctuary of the native landscape, a place sequestered from Megalopolis, the jungle of profound ugliness; a cool, refreshing, clear place of trees and stones and running water—an exposition, in little, of the structure of the land. It was planned as a hidden garden of the people of Megalopolis.⁴⁸

In the center of the site, Caldwell designed a prairie river—a meandering lagoon with ledges of stratified

⁴⁴ Ibid, 132.

⁴⁵ Julia Sniderman, Bart Ryckbosch and Laura Taylor, "Lincoln Park, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form," (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1994) 78-79.

⁴⁶ Alfred Caldwell, "And That's What I've Got to Say to You Kids," *Friends of the Parks Newsletter* (Spring, 1988): 5.

⁴⁷ *Park and Cemetery* 10, no. 7 (1895): 129.

⁴⁸ Caldwell, *Alfred Caldwell*, 158.

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limestone. This was meant to represent glacial waters cutting through native rock. Caldwell considered this would be "...a veritable statement of the natural forces that created the terrain of Chicago."⁴⁹

The natural site of the Lily Pool proved to be quite compatible with Caldwell's symbolism. Well before the creation of Lincoln Park, the site was composed of natural glacial ridges on the east and west sides and a lower swale in the center. For the most part, these ridges remained when the Lincoln Park Commissioners installed the Victorian lily pool in the late 1880s. Caldwell retained the existing topography and made it even more dramatic in some areas of the landscape. In the center lower area, he created the prairie river to appear as though it had cut a channel through limestone bedrock. He designed a cascading waterfall at the northwest edge of the lagoon to represent the source of the prairie river. He also used limestone for ledges that served as retaining walls, paths and steps. "From varying heights, a slab path leads the observer around the expansive and seemingly natural enclave."⁵⁰ He placed a council ring, a circular stone bench, on one of the higher points of the landscape providing a gathering place at a dramatic overlook.

The prairie river, waterfall, council ring, stone paths and ledges, and use of native plants are all landscape design elements that reflect Jens Jensen's influence on Caldwell. Jensen incorporated meandering prairie rivers, often with waterfalls to represent the river source, in many designs, including that for Columbus Park, a designated National Historic Landmark in Chicago. The council ring is often considered Jensen's favorite element because he believed it was a very democratic space that could be used for story telling and other small gatherings. Quite often, Jensen's council rings had a hearthstone in the center, so that people could sit around a fire—a feature relating to Native American lore. Similarly, Caldwell's council ring in the Lily Pool has a center hearthstone. Jensen's inspiration can be seen in other details, such as use of stratified layers of stone, and stepping stone paths. Demis Domer, Alfred Caldwell's biographer asserts: "The Prairie School landscape that Alfred Caldwell made under Jensen's employ and throughout his own long and eventful career were a powerful testament to Jensen's influence."⁵¹

In addition to Jensen's profound impact, Frank Lloyd Wright's influence on Caldwell can be clearly seen in the design of the Lily Pool's entry gate and pavilion. The emphasis on horizontality, earthy colors and materials, relationship between the architecture and natural setting, and Japanese quality are all elements related to the work of Wright. Architectural historian Richard Guy Wilson asserts:

Similarities between Caldwell and Wright's work such as the roofs of Midway Garden or the fieldstone at Taliesin, can be observed. However, Caldwell's work needs no defense; his work expands the Wrightian idiom and also is more fully immersed in nature.⁵²

Caldwell described the pavilion as a "seating and gathering place by the water... constructed of oak timbers with copper capping details." He suggested that the "spreading horizontal structure is like a tree, rooted in a rock ledge."⁵³

Caldwell recognized that the Lily Pool and other Chicago park projects presented him with a unique opportunity to realize his design ideas. Having his work constructed as he envisioned was not altogether easy, however. In 1988, Caldwell recalled:

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Wilson and Robinson, *Modern Architecture in America*, 206.

⁵¹ Dennis Domer, "Cut from the Same Cloth," *A Force of Nature: The Life and Work of Jens Jensen* (Chicago: Chicago Dept. of Cultural Affairs, 2001).

⁵² Wilson and Robinson, *Modern Architecture in America*, 206.

⁵³ Caldwell, *Architecture and Nature*, 42.

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You know the politicians almost killed me trying to build this ... Lily Pond. You know there was a fight every hour on the hour until George Donahue called me up one day and said "Alfred, what in the hell is going on out there? I have had to stop being General Superintendent of the Park District to take care of these complaints."⁵⁴

At times Donahue intervened on Alfred Caldwell's behalf, and at other times, the young idealistic designer had to accept the alterations or changes that his colleagues made to his plans.

In 1938, towards the end of the construction of the Lily Pool, his associates at the park district made a decision that he could not accept. They decided to cut the majority of the wildflower plantings from the budget for the Lily Pool. Years later, Caldwell recalled:

So not to be beat, I talked it over with my wife. I had recently taken out an insurance policy for \$5,000 dollars. I cashed in my insurance policy. I got \$250 dollars. I went up to Wisconsin. I hired a truck. I had three or four people and they worked like mad for a whole day and a half. I loaded all these thousand and thousands of plants. I loaded them and brought them in all the way from Sauk County, Wisconsin. When I got back to the Lincoln Park Lily Pond, it was 6:00 pm on a Saturday night. We spread all the stuff out on the side of the slopes where they were to go. In the morning we planted them all. We finished the whole thing by 1:00 or 2:00 p.m. The lily pond was finished. The juneberry trees were in blossom. It was like paradise.⁵⁵

Caldwell often repeated a second story that occurred later on the day he planted the wildflowers at the Lily Pool. He explained that three mysterious men in black overcoats were looking closely at the site's details. He recalled, "They spoke in German. The tall one could speak a little English."⁵⁶ Paul Finfer, a former student of Alfred Caldwell, remembers his professor describing this chance meeting with the German visitors. Finfer recounts that as the men studied the pavilion at the Lily Pool, Caldwell approached. They pointed to the pavilion and asked, "Frank Lloyd Wright?" He thumped himself on the chest and replied, "No, Alfred Caldwell."⁵⁷ Caldwell remembered that one of the men was also intrigued with the way plants were growing between the crevices of the rocks.⁵⁸ The three men left, and Caldwell "often wondered mightily about them."⁵⁹ It wasn't until a couple of years later that Caldwell learned that they were Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Ludwig Hilberseimer and Walter Peterhans, the famous architects and planners who fled Nazi Germany to settle in Chicago to teach at the Armour Institute (now Illinois Institute of Chicago).

He had decided to study for the Illinois architects' examination and a friend of his suggested that he should sign up for a three-part evening class on architectural design at the Art Institute of Chicago. "His friend told him that "three Krauts who do awful architecture" would grade the drawings.⁶⁰ When Caldwell attended the first class, he quickly realized that the instructors Mies van der Rohe, Hilberseimer, and Peterhans, were the three men who had admired the details of the Lily Pool. They quickly recognized Caldwell's great talent. Hilberseimer and Peterhans helped prepare Caldwell for the architecture exam, "which he passed without difficulty at the

⁵⁴ Alfred Caldwell, "And That's What I've Got to Say to You Kids," *Friends of the Parks Newsletter* (Spring 1988), 5.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 5, 10.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵⁷ "Conversation with Alfred Caldwell," Lost and Found Productions, 1989.

⁵⁸ Domer, *Alfred Caldwell*, 29.

⁵⁹ Alfred Caldwell. "And That's What I've Got to Say to You Kids," *Friends of the Parks Newsletter* (Spring 1988), 10.

⁶⁰ Domer, *Alfred Caldwell*, 29.

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University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana.”⁶¹

Caldwell became particularly close with Hilberseimer, an architect and city planner who had founded the Department of Planning at the Bauhaus in 1928. Hilberseimer was quite impressed with Caldwell’s drawing abilities, a skill that he did not possess. He was writing a book and he asked Caldwell to produce some of its illustrations. “Caldwell read early versions of Hilberseimer’s book *The New City*, published in 1944, and he recognized ideas that paralleled his own philosophy of urban development.”⁶² Hilberseimer (who was nicknamed Hilbs) offered to pay Caldwell for the drawings, but he refused to accept any money for the work.⁶³ Hilbs encouraged Caldwell to enter his plan for “The City in the Landscape” in a competition sponsored by the *Herald American* focusing on ideas about improving Chicago. He also encouraged Caldwell to begin teaching. Although Alfred had never had a formal education, he worked as a professor at the Illinois Institute of Technology from 1945 to 1960, and later taught at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and the University of Southern California. (Caldwell was awarded a Master’s of Science in City Planning from the Illinois Institute of Technology in 1948 and an honorary doctorate in 1988).

In addition to his teaching career, Caldwell worked on landscape design, planning, and architectural projects throughout the rest of his life. Many of these were landscape plans for architectural projects designed by Mies van der Rohe and his associates including Lafayette Park (1955- 63), Detroit, Michigan and S. R. Crown Hall (1956) (NHL, 2001) and numerous other sites at the Illinois Institute of Technology. Caldwell designed a private park for Chicago’s Lake Point Tower, a residential skyscraper inspired by Mies and produced by two of his former employees, Schipporeit & Heinrich. Caldwell also created detailed plans and models for projects that were never built, such as the Montreal Zoo project (1954) and the Omaha Zoo project (1955). “Caldwell also had numerous smaller landscape projects during the 1950s, such as the landscape for the Hall residence (1954) in Deerfield, Illinois, and the striking prairie school landscape for Roosevelt Park (1957) in Gary, Indiana.”⁶⁴ Caldwell’s dearest project was the design and construction of his own property, which he called “the farm” in Bristol, Wisconsin. With the encouragement of Hilberseimer, Caldwell purchased the property in 1940 and worked on it for the rest of his life. The Prairie style site includes a house, studio, garage, lily pool, arbor, council ring, orchard, meadows, paths, and groves of trees.

Caldwell’s farm in Wisconsin is now owned and maintained by his daughter, Carol Dooley. She and other family members are committed to maintaining this important site that her father created over a period of more than 50 years. Alfred Caldwell’s farm has important association with his life because he wanted to provide his family with a way to escape the density of the city and a means to be closer with nature. Because it remains intact and is so closely associated with Alfred Caldwell’s life and philosophies, the farm is also very significant. However, in selecting a premier choice for a site to designate as a National Historic Landmark, it would not be as appropriate as the Lily Pool. The farm is a homestead built over a long period of time, beginning in the late 1950s and continuing through much of the 1990s. Although Caldwell designed much of the property, it does not have a cohesive design composition in the way that the Lily Pool does. It does not have each of the symbolic elements represented in his design for the Lily Pool. In addition, the Lily Pool well represents a very important time in Caldwell’s career—the late 1930s and it also magnificently conveys the homage he paid to both Jensen and Wright. There are no other sites in which he did so in such an obvious way.

In addition to the Lily Pool and his farm, there are a few other Caldwell properties that could be studied for their

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Alfred Caldwell, interview by Betty Blum, 95.

⁶⁴ Domer, *Alfred Caldwell*, 50.

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national significance. Eagle Point Park in Dubuque, Iowa is one, however, Caldwell was dismissed prior to the completion of the project and the landscape is somewhat degraded today. Promontory Point is another Chicago park project that might be considered for possible national significance. This site is particularly interesting because although Caldwell wasn't entirely satisfied with the execution of its design in the 1930s, the Chicago Park District hired him in 1989 to consult on its restoration. Caldwell advised in the replacement of unattractive concrete council rings with the circular stone benches that he had originally intended, and the landscape was replanted under his direction.

Of all of the landscapes designed by Alfred Caldwell, the Lily Pool is the strongest candidate to represent his poetic symbolism and design theories and philosophies in a site that strongly conveys his original plan today. Over the past decade, the Chicago Park District, citizens and civic organizations have been increasingly committed to the Lily Pool's rehabilitation and continued maintenance. Earlier in the site's history, there was not such a commitment. Under the guidance of Zoo Director, Marlin Perkins, the Lily Pool became the Zoo Rookery, an exhibit for exotic birds and water fowl in the 1940s. The site soon fell into disrepair as a result of overgrazing by zoo birds, heavy human foot traffic, erosion, the introduction of invasive plant materials, and inappropriate repairs.

After serving as the Zoo Rookery for over 40 years, the Lily Pool landscape had suffered terrible decline by the late 1980s. In 1990, Alfred Caldwell visited the Lily Pool, for the first time in many years. He was deeply saddened by its condition and declared the site "a dead world."⁶⁵ He also stated, "My idea was stupendous" adding "now its rubbish."⁶⁶ Although the Chicago Park District attempted to do a pilot restoration project in a small area of the Lily Pool landscape in the early 1990s, the initiative had not been properly presented to the public, and after numerous complaints about tree removal, the project was ended. Finally in 1997, the Friends of Lincoln Park (now Lincoln Park Conservancy) agreed to work with the Chicago Park District to build community consensus and to help raise funds for the rehabilitation.

After receiving a grant from the USDA Forest Service, the Friends of Lincoln Park conducted a series of five focus groups to develop a consensus plan for the rehabilitation of the site. The focus groups consisted of the following: experts in historic preservation, bird watchers and ecologists, individuals especially knowledgeable about Lincoln Park and active in its planning and management, activists and experts on the subject of accessibility, and members of the general public. The focus groups were presented with a video in which experts discussed the history, significance, and various problems with the Lily Pool landscape. After determining the results of the focus group meetings, the Friends of Lincoln Park and Chicago Park District engaged the services of Wolff, Clements, and Associates, landscape architects. The firm used historical research conducted by the Chicago Park District historian and the results of the focus groups to develop a consensus plan. The Friends of Lincoln Park raised approximately half of the \$2.5 million invested in the site rehabilitation. Wolff, Clements and Associates developed construction documents with assistance from consultants such as Applied Ecological Services and Eifler & Associates (preservation architects). The Chicago Park District carefully managed the project, with a staff landscape architect holding weekly meetings in the field to review progress during the project conducted between 2000 and 2002.

The exceptionally high quality of the Lily Pool rehabilitation has been recognized in many awards. These include a 2002 Richard H. Driehaus Outstanding Preservation Award; a 2003 Honor Award from the Illinois

⁶⁵ Alfred Caldwell to the staff of the Chicago Park District, video-tape of lecture by Mark Rosenthal, July 25, 1990.

⁶⁶ Mark Rosenthal, Carol Tauber, and Edward Uhler, *The Ark in the Park: The Story of Lincoln Park Zoo* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

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Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects; and a 2003 Distinguished Building Award from the Chicago Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. The future preservation and sensitive management for the site are anticipated for a number of reasons. The City of Chicago officially designated the Lily Pool as a Chicago Landmark in 2003. The Chicago Park District and Lincoln Park Conservancy have adopted a management plan that specifically identifies the strategies and techniques for operating and maintaining the site. The two organizations have been jointly undertaking a docent program by which trained volunteers provide interpretive tours of the site. And lastly, the Lincoln Park Conservancy is currently raising funds to support the position of Site Manager, a professional staff person responsible only for operations, programs, and management issues relating to the Lily Pool.

Although Alfred Caldwell did not live to see the rehabilitation of his Lily Pool landscape, today visitors can understand and enjoy his genius by visiting what is now known as the Alfred Caldwell Lily Pool in Lincoln Park.

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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: #

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: 3 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	16	447450	4641450

Verbal Boundary Description:

The property is bounded by the northern edge of the Fullerton Gate and north fence-line on the north, the Lincoln Park Zoo fence-line on the south, the west curb line of Cannon Drive on the east, and the Lily Pool's west fence-line on the west.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes the resources that have historically been a part of the Lily Pool in Lincoln Park designed by Alfred Caldwell and which maintain historic integrity.

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Date: December, 2004

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Philadelphia PA 19106

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(215) 597-8875

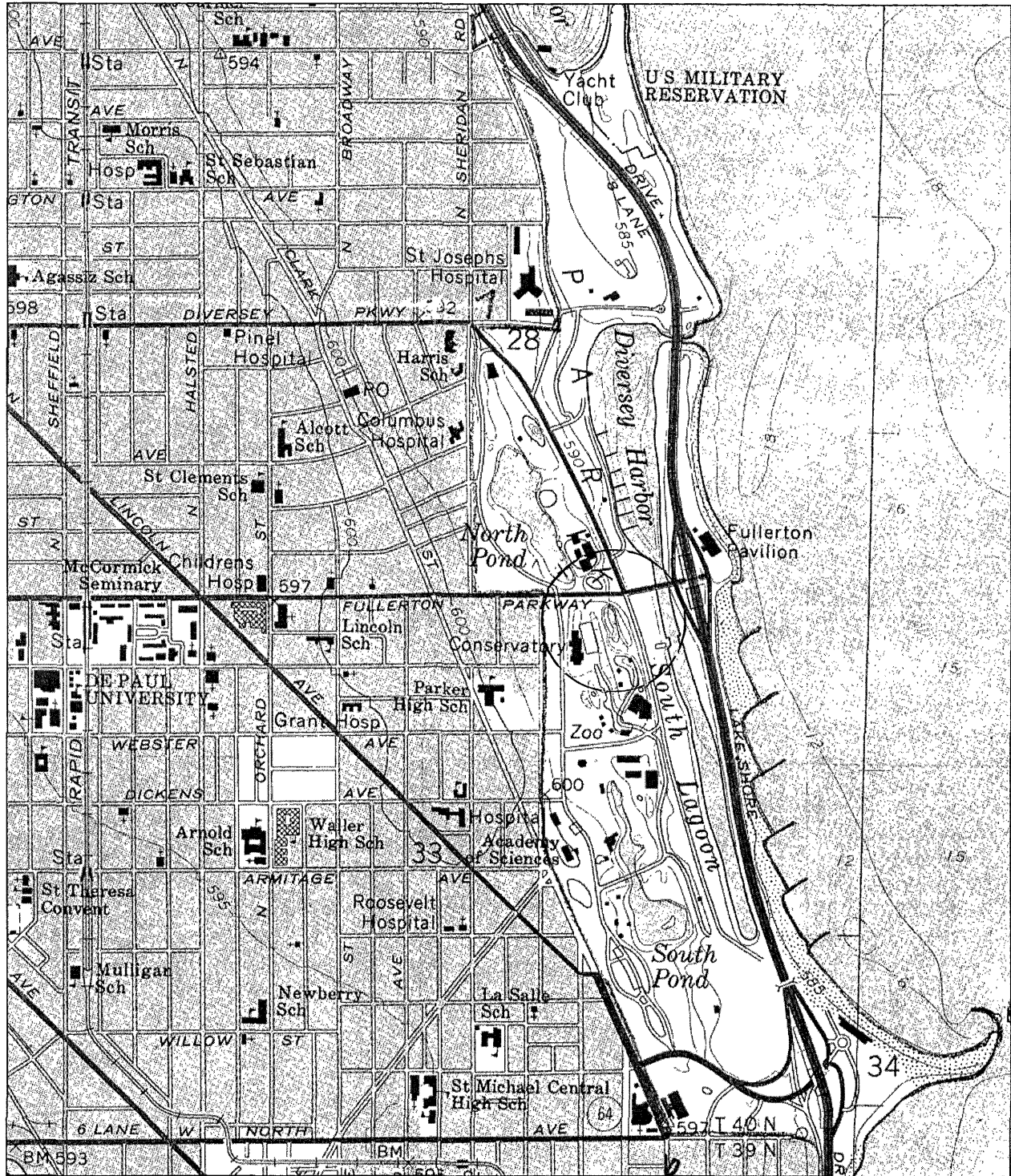
DESIGNATED A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK
February 17, 2006

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UTM Reference:	Zone 16	Easting	Northing
		447450	4641450

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Fullerton Gate and Lantern. Photo by Julia S. Bachrach, Chicago Park District, 2004.



Pavilion. Photo by Julia S. Bachrach, Chicago Park District, 2004.

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Council Ring. Photo by Julia S. Bachrach, Chicago Park District, 2004.



Waterfall. Photo by Julia S. Bachrach, Chicago Park District, 2004.

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Prairie River and Pavilion. Photo by Julia S. Bachrach, Chicago Park District, 2004.



Path and Waterfall. Photo by Julia S. Bachrach, Chicago Park District, 2004.

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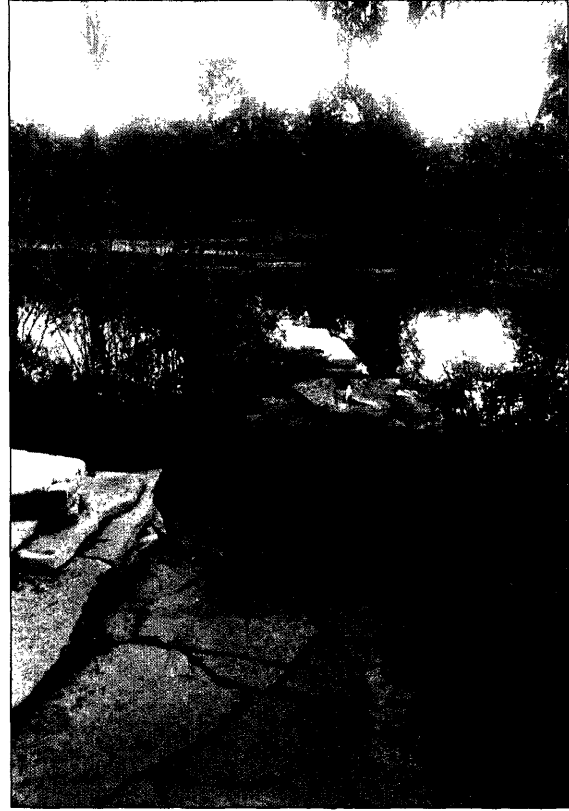
United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

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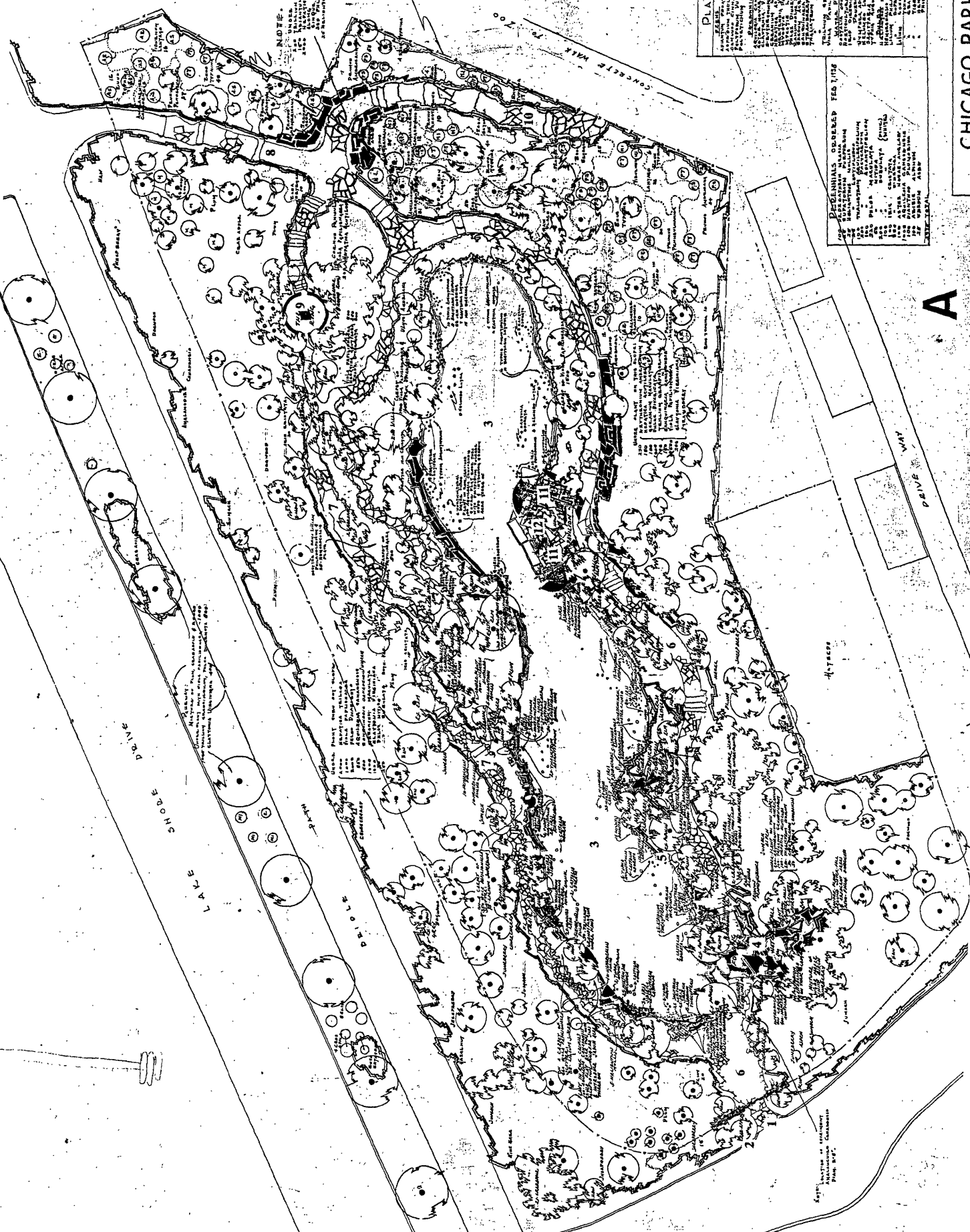


Steps leading to Council Ring.
Photos by Julia S. Bachrach, Chicago Park
District, 2004.



Path and Bird Bath.

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT LANDSCAPE DESIGN SECTION



NOTE:
 ALL PLANTINGS TO BE INSTALLED BY THE CONTRACTOR UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT.
 ALL PLANTINGS TO BE INSTALLED BY THE CONTRACTOR UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT.
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PLANT LIST

NO.	PLANT	QTY.	REMARKS
1	AMERICAN BIRCH	100	10' x 12'
2	AMERICAN HEMLOCK	50	10' x 12'
3	AMERICAN SPRUCE	50	10' x 12'
4	AMERICAN DOGWOOD	100	10' x 12'
5	AMERICAN YEW	50	10' x 12'
6	AMERICAN JUNIPER	50	10' x 12'
7	AMERICAN CEDAR	50	10' x 12'
8	AMERICAN PINE	50	10' x 12'
9	AMERICAN FIR	50	10' x 12'
10	AMERICAN LARCH	50	10' x 12'
11	AMERICAN TYPHOID FEVER FEVER	50	10' x 12'
12	AMERICAN TYPHOID FEVER FEVER	50	10' x 12'
13	AMERICAN TYPHOID FEVER FEVER	50	10' x 12'
14	AMERICAN TYPHOID FEVER FEVER	50	10' x 12'
15	AMERICAN TYPHOID FEVER FEVER	50	10' x 12'
16	AMERICAN TYPHOID FEVER FEVER	50	10' x 12'
17	AMERICAN TYPHOID FEVER FEVER	50	10' x 12'
18	AMERICAN TYPHOID FEVER FEVER	50	10' x 12'
19	AMERICAN TYPHOID FEVER FEVER	50	10' x 12'
20	AMERICAN TYPHOID FEVER FEVER	50	10' x 12'

PLANTING SCHEDULE

NO.	PLANT	QTY.	REMARKS
1	AMERICAN BIRCH	100	10' x 12'
2	AMERICAN HEMLOCK	50	10' x 12'
3	AMERICAN SPRUCE	50	10' x 12'
4	AMERICAN DOGWOOD	100	10' x 12'
5	AMERICAN YEW	50	10' x 12'
6	AMERICAN JUNIPER	50	10' x 12'
7	AMERICAN CEDAR	50	10' x 12'
8	AMERICAN PINE	50	10' x 12'
9	AMERICAN FIR	50	10' x 12'
10	AMERICAN LARCH	50	10' x 12'
11	AMERICAN TYPHOID FEVER FEVER	50	10' x 12'
12	AMERICAN TYPHOID FEVER FEVER	50	10' x 12'
13	AMERICAN TYPHOID FEVER FEVER	50	10' x 12'
14	AMERICAN TYPHOID FEVER FEVER	50	10' x 12'
15	AMERICAN TYPHOID FEVER FEVER	50	10' x 12'
16	AMERICAN TYPHOID FEVER FEVER	50	10' x 12'
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18	AMERICAN TYPHOID FEVER FEVER	50	10' x 12'
19	AMERICAN TYPHOID FEVER FEVER	50	10' x 12'
20	AMERICAN TYPHOID FEVER FEVER	50	10' x 12'

A

SCALE: AS SHOWN
 DRAWN BY: [Name]
 CHECKED BY: [Name]

