

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED NOV 12 1980
DATE ENTERED JAN 12 1981

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
BRANCH BROOK PARK
AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER *Roughly bounded by Belleville Park, Washington and Clifton Aves., 6th and Orange Sts.*
See Geological Survey Map
CITY, TOWN *Newark - Belleville* VICINITY OF *10th, 11th*
STATE *New Jersey* CODE *034* COUNTY *Essex* CODE *013*

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME *County of Essex*
STREET & NUMBER *Hall of Records, 465 High Street*
CITY, TOWN *Newark* VICINITY OF *New Jersey* STATE *New Jersey*

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. *Hall of Records* *County of Essex*
Essex County Court House *Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs*
STREET & NUMBER *465 High Street* *115 Clifton Avenue*
CITY, TOWN *Newark, NJ 07102* *Newark, NJ 07104* STATE *New Jersey*

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE *Survey of Branch Brook Park* *Determination of Eligibility: Department of the Interior, Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service - 6/7/1979*
DATE *Various dates from 1895 through 1/1978* FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS *Essex County Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs*
CITY, TOWN *Newark* STATE *New Jersey*

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" 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

Branch Brook Park (hereinafter referred to as "Park") is approximately two miles in length and a quarter of a mile wide, covering .562 square miles. As a result of a series of land purchases and donations, it has reached its current size of 359.72 acres. Running through the center of the "Park" is Branch Brook Lake surrounded by Cherry Blossom trees as well as other trees and foliage. There are also smaller ponds within the "Park." The Second River which flows easterly through the Northern Extension of the "Park" is lined on both banks with the greatest concentration of flowering Cherry Blossom trees. Many ball fields and recreational facilities are located throughout the entire length of the "Park". Included in the Southern Division of the "Park" are the boathouse on the south shore of Branch Brook Lake and the Branch Brook Ice Center, which serves as an ice skating rink in the winter and a roller rink in the summer.

Only 25 acres of park land existed in Essex County when the Essex County Park Commission, the first in the United States, was created in 1895. Shortly thereafter, the Commission announced that it would acquire 3,000 acres in Essex County.

In 1895 the City of Newark transferred roughly 60 acres of land to the Park Commission and this served as the starting point upon which Branch Brook Park was developed. Previously this land was virtually a swamp surrounded by old tenement houses. The swamp was drained, the houses razed, and excavation for the lake and the development of the "Park" was begun.

Miracles took place at Branch Brook Park before 1900. A lake replaced the old swamp, flower gardens were set in place, lawns were graded, and terraces and bridges were built. People came to hear band concerts, to play tennis on the lawn, to view the flower beds, to fish and row boats in the summer, and to ice skate in the winter.

The Commission's work did not go unnoticed. Following the \$2,092,755 that was expended through 1897, the voters of Essex County, in 1898, approved expenditures of \$1.5 million for additional park development. Four years later in 1902, the voters approved another \$1 million for the Park Commission. Dollars were, as they are now, evidence of public support and enthusiasm.

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Newark, Essex County
New Jersey

Description (continued)

The Commission was able to extend its acquisitions north by the public spirited generosity of the Ballantine Family who donated all the land owned by them within the "Park" lines, amounting to 30.32 acres. Robert F. Ballatine contributed a handsome gateway in 1899 at a cost of \$27,895, which is now named after its donor. An additional 51.59 acres were given to the Commission by Z.M. Keen, William A. Righter, and the Heller Family.

The present boundaries and divisions of Branch Brook Park are delineated on Map 1. The "Park" is divided into four divisions: Southern Division, Middle Division, Northern Division, and Northern Extension.

Buildings and Sites Within or Contributing to the Character of Branch Brook Park:

1. Sydenham House (Old Road to Bloomfield - No. 1 on Map 2): Colonial, 2 stories field stone and clapboard, built ca. 1712, enlarged four times to its current 14 rooms. The house is registered with the Library of Congress as part of the 1935-36 Historic American Building Survey and is listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. (This building is immediately outside of Branch Brook Park proper.)

Description (continued)

2. Cathedral of the Sacred Heart (Sixth Avenue and Clifton Avenue - No. 2 on Map 2): Classic French Gothic, constructed of the finest imported and domestic marble, its towers rise 232 feet. The Cathedral covers an area of 45,000 square feet. Sacred Heart is the fifth largest cathedral in the United States; it borders Branch Brook Park on its eastern boundary overlooking Branch Brook Lake. Since December 22, 1976, the Cathedral has been registered as a State and National Historic Place. (The Cathedral is immediately outside of Branch Brook Park proper.)

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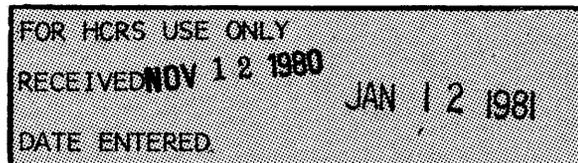
CONTINUATION SHEET

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Branch Brook Park
Newark, Essex County, New Jersey
Description (continued)

3. Ballantine Gateway (Ballantine Parkway and Lake Street - Nos. 3 and 4 on Map 2): French Renaissance, two one-story buildings, red brick and limestone, on either side of the Ballantine Parkway entrance. Between these two buildings stands a wrought iron gate, 11 feet high and 40 feet wide, which opens to its entire width. Donated to Branch Brook Park in 1899 by Robert F. Ballantine, it is a replica of a gatehouse in Scotland. The architects were Carrere and Hastings of New York City, noted architects of the New York Public Library and the Frick Mansion (Art Museum).
4. Prudential Lions (Boat Landing - No. 5 on Map 2): Two Lions, 8 feet tall, weighing 3 tons apiece. They are the original sculptures by Karl Bitter for the Prudential Insurance Company of America. From 1901 - 1956 the Lions were located above the doors of the Broad Street entrance to the Prudential. When that building was razed to make way for the company's new corporate office, the Lions were removed. Prudential presented them to the Essex County Park Commission on June 1, 1959. They were placed on either side of the boat landing near the concert mall.
5. Cherry Blossom Trees (Branch Brook Park - primarily Northern Extension above Heller Parkway): This is the largest collection of flowering Cherry Blossom trees in the United States. The old Bamberger Estate which occupied much of the Northern Extension grew Cherry Blossom trees, thus providing the style of arrangement later expanded upon when more trees were donated and replaced.

In 1927 the Bamberger-Fuld Family, through Caroline Bamberger-Fuld, donated more than 2,000 of these trees to beautify Branch Brook Park. Since the original donation over 50 years ago, the Essex County Park Commission has planted well over 1,500 more trees. Today Branch Brook Park boasts the largest display and variety of Cherry Blossom trees in this country, surpassing those in the Tidal Basin of the Nation's Capital in both number and different types of blossoms. These trees are known to have a life span of approximately 40-50 years. As a result, the Newark Cherry



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Description (continued)

Blossom Festival, Inc., a private non-profit corporation, established a Tree Fund in 1976 to raise moneys for the replacement and replenishment of Branch Brook's Cherry Blossom Trees. To date, the Festival has donated \$10,000 in the form of 270 Cherry Blossom trees to Branch Brook Park.

Map 3 shows the arrangement of Cherry Blossom trees in the "Park."

6. Essex County Park Commission Building (115 Clifton Avenue - No. 6 on Map 2): Two-stories, steel frame, concrete walls faced with brick, concrete floors, Spanish tile roof. Built 1914-1916.

The Park Commission building was designed for the Park Commission by Harold Van Bueren Magonicle. It is a good example of Second Renaissance Revival architecture. Two special features are the Palladian window in the front center of the building and the upper story tiles that were painted by the architect's wife.

Between 1895 and 1916, the Park Superintendents and Engineers were housed at 160 Clifton Avenue in Newark. They moved into this new building in 1916; however, the Park Commissioners remained in downtown Newark offices until moving into the Park Commission Building in 1940. In November 1977, the Park Commission Building was listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

7. Branch Brook Ice Center (located at south end of "Park" in the old Reservoir - No. 7 on Map 2): Enclosed, clear span structure, laminated wood and trusses, 120 feet wide, 220 feet long, 36 feet high at center. Built 1969.

Within the original walls of the old City Reservoir is the skating rink and adjoining park lot. An outdoor artificial rink stood on this same site since 1957. The present rink has the same floor, engine room, compressors and pipes as the 1957 rink.

8. The Boat House (South end of "Park" adjacent to Interstate Route 280 - No. 8 on Map 2): One-story, brick masonry, stucco walls, wood roof, wood trusses inside with plywood sheetings over trusses, approximately 60' x 25'. Built 1940.

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Description (continued)

The original Boat House was built in Victorian style in the late 1890's near the site of the present buildings. Ice skating and boating were major attractions at the "Park." This house was torn down around 1930 due to old age and decay. Interest in canoeing and rowboating declined in the 1960's. After Interstate Route 280 was completed around 1972, the Boat House was closed.

9. War Memorial (No. 9 on Map 2): Along the Park road to the east of Heller Field and just north of the Ballantine Gateway there sets an inscribed plaque on stone surrounded by evergreen bushes. It was presented by the North End Junior Municipality on June 4, 1923 and is dedicated to the youth of the 8th Ward who died in World War I.
10. Senior Citizen Buildings: Branch Brook Park has two buildings that have been converted into centers where Senior Citizens gather to socialize, play cards, play Bocce ball and engage in other activities. The two clubs have a total membership of over 700. These centers are both popular and often crowded.
 - a. (South side of Bloomfield Avenue - No. 10 on Map 2): Victorian style with wood frame, columns, and roof; walls are cement block asphalt shingles, 4 gables, built early 1930's as an open boat landing approximatley 45' x 18'. Converted in 1969 to a Senior Center. The asphalt parking lot was added in 1977.
 - b. (North of Heller Parkway and tennis courts - No. 11 on Map 2): One-story prefabricated wood siding and frame, approximately 45' x 20'. Built 1932 as a field house, then tool shed, now Senior's building.
11. The Greenhouses and Water Pumps (Nos. 12 and 13 on Map 2): The "Park" greenhouse buildings (No. 13) serve all of the county parks and are located in an area directly south of Heller Parkway in the garage-maintenance complex. The greenhouse maintenance building, built in 1900, connects the two greenhouses and houses the only "Park" pump in its basement. It is a one-story wood frame build-

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Description (continued)

ing about 70 feet by 15 feet. The original three greenhouses have been removed. Now standing is a 45-year old greenhouse (70' x 20') and a 3-year old greenhouse (70' x 40'), both are filled with beautiful indoor and outdoor plants. Since their inception, the greenhouses have been used to produce park plants and to hold plants over the winter. In the summer, in conjunction with the greenhouse, the Park's Recreation Department has run a program for Senior Citizens and retarded and handicapped children and adults. The participants learn to grow their own plants in an eight-week program. Flower shows, specializing in Chrysanthemums, took place here until 1969. Their popularity declined in the '60's due in part to the poor shape of the old greenhouses.

A large electrical pump, that supplies drinkable water from a well two hundred feet below to Branch Brook Lake, is located beneath a trap door in the basement of the greenhouse maintenance building. There have been several replacements for the pump, the last being in 1975. This well supplies water to the lake in dry periods, and prevents stagnation in warmer weather by keeping a flow through the lake.

There was an electrical centrifugal water pump in a shed (No. 14 on Map 2), which still stands as a Tool house, at the head of the lake in the Middle Division. This pump, installed in 1907, at one time sent water up to the north end of the lake near Heller Parkway, and eventually was removed giving way to the present well in the greenhouse.

12. Garage and Maintenance Buildings (Nos. 15 and 16 on Map 2): Occupying the same area as the greenhouse. Steel, cement block complex of garages and a small office building. Built 1967-8.

These buildings house the equipment and staff responsible for the upkeep and construction of the Essex County Parks. The original maintenance yard was built in 1895 and consisted of a complex of brick barn-shaped buildings. All of these structures were removed by 1967. A storage garage built in 1975 is located behind the greenhouses.

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Description (continued)

13. Sand Court Shelter (Clifton Avenue just north of Interstate Route 280 - No. 17 on Map 2): Open brick structure, wood frame roof, approximately 40' x 20'. Built in 1899, Olmsted Brothers Architects.

This building has been the center for children's activities since 1899. There used to be sand boxes around the buildings. The Park Commission reported that in 1905 the average daily attendance at the sand court and "little folks" lawn nearby was 1,061 and seasonally 75,000.

14. Octagon Shelter (On Meeker Mound, named after an early Park Commissioner - No. 18 on Map 2): West of Barringer High School and overlooking the lake. Designed by the Olmsted Brothers, concrete and brick masonry, about 8 feet on each side, wood frame roof. Built 1899.

Now surrounded by full-grown trees, this shelter, also called the gazebo, once was surrounded by formal gardens adding to its very scenic view of the entire Southern Division of the Park.

15. Recreation Program Building (No. 19 on Map 2): Next to Sand Court Shelter on Clifton Avenue, basic brick masonry, wood roof. Built 1900. Approximately 30' x 15'.

16. Tool Houses

- a. (No. 20 on Map 2): Next to recreation building with adjoining lighted basketball courts. Concrete block, stucco, wood frame roof (15' x 15').
- b. (No. 14 on Map 2): Just south of Bloomfield Avenue, wood frame, 8' x 8'. Formerly housed original 1907 water pump.
- c. (No. 21 on Map 2): Mill Street and Franklin Avenue, pre-fabricated wood frame, 25' x 15'. Built ca. 1932.

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Description (continued)

17. Octagon Field House (Off Lake Street between Park and Bloomfield Avenues - No. 22 on Map 2): Used as Men's and Ladies' Rooms; wood frame, concrete block, exterior stucco, shingle roof, approximately 8-10 feet on each side.
18. Men's and Women's Restrooms (Nos. 23 and 24 on Map 2): Located on either side of the Prudential Lions near Park Avenue; concrete block, stucco, flat tar roof, 15' x 15'. Built 1921.

These buildings appear as the original buildings other than the windows that have been closed up with cement. In 1975, the roofs were reframed and steel door and frames replaced parts that had been rotting.

19. Tennis Courts and Building (North of Heller Parkway entrance - No. 25 on Map 2): Prefabricated Sears-Roebuck all wood frame siding and roof. Built 1927. Approximately 35' x 15'.

Tennis came to Branch Brook Park in 1906. The courts were grass and clay in the old days. Now there are 16 clay courts and 4 hard surface courts. The courts are continually filled during the playing season with weather permitting.

20. The Field House (Heller Field - No. 26 on Map 2): Wood frame and roof, cement stucco exterior with pebble dash finish, windows sealed up, 13 gables. Inside has an attractive lumber ceiling (90' x 30'). Built 1905. Originally, this building had showers, bathrooms and lockers. Now it is used as an urban day camp in the summer.
21. Winding Road and Bridges. The roads in Branch Brook Park are now paved but still follow the paths of the original roads which were designed for horse and buggy. They are designed in the old European classic tradition which is natural, informal and winding.

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Description (continued)

In the 1920's and 1930's small stone and cement pedestrian bridges were constructed, many designed by the Olmsted Brothers. They blend beautifully with the informal, rural look of the "Park" and follow foot paths throughout the "Park." There are several of these bridges between Heller Parkway and Bloomfield Avenue.

The Park and Bloomfield Avenue bridges were completed in 1904. The Park Avenue bridge cost \$83,687; its Bloomfield Avenue counterpart cost about half that amount. At that time the Park Avenue bridge was one of the largest of its particular kind in the country with a clear span of 132 feet. The ornamental work on the bridge used artificial stone closely resembling cut Indiana lime stone. Parts of the original ornamentation have been removed.

In the Northern Extension there are two railroad bridges, three auto bridges over Mill Street and the Second River, and two pedestrian bridges that offer a fabulous view of the Cherry Blossom trees.

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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Recreation
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1895

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

John Bogart & N.F. Barrett; Olmsted Brothers Landscape Architecture Firm

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The First County Park System

Branch Brook Park has the distinction of being one of the original parks opened for public use in the Nation's first county park system, the Essex County Park Commission, which was established in 1895. Branch Brook Park is also significant for its graceful landscape architecture in large part a contribution of the firm of Frederick Law Olmsted, one of America's most famous landscape architects.

The cover of the Essex County Park Commission's Report of 1976-1977 reads, "America's First County Park System." In his book published in 1905 entitled "The First County Park System", Frederick Kelsey details development of this extended and costly park system.

It was also significant because of the Commission's early recognition of the value of open space in a rapidly developing urban setting. The underdeveloped swamp lands provided little value to the area. In fact,

"The land was impossible without draining, and until thus improved, practically worthless. In the Springtime or during a rainy season, many acres were practically as impassable to a person on foot as the jungles of Africa."²

The first boundaries and plans for Branch Brook were agreed upon July 30, 1895 and extended only so far as Park Avenue to the north and Orange Street to the south. Grading and surface work began June 15, 1896.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Continuation Sheet

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

UTM NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 359.72

QUADRANGLE NAME _____ QUADRANGLE SCALE _____

UTM REFERENCES			UTM REFERENCES		
ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A 1,8	5 6,9 1,6,0	4,5 1,1 0,7,0	B 1,8	5 6,8 8,3,0	4,5 1,1 1,3,0
C 1,8	5 6,8 7,3,0	4,5 1,1 9,5,0	D 1,8	5 6,9 6,0,0	4,5 1,5 2,1,0
E 1,8	5 6,9 8,1,0	4,5 1,5 4,8,0	F 1,8	5 7,0 4,6,0	4,5 1,5 2,6,0
G 1,8	5 7,1 3,5,0	4,5 1,4 6,5,0	H 1,8	5 7,1 3,3,0	4,5 1,4 6,0,0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

I 1 8	5 6 9 9 5 0	4 5 1 5 1 9 0	J 1 8	5 6 9 7 5 0	4 5 1 4 5 6 0
K 1 8	5 6 9 8 8 0	4 5 1 4 3 4 0	L 1 8	5 6 9 9 2 0	4 5 1 3 9 0 0

(see continuation sheet for verbal boundary description)

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE		
M 1 8	5 6 9 2 5 0	4 5 1 1 9 2 0	N 1 8	5 6 9 2 2 0	4 5 1 1 8 9 0
O 1 8	5 6 9 1 2 0	4 5 1 1 6 4 0	P 1 8	5 6 9 3 5 0	4 5 1 1 5 5 0

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE Kathleen P. Galop, Esq., Founder and Trustee
Ron Rudin, Research Director

ORGANIZATION Newark Cherry Blossom Festival, Inc. DATE May 1, 1979

STREET & NUMBER 375 Mt. Prospect Avenue TELEPHONE (201) 877-6258 (day)

CITY OR TOWN Newark STATE New Jersey

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE X 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.

Deputy [Signature] DATE 6-5-80

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE Deputy Commissioner, Dept. of Environmental Protection

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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	DATE <u>1/12/81</u>
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	DATE
ATTEST:	DATE
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION	

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Significance (continued)

The Original Park Plan

Who gets credit for designing Branch Brook Park? As with any such undertaking many individuals and groups contributed. Here we give credit to the Essex County Park Commission, the Olmsted Brothers Landscape Architects Firm, and John Bogart and N.F. Barrett, Landscape Architects and Engineers.

Bogart and Barrett, who had wide experience in park work throughout the country, were selected in 1894 to provide the Park Commission with plans and advice for development of Branch Brook Park and several other parks in Essex County. Bogart and Barrett planned for "a public ground for recreation not surpassed in any other city....combining features of landscape treatment developed by different schools of that art."³ Work on the "Park" began in 1896 following the plans of Bogart and Barrett. Due to cut-backs in funds, they were terminated in 1897. At that time, Frederick Law Olmsted also submitted a report that was valuable in helping guide the Commission.

On August 22, 1898, the Park Commission hired the Olmsted Brothers firm who "designed general plans for the completion of the Southern Division....with entirely new general plans for the Middle and Northern Divisions."⁴ Their contract was not renewed in 1905, but reportedly the Olmsted firm was called upon for consultation regarding many of the county parks up to 1940.

Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. is considered to be the father of landscape architecture and the founder of landscape architecture as a profession in America. In 1857 he designed New York City's Central Park and this established the precedent for parks in urban areas and initiated the profession of landscape architecture. As the demand for his work increased, he organized the Olmsted Brothers Landscape Architect Firm consisting of his brother, his sons and himself. Some of his many accomplishments include, The Capital Grounds in Washington, D.C. and the Campuses of Harvard, Yale, Amherst and Stanford. He also designed parks for the cities of San Francisco, Boston, Trenton, New York, Philadelphia, the National Zoo in Washington, D.C., and the United States Military Academy at West Point. The list of his and his firm's accomplishments are impressive and endless and Branch Brook Park is among them.

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Significance (continued)

The Olmsted Brothers spoke of the "Park" as "unmistakable and most satisfactory evidence of that love of the beautiful in nature and in art which does more than anything else to inspire the heart and the intellect and through them to make life worth living."⁵

The Cherry Blossom Trees

Branch Brook Park's Cherry Blossom trees are considered to be among the finest and most impressive in the world.

Inspired by the beauty of Washington's cherry blossoms, in 1927 Caroline Bamberger-Fuld donated some 2,050 Japanese Cherry Blossom trees to the Essex County Park Commission, which were to be planted in Branch Brook Park. Over the years the Essex County Park Commission has added about 1,500 more Cherry Blossom trees bringing the display to well over 3,000, the largest display and variety of such trees in the United States.

The Newark Cherry Blossom Festival, Inc. has raised over \$10,000 through its Tree Fund established in 1976 and has planted more than 270 Cherry Blossom trees in Branch Brook Park to replenish and replace the original trees donated in 1927.

Cherry Blossom trees are divided into single and double flowering types. Branch Brook Park has both single and double species of cherry trees. Among the single types, the Yoshino predominates, as in Washington, D.C. There are at least nine other varieties of single and double cherry blossoms in Branch Brook Park, including the Higan, Pink Weeping Higan, Subhirtella, Autumnails, Sargent's Shirotae, Fijiyama, Gyoiko, Fungenzo and the most popular double pink, the Kwanzan.⁶

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Significance (continued)

The Cherry Blossom trees are in full bloom for two to three weeks each Spring. The trees do not all bloom at once, singles blossom first, followed by the doubles. The most spectacular period of the 14-17 day display comes when both the single and double types are in bloom together. When this occurs the crowds are enormous. The display is visited by people from all over the country. It has been estimated that as many as 150,000 people have been counted in a single eleven-hour period when the trees are in full bloom.

The Essex County Park Commission has taken pride in the maintenance and conservation of Branch Brook Park. In addition to the Cherry Blossom trees in the "Park," there are greenhouses in which trees and plants are sprouted and rooted, later to be planted throughout the "Park" in the many flowerbeds and gardens. These flowerbeds and gardens are nicely arranged and the flowers are changed and replanted with the coming of each new season giving the "Park" a fresh new face several times a year.

D. Camp Frelinghuysen

Camp Frelinghuysen was established to muster northern New Jersey's troops into action for the Civil War. The huge camp sprawled westward from what is now Branch Brook Park, and extended from the tracks of the Morris and Essex Railroad to Bloomfield Avenue. Volunteers gathered at the camp in July, 1862 to form the Thirteenth Regiment. The unit was at full strength on August 28, 1862, when the Rev. Dr. E.M. Levy and several ladies of the South Baptist Church stopped by and presented a regimented flag stitched by the ladies. Colonel Ezra A. Carman accepted the flag and promised that the Thirteenth would "Follow it to the battlefield, fight under it, and if need be, die beneath its folds." Less than three weeks later, on September 17, the green troops fought at Antietam and suffered cruel losses. The Thirteenth fought on through Virginia; at Gettysburg; on Sherman's march to the sea; and beyond to the war's end.

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Significance (continued)

In the Southern Division of the Park, near the Prudential Lions, there is a plaque on a stone explaining the history of Camp Frelinghuysen.

E. Significant Areas of the Park

The Reservoir (No. 27 on Map2)

The walls of the old City Reservoir still stand around the ice skating rink and parking lot. Once called the Clifton Avenue Reservoir and located in what was once called Reservoir Park, this area was a quarry in 1871 and was converted into a reservoir in 1873. It was inefficient and costly to operate from the beginning because the water leaked through the inadequate cement and stone walls. It was abandoned and has been dry since 1912. At one time tenements rimmed the reservoir. These dwellings were torn down to make way for the newly landscaped Branch Brook Park in 1896.

The Reservoir Fountain

Another historical note connected with the Reservoir is that it once contained a Fountain that the Newark News in 1903 reported to be the "world's greatest flowing fountain." The Newark Water Department at the same time reported that the discharge of 400,000 gallons of water daily "is greater than that from any found in the world." Designed by Eugene Vanderpool and Morris Sherrerd, and installed in 1903, the Fountain was a great attraction. It sent water spurting 50 feet into the air. The Reservoir was drained in 1912 and the Fountain was dismantled.

Mendellsohn's Bust

A six-foot high pedestal stands in the "Park's" Southern Division just to the west of Barringer High School. A bust of the famous Mendellsohn rested here until old Barringer was torn down in 1966 and the bust became a target for abuse. The bust was a prize won by the United Singers of Newark at the Saingerfend held in 1902. It was donated to the "Park" in 1904. A committee from the National Sculpture Society "declare it to be in every way artistic,"¹² thus allowing it to be erected. The bust is presently stored in a "Park" garage.

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Significance (continued)

The Subway-Canal Connection

The Number 7 City Subway line runs above ground from the Franklin Avenue Station, which is located several blocks north of Heller Parkway, along the west border of the "Park," eventually going underground near Norfolk Street to Pennsylvania Station.

The Subway has never been on "Park" property. Dubbed "the scenic route" because of its stretch along the "Park," its construction began on November 18, 1929, a few days after the stock market crash and finished on May 26, 1935, with an original cost of six million dollars.

The Subway follows the bed of the old Morris Canal, a route that once floated barges linking the coal mines of Pennsylvania with the iron mines of Morris County and the markets of Newark and New York City. The Canal was never part of the "Park" property, although it was a big attraction during its existence from 1829 and 1912. An exciting and notorious culture developed around the canal and the people who worked and traveled the barges.

The Subway route is presently owned and operated by the Transport of New Jersey. It was the last transport line to use trolley cars in New Jersey. The original subway cars that replaced the trolleys are still running today and are in excellent condition.

Heller Field (No. 29 on Map 2)

Although swampy and sometimes impassable by foot during heavy rains, the area just south of Heller Parkway was used for airplane barn-storming prior to acquisition of part of this land by the Park Commission in 1931. The Eastern terminal of the U.S. Aerial Mail Service used this field land for 18 months from 1919-1921.

This use was terminated after a series of accidents and failure of early biplanes to negotiate its rough terrain and 900-foot landing strip. Referred to as the worst of its kind, the field was plagued by weather conditions and many pilots and some onlookers were killed from crashes.

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Significance (continued)

In his book By the Seat of My Pants, Dean Smith writes: "Heller Field in Newark was probably the worst of all. Situated as it was between Tiffany's factory and a canal, approaching planes had to glide between the factory and a steep hill, make a sharp bank over a gully filled with debris, and quickly set down, right out of the turn, to land on the edge of the field... the employees of Tiffany's would line up to observe a spectacular splash in the canal, a wild round loop, or a noseup into the mound." ¹⁶ During that time hundreds of people flocked there on weekends and holidays by trolley, horse and buggy to view these aerial antics.

The field had previously been owned by Paul Elias Heller, head of an important Newark manufacturing family that ran Heller Tool and Dye Company. In 1877, a large battery was erected on the field by General Wind of the New Jersey Militia.

Today a field house (No. 26 on Map 2) built in 1905, sets on the northeast part of the field and is used for recreation.

Recreation

Branch Brook Park has provided recreational facilities for Newark and the entire County since its creation in the 1890's. In addition to all its natural beauty and historical significance, Branch Brook Park offers many recreational activities to the people it serves and is still meeting the needs of its urban visitors by providing a secluded haven away from the bustling city life. Even more than its quiet and peaceful places, there are many choices available to those recreation-minding individuals. Branch Brook Park has all the facilities a park is expected to have, and then some. In addition to its baseball, football, and soccer fields, Branch Brook Park has tennis and basketball courts. There are playgrounds for children, as well as recreation centers and special programs for senior citizens, including bocce courts. There is fishing in Branch Brook Lake and some of its larger ponds; there are trails for running and jogging enthusiasts and bike paths for cyclists. There is also an Ice Arena which is used for ice skating in the winter and roller skating in the summer.

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Significance (continued)

Environmental Improvements and Other Modifications

More improvements and additional work are currently underway to beautify the "Park." The Essex County Park Commission has recently received a \$4 million grant (Green Acres) to make improvements in Branch Brook Park. Some of the plans include the rehabilitation of the existing boathouse so that it will once again be operational renting boats and serving refreshments. Also, the Lake will be redredged, cleaned and eventually stocked with trout to provide more fishing pleasure for the "Park" visitors. A floating amphitheatre will be constructed on Branch Brook Lake, connected to the boat-landing to provide more concert entertainment for the people of Essex County and Branch Brook Park.

Other Green Acres funding will go into the renovation of the tot lot, the tennis courts, basketball courts, Building 26, and the horse shoe pitching area. There will also be tree and shrubbery plantings (cherry blossom trees are to be replaced when they die), and the existing tennis court building may be demolished to make room for a larger one.

Land topography has remained stable for the most part. Growth in vegetation has been most noticeable. There have been changes in the lake bottom particularly under the new bridge that passes in front of the Boathouse. Construction of Interstate Route 280 in the early 1970's cut off about an acre of "Park" land and has affected the water drainage. The Boathouse that was in use since 1940 was closed in 1972.

Due to the growth of trees, areas where formal gardens once glamorously grew no longer are conducive for such growth. Flowers are still planted throughout the "Park," particularly near Park Avenue and Heller Parkway.

In 1977, the head of the lake south of Bloomfield Avenue was filled in and large trees surrounding the lake were cut down to make way for a paved parking lot next to the Senior Citizens Building.

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Significance (continued)

The Second River which runs through Branch Brook Extension along Mill Street was given a cobblestone bottom and cement canal-like walls. Portions of the cobblestone bottom are now covered by cement.

In recent years some low growing vegetation has been thinned throughout the "Park," particularly along Lake Street to improve safety.

The citizens of Essex County are proud of Branch Brook Park and want to keep it as it was intended, a haven for the urban dweller, with something for everyone, unspoiled and beautiful in a time when more and more land is literally being wasted. Branch Brook Park maintains much of its original beauty and is interested in keeping it this way. Today, Branch Brook Park is nationally recognized as one of the most extensive and remarkable urban parks in the United States.

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(11/78)

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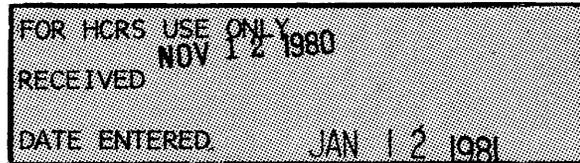
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**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
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Continuation sheet

Geographical Data

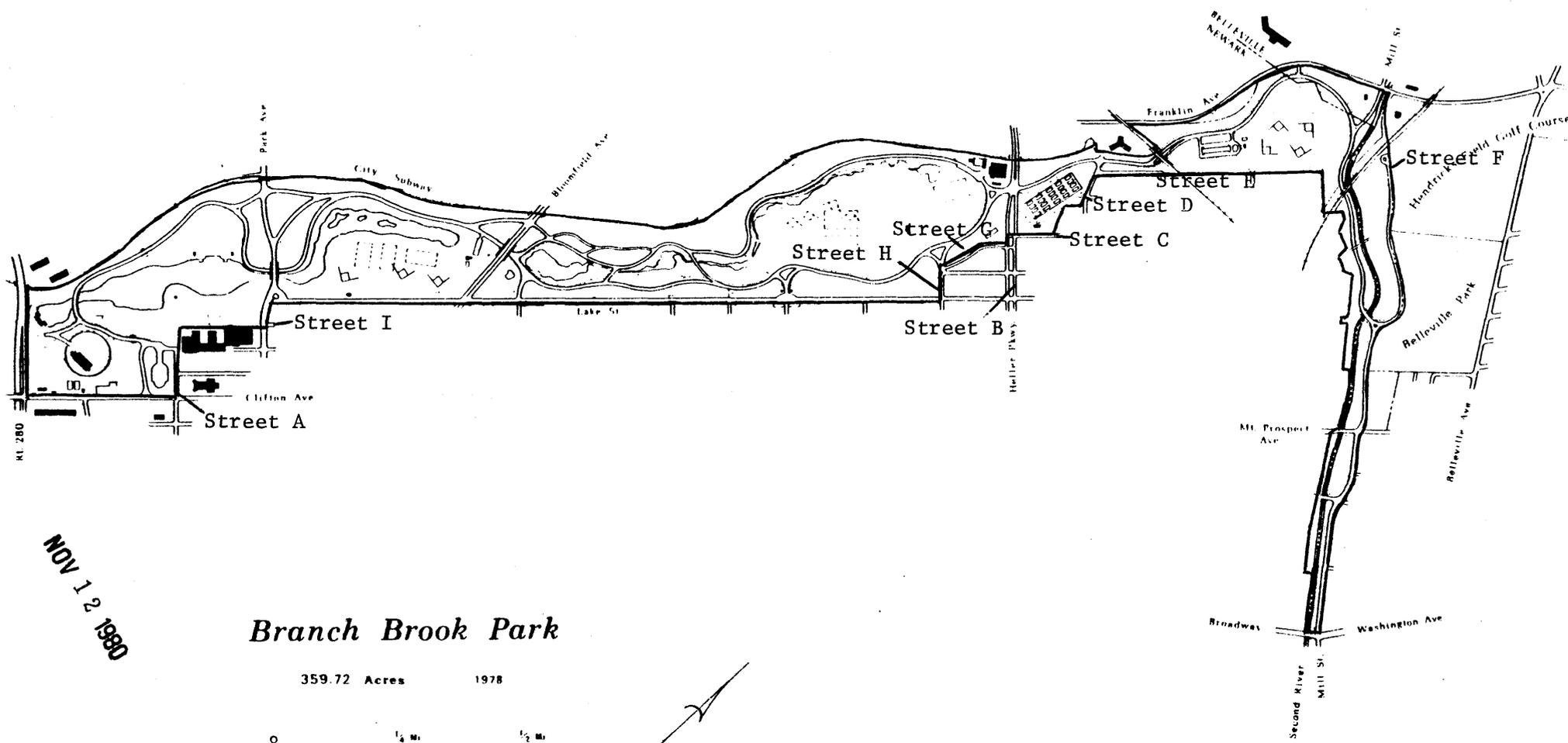
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Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at the NE corner of Route 280 and Clifton Avenue proceed NW along Route 280 to the east right-of-way of the Newark City Subway line. Thence, proceed north along the subway right-of-way crossing Park Avenue, Bloomfield Avenue, and Heller Parkway to the subway turnaround. Thence, proceed SE 50 feet. Thence, proceed NW following the park boundary to the north right-of-way of the southern branch of the Erie-Lackawanna and Western Railroad at the overpass. Thence, proceed along the railroad right-of-way to Franklin Avenue. Thence, proceed NE along Franklin to the east bank of Second River. Thence, proceed south to the northern point of the road labeled Street F. Thence, proceed SE along this road crossing Mt. Prospect Avenue to the north right-of-way of Broadway-Washington Avenue. Thence, proceed SW to the west bank of the Second River. Thence, proceed north following the park limits across Mt. Prospect Avenue and the north branch of the Erie-Lackawanna Railroad to the roadway labeled Street E. Thence, proceed SW along the south right-of-way of Street E to the west right-of-way of Street D. Thence, proceed southward along the park limits to Street C. Thence, proceed along the north curb of Street C to the west curb of Heller Parkway. Thence, proceed south along Heller to the north curb of Street G. Thence, proceed along Street G to the south curb of Street H. Thence, proceed SE along Street G to the north curb of Lake Street. Thence, proceed SW along Lake Street to the east curb of Park Avenue. Thence, proceed south to Street I. Thence, proceed SW along the park boundary 400 feet. Thence, proceed SE to the east curb of Street A and continue southward along this street to the north curb of Clifton Avenue. Thence, proceed SW along Clifton Avenue to the point of beginning.

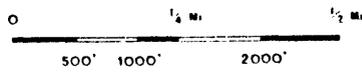
Southern Division Middle Division Northern Division Extension



NOV 12 1980

Branch Brook Park

359.72 Acres 1978



Prepared By
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