United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page ____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: <u>96000846</u>

Hamilton Park Property Name <u>New Haven CT</u> County State

Date Listed: 08/15/96

N/A

Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Signature the Keeper

Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

8. Statement of Significance: Period of Significance

The documented period of significance for the park is 1898-1947, which reflects the district's architectural and historical significance as it relates to the dates of its extant resources.

This information was confirmed with John Herzan, National Register Coordinator, CTSHPO, by telephone.

DISTRIBUTION: National Register property file Nominating Authority (without attachment)



Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: <u>1</u>

Name of related multiple property listing: <u>NA</u>

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STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION 4.

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria.

06/14/96 Signature of Certituing Official Date John W. Shannahan, Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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

Date

Signature of Commenting or Other Official

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I, hereby certify that this property is:

Entered in the National Register _____ Determined eligible for the _____ National Register Determined not eligible for the _____ National Register Removed from the National Register ____ Other (explain):

Ignatuke

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6. FUNCTION OR USE		
Historic: <u>LANDSCAPE</u>	Sub: <u>park</u>	
Current: LANDSCAPE	Sub: <u>park</u>	
7. DESCRIPTION		
Architectural Classification: LATE 19TH & 20TH C REVIVAL /Colonial Revival LATE 19TH & 20TH C MOVEMENT/Rustic	Materials: Foundation <u>: STONE, CONCRETE</u> Walls: <u>STONE, WOOD</u> Roof: <u>ASPHALT</u> Other Description:	

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Hamilton Park is a 93-acre L-shaped public park located 1 1/2 miles southeast of the center of Waterbury. It is bounded on the south by, and visible from, Interstate 84, bounded on the west by the Mad River and Silver Street, on the north by East Main Street, and on the east by Idylwood Avenue and Plank Road (see map). In the neighboring area to the west, which was industrial, buildings are now deteriorated or demolished, while neighborhoods to the north and east are commercial/residential.

The rolling terrain of the park is divided roughly into thirds by Plank Road, which runs generally east-west, and Idylwood Avenue, running north-south. The westerly third, south of Plank Road and west of Idylwood Avenue, retains original topography and rustic man-made features from the first decade of the 20th century. The northerly section, north of Plank Road and west of Idylwood Avenue, was developed mostly in the second quarter of the 20th century, while the easterly section, the horizontal section of the L, is a bird sanctuary.

The main entrance to the park, not original, is at its northern tip on two acres acquired ca.1902. A memorial bronze plaque to David Boughton Hamilton is mounted on a nearby boulder. The gateway entrance is of curved cobblestone walls leads to Plank Road. Several features in cobble work, defined as mortar-laid construction using round stones with wide mortared joints, are important in creating the rustic/Arts and Crafts nature of the park.

The area south of Plank Road and west of Idylwood Avenue was the original park, the 1898 gift of 45 acres by Mrs. David B. Hamilton. Features already existing at that time include Carrington Brook, Plank Road southeast from East Main Street, and the Brass Mill with Idylwood Avenue leading to it south from Plank Road. Because of its importance in the early history of Waterbury's metal-processing industry, the Waterbury Brass Mill Archeological Site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975.

In this original westerly third of the park winding paths and stream, cascade, cobblestone pedestrian bridge (with incised letter H for Hamilton in its keystones), and rustic pavilion all appear to be part of the 1903 design by George Pentecost, landscape architect of New York City (Photographs 1, 2, 3). The original work continues in evidence in the varied and hilly panorama characteristic of natural/rustic landscapes popular at the time (Photograph 4). A popular swimming pool was located in northern end of this area, ca.1920s.

Two later buildings are located in the northern part of this original third of the park. One, the Bear House, ca. 1912, is a gambrel-roofed cobblestone building (Photograph 5), part of a popular but short-lived zoo, while the other is an open steel-skeleton structure built in 1967 as an ice-skating facility (Photograph 6).

When the 18 1/2-acre area north of Plank Road and west of Idylwood Avenue was added to the park in 1915 through the generosity of Caroline A. Platt, it became known as Proprietors' Common and was the location of a rose garden and rock garden, now gone. The landscape design was altered in 1948 and again, to the plan of James Curtain, who then was Superintendent of Parks, in 1956.

The Dance Pavilion, Fred A. Webster, architect, a large white one- and two-story building constructed in 1925 as a dance hall but now renamed Seven Angels Theater, dominates this part of the park. A 1- and 2-story white gable-roofed frame building with 2-story 6-column porch, it was the scene of performances by dance orchestras of the Big Band era. Altered and renovated in 1941 by E. Wallace Cone, in 1978 by John Damico, and in 1990 by T. Thompson, it is now the Seven Angels Theater (Photograph 7). A park patrolman, Michael J.Bolton, who served from 1918 to 1935, is honored by a memorial in the drive south of Dance Pavilion. The memorial is a bronze plaque mounted on a two-stage concrete platform and pier. (Photograph 7).

Nearby is Victory House, a 15' x 19' frame gable-roofed Greek Revival prostyle building constructed in 1917 downtown, where it was used for sales of Liberty Bonds in World War I. It was moved to the park in 1919, then renamed Victory House when it resumed service on the Green in 1942 for World War II service, and returned to the park in 1945 (Photograph 8). A contemporary bathhouse, a swimming pool, and playing fields are to its east.

Another gift, by the Goss family, variously reported as 18 acres (Pape, p. 55) or 24 acres (Park Department list), followed a year later. The discrepancy in acreage probably is explained by land lost to the construction of Interstate 84. This land is the acreage east of Idylwood Avenue, which is a bird sanctuary pursuant to the terms of the gift.

A final increment of five acres, south of the original Hamilton segment, was donated in 1917 by American Brass Company. It includes a brick two-story building which was part of Waterbury Brass Mill on the site of one of the earliest metal-working mills in the city at the edge of the Mad River (Photograph 9). A high stone wall of granite blocks east of the brick building retained the pond, still there, which was part of the mill's watersupply system. The mill long displayed its waterwheel as a park attraction. This is the resources listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975 as the Waterbury Brass Mill Archeological Site. Additional athletic facilities are nearby.

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Carrington Brook runs north-south though the park from the East Main Street entrance to its juncture with the Mad River near the Brass Mill. The stream provides water for a pond with fountain near the entrance and a second pond located across Plank Road from the theater. The second pond probably is what remains of a well-patronized 1907 swimming pool, fed by the stream as it wended its way south (Photograph 10). The pedestrian bridge and cascade mark the course of Carrington Brook as it continues south.

A major highway, Meriden Road/SR 89, crosses the park in the east-west direction just south of the entrance. It is elevated on a berm and is carried over Plank Road by a bridge designed by George L. Dunkleberger which clearly resembles his Merritt Parkway bridges (Photograph 11). It was erected ca.1947. Whether the highway was at grade prior to that time is not known. The bridge is a concrete structure with stone veneer in the shape of the broad three-center arch characteristic of Dunkelberger's work.

Vegetation and planting in the park are concentrated in a band along the west and south borders, where hemlock and rhododendron abound, and in the bird sanctuary at the east. Such peripheral planting separated the park from the city, increasing the sense of tranquility. Mature oaks, pines, and maples are found dispersed throughout the park along the roadways.

Inventory

Date	<u>C/NC</u>	Description
ca.1902	С	Cobblestone gateway at north (main) entrance.
ca.1903	С	Pedestrian bridge, George Pentecost (Photograph 2).
ca.1903	С	Cobblestone pavilion, 35' x 75', George Pentecost (Photograph 3).
ca.1903	С	Cascade, George Pentecost (Photograph 1).
ca.1912	С	Cobblestone 1-story Bear House, 22' x 52', with high gambrel roof (Photograph 5).
ca.1912	С	Small associated nearby cobblestone building.
1917	С	Liberty House/Victory House (Photograph 8).
1926	С	Dance Pavilion, now named Seven Angels Theater (Photograph 7).
ca.1936	С	Michael J. Bolton Memorial (Photograph 7).
1937	С	David Boughton Hamilton memorial bronze plaque.
ca.1947	С	Meriden Avenue Bridge over Plank Road, George L. Dunkelberger (Photograph 11).
1952	NC	Bathhouse, altered and enlarged in 1992, Alexander & Nichols.

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1964	NC	Frame field house, Joseph Stein (Photograph 9).
1967	NC	Ice-skating rink, R.W. White Associates, architects.
1969	NC	Swimming pool.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANC	E	
	dered the significance of this provide Nationally: Statewide:	
Applicable National Register Criteria: A <u>x</u>	B C_ <u>x</u> D	
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A	B C D E F G_	
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	iod(s) of Significance Significan 1898 1996 1903 1903 1947	
Significant Person(s): <u>NA</u>		
Cultural Affiliation: <u>NA</u>		
Architect/Builder: <u>George Pen</u> Cairns. Ge	tecost, Robert A orge L. Dunkelberger	

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

Summary

Hamilton Park is significant historically because it is the oldest park in Waterbury and because its land was given by members of several families associated with the metalworking industry, which for a century provided the economic basis for the city's industry and social structure. It is significant architecturally because it was initially laid out by George Pentecost, landscape architect of New York City, as a natural/rustic park, constructed under the supervision of Robert A. Cairns, Waterbury's City Engineer, and enhanced by the work of several architects, notably George L. Dunkelberger. The first section of the park continues to exhibit the principles of park landscape design in the rustic and Arts and Crafts modes with good integrity. The added sections with their bird sanctuary and active recreational facilities reflect 20th-century influences.

<u>History</u>

The first event in the history of Hamilton Park occurred in 1898 when Mrs. David Boughton Hamilton presented the City of Waterbury with approximately 45 acres of land for

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use as its first public park. The gift was made in memory of her husband, Captain David Boughton Hamilton, who for 43 years had been a principal in Rogers & Brothers, manufacturers of silverware on Silver Street, adjacent to the donated acreage, in a facility known locally as the Spoon Shop. Rogers & Brothers engaged in the fabrication of metal pursuant to common practice followed in the Naugatuck River Valley in which Waterbury was centrally located. Rogers & Brothers continued in existence until 1939, when it became a component of International Silver Company.

By the end of the 19th century Waterbury had developed a strong industry in the processing of metals. Wealth had accumulated, making possible substantial charitable gifts by the families owning the factories. At the same time, recognition of the need for city parks in mitigation of dense urban living conditions was well recognized. Hartford, nearby, had built a ring of city parks in the 1890s. Waterbury's need as a manufacturing city for open space was met in part by private philanthropy made possible by the success of the metal-working enterprises.

The city's 45-acre acquisition by gift of Mrs. Hamilton was mostly the area south of Plank Road and west of Idylwood Avenue, now the westerly section of the park. It received the attention of Robert A. Cairns (1859-1937), who was Waterbury City Engineer for 47 years from 1890 to his death. Cairns graduated from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1885 with a degree as a "civic engineer" (<u>Waterbury Republican</u>, November 23, 1937). According to his obituary, his greatest achievement was planning and building Waterbury's system of reservoirs and supply lines that provide the city with water. However, he devoted substantial attention to Hamilton Park, making its first map in 1900 and a contour map in 1901 (Pape, p. 52). He established or improved Plank Road and "Brass Mill" Road, which bordered the park on two sides and continue to define the original park land, and in 1902 acquired the two acres for the East Main Street entrance.

In 1903, at the suggestion of Cairns, George Pentecost of New York City was retained to prepare drawings for development of the park. First work pursuant to the Pentecost plan was devoted to basic land improvements such as drainage and surfacing the roadways, to make the park accessible to the public. The exact date of construction of the rustic cobblestone features, presumably also part of Pentecost's plan, is not known.

George C. Walker took over responsibility as first superintendent of Waterbury parks in 1905. He soon created a playground, swimming pool, and baseball field, thereby introducing active recreational use at an early date. On one Sunday in summer 1905 nearly 3,000 people entered Hamilton Park (Pape, p. 53). A zoo established in 1909 contained two monkeys, four raccoons, one opossum, one red-tail hawk, one large owl, one fox, ten gray squirrels, and 20 guinea pigs. The Bear House followed, but the zoo was short-lived; it is not mentioned in later reports. By 1913 "Hamilton Park had become the great breathing space of the city" (Pape, p. 55).

In 1915 the city wished to expand the park to the north of Plank Road, but could not meet the cost until Miss Caroline A. Platt, member of another metal-working family, stepped forward with the necessary funds. The area, named Proprietors' Common in memory of the founders of the city, was developed as a rose garden and rock garden, both no longer extant.

The following year the Goss family, associated with the Scovill Company (metal workers), presented the city with additional acreage at the east end of the park, with stipulation in the deed that it be used as a bird sanctuary in perpetuity. The restriction withstood mid-20th-century attack by the Board of Education which considered the location suitable for a school. It continues as a bird sanctuary.

Land acquisition was completed in 1917 with the gift by American Brass Company of five acres on the south, including the brick building on the river, still standing, which is on the site of Waterbury's first brass mill established by Waterbury Brass Company in 1846.

Playing fields have been added between the Brass Mill and the cobblestone pavilion and in the area of Proprietors' Common. Additional buildings and structures have been erected in Proprietors' Common, notably the Dance Pavilion, bathhouse, field house, and swimming pool, to the design of several Waterbury architects. The Dance Pavilion, constructed at a cost of \$75,000, opened on September 9, 1925, with the music of Johnny Clark and His Orchestra.

Most of the park budget in recent decades has been applied to active recreational uses, notably the short-lived ice-skating facility, and improvements to the swimming pool, bathhouse, and Dance Pavilion turned Seven Angels Theater. At the same time, the somewhat deteriorated original natural/rustic concept, the work of George Pentecost, remains in place to the enjoyment of visitors seeking the experience of passive outdoor activity. The park continues as an example of benefit to the city made possible by fortunes accumulated in Waterbury's historic principal industry.

Landscape Architecture/Architecture

The landscape architecture planned in 1903 by George Pentecost (1875-?) came toward the end of the period of natural/rustic treatment of landscape for park design that had been popular since Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., and Calvert Vaux laid out New York City's Central Park in mid-19th century. Pursuant to this concept, natural landscape was used as the basis for the plan, recognizing natural bodies of water, natural vegetation, and existing rock and ledge outcroppings as important and dominant features to which man-man structures such as roads, buildings, and paths were added. The Olmsted office continued to offer its services in this general mode through the century, being responsible for several such Hartford parks in the 1890s. Sheffield A. Arnold of Providence and Boston did similar work at Rockwell Park, Bristol, in 1914. Pentecost's landscape design for Waterbury's Hamilton Park, following the Olmstedian concept, was similar in rationale to contemporary park designs in nearby towns.

While the record of Pentecost's career is sketchy, it is known that his collaboration with Samuel Parsons, Jr., of New York City began in 1896. When the American Society of Landscape Architects was founded in Parsons' office on January 4, 1899, Pentecost, being on the premises, became one of the 10 founders of the organization. (He resigned in 1921.) Two of the of the projects on which Pentecost worked with or for Parsons are a plan for Ashville, North Carolina, which was carried out, and a study for the park in Washington, D.C., between the White House and Washington Monument. Some years after leaving Parsons, Pentecost was headquartered in Yonkers, New York.

The account that Pentecost identified the new park's first needs as drainage and better roadways suggests that he started with swampy land of undistinguished character but irregular topography. Therefore, it seems likely that he worked with existing conditions in the small valley between several hills to establish his rustic effect in the Arts and Crafts mode. Regrettably, no record exists of the plantings he recommended, or that Cairns actually put in place. (There is no record of any kind of historic or contemporary plantings/vegetation in Hamilton Park.)

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Much of the landscape is occupied by winding paths that crisscross Carrington Brook and by rustic construction in stone to enhance the paths and plant groupings. The cascade, pedestrian bridge, and cobblestone pavilion all use large round native tan field stones to achieve characteristic effects in the rustic mode. The pavilion, the largest and most ambitious of the three surviving features, has lost the most to deterioration, but its masonry walls and scissors-truss roof framing remain in place. With its broad entrance steps and strong cross gables it is a major statement in rustic/Arts-and-Crafts design popular at the time and makes a strong contribution to the naturalistic visual sense of the park. The construction in stone complements the broader skillfully designed landscape of undulating contours, curving paths, and naturalistic planting.

The Bear House, which has good integrity, continues the model of stone architecture established earlier. Its exact date and identity of designer are not known, but it effectively contributes to the rustic mode of its surroundings. Zoos were a popular feature of Connecticut public parks at the time; most have not survived, the exception being the Beardsley Park Zoo, Bridgeport.

The other segment of the park that continues to display its original ambience with integrity is the 1916 bird sanctuary, which appears essentially to have been left alone, as it should, except for Interstate 84 intrusion.

The other Hamilton Park man-made element of outstanding design quality in original condition is the 1947 bridge by George L. Dunkelberger (1891-1960). A first glance at the bridge is a surprise, but its origins are immediately recognizable because of the widespread appreciation of such work by Dunkelberger for Connecticut's Merritt Parkway. The decorative effect of the characteristic arch form proclaims the Dunkelberger trademark. The authenticity is confirmed by signed drawings held by the Waterbury Parks & Recreation Department. The arrangement of the road layout scheme prior to the bridge is unknown, but since the busy highway of which the bridge is part is carried across the park on a berm, the possibility exists that the bridge was part of a program to elevate the heavy traffic above the park greensward.

The other major structure is the large white Hamilton Park Dance Pavilion/Seven Angels Theater. Its colossal front porch is somewhat reminiscent of Mount Vernon and its overall effect unquestionably is in the Colonial Revival mode, which was the popular architectural style in the 1920s when it was built. Original appearance is not known; the building has been enlarged and, more importantly, its interior altered to become a theater by installation of seating (which is reversible if restoration is desired).

The 45 acres of natural/rustic landscape architecture designed by George Pentecost and the accompanying buildings and structures, the continued untamed character of the bird sanctuary, and the pleasant surprise of a Dunkelburger bridge combine to make Hamilton Park a significant statement in landscape architecture/architecture.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- W. Phillips Barlow and David F. Ransom. Hamilton Park Inventory Form, Historic Connecticut Municipal Parks Survey, Statewide Historic Resource Inventory. Connecticut Historical Commission, 1995.
- Birnbaum, Charles A., ed. Pioneers of American Landscape Design. Washington, D C.: National Park Service, 1993, p. 94.

Conversation, January 16, 1996.

Brockmeyer, Christine B. Waterbury Brass Mill Archeological Site. National Register of Historic Places registration form. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1975.

"Funeral Rites Tomorrow for Robert Cairns." Waterbury Republican, November 23, 1937.

- Newton, Norman. Design on the Land. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 1974, p. 390.
- William I. Pape. History of Waterbury and Naugatuck Valley, Connecticut, vol. 1. New York and Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1918.
- Public Grounds Under the Control of the Board of Park Commissioners, City of Waterbury, Connecticut. List of parks with acreage. Department of Parks & Recreation.
- Untitled history (typescript) of Waterbury parks and the Waterbury Parks & Recreation Department. Prepared by various contributors over a period of years. Department of Parks & Recreation.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has
 - been requested.
- <u>x</u> Previously Listed in the National Register. Waterbury Brass Mill Archeological Site. Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
- Designated a National Historic Landmark.

Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: # Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #_____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- x State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- _ Local Government
- University
- <u>x</u> Other: Specify Repository: Department of Parks & Recreation, City of Waterbury, 296 Grand Street.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 93.14

UTM References: Zone Northing Easting Zone Northing Easting

A <u>18</u>	<u>4601010</u>	<u>665540</u>	B <u>18</u>	<u>4600710</u>	<u>665510</u>
C <u>18</u>	<u>4600630</u>	<u>665720</u>	D <u>18</u>	<u>4600360</u>	<u>665740</u>
D <u>18</u>	4600360	665740	E <u>18</u>	4600360	<u>665350</u>
F <u>18</u>	4600720	665000	G <u>18</u>	<u>4601270</u>	<u>665130</u>

Verbal Boundary Description:

The park's boundary is shown on the accompanying map drawn at scale of

Boundary Justification:

The boundary of the nominated property is the boundary of the park.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

- Name/Title: David F. Ransom, Consultant, reviewed by John F.A. Herzan, National Register Coordinator
- Org.: Architectural Historian

Date: November 1995

- Street/#: 33 Sunrise Hill Drive
- City/Town: West Hartford
- State: CT
- ZIP: 06107
- Telephone: 203 521-3387

List of Photographs

Photographs were taken by W. Phillips Barlow and David F. Ransom in February and October 1995. Negatives are on file at the Connnecticut Historical Commission.

Photograph 1 Hamilton Park Waterbury, CT Dam and cascade View north Photograph 2 Hamilton Park Waterbury, CT Pedestrian bridge View west Photograph 3 Hamilton Park Waterbury, CT Rustic cobblestone pavilion View west Photograph 4 Hamilton Park Waterbury, CT Original section Typical view Photograph 5 Hamilton Park Waterbury, CT Bear House View southwest Photograph 6 Hamilton Park Waterbury, CT Ice-skating facility View southwest Photograph 7 Hamilton Park Waterbury, CT Dance Pavilion View north

List of Photographs (cont.)

Photograph 8 Hamilton Park Waterbury, CT Victory House View north Photograph 9 Hamilton Park Waterbury, CT Field House and Brass Mill View south Photograph 10 Hamilton Park Waterbury, CT Location of original swimming pool View southwest Photograph 11 Hamilton Park Waterbury, CT Dunkelberger bridge

View southeast

