

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Wahconah Park

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 143 Wahconah Street n/a not for publication

city or town Pittsfield _____ vicinity _____

state Massachusetts code MA county Berkshire code 003 zip code 01201

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Betsy Friedberg, National Register Director June 24, 2005
Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____
Massachusetts Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional Comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. 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): _____

for
Signature of the Keeper Edson Beall Date of Action 8/12/05

Wahconah Park
Name of Property

Berkshire, MA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

(Check only one box)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	building
<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	sites
<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	structures
		objects
<u>9</u>	<u>7</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION and CULTURE – sports facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION and CULTURE – sports facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: shed-roof grandstand with wings

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls corrugated steel

roof corrugated steel

other steel and wood

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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Continuation Sheet

Wahconah Park
Pittsfield (Berkshire), MA

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SUMMARY

Wahconah Park consists of a steel-framed, wooden plank-decked ca.1950 grandstand with corrugated steel shed roof and back end enclosure; a minor league fenced and lighted baseball field; a gravel parking area; and adjacent Parks Department playfields with a basketball court and two youth baseball diamonds. It is located adjacent to and within the floodplain of the West Branch of the Housatonic River at 143 Wahconah Street on 18.2 acres in the central section of the 42-square-mile city of Pittsfield, Massachusetts whose current population is 41,559 (5 Dec. 2003 city census).

Ten parcels make up the 18.2-acre Wahconah Park. They were assembled by the City of Pittsfield between 1919 and 1994. Wahconah Park is oriented in a north-south direction, with the grandstand and its minor league ballfield at the northern end, the two-acre unpaved parking area abutting and just south of the ballfield, and the Parks Department playgrounds at the southern end (See map titled "Wahconah Park, Aerial View - Labeled"). The minor league baseball field has been located on the same northern location within the property since 1892.

To the west of Wahconah Park and separated from it by the West Branch of the Housatonic River is a city-owned vacant 84-acre parcel in the floodplain of the river. To the north of the park is the expansive Pittsfield Cemetery. Adjacent to the park on its east is a one-lot deep row of small parcels containing mixed residences and small businesses facing on and separating the park from its access road, Wahconah Street. Beyond the east side of Wahconah Street and to the south of the park property are dense sections of 19th and 20th century mixed single and multiple family residences. Carved out of the heavily residential section to the southeast of the park is the major medical center of Berkshire County, Berkshire Medical Center, a teaching hospital affiliated with the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester. To the southwest of the park it abuts the Central Business District of the City of Pittsfield.

CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

Grandstand

Designed in the late 1940s by local architects Joseph McArthur Vance and Bradley & Gass (architects' sketch, Figure 1), with significant structural design contributed by the Hussey Mfg. Co., construction of the 2,000-seat, three-section grandstand was started on 1 October 1949 and completed in late April 1950 at a cost of \$114,345.80, paid for by city appropriations. A separate contract for \$13,200, also paid by a city appropriation, covered the cost of fencing in the ballfield. It was open to the public in time for the first Canadian-American League game on 2 May 1950.

The grandstand was built on a foundation of 97 New Hampshire spruce piles that were driven into the subsoil of clay and hardpan in October 1949 until the substratum ledge was reached. The substratum

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ledge runs from north to south varying in depth from 16 to about 38 feet below the original ground level. The piles were leveled and the upper end of each was encased in a corrugated steel casing, driven partially around the butt of the wood, and then filled with cement. The head of the casing was surrounded with a two-foot-square cement pier. The grandstand superstructure was built upon the piers. Each piling was calculated to be able to support 20 tons.

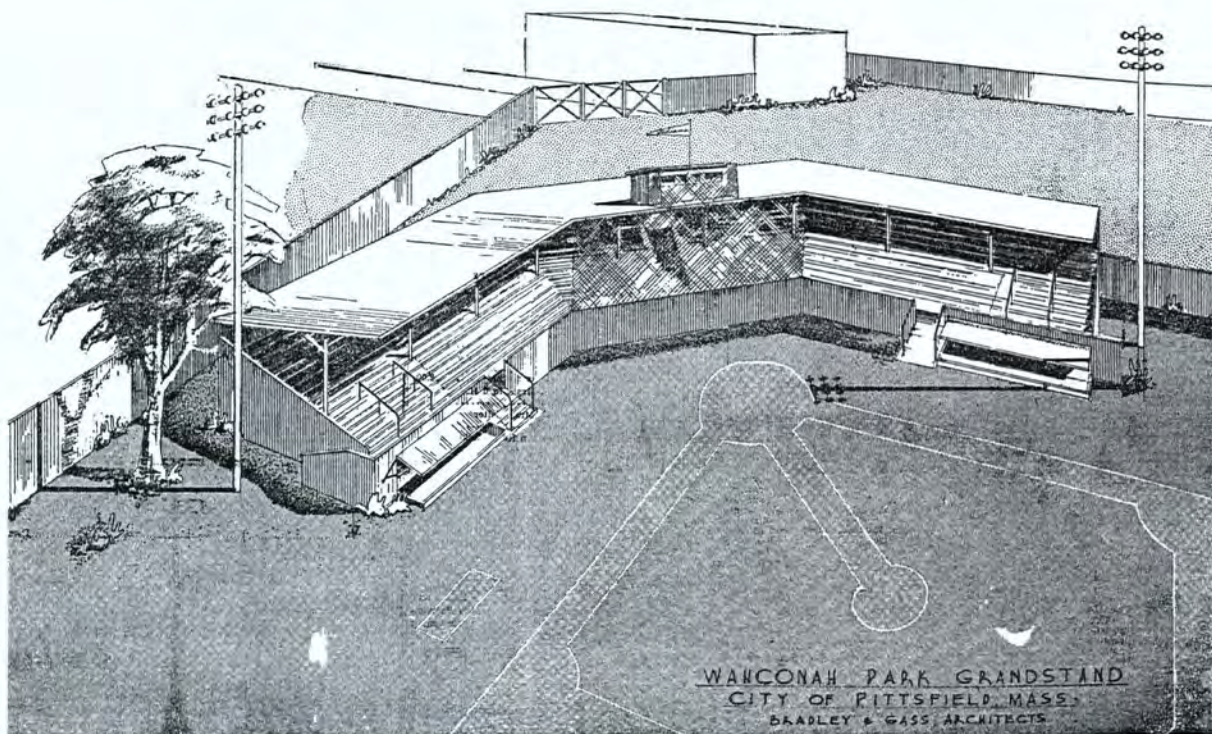


FIGURE 1. Architects' sketch of c.1950 Wahconah Park grandstand.¹

The handicapped-accessible grandstand is constructed of cross-braced steel I-beam 8"WF 24² columns and steel 10"WF I-beam risers forming a frame to support tiered seating and a corrugated
(continued)

¹ Please see Section 9, for attributions for Figures 1-6

² 8"WF 24 is a standard industry term indicating 8"-wide flange and 24 lb/ft, the weight per linear foot of the I-beam.

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Pittsfield (Berkshire), MA

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steel shed roof, as shown in the section through the grandstand in Figure 2. The back of the grandstand is enclosed with corrugated steel pierced by 18 window vents for air circulation. All other sides are open. (Archival Photographs 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9)

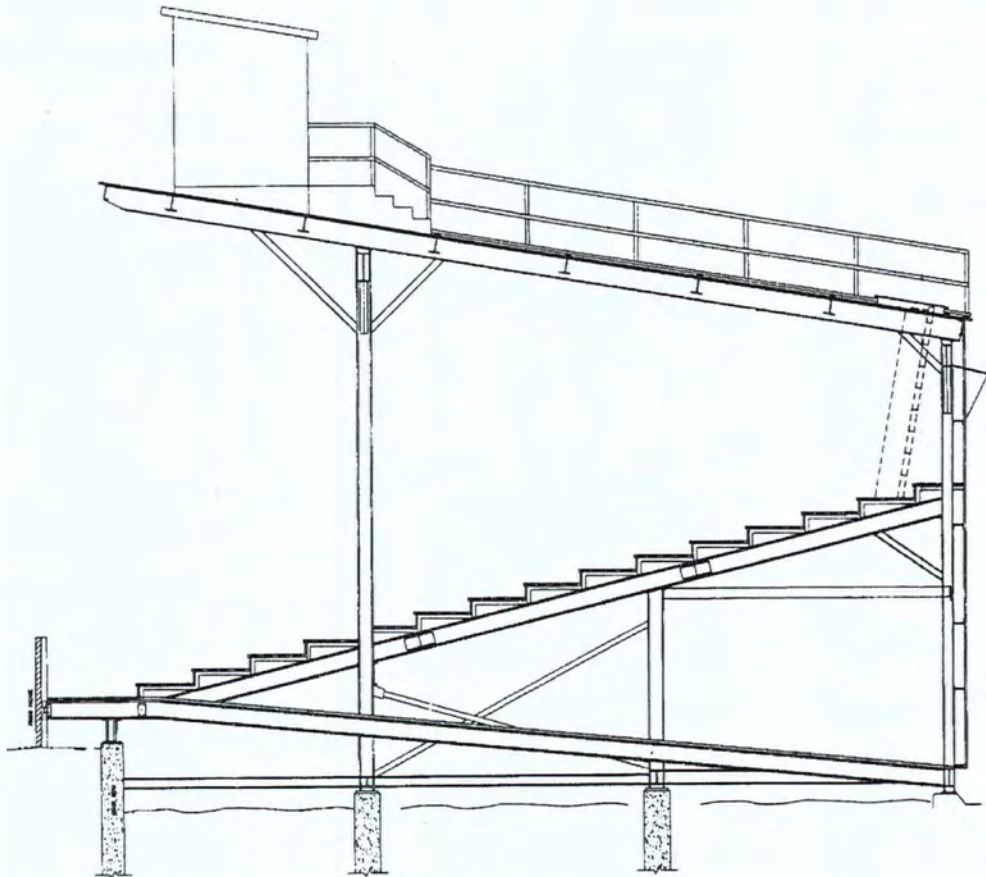


FIGURE 2.

Section through 38-foot deep ca.1950 Wahconah Park grandstand showing steel support structure.

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The grandstand has three main sections, a center section behind home plate and a wing on each side of it angled 45° toward the ball field and extending partway along a baseline. Stray balls are prevented from threatening the center section patrons by a wire mesh that extends the width and height of this section. In footprint, the grandstand is approximately 13,000 square feet. The perimeter along the backside of the three sections is approximately 260 feet, and along the front side of the three sections about 192 feet, as shown in the sketch in Figure 3. Angle steel is welded to the steel substructure to provide tiering for wood plank steps and seating. The ca.1950 seating for 2,000 in the grandstand consisted of 500 reserved seats and seating for 1,500 on benches made of wrought iron with 2"x10" pressure-treated Douglas fir stock for seats and backrests. The architects' original drawings show the notation "2000 seats @ 18" per seat" on a sketch illustrating 15 rows of tiered seating. The same 15 rows of tiered seating exist currently with the following exceptions: handicapped-accessible seating was updated in 1997 to provide wheelchair seating for five by leveling a short section of the first two tiers on one side of the entry ramp, replacing the equivalent of 30 box seats; the lowest five tiers of the grandstand adjacent to the promenade were converted into 347 box seats in 2002; and all seating was removed from row six, separating the box seats from general admission seating. The upper nine rows, rows 7 through 15, remain arranged for bench seating as they were originally. Additional right and left field bleacher seating can accommodate 1560 spectators, bringing the total capacity within the stadium to approximately 3260. Bleachers trucked in from other Parks Department facilities can increase the stadium seating capacity when needed.

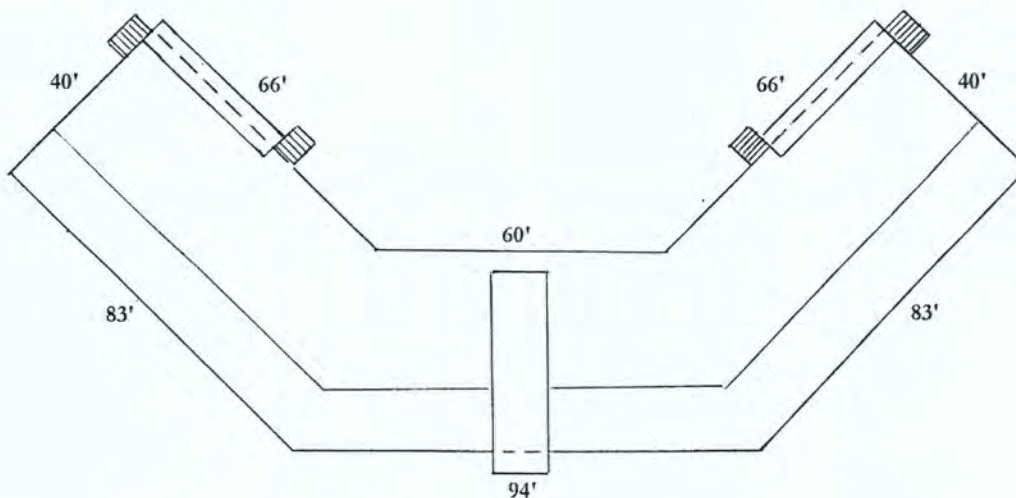


FIGURE 3. Dimensioned plan of ca.1950 Wahconah Park grandstand.

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Wahconah Park
Pittsfield (Berkshire), MA

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When the grandstand was constructed in 1950, the space at its back beneath the tiered seats was outfitted with team dressing rooms, showers, team and public rest rooms, concession rooms, and storage. In May 1978, work was completed to upgrade these facilities to include ramps, stalls, and toilets for the handicapped, and new lighting in the public rest rooms. At the same time, the dugouts were moved and built outside the grandstand, at its ends. The grandstand was painted inside and out. A new foundation wall was built under the stands and considerable work done to the substructure where frost heaves over the years had shifted the stand around, in some places off the cement piers.

A \$300,000 renovation of Wahconah Park was undertaken in 1997. Repairs to the grandstand included installation of new steel supports, new pressure-treated southern yellow pine decking on the promenade and first two rows of seats, and the addition of an extra row of box seats. The new steel supports were necessary because of deterioration of the front sections of the original steel I-beams supporting the promenade and first two rows of seats. All 39 10"WF steel I-beam risers running from front to back were cut away from the front façade to just under the back of the second row of seats. The new I-beam sections were butt-welded to the ca.1950 beams. On both sides of the butt joint, 1'6" x 6" x 3/8" gussets were field-welded on all edges.

In 1986 a concrete block 24'x30' home team locker room was added on to the back side of the grandstand and spaces under the grandstand seating were infilled with partitions to create storage space and a washroom. A 22'x16' addition to the back side was added in 1994 for a visitors' clubhouse. A 1997 repairs project included new tile in the restrooms and new carpeting in the clubhouse. Currently, facilities under or attached to the grandstand include handicapped-accessible men's and women's rest rooms; locker rooms, restrooms, showers, and clubhouses for both home and visiting teams; concession rooms; and storage areas. The changes to the grandstand since its construction are shown in the sketch in Figure 4. The 1986, 1994, and 1997 alterations have not affected the grandstand's or Park's overall integrity. The current ancillary spaces under the grandstand and attached to it are shown in the floor plan in Figure 5.

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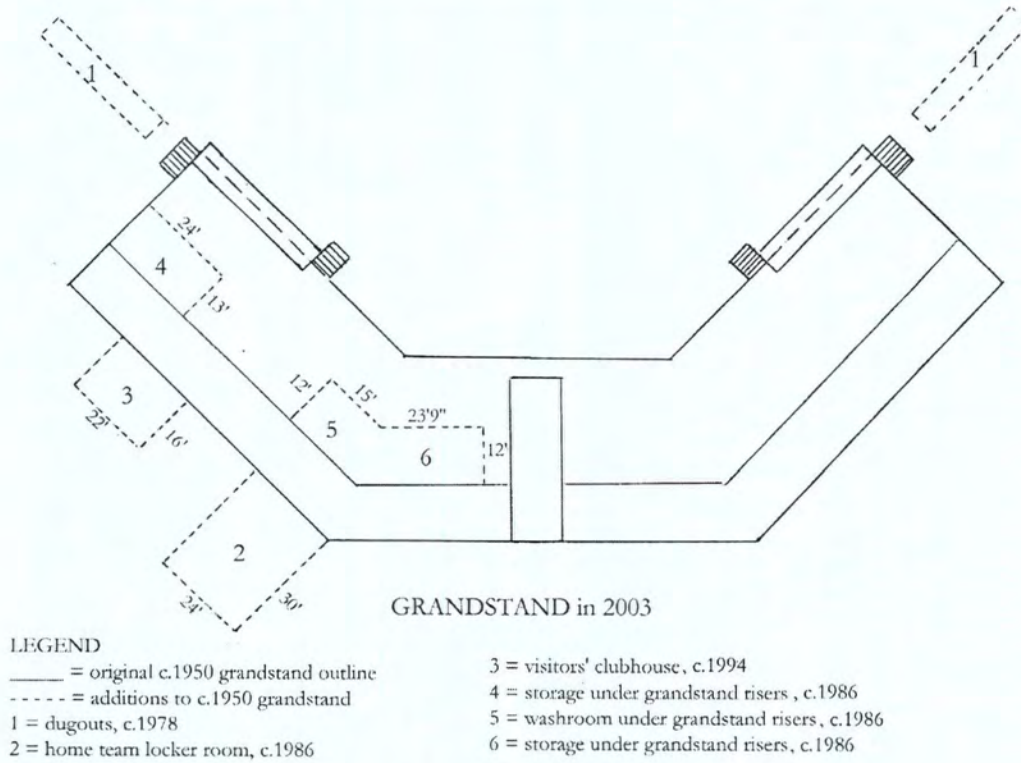


FIGURE 4. Additions to the ca.1950 Wahconah Park grandstand.

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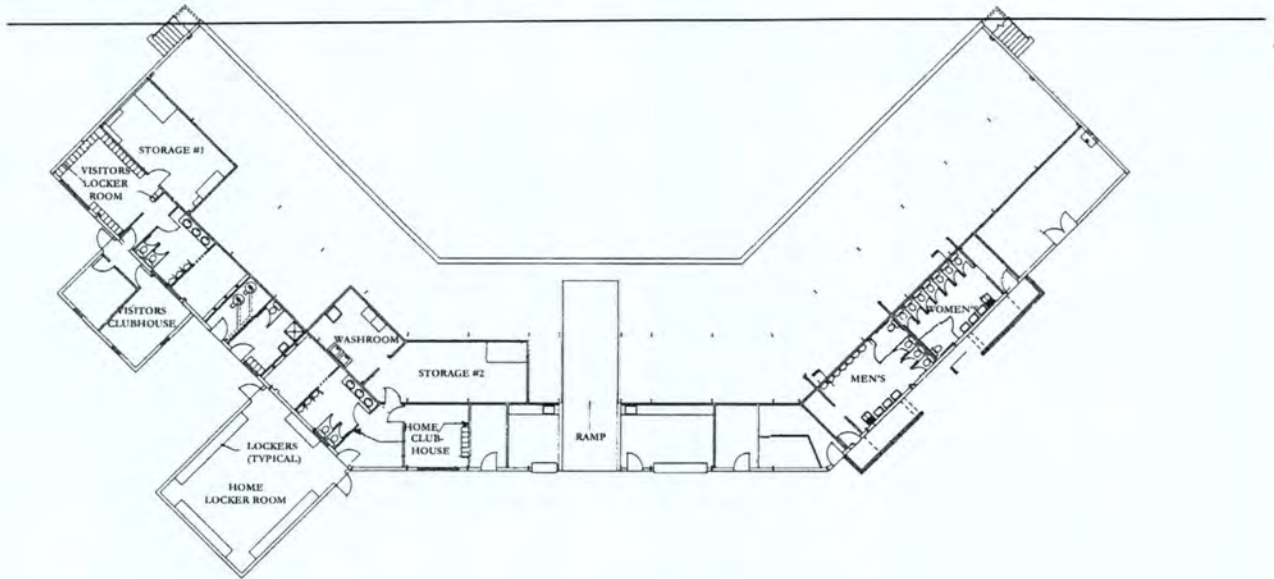


FIGURE 5. Floor plan of current facilities under and attached to the grandstand.

Bleachers

There are two sets of contributing ca. 1950 bleachers, one along the first baseline and a second along the third baseline. They are comprised of structural steel frames and No. 1 dense grade Southern Yellow Pine pressure-treated kiln-dried planks for seatboards, footboards, and sleepers. The manufacturer reported that "when tested, individual 12' sections have supported 683 pounds per individual 18" seat without any sign of failure, or four times their full seating capacity". The first baseline bleachers have 15 rows of 96' planks providing a capacity of 960 seats while the third baseline bleachers have 15 rows of 60' planks providing a capacity of 600 seats for a total bleacher capacity of 1560 (Archival Photograph # 6). Capacity figures are consistent with and have been confirmed by a review of old certificates of inspection as well as a manufacturer's specifications brochure of the era. The bleachers, Hussey's Model "6", were manufactured by and purchased from the Hussey Mfg. Co., Inc. of North Berwick, Maine and installed at approximately the same time as the grandstand was built in 1950. Recent correspondence with Ronald Bilodeau of the Hussey Seating Company indicates that the firm supplied structural steel for the grandstand's sidewalls and roof, but another unidentified firm would have produced the "skin" for the structure.

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~~When the Parks Department had a full complement of employees, the bleachers were knocked~~
down and removed from Wahconah Park every fall and transported to the Parks Department
maintenance buildings for storage to retard deterioration and repairs. Maintenance was on a two-
year cycle. One year the planks would be scraped, sanded and recoated. The next year the steel
supports would be sandblasted, inspected, repairs made as needed, and painted. Budget
constraints beginning in the 1980s caused a serious reduction in Parks Department personnel.
The annual removal and reinstallation had to be eliminated. Maintenance is now done *in situ*.
The third base bleachers were overhauled in 2003 and the first base bleachers in 2004. This
careful attention to the physical state of the bleachers has resulted in these over half-century-old
bleachers being in superb condition.

Ballfields

The current minor league contributing baseball field is oriented so that the grandstand, batter, and
catcher face west. During games played in the evening, "sun delays" were common beginning in
the 1940s. Trees beyond the outfield fence have grown tall and dense enough to sometimes
provide shade for the eyes of the batter, catcher, and home plate umpire so that this renowned
feature of the ballpark is a hazard for players and officials less often. Although the orientations of
the playing field and grandstand have been changed a few times since 1892, they have remained
on the same acreage at the north end of the Park since 1892.

By May 1978, major renovations to the ballfield had been completed, funded by a federal grant. The
primary purpose of the renovations to the ballfield was to end a chronic problem with flooding and
soggy grounds caused when the adjacent West Branch of the Housatonic River overflowed onto the
park property. The playing field was raised four feet, with the outfield area pitched toward
centerfield and from the center toward both foul lines for drainage. The infield diamond was
provided with skinned baselines and pitcher's mound, amenities it had before the renovation. A
sprinkler system using well water was installed for the entire sodded area for dry summer spells. The
playing field was enlarged to hold the by then traditional Wahconah contributing football field
without any of its playing surface touching the infield, with room for bleachers on both sides of the
football field. The newly fenced-in bigger outfield meant that to reach the fence, a batter would have
to drive a ball 340 feet down the left-field line, 380 in the center, about 430 in right center, and 335
down the right-field line.

The contractor on the 1997 renovations to the park has estimated that 30-50% of the loam was
removed from the outfield to prepare it for the installation of a drainage system to cure the soggy
conditions after rainstorms. A network of drainage pipes was installed in a bed of sand topped by
loam and sod. Renovations in 1997 also included the removal of the Marlboro Man advertising sign
from the fence.

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Parking Area

In approximately the center of the 18.2-acre Park, there is a contributing gravel parking lot that has existed in its present configuration since at least 1950. It is approximately 90,000 square feet and will accommodate about 225 automobiles.

Parks Department Recreational Facilities

At the southern end of Wahconah Park, the Parks & Recreation Department maintains three playing surfaces including two contributing youth baseball diamonds that were originally laid out in approximately 1940 (Archival Photograph #1). They are sandlot practice fields with the Little League regulation 60' between bases. For both, only the base paths are skinned (as opposed to, for example, softball, where the entire infield is skinned). Both fields have Little League regulation size pitchers mounds

NONCONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

Dugouts

Currently, the two non-contributing dugouts are just outside the grandstand, one parallel to the first base line and the other parallel to the third base line and are of equivalent dimensions to the original dugouts. They were moved to these positions as a result of the renovations completed in 1978 that included raising the ballfield by four feet. The change in elevation of the playing field made it impossible to use the two original 33' long x 5'6" deep dugouts that were below grade and integral with the c.1950 grandstand, placed on the outside corner of each wing.

Lighting & Scoreboards

The federally funded renovations at Wahconah Park completed by May 1978 included a new non-contributing lighting system. Concrete foundations measuring 12' x 12' by 6' or 4' deep, weighing up to 60 tons each, were built for eight new light poles surrounding the perimeter of the ballfield. The eight poles carried a total of 128 lights, each weighing about 85 pounds. The bolts were 2½" diameter by 8' long. Seven additional lights were installed under the roof of the grandstand to light up the shadows between home plate and the stands. The self-weathering poles are from 90 to 95' high with platforms for maintenance of the lights and safety features for repairmen. New lenses were installed in all outfield lights during a 1997 park repairs project. The renovations completed in 1978 included removal of the original scoreboard and installation of two new scoreboards for baseball and football with new control boxes in the press box.

Outbuildings

There are five (5) small outbuildings that provide support functions for the Park. All are constructed

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Wahconah Park
Pittsfield (Berkshire), MA

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of wood. Two are small maintenance sheds built in 1965. A third is a 14' x 8' wooden pizza shed with electrical service built in 1992. A fourth is a 10-foot by 18-foot beer shed constructed in 2002. The last is a ticket booth. Ticket booths have existed at the Park from its beginning. There are insufficient records to determine how many. The most recent 4' x 8' one (possibly from 1950) currently is being renovated.

Parks Department Recreational Facilities

South of the unpaved parking lot and separated from it by a guardrail and gate is an open, grassy recreational area. Within this portion of Wahconah Park there is a small basketball court and two sandlot practice baseball fields (Archival Photograph #1). For many years the City maintained a small playground near the basketball court. When the play equipment became unsafe it was removed and never replaced. Though mainly an open recreational area, portions are used for parking cars during large events. This area is also used periodically as a staging area for fireworks displays.

The two contributing sandlot youth baseball fields with Little League dimensions are supported by the noncontributing benches for players on the first and third base sides and the two non-contributing 20' by 15' angled backstops for the fields that were both built of steel chain link mesh in approximately 1960.

The noncontributing 42' by 25' basketball court with steel hoop standards and paved surface was installed in 1970. A specialized basketball court surface coating was applied over the tar-type pavement and lines painted on top of the coating.

(end)

Wahconah Park

Name of Property

Berkshire, MA

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

ENTERTAINMENT / RECREATION

Period of Significance

1892- 1955

Significant Dates

1892 (ballfield)

1950 (grandstand)

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Joseph McArthur Vance and Bradley & Gass

David McNab Deans, general contractor

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

see continuation sheets

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Wahconah Park
Pittsfield (Berkshire), MA

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SUMMARY

Wahconah Park is significant under Criteria A and C at the local level for its contribution to the history of Pittsfield in Entertainment/Recreation and Architecture. It is also eligible at the state level: no other wooden minor league ballfields remain in the state, and in fact few fields of this type remain in use nationally. Existing at the mid- and bottom levels of professional baseball for most of its lifetime, Wahconah Park has escaped major renovations at a period when ballfields have been forced to significantly alter their original integrity or risk demolition. What remains is a sports facility steeped in tradition and little changed through time.

The history of the ca.1892 ballfield at Wahconah Park portrays a continuous pattern of the evolution of organized baseball and other large group leisure activities in small American cities that have provided a recreational environment important for community enjoyment. The ca. 1950 grandstand is an example of small town ballpark design whose simple structure and human-scale proportions have enhanced the recreational activities shared there by community people. Together, the ballfield and grandstand have borne silent witness to the creative use of the stadium in Pittsfield as a large open-air location for its citizens to join in civic entertainment and to gather for mutual support in a time of need. While the park has played an important role in the city's recreational history, it has not been a static one. Rather, the services to which the park has been put have demonstrated its ability to remain a part of the living fabric of the city, adapting itself to functions requiring a large open-air arena.

Wahconah Park illustrates the means by which such a facility can benefit a local economy. The presence of the grandstand at Wahconah Park has provided the community with a significant stimulus to the local economy in revenues for merchants, rental income for the City of Pittsfield, infusions of cash for local organizations, and when professional baseball teams are in residence, salaries for players and revenues for team owners and concessionaires.

The father-son team of Abraham and George Burbank was instrumental in the development of downtown Pittsfield during its formative years ranging from the mid to late 1800s and just into the 20th century. George Burbank built hundreds of homes in downtown Pittsfield, many of which are still extant. George Burbank built the first Wahconah Park grandstand and ballfield in 1892 on property he owned. After his death the City acquired the Burbank Wahconah Park property and several abutting parcels. Over the years additional abutting properties have been purchased by the City, bringing the park to its present 18.2 acres.

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ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION (Criterion A)

Baseball on the Minor League Field

Just as the United States was developing its unique form of government in the 1800s, the fledgling nation was also developing its own sports and its own network of organizations that eventually would feed talent into national teams. Establishment by a New York City club of a standardized set of rules for baseball in 1845 spurred interest in the game and it grew rapidly. Four years after the Civil War ended, the Cincinnati Red Stockings began to pay its baseball players. In between 1876 when the present National Baseball League was organized and 1900 when the American League was organized, Wahconah Park hosted its first event.

The first event of any kind that took place at Wahconah Park was a baseball game on 9 August 1892 at 4:05 pm between the semi-professional Albany Gises and a hastily assembled Pittsfield team. The "Pittsfields" ' ' convincing win that day and in three successive games played on 13 August, 20 August, and 27 August 1892 would forever pair Wahconah Park and baseball in the minds of Pittsfielders. Although Pittsfield's entry into the New York State League in 1894 was a short lived association that would be concluded after 30 games, the city's association with semi-pro leagues starting less than two decades later firmly established professional baseball at Wahconah Park.

Beginning in 1913 and 1914, there was a professional Pittsfield team based at Wahconah associated with a variety of minor leagues over the years. Among the more recent franchises were the Class AA Pittsfield Red Sox (1965-1969), the Pittsfield Senators and Rangers (1970-1975), the Berkshire Brewers affiliated with the Milwaukee Brewers (1976), the Pittsfield Cubs (1985-1988) of the Eastern League, the Class A Pittsfield Mets (1989-1999) and Pittsfield Astros (2000) of the New York-Penn League, and the Berkshire Black Bears of the independent Northern and Northeast Leagues (2002-2003). On 15 April 1985 NBC's Gene Shalit hosted the filming of opening day at Wahconah Park as 4,000 fans welcomed the minor league Pittsfield Cubs to their home opener, broadcast on NBC's *Today Show* the next morning.

In the early years, Wahconah Park was host to professional African American teams of that era including the Cuban Giants and the Brooklyn Royal Giants who played at Wahconah in the late 1800s. The Boston Red Sox played two games in each of the 1921 and 1922 seasons against the Pittsfield "Hillies", and again in 1928, with the Hillies winning three. In 1922 Jim Thorpe played baseball at Wahconah against the Pittsfield Hillies, once as a member of the Hartford Senators, and twice with the Worcester Boosters. Lou Gehrig, playing with the Hartford Senators, appeared in five games at Wahconah in 1924. In one, he blasted the ball over the center field fence in a drive that is still a topic of discussion. Charles "Casey" Dillon Stengel, "owner" and player-manager of the Eastern League Worcester team, played baseball at Wahconah Park on

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Wahconah Park
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four occasions in 1925. One is memorable for Stengel's banishment from Wahconah Park by the umpire for failing to obey the umpire's directive to leave the playing field after being called out on strikes.

Community people point with pride to the greats in baseball who have played at Wahconah Park. But they also derive great satisfaction in knowing that Wahconah has been on the circuit of minor league playing fields that have given young men with the dream of playing in the big leagues the opportunity to chase that dream before local appreciative fans. Many men who played at Wahconah on Pittsfield minor league teams have gone on to the major leagues. They include such stars as Al Rosen and Jim Lemon who played with the 1940s Pittsfield Electrics, Reggie Smith and Carlton Fisk who played with the 1960s Pittsfield Red Sox, and Bill Madlock and Toby Harrah who played with the 1970s Pittsfield Senators and Rangers.

Homegrown big league baseball players have come up through the organized local amateur leagues in Berkshire County. No fewer than 25 local athletes have made it to the major leagues, culminating their amateur days of playing high school baseball at Wahconah Park. Among them are Mark Belanger, Earl Turner, Turk Wendell, Art Ditmar, Tom Grieve (who was an outfielder for the Eastern League Pittsfield Senators), and Jeff Reardon.

The first intercollegiate baseball game in history was held in 1859 between Williams and Amherst Colleges, on the corner of Maplewood Avenue and North Street in Pittsfield (NRDIS, 2002). To commemorate the Nation's Bicentennial, the two colleges recreated the game on 1 June 1976 at Wahconah Park before a crowd of 2,000 fans.

The Senior City Baseball League started at Wahconah Park in 1931. After a five-year suspension of games during WWII, it resumed operations with a double-header at Wahconah in May 1946. It was a year that saw the heaviest use of Wahconah for baseball to that date. The park was booked solid from early May until 13 September 1946 with 136 baseball games and 13 boxing events. The schedule called for 63 home games by the Canadian-American League Pittsfield Electrics, 65 dates for the semi pro Senior City Baseball League, 5 dates for the American Legion baseball league, and 3 high school baseball games. Later that season, scheduling permitted the insertion of two additional baseball games – the playoffs for the Junior City Baseball League, under the lights, on a pair of weekday nights. In the years since, Wahconah has been heavily used for baseball at all levels including intercity playground leagues. Regional baseball tournaments are held routinely at Wahconah Park. The first Babe Ruth State Tournament was held at Wahconah Park in August 1952. In 1982 the Western State Babe Ruth Tournament was held at Wahconah. A year later, the Northeast Regional American Legion Baseball Tournament was hosted by Pittsfield at Wahconah, a weeklong eight-team double elimination event.

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Big league scouts conduct tryouts at Wahconah Park in their search for talent. In 1961 the Philadelphia Phillies held a 2-day baseball clinic there. On 24 June 1982 the Major League Scouting Bureau representing 18 of the 26 major league clubs conducted a tryout and instructional clinic at Wahconah that drew 100 hopefuls from Vermont and New York as well as from the local communities. Director of the workouts Lenny Merullo, former Chicago Cubs infielder, was quoted saying, "We know Pittsfield's a good baseball town - and this overall area is a good baseball area. That's why we're here." A year later the bureau was back to try out another 81 hopefuls.

Football

From its inception in 1892, it was intended that Wahconah should be used for and adaptable to numerous sports and community activities, although its major purpose was for baseball. The use of the Wahconah ballfield for football can be traced back to at least 1931 when the two local high schools of that time played their annual Thanksgiving classic. News accounts suggest that football was played at Wahconah for some years prior to 1931. From 1931 to 1946, however, both semi pro and high school football games were played at fields in Pittsfield other than Wahconah. High school football returned to Wahconah Park in the fall of 1946 and has been an integral part of the city athletics played at Wahconah since that time. Semi pro football arrived at Wahconah in the fall of 1946 and Junior League football has been played at Wahconah since at least the 1960s. Prior to the return of football to Wahconah, city engineers drew up in July 1946 a gridiron layout that kept the football field off the infield, although it would be overlapped by some bleachers.

As public conversation in 1941 and 1942 turned to the building of a new grandstand, numerous plans were put forth. Although it was never implemented, a proposal in March 1942 by the General Electric illuminating laboratory showed a layout for a municipal stadium at Wahconah that included a scheme for converting bleachers at first and third bases to form one side of the grandstand for football, with auxiliary bleachers set up in the outfield for the other side of the gridiron. This dual use of the ballfield manifestly reflected community sentiment for multiple use of any playing field built at Wahconah.

The planning of the ca.1950 Wahconah grandstand was accomplished with the use of the ballfield for football clearly in mind. In submitting an order to the City Council in September 1946 calling for a supplemental appropriation of \$26,000 to be added to the \$54,000 approved in December 1945 for a new grandstand, Mayor James Fallon said, "I want to remind you that a thorough study has been made of all available sites for a baseball and football field and it has been the consensus that Wahconah Park is the most desirable place in the city for the location of such a field."

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Football was very much a partner to baseball in the inaugural season of ball games played on the new 1950 ballfield. The outfield was outfitted with bleachers and the arrangement played host in the fall of 1950 to the semi pro Pittsfield Tyler Aces football team and four home games by the Pittsfield High School football team.

A federally funded renovation of the ballfield completed in 1978 resulted in the redesign of the outfield to hold a football field without any of its playing surface touching the infield. The enlarged outfield also resulted in a new challenge for baseball players ... driving a ball over the right center field fence, now 430 feet away.

Soccer

The presence of a lighted football field at Wahconah made it an obvious choice for soccer meets when this game emerged as a major sport in American schools. The first boys' soccer game was played in the fall of 1978 at Wahconah Park with their first night soccer game following shortly thereafter, in November 1978. The first girls' night soccer game was held in October 1981, having the dual distinction of being the first nighttime girls' varsity sports event ever held at Wahconah. The Park hosted its first college soccer game on 20 October 1982 in an NASC contest between North Adams State College and Castleton (VT) State College.

Boxing

On 19 June 1917, Kansan Jesse Willard, the heavyweight world's boxing champion, appeared at Wahconah Park as a feature presentation of The Buffalo Bill Wild West Show & Circus. It was not until after WWII, however, that Wahconah Park was used for boxing events sponsored by city organizations. Prior to the use of Wahconah Park, professional boxing had been held at the roller skating rink on upper North Street across from the former Pontoosuc School and at the Auditorium in the Armory on Summer Street

A local group chartered as the Shire City Athletic Club (SCAC) received its license from the State Boxing Commission in early 1946 to conduct bouts. The Park Commission approval of use of Wahconah Park for 13 nights of boxing foresaw setting up the ring at home plate with bleachers arranged around it on the field. The SCAC was to pay the Park Commission \$50 per night for use of the park. A boxing event held by the SCAC on 25 June 1946 drew 3,872 paid attendees for a gate of \$7200. It was believed to have been a record for turnout and cash for a boxing show in Berkshire County to that date. On 5 July 1946, Jack Sharkey, former heavyweight champion of the world, refereed the main boxing event at Wahconah Park.

The SCAC also conducted boxing events at Wahconah Park in 1947. On 7 July 1947 it was projected that rental fees from boxing would be \$1625 for the season. But shortly thereafter, the SCAC unexpectedly announced that they had decided to indefinitely defer any further boxing programs at Wahconah because outdoor bouts "... all over the country have been fighting a losing battle in the box office."

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Other promoters of professional boxing held events at Wahconah Park during the 1940s including the Century Sports Club. Among the notable boxers who appeared at Wahconah Park during the 1940s were Willie Pep, world featherweight champion; Sandy Sadler, former featherweight champion; and Paddy DeMarco, former lightweight champion. In 1964, Sugar Ray Robinson, former welterweight and middleweight world champion, met and demolished Clarence Riley at Wahconah Park (Appendix Photo #7).

The Pittsfield Park Department initiated interplayground boxing matches at Wahconah Park in August 1947 for flyweights to heavyweights. Matches were held through at least 1949 with cards ranging from 10 to 19 bouts before as many as 2800 spectators for the first annual playground boxing contest on 27 August 1947 to 900 fans on 13 August 1949 (Appendix Photo #1).

Other

On the south end of Wahconah Park there currently exist facilities for neighborhood children. They include two baseball diamonds and a basketball court. This part of the park has served as a neighborhood playground since at least 1946 when the City Council passed a mayoral order transferring "...\$425 from surplus revenues to purchase playground equipment for the recently established playground at Wahconah."

The Park Commission minutes of the 1930s illustrate an early desire to make the park available to local groups. They granted permits to St. Charles Church to hold a garden party the week of 11 September 1930, the Clan Macinnes Order of Scottish clans for games on 21 June 1931, and Dante Alighieri and the Knights of Columbus for a celebration on Columbus Day 1931. Square dance festivals with nationally known callers have been held periodically since 12 August 1949, drawing a large attendance even when the weather does not cooperate. About 1,000 attended the arrival at Wahconah of the Downtown Santa on 25 November 1955. In 1965 twelve western Massachusetts schools took part in an auto repair trouble-shooting contest at Wahconah.

For a century, Wahconah Park has hosted large-scale entertainment for the community. At the turn of the last century, performances were given by the traveling Leon W. Washburn Big Show and the Robinson & Franklin Bros. Circus. When Ringling Bros., Barnum & Bailey Circus performed at Wahconah Park on 29 June 1940, the Park Commission required a \$300 deposit against any damages. In the 9 December 1940 Park Commission minutes, it was recorded that the Commissioners would inform Ringling "...that there would be no refund from the \$300 deposit made by them as the entire amount is needed to restore Wahconah Park." In the 1960s and 1970s, the Clyde Beatty Circus came to Wahconah Park, on one occasion drawing 15,000 patrons who flowed through the parking lot. To the delight of the spectators, the Indianapolis Clowns, a traveling African American comedic baseball team, visited Wahconah Park in 1964.

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The Pittsfield Permanent Firemen's Association used Wahconah Park to hold its first muster and weeklong lawn party in more than 30 years when they set up south of the enclosed ball field for the week of 30 June – 5 July 1947, attracting more than 10,000 people to the festivities. The group continued the event at Wahconah for many years before the all-volunteer Pittsfield 4th of July Parade Committee took over responsibility for running Pittsfield's celebration of our national birthday (Appendix Photo #8).

When Pittsfield threw itself a 200th birthday bash in 1961, a major happening occurred at Wahconah Park where an all-volunteer, 125-member cast from Berkshire County put on the statehood thematic "Oklahoma!" for a record-breaking 7,825 fans over five performances, establishing Wahconah Park as an ideal facility for summer musicals. The park hosted the locally produced musicals "Jesus Christ Superstar" in June 1981, "Hair" in June 1982, and "Damn Yankees" in 2003.

Berkshire Medical Center is across the street from Wahconah Park. This has led to its unanticipated usefulness as a take-off point for medical services. The first time occurred on 24 January 1983 when a Berkshire Medical Center heart patient was airlifted to the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in Worcester by the UMass helicopter service. The flight took 40 minutes compared to the 2½ hours by ambulance.

The 23 February 1942 Park Commission minutes recorded that "The Commission voted unanimously to donate the cannon on Memorial Park to the United States Government as salvage." As the city-wide collection of scrap metal to help the war effort proceeded, all of that collected was brought to Wahconah Park. Photos in a Richard Happel book memorialized the 19 October 1942 "Salvage Sunday" scrap drive that included the delivery of the Memorial Park cannon to Wahconah to be added to the huge heaps of every kind of object made of metal.

In the 1970s, then mayor Evan Dobbelle proposed relocating the playing field at Wahconah Park. There was an outcry from other public officials and letters to the local paper strongly supported keeping the ballfield at Wahconah. Heeding the citizen dissent, the mayor successfully sought federal funding to rehabilitate the playing field in an attempt to eliminate the famous periodic flooding from the adjacent West Branch of the Housatonic River. On three different occasions in the four-year period from 1997 to 2001, the citizens of Pittsfield flocked to the polls to defeat three different referenda that would have seen the Wahconah Park recreational activities moved to a different location.

When the people of Pittsfield gather together, it is either on the main streets for parades, or at Wahconah Park for community events. The latter has been especially true since the construction of the ca.1950 grandstand. Although Wahconah Park began its life as a baseball venue, and the grandstand began its life as protected cover for baseball fans, Wahconah Park has long been the place where the people of this community assemble

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for events important to them. When the community needed a place to join together to share their grief after 9/11/01, they chose Wahconah Park. On 13 September they marched from City Hall down North Street to Wahconah Park for a memorial service for the victims of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The interfaith service was attended by 2,000. *Eagle* reporter Dusty Bahlman wrote, "Some came carrying infants. Some came carrying American flags. At twilight's last gleaming ... Wahconah Park was the destination for all who carry the burden of horror and uncertainty that descended on the nation Tuesday morning."

GRANDSTAND ARCHITECTURE AND BALL FIELD DESIGN (Criterion C)

The ca.1950 Wahconah Park grandstand is a simple structure consisting of unadorned steel columns and I-beams supporting tiered open-air seating protected by a steel shed roof and a covering on the angled back side. The spare, utilitarian lines mirror its New England heritage of functional buildings set in beautiful surroundings of mountains, lakes, rivers, and wooded expanses, all of which are in scale with the humankind who live there. The mountains are really hills, the lakes are small, and many of the rivers are filled with rushing waters only periodically. The Wahconah Park grandstand is as tied to New England design as are the barns, sheds, covered bridges, saltbox and simple gabled homes for which the region is known. The grandstand's uniquely oriented ball field facing west is inseparably linked to the grandstand; it is the combination of the two that has provided historic significance to the venue and embedded them in the folklore of historic baseball parks that are unpretentious and accessible, parks that are in scale with the fans who attend events there. The Wahconah grandstand is an uncommon remaining example of this once familiar and distinctive small city design, still in use by professional teams.

Contemporarily written treatises of Wahconah Park, many nationally distributed, authoritatively portray the historic nature of the design and setting of the Wahconah ballpark. Daniel Okrent, a *Life* magazine contributing editor who has written three books on baseball, wrote an article for *Sports Illustrated* in 1990, "Just a Little Bit of Heaven, Pittsfield's Wahconah Park is Baseball as it Oughta Be". He began by asking the reader to imagine being in an old ballpark "...where the action is so near at hand you can sometimes hear the batter talking to the umpire. ... The players exert themselves ceaselessly, sprinting toward first on every routine pop-up, chasing every impossible foul fly. After the game, the players linger behind the dugout and greet the kids in the park with autographs and pats on the head. If this is your idea of baseball heaven, you ought to visit Wahconah Park, in Pittsfield, Mass., where I watch as many as 30 games every summer. There you will see why I would rather attend a Class A New York-Penn League game between the Pittsfield Mets and the Oneonta Yankees than a World Series game between their big league brothers. At Wahconah, you get your baseball pure. You say the quality of the play on display there isn't good? Well, maybe you can tell the difference between A ball and the big league variety if you are a pro scout, but I can't, and I used to watch baseball games for a living. Nine plays out of 10 are as crisp as any you see in the majors."

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Okrent analyzed the contribution of the grandstand and ballfield to the experiences of fans. "The joys of the minors aren't confined to the playing field either. Wahconah, like many minor league parks, is a cozy structure that entertains by its very presence. Effigies of owls dangle from the grandstand overhang, scaring away pigeons and amusing the kids below. Few moments have given me more pleasure than the day in 1989 when the owners took down a temporary outfield fence and returned straightaway right to its former glory: a chasm 430 feet from home plate, jutting improbably out from a 330-foot foul line and veering back in to a 374-foot center. And what a fence! For those of us who never saw the advertising signs on the walls of Ebbets Field, Wahconah more than makes up for that deprivation. Who could resist the sign that proclaims the Berkshire Medical Center as THE OFFICIAL HOSPITAL OF THE PITTSFIELD METS? But the greatest pleasures of being a fan at Wahconah are the human ones. In scores of games there, I have never heard an obscene chant, and flagrant drunkenness is virtually unknown."

A survey of all professional baseball parks was conducted in 1951 during the Truman administration. The only ballpark facing west was found in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, which may no longer have a pro team. Perhaps as many as 98% or more of all ball parks are laid out in a conventional way, with the sun south of the first base side. The unusual orientation of the Wahconah ballfield was the focus of Mark J. McGuire's 1992 article in the *Albany Times Union*, "Field of the setting sun, Pittsfield minor league park has charm all its own." McGuire wrote, "In the middle of the Berkshires is a baseball stadium, a park really, where lefties are northpaws, owls hang from the rafters and games are delayed because of perfect weather. ... this is one place where the stars do not outshine the sport. The drawing card here is a ... field that rivals the charm of Massachusetts' only other pro park, Fenway. With its enclosed grandstand, press box and old steel pillars, Wahconah is a ... stadium that was built to last. It was also built backwards. Almost all open-air baseball parks are built facing east or east-northwest, so the sun sets behind the batters. But for some reason, presumably to offer a view of the Berkshire Mountains, Wahconah faces due west. The result? Blinded batters swing at rumors of strikes. For humanitarian purposes, not to mention batting averages, early season night games are often halted on sunny evenings after the second inning for more than 20 minutes. ... in Pittsfield it's the caliber of the park, not the game, that prompted more than 162,000 fans to come out over the past two years for a 39-game home schedule, many as far away as Albany and Troy. Like Heritage Park, home of the Double A Albany-Colonie Yankees, Wahconah's grass is real, its outfield wall wood plastered with ads. But while Heritage is reminiscent of a Little League field on steroids, Wahconah is more like a major league stadium scaled down to fit Pittsfield. 'This is a gorgeous park, a perfect minor-league park', said new team majority owner William Gladstone, a member of the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum Board of Directors. 'There isn't anything I would change.' Some of the kids that play through Wahconah go on to the bigs. Most head to obscurity. ... [but] they all recall Pittsfield, and the field of the setting sun. ... Wahconah Park got it backward, but still got it right."

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Paul Lucas writing for *Money* magazine in June 2000 told of his disenchantment with major league baseball games after attending them for 25 years: "...the players and owners were drowning in their own greed, the game had been merchandized and commercialized beyond all reason, and a players' strike had wiped out the 1994 World Series. The whole situation had become offensive, and I decided not to support it with my ticket purchases anymore. Instead, I began attending minor league games. As I soon discovered, the minors are an ideal curative for anyone who's become disgusted with big-time sports. The players eagerly sign autographs and haven't yet turned into egomaniacs. The stadiums are small and cozy, so there usually isn't a bad seat in the house (or an expensive one, either)." Lucas portrayed his seven favorite minor league parks across the United States, calling Wahconah Park "the definitive old-time minor league experience."

Garry Brown writing in *The Republican* on 17 May 2003 reported on Rafael Palmeiro's visit to Fenway Park with the Texas Rangers that week, a visit that reminded him of another Massachusetts ballpark he came to know and love. "How's that park in Pittsfield? Do they still have pro ball?" he asked Brown. Brown reported that Palmeiro was referring to Wahconah Park, which Brown called "a little jewel of a baseball stadium."

Jim Bouton is a former major league pitcher who won 21 games for the New York Yankees in 1963 and was an All Star pitcher that year. The next year he won 18 games and beat the Cardinals twice in the World Series. His diary of the 1969 season with the Seattle Pilots and the Houston Astros, *Ball Four*, was a best-selling book selected in 1995 by the New York Public Library as one of the "Books of the Century", a list which included *Gone With the Wind*, *Catch-22*, and *In Cold Blood*. In 2003, he published a book entirely on Wahconah Park and the efforts of his group to be the successful promoters of a professional baseball proposal.

Bouton's assessment of Wahconah is that of a professional who has a unique interpretation of Wahconah's special characteristics. "Baseball aficionados, who rank everything from the ballparks to the bratwurst at the concession stands, consistently rate Wahconah Park among the top ten venues in the country. ... It leads the league in superlatives. 'This rugged Berkshire beauty' has also been called 'a great baseball cathedral,' 'one of the gems in the Northeast,' 'a throwback to another era,' and 'Rockwellesque,' to name a few. The place reeks of atmosphere, incorporating the three necessary ingredients for a great ballpark – intimacy, character, and an evocation of the past. This last is the most important, for it is baseball, above all the other sports, that connects the generations. Wahconah Park, whose quirky dimensions offer its own sublime balance. With a grandstand as close to home plate as the pitcher – which is great fun for the fans – there aren't many easy pop fouls, a gift to batters. This is offset by the 434-foot death valley in right center, a gift to pitchers. The park giveth and the park taketh away. ... Here's a ballpark that gives you a feel for what life might have been like just after World War One. ...only Wahconah is a real working ballpark. I want to be able to take my grandchildren there one day."

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COMMERCE and ECONOMICS

Wahconah Park acts as a stimulus to the local economy in at least three ways: (a) local merchants are provided with additional tourist revenues, (b) fees from and rentals of the park provide the City with contributions toward the maintenance of the park, and (c) benefits produced at the park provide revenues for local groups in their charitable activities. When a minor league ball club is in residence, an additional economic stimulus provides revenues for salaries, owners, and concessionaires. All of these have a multiplier effect on the local economy.

The value to the local economy of the ca.1950 Wahconah grandstand was recognized during its planning stages. On 26 February 1942, members of the Pittsfield City Council heard speakers who argued that "A grandstand would benefit the churches, organizations and the welfare of the young people ... besides the gain in recreation, a sports grandstand would keep many from going out of town to spend their money."

Funding for the grandstand was provided by several appropriations from municipal surplus revenues over several years. In submitting an order for additional funding for the grandstand on 6 September 1946, then Mayor James Fallon was quoted in the *Berkshire Eagle* as saying: "You will understand that, although the city is constructing the stand and rendering it safe, it is ... an expenditure of money in the form of an investment. The city receives a commission from baseball games; from the boxing exhibitions; and if professional football shall be introduced, then a commission from the football games; so that eventually the returns from these games are expected to be substantial. In addition to this, the modern city has been using funds for the purpose of advertising the city. I know of no better advertisement for the city than a good baseball team. In addition to its advertising value, it brings to the city patrons of the game, who patronize our merchants, the keepers of restaurants and who contribute to various other activities. As a matter of fact towns and cities of 10,000 and 11,000 are maintaining baseball fields and baseball clubs for advertising purposes."

No evidence has been uncovered that suggests an attempt in the 1940s to quantify Mayor Fallon's statement regarding the value of a grandstand at Wahconah to the local economy. The Park Commission of 1946, however, did publicly state in September of that year that "With the erection of the grandstand and proper concession and toilet facilities... rentals would be increased considerably."

The economic impact on the community of the ca.1950 Wahconah grandstand has been significant since it was built. Research and development of data in recent times now makes it possible to provide a level of magnitude of the monetary effect of pro baseball. In today's dollars, employing contemporary tourist industry formulas, and using a home season attendance of 80,000 that was typical in the 1990s of whom 48,000 could be expected to be from out-of-town, the Berkshire Visitors Bureau has estimated that the

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economic impact on Pittsfield of a professional baseball team such as the Pittsfield Mets would be approximately \$4 million. This is comprised of \$1.7 million for ticket revenues, souvenirs, and concession sales; \$1.3 million for overnight lodging by visitors using baseball as their primary destination; and approximately \$1 million for gasoline, meals, and incidental purchases.

In anticipation of the building of the new grandstand, fees for the use of Wahconah began to be increased in the late 1940s. These actions were directly measured in December 1948 when it was reported that Wahconah Park rentals produced \$5,516.76 in that calendar year that were turned over to the city treasury for the general fund, an occurrence before the availability of the forthcoming grandstand. For context, the entire City of Pittsfield budget in 1949 was approximately \$5 million. An immeasurable is the service such a facility provides to a community that enhances the quality of life of its citizens.

Allowing Wahconah Park to be used by professional baseball teams has provided salaries for players and revenues for team owners. The existence of the ca. 1950 grandstand and ballfield has also allowed Wahconah to generate revenues for community-based groups in need of an outdoor arena for fund-raising events. These are too numerous to list, but a few examples follow to illustrate the value of the facility to the community.

- The availability of large capacity seating at Wahconah made it possible for the City of Pittsfield to hold part of its 200th birthday celebration there in 1961. Attendance for the five presentations of "Oklahoma!" totaled 7,825, an all-time record for an amateur production in Pittsfield.
- Pittsfield annually holds a traditional 4th of July parade down its main streets with crowds of 50,000 and above typical. The parade has been telecast since the 1980s, including some years to the US military through their overseas network. During the 1980s and 1990s, the Pittsfield 4th of July Parade Committee held annual drum corps competitions before about 5,000 spectators at Wahconah featuring internationally ranked groups. The competition was the committee's chief fund-raiser, typically yielding \$6,000 in profits to help defray the cost of producing the parade.
- On 31 August 1980, Arlo Guthrie and Shenandoah played a benefit concert at Wahconah before 1500 spectators, grossing \$7,500 for the Berkshire County Parochial School Association.
- Baseball, football, and soccer games are often arranged at Wahconah as benefits for charitable organizations or school athletic programs. Typically, there are a half dozen or more per year.

PRE-1950 GRANDSTANDS

The first grandstand in Pittsfield was built at Wahconah Park by local contractor George Burbank in 1892 on about eight acres of land he owned there for the inaugural professional baseball game in Pittsfield on 9 August of that year. It fulfilled a long-time need of Pittsfield for a centrally located site for ball games and athletic events of various kinds. On the initial baseball field both the diamond and outfield were skinned.

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The park was fenced in and a half-mile track for bicycle races laid out along the outer edge of the park was planned. Immediately in front of the grandstand, a smooth track was planned especially for foot races. Between 1895 and 1905, the grandstand deteriorated. Renewed interest in professional level baseball caused talks to begin in September 1908 to plan a new grandstand at Wahconah Park.

The second grandstand was built by Fred M. Osteyee on the Burbank property and completed by April 1909. With a roof covering about half of it, the grandstand provided seating for 1100 people. Bleachers for an additional 450 were installed outside along the east side perpendicular to the grandstand. The grandstand measured 138 feet long by 38 feet wide and was located at the extreme south end of the field so that it faced north. A map of that era shows an outline of an asymmetrical building footprint consisting of one long section with a smaller section angled inward toward the ballfield. From other sources it is known that girders were 10"x12", posts 10"x10", stringers 2"x12", and rafters 2"x12". It had a 3-ply roof and spruce was used in the grandstand seating area. Team dressing rooms were installed underneath the grandstand. The ballfield was enclosed by 1,940 feet of 8-foot-high unpainted hemlock fencing. The park's first telephone was installed; it was No. 118. Admission to the park and bleacher seating was 25¢, with an additional 15¢ required to obtain grandstand seating. News articles of the era reported that attendance at ballgames of 2400 was common, although it was not clear where the extra 900 or so people were accommodated. This grandstand eventually fell into disrepair during the 1930s and it was vandalized, primarily by people needing the wood to heat their homes during the Great Depression.

PRE-1950 BALLFIELDS

Ballfields

The orientation of the baseball field has not always been the same as the current layout although the playing field has always been in approximately the same location since 1892. From George Burbank's initial layout in 1892 until the current grandstand was built in 1950, the orientation was changed a few times. News accounts of the construction of the second grandstand in 1909 clearly state that it was built on the extreme south end of the field (then existing) so that it faced north. A map in the archives of the Pittsfield Public Works Department dated 20 December 1919 shows the ca. 1909 grandstand footprint. Its orientation fits the description given in the 1909 news accounts. The scanty history on this aspect of the ballpark does not reveal the number of times the orientation of the playing field was changed or when and why the decision was made to have it finally face west.

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Lighting & Scoreboards

Technically, the first night baseball game at Wahconah Park was held in August 1930 when a California team, traveling with its own portable lighting system, played the Pittsfield Collegians there. A portable lighting system for night baseball was used as early as 1941 by Pittsfield baseball teams. Permanent lighting was installed on regular electric light poles and used for the first time on 24 July 1942, paid for and owned by the Canadian-American League Pittsfield Electrics (Pittsfield Professional Baseball Corporation).

In June 1946, eight 80-foot poles for General Electric floodlights were installed around the perimeter of the ballfield, paid for by the Pittsfield Professional Baseball Corporation. Other organizations using the park at night were allowed to use the lights for the cost of the electricity to run them. The first game was played under the new lights on 14 June 1946, a Canadian-American League contest. On 10 April 1951, the Pittsfield City Council approved an appropriation that included \$4,750 to purchase the lights from the by then defunct Pittsfield Professional Baseball Corporation and recondition them. The scoreboard installed with the ca.1950 grandstand complex was an automatic device adaptable to either football or baseball. It had letters and numbers 18" high and was donated by Sports Services, Inc., of Buffalo, New York. It was replaced during the 1978 renovations.

GEORGE W. BURBANK

Wahconah Park was started by a member of one of Pittsfield's most famous and historic families, George Burbank. He was the third of ten children of Abraham and Julia Burbank, whose first two children died before reaching their first birthdays. With little money in his youth, but great perseverance and ambition, Abraham overcame several early financial setbacks with hard work, vision, and the instincts of a natural developer. When he died at age 71, he had amassed an enormous personal fortune and had constructed many of the major buildings in the downtown of his adopted city of Pittsfield. The patterns of George's life would very much follow his father's examples.

Burbank built many of Pittsfield's homes and commercial buildings in the mid 1800s. At one point, he owned nearly all the land between North Street and the railroad station north of Depot Street where he built two large brick blocks and several smaller brick buildings. He built the Berkshire Hotel, large blocks of stores in the downtown, and hundreds of houses. At his death, Abraham's real estate holdings included 50 houses, two large hotels, and six blocks with 37 of the best situated stores in Pittsfield.

Abraham Burbank was known as both an honorable business man and a generous one. Shortly after purchasing a lot in 1847 on North Street, he erected his first brick building, just south of the Central Block. It was three stories high. The city had no place where its citizens could gather to hear platform speakers of the day. Abraham provided the space by devoting the upper floor of the building for community purposes. In his

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obituary, Abraham's adherence to principles was noted. Among those cited, he was credited with his belief that "we do not live for ourselves alone, but for the generations which shall come after us."

As the oldest surviving child of a father whose living philosophy involved generosity to one's fellow humankind and a vision for the future of one's community, it is not surprising that George Burbank would respond to his community's desire to have a centrally located site for sporting events. An article of 14 June 1892 in the *Berkshire Evening Eagle* was headlined, "New Sporting Park For Base Ball and Other Sport To Be Established by George Burbank on Wahconah Street – It Will Be Suitable for All Sorts of Sports".

George Wesley Burbank was born in Pittsfield on 8 November 1837. He spent his entire 71 years in the city, dying on 15 April 1909 at his home at 50 Appletree Avenue. He married Samantha L. Stearns of Windsor in 1859. They had two daughters, one son, and a child who died in infancy.

Like his father Abraham, George was a carpenter by trade and a builder by choice. It is conservatively estimated that George built 300 houses and buildings in Pittsfield between 1885 and 1908. He built most of the houses on Burbank Street, named for him, concluding with the A. H. Rice silk mill that still operates on Burbank Street. Many of the houses in the Morningside and Russell sections of the city were built by him. In Pittsfield's downtown, he built many large structures on Summer Street and Columbus Avenue. They included the Norwood Hotel, the Empire Theater, and the brick buildings beyond them.

George Burbank was renowned for helping people in need and for his work ethic. He took great delight in participating in the growing town's celebrations. He was on all the Fourth of July committees and was reported to have been "...a wonder in arranging for the parade of the 'horribles' and loaned horses and costumes for the doings". His joy in gatherings of the townspeople to whom he was devoted is reflected in his decision to provide Pittsfield with a site and a grandstand for the fledgling sport of baseball that already had become a favorite pastime. The last line of his obituary read, "Everyone recalls that when Pittsfield needed a place where large dances and entertainments [as Wahconah Park] could be held, George Burbank volunteered to meet the demand".

THE SITE – EVOLUTION OF THE PHYSICAL PROPERTY

The Wahconah Park land on which three successive grandstands have been built has been used continuously since 1892 as a baseball venue. At various times it also has been used for other sports and as a site for community activities. The site came into being because of the community spirit and generosity of George W. Burbank. He was perfectly positioned to take on the task of establishing Wahconah Park as a sports park. He owned the centrally located property, he was a contractor and carpenter by profession, and he possessed his father's generosity of spirit.

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In the same year that George Burbank died, Judge Charles L. Hibbard, a pioneer in Pittsfield's parks and playgrounds system, began the call for the purchase of Wahconah Park to place it in the City's hands. It was ten years later, in March 1919, when a formal proposal was made to acquire not only George Burbank's Wahconah Park, but also many properties abutting it. News articles of the era referred to the proposal as one that would see development of a "Great Park".

The General Electric Company had purchased the electrical transformer manufacturing facility of the William Stanley Electric Company in 1903 and formally commissioned it the Pittsfield Works of the General Electric Company in 1907. The city's population was growing and it was putting up new schools at an unprecedented rate. Three schools with a total of 27 rooms were built in 1896. Beginning in 1908, the school population increased by an average of 230 pupils per year for several years. A sense of the rapid expanse of the city can be gained from the schools built at the time. In the nineteen-year span from 1905 to 1924, Pittsfield built eight schools with a combined total of 123 classrooms.

Pittsfield appointed its first Park Commission under state law in 1913. The Park and Playground Association coexisted with the Park Commission for some years. In 1919 they jointly recommended the acquisition of the Burbank estate-owned Wahconah Park and several adjoining properties for a "Great City Park" because they said that they foresaw the recreation needs of an expanding city. They had obtained options on most of the properties planned for purchase. An article in the *Berkshire Evening Eagle* of 18 March 1919 announcing the plan noted that "There is no expectation on the part of anyone that the property will be converted into a central park in one year. Those who have had the project so prominently in mind for so long a time and have given to it so much thought and such exhaustive examination for the last 10 or 12 years have had a vision comprehending the next 25 or 50 years of the city's growth and development. ... 'What an opportunity for us to take this tract, avoid the possibility of improper development and, instead, make it blossom like a rose,' say those who are identified with the undertaking on behalf of this generation and of generations yet to be. ... Possibilities in the Wahconah street undertaking are limitless. ... The park would be a combination of utility and beauty conceived in the public interest and dedicated to a service of the highest possible type".

The city took action in 1919 to acquire the Burbank estate property and several adjoining parcels. Over the years additional parcels were purchased, with the two most recent (1994) enlarging the entrance to the park on Wahconah Street. The properties conveyed to the city that now make up Wahconah Park are shown in Figure 6 along with the dates of conveyance. The grandstand is located on the upper part, the parking area in the central section, and playgrounds for city children on the lower parcels.

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FIGURE 6. Parcels conveyed to the City of Pittsfield making up Wahconah Park and their dates of conveyance.

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ARCHITECTS: JOSEPH McARTHUR VANCE; BRADLEY & GASS

Joseph McArthur Vance came to Pittsfield on 10 December 1894, three years after obtaining his degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He would remain in Pittsfield for the rest of his life. One of his last projects was the design of the grandstand for Wahconah Park. The Parks Commission minutes of 27 March 1942 record the official engagement of Vance as the architect for the Wahconah grandstand. Vance's death in 1948, several events that occurred before his death, and the absence of Vance's design drawings for the grandstand, have required piecing together source material in an attempt to determine where Vance's design left off, where the design of the architects hired to replace him picked up, and why there had to be changes in Vance's original grandstand design.

By 26 February 1942, Vance and members of the Park Commission in a private budget discussion were describing the proposed structure to members of the Pittsfield City Council. As described by the Parks Commission chairman and architect Vance and reported in the *Eagle* (27 February 1942), "The structure would be a covered wooden stand seating about 1500 on benches, while the extra bleachers would seat 1700 more and use of all available equipment from other parks would accommodate a total of 6800 spectators for special occasions at Wahconah."

The events that would require the revision of the 1942 Vance plans were the 1942 denial of permission by the War Production Board to build the grandstand; the City's new building code that became effective 1 March 1944 and that required a grandstand of the proposed size of Wahconah to be built of steel; and having only one bid come in by 18 August 1948 ... and it was three times the amount that had by then been appropriated for the construction. Vance's death on 14 December 1948 prevented him from making the revisions to his 1946 plans necessary to conform to code and elicit bids close to the appropriation.

By the mid 1940s, appropriations totaling \$74,597 had been made in preparation for building the grandstand and the original design had been expanded by the addition of two wings, bringing the seating capacity of the grandstand to 2000. The one bid made for construction in August 1948 was \$209,967. Four months after the one bid was received and at about the same time Vance died, the Hussey Mfg. Co. of North Berwick, Maine stated that it could probably build the proposed grandstand for about \$100,000. The principal reason stated for the big difference in cost was that the Maine firm would make several extensive and cost-saving changes in the most recent Vance plans. An *Eagle* article of the era stated, "The changes would be primarily structural and would not result in altering the grandstand's outward characteristics appreciably. The principal revision would be in the use of steel rather than concrete to lace the tiers of the grandstand together." The Hussey proposal included a steel roof capped by a press box on the grandstand.

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In May 1949, the Hussey Company had prepared cost estimates for a 1500-seat grandstand. They totaled \$107,000. Several revisions later, the City Council on 28 June 1949 approved the expenditure of \$115,000 for the grandstand. On 26 July 1949 it was announced that the City was now planning for 2000 seats in a \$115,000 structure, that Bradley & Gass had been retained as "consultants" and that it had been decided to keep the field and grandstand at their previous locations. The state gave its formal approval of the grandstand plans in late summer and issued a certificate to "Bradley & Gass, the architects". When the bids were opened in early Fall 1949, the low bid was \$105,204.82. Change orders approved during construction brought the total expenditure for the grandstand to \$114,345.80.

Joseph McArthur Vance was born in Urbana, Ohio on 22 January 1868. When he was young, his family moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee where he was raised. He returned to Urbana to attend Urbana University. In 1891 Vance graduated from M.I.T. with, it is assumed, a degree in architecture. For a time he worked with the Boston architect Francis R. Allen. Allen designed the Berkshire Bank building (previously Berkshire County Savings Bank). Vance came to Pittsfield in 1894 to supervise the construction of this strategically placed building at the corner of North and East Streets adjacent to the City's center at Park Square. Vance spent the rest of his life in Pittsfield and is often referred to as the most important architect represented in the Park Square Historic District Extension. The buildings he designed in the District include the Palace Theatre, originally called the Majestic (1910), demolished in 1993; the 1937 England Brothers department store, now demolished; and the two-story addition to the Berkshire Life building on the corner of North and West Streets.

Vance is often credited as being the architect of the Colonial Theatre (1903) on South Street in Pittsfield. In Spring 2000 this was proven incorrect. Through the years many had found it very curious that an architect designing his first theater could create one whose acoustics became renowned for their clarity; that could be built in five months, even though its performance chamber was extremely ornate; and would be designed with plain exterior side walls, as though meant to be inserted between two other buildings, when it was free-standing. The mysteries were solved when a researcher for the Colonial Theatre found some critical lines in the 1938 obituary of John F. Sullivan in the *North Adams Transcript*. Sullivan and his brother were businessmen, builders, and investors in North Adams and Pittsfield. At the turn of the last century, the Sullivan brothers built the Empire Theater in North Adams on property directly behind the Wilson Hotel, which they owned. The Empire was accessed through a lobby in the hotel. Thus, no specially designed exterior had to be designed, only the performance chamber and ancillary spaces. For this the Sullivans hired the premier theater architect of the day, J. B. McElfatrick.

In the John F. Sullivan obituary were these lines: "As soon as the erection of this building [a six-story building for the exclusive use of their furniture business] had been completed Mr. [John F.] Sullivan and

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his brother undertook the construction of the Empire theater building on the property directly back of the Wilson hotel, through which a lobby was provided, and extending out to Holden Street. Under Mr. Sullivan's management the theater duplicated the success of the furniture enterprise which he and his brother had started and as a consequence he decided to enter the amusement field in the city of Pittsfield where he built the Colonial theater the interior of which was the exact duplicate of the Empire." The Empire Theater was destroyed by a fire on the morning of 2 July 1912. The Colonial Theatre researcher tracked down the original plans of the Empire to determine if the Colonial's are identical. They are an exact match. Thus, the Colonial's performance chamber is a J. B. McElpatrick design while the façade was designed by Vance. Vance supervised the construction and became the architect of record. But the "theater" is the performance chamber. In terms of who actually designed the Colonial's, it was McElpatrick. No record has been found indicating whether McElpatrick knew and permitted the second use of his design.

Vance designed a number of buildings in downtown Pittsfield. These include the Melville Building at 308-316 North Street (ca.1899), the Registry of Deeds Building, the First Baptist Church on South Street, the First Church of Christ Scientists, the Masonic Temple (1914) on South Street, and the white brick Kinnell-Kresge Building (1918) at 47-51 North Street.

Before graduating from Urbana University, he played on its varsity baseball team and achieved the distinction of hurling a no-hit, no-run game. While no other instances have been found of Vance designing sports venues other than Wahconah Park, he certainly brought to that task first hand knowledge of the needs of such a facility.

Pittsfield has a park in its downtown, The Common. It has long had a very large outdoor skating rink in the winter. Vance designed the brick Shelter House that exists and is used to this day. The original dimensions were 28 feet by 30 feet. It was started and completed in 1941 at a cost of \$7,046.47. A four-foot deep addition, also designed by Vance, was put on in 1946, believed to have been to increase the size of the heating room. Other spaces within the Shelter House provided for an activities room and a pair of rest rooms.

The state's highest peak is Mount Greylock in the Berkshires in the Town of Adams. It is owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts under the custodianship of the Department of Conservation and Recreation. Vance designed the rustic and hardy Bascom Lodge atop Mt. Greylock. Constructed of native stone and wood culled from the mountain, the lodge sits at the base of the Veterans' War Memorial beacon tower atop Greylock. Closed during the winter months, it has stone fireplaces, high ceilings with

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hand cut spruce beams, a dining facility, overnight sleeping quarters to accommodate 34 guests, a lobby/lounge, and other amenities for visitors and hikers who numbered 150,000 to 200,000 in 2004. Vance's design has withstood the brutal conditions on the mountain during the winter months nearly 70 years. Approval of the facility took place in 1932, one wing was completed in 1935, and the entire facility finished in 1937. It was built by men of the Civilian Conservation Corporation (CCC). The lodge and the surrounding summit of Greylock are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Other examples of Vance's architecture that can be found outside of Pittsfield include the Mahaiwe Theater (1905) in Great Barrington, currently being restored; the Ramsdell Public Library (1908) in Housatonic; and the Aspwall Hotel in Lenox, which was destroyed by fire in 1931.

Architects Prentice Bradley and Douglas Gass purchased the Harding & Seaver architectural firm in 1948. It had been started as a one-man office in 1898 by architect George C. Harding, a Pittsfield native who began a succession of firms that has lasted to the present day. In 1901, Harding took on architect Henry M. Seaver as a partner. The firm became one of the most successful in Western Massachusetts. Harding died in 1921. Seaver carried on the business until his death in 1947. Bradley & Gass were prompted to purchase the Harding & Seaver business because there were projects on their drafting boards but no leadership to complete them. The partnership dissolved in 1955. Bradley took over the firm & operated it under the name of the Office of Prentice Bradley, Architect until 1971.

In the period from 1948-1955, Bradley & Gass designed the Arthur Crane contemporary redwood home at 11 Main Street in Dalton (1949-50) and the 1950 remodeling of the Berkshire Eagle flatiron building on Eagle Street in Pittsfield that included a contemporary façade and a stairway that spiraled as it rose through multiple stories in front of the ground level to roof line window in the bow of the building. Little is known about other work created by the firm at the present time. The firm actually credits Bradley with the revisions to the Wahconah Park grandstand as well as Wahconah Regional High School in Dalton.

In the 1960s, the Office of Prentice Bradley were the architects of a number of multifamily and elderly housing projects including Providence Court (formerly St. Luke's Hospital), Epworth Arms and The Pines at Pontoosuc, all in Pittsfield; Hyde Place in Lee; Bostwick Gardens in Great Barrington; and Holy Family Terrace in North Adams. They also were the architects for the additions to Williams (6 classrooms, 1962), Allendale (4 classrooms, 1963), and Highland (3 classrooms, 1963) elementary schools in Pittsfield; and the addition to St. Stephen's Church in Pittsfield.

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In 1971 Bradley hired three new architects and renamed the new firm Bradley Architects, Inc., the name by which it is known to this day. Bradley Architects, Inc. has designed such projects as the Doctor's Building at Fairview Hospital in Great Barrington, Richmond Consolidated School, and the Department of Environmental Management and Regional Headquarters in Pittsfield. In 1986, they designed the office building and computer data center for the Geary Corporation, currently Keane Inc. on South Street in Pittsfield.

Prentice Bradley was born in Chicago in 1906. He was educated at Dartmouth and Harvard. In 1975 he retired from the firm that carries his. Bradley later moved to San Antonio. He died in 1997.

Archaeological Description

While no ancient Native American sites are known in the nominated area, sites may be present. Seven ancient sites are recorded in the general area (within one mile). Most known sites are restricted to dry upland terraces bordering stream and riverine wetlands. No sites are currently identified on riverine floodplain locales such as characterized by the Wahconah Park area. Environmental characteristics for the nominated area generally represent locational criteria (slope, soil drainage, proximity to wetlands) that are favorable for the presence of ancient Native American sites. The property is located on a level to moderately sloping floodplain terrace within 1,000 feet of the West Branch Housatonic River. Undisturbed soils in the area are well drained, formed in glacial till. During the historic period, however, the natural characteristics of soils in this area have been altered or obscured by urban works and structures resulting in evidence of dumping and disturbance on the surface and in soil profiles. In 1987, a locational survey for a highway project on the opposite side of the river from Wahconah Park found evidence of dumping and soil disturbance in the floodplain area. An ancient Native American site was located on an elevated terrace bordering the floodplain; however, because of extensive subsurface disturbance, the site did not appear to be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places and no additional work was recommended. In 2004, the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) reviewed a proposed redevelopment of Wahconah Park, at which time an MHC archaeologist walked the park area and reviewed available background materials for the property. MHC found that the park and adjoining property to the south is disturbed, an interpretation consistent with urban land characteristics identified by the USDA soil survey for this area and the results of the 1987 locational survey for the floodplain locale on the opposite side of the West Branch of the Housatonic River noted above. MHC concluded there was little historic or ancient Native American archaeological potential for the Wahconah Park area of

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redevelopment. The current review of the Wahconah Park property nominated for National Register nomination extends that interpretation for the entire nominated area. Any sites that may have been located in the area have been destroyed by urban development. Many poorly drained areas and dry floodplain locales have been filled. Given the information presented above, the use of much of the nominated property as parkland since the late 19th/early 20th century, and the lack of documented historic landuse prior to that time, the potential for locating significant archaeological resources, both ancient Native American and historic, is low.

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- Willison, George F. *The History of Pittsfield, Massachusetts 1916 - 1955*. Pittsfield, Massachusetts: Sun Printing Corporation, 1957.

Primary Location of additional data

REPOSITORY:

ASSESSORS DATA & MAPS: Board of Assessors

Att: Richard Bordeau, Chief Assessor, Treasurer, & Director of Financial Services
City of Pittsfield, City Hall
70 Allen Street
Pittsfield, Massachusetts 01201
413/499-9466

MAPS: Department of Public Works & Utilities, Engineering

Att: Bruce Collingwood, Commissioner
City of Pittsfield, City Hall
70 Allen Street
Pittsfield, Massachusetts 01201
413/499-9327

MAPS: Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

Att: Nathaniel Karnes, Director
1 Fenn Street, Suite 201
Pittsfield, Massachusetts 01201
413/442-1521

DEEDS: Berkshire Middle District Registry of Deeds

Att: Sharon Henault
44 Bank Row
Pittsfield, Massachusetts 01201
413/443-7438

(continued)

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WILLS & ESTATES: Berkshire Probate & Family Court Department
Att: Francis B. Marinaro, register
44 Bank Row
Pittsfield, Massachusetts 01201
413/442-6941

LOCAL HISTORY: Berkshire Athenaeum
Att: Kathy Riley, Director of Local History
1 Wendell Avenue
Pittsfield, Massachusetts 01201
413/499-9486 (Local history department)

BALLOT REFERENDA & DEATH CERTIFICATES: City Clerk's Office
Att: Jody L. Phillips, City Clerk
City of Pittsfield, City Hall
70 Allen Street
Pittsfield, Massachusetts 01201
413/499-9361

ARCHEOLOGY:
Att: Mitchell Tyler Mulholland
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Massachusetts
413/545-1626

ARCHITECTS' PLANS: c.1950 grandstand
HISTORY of PRENTICE BRADLEY ARCHITECTURAL FIRM
Att: Jack Barbara, architect
Bradley Architects, Inc.
8 Bank Row
Pittsfield, Massachusetts 01201
413/448-8253

ENGINEERING DWGS: 1997 renovation
EXISTING CONDITIONS PLAN: 2004
Att: Robert Fournier, lead engineer
S K Design Group, Inc.
2 Federico Drive
Pittsfield, Massachusetts 01201
413/443-3537

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CONSTRUCTION: 1997 renovation

Att: Dan Francese, president
Cardan Construction, Inc.
555/607 Fenn Street
Pittsfield, Massachusetts 01201
413/442-8500/499-0149

ECONOMIC STIMULUS DATA:

Att: William Wilson, Executive Director
Berkshire Visitors Bureau
Berkshire Common
Pittsfield, Massachusetts 01201
413/443-9186

PARK COMMISSION MINUTES, SCRAP BOOKS, MAPS, & ARCHIVES

Att: James McGrath, Director
Department of Community Services, Parks & Recreation Department
City of Pittsfield, Springside House
874 North Street
Pittsfield, Massachusetts 01201
413/499-9343

BASCOM LODGE

Att: Timothy Eager, Manager
Bascom Lodge
Summit of Mount Greylock
Mount Greylock Reservation
Adams, Massachusetts 01220
413/743-1591

EMPIRE THEATER RESEARCH

Att: William F. Munn, President
Friends of the Colonial Theatre Restoration, Inc.
42 Roberta Road
Pittsfield, Massachusetts 01201
413/499-1480

(end)

Wahconah Park
Name of Property

Berkshire MA
County, State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 18.2 ac.

UTM References See continuation sheet.

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1. 18 Zone	643580 Easting	4702500 Northing	3. 18 Zone	643520 Easting	4702220 Northing
2. 18 Zone	643700 Easting	4702080 Northing	4. Zone	Easting	Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

Anne Everest Wojtkowski, assisted by Robert M. Boland, Joseph O. Guzzo, James R. McGrath, and David J. Potts,
name/title with Betsy Friedberg, NR Director, Massachusetts Historical Commission

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date June 2005

street & number 220 Morrissey Boulevard telephone 617-727-8470

city or town Boston state MA zip code 02125

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Pittsfield, MA (under custodianship of Dept. of Community Services, Parks & Recreation)

street & number 874 North Street telephone 413-499-9343

city or town Pittsfield state MA zip code 01201

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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10. GEOGRAPHIC DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of Wahconah Park is shown as the heavy solid line on the accompanying map entitled "Wahconah Park Boundary Lines".

Boundary Justification

The bounds of the Wahconah Park site are continuous and represent the parcels put together since 1919 when the plan for establishing a large central park in Pittsfield was first publicly proposed. The plan envisioned a park with a grandstand as well as facilities for local leagues and neighborhood children. The initial conveyances to the city in 1919 included two large parcels from the George Burbank estate. On one of these was the c.1909 grandstand. The original 1892 and current 1950 grandstands were built on this same parcel. Parcels conveyed to the city since 1919 have kept the entirety continuous, have provided a broad entrance to the park from Wahconah Street, and have been consistent with the original plan that has been endorsed and supported by the people of the community on numerous occasions

(end)

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**Wahconah Park
Pittsfield (Berkshire), MA**

Section number photo Page 1

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographer: David Potts
Date of photographs: February 2005
Location of negatives: Department of Community Services
874 North Street
Pittsfield, Massachusetts 01201

The information above applies to all included 8 x 10" photographs.

1. North from Park Street, toward basketball court
2. North from Park Street, toward grandstand
3. North, across parking lot toward grandstand
4. Northeast from third base bleachers toward grandstand
5. Northwest from third base toward center field football press box
6. Northeast from second base toward first base bleachers
7. Southeast from pitching mound toward grandstand
8. South from within grandstand
9. Southwest from concourse toward grandstand

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Wahconah Park
Pittsfield (Berkshire), MA

Section number photo Page 2

ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographer: James McGrath

Date: June 2003

Location of negatives: Dept. of Community Services, Pittsfield, MA

The above information pertains to the following 4 x 6" photographs.

1. Grandstand along first base line, camera facing south
2. Grandstand along third base line, camera facing east
3. Within grandstand facing northwest toward outfield
4. Within grandstand facing southwest toward backstop
5. Within grandstand, showing box seating, owls, facing east.
6. Detail of grandstand owls
7. Grandstand, handicap ramp, facing south
8. Steel girder construction from uppermost grandstand seats
9. Main entrance to park from parking lot, facing northwest
10. Grandstand exterior from concourse, facing northeast
11. Parking lot, facing south

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Continuation Sheet

Wahconah Park
Pittsfield (Berkshire), MA

Section number illus. Page 1

ATTRIBUTION OF SKETCHES IN SECTION 7, FIGURES 1-6

FIGURE 1: sketch of ca.1950 Wahconah Park Grandstand by architects Bradley & Gass published in the Berkshire Eagle on 15 December 1949.

FIGURE 2: sketch by Design Group, Inc. from their 1997 renovation to Wahconah Park, modified using Adobe Photoshop by Anne Everest Wojtkowski

FIGURE 3: sketch by Anne Everest Wojtkowski based on the ca.1949 Wahconah Park Grandstand Bradley & Gass plans.

FIGURE 4: sketch by Anne Everest Wojtkowski based on ca.1949 Bradley & Gass and 1997 Design Group, Inc. plans.

FIGURE 5: sketch by Design Group, Inc. from their 1997 renovation plans, modified using Adobe Photoshop by Anne Everest Wojtkowski.

FIGURE 6: map by Avis Airmap, Inc. for the Pittsfield Board of Assessors, modified using Adobe Photoshop by Anne Everest Wojtkowski

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Wahconah Park
Pittsfield (Berkshire), MA

Section number illus., Page 2

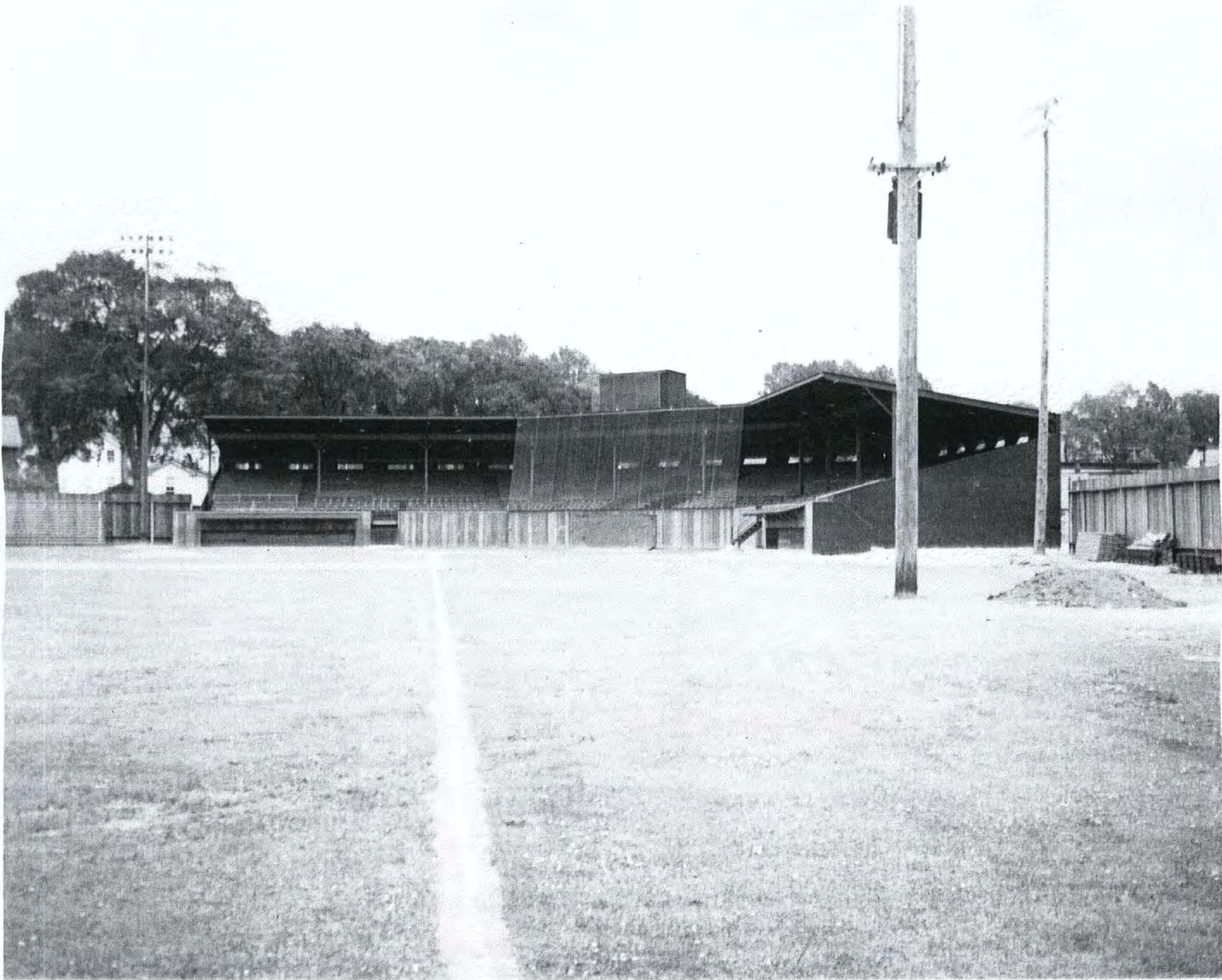
APPENDIX PHOTOGRAPHS

The following photographs have been culled from the files of the Department of Community Services, Parks & Recreation. Where the photographer has been identified, that has been noted.

1. Inter-playground boxing match, 1949. *Photographer: William Plouffe.*
2. Front façade of grandstand, undated.
3. East toward grandstand down third base line, undated.
4. Northwest from home plate toward outfield fence, undated.
5. Folk Festival, 1953. *Photographer: William Plouffe.*
6. Little League City Championship game, 1958. *Photographer: William E. Mahan.*
7. Professional boxing match, Sugar Ray Robinson v. Clarence Riley, 1964.
8. Gillette Carnival in parking lot, 1976.
9. New York Mets AA farm team game, 1992.









THE LINOLEUM STORE

John Wohrle's
FRANKLIN
SAWAGE PRODUCTS
500 S. 10th St.

READ FOR
BREAD AT ITS BEST

P.F. CAYBURY CO.
PLUMBING - HEATING

Coca-Cola

CLARK Clothing FACTORY
SALE ROOM
124 COLUMBUS AVE.

BRIDGES & FOSS, INC.

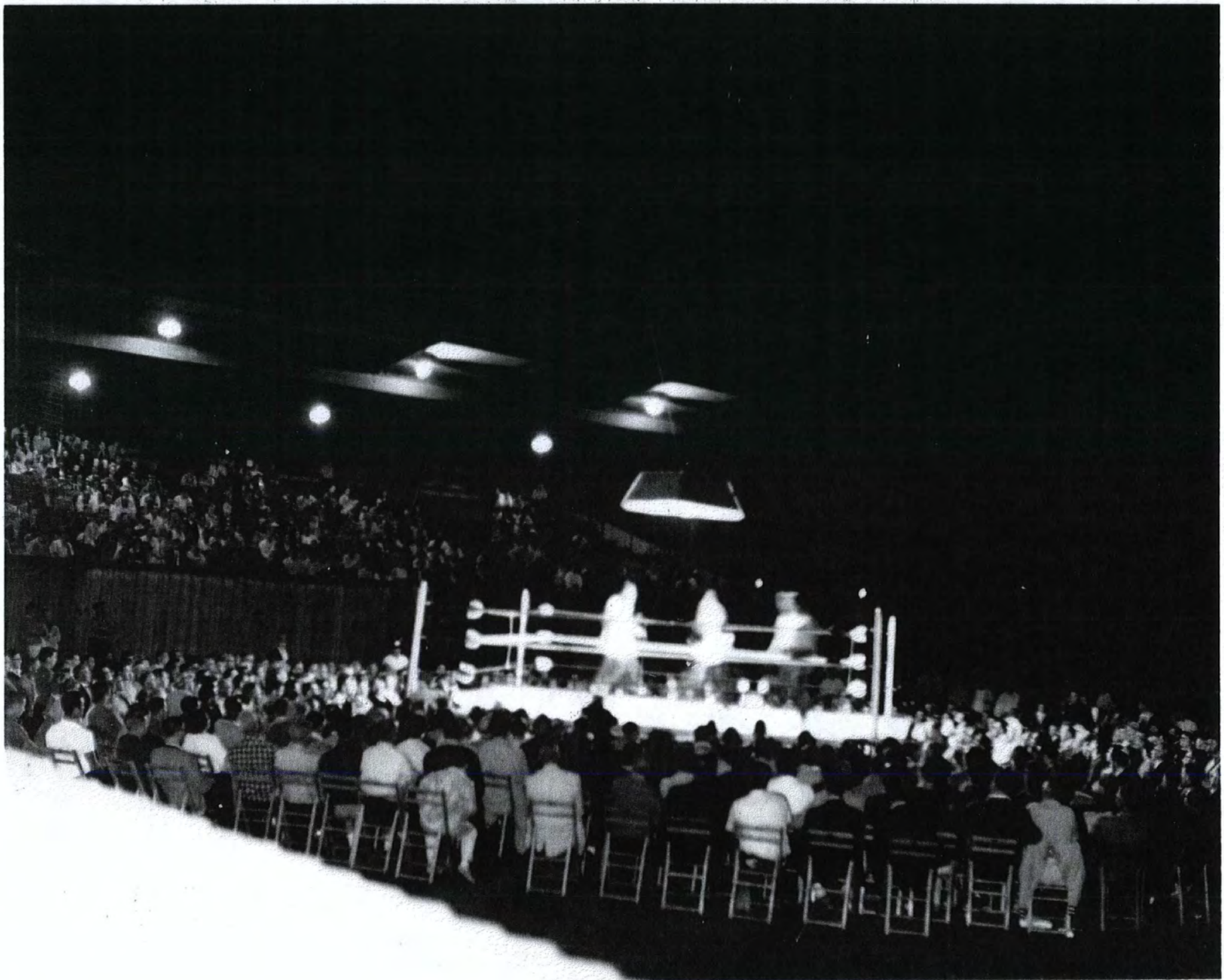
THE COLT AGENCY
INSURANCE

THE PITTSFIELD MILK EXCHANGE

PITTSFIELD MILK EXCHANGE









The view from the top

JUL 3, 1976

The crowd was just beginning to gather at Wahconah Park after an early-evening rain last night when this photo of the Firemen's Muster carnival was taken from the top of the carnival's ferris wheel. The view is toward Wahconah Street. The "seats" on the ferris wheel can be

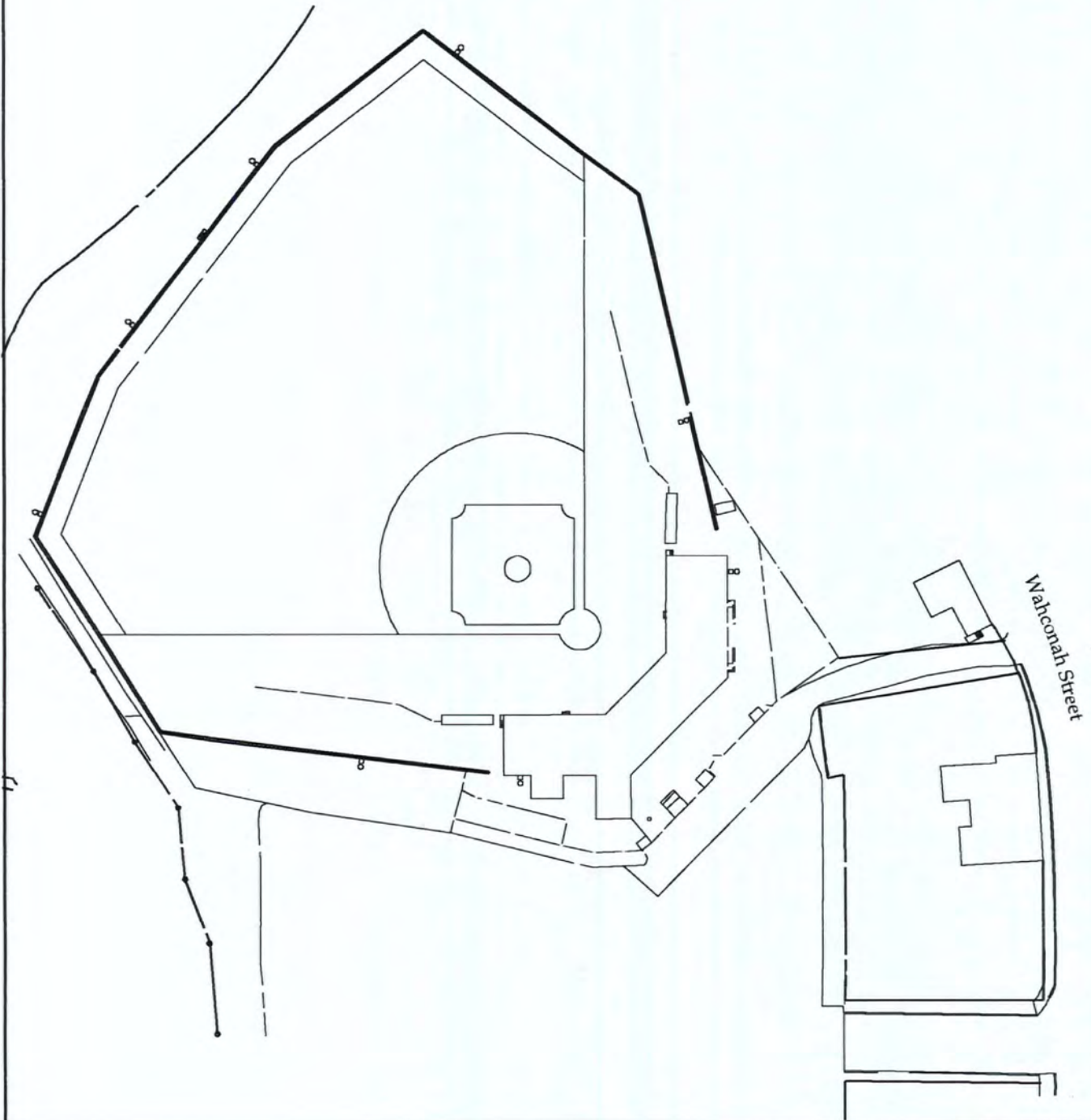
maneuvered like small cars by the passengers, and Eagle photographer Stephen Hawkins was assisted by "driver" Carl Allen of 447 West St., who kept the car on an even keel while the picture was snapped. The carnival will run through Monday.



Wahconah Park

Site Plan

Pittsfield, MA



MAP LOCATING WAHCONAH PARK BUILDINGS, SITES, STRUCTURES & OBJECTS LISTED ON DISTRICT DATA SHEET

This map was produced by Anne Everest Wojtkowski by modifying in Adobe Photoshop a scaled site map, "Wahconah Park Area for Historic Area Designation", generated by the BRPC.



0 100 200 300 400 Feet

1:2,400

**WAHCONAH PARK, PITTSFIELD (BERKSHIRE), MA
DISTRICT DATA SHEET**

Historic Name	Address	Date constructed	Resource	Status
Wahconah Park	Wahconah Street	since 1892	SI	C
Baseball field	"	1892, renovations: 1909, 1927 1950, 1978, 1997	ST	C
Football field	"	ca. 1946 (played as early as 1931)	ST	C
Grandstand	"	1950, renovations: 1978, 1997 modifications 1986, 1994	B	C
Dugouts	"	1978	2 ST	2 NC
Bleachers	"	ca. 1950	2 ST	2 C
Lighting system	"	1978 (on eight 90' poles)	ST	NC
Beer shed	"	2002	B	NC
Pizza shed	"	1992	B	NC
Ticket booth	"	1950, major renovation 2005	B	NC
Parking area	"	1950 in its current configuration	SI	C

**WAHCONAH PARK, PITTSFIELD (BERKSHIRE), MA
DISTRICT DATA SHEET**

Historic Name	Address	Date constructed	Resource	Status
Youth baseball fields	Park Street	ca. 1940	2 SI	2 C
Basketball court	"	1970	SI	NC

TOTALS	Contributing	Noncontributing
Buildings	1	3
Structures	4	3
Sites	4	1
TOTAL	9	7

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Wahconah Park

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Berkshire

DATE RECEIVED: 6/29/05 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 7/25/05
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 8/09/05 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 8/12/05
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 05000878

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 8/12/05 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



WANCONAH PARK
PITTSFIELD, MA
BERKSHIRE CO.

2/05

PHOTO BY: DAVID POTTS

NEGATIVES: 874 NORTH ST., PITTSFIELD

NORTH FROM PARK ST., TOWARD BASKET BALL COURT

PHOTO #1



WAMCONAH PARK

PITTSFIELD, MA

BERKSHIRE CO.

2/05

PHOTO BY: DAVID POTTS

NEGATIVES: 874 NORTH ST., PITTSFIELD, MA

NORTH FROM PARK ST., TOWARD GRANDSTAND

PHOTO #2



WAHCONJAH PARK

PITTSFIELD, MA

BERKSHIRE CO.

2/05

PHOTO BY: DAVID POTTS

NEGATIVES: 874 NORTH ST., PITTSFIELD, MA

NORTH, ACROSS PARKING LOT TOWARD GRAND STAND

PHOTO #3



WAMCONAH PARK

PITTSFIELD, MA

BERKSHIRE CO.

2/05

PHOTO BY: DAVID POTTS

NEGATIVES: 874 NORTH ST., PITTSFIELD, MA

NORTHEAST FROM THIRD BASE BLEACHERS TOWARD GRANDSTAND

PHOTO #4



WAHCONAH PARK

Since 1892

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 R H E

BALLS
STRIKES
OUTS

374

OUT
IN

WANCONAH PARK

PITTSFIELD, MA

BERKSHIRE CO.

2/05

PHOTO BY: DAVID POTTS

NEGATIVES: 874 NORTH ST., PITTSFIELD MA

NORTHWEST FROM THIRD BASE TOWARD CENTER FIELD PRESS BOX

PHOTO #5



WAMCONAM PARK
PITTSFIELD, MA
BERKSHIRE CO.

2/05

PHOTO BY: DAVID POTTS

NEGATIVES: 874 NORTH ST., PITTSFIELD, MA

NORTHEAST FROM SECOND BASE TOWARD FIRST BASE BLEACHERS

PHOTO #6



WATHCONAH PARK

PITTSFIELD, MA

BERKSHIRE CO.

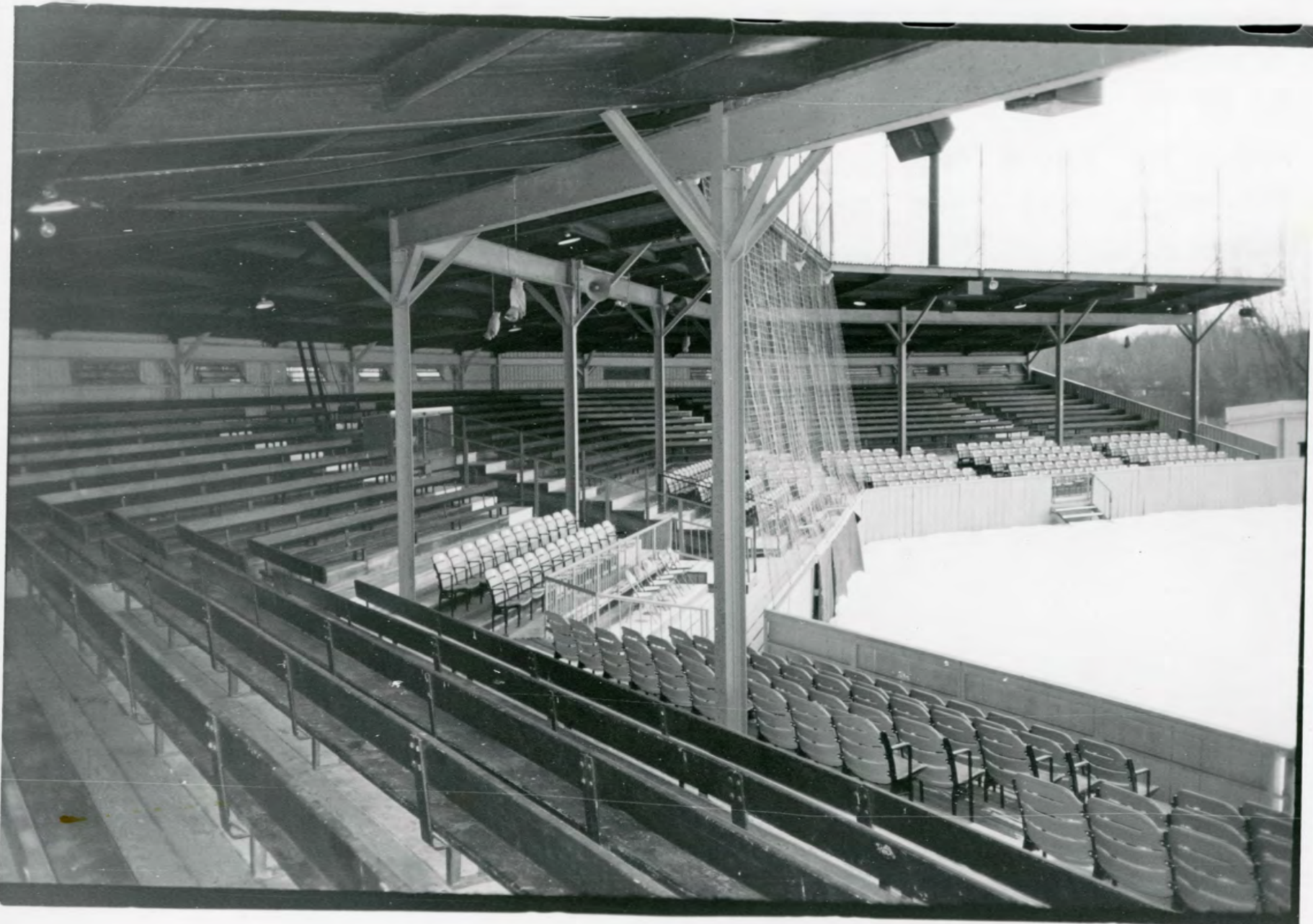
2/05

PHOTO BY: DAVID POTTS

NEGATIVES: 874 NORTH ST., PITTSFIELD, MA

SOUTHEAST FROM PITCHING MOUND TOWARD GRAND STAND

PHOTO #7



WAMCONAH PARK

PITTSFIELD, MA

BERKSHIRE CO.

2/05

PHOTO BY: DAVID POTTS

NEGATIVES: 874 NORTH ST., PITTSFIELD, MA

SOUTH FROM WITHIN GRANDSTAND

PHOTO #8



WANCONAM PARK

PITTSFIELD, MA

BERKSHIRE CO.

2/05

PHOTO BY: DAVID POTTS

NEGATIVES: 874 NORTH ST., PITTSFIELD, MA

WEST FROM CONCOURSE TOWARD GRANDSTAND

PHOTO #9



WAHCONAH PARK
PITTSFIELD, MA

Photo #1

JUNE 2003

JAMES MCGRATH, DEPT. COMMUNITY SVCS.

South towards grandstand, first base line



WAHCONAH PARK
PITTSFIELD, MA

photo #2

east toward grandstand, down third baseline

JUNE 2003
JAMES MCGRATH,
DEPT. COMMUNITY SVCS



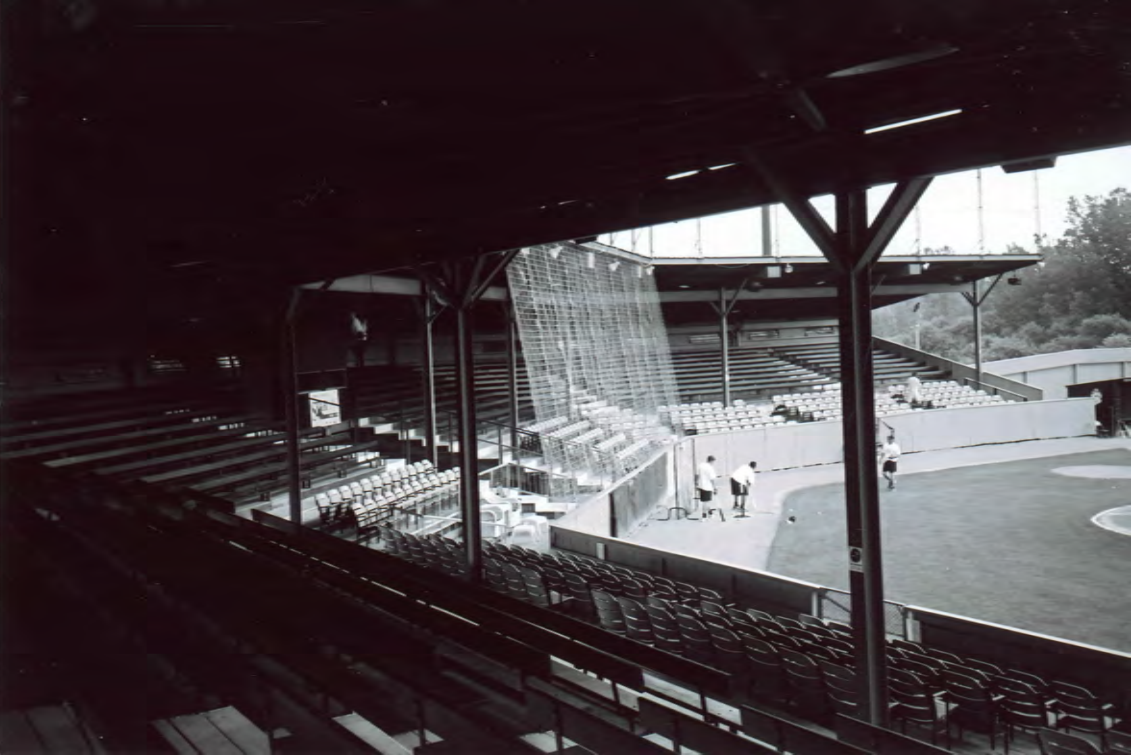
WAHCONAH PARK
PITTSFIELD, MA

photo # 3

JUNE 2003

JAMES MCGRATH, DEPT. COMMUNITY SVCS.

northwest within grandstand toward outfield



WACHCONAH PARK

PITTSFIELD, MA

photo #4

JUNE 2003

JAMES MCGRATH, DEPT. COMM. SVCS.

southwest from within grandstand toward
out field



WAHCONAH PARK
PITTSFIELD, MA

Photo #5

JUNE 2003

JAMES MCGRATH, DEPT. COMMUNITY SERVICES

east from within grandstand toward box seating



WALCONAH PARK
PITTSFIELD, MA
photo # 6

JUNE 2003

JAMES MCGRATH, DEPT. COMMUNITY SERVICES
up toward ceiling from within grandstand

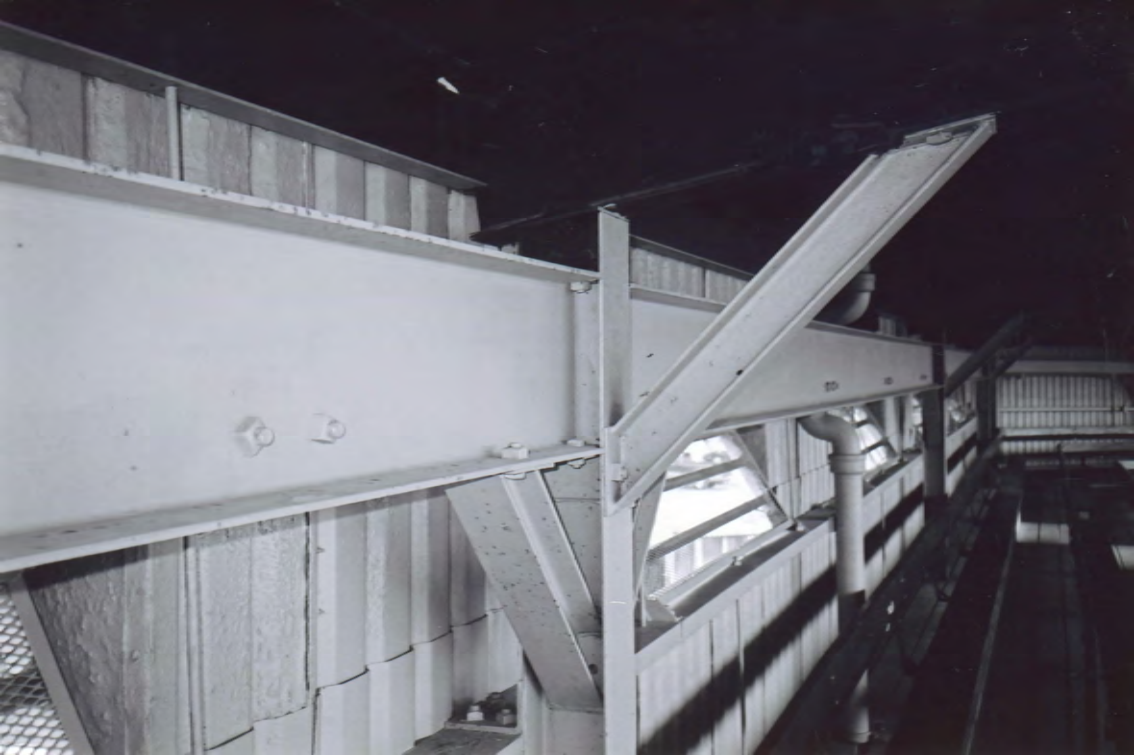


WAHCONAH PARK
PITTSFIELD, MA
photo # 7

JUNE 2003

JAMES MCGRATH, DEPT. COMMUNITY SERVICES

south toward grandstand from handicap ramp.



WAHCONAH PARK
PITTSFIELD, MA

Photo # 8

JUNE 2003

JAMES McGRATH, DEPT. COMMUNITY SERVICES

steel girder construction from uppermost seats
of grandstand



The City of Pittsfield Welcomes You To
WASHINGTON PARK
Home of the
PITTSFIELD RED SOX

FOOD

ODA

P

WAHEONAH PARK
PITTSFIELD, MA

photo #9

JUNE 2003 JAMES MCGRATH, DEPT. COMMUNITY SVCS.

northwest toward grandstand from parking lot.



WALTON PARK
PITTSFIELD, MA

photo #10 JUNE 2003

JAMES MCGRATH, DEPT. COMMUNITY SERVICES

northeast tow. grandstand from concourse



WAHEONAH PARK
PITTSFIELD, MA

photo # 11 JUNE 2003

JAMES MCGRATH, DEPT. COMMUNITY SERVICES

south from parking lot toward southern portion
+ playground

USGS
SCIENCE for a changing world

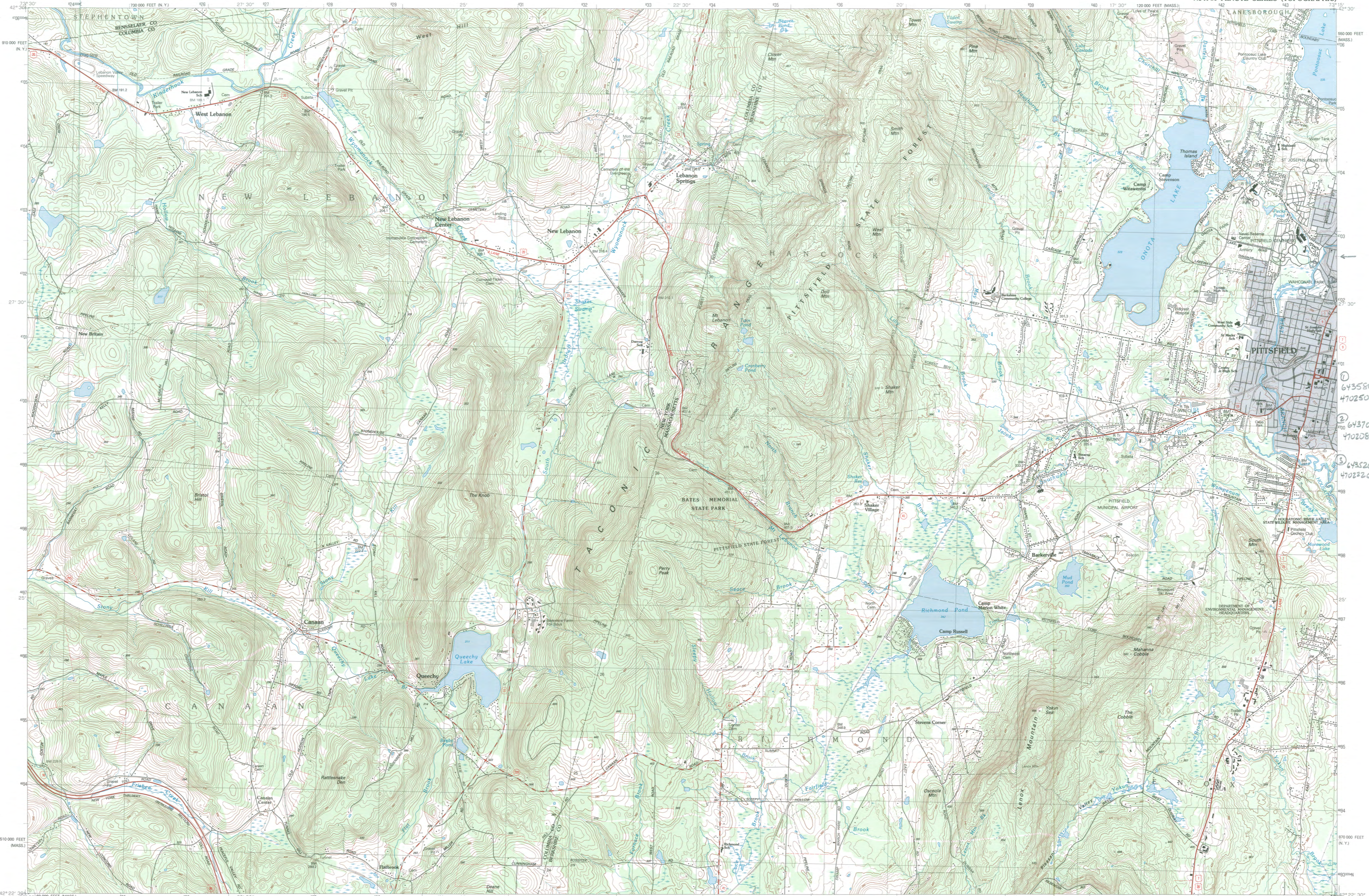
WASHINGTON PARK PITTSFIELD
Pittsfield West
MASS.-N. Y.
(BERKSHIRE) N.Y.

1:25 000-scale metric
topographic map

7.5 X 15 MINUTE QUADRANGLE SHOWING

- Contours and elevations in meters
- Highways, roads and other manmade structures
- Water features
- Woodland areas
- Geographic names

U.S. Department of the Interior
U.S. Geological Survey
1998



Produced by the United States Geological Survey
Derived from imagery taken 1981 and other sources. Photostitched using imagery taken 1998; no major culture or drainage changes observed. Survey control current as of 1981.
Boundaries, other than corporate, revised 2000.

This area also covered by 7.5-minute, 1:25,000-scale maps: Canton and Pittsfield West dated 1979.
North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27). Projection and 1000-meter grid. Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 18, 10 000-foot ticks. Massachusetts coordinate system, main zone and New York coordinate system, east zone.
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) is shown by dashed corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 27 and NAD 83 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software.

There may be private buildings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map.

CONTOUR INTERVAL 6 METERS
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
CONTROL ELEVATIONS SHOWN TO THE NEAREST 0.1 METER
OTHER ELEVATIONS SHOWN TO THE NEAREST METER

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS

Meters	Feet
1	3.2808
2	6.5617
3	9.8425
4	13.1234
5	16.4042
6	19.6850
7	22.9659
8	26.2467
9	29.5275
10	32.8084

UTM grid convergence (GM) at center of map	Diagram is approximate
14m	1°00'
29m	2°00'
43m	3°00'
58m	4°00'
72m	5°00'
87m	6°00'
101m	7°00'
116m	8°00'
130m	9°00'
145m	10°00'

ISBN 0-607-93714-9
9 780607 937145

Topographic Map Symbols

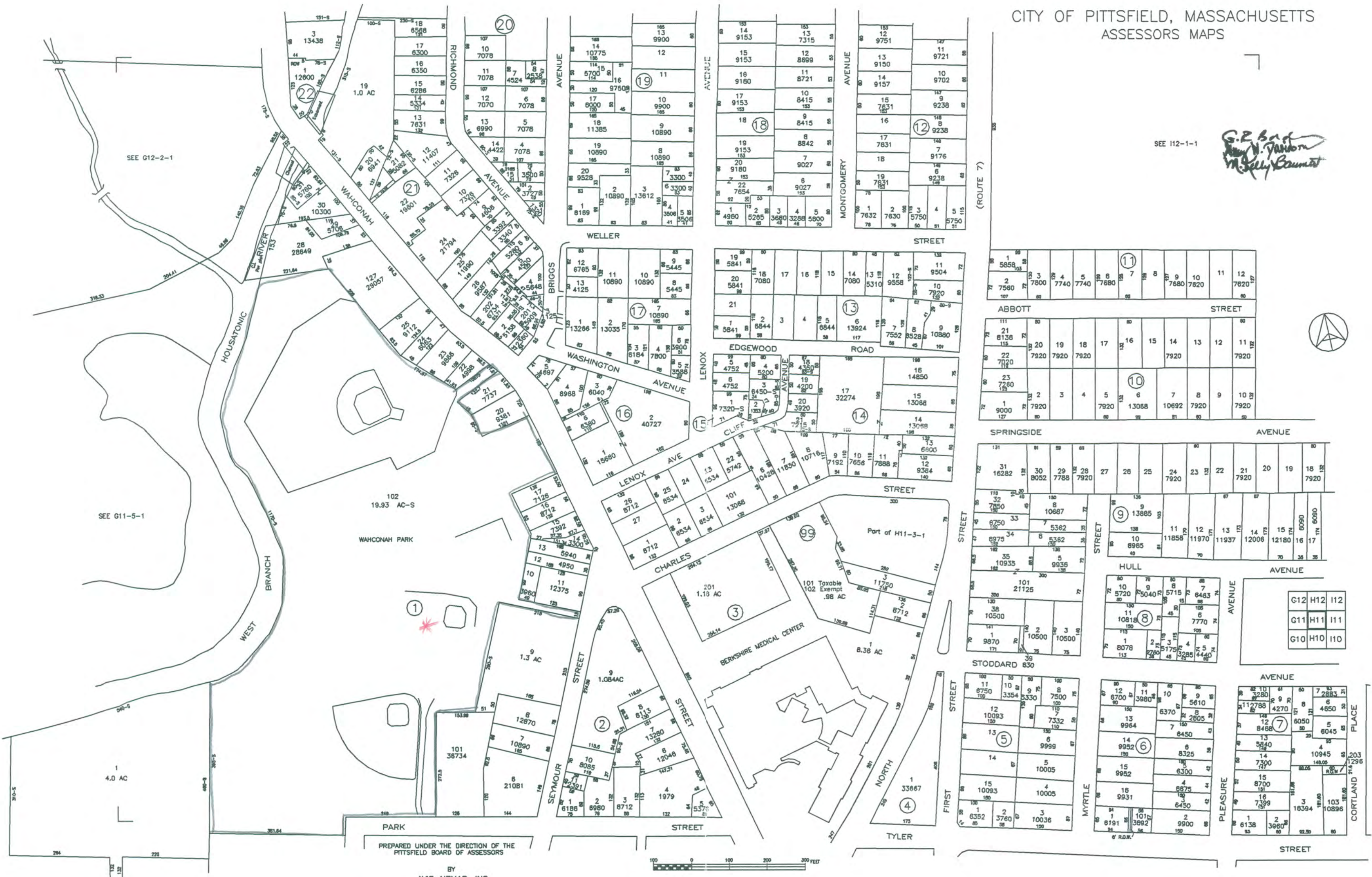
Primary highway, hard surface	—
Secondary highway, hard surface	—
Light-duty road, hard or improved surface	—
Unimproved road; trail	—
Route marker: interstate; U. S.; State	—
Route marker: standard gage; narrow gage	—
Bridge: drawbridge	—
Footbridge; overpass; underpass	—
Build-up area: only selected landmark buildings shown	—
House; barn; church; school; large structure	—
Boundary	—
National, with monument	—
State	—
County, parish	—
City township, precinct, census	—
Incorporated city, village, town	—
National or State reservation; small park	—
Land grant with monument; found section corner	—
U. S. public lands survey; range, township, section	—
Range, township, section line: location approximate	—
Fence or field line	—
Power transmission line, located tower	—
Dam; dam with lock	—
Cemetery; grave	—
Campground; picnic area; U. S. location monument	—
Well; water well; spring	—
Minor shaft; prospect; art or mine; tunnel; section	—
Control: horizontal station; vertical station; spot elevation	—
Contours: index; intermediate; supplementary; depression	—
Distorted surface: strip mine; lava; sand	—
Bathymetric contours: index; intermediate	—
Perennial lake and stream; intermittent lake and stream	—
Rapids, large and small; falls, large and small	—
Swamp; marsh	—
Submerged mark; land subject to controlled inundation	—
Woodland; scattered trees	—
Scrub; mangrove	—
Orchard; vineyard	—

A pamphlet describing topographic maps is available on request.
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225

CITY OF PITTSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS
ASSESSORS MAPS

SEE 112-1-1

G.P. Bart
W. J. Parson
M. Kelly Baumert



SEE G12-2-1

SEE G11-5-1

* THIS YOUTH BASE BALL DIAMOND
WAS ERRONEOUSLY SITED ON THIS
MAP.

NR file



Pittsfield Historical Commission
City Hall · Pittsfield, Massachusetts · 01201

17 May 2005

RECEIVED

MAY 19 2005

MASS. HIST. COMM

Cara H. Metz
State Historic Preservation Officer
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Blvd.
Boston, MA. 02125

Dear Ms. Metz,

On behalf of the Pittsfield Historical Commission it gives me great pleasure to once again support Pittsfield's application to recognize Wahconah Park as a National Historic Site.

This venerable old park has long been the center of many community activities and holds an enviable position in the history of baseball both locally and nationally. This 1892 field can stand proudly beside Herman Melville's home and Shaker Village as a Berkshire County landmark.

Speaking as a member of the team submitting this application I hardly need to say that our support is both enthusiastic and all-encompassing.

Enclosed are copies of previous correspondences.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,
Robert Boland
Robert Boland
113 East Housatonic St.
Pittsfield, MA. 01201

tel: 413 499 3342



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
MASSACHUSETTS SENATE
STATE HOUSE BOSTON 02133-1053

RECEIVED

MAY 31 2005

MASS. HIST. COMMISSION

SENATOR ANDREA F. NUCIFORO, JR.
BERKSHIRE, HAMPSHIRE
AND FRANKLIN DISTRICT
ROOM 213B STATE HOUSE
TEL: 617-722-1625
FAX: 617-722-1523

DISTRICT OFFICE
74 NORTH STREET
PITTSFIELD, MA 01201
TEL: 413-442-6810
FAX: 413-442-6927
www.nuciforo.com

COMMITTEES:

FINANCIAL SERVICES (CHAIRMAN)
ELDER AFFAIRS (VICE CHAIRMAN)
HIGHER EDUCATION
ELECTION LAWS
CONSUMER PROTECTION AND PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE

May 20, 2005

Cara H. Metz
State Historic Preservation Officer
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Dear Ms. Metz:

The City of Pittsfield's historic and revered Wahconah Park is a candidate for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, with a public hearing planned for June 8th. On behalf of the people of my district I enthusiastically support this nomination.

First established in 1892 as a baseball venue, this great old park has played host to baseball and community events for generations of Pittsfielders. Although the centrally located Wahconah is a genuine working ballpark, it has always been a flexible site capable of being adapted to other community needs. Thus, for over a century, it is the single location where the community has gathered for the whole range of events experienced by small city America.

Wahconah Park is not only a valuable recreational and economic resource, but it is renowned in the lore of nationally known professional baseball aficionados who consistently rank the park among the top ten venues in the country for its intimacy, character, and evocation of the past.

Should there be anything additional I can do to support this nomination, please feel free to contact me. Thank you very much for your consideration and for the time expended on behalf of this nomination by the members of the Historic Commission.

Sincerely,

ANDREA F. NUCIFORO JR.
State Senator

NR76



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

House of Representatives

State House, Boston 02133-1054

RECEIVED

May 24, 2005

MAY 26 2005

MASS. HIST. COMM

Cara H. Metz
State Historic Preservation Officer
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, MA 02125

Members of the State Review Board:

I respectfully submit this letter of support for the nomination of Wahconah Park in Pittsfield, Massachusetts to be placed upon the Register of Historic Places in America.

Opened in 1919, Wahconah Park is one of the last remaining wooden ballparks in America and it offers the opportunity to experience a lost era of baseball. While the Park has seen several significant renovations in its lifetime, its character has remained the same as the day it was created. The current wooden grandstand was constructed over almost a decade to accommodate for work shortages caused by World War II. Since the Park was built prior to night games, it is oriented towards the west and is one of only two stadiums in the United States which celebrate "sun delays" – an early seventh inning stretch – while the game waits for the sun to go behind the trees in centerfield. As a testament to its appeal, Fortune Magazine placed Wahconah Park on its list of top minor league ballparks in America in 2000.

The City of Pittsfield maintains a prominent place in baseball history. The City of Pittsfield was the site of the first collegiate baseball game between Williams and Amherst in 1859. In addition, the City recently uncovered the oldest written reference to baseball in a town bylaw dating back to 1791. This document was displayed at the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y..

Given the uniqueness and historic character of Wahconah Park, I urge the State Review Board to award Wahconah Park with a place on the Register of Historic Places in America.

Sincerely,

Christopher N. Speranzo
State Representative
Third Berkshire District

Cara H. Metz
State Historic Preservation Officer
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, MA 02125

NKfile

RECEIVED

MAY 24 2005

MASS. HIST. COMM

Members of the State Review Board:

Re: Wahconah Park nomination to the Register of Historic Places in America

I respectfully submit this letter of support for the nomination. I have personally experienced the pleasure of researching the history of Wahconah Park from its conception in 1892 right through the completion of the current (1950) grandstand. To truly understand the significance a historic designation will mean to this property and the community it reside in, you would need to time travel backwards 113 years to when this complex was but an idea in the mind of local building contractor, George W. Burbank, who (as luck would have it) at the time owned some eight acres of land behind "Brennen's Saloon."

It was George W. Burbank's vision for a sporting venue to be located close enough to the center of commerce to make it easily assessable to all that wished to attend such events without hardship. The concept remains as practical today as it did back in 1892. The citizens of Pittsfield continue to enjoy a variety of events held annually (as well as sporadically) at Wahconah Park. From baseball and football to Broadway play's such as the "Damn Yankee's" production staged in 2004, the park has served the community without proper notoriety for 113 years. The current grandstand was delayed in its construction by nine years due to such unforeseeable obstacles as World War II, building code restrictions and prohibitive cost proposals.

Wahconah Park is steeped in a baseball history that includes accounts of Jim Thorpe, Lou Gehrig and Charles "Casey" Stengel, among countless other recognizable names rounding its basepaths. The time is now, to place Wahconah Park beside other historically honored ballparks like Rickwood Field, (Birmingham, AL) and Jackie Robinson "City Island" Ballpark, (Daytona Beach, FL). The National listing will ultimately insure the continued longevity of the fabled ballpark and its surrounding parkland.

Sincerely,



David J. Potts
19 Morgan Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201



CITY COUNCIL
PITTSFIELD
MASSACHUSETTS

May 24, 2005

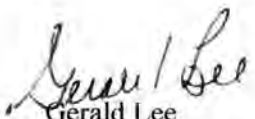
Cara H. Metz
State Historic Preservation Officer
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, MA 02125

Dear Ms Metz:

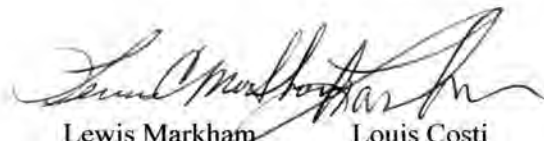
It is with great enthusiasm that the City Council of Pittsfield endorses the efforts to have Wahconah Park in Pittsfield designated as an official historic site by the Massachusetts Historic Commission. Wahconah Park has been an integral part of the history of Pittsfield and its citizens. It has held a significant role in the rich history of baseball. Baseball at the high school, college and professional level has been played at Wahconah Park since 1892. Many major league players and a number of Hall of Famers have played at the park. These players include, Joe DiMaggio, Babe Ruth, Jack Chesbro, Mark Belanger and Jeff Reardon. More importantly Wahconah Park is one of only a few parks from this era that is still operating in the country today.


Thank you for your consideration of the worthy historic designation of Wahconah Park.

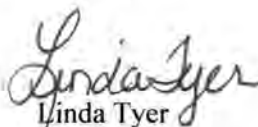
Sincerely,



Gerald Lee
Council President



Matthew Kerwood
Council Vice President


Lewis Markham
Ward 1



Louis Costi
Ward 2


Linda Tyer
Ward 3



Ozias Vincelleto
Ward 4


Jonathan Lothrop
Ward 5


Dan Bianchi
Ward 6


Anthony Maffucio
Ward 7


Tricia Farley-Bouvier
At-Large


Patricia Malumphy
At-Large



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
Massachusetts Historical Commission

June 24, 2005

Mr. John Roberts, Acting Chief
National Register of Historic Places
Department of the Interior
National Park Service
1201 Eye Street, NW 8th floor
Washington, DC 20005



Dear Mr. Roberts:

Enclosed please find the following nomination form:

Wahconah Park, Pittsfield (Berkshire), MA

The nomination has been voted eligible by the State Review Board and has been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. The owners of the property were notified of pending State Review Board consideration 30 to 45 days before the meeting and were afforded the opportunity to comment.

Five letters of support have been received.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsy Friedberg".

Betsy Friedberg
National Register Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

Enclosure

cc: Hon. James M. Ruberto, Mayor, City of Pittsfield
Robert Boland, Pittsfield Historical Commission
Pittsfield City Council
State Senator Andrea F. Nuciforo, Jr.
State Representative Christopher Speranzo
James R. McGrath, Dept. of Community Services
Anne Everest Wojtkowski
David J. Potts
Joseph O. Guzzo

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