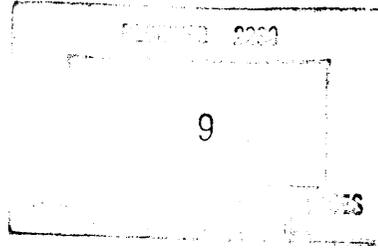


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Laurelhurst Park

other names/site number Ladd Park

2. Location

street & number 3554 SE Ankeny Street  not for publication

city or town Portland  vicinity

state Oregon code OR county Multnomah code 051 zip code 97204

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide x locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] January 16, 2001  
Signature of certifying official/ Deputy SHPO Date

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

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I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register Edson H. Beall 2/16/01  
    See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the \_\_\_\_\_  
    National Register  
    See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the \_\_\_\_\_  
    National Register  
 removed from the National Register \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper    Date  
                                    of Action

---

#### 5. Classification

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Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private  
 public-local  
 public-State  
 public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)  
 district  
 site  
 structure  
 object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	_____	buildings
<u>1</u>	_____	sites
<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>	structures
_____	<u>1</u>	objects
<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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

City Beautiful Multiple Property Submission

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RECREATION AND CULTURE Sub: outdoor recreation  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RECREATION AND CULTURE Sub: outdoor recreation  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS  
\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation \_\_\_\_\_  
roof \_\_\_\_\_  
walls \_\_\_\_\_  
other \_\_\_\_\_

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

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### Description<sup>1</sup>

Laurelhurst Park contains one contributing building, one contributing site, and two contributing structures. In addition, Laurelhurst Park contains four noncontributing structures and one noncontributing object. The contributing and noncontributing features are listed below with numbers corresponding to the map entitled "Sketch and Boundary Map and Feature Key" found after Section 10 of this document.

1. Ankeny Street Comfort Station: contributing building.
2. Laurelhurst Park land, defined by its legal boundaries and including Concert Grove, Children's Lawn, Plateau Meadow, Broad Meadow, Picnic Grove, and Rhododendron Hill: contributing site
3. Circulation system: contributing structure
4. Firwood Lake: contributing structure
5. Lighting system: noncontributing structure
6. Horseshoe pit court: noncontributing structure
7. Boomerang Island: noncontributing structure
8. Concrete terraces: noncontributing structures
9. Modern sculpture: noncontributing object

Laurelhurst Park marks the southwest corner of Laurelhurst, a 442-acre residential neighborhood located in both southeast and northeast Portland. The 26.81-acre park is bounded on the east by Southeast Thirty-ninth Avenue, the south by Southeast Oak Street, the west by Southeast Thirty-third Avenue, and the north by Southeast Ankeny Street. The northwest border of the park, between Southeast Ash and Ankeny Streets, is heavily wooded and abuts a large parcel of residential property. With the exception of Thirty-ninth Avenue, quiet residential streets surround Laurelhurst Park.

Laurelhurst Park has a roughly triangular footprint; its east end and south side meet at a square angle, while its north side slopes south as it travels westerly, following Ankeny Street's slightly curved alignment. The park's western boundary along Southeast Thirty-third Avenue, which angles to the northeast, forms the "point" of the rough triangle. Because there was little major grading of the site when the park was developed, the topography follows the contours of the surrounding area. Gently rolling hills and intermittent level land contrast with a shallow swale and steep slope at the park's northwest section. The park boundaries are defined by a dense mix of mature deciduous and coniferous trees and large shrubs, obscuring views of the park's interior from points outside the property line. There are thirteen entrances to the park from the surrounding streets: main entrances are located at the corner of Ankeny and Thirty-ninth Streets, at the corner of Thirty-ninth Avenue and Oak Street, along Oak Street, and along Ankeny Street. There is one secondary entrance at Thirty-ninth Street, four at Oak Street, two at Thirty-third Avenue, and two at Ankeny Street.

There are six major sections of land within the park. Emanuel T. Mische, the Olmsted Brothers' long-time horticultural expert who served as Portland's park superintendent and designer from 1908 until 1914, designed Laurelhurst Park to allow for different types of uses within each section. The sections each have their own distinct character and are

<sup>1</sup> This description is based on a site visit conducted by Christine Curran on November 10 and November 14, 1999. Sources for this section include a 1910 site plan prepared by Emanuel T. Mische; a 1981 site plan prepared by the Bureau of Parks and Recreation; a series of building plans dating from 1914 and 1915 prepared by architects Whitehouse and Foulhoux; and a Laurelhurst Park tree inventory and plant list obtained from Portland Parks and Recreation, 1999.

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separated from each other by the original concrete footpath system that circulates throughout the park. The sections will not be considered individually as contributing or noncontributing sites. They comprise the site and are therefore considered collectively as a contributing site. However, within some sections, there may be noncontributing elements, for example: the noncontributing modern sculpture located within the contributing Children's Lawn. The park's main circulation system is a contributing structure because it is original and retains its historic integrity. The paths are twelve-foot wide in most areas and paved with asphalt throughout with the exception of a secondary path through Rhododendron Hill. The system includes a stairway that runs between Ankeny Street and the park's interior at the north park boundary. The park's circulation system follows Mische's 1910 plan very closely. Although some secondary paths shown on the plan were never built, all of the main paths actually constructed at Laurelhurst Park are represented on the 1910 plan. The system essentially makes an open loop around the perimeter of the park, starting at the northernmost entrance on Thirty-third Avenue and terminating at the southernmost entrance on Thirty-third Avenue. Offshoots from the loop comprise the bulk of the circulation system, following the curvilinear boundaries of the six different sections of the park. Where paths merged, Mische created triangles that served to prevent short-cutting across the lawn by park visitors. These triangles remain ideal sites to showcase plantings such as Cornelian cherry, mountain laurel, eastern flowering dogwood, and Japanese andromeda. The circulation system was lit in 1915. The lamp standards and fixtures were replaced in the 1960s and again in 1996. Because it is not known if the new structures are placed in the same locations as the original structures and because the existing lamp structures are entirely modern, the lighting system is a noncontributing structure. Picnic tables and benches are scattered throughout the park. Placement and materials of these features have changed over time but do not greatly affect the overall integrity of the park.

The following narrative describes the park's major elements beginning at the north boundary and moving clockwise.

### **Ankeny Street Comfort Station**

In 1914, Portland architects Whitehouse and Foulhoux designed a men's comfort station for Laurelhurst Park. The building is located at the park's northern boundary at the intersection of Laurelhurst Place and Ankeny Street. The building faces Ankeny Street, marking one of the park's main entrances, and currently holds restrooms and the park's administrative office. Because the Ankeny Street Comfort Station retains its historic integrity and appearance, it is a contributing structure.

Clad in green-painted stucco with darker green trim, the one-story, wood-frame building has a cross-gabled plan consisting of prominent, projecting cross-gabled bays at the front (south) and rear (north) facades and hipped-roof wings to the east and west. The building was designed in a simple version of English Cottage, a popular period-revival style at the time. The eaves at the cross-gabled bays display simple vergeboards, while the hipped-roof wings have overhanging boxed eaves. Three steel bollards and a concrete pad and sidewalk mark the approach to the building, which is surrounded by planting beds and mature deciduous trees. The gabled bay at the front facade holds a wood double-leaf front door framed in a simple wood casing. Each leaf has a tongue-and-groove panel surmounted by a four-light window. The door is spanned by a five-light transom. On either side of the main door is a six-light, wood-sash window. The gable of the bay is pierced by a vertical louvered vent. East of the front bay, the hipped-roof wing holds a wood-sash, multi-light window. The west wing holds a double-leaf door with tongue-and-groove panels. West of the doors the front facade continues seamlessly as part of a secondary hipped addition that extends off the west facade. The west wing's roof steps down just past the double doors, indicating the addition. The addition holds a small wood-sash, multi-light window at the front facade and two modern, single-leaf, metal doors at the west facade. The projecting gabled bay at the south facade faces the interior of Laurelhurst Park. A central double-leaf door is flanked by single-leaf doors in a continuous casing. All the doors have tongue-and-groove panels topped with four-light

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windows. Thick, tapered columns flank the doors. A broad, wood beam surmounts the columns, spanning the distance between them. A series of rafter tails extends from the building to the beam, creating a canopy over the doors. The gable of the bay is pierced by a vertical louvered vent. On either side of the bay, the east and west wings hold wood-sash, multi-light windows with simple casings. The west wing addition is slightly recessed at this facade and also holds a wood-sash, multi-light window. A raised concrete patio marks the approach to the south facade. Thick, concrete wing walls ring the patio, framing a wide set of three shallow steps leading from the patio into the park. The east facade of the building is comprised of the end of the east wing. There is a single, off-center, modern metal door at this facade.

Inside the Ankeny Street Comfort Station, the center section, articulated by the gabled bays, contains a recently remodeled Parks and Recreation field office and community meeting room. The hipped-roof wings hold men's and women's restrooms. Interior furnishings are spare, with walls of painted plywood and a floor of concrete.

### Concert Grove

Directly east of the Ankeny Street Comfort Station is the subdivision of the park known as the Concert Grove. The Grove is a gently sloping tract of cultivated lawn that covers the northeast portion of the park. Mische intended to build a music gazebo in the center of the Grove, but money shortages cancelled the plan. Nevertheless, the Grove has historically been the location of musical and theatrical performances, attracting large crowds to the expansive area. Since Mische envisioned a space that would accommodate such crowds, he planned a spare planting program for the Concert Grove. Mische added Douglas fir, linden, and swamp chestnut oak to the mature Douglas firs that already peppered the site in 1913. Most of the trees are scattered at the Grove's perimeter. Modern picnic tables stand in angled groupings at the east and west ends of the Grove.<sup>2</sup>

### Firwood Lake and the Children's Lawn

The south border of the Concert Grove marks the north edge of the section of the park containing Firwood Lake. This is a large section, covering more than one-third of the east side of the park. Firwood Lake is approximately three feet deep. It is surrounded by a gravel path that circumnavigates its concrete and rock banks. Plantings around the lake are a mix of deciduous and coniferous trees and mature shrubbery planted in clusters, including common hackberry, silktree, sweetgum, fragrant snowbell, bald cypress, and Chinese witch hazel. Bigleaf maple, sugarberry, and Northern red oak are among those plantings that remain from 1913-1914. Boomerang Island stands in the west section of the lake. Constructed in the 1950s, this small island was not part of Mische's original plan; however, a dramatic weeping willow and mature evergreen shrubs contribute appropriately to the lake's picturesque appearance. Shallow concrete terraces at the lake's northwest and east shores provide seating and access to the lake. There are rock stairs and railings at the north shore leading from the path to the lake and stylized railings around the terraces at the east end of the lake. These manmade features were not designed by Mische. They represent efforts during the 1920s and 1930s to improve accessibility to the shore and increase safety in the area immediately surrounding the water. The lake is a contributing structure because it was a principle design element in Mische's original plan. The concrete terraces surrounding the lake are noncontributing structures and Boomerang Island is a noncontributing structure because these elements were not part of the original design.

Northwest of the lake is a small, treeless tract of cultivated lawn known as the Children's Lawn. Surrounded by clusters of ornamental shrubbery and mature trees, this area was designed as an open play field. It remains today as it was

<sup>2</sup> Portland (OR) Park Board, *Annual Report*, 1912 (Portland: The Board, 1913); Laurelhurst Park tree inventory and plant list.

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originally designed, with the exception of a modern metal sculpture placed in the middle of the lawn in the early 1980s. The sculpture is a noncontributing object because it is a modern addition.

### Plateau Meadow

At the south shore of Firwood Lake, the land rises to the hilly, forested southeast corner of the park. Known as Plateau Meadow, this section of the park contains many of the original, old Douglas and grand firs that Mische considered the central design element of Laurelhurst Park. His decision to minimize grading at the park was a result of his respect for the trees and his desire to maintain the grandeur of their appearance. To the grove of firs, Mische added more Douglas and grand firs, swamp chestnut oak, and London planetree. Many of these original trees still stand, although some of the old firs have died of natural causes over the years and been replaced in-kind. Later additions, evergreens and exotics, have contributed to the stunning display of variety at Plateau Meadow. These include dawn redwood, a rare deciduous conifer, giant redwood, Port Orford cedar, Northern red oak, tulip tree, Japanese crabapple, Pacific dogwood, Southern magnolia, Whitcomb flowering cherry, and Katsura tree. Besides the lamp posts along the pathways, manmade features at Plateau Meadow are limited to sparsely scattered benches, single picnic tables, and the twelve-pit, lighted horseshoe court enclosed by a low chain-link fence at the south edge of the park. The horseshoe court is a noncontributing structure because it was not part of Mische's original plan.

### Broad Meadow

A dense swath of large, original camellias marks the transition from Plateau Meadow to Broad Meadow, the park's large center section whose southern boundary parallels Oak Street. Broad Meadow represents Mische's vision to create distinct sections of the park for vigorous activities: "the flatter areas are to be open to games, picnicing, rambling and fiestas." Consequently, Mische planted very little at Broad Meadow, which consists of a wide expanse of cultivated lawn with a level, treeless center surrounded by gentle slopes with dense and varied tree clusters. In 1913, Mische found Douglas and grand fir, Western red cedar, and Western hemlock at the site. He added American beech, tulip tree, heavenly bamboo, and wintersweet, all of which are extant. Subsequent plantings include Pissard plum, Northern red oak, giant sequoia, weeping Japanese cherry, Colorado spruce, and Sassafras. Broad Meadow contains a few scattered picnic tables and benches around its perimeter. It is utilized as a playing field for casual ball games and other team sports, just as Mische had intended when he designed it in 1910.<sup>3</sup>

### Picnic Grove

Picnic Grove has a savannah-like character, with open, level spaces scattered with single trees giving way to denser foliage and hilly land at its west end. Approximately half the size of its eastern neighbor, Broad Meadow, Picnic Grove is located between Oak Street to the south and Rhododendron Hill to the north. Picnic Grove is utilized, as originally intended by Mische, as a gathering place for large groups. The area displays long strings of picnic tables on concrete pads at its flat west end. Mische did a great deal of planting in this area to augment the Douglas fir, Western yew, and black walnut that he found there in 1913. European beech, sugar maple, Norway maple, bigleaf maple, coast redwood, giant sequoia, common persimmon, holly, sycamore, and umbrella pine comprise Mische's selections for Picnic Grove. According to the park's planting inventory, this original vegetation is extant.

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<sup>3</sup> Portland Park Board, *Annual Report*, 1912; Linda Corbett, Laurelhurst Gardener, interview by Christine Curran, November 10, 1999.

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### Rhododendron Hill

The southern boundary of the area known as Rhododendron Hill meets the northern boundaries of Picnic Grove and Broad Meadow. The steepest section of Rhododendron Hill abuts a large parcel of residential property, marking the park's northern boundary between Ash and Ankeny Streets. Running from the west end of the park to the Ankeny Street Comfort Station, Rhododendron Hill is the largest of the six sections in Laurelhurst Park. Rhododendron Hill is located on either side of the park's northernmost pathway, which begins at Thirty-third Avenue and travels to the Ankeny Street Comfort Station. The paved pathway runs through a steep hillside covered with dense foliage and some of the most diverse plantings in the park. There is a gravel path that runs parallel and below the paved one. This hill contains what Mische described as the "steeper areas" of the park which were to be "devoted to arboreous and shrubby vegetation as an appropriate use of the ground and to add an enriching element and one lessening the cost of maintenance." Mische planted the area profusely with rhododendrons, azaleas, Western hemlock, and Southern and saucer magnolia. The rhododendrons that lend the hill its name are concentrated in the center of the incline around a string of straight-run brick stairs that runs from the base of the hill to Ankeny Street. Although the original log stairs have been replaced with brick, the enormous rhododendrons surrounding them are the original plantings. Subsequent plantings on the densely wooded slope include deodar cedar, border forsythia, Tanyosho pine, paperbark maple, paper birch, paperbark cherry, empress tree, redbud, Devil's Walking Stick, harlequin glorybower, grand fir, goldenchain tree, incense cedar, and red flowering currant. At the base of the hill is a shallow, lawn-covered ravine. This ravine was to have been the site of a brook and pool system originating from Firwood Lake. Mische deliberately planned the brook system for that area, knowing the area was swampy. A lack of funds cancelled construction of the brook and now the ravine holds standing water through much of the winter and spring.

### Conclusion

The integrity of Laurelhurst Park is excellent. Emanuel Mische's design intent, based on the Olmsted design tradition, is clearly recognizable eighty-nine years after the park's design was conceived. Within the original property boundary, the historic circulation system is still intact, defining the original relationships between the six distinct sections of the park. Today, each section offers the same type of visitor experience and provides the same function for which it was originally intended. Because landscapes are dynamic entities, not all the vegetation called for by Mische in 1913 remains intact. However, many of the natural features that Mische used as principle design elements in his plan for Laurelhurst Park are extant, including portions of the old fir grove and the lake. Mische selected a wide variety of plants for Laurelhurst Park at a time when such horticultural heterogeneity was not commonly seen in Portland. Later alterations to the historic planting plan, inevitable in a living landscape, were undertaken in the spirit of Mische's fascination for diversity. Many of the plants in Laurelhurst Park are rare, unique to Portland and to the Northwest. Contained within its nearly twenty-seven acres are over one-hundred different varieties of trees and shrubs. The park's only architectural feature, the Ankeny Street Comfort Station, retains its historic appearance and excellent condition. A minor, seamless addition to its west end does not diminish the building's integrity. All these factors contribute to excellent visual continuity and to the strong historical associations evoked by Laurelhurst Park.



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### Statement of Significance

#### Introduction

Laurelhurst Park in east Portland, Oregon is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places within the area of Landscape Architecture under Criterion A and C because it embodies the design principles of Frederick Law Olmsted, the nation's most influential landscape architect and urban planner. Frederick Law Olmsted's landscape design firm was the first of several such firms to flourish around the turn of the twentieth century as a result of the City Beautiful movement. The City Beautiful movement was one among many social crusades that gained popularity between 1890 and 1917 as a response to the oppressive conditions found in American cities in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. This period of heightened social awareness, known as the Progressive Era, was characterized by reform movements in all areas of American culture, from personal morality, politics, and working conditions to civil engineering, architecture, and recreation. The City Beautiful movement promoted the rational, comprehensively planned built environment as a means for achieving civic aesthetics and social reform. The City Beautiful movement was embraced and interpreted by professionals and laypersons alike; its ideology was practiced in the fields of architecture, landscape architecture, civil engineering, community planning, recreation, and fine art. One of the fundamental components of the City Beautiful movement was the notion of beautifying the urban landscape using deliberate planning practices; its hallmark became the planned park system that stood in sharp contrast to the random and haphazard development that had characterized the physical growth of American cities up to that time.<sup>4</sup>

In 1898, the secretary of Portland, Oregon's newly formed park association began correspondence with Olmsted Brothers, the firm that was founded by Frederick Law Olmsted. In 1903, John C. Olmsted, stepson and nephew of Frederick Law Olmsted and principal of the firm, submitted a plan for a park system in Portland. While the Olmsted firm was not retained to design the system, the Olmsted legacy was manifested in Emanuel T. Mische, the Olmsted Brothers' long-time horticultural expert who served as Portland's park superintendent and designer from 1908 until 1914. Under E. T. Mische, Laurelhurst Park flowered into one of the finest examples of Frederick Law Olmsted's revolutionary treatment of designed landscapes in Portland.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, Laurelhurst Park meets the registration requirements set forth by the City Beautiful Multiple Property Submission prepared by the City of Portland Bureau of Planning in 1999. The park qualifies for listing as a Neighborhood Park that retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, and association. It is also eligible as a reflection of Olmsted design characteristics and as a part of the Olmsted Plan of 1903. Finally, Laurelhurst Park was acquired or functioning as a park between 1897 and 1949, the City Beautiful Multiple Property Submission's period of significance.

#### John C. Olmsted's 1903 Portland Park Plan

The initiation of correspondence between the secretary of Portland's newly formed park association and the nation's

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<sup>4</sup> The following narrative on the Olmsted Plan of 1903 and Emanuel Mische relied heavily on sections from Kenneth J. Guzowski's master's thesis, "Portland's Olmsted Vision (1897-1915): A Study of the Public Landscapes Designed by Emanuel T. Mische in Portland, Oregon" (master's thesis, University of Oregon, 1990); Guzowski, 9-12, 21-24; Norman T. Newton, *Design on the Land: The Development of Landscape Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 413-426.

<sup>5</sup> Guzowski, 17.

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premiere landscape architecture firm, Olmsted Brothers of Brookline, Massachusetts, marked the genesis of Portland's park system. Encouraged by Portland's strong economy, city leaders in the 1890s actively promoted Portland as the emerging cultural and economic center on the West Coast. With the reformist ideologies of the Progressives at the forefront of the country's collective consciousness, Portland's visionaries set about to cultivate a higher quality of life in the city by improving the built environment. Portland was not alone in its quest for physical order, deliberate planning, and refined aesthetics. The World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago had stimulated the public's interest in civic design in 1893. Several similar fairs followed in other cities and the McMillan Commission's plan of 1901 for the Mall in Washington, D.C. strengthened the current that propelled American cities into a period of unprecedented planning activity at the turn of the century. The Portland Park Association's interest in establishing a comprehensive park system reflected this nationwide trend toward a heightened civic aesthetic known as the City Beautiful movement.<sup>6</sup>

In Portland, the City Beautiful movement found expression initially in the construction of four municipal reservoirs in 1894: two at Mt. Tabor and two at City Park, now known as Washington Park. Surrounded by elaborate fencing, gatehouses, cultivated lawn, and flower beds, the reservoirs represented some of the finest planned landscapes in the city. The development around the reservoirs stood in stark contrast to the city's park land, which at that time consisted of the Park Blocks, a string of twenty blocks in the city's downtown; the Plaza Blocks, two blocks now known as Chapman and Lownsdale Squares, between Southwest Salmon and Madison Streets and Third and Fourth Avenues; Terwilliger Park, south of downtown; City Park, west of downtown; Holladay Park, between Northeast Eleventh and Thirteenth Avenues and Holladay and Multnomah Streets; Columbia Park, off North Willamette Boulevard in north Portland; and Ladd's Addition in southeast Portland. Encompassing less than 200 total acres, Portland's park land was largely unimproved. Encouraged by the investment at the reservoirs and a generous donation of 107 acres of land in northwest Portland by Scotsman Donald Macleay in 1897, civic leaders began to visualize the potential for a municipal park system. Empowered by the national call-to-arms to pursue the "City Beautiful," the city of Portland formed a park association to administer and improve existing parks and to develop a park system.<sup>7</sup>

Negotiations between the Portland Park Association and Olmsted Brothers continued over the following two-and-one-half years. By the spring of 1903, John C. Olmsted was on his way to the Pacific Northwest to discuss the design of the upcoming Lewis and Clark Exposition and proposed park systems in Portland and Seattle. At the time of Olmsted's visit, Portland park property consisted of just over 200 acres. Olmsted spent several days touring the city and visiting parks. Later that year, he prepared a report to the Park Board "outlining a system of parkways, boulevards and parks for the city of Portland." This preliminary plan became the foundation from which the city's modern park system would eventually develop.<sup>8</sup>

In his report, Olmsted identified locations for thirty-seven park projects encompassed within a proposed system of neighborhood parks, suburban parks, scenic reservations, city squares, parkways, and boulevards. Among the sites

<sup>6</sup> City of Portland Bureau of Planning, "The City Beautiful Movement and Civic Planning in Oregon, 1897-1921, Multiple Property Submission," sec. E, pp. 1-13; Leland M. Roth, *A Concise History of American Architecture* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), 214-218; Newton, 400-412.

<sup>7</sup> "The City Beautiful Movement," sec. E, p. 12-13. Acquisition dates for the parks are as follows: Park Blocks, 1852-1870; Chapman and Lownsdale Squares, 1852; Terwilliger Park, 1854; City Park, 1871; Holladay Park, 1870; Columbia Park, 1891; Ladd's Addition, 1891; and Macleay Park, 1897. Portland Park Board, *Annual Report*, 1901. Although the city owned the above park properties by 1903, they may or may not have been developed by that time. Terwilliger Park should not be confused with Terwilliger Boulevard, a parkway identified by John C. Olmsted in 1903. Acquisition of land for Terwilliger Boulevard did not begin until 1908. Guzowski, 143-145.

<sup>8</sup> City of Portland, "The City Beautiful Movement," Guzowski, 17.

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Olmsted selected was a portion of an east Portland dairy farm owned by the estate of William S. Ladd. In 1903, the land surrounding the farm was already being subdivided for residential use. Olmsted undoubtedly foresaw the future development of the Ladd farm, as he targeted its swampy, forested southwest section as an ideal setting for a neighborhood park. Eventually known as Laurelhurst Park, the acreage would not be acquired by the city for some time. The extraordinary rise in land values after Portland's Lewis and Clark Exposition of 1905 prevented the Park Board from realizing Olmsted's plan for the Ladd farm or for any of the other thirty-six proposed park sites.<sup>9</sup>

In time, however, the rapid development Portland experienced after the Exposition worked to the advantage of the Olmsted plan. As the population grew, pressure mounted for neighborhood parks and playgrounds in and around expanding residential subdivisions. In 1907, the Portland Park Association planned a bond issue for \$1,000,000 to carry out the Olmsted plan of 1903. The bond issue passed in June and the following month, the Park Board enlisted Olmsted Brothers to prepare a land acquisition analysis for the properties identified in the 1903 plan. Because of the city's rapid growth and concurrent skyrocketing land values, John Olmsted made substantial changes to his 1903 plan. He suggested that the city prioritize its acquisitions, identifying the most important landscapes to be developed. He advised to abandon hopes for connecting parkways on Portland's east side, as the land had become too expensive. Instead, he suggested placing priority on constructing local and neighborhood parks to keep up with the rapid residential growth taking place on the east side. In contrast to Olmsted's 1903 plan, his 1907 acquisition plan found the Park Board in a position to act upon his advice. Between 1908 and 1909, Emanuel Mische led the Park Board in prioritizing park lands and initiating negotiations to acquire them.<sup>10</sup>

### Emanuel T. Mische and the Portland Park System

Thirty-eight-year-old Emanuel Tillman Mische was at the helm of the Portland Park Department when the first installment of the \$1,000,000 bond issue became available for park land acquisition. Mische had replaced park superintendent Arthur D. Monteith in the spring of 1908 after leaving his position as park superintendent for Madison, Wisconsin. Mische had been recommended for the Portland position by John Olmsted at the time of Monteith's hiring in 1906 but Mische had just started his job in Madison. When the opportunity arose again in 1908, the timing was right. Mische brought to Portland a remarkable range of experience and skill. Born in Syracuse, New York, he attended the Missouri Botanic School before enrolling in the Bussey Institute, the horticulture school of the Arnold Arboretum in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, in 1894. Under the influence of such horticulture luminaries as Charles Sargent, Alfred Rehder, Jackson Dawson, and Ernest Henry Wilson, Mische cultivated his skills, focusing on the propagation of seeds, grafting, and cuttings of new plant species from Asia. In 1896, Mische received a scholarship to attend the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, England. In 1898, upon his return from Europe, Mische went to work for Olmsted Brothers in Brookline, Massachusetts. Under the tutelage of John Olmsted and Olmsted's half-brother Frederick Law, Jr., Mische learned to draw and design in the Olmsted tradition. Because of his extraordinary horticulture expertise, the Olmsteds encouraged his involvement with projects requiring planting plans. After eight years with Olmsted Brothers, Mische left Brookline for the Madison position.<sup>11</sup>

Emanuel Mische's responsibilities as Portland's park superintendent went above and beyond the routine duties of the position. Mische expanded his responsibilities for the administration of park maintenance and improvements to include

<sup>9</sup> Portland Park Board, Report of the Park Board, Portland, Oregon, 1903, with the Report of Messrs. Olmsted Bros., Landscape Architects, Outlining a System of Parkways, Boulevards and Parks for the City of Portland (Portland: The Board, 1903) as described in Guzowski, 54-58.

<sup>10</sup> Guzowski, 64-68; Portland Park Board, *Annual Report*, 1923.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 97-100.

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the designing and planting of all the city's parks. While his predecessor simply made recommendations for park land acquisition, Mische took an active role in negotiations. Because of his intimate involvement with every aspect of park planning, the parks that were developed during his six-year tenure as park superintendent emerged with a distinct character wholly evocative of Frederick Law Olmsted's finest urban park designs. During his eight years with Olmsted Brothers, Mische had absorbed the philosophies that inspired the work of the Olmsted family: the social responsibility the Olmsteds felt to create restorative landscapes for all classes of people; the creation of designs that resembled the results of natural weathering or biological processes on the land; the use of design techniques that created either a pastoral scene characterized by gently rolling meadows, scattered shade trees, and still bodies of water, or a picturesque scene evoked by lush foliage, rugged terrain, and circuitous paths and streams; the use of circulation systems such as walks and drives so visitors could enjoy the landscape without destroying it; the belief that all buildings and statuary in a park remain secondary to the landscape design; and finally, the importance of the benefits to the human soul of total immersion in scenery. In addition, Mische was heavily influenced by the Olmsted technique of dividing neighborhood parks into sections for different types of uses. John Olmsted mentioned this design approach in 1903 when he suggested to the Portland Park Board, "To make them [neighborhood parks] as attractive and useful as possible it is often best to abandon the attempt to secure simple broad landscape effects and to design them with as many interesting features and useful subdivisions as practicable somewhat as a recreation building is subdivided." Mische utilized all of the design techniques mentioned above when designing new park acquisitions and improving existing parks while he was superintendent.<sup>12</sup>

### The Park Board Takes Possession

By December 1909, Mische had facilitated the acquisition of Mt. Tabor, Kenilworth, Sellwood, and Peninsula parks, and Ladd Park, now known as Laurelhurst. First identified by John Olmsted as part of his 1903 park plan, Ladd Park was further developed on paper when John Olmsted returned to Portland in 1906 to secure private work with William M. Ladd. Ladd's father, William S. Ladd, had been a prominent civic leader in Portland. Founder of the city's first bank and twice mayor of Portland, the elder Ladd had owned and operated Hazel Fern Farm, a 486-acre dairy and livestock concern in east Portland. William S. Ladd died in 1893 and in 1906 the property still belonged to his estate. As Olmsted had suspected three years earlier when he targeted a portion of the farm as an ideal site for a neighborhood park, the property was under extreme development pressure. One year after the Lewis and Clark Exposition, with land values soaring, Ladd's son contacted Olmsted in anticipation of the residential development that was planned for the farm as soon as the estate was settled. According to landscape historian Kenneth J. Guzowski, Olmsted made several preliminary plans for the new subdivision only to learn that his firm would not be employed to finalize the design. Olmsted remarked in a letter to his business partner, Frederick Law, Jr.:

Mr. Ladd's idea is that I should act in consultation with his engineer in determining a few main lines of curved roads only. I thought this rather absurd but did not say so of course. I mean that it did not seem to me possible to determine the main lines without studying all the roads. I dare say it was partly his canny way of saving the cost of a full plan. However I dare say I shall get a fair compensation out of it.<sup>13</sup>

Olmsted's essential plan for the subdivision featured curvilinear streets and emphasized a large neighborhood park at

<sup>12</sup> Charles E. Beveridge and Paul Rocheleau, *Frederick Law Olmsted: Designing the American Landscape* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1995), 33, 38, 43, 50-51; Portland Park Board, *1903 Report* as quoted in Guzowski, 119.

<sup>13</sup> "Closely Knit Laurelhurst Clings to Roots," *Oregonian*, n.d., vertical file at Oregon Historical Society. Subsequent references to the Oregon Historical Society will be abbreviated "OHS;" Olmsted to Olmsted, Dec. 4, 1908, quoted in Guzowski, 63.

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the south end of the development. The plans languished until the settlement of William S. Ladd's estate in 1908 triggered a flurry of property transactions. As soon as their father's estate was settled, William M. Ladd and his brothers formed the Ladd Estate Company to handle the family's land holdings. In 1909, the company deeded Hazel Fern Farm to William M. Ladd, who promptly sold it to the Laurelhurst Company that year for \$2,000,000, the largest sale of vacant land in Portland up to that time. Using Olmsted's plans as a framework, the Laurelhurst Company began planning the subdivision in earnest. In keeping with Olmsted's vision, the Portland Park Association purchased the swampy southwest corner of the property from the Laurelhurst Company in October 1909 for \$92,482.<sup>14</sup>

### A Layout for Laurelhurst

While formulating designs for the parks he acquired in 1909, Mische was particularly challenged by the site at Ladd Park, proposing "a development of strong individuality for the park, one not possible in a similar way in any of the other park properties." At just over thirty acres, the Ladd Park property purchased by the Park Board was slightly larger than was suggested by Olmsted. Mische felt justified in improving on his old friend's recommendation, explaining to the Park Board in 1909, "to confine ourselves to the original recommendation would be to secure practically the swamp alone, whereas the extended taking includes many specimens of the grove of fine old firs and it furthermore allows for providing that district with more reasonable ample and satisfactory park attributes."<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, the grove of old firs at the southeast end of the park became the focal point of the park's design. Mische called the trees "the crowning glory of the park" and he described their role in his plan for Laurelhurst Park, as it was known by then, in the 1912 annual report to the Park Board:

The proposed plan is conceived in the spirit of the trees being the principal local consideration, and the general design and its details are devised to accentuate them and encourage their continued longevity.<sup>16</sup>

Mische planned to emphasize the fir trees by integrating other existing evergreen vegetation at the site into the design and by planting new evergreens and other plants rich in foliage, such as "hollies, mountain laurel, rhododendrons, azaleas, and similar plants known as 'choice,' either for their elegance of foliage, beauty of flower, ornament of fruit, or similar reasons." Mische insisted that "practically all of the material used there is grown in local nurseries," and that his suppliers looked elsewhere only when there was a shortage in local stock or a financial advantage to obtaining a plant from a non-local source. According to Linda Corbett, Laurelhurst's gardener, Mische obtained much of his non-local material from the southeastern United States, which may account for the high mortality rate of many of the original shrubs over time. In addition to the native plants and trees existing at the site, Mische's planting palette at Laurelhurst included Japanese snowbell; sweet viburnum; sweetgum; fragrant snowbell; tupelo; camellia; mountain laurel; Japanese star anise; sakaki; bigleaf, silver, and Norway maple; seven species of magnolia; redwood; fuchsia; heavenly bamboo; sassafras; American (or London) planetree; Chinese photinia; European and American beech; tuliptree; wintersweet; holly; Western hemlock; daphne; hydrangea; five species of rhododendrons; five species of

<sup>14</sup> Guzowski, 63; OHS vertical file; Warranty Deed, Laurelhurst Park Historic File, 1909-1972, 27/10 at the Stanley Parr Archives and Records Center, Portland, Oregon. Subsequent references to the Stanley Parr Archives and Records Center will be abbreviated "Portland Archives."

<sup>15</sup> Portland Park Board, *Annual Report*, 1909.

<sup>16</sup> Portland Park Board, *Annual Report*, 1912; Ladd Park's name was changed to Laurelhurst Park by a resolution adopted by the Park Board in July 1912. The same resolution changed City Park's name to Washington Park and Williams Park's name to Mt. Tabor Park. Laurelhurst Park Historic File, 1909-1972, 27/10, Portland Archives.

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boxwoods; ten species of zaleas; three species of linden; gardenia; and common hackberry.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to the grove of fir trees, Mische utilized an existing spring-fed pond at the east side of the site as a principle design element. Mische called for the enlargement and deepening of the pond to create Firwood Lake, which was designed to feed a brook system that emptied out of the lake from its north shore, meandering west to the far end of the park. Mische envisioned intermittent dams creating pools and miniature cascades at several locations along the stream. Picturesque bridges would carry paved walkways over the brook. The details in Mische's design went beyond aesthetics. His extensive knowledge of horticulture and natural systems led Mische to make allowances in his design of the lake to keep it clear of biological growth and prevent stagnation. He calculated the depth of the lake to prevent the growth of aquatic weeds and provided a back-up circulation system, suggesting the use of an artesian well or the city main if the Ladd spring failed to keep the water moving naturally.<sup>18</sup>

Mische's design subdivided the park into six major sections separated by paved walkways. "The flatter areas are to be open to games, picnicing, rambling and fiestas. The steeper areas are to be devoted to arboreous and shrubby vegetation as an appropriate use of the ground and to add an enriching element and one lessening the cost of maintenance." The bucolic names Mische gave to these subdivisions reveal their distinct characteristics: "Concert Grove," "Plateau Meadow," "Broad Meadow," "Picnic Grove," "Rhododendron Hill," and "Children's Lawn." The circuitous walkways that bordered them were "so arranged as to control a tendency toward short cuttings."<sup>19</sup>

Mische's description addressed the issue of buildings and structures in the park, invoking quintessential Olmsted design principles in his insistence that "all building structures coming into vision are to be secondary to the landscape, and with this design a departure therefrom can only be adopted as a sacrifice to park effect and value." Mische proposed to "provide such necessary structures as shelters and comforts, and such minor objects as seats, fountains, light standards, and the like, but never to introduce buildings of conspicuous size, or any dominating a considerable portion of the park."<sup>20</sup>

Mische felt the design of Laurelhurst Park, more than any in the park system, was dictated by the existing vegetation, topography, and natural features at the site. His understanding of the integral character of natural systems was evident in his warning to the Park Board that, with the exception of Macleay Park, "change is nowhere to be regarded with the probability of harm being so surely involved therein as in this one." Mische felt strongly that any major alteration of the topography, such as substantial re-grading or placing structures too close to the grove of fir trees, would cause irreparable harm to the site's most appealing features. From the beginning, Mische considered Laurelhurst Park "a distinctively interior park with views wholly within the tract, and its development recognizes and uses this so as to establish a highly ornate property, self contained and without outward dependence other than for water supply." At Laurelhurst Park, Mische's training at the hands of the Olmsted Brothers is fully recognizable, as he clearly subscribed to the Olmsted conviction that "all rational improvement of grounds is, necessarily, founded on a due attention to the character and situation of the place to be improved."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Park Board, *Annual Report*, 1912, 68-70; original plantings plan linen, 1913, in the collection of the Portland Archives; Linda Corbett interview; letter from E. T. Mische to Paul Murphy, June 19, 1914, Correspondence-Laurelhurst 1914 File 2/8, Portland Archives.

<sup>18</sup> Park Board, *Annual Report*, 1912, 68-70.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.; Original plan for Ladd Park, 1910, Portland Archives.

<sup>20</sup> Park Board, *Annual Report*, 1912, 69.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 70.

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### Mische's Vision Materialized

Although Mische designed Laurelhurst Park in 1910, little more than debris clearing happened at the site that year because of funding shortages. At the end of 1911, the site was still unimproved but Mische stated in his annual report to the Park Board a desire to start grading walks and lawns at the park. Construction finally began in 1912 with the sub-grading of walkways, the grading and seeding of lawns, and the installation of log steps; however, financial constraints stalled plans for planting and quashed the construction of a gazebo for the Concert Grove and the installation of the brook and pool system. That year also brought a challenge to one of Mische's principle design elements. Feeling pressure from "local agitation" for a playground in the park, likely from prospective and existing owners in the developing Laurelhurst subdivision, the Park Board insisted that plans be studied for the substitution of the proposed Firwood Lake with a recreation area. The site would include a swimming pool, assembly building, lockers, gymnasium, and an outdoor playground. Mische claimed that because of the "radical changes this entails, if so much as possible of the tree growth is to be preserved, extremely careful and painstaking study on an extended scale is necessary and to date sufficient time to prepare it has not been available." Mische felt strongly that no further improvements be made to Laurelhurst Park until the playground issue was resolved. In addition, the public had failed that year to pass a \$2,000,000 bond issue for park acquisition and improvement. For these reasons, construction did not resume at Laurelhurst Park for three more years.<sup>22</sup>

After the failure of the 1912 bond issue, Mische made a concerted effort to promote the bond for a 1913 election. Even though he had made substantial progress toward realizing Olmsted's 1903 plan, Mische lamented that Portland was still 100 to 600 percent behind other American cities in park development. He spent the year on the local lecture circuit, gathering research, and making presentations in an all-out appeal for his cause. The failure of the bond issue in June 1913 disheartened Mische profoundly. That same year, extensive city charter revisions abolished the Park Board in the process of installing a commission form of government. Although the park superintendent was still the administrative head of the newly established Park Bureau, sources suggest that the restructured government did not share Mische's broad interpretation of the position. He was transferred to the position of landscape architect for the city in August 1914 after continued friction with Commissioner William Brewster. One month later, Mische officially tendered his resignation as park superintendent. Almost immediately upon his resignation, Mische signed a one-year contract with the city to serve as a parks consultant under the new superintendent, James O. Convill, Mische's former assistant. In his capacity as consultant, Mische made recommendations and executed designs for new additions to the Olmsted Plan and prepared detailed improvement and planting plans for existing parks, including Laurelhurst.<sup>23</sup>

It was under Convill's administration and Mische's design and recommendations that activity resumed at Laurelhurst Park in 1915 with the paving of the walkways, the installation of a lighting system, and the erection of a "first-class" restroom facility. With the renewed attention to the park and the continuing development of the residential neighborhood surrounding it, Laurelhurst Park's popularity began to rise dramatically. By that time, the park and neighborhood were accessible by several street car lines: the East Ankeny and Montavilla lines along Glisan, the Rose City and Beaumont lines along Sandy, and the Mount Tabor and Sunnyside cars along Belmont Street. The annual report to the Park Board in 1915 noted that because of its central location, the patronage of the park was "enormous" and that one local band concert drew 32,000 people, "the largest crowd ever assembled in a Portland park for a single

<sup>22</sup> Park Board, *Annual Report*, 1910-1912. Construction took place on a contractual basis. Information was not available regarding the specific firms that undertook the work on Laurelhurst Park.

<sup>23</sup> Guzowski, 148-153.

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band concert."<sup>24</sup>

Regular improvements continued at Laurelhurst Park through 1916, the most significant of which was the enlarging and deepening of the pond at the east end of the park to create Firwood Lake. By 1916 Portland's park system consisted of 1,410 acres, much of it acquired, designed, or improved by Emanuel Mische. Mische had described Laurelhurst Park as "one of the most elegant of the park system properties;" it was later reported to have been his favorite. Mische used Laurelhurst to show off his horticultural expertise, taking full advantage of the site to experiment with a wide range of plant varieties that had not been used before in Portland. In 1919, the Pacific Coast Parks Association honored Mische by voting Laurelhurst the most beautiful park in the west.<sup>25</sup>

After Mische's contract with the city of Portland ended, he continued to exert his influence over park decisions through newspaper articles, city council meetings, and as president of the Portland City Club, a position he held from 1922 to 1923. In addition, he pursued private work all over the West Coast, aiding in the developing of Crater Lake Park and contributing to leading contemporary horticulture and landscape magazines. He stayed in Portland until the mid-1920s when he moved to Los Angeles to pursue park work for California State Parks.<sup>26</sup>

### Laurelhurst's Olmsted Legacy

In August 1917, another of Mische's former assistants, Charles P. Keyser, became the Executive Head of the Park Bureau, a position he retained for thirty-two years. As a result of having worked closely with Emanuel Mische for many years, park superintendent Keyser followed a nearly seamless philosophical approach to the maintenance and improvements of Portland's park system. Between 1921 and 1922, Keyser purchased an entire block across Oak Street from Laurelhurst Park to serve as a playground. This strategic acquisition took the pressure off further development at the main park and was a key factor in the retention of the park's design integrity over time. Keyser oversaw the development of the playground throughout the 1920s, installing tennis courts, handball courts, play equipment, a wading pool, a recreation building, and a kitchenette. A real estate inventory listing park and playground features installed between 1925 and 1932 notes the installation of horseshoe courts in 1926, a point confirmed in the 1927 Annual Report, which listed six courts. Although it is unclear whether the horseshoe courts were located at the playground or at the main park, the six courts were likely the first of twelve that currently stand at the south side of the main park. These horseshoe courts represent the only major recreation facility constructed in the park since it was designed in 1910. Charles Keyser continued to facilitate improvements to Laurelhurst Park through the 1920s and 1930s, including the installation of a rock shore, shallow concrete terraces, and railings at Firwood Lake. The 1955 construction of Boomerang Island in the lake was perhaps the most significant alteration to Mische's park design, although it echoes the picturesque character of the rest of the park. The 1950s also saw the original log stairway that led from the north end of the park to Ankeny Street replaced by one constructed of bricks in the identical location. An electric kitchen and restroom facility west of Broad Meadow, built in the 1960s, was removed in 1996. A metal sculpture was placed in the Children's Lawn in the early 1980s.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Park Board, *Annual Report*, 1915.

<sup>25</sup> Park Board, *Annual Report*, 1916; letter from E. T. Mische to Paul Murphy; Linda Corbett, interview; Keith Eggener, Ladd Park National Register Nomination (unsubmitted), 1985, sec. 8, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Guzowski, 152-158.

<sup>27</sup> Warranty Deeds, 1921 and 1922, Laurelhurst Park Historic File, 1909-1972, 27/10, Portland Archives; Real Estate Inventory, Laurelhurst Park Historic File, 1909-1972, 27/10; Eggener, sec. 8, p.5.

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The plantings that Mische so carefully selected for Laurelhurst Park in 1913 and 1914 matured with varying levels of success. The trees fared better over time than the shrubbery, although original examples of both planting types have survived to the present. The grove of old firs that caught Mische's trained eye in 1909 is currently a mix of original and second-growth trees; as the trees reached their natural life span and died, park officials replaced them in-kind. Although some of the plants along the perimeter of the park have been replaced over time, the "wholly interior views" that Mische intended in his design of Laurelhurst Park have been preserved.<sup>28</sup>

The lush surroundings at Laurelhurst Park were chosen year after year as the location for such long-standing Portland traditions as the Rose Festival flower shows and queen coronations. In the 1960s and 1970s, Laurelhurst Park suffered neglect as the surrounding neighborhood experienced a decline in property values and owner-occupied residences. However, the past twenty years have witnessed the re-emergence of the Laurelhurst neighborhood as the elegant subdivision it was designed to be almost ninety years ago. Property values there are among the highest in the city and the welfare of the park and the neighborhood are assured under the watchful eyes of a remarkably active neighborhood association.

Today, Laurelhurst Park remains a physical anchor and cherished amenity for the surrounding neighborhood and a landmark for the city of Portland. The park is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C as perhaps the best example in the Portland park system of the Olmsted design philosophy interpreted by Emanuel T. Mische. It is also eligible for listing under Criterion A for its association with Portland's early park planning, particularly for its inclusion in the Olmsted Plan of 1903. Laurelhurst Park is clearly evocative of the social issues that were at the forefront of the American consciousness at the turn of the twentieth century. The design for Portland's park system by John C. Olmsted reflected the activities of many American cities at that time, as they strove to build a quality of life equal to the economic stability the Industrial Revolution had provided. Through the vision and talents of park superintendent E. T. Mische, the design of Laurelhurst Park embodies the distinct physical characteristics associated with Frederick Law Olmsted and his close associates, who represented the professional pinnacle in landscape design at the height of the City Beautiful movement.

### Registration Requirements

Parks nominated under the Multiple Property Submission, "The City Beautiful Movement and Civic Planning in Portland, Oregon 1897-1921" must meet the following registration requirements:

1. Intact example of rural or suburban park, or an urban or neighborhood park
2. Exhibits Olmstedian design characteristics
3. May have been included in the Olmsted Plan of 1903
4. Acquired or functioning as a park between 1897 and 1921 during the period of significance

Laurelhurst Park is an excellent example of park planning in Portland during the height of the City Beautiful movement for the following reasons:

*Intact example of urban or neighborhood park.* Exceptionally intact after almost ninety years, Laurelhurst Park marks the southwest corner of a distinctive, 442-acre residential subdivision in the city of Portland's inner ring. The park serves both the surrounding neighborhood and the wider metropolitan area. The park is particularly accessible to pedestrians because of its location in a residential neighborhood and its interior circulation system of wide paved

<sup>28</sup> Linda Corbett, interview; current plantings list for Laurelhurst Park obtained from Portland Parks and Recreation.

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pathways. A playground adjacent to the park contains a recreation building, tennis courts, a wading pool, and playground equipment.

*Exhibits Olmstedian design characteristics.* As a former employee of Olmsted Brothers, Portland park superintendent Emanuel T. Mische was an accomplished practitioner of the highly distinctive design techniques that characterized Olmsted work. Mische designed Laurelhurst Park as a superior example of such techniques: pastoral scenes characterized by gently rolling meadows, scattered shade trees, and still bodies of water are represented in Laurelhurst Park's Broad Meadow, Picnic Grove, and Firwood Lake; picturesque scenes evoked by lush foliage, rugged terrain, and circuitous paths and streams are found at Rhododendron Hill; the use of circulation systems such as walks and drives so visitors could enjoy the landscape without destroying it is evident throughout the park in the curvilinear pathway network; finally, the Olmsted belief that all buildings and statuary in a park remain secondary to the landscape design is illustrated in the placement and scale of the single building at Laurelhurst Park, the Ankeny Street Comfort Station.

*May have been included in the Olmsted Plan of 1903.* The current location and approximate footprint of Laurelhurst Park is clearly visible in the Olmsted Plan of 1903.

*Acquired or functioning as a park between 1897 and 1921 during the period of significance.* Laurelhurst Park was acquired in 1909 at the height of the City Beautiful Movement. It was functioning as a park by 1916.

Cultural Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder Emanuel Tillman Mische  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data

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

Name of repository: Oregon Historical Society

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**10. Geographical Data**

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Acreage of Property 26.81 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing		
A 1	<u>10</u>	<u>529520</u>	<u>5040895</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>528930</u>	<u>5040610</u>	
	<u>2</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>529520</u>	<u>5040620</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>528980</u>	<u>5040765</u>
	<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.							

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

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

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title Christine A. Curran, architectural historian

organization SERA Architects, PC date November 1999

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Warranty deed. October 30, 1909. Laurelhurst Park Historic File # 27/10, 1909-1972. Stanley Parr Archives and Records Center, Portland.

Warranty deed. January 27, 1921. Laurelhurst Park Historic File # 27/10, 1909-1972. Stanley Parr Archives and Records Center, Portland.

Warranty deed. January 14, 1922. Laurelhurst Park Historic File # 27/10, 1909-1972. Stanley Parr Archives and Records Center, Portland.

### Archival Collections

Portland Parks and Recreation Archives and Drawing Collection. Stanley Parr Archives and Records Center, Portland.

Vertical Files. Oregon Historical Society, Portland.

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### UTM References

### Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is bounded by Southeast Thirty-ninth Street on the east, Southeast Oak Street on the south, Southeast Thirty-third Street on the west, Southeast Ash Street on the northwest, and Southeast Ankeny Street on the north. The boundary is shown as a heavy black line on the accompanying map entitled, "Sketch and Boundary Map, Laurelhurst Park," drawn to a scale of 100 feet to one-half inch.

### Boundary Justification

The boundary represents the original tract of property purchased by the Portland Park Board in 1909.

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

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

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

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

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**Property Owner**

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

name City of Portland c/o Park Bureau

street & number 1120 SW 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue telephone (503) 823-2223

city or town Portland state OR zip code 97204-1914

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

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

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### Index to Photographs

Property: Laurelhurst Park, Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon  
Photographer: Christine A. Curran, SERA Architects, PC  
Date: November 7, 1999  
Negatives: SERA Architects, PC  
123 NW 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue  
Portland, Oregon 97209

- No. 1 Ankeny Street Comfort Station, north facade. View to southeast.
- No. 2 Concert Grove. View to northeast.
- No. 3 Plateau Meadow. View to southwest.
- No. 4 Footpaths between Plateau and Broad Meadows. View to north.
- No. 5 General view. View to west.
- No. 6 Broad Meadow. View to northwest.
- No. 7 Picnic Grove. View to northwest.
- No. 8 Ankeny Street Stairs. View to north.
- No. 9 Firwood Lake. View to east.

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No. 1 Ankeny Street Comfort Station, north façade. View to southeast.



No. 2 Concert Grove. View to northeast.

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National Park Service

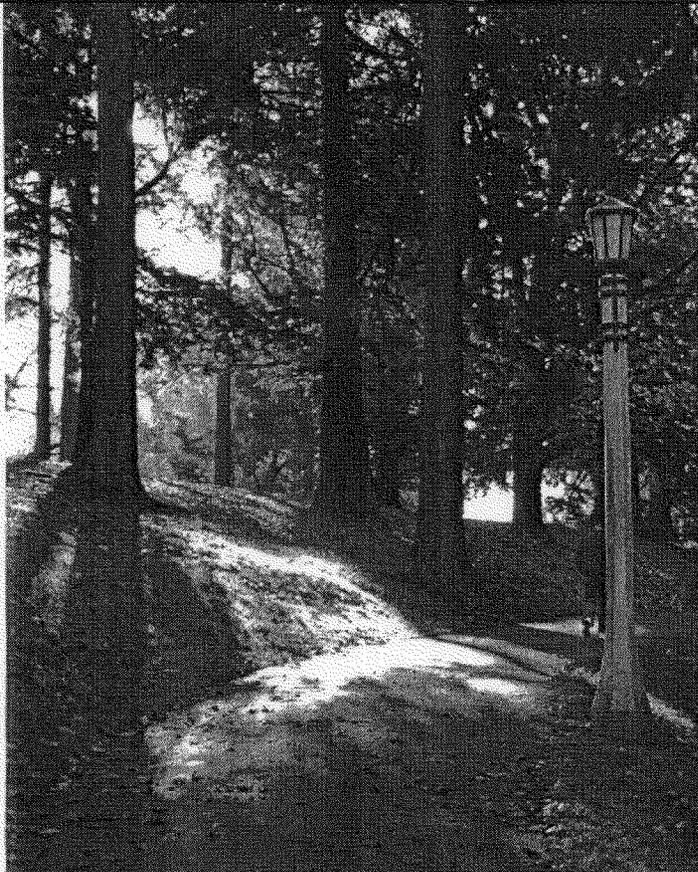
## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

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No. 3 Plateau Meadow. View to southwest.

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## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

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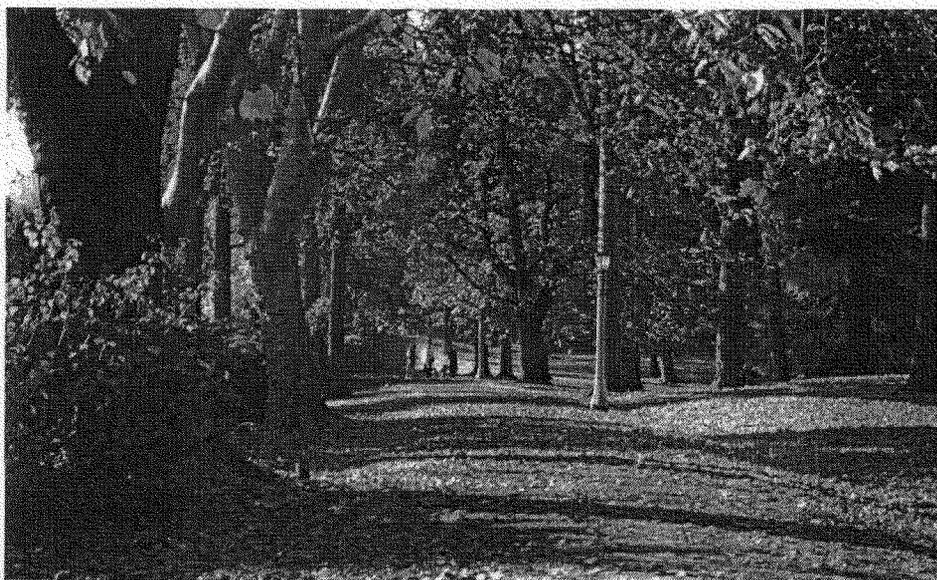
Laurelhurst Park  
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No. 4 Footpaths between Plateau and Broad Meadows. View to north.



No. 5 General View. View to west.

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No. 6 Broad Meadow. View to northwest.



No. 7 Picnic Grove. View to northwest.

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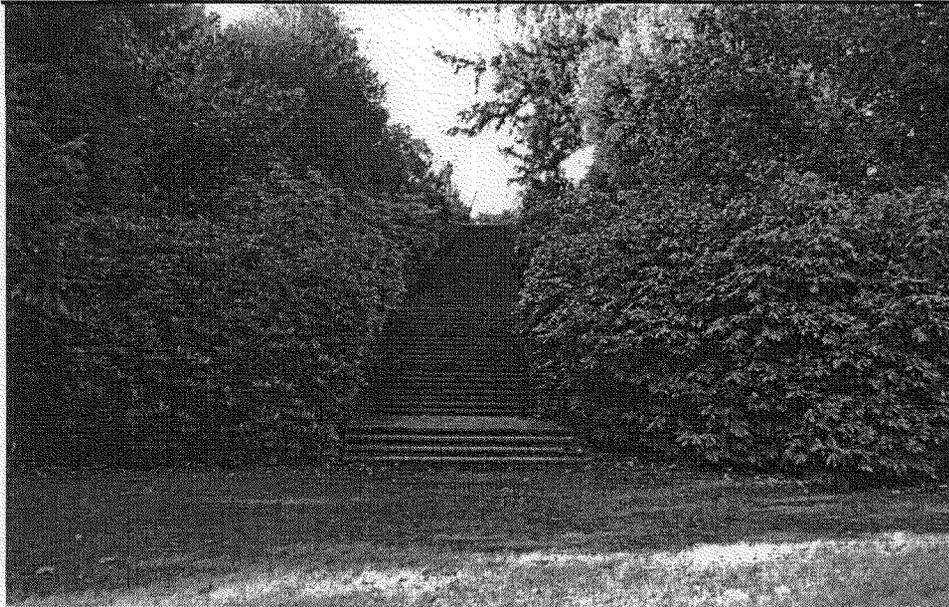
## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

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No. 8 Ankeny Street Stairs. View to north.



No. 9 Firwood Lake. View to east.

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## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

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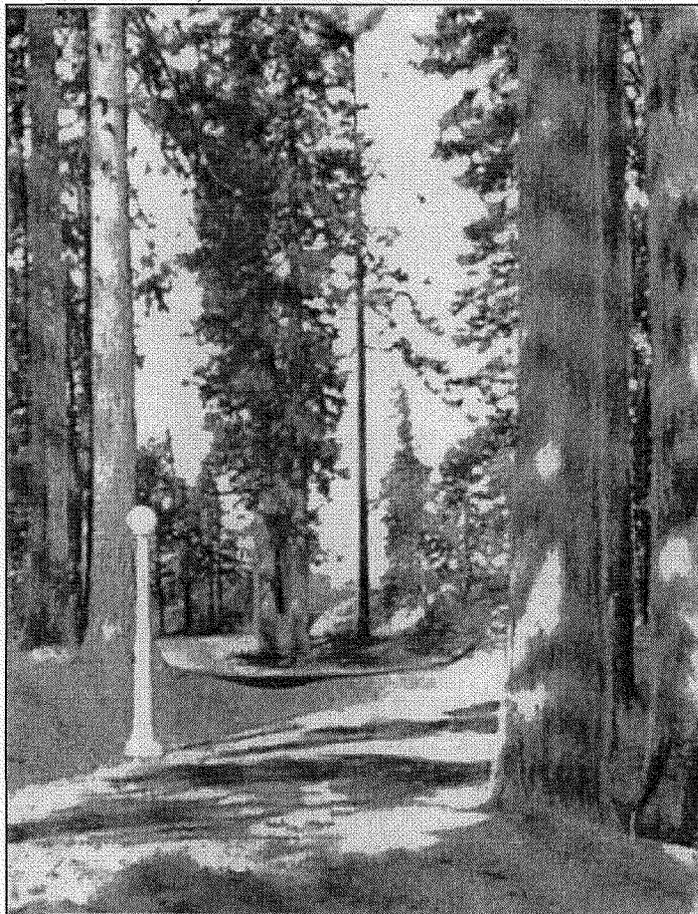
Laurelhurst Park  
Name of Property

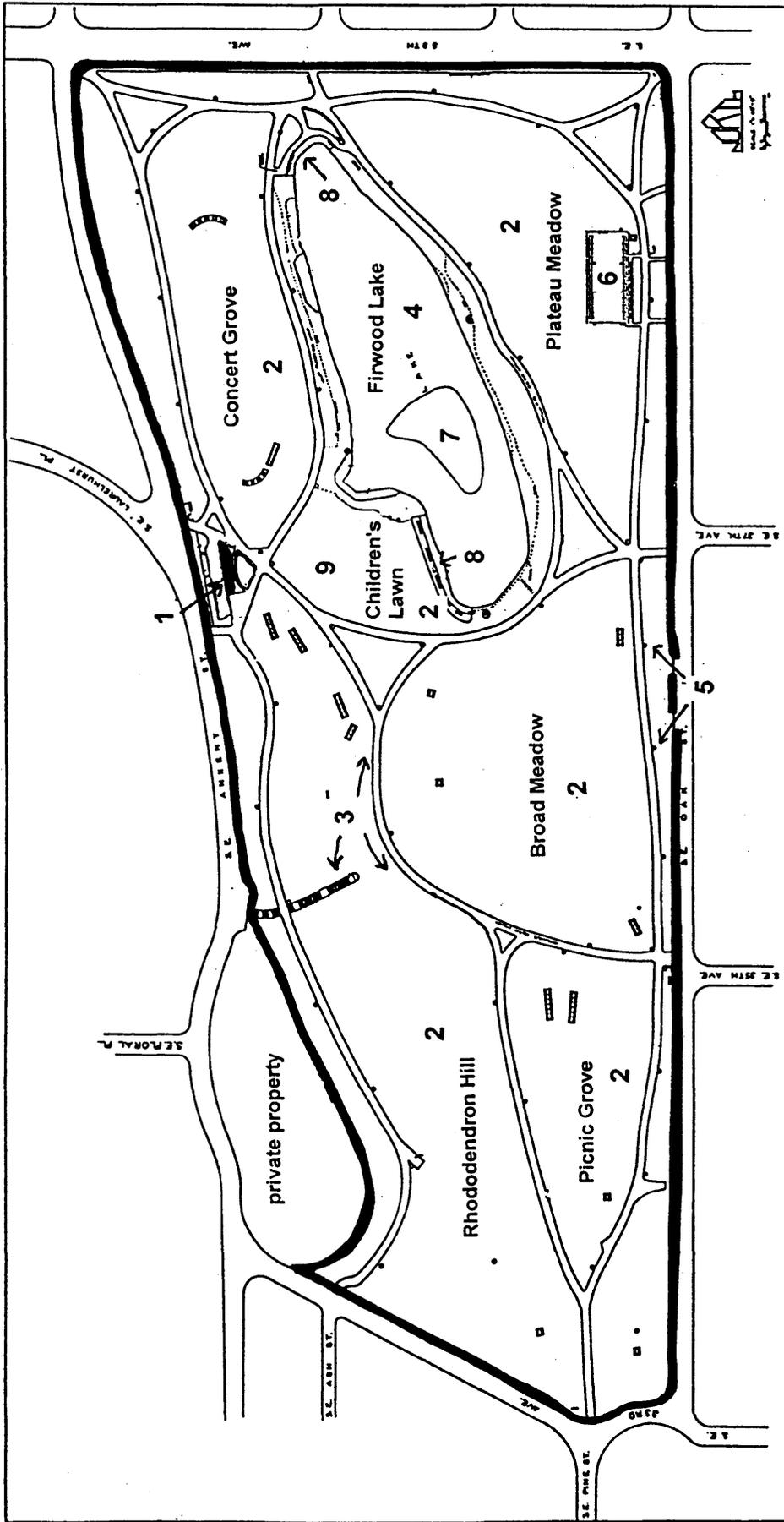
Multnomah, Oregon  
County and State

City Beautiful MPS  
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ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION: View in Laurelhurst Park, image from Paul C. Murphy, *Laurelhurst and its Park* (Portland, OR, 1916) 5.

SEPTEMBER, 1916 LAURELHURST AND ITS PARK PAGE 5





Sketch and Boundary Map  
and Feature Key

**Laurelhurst Park**  
Portland, Multnomah County  
Oregon

Scale: 1/2" = approximately 100'