

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**DATA SHEET**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

MAY 23 1978

DATE ENTERED

SEP 20 1978

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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Rockford Park

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER Roughly bounded by Red Oak Road, Church Lane,  
Rising Sun Lane, the Brandywine and Rockford Road

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Wilmington

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
One

STATE

Delaware

CODE

10

COUNTY

New Castle

CODE

002

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

X DISTRICT

\_\_\_ BUILDING(S)

\_\_\_ STRUCTURE

\_\_\_ SITE

\_\_\_ OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

X PUBLIC

\_\_\_ PRIVATE

\_\_\_ BOTH

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

\_\_\_ IN PROCESS

\_\_\_ BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

X OCCUPIED

\_\_\_ UNOCCUPIED

\_\_\_ WORK IN PROGRESS

**ACCESSIBLE**

\_\_\_ YES: RESTRICTED

X YES: UNRESTRICTED

\_\_\_ NO

**PRESENT USE**

\_\_\_ AGRICULTURE

\_\_\_ COMMERCIAL

\_\_\_ EDUCATIONAL

\_\_\_ ENTERTAINMENT

\_\_\_ GOVERNMENT

\_\_\_ INDUSTRIAL

\_\_\_ MILITARY

\_\_\_ MUSEUM

X PARK

\_\_\_ PRIVATE RESIDENCE

\_\_\_ RELIGIOUS

\_\_\_ SCIENTIFIC

\_\_\_ TRANSPORTATION

\_\_\_ OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

City of Wilmington

STREET & NUMBER

Public Building, Rodney Square

CITY, TOWN

Wilmington

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Delaware

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE.

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Public Building

STREET & NUMBER

Rodney Square

CITY, TOWN

Wilmington

STATE

Delaware

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Delaware Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings N-1446, N-3661

DATE

1974

\_\_\_ FEDERAL X STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Division of Historical & Cultural Affairs

CITY, TOWN

Dover

STATE

Delaware

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Rockford Park is situated in a residential area in the northwestern part of the city. The boundaries of the park are created by Red Oak Road and Church Lane to the south, Rockford Road and the property line of Rockford Park Apartments to the east, the right-of-way of the B & O Railroad to the north and a line paralleling Rising Sun Lane to the west. Kentmere Parkway, which leads to the southern end of the park, aesthetically links this park from the earlier Brandywine Park.

A large, grassy meadow slopes gently upward to a large knoll inside the Park. The Park Drive branches off from Red Oak Road and winds through the meadow entering the woods towards the northern part of the park. It passes along the ridge on the far side of the knoll where a steep, rocky embankment falls off towards the Brandywine. Set on a large island of land on the drive is the focal point of the park, the Rockford Tower.

Rockford Tower is a massive 75 foot stone structure which encloses a steel cylinder water tank. The entrance into the tower is by way of a single door at the base of the tower; it leads to a staircase which surrounds the tank. Narrow, elongated, arched windows pierce the tower at various levels, affording the only light to the winding stairwell which leads to the observation level. Stone arches with iron grillwork enclose the upper level; dentil cornices circumscribe the tower above and below this level. The gutter of the rolled-copper conical roof is decorated with lion's head spouts which provide drainage from the gutter. A sun-dial is located on one side of the tower.

Overlooking the Brandywine River from the embankment behind the tower is the Canby Seat. This granite bench is a memorial to William M. Canby; it provides a vista of the upper river, a favorite view of Mr. Canby's.

As the drive curves southward, it passes the Rear-Admiral Samuel Francis DuPont statue, located in a paved area directly opposite the Nineteenth Street entrance. The bronze figure of the admiral on its granite pedestal has the Rockford Tower as a backdrop for all who enter the park from this direction.

Park Drive passes the rear of Mt. Salem Church. Although the church rests on property jutting into the park, this area has never been considered park land. Park Drive continues past several tennis courts and a baseball diamond at the top of the knoll; it then curves along the southern ridge of the knoll, past the William P. Bancroft Memorial to re-enter the woods and then out into the meadow below.

The William P. Bancroft Memorial is a large stone with a cast bronze plaque centered on a semi-circular stone outcropping. This monument rests on a stone terrace where one can view virtually the entire park. Stone steps enclosed in shubbery, flank the terrace, offering open vistas as they lead to meadow below.

The southern boundary of the park is formed by residences which front on the park along Red Oak Road and Church Lane. An embankment, on the west side of the park, provides a natural backdrop for the old millworker's houses along Rising Sun Lane. To the north the park land terminates at the old railroad tracks below which flows the Brandywine. The land, formerly part of the Joseph Bancroft Mills, creates the eastern boundary; apartments and private residences are now located there.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1889

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of Rockford Park lies in the manifestation of the philosophy of Frederick Law Olmstead through the efforts of William P. Bancroft. Bancroft was a strong supporter of Olmstead's belief that open landscape was indispensable for the well-being of city-dwellers. By his donation of the land for Rockford Park in 1889, Bancroft was the first citizen of Wilmington to create a city park, and by virtue of his humanitarian effort he has become known as the father of the Wilmington Park System.

Bancroft was elected to the Board of Park Commissioners at its inception in 1883. At its first meeting he offered to the city about 48 acres of land for a park with the stipulation that they obtain the adjoining thirty-three acres. This land, situated on both sides of Rockland Park, was ideally suited for parkland. From the knoll at its northern end, one of the finest views of the City of Wilmington was obtained. Its large meadow area would be ideal for playgrounds and its view of the Brandywine made the area aesthetically pleasing. The far-thinking Board of Park Commissioners could see the desirability in obtaining the area, but many thought a park so far from the city a folly.

For six years, no action was taken. In the interim, the area along Delaware Avenue leading out towards Rockford Road began to develop. The movement away from the city was linked to the improvement of the public transportation system, which eventually met Rockford Park in May of 1901. This trolley line extension to Rockford Park encouraged more city dwellers to take advantage of the spacious landscape offered by the park. In 1889, Olmstead was invited by the Park Commissioners to view speculated parkland. Olmstead prepared a report to the Park Commission. He recommended certain projects such as the acceptance of Bancroft's offer and the purchase of the Salem Hill area, which is now part of Rockford Park. He also stressed that the purpose of the commission was to allow for city people more "physical, intellectual and moral vigor and . . . longer lives," through the recreation of spacious landscape. So, in 1889 Bancroft's gift of 59 acres of land was given to the city. Bancroft also encouraged E.I. duPont to give the other 9 acres which would complete Rockford Park.

Within the park are various memorials, one of which is the Rear-Admiral Samuel Francis DuPont statue. It was moved to its present site at the Nineteenth Street entrance of the park in 1920. In 1884, the statue was erected by Congress at DuPont Circle in Washington, D.C. to commemorate the admiral's military service.

Two other memorials in the park are dedicated to the men who were chiefly responsible for its existence. Centrally located in the park is the William P. Bancroft Memorial, dedicated to the man who donated most of these grounds to the city; it was erected in 1937. At a point overlooking the Brandywine is the Canby Seat a monument to William Canby, first President of the Wilmington Board of Park Commissioners. Erected in 1905, it was the first monument given by the city in memory of one of its citizens. Canby's

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Zebley, Frank R. Along the Brandywine. Wilmington: By the Author, 1940
- The Parks and Playgrounds of Wilmington, Delaware. Wilmington: The Board of Park Commissioners, 1929.
- Priscilla M. Thompson, "Development for a Public Park in Wilmington: Brandywine Park, Kentmere Parkway and Rockford Park before 1896." Dec. 1976.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 70 Acres

UTM REFERENCES

E 18/450585/4401730  
 F 18/450670/4401940  
 G 18/451020/4402100

A | 18 | 451360 | 4402040  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C | 18 | 451325 | 4401560  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B | 18 | 451370 | 4401750  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D | 18 | 450900 | 4401565  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries of the district shall follow the boundaries of the Park as shown on the map except that the district shall terminate with a line following the centerline of Rockford Road and joining the two boundary lines.

The approximate boundaries of the Park are as follows: beginning at a point near the intersection of Red Oak and Rockford Road and following a line parallel to Red Oak Road

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

J. M. Norton, Historic Site Surveyor (Amended Jean Athan)

ORGANIZATION

Division of Historical & Cultural Affairs

DATE

6/76 (5/78)

STREET & NUMBER

Hall of Records

TELEPHONE

(302) 678-5314

CITY OR TOWN

Dover

STATE

Delaware 19901

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE



TITLE Director, Division of Historical & Cultural Affairs

DATE June 23, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

R. B. Rettig

DATE 9/20/78

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST William Lebowitz  
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE Sept 14, 1978

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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SEP 20 1978

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

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 6

PAGE 2

TITLE: Historic American Engineering Record, DE-16  
(Wilmington North 18.450760.4401880)

DATE: 1975 Federal

DEPOSITORY: Library of Congress

CITY: Washington, D. C.

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Rockford Park

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Since its inception, the park has been improved through additions of sports facilities, picnic sites and pavillions, and a comfort station. Roads, walking paths and vistas were also established through the park over the years with the inclusion of various plants, shubbery and trees to beautify the landscape.

The nominated area includes approximately 70 acres of open land on which only one building, the Rockford Tower, is located as well as three memorials in the form of a statue, a bench and a terrace. There are also various sports areas.

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Rockford Park

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part in creating Rockford Park was that of allocating funds for the development of the park. In conjunction with the Wilmington Water Department, he made provisions for the most significant monument in the park, Rockford Tower.

Built by the city in 1901, the Rockford Tower is typical of turn-of-the century water towers. People travelled great distances to enjoy the views from the observation level at the top of the tower. It is the only one of its kind in Delaware. Because of this fact, the tower was recorded in the HAER inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites in Delaware.

The establishment of this large park had an important effect on the development of the area. It became a very desirable place to live and large homes were constructed along the edges of the park land.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9

PAGE 1

Manual of the Parks of Wilmington, Delaware, 1929. Wilmington: The Board of  
Park Commissioners, 1929.

MacElrees, Wilmer W. Along the Western Brandywine, 2nd edition. West Chester:  
By the author, 1912.

Board of Trade Journal, Vol. I, No. 9, June, 1899, p. 6; Vol. II, No. 2, May, 1900,  
p. 11.

Report of the Board of Park Commissioners, Wilmington, Delaware, 1905. Wilmington:  
John M. Rogers Press, 1906.

Morning News, December 15, 1905, pp. 1-6.

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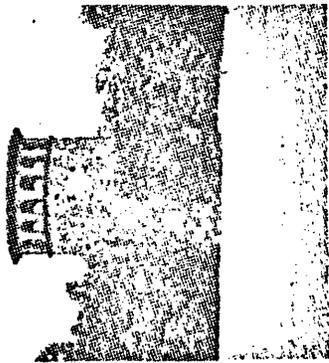
SEP 20 1978

CONTINUATION SHEET

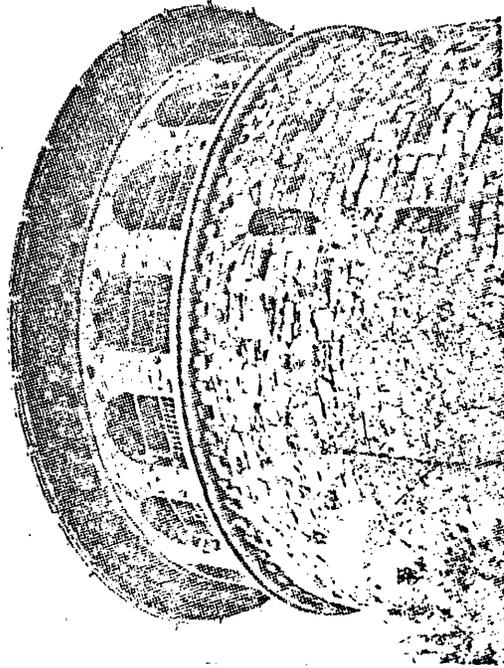
ITEM NUMBER 10

PAGE 1

until it intersects Church Lane and then with the northwestern side of Church Lane excluding the Mt. Salem Church lot approximately 1200 feet and from thence northeast, approximately 750' to a point on the southern side of the P & R Railroad right-of-way, and then following the right-of-way approximately 1300' until it intersects the DuPont Company land, and then southeast along the line of the land 525'; then northeast along another line of the land approximately 325' to a point in the railroad right-of-way and then with the same approximately 650' to a point in the line of land held privately and then with this land south south west approximately 850' and then southeast approximately 450' to the centerline of Rockford Road and then south south west 450' to the beginning.

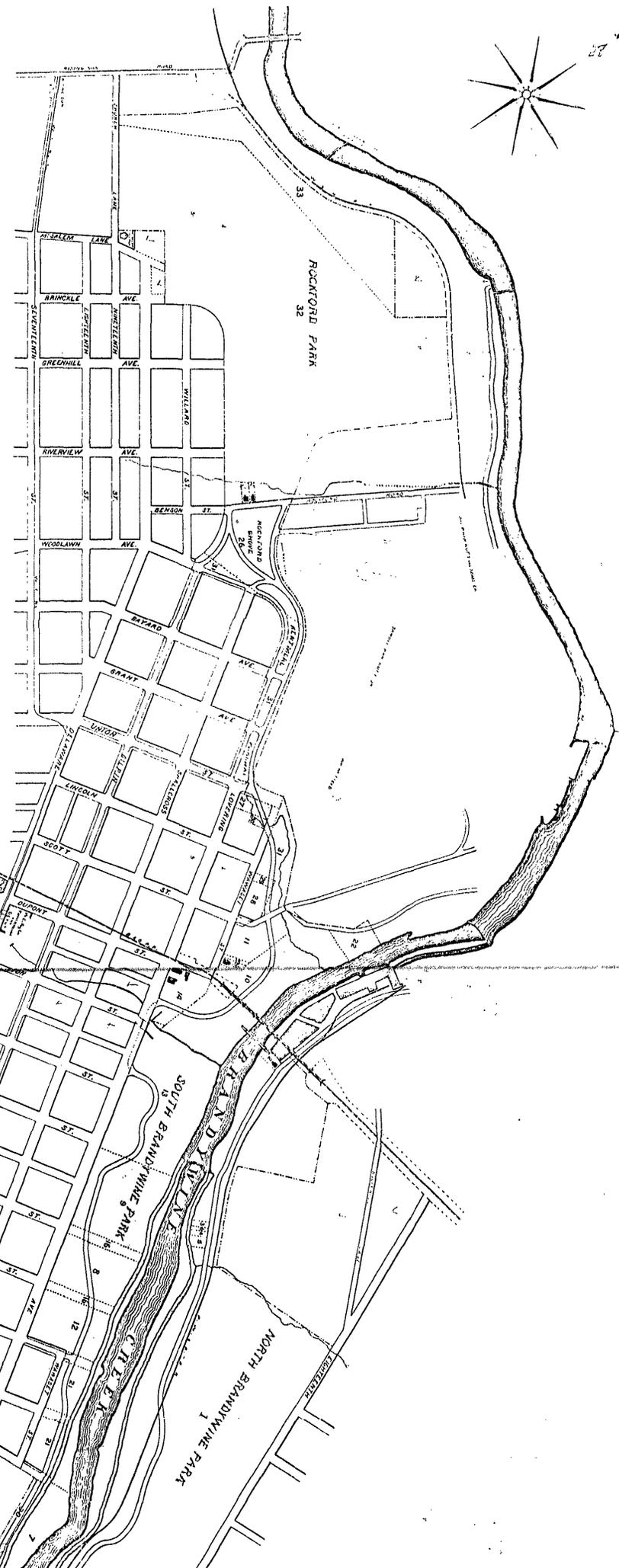
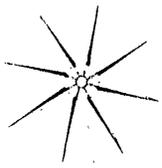


*Rockford Water Tower*



*Observation Deck*

*BOTH PHOTOS,  
PACKET #10*



# PUBLIC PARKS OF WILMINGTON D.C.

## ROCKFORD PARK

1895.

SCALE

DATE OF ACQUISITION.	FROM WHOM ACQUIRED.	AREA IN ACRES.	CONSERVATION.
32 Sept. 28, 1889.	William P. Baneroff	58.86	Tree
33 June 20, 1895.	E. I. duPont de Nemours & Co.	9.56	Tree
		68.42	

The numbers correspond to those on the different plots on the map.

Map obtained from Report of the Board of Park Commissioners, Wilmington, DE, 1905.

1925  
 DE, 1925

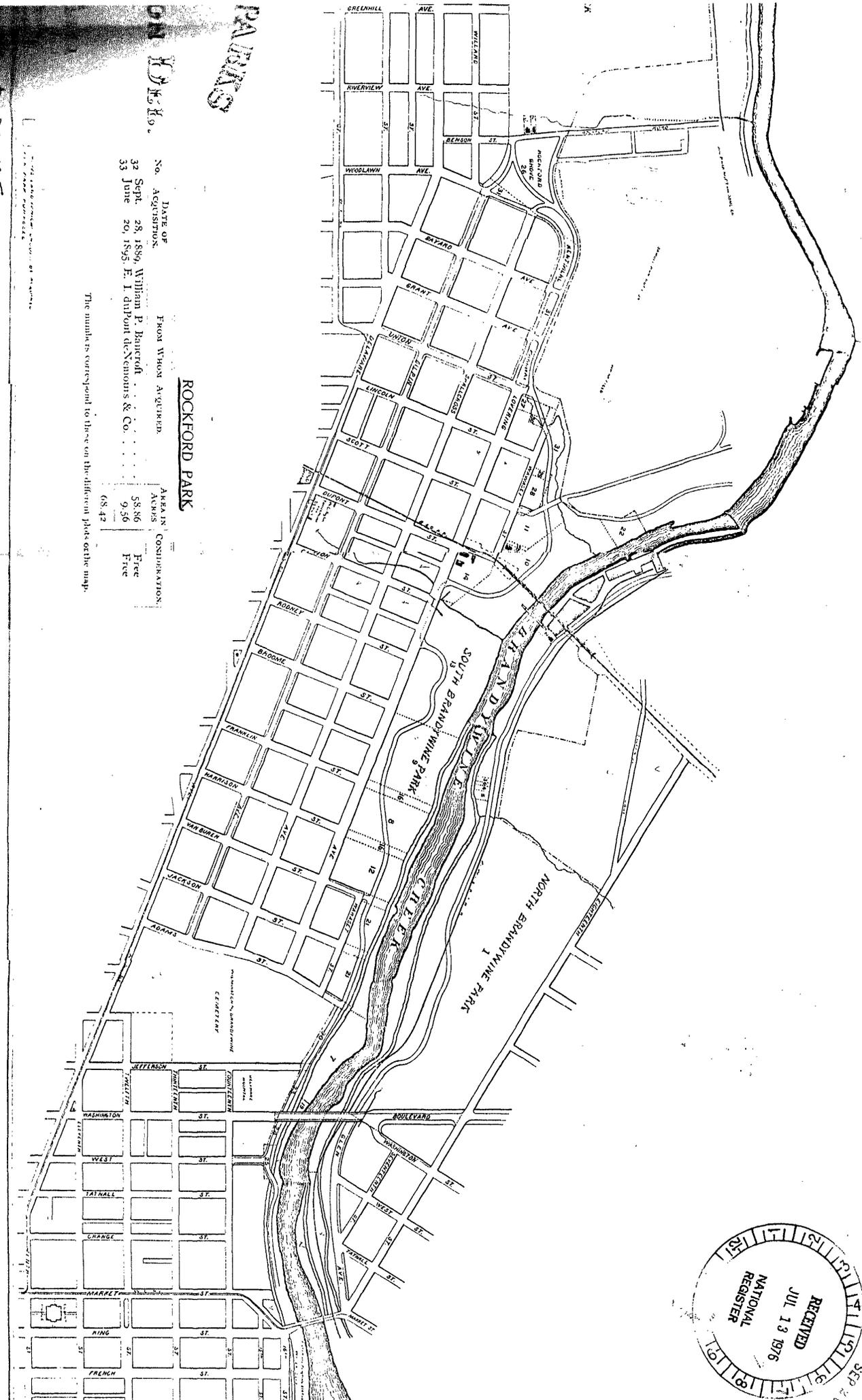
PAID

PAID  
 H. J. R. 9.

**ROCKFORD PARK**

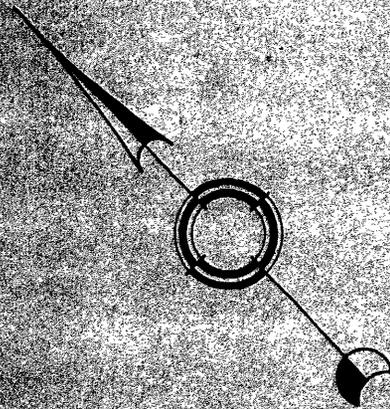
DATE OF ACQUISITION	FROM WHOM ACQUIRED	AREA IN ACRES	CONTRIBUTION
32 Sept. 28, 1886	William P. Bauerfeld	58.86	Free
33 June 20, 1893	E. I. duPont de Nemours & Co.	9.50	Free
		68.32	

The numbers correspond to those on the different plots on the map.



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 NATIONAL REGISTER

DuPONT CO.



BRANDYWINE

P.B.R.R.

R.O.W.

DRIVE

PARK

RISING SUN LANE

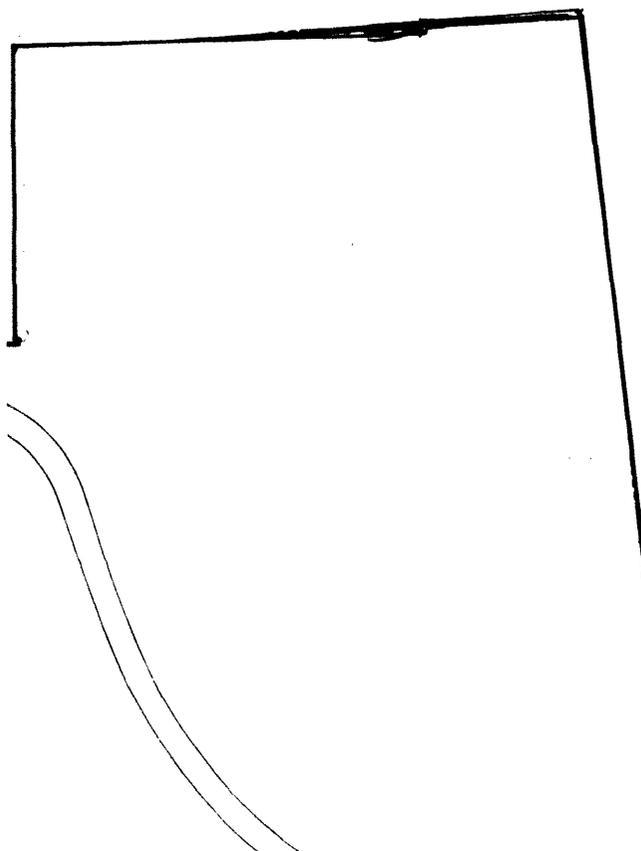
MI SALEM CHURCH

CHURCH

LANE



ROCKFORD TOWER  
APARTMENTS



ROCKFORD PARK

PARK

DRIVE

ROCKFORD ROAD

LINE

MATCH

ROCKFORD GROVE

RED OAK ROAD

AVENUE

AVENUE

ST

BENSON

WILLARD

STREET

GREENHILL

RIVERVIEW

DELAWARE

AVENUE

NINETEENTH

STREET



REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION	BY
 <p>NEW CASTLE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS &amp; RECREATION PLANNING DIVISION</p> <p><b>ROCKFORD PARK</b></p>			
CITY OF WILMINGTON, DE		NEW CASTLE CO.	
SCALE	1" = 100'	APPROVED BY	07/13/76
DRAWN	R.K. CRAWFORD	FAM FRANKS	
TRACED		DRAWING NO. P-100-1 (1)	
CHECKED			