

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Rhode Island	
COUNTY: Washington	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAY 7 1973

1. NAME

COMMON: *Historic*
Wilcox Park District

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: Block bounded by Granite St., Broad St., High St. and Grove Avenue, with adjacent portions of those streets and Newton Ave., Elm and Union Sts.

CITY OR TOWN: Westerly

STATE: Rhode Island 02891 CODE: 44 COUNTY: Washington CODE: 009

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: multiple

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Town Hall

STREET AND NUMBER: 49 Broad Street

CITY OR TOWN: Westerly STATE: Rhode Island 02901 CODE: 44

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

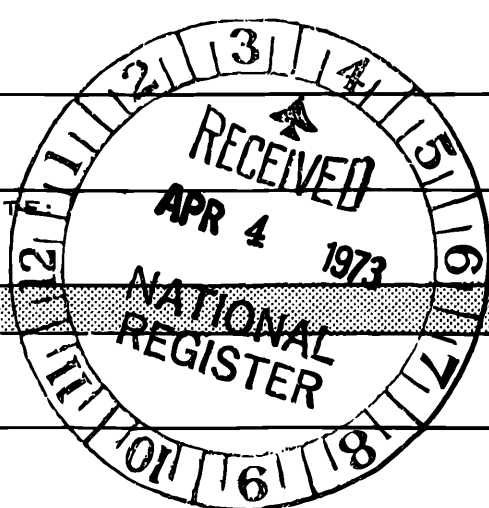
DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



STATE: _____

COUNTY: _____

ENTRY NUMBER: _____

DATE: _____

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

Excellent

Good

Fair

Ruined

Ruins

Unexposed

(Check One)

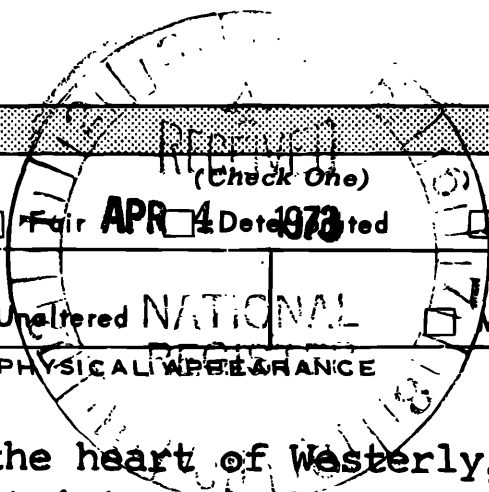
(Check One)

Altered

Unaltered

Moved

Original Site



DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Wilcox Park is located in the heart of Westerly, Rhode Island. To the west is the central business district. North, east and southeast is the residential area. To the south is the town's civic center where public and institutional buildings are concentrated.

Wilcox Park was founded by Harriet Hoxie Wilcox in 1898. It occupies the greater part of an irregular block bounded by High Street, Broad Street, Granite Street and Grove Avenue (see site plan). The Olmstead firm of Boston, founded by Frederick Law Olmstead who revolutionized urban park planning with designs for parks and park systems from Boston to San Francisco, designed Wilcox Park. It is a grassy valley crossed by meandering paths and accented by specimen trees and shrubs. Originally Babcock Brook coursed through the park; the stream has been diverted into an underground conduit for many years. A high knoll on the northeast edge of the park screens it from the rear of commercial buildings facing High Street. Informal scenic Wilcox Park contains a small pond, caretaker's cottage, band stand, and an interesting restroom building built into the knollside. Where the park fronts on High Street and Grove Avenue it is ringed by a field stone wall. Four commemorative monuments are located on the park's periphery: statues of Christopher Columbus and a Spanish American War soldier, a World War I Memorial, and a fountain dedicated to the park's benefactress and her husband, Samuel Wilcox.

Among the structures on lots abutting Wilcox Park are several of particular note. The Memorial and Public Library (1892, "C" on the site plan), the work of Hurd and Longstatt of Bridgeport, Connecticut, is a buff brick structure in the Richardsonian Romanesque manner. It was built and endowed in large part with funds provided by Samuel Wilcox. The Post Office (1913-14, "B") designed by James Knox Taylor, a suave neo-classical building, is already a National Register property. At 67-67½ High Street ("A") is a three story commercial block with an engaging cast iron facade. Contiguous with the park's northeast extremity is a group of modest but appealing Greek Revival and late XIX century houses facing High Street and Grove Avenue.

On the hillside east and southeast of Wilcox Park is a long-established residential area. On Grove Avenue, Granite and Elm Streets is a linkage of domestic structures representative of Westerly houses constructed over the span of 200 years. Despite this long history, they present a well integrated architectural progression, and suggest eras of Westerly's greatest prosperity and growth. At 16 and 18 Granite Street ("K") stand two small story and a half dwellings typical of Westerly area houses of the early XVIII century. On the opposite side of Granite Street and continuing down Elm as far as School Street is a series of thirteen substantial Greek Revival structures erected between 1830 and 1850. The late Victorian era is represented by the large mansard roofed houses at 22 and 24-26 Elm Street ("H"), and the massive Gothic Revival dwelling on the corner of Elm and School Streets ("I"). 15 Granite Street ("J") and 38 Grove Avenue ("L") are in the Shingle Style of the 1880's and 90's. Pattern book architecture of the late XIX and early XX centuries is illustrated by the row of houses on the east side of Grove Avenue. They form the eastern background for Wilcox Park.

South of the park is a complex of public buildings which establish an (see continuation sheet)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Washington	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	APR 4 1973

(Number all entries)

7. Description (continued)

impressive skyline. Christ Church (1891-1905, "F"), designed by Henry M. Congdon of New York and built of grey Westerly granite, has a fine spire. It exemplifies the Episcopalian variety of English Rural Gothic. The Westerly Town Hall and Court House (1912, "E") by William R. Walker and Sons of Providence, also of local stone, has a colossal Ionic frontispiece. Its smooth-faced granite trim is set off against quarry-faced walls. The old Westerly Town Hall (1874, "D") is a two story brick building set on a high granite podium. Its tall clock tower is a local landmark. Together with the Post Office and Library on the park side of Broad Street, and the former Christian Church (c. 1845, "G"), these buildings create a compact civic center. Wilcox Park plays a major role in producing the distinctive character of this area.

The Wilcox Park District includes the entire block in which Wilcox Park is located, and structures adjacent to and in the vicinity of the park on Granite, Broad, Elm and Union Streets, and Newton and Grove Avenues. Buildings here are in good condition and are well preserved (see site plan for lot numbers).



1. SIGNIFICANCE

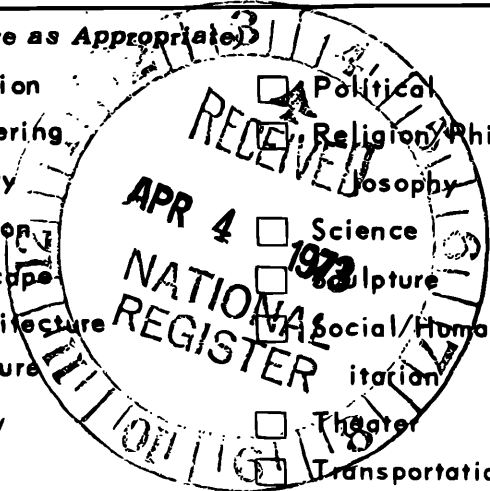
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Early in 1898 the Rowse Babcock estate in Westerly, Rhode Island was put up for sale. The estate comprised 18½ acres of prime land. By size and siting this was an ideal location for a park and the suggestion was made that the town buy the land for that purpose. The taxpayers of Westerly, in a special town meeting held August 23, 1898, voted the proposal down 156 to 93. Spurred to action by this shortsighted act, a wealthy and public-spirited local citizen, Helen Hoxie Wilcox, purchased the Babcock estate and established Wilcox Park. Subsequently she endowed a private foundation to develop and maintain the park property for the benefit of the people of Westerly. Wilcox Park is the most handsome and best cared for park in southern Rhode Island, and illustrates the scenic park planning concepts espoused by the Olmstead firm, the most prominent landscape firm in the country at the close of the XIX century.

Residential streets and public buildings adjacent to Wilcox Park are included in this nomination because of their close relationship with the park and their own integrity, local historical significance and architectural quality. The Greek Revival structures on Granite and Elm Streets are particularly remarkable as a concentration of buildings representing the architectural tastes of Westerly's first great era of prosperity--the decades of the 1830's and 40's when local textile manufacture and granite quarrying were developed. Representative buildings of both earlier and later periods lend historic scope and variety to this residential area.

Eight buildings in the Wilcox Park District are important as focal design elements in the Westerly townscape. The intersections bordering the park have "T" and "Y" configurations. Thus buildings at the head of entering streets are experienced as visual termini or pivot points, closing vistas or establishing fixed axes around which traffic flows. Key buildings functioning in this monumental fashion are: the Post Office ("B"), the Library ("C"), the former Christian Church, now the "Colonial Building of Christ Church" ("G"), Christ Church ("F"), 15 and 16 Granite Street ("I" and "J"), and 67-67½ and 106 High Street ("A" and "M").

Wilcox Park acts as a buffer, an aesthetically rewarding transitional area between the citified bustle of Westerly's business district, a still vital residential neighborhood, and the area in which the town's public buildings are clustered. The park also acts as a hub, welding these areas into a cohesive urban core. Wilcox^{park} and the structures which surround it give Westerly a certain amplitude of scale and amenity, a tone of long established and untarnished gentility. They create for the town an urbane and visually effective civic identity.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Best, Mary Agnes: The Town That Saved a State: Westerly, The Utter Co., Westerly, R.I., 1943.
 Coy, Sallie E.: letter dated December 4, 1972.
 Denison, Frederic: Westerly and Its Witnesses, J.A. and R.A. Reid, Providence, R.I., 1878.
 U.S. Works Progress Administration, Federal Writer's Project: Rhode Island Boston, 1937.

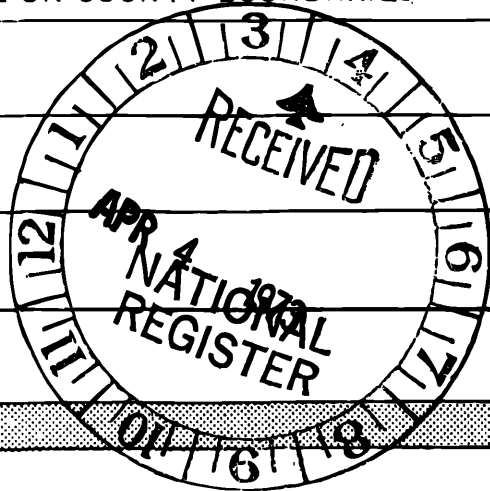
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	41° 22' 50.81"N	71° 49' 53.20"W		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	41° 22' 50.81"N	71° 49' 31.49"W				
SE	41° 22' 21.74"N	71° 49' 31.49"W				
SW	41° 22' 21.74"N	71° 49' 53.20"W				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **50 acres**

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

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



SEE INSTRUCTIONS
 028-92/61MN
 084-3554/006-92/61SE
 19/263700/4584
 19/263700/4584
 19/263700/4584

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
D.W. Chase, Survey Director

ORGANIZATION: **Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission** DATE: **25 January 73**

STREET AND NUMBER:
52 Power Street

CITY OR TOWN: **Providence** STATE: **Rhode Island 02906** CODE: **44**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

National State Local

Name *Frederick Williamson*
 Title **State Historic Preservation Officer**
 Date *3/28/73*

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Robert H. Utley
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

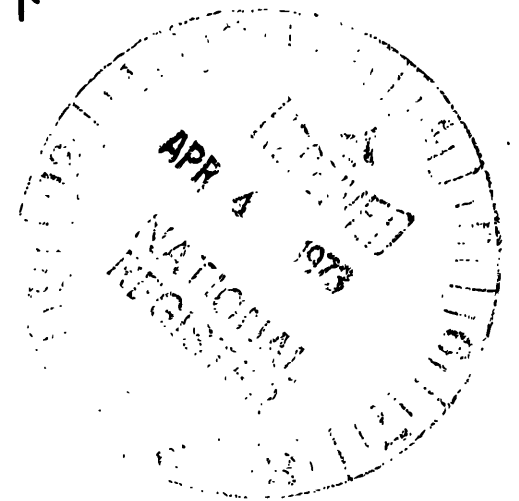
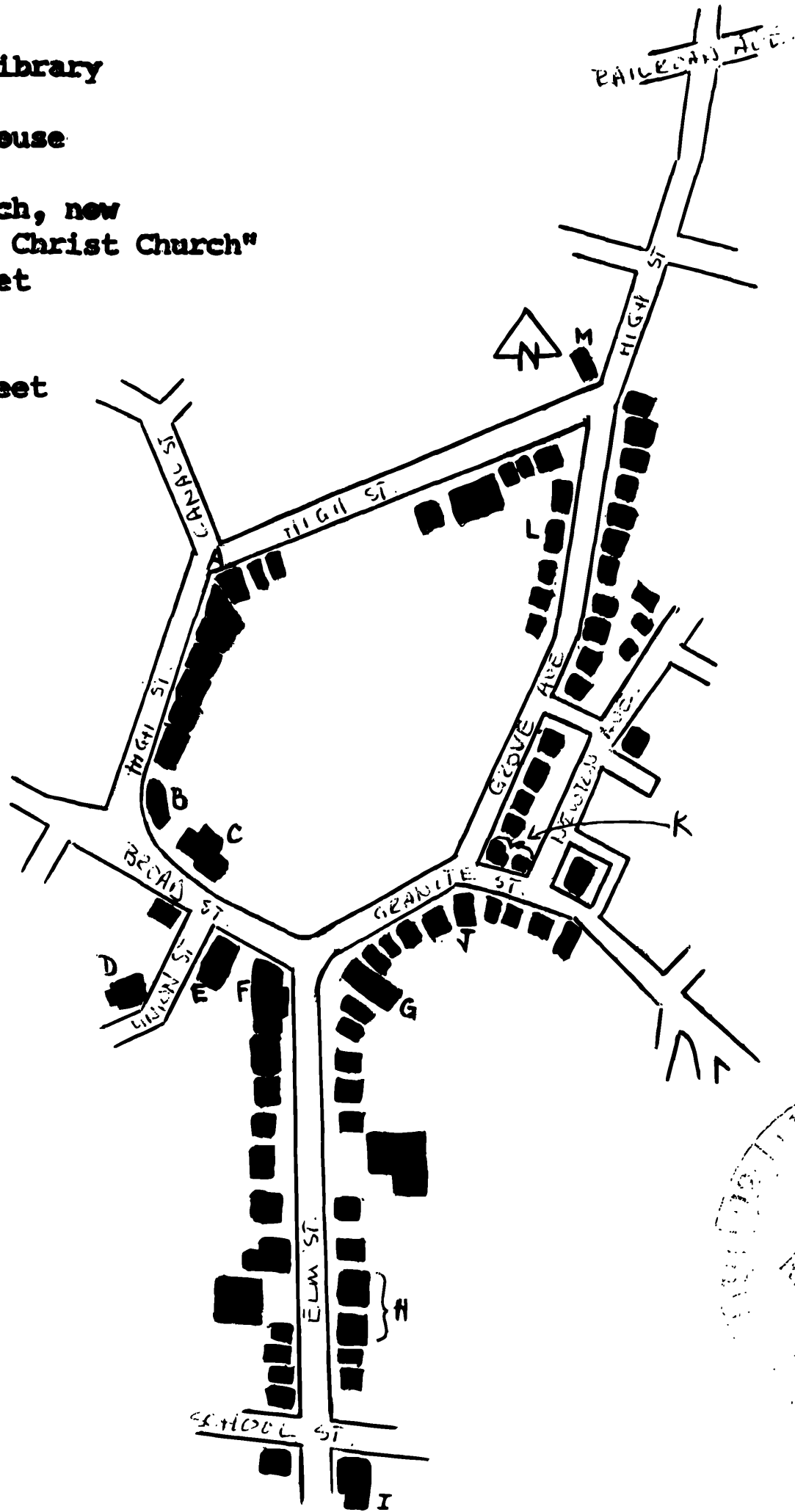
Date *5/7/73*

ATTEST:
W. S. ...
 Keeper of The National Register

Date *5 2 73*

**Site Plan
Wilcox Park District
Westerly, Rhode Island**

- A. 67-67½ High Street
- B. Post Office
- C. Memorial and Public Library
- D. Old Town Hall
- E. Town Hall and Court House
- F. Christ Church
- G. Former Christian Church, now
"Colonial Building of Christ Church"
- H. 22 and 24-26 Elm Street
- I. 34 Elm Street
- J. 15 Granite Street
- K. 16 and 18 Granite Street
- L. 38 Grove Avenue
- M. 106 High Street



The following lots are in the Wilcox Park District: Plat 58, lots 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 13A, 14, 15, 16, 199, and 16A and 69 to a line back 200' from and parallel to the east side of Elm Street; Plat 60, lots 1, 1A, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 85, 89, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 112A, 112B, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 129A, 130, 172, 173A, 174, 174A, 174B, 175, 176, 177, 178, 178A, 179, 180, 181, and 182; Plat 62, lots 90A, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 149A, 150, 150A, 155, 156, 157, 158, and 159.

Form 10-301
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY MAP FORM**

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map)

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Washington	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAY 7 1973

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: **Wilcox Park District, (site plan)**
AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: **Bounded by High Street, Broad Street and Grove Avenue, and including portions of Newton Avenue, Union Street and Elm Street.**

CITY OR TOWN:
Westerly

STATE: Rhode Island	CODE 44	COUNTY: Washington	CODE 009
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3. MAP REFERENCE

SOURCE: **Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission
52 Power Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02906**

SCALE: ---

DATE: **November, 1972**

4. REQUIREMENTS

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

1. Property boundaries where required.
2. North arrow.
3. Latitude and longitude reference.

