

Missing Core Documentation

Property Name

Charlestown Heights

County, State

Suffolk County,
Massachusetts

Reference Number

97000969

The following Core Documentation is missing from this entry:

☒ Nomination Form (missing front and back pages of original returned submission)

☐ Photographs

☐ USGS Map

Charlestown Heights
Name of Property

Suffolk, MA
County and State

5. Classification

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

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
1	0	sites
14	6	structures
2	0	objects
18	6	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE: park

RECREATION AND CULTURE: outdoor recreation

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE: park

RECREATION AND CULTURE: outdoor recreation

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

PARK/OTHER: urban designed landscape

POOL COMPLEX: Moderne

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Concrete

roof Asphalt

other

Narrative Description

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

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Charlestown Heights
Boston (Charlestown), (Suffolk County)
Massachusetts

7. DESCRIPTION

Summary

Charlestown Heights (also known as Doherty Playground) is a 3.8-acre park on an extraordinary hillside site overlooking the Mystic River in Charlestown, a neighborhood of Boston, Massachusetts. It is one of the earliest parks in Boston, being one of five designed by F. L. Olmsted & Co. for densely crowded urban neighborhoods.

Olmsted capitalized on the site for both active and passive recreation, dividing the park along topographical lines into three separate functional areas, and within them establishing variety by creating two very distinct types of landscape. Along Bunker Hill Street at the crest of the hill the sidewalk was widened to allow a generous space for games and "promenading" focused on a fountain at one end, and planted with shade trees (Photos 1 and 2). This relatively formal treatment continued into the middle section of the park, which featured a large grassy play area for small children, sand courts, and a pavilion (Photos 3 and 4). At the opposite end, where the ground dropped off sharply to the river, the landscape was made dramatically picturesque. Here was a terraced overlook with graceful "seats" (Photos 5 and 6) and the winding paths and steps of rough boulderwork found in Olmsted's larger parks (Photos 8 and 9).

Today the park's neighborhood continues to be densely residential bordered by commercial and industrial development on Medford Street (Photos 12, 13, and 25). The essence of the park's original plan remains intact, as well as the intent of the Olmsted firm that it serve active as well as passive recreational uses.

The active play area has changed the most, due to the city's periodic need to introduce updated recreational facilities. A swimming pool and bathhouse complex replaced the function of a bathing beach added shortly after Olmsted's time on the flats by the river (which had become polluted); the pavilion was replaced with a new field house, itself later replaced with the bathhouse; and the central lawn was paved over for basketball courts and play equipment (Photos 15-20). Nevertheless, these changes were made to an area already intended for active play space, and all but the pool complex are reversible.

The passive areas at the upper and lower ends of the park have retained the most historic character. The upper promenade has matured into the tree-shaded refuge Olmsted envisioned, still focused on the original granite fountain. It now has paved paths and seats, and is in good condition (Photo 14). The lower overlook and hillside, on the other hand, have suffered from deferred maintenance and vandalism. The play area encroaches on the tranquil overlook, which has lost its path and the seats Olmsted positioned to take advantage of river views (Photo 21). Much of the charming system of winding paths and stone steps remains intact. However, a portion of the eastern stair is closed off due to collapse from abutting site work (Photo 25) and some stone elements are missing. Plantings

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are overgrown, and the slope below the pool needs repair from erosion and damage from frozen pipes.

Lastly, the riverfront has experienced continuing landfill and industrial development which has altered both near and distant views from the park. In Olmsted's day the "hither bank" housed factories and docks (Photo 7), although sections of undeveloped riverfront allowed for a "grand sweeping view over the marshes of the Mystic" (Photo 21). This once picturesque view is now obscured by the early 20th-century sugar refineries which line Charlestown's industrial waterfront. Nevertheless, even the original Olmsted plan intended for the judicious use of plantings to screen out "intrusions."

There is some name confusion associated with this park. The correct names pertaining to it are its original name, Charlestown Heights (sometimes Charlestown Heights Playground is used in Parks Department reports); its current name conferred in 1942, Ensign John J. Doherty Playground; and its pool, the Paul Clougherty Pool. This site should not be confused with the nearby Charlestown Playground also designed by Olmsted (renamed Ryan Playground in 1942), or the John A. Doherty Playground, located elsewhere in Boston.

Current Description

Charlestown Heights occupies the northern slope of Bunker Hill. It is well known in American history as the supposed site of the Battle of Bunker Hill, the first great battle of the Revolutionary War on June 17, 1775, though the battle was actually fought on nearby Breed's Hill.

This rectangular hillside park occupies the western two-thirds of a city block bounded by Bunker Hill Street to the south, Medford Street to the north, and St. Martin (formerly Quincy) Street to the west (Fig. 15). The remainder of the block not covered by the park, beginning at a gas station at the Medford Street base, is bounded by North Mead Street to the east.

Bunker Hill Street is a major commercial and residential thoroughfare (Photo 12), and Medford Street parallels the Boston and Maine Railroad which services the riverfront industrial complex. The neighborhood between these two arteries is made up primarily of multi-family row houses (Photo 13). The hillside area east of North Mead Street is dominated by an old Catholic cemetery, with the St. Francis de Sales Roman Catholic Church (1862), convent, and rectory situated at the crest of the hill along Bunker Hill Street.

Fences in rich variety surround the park. The Bunker Hill Street border is defined by a painted cast-iron picket fence whose two entrance openings are flanked by granite posts. The other perimeters along St. Martin Street, Medford Street, and the interior are largely marked by gray granite ashlar retaining walls, 4' high and 2' wide with 10" high granite coping, generally topped by iron pickets except along Medford Street (Photo 24).

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The park is divided into three functional sections (Fig. 14) corresponding to its topography, the highest point being an elevation of 111' at the southeast corner. There is a relatively flat upper promenade along Bunker Hill Street (a constant slope from elevation 99 to 84), a somewhat flatter central play area (falling from elevation 87 to 80), and a steep slope leading down to Medford Street (a drop from elevation 80 to 27). The central play area is separated from the promenade above by a concrete wall topped with iron fencing (Photo 15) and pierced by two sets of granite stairs, while a stone terrace topped by a parapet of individual puddingstone blocks and boulders (Photo 21) separates the play area from the slope below.

The promenade (Photo 14) provides a formal transition from sunny, busy Bunker Hill Street by affording shady places to walk and sit. It is accessible from both Bunker Hill and St. Martin Streets. A long parallel path system of concrete is bordered by precast concrete and wood benches and mature trees; it surrounds a lawn dotted with additional trees. The original granite drinking fountain with surrounding seats completes the east end; it is currently filled with concrete and not functional. A lawn extends beyond the fountain up to the property line. Close to Bunker Hill Street, halfway up the lawn to the property line, is a gray granite monument with a bronze plaque honoring the Battle of Bunker Hill. It was erected in 1926 by the Daughters of the American Revolution. Non-historic park features include an accessible drinking fountain and several Boston Parks and Recreation Department signs, the largest of which gives the park's name and is fastened to a metal standard just inside the fence along Bunker Hill Street.

The central play area contains all the park's active recreational facilities. 1.5 acres is given over to the Clougherty Pool complex, which abuts the eastern property line and extends the full length of the play area from the edge of the promenade to the edge of the overlook. This complex was designed by John M. Gray Company, Architects for the George Robert White Fund (described in section 8 below). It comprises a bathhouse, a 7500-square-foot swimming pool, a 2400-square-foot diving pool, concrete bleachers, and a pumphouse, all for summer seasonal use (Photos 18 and 19).

The commodious Moderne bathhouse (Photos 16 and 18) is a simple rectangular concrete structure whose decorative elements impart great interest and style. The two-story building is topped by a flat roof furnished with a partially-covered deck. An open section faces north over the adjacent pool and distant Mystic River, while a covered (but open-sided) section faces south to the promenade and Bunker Hill Street. Three-story stair towers anchor the Bunker Hill Street corners.

The two-pile structure has six bays and is nearly symmetrical. Its main entrance is at the far end of the Bunker Hill Street facade, opposite the street entrance to the park. The principal facade, however, faces the pool. The central core is flanked by tower-like vertical projections marking entrances to the men's and women's facilities through double metal doors on the ground floor. Another even wider metal door is at the end beyond the left tower. Both floors have horizontal bands of metal awning-style windows, symmetrically spaced and arranged mostly six over two (at

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second-floor level, four over two in the towers and six over three at the ends). Ventilation louvers take the place of panes in some cases. The St. Martin Street facade has two additional metal doors with transoms, the rightmost door being opposite the vehicular entrance at St. Martin Street and equipped with double doors for vehicle and wheelchair access. Bathhouse facilities include women's and men's locker rooms; a first aid room and facilities for the handicapped, elderly, and children; lifeguard room; and staff office. The roof deck, which houses a concession area, is presently closed.

The bathhouse's streamlined exterior is accented with richly decorative trim. The primary emphasis is horizontal, achieved through facade incising, the horizontal windows, flat roof, and linear metal balustrade elements surrounding the roof deck. Vertical contrast is provided by the towers, whose edges are highlighted by stepped pilasters. The tower facades are decorated with sculpted friezes displaying streamlined plant and animal motifs (Photo 17 shows details of the women's side, where a female figure poised on a dolphin is riding the waves). Red paint gives a playful touch to the metal doors and window trim. Commemorative bronze plaques marking the pool's establishment in 1949 by the George Robert White Fund decorate the center of the pool facade and an interior corridor. The pool was given a massive renovation in 1989 and is presently in good condition.

Beside the pool complex are two basketball courts and facilities for small children (swings, splash/wading pool, concrete shade shelter, and playground, as seen in Photos 15 and 20). The area is accessible from both the upper promenade and St. Martin Street; service vehicles can enter through a steel pipe vehicular gate on St. Martin Street. Iron-picket-topped concrete walls, like those separating the recreation areas from the promenade above, surround the pool complex (Photos 16 and 19) and segments of chain link fencing surround portions of the children's playground (Photos 15 and 20).

The lowest portion of the park is a sloping meadow which retains its original picturesque circulation system and informal, naturalistic feeling. A graceful run of rustic stone steps leads to a broad path beneath the overlook (Photo 23). Additional stone steps and curving paths wind down to Medford Street below. The granite steps and puddingstone cheek walls are a signature Olmsted landscape feature. The paths, originally gravel or macadam, are now paved with bituminous concrete.

Olmsted's design called for plantings whose principal aim was function. He framed the park and screened it from the sights and sounds of the surrounding neighborhood with large shade trees along the entire eastern and western boundaries and dense shrubbery at the Medford Street base (Photo 9). Within this framing, each of the three sections had plantings appropriate to its particular function serving to separate those functions from one another.

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The upper promenade featured an allee of large trees parallel to Bunker Hill Street to provide shade and a grove for city concerts (Photo 2). The central play area featured a large, open lawn for the gentle play of small children, and for a smooth foreground to the distant river view. Scattered shrub groupings eased the transitions at either end. At the promenade end, shrubs surrounded the steps leading down into the play area from the fountain, flanked the pavilion in two elongated islands facing the promenade, and likewise flanked the sand courts facing the grass (Photos 3 and 4). At the overlook end, shrubbery concealed the quiet seat area from the adjoining lawn (Photo 6). The hillside below, in contrast to the two upper areas, was intended to appear quite wild. The rocky terrace wall supporting the overlook was thickly planted with low shrubs and clambering vines; an especially picturesque rough boulder "grotto" was framed with unruly vines near the steps under the northwest terrace wall (behind the path in Photo 8). The remaining hillside had a few open areas of rough meadow (Photo 7) and many strategically-placed groupings of large, densely-planted shrubs. They served to make this part of the park appear larger than it is by offering periodic fresh views from the winding paths and stone steps. Vines and shrubs dripped in picturesque profusion over the steps' puddingstone cheek walls, especially at the steepest northeast corner.

It appears that only a handful of large oak and maple trees, and perhaps some tangled vines remain from the original planting. One cannot be certain, however, as no planting lists describing exactly what was used on the site have been found to date. However, Olmsted preferred to use native materials in a manner consistent with the original character of the land, and there are documented plantings for similar landscapes undertaken by the Olmsted firm at roughly the same time as Charlestown Heights, such as Franklin Park and the Muddy River Improvement in Boston's "emerald necklace" of parks.

For tall shade trees such as those on the periphery and the promenade allee, Olmsted often used red oak, white oak, sugar maple, silver maple, and American elm. For medium-sized shrubs in groups like those about the edges of the central lawn, he used such plants as privet, barberry, shining sumac, and viburnum. For the boulder retaining wall beneath the overlook, Olmsted would have sought the appearance of old, spontaneous growth by inserting among the boulders some close-growing ground covers, vines, and small shrubs. Typical plantings were low rambling rose, honeysuckle, grape, ampelopsis, trailing euonymus, and American bittersweet. On the wilder lower hillside, large shrubs might have included staghorn sumac, common witch hazel, and viburnum; whereas low-growing shrubs and groundcovers might have included yellowroot, bittersweet, fragrant sumac, and potentilla. In steep areas near the boundaries, where it was necessary to discourage use, he might have used spiny shrubs like barberry and briar.

Probably original large oak and maple trees stand at each Medford Street corner, to the right of the vehicular gate at St. Martin Street and outside the fence by the southeast corner of the basketball court (both could be original promenade trees), and at the southeast Bunker Hill Street corner by the DAR monument. None is in good condition.

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Olmsted's design intent remains evident throughout the park except in much of the central play area, discussed further below. There continue to be large shade trees (silver and Norway maple, elm, and oak) along the eastern and western boundaries, though they are probably less dense than Olmsted envisioned (Photos 18 and 19). The promenade continues to have a quiet feeling and formal plantings consistent with Olmsted's intent, though paved walkways surrounding long grass beds have replaced the original gravel. When the pathways were installed in 1932, they were lined inside and out with new trees of unspecified species. In 1977, Norway maples were added. A few remnants of the original allee remain, as noted above, apparently among those noted as "existing trees" of about 20" diameter on the 1977 plan. Grass continues in use behind the fountain.

Clearly the central play area's vegetation is entirely new because new surfaces were needed underfoot when recreational facilities changed to meet modern needs and accommodate older children. Initially a large circular lawn enclosed by a shrub-dotted walk and ending at a scenic overlook, most of the lawn and the north and east portions of the walk were later paved to accommodate a new field house (now gone), the pool complex, basketball courts and tot lot. However, the western perimeter along St. Martin Street, where most of the younger children's facilities are concentrated, continues to have the type of vegetation Olmsted envisioned; tall shade trees and grass remain outside the perimeter walk, and there is grass inside this walk up to the concrete shelter. Small trees and shrubs have been added beside the tot lot, and grass has been planted at the overlook where originally there were a path and seats. On the east side, masses of evergreen shrubs were recently planted beside the splash pool.

The lower hillside retains much of the Olmsted feeling, though it is both more and less civilized than he intended. In addition to the (probably original) large trees at the Medford Street corners (described above) smaller trees here now include honeylocust, ash, crabapple, elder, and red chokecherry. There is more meadow and it is less rough, while the shrubs have as a result of deferred maintenance become very overgrown. Blackberry and bittersweet (both possibly original) choke the hillside along with other (probably volunteer) vines and poison ivy, and volunteer trees have grown into the rocky area below the overlook. The general impression now is of an area more overgrown than picturesque.

Night lighting for most evening use of the park comes from street lights along its perimeter. Additional lighting is provided by four 40' concrete poles encircling the basketball courts, the cobra head lights on concrete poles at the top of the southwest and northwest stairs, and security lights in the swimming pool complex.

Archaeological Description

Charlestown Heights is located between Medford, St. Martin, and Bunker Hill Streets in Charlestown, and is bounded and fenced on the eastern limits by a residential neighborhood. The

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park was originally designed in 1891 by F. L. Olmsted and Company as part of the planned park system of Boston. The city acquired the parcel in 1876 from the Estate of William Dehon. This parcel originally extended across Medford Street and included the Mystic River waterfront. The waterfront parcel of the property is presently occupied by Mystic Park, an industrial park which contains a storage facility, office space and a parking lot. The land-use history of the project area does not appear to be extensive, however without completing a detailed study of the parcel it is difficult to assess what archaeological survivals might remain. Charlestown Heights now serves as a multi-purpose recreational area which is occupied by a bath house and pool area, a tot lot, a pavilion area, basketball courts, a flat tree lined park area, and a scenic overlook containing stairs, bordering walls and pathways.

No prehistoric sites are recorded in the parcel known as Doherty Park. Thirteen prehistoric sites are located within a one mile radius of the property, however eight of these sites are located in Boston Proper, and five are located along or near the water, either on the Charles River or Boston Harbor. The Paleoenvironmental reconstruction of the parcel has not been determined, however the historical environmental reconstruction of the property shows that Medford Street follows the original Contact Period shoreline. Prehistoric sites may survive in areas that were not affected by construction impacts, or in filled areas, a process which would have protected any extant cultural remains. Depending on the land-use history of the property, a moderate potential for the location of prehistoric sites exists.

A moderate potential exists for the recovery of historic archaeological survivals on the Charlestown Heights. A map of Charlestown in 1794 shows the shoreline of the Mystic River just north of and following the route of Medford Street (Thompson, 1794). By 1830, a few small dwellings were located on the south side of Bunker Hill Street and near Malden Bridge. Development continued in the surrounding area, however no structures were evident on the property until at least 1885. In an atlas of 1885, two wood sheds are located in the center of the property owned by Wm. Dehon's heirs (Bromley, 1885).

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8. Statement of Significance**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

(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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1891-1947

Significant Dates

1891 and 1947

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

F. L. Olmsted & Co. Landscape Architects

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Massachusetts Historical Commission

Boston Landmarks Commission

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

Charlestown Heights is significant as a work of F. L. Olmsted & Co. under the direction of Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., specifically as the best remaining example of the small neighborhood parks that were an integral part of the metropolitan park system the firm designed for Boston.

In addition, it is significant as a reflection of city government's response to the recreational needs of an increasingly dense urban population at the turn of the century.

Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. and the Boston Parks

Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903) was the acknowledged father of American landscape architecture and preeminent practitioner of the profession for 40 years. In the 1850s he and his first partner, Calvert Vaux, created Central Park in New York, the country's first large urban public space designed solely for recreation. He and his several partners took on over 600 other commissions including dozens of other city and state parks (such as Prospect Park in Brooklyn, Mount Royal Park in Montreal, Belle Isle Park in Detroit), and comprehensive systems of parks connected by parkways (for Brooklyn, Chicago, Buffalo, and Boston). In addition, his firm set the standard for public site planning (the U. S. Capitol grounds and the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago), residential subdivisions (Riverside, Illinois), private estates (George W. Vanderbilt's Biltmore in North Carolina), and campuses (Stanford University).

F. L. Olmsted was operating in unique times. In the mid-19th century cities throughout the United States experienced unprecedented growth through industrialization and immigration. Olmsted and others saw the need to create public "breathing spaces" to prevent disease and preserve dwindling open space. He strongly espoused public parks as places for all people to escape city pressures through the restorative power of soothing scenery and what he called "communitiveness," the friendly mingling of people from a variety of social classes. An often-quoted phrase from Olmsted's writings about public parks states:

....We want a ground to which people may easily go after their day's work is done.... seeing, hearing, and feeling nothing of the bustle and jar of the streets.... We want the greatest possible contrast with the streets and the shops and the rooms of the town.... We want, especially, the greatest possible contrast with the restraining and confining conditions of the town, those conditions which compel us to walk circumspectly, watchfully, jealously, which compel us to look closely upon others without sympathy....

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Under his influence, landscape design, especially park design, took on social aims; land came to be arranged not only for scenic effect but also to promote the health, comfort, and wellbeing of everyone who used it.

Frederick Law Olmsted's designs were pastoral and picturesque, as spontaneous and inevitable as the natural landscape. More than any other landscape designer of his era he was able to promote a sense of tranquillity through the consistent application of the principles of subordination and separation. Subordination (of individual elements to overall design) is found in his parks, where structures merge into the landscape, and walks and drives flow through it with such gentle grades and curves that moving along them requires minimal attention. Separation (of conflicting uses) is found in his park systems, where large parks designed for the enjoyment of scenery are supplemented by smaller recreational areas for other activities, and where pedestrian traffic is separated from vehicles. Other important design principles he espoused are as follows:

- Scenery need not be spectacular, but should have a pleasing, simple, rural aspect. Extended views across water are especially calming. Within a limited area, sinuous curves can be used to provide fresh views of central open spaces from several points.
- Promenades and scenic overlooks are ideal for restorative non-exertive recreation and the enjoyment of scenery.
- Trees and shrubs can effectively shut out city sights and sounds, and separate areas of passive and active recreation.
- Plantings should be mostly of native materials.
- Any necessary buildings should be as inconspicuous as possible.

Completed at the end of F. L. Olmsted's career, the Boston park system is one of his boldest and most complex undertakings, perhaps his most influential design. It is the country's most comprehensive park system of the era.

After the highly publicized success of Central Park, Boston made improvements to its own Public Gardens in 1859 and 1860, and began seeking suitable land for additional public parks. Several plans were put forth over a period of years. Olmsted's involvement (informally beginning in 1870, formally in 1878) was a major factor in his decision to move his home and office from New York to the Boston suburb of Brookline in 1883.

Boston's overall open space was intended to provide two types of parks: scenic outer rural parks for the recreation of the entire city, and inner urban parks with waterfronts on the harbor and rivers for daily relief of citizens in the most crowded areas. The outer, or continuous, part of the system, which came to be known as the "Emerald Necklace," comprised five miles of linked parks, ponds, and parkways running from the already established Boston Common and Commonwealth Avenue

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Mall to the Back Bay Fens, then along the Muddy River Improvement to Jamaica Pond, the Arnold Arboretum, and Franklin Park.

Olmsted's Neighborhood Parks

In contrast to the pastoral larger parks of the Emerald Necklace, the urban parks were small breathing places to promote public health in tenement neighborhoods. Specifically, Olmsted noted in the Second Report of the Commissioners of the Boston Parks Department,

"The urban parks have been located as near as possible to the present densely occupied parts of the city, for..... sanitary reasons, and also to serve as everyday play-grounds, where the children can exercise with safety, and as resorts for their parents at the close of a busy day."

Charlestown Heights was one of only five such parks designed under Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. for Boston. The others were Charlesbank, the embankment along the Charles River in the West End; Wood Island Park in East Boston; Charlestown Playground, a separate Charlestown park near Sullivan Square; and North End Park, also known as Cops Hill Terraces. Many more were designed by the Olmsted firm in Boston and elsewhere in the first decades of the 20th century.

The most basic requirements F. L. Olmsted, Sr. had for such neighborhood parks were very simple:

Usually.....there is nothing better for the purpose of this class of grounds than a simple open grove, or, on the smaller spaces, a group of forest trees (selected with regard for probable vigor and permanent health under the circumstances) with a walk through or around it, proper provisions against injury and unseemly use, a drinking fountain, and convenient seats out of the lines of passage....

Plans for the five Boston neighborhood parks, however, went significantly farther. They all followed the prototype of Charlesbank - the first playground in the country - although with variations according to the size and topography of the site. They were designed for use by local residents of all ages and included such features as sandboxes, swings, and grassy play areas for small children; outdoor gymnasiums and playing fields for older children and adults (where space permitted); gathering places for families, with walks and sitting areas for passive recreation, strolls, and relaxation. All were sited along river or ocean banks to provide refreshing breezes and distant views, and to incorporate public bathing or swimming, as many tenements lacked private bathing facilities.¹

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¹ Only the beach intended for Charlestown Playground was not built, possibly because Dewey Beach had been built at Charlestown Heights in the meantime.

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Massachusetts**The Charlestown Neighborhood and Bunker Hill

Charlestown is the second-oldest settlement of the Massachusetts Colony, founded in 1629 by English settlers. Failing to find a source of fresh water there, Governor Winthrop and most of the settlement party relocated to a neighboring peninsula in 1630, establishing the town of Boston.

Though later augmented by substantial landfill operations (see below), Charlestown originated as a small peninsula separated from Boston to the south by a narrow, deep channel, with the Mystic River to the east and the Charles River to the west. It was about one mile from north to south, and about one-half mile wide at the southern tip near Boston; at the north the land narrowed to a pass or "neck" connecting it with the mainland (Fig. 1).

Bunker Hill is one of three prominent hills on this peninsula. It rises gradually from the neck, slopes on the north and east toward the Mystic River, and connects by a ridge on the south with Breed's Hill, then Moulton's Point at the southeast corner (Fig. 2). The eastern portions of the hills separated the densest settlement on the south and west from the clay pits that stretched along the Mystic River, and were initially used chiefly for hay and pasturing; in the custom of the times, Bunker Hill derives its name from the wealthy emigrant George Bunker, who arrived in 1634 and had a large pasture running over the summit. The Battle of Bunker Hill, however, actually took place on Breed's Hill where the Bunker Hill Monument stands today.

Charlestown's economic prosperity resulted from its location. As early as the first decade of settlement, the natural deep water port created by the confluence of the Charles and Mystic Rivers attracted several wharves and a shipyard to the eastern shoreline. After the Revolutionary War, further transportation developments solidified Charlestown's position as a major port. The peninsula became linked to its surrounding towns by new bridges (to Boston in 1786, Chelsea in 1802, and Cambridge in 1810), and to the interior Merrimack River Valley in 1803 by the opening of the 27-mile-long Middlesex Canal which terminated at the neck. Maritime activity was clustered along the numerous wharves which lined the harbor, eventually producing the industrial ring of shipping (and later rail) development around Charlestown's core residential community that survives to this day.

The creation of additional land for commercial uses began in the mid-1840s with the filling of the Middlesex Canal, which had been rendered obsolete by the advent of rail transportation. Then the Charles River tidal basin was filled in the 1870s to facilitate railroad traffic on the three separate rail lines which had been reaching Charlestown's wharves via causeways. Warehouses, breweries, factories, and railyards were constructed on landfill stretching along the southern and western shores to the neck.

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A similar transformation had begun on the northern shore when Medford Street was laid out in the 1830s. Medford Street skirted the hill along the Mystic River, beginning at the neck beside a beach at the base of Bunker Hill (now Sullivan Square). This waterfront became Charlestown's premier shipping center when the Charles River basin became landlocked through filling in the 1870s as noted above. Fringe commercial activities encircled residential development of Bunker Hill with a complex of rail yards and warehouses on the Mystic River. In 1873 the Mystic Docks were developed by the Boston and Lowell Railroad between Medford Street and the river. Transferred to the Boston & Maine in 1887, these docks became the center of Boston's export timber trade and were the receiving point for great quantities of coal used and distributed by the railroad. Other new industries were a foundry, bakery, and furniture factories. Facilities for manufacturing black lead (graphite) for stove polish, shoe blacking and shoemakers wax stood at the foot of N. Mead Street in 1885.

The development of all these port, transportation, and manufacturing facilities in Charlestown led to dramatic increases in population density which, in turn, spurred multi-family tenement development. Between 1830 and 1870 the population tripled, reaching 28,000 in 1870. It peaked at 41,400 in 1910. Charlestown was annexed by the City of Boston in 1873.

Many working-class residents, including the mushrooming immigrant population in both Charlestown and Boston, were especially attracted to Charlestown by the availability of public transportation. As early as 1860 a street railroad into Boston operated on Bunker Hill and other streets; in 1901 it was converted to electricity at the same time that an elevated railroad was built over Main Street from Boston to Sullivan Square. By the turn of the century Charlestown had become 90% Irish in nationality.

In the early 20th century, population growth stagnated but commercial activities continued to expand on the fringes. Landfill activity continued along the northern border. On Medford Street flanking the base of Doherty Playground, the Revere Sugar Refinery was built in 1918 and Schrafft's confectionery plant in 1927.

Today Charlestown covers an area of 1.4 square miles with a population of 14,700, about 96% white, representing 2.8% of Boston's population (according to 1990 census statistics). Its population density is 17 people per acre, a little less than the Boston average.

Historic Development of Charlestown Heights and its Remaining Integrity

In 1891 the city acknowledged Charlestown's lack of open space and acquired two sites for a small park and playground: the former Dehon estate on Bunker Hill (later Charlestown Heights), and the nearby Guild Tannery property on Tufts Mill Pond by Sullivan Square (later Charlestown Playground).

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The city first acquired the William Dehon estate in 1876 for non-payment of taxes; the tract was sold to William B. Bacon in 1877, reverting back to city ownership in 1891. The land appears to have been vacant, though surrounded by commercial and residential development on all sides. The atlas of 1875 shows no use, while that of 1885 (Fig. 3) depicts two buildings. The Dehon tract consisted of three parcels totalling 10.5 acres. 3.8 acres sloped from the highest part at Bunker Hill Street down to Medford Street. This comprised the original part of the park known as Charlestown Heights, and the subject of this nomination. Medford Street separated Charlestown Heights from the remaining land which lay on the other side: an additional .5 acre between Medford Street and the Boston & Lowell Railroad track, and 6.2 acres of flats on the Mystic River, which became Dewey Beach (Figs. 4 and 5).

The Dehon tract's varied topography and river view made it an inspired choice for a new neighborhood park. The site (Fig. 6), design intent (Fig. 7), and pavilion structure (Fig. 8) were later described as follows by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., writing in 1897 in *Harper's Weekly*:

...Charlestown Heights...is situated on the northern slope of Bunker Hill - the real Bunker Hill, not the spurious one where the battle took place and the monument was built. It reaches from near the crest of the hill to its foot, a distance of about five hundred and fifty feet, dropping down a declivity of about sixty feet. The feature of Charlestown Heights is a grand sweeping view over the marshes of the Mystic, as yet almost untouched, except upon the hither bank, by the growth of the city, to the distant suburbs of Malden and Everett, with the permanently forested hills of the Middlesex Fells in the distance beyond. The design in this case.....takes the peculiar advantage of the location as its controlling motive throughout, and attempts to make the most of it.

At the high end of the ground upon the street is a small graveled plaza, which serves for the games that ordinarily have to go on in the street, and which will serve admirably for a concert grove when the trees get large enough. At the edge of the little plaza the ground drops to a lower level. The upper floor of the house shown on the plan is open but for the posts which support the roof, and stands at a level overlooking the plaza, as well as the lower ground to the north and the broad view beyond. Immediately in front of the building are sand courts for little children, and the basement is recessed to provide a sheltered walk with seats for the mothers. The basement contains also the toilet-rooms, refreshment stand, etc. Before the sand courts a lawn slopes down to a rough boulder parapet and terrace wall overgrown with creepers and other plants, and commanding the same view, with a different foreground. Below this terrace the hill is very steep, and is, in the main, a series of rocky slopes with a rich plant growth, through which a winding path and steps lead down to the street below.

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The pavilion/shelter (from plans of Walker & Kimball fleshing out Olmsted's preliminary design) was heated with coal and lighted by electric lights.

Two pieces of correspondence regarding construction are available. A February 4, 1892 memorandum, apparently responding to architect's plans for the shelter, notes among many other details that the seats for mothers by the sand courts "... should all be divided off every 20 inches by iron arms to prevent loafers lying upon them." Following this, a lengthy letter of April 29 to the Chairman of the Boston Park Commission attempts to dismiss once and for all the persistent suggestion of a local historian that the park design be modified to preserve a larger portion of the highest part of the original surface, in honor of alleged remains from a small, temporary fortification (a "redoubt") built by the British during the Revolutionary War on the site of the present St. Francis de Sales Roman Catholic Church. In this letter (signed only with the firm's name but apparently written either by Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. or, more likely, his nephew and stepson John Charles Olmsted) two important points are emphasized about the park's function and its separation from the encroaching urban landscape. First, the central lawn "both as a play-ground for little children and as a beautiful foreground to the fine distant view, is the most important feature of the plan." And second, it was intended that trees planted along the west border (now St. Martin Street), screen the park from "ugly, three-story, wooden tenement houses, with flat roofs upon which clothes are hung out to dry," as well as "frame in and form an agreeable foreground for the beautiful and unobstructed view to the north over the Mystic River."

Charlestown Heights was constructed according to plan; only the intended bridge across Medford Street was not built. Such a bridge was used to span St. Martin Street when it was constructed in 1896, while at Medford Street an underpass to what became Dewey Beach was built in 1898.

Substantial regrading of the hilly site was needed to flatten the upper promenade and central play areas. Surplus stone found in the excavation and not used in the walls supporting the terrace below the overlook was broken up and deposited on the walks for surfacing. Granite retaining walls were built on the three sloping sides, and steps were constructed of granite with puddingstone cheek walls. Graceful iron-framed wooden seats with iron armrests were placed at the overlook and on the curving path below it (Photo 8). Lamp-posts were installed for electric lighting. The park opened in 1895.

Subsequent alterations have focused on expanding the active recreational facilities in the central area, and the structures to serve them, while making the plaza/promenade area more formal as its trees matured. These alterations are discussed in detail below for each of the three sections, along

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with comments as to the remaining integrity of each section, followed by a discussion of the integrity of those aspects which apply in large part to the park as a whole, namely its location, setting, and association.

Changes in the promenade began in 1901 with the installation of an iron fence (planned since 1896) on each side of the pavilion; then or later (by 1932) seats were placed along it. In 1909 a similar iron picket fence was constructed along Bunker Hill Street, probably to protect the growing trees, or in connection with electrification of the street railway (both fence and railway are prominent features of Photo 11). By 1932 the pavilion was demolished (see discussion below). The promenade was made more formal in 1932, possibly triggered by ongoing maturation of the trees, which would have prohibited active games in this area, (Fig. 10). The wide gravel surface was replaced with concrete walks surrounding two oval grassy beds with a circular bed and flagpole between them. The original allee was supplemented by additional trees (of unspecified species) in pits inserted at intervals inside and outside the concrete walks. The iron fencing and benches previously introduced were now removed; new benches were installed facing the new grass beds inside the newly paved walks. New granite steps leading down to the grassy play area were inserted on centerline with the pavilion. Similar alterations were made in 1977 (Fig. 13): new concrete curbing and iron fencing were installed at the north end, the flagpole was removed, a new base was made for the DAR monument (see description, p. 4), the present precast concrete and wood benches were introduced, and 14 Norway maple trees were planted outside the concrete walk.

A comparison of the historic plan (Fig. 7) with the current plan (Fig. 14) (not considering the pavilion, which is discussed below) shows continuing integrity of design intent: it fulfills Olmsted's vision of a tree-shaded promenade with a granite fountain at the south end as focal point. The granite ashlar wall surrounding the fountain (both wall and fountain were built by Walker & Kimball, architects of the pavilion) may be the same material used in the pavilion. The later additions of concrete paths and benches are consistent with Olmsted's intent for a quiet resting place shaded by mature trees. Integrity of materials is retained in the fountain, but not the paving, where concrete and grass replaced gravel. Integrity of feeling is definitely conveyed in this quiet, shady area (Photo 14), which continues to be a restful "resort for [the children's] parents at the close of a busy day."

The central play area, the "most important feature of the plan," has seen the greatest amount of change, reflecting the 100-year evolution of needs and trends in facilities for active recreation. It was built as a grassy lawn for little children's play, with sand courts in front of the pavilion housing convenient seats for their mothers. The play area was protected with wooden post-and-rope fencing and encircled by a walk of gravel or macadam (Photos 3 and 4). At its farthest edge was a dramatic wide overlook built on stone terraces with a boulder parapet. Olmsted furnished this area with curving seats for resting and admiring the view over the Mystic River below (Photos 5-7).

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The play facilities were supplemented by construction of Dewey Beach across Medford Street in 1898, and a bathhouse in 1912 (Photo 10). (The relationship of the beach and bathhouse to Medford Street and the main park area can be seen in Fig. 11, a plan for WPA work undertaken in 1938.) By 1932 a swing shelter was added to the lawn, the pavilion at the upper promenade was demolished, and a new field house built at the edge of the grass near the overlook (Fig. 9). The field house appears to have redirected the park user's attention at this key spot into the play area rather than out of it. It is unclear at what time after this seats were removed from the overlook. In 1945 the wading pool was built, with the swimming pool complex following in 1948-49 (Fig. 12), and the field house was demolished (quite likely its functions overlapped with those of the new bathhouse). The construction of the pool complex is the most significant (and irreversible) change in the central play area. Though it continues the active play function intended in this space, it also began the process of diminishing, squaring off, and paving over the naturalistically-styled lawn area. Additional active recreation facilities were introduced: in 1968 the concrete shade shelter, in 1972 the tot lot for small children, in 1975 the basketball courts, in 1987 more play equipment for small children, and in 1995 a new splash/wading pool. The swimming pool complex underwent major renovations completed in 1989, including extensive plumbing changes and the installation of new toilets and showers. No changes were made to either the interior or the exterior walls.

A comparison of historic Photos 4, 5, and 6 with current Photos 16, 20, and 21, respectively, demonstrates the effect of the exchange of the original pavilion and picturesque lawn for the hard-surfaced games of the 20th century. The concrete shade shelter and splash pool do not have the traditional craftsmanship of Olmsted's structures. Thus this section of the park has lost its integrity of materials, workmanship, and feeling, but nevertheless retains all the functional aspects of its design and intent as an active play space.

In contrast, the informal lower hillside has experienced remarkably little change, as is evident from a comparison of historic Photos 8 and 9 with current Photos 23 and 24. It was designed to be "a series of rocky slopes with a rich plant growth, through which a winding path and steps lead down to the street below," with strategically placed benches for rest and enjoyment of the view. While the area suffers from neglect and vandalism, the only intentional changes are replacement of the gravel or macadam surface with bituminous concrete, and removal of the benches. The original path system is unchanged, as are its granite steps with puddingstone cheek walls (some need repair and replacement). As to plantings, only a few large perimeter trees appear to remain from the originals, and there are fewer large shrubs and more meadow and overgrown brush than intended. However, with proper maintenance this lower portion of the park can demonstrate integrity of design, most materials, workmanship, and feeling.

In summary, all three sections retain substantial integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling. The park entity as a whole retains integrity of location, setting, and association. Its present size of 3.8 acres is the same as the original size of Charlestown Heights. (As a consequence of

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Dewey Beach becoming polluted, it was replaced by the pool in the central play space, and sold to industrial interests.) The present area is the only portion to which the original Olmsted design applied. As to setting, the character of the neighborhood continues to be largely multi-family residential with fringe commercial and industrial development, as can be seen by comparison of Bunker Hill Street in the background of historic Photo 1 with its virtually identical present aspect in Photo 12, and St. Martin Street in historic Photo 5 with the very similar present Photos 20 and 13. Likewise the 1885 atlas (Fig. 3) and the 1995 assessor's map (Fig. 15) show the same type of densely populated area. Though a comparison of historic Photo 7 with present Photo 21 shows the "grand sweeping view of the marshes" diminished through landfill and industrial development, the setting was clearly industrial even in Olmsted's time. The association with the work of F. L. Olmsted & Co. under the direction of Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. remains evident in the remaining clarity of design.

Significance of Charlestown Heights as an Olmsted-Designed Neighborhood Park

For his neighborhood parks, Olmsted had alerted the Park Commissioners to watch for a particular type of urban site:

... topographical circumstances may compel spaces unsuitable for building to be left between streets, which it will be economical to use for such grounds..... It is most desirable to make use of any local circumstance of the slightest dignity of character to supply a centre of interest for such grounds..... for instance, in a natural feature, as a notable rock, or in a historical feature, as the site of an old fort.....or simply in a point of vantage for a view, as a prospect down the harbor.

The former William Dehon estate on Bunker Hill overlooking the Mystic River, and the park Olmsted designed for it, Charlestown Heights, is an outstanding example of both the siting and design Olmsted envisioned.

The most important feature of the site is its location in a densely populated neighborhood overlooking the river. The steep hillside had thus far been too difficult for development, yet could provide a beautiful view in an historic location.

As to design, Olmsted's plan made the most of the varied topography which, with substantial regrading, permitted him to include separate areas for active and passive recreation linked by gracefully curving walks and the trademark rustic stone steps and puddingstone boulders found in his larger parks. He was able to incorporate most of the features of the Charlesbank ideal: sandcourts and a grassy play area for young children, a graveled mall for street games (a concert grove after the trees matured), and picturesque areas for walking and sitting. The small site was inadequate for ball fields and outdoor gymnastic grounds, which were relegated to Charlestown

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Playground. From the design principles discussed above, Olmsted incorporated an extended view across water, walks winding around a central open space, promenades, a scenic overlook, perimeter trees and shrubs to provide visual separation from the surrounding neighborhood, and a rustic building intended to be subordinated to the landscape.

Today, Charlestown Heights is significant because it retains more of its original design and feeling than any of the others among the five neighborhood parks. The view is not as refreshing because of increasing industrialization along Medford Street and beyond, and much of the park is overgrown and suffers from deferred maintenance. Nevertheless, beneath the somewhat derelict appearance, much of its charm and the originally-envisioned design and use remain intact, albeit changed to meet modern conditions and recreational needs. The upper promenade has matured into the shady oasis Olmsted envisioned. While the steep hillside has lost the focus of the planting plan that Olmsted had in mind, it can be reclaimed with proper planting and maintenance. The central play area continues to function as an active play area as planned.

The other four parks have been more severely altered or destroyed. Charlesbank was modified substantially through landfill and street widening, the Olmsted design obliterated by a Metropolitan District Commission swimming pool and athletic field. Wood Island is under a Logan Airport runway. Charlestown Playground is intact but was scaled back dramatically from the Olmsted design and is devoted entirely to ballfields. At North End Park, only a small portion remains of the historic design and feeling.²

Significance of Charlestown Heights as City Government's Response to Recreational Needs of an Increasingly Dense Population

Charlestown Heights/Doherty Playground is also significant as an example of the City of Boston's solutions to public recreational needs in both the 19th and 20th centuries. Being one of the areas of earliest settlement, Charlestown had become overcrowded crowded by the time planning began for

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² Interestingly, this park has many similarities to Charlestown Heights. Also a difficult site, it is on a steep hill on the Boston side of the Boston Harbor, directly opposite the Charlestown Navy Yard and the Bunker Hill Monument, and it is from this spot that British troops fired on Charlestown in the historic Battle of Bunker Hill. Likewise it is in a crowded residential and commercial area adjacent to an historic burial ground, so dense that the park could accommodate only quiet resting places on steep stone terraces on the hillside along the street, plus a beach with bathhouses and promenade piers across the street. Today only the stone terraces survive. The beach, polluted like the Mystic River, was replaced by a large ball field and outdoor swimming pool (the Mirabella Pool built by the George Robert White Fund shortly after Clougherty Pool).

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the Boston park system in the 1870s. Along with the other long-settled Boston neighborhoods, it had by far the largest average number of inhabitants per acre (56, compared to the city average of 15). Ironically, this very density meant no park could be accommodated there initially. As the Second Report of the Board of Commissioners of the Department of Parks for the City of Boston, 1876 noted:

The Commissioners regret that they are unable to recommend in this report any location for a park within the limits of the Charlestown district. No unoccupied land of sufficient area and appropriate character for the purpose exists. The best provision that can be made for the accommodations of its citizens, at the present time, is to extend the Charles-river Embankment [Charlesbank].....to enable them to reach the general system of parks in the pleasantest and most direct way.

The community persisted in petitioning for recreation areas of some sort, however, as reported by the Commissioners in 1889:

....in view of the rapidly increasing population of the Charlestown district, and the entire absence of any public park or playground in its limits, the Board of Park Commissioners be requested to consider the expediency of acquiring or purchasing the whole or parts of certain lands herein specified.....

until the sites for Charlestown Heights and Charlestown Playground were finally taken for parks in 1891.

In addition to providing recreational space, the city also made available instruction in constructive recreational activity and general hygiene. Supervised "kindergarten" classes were held at Charlestown Heights beginning in 1895 as an extension of work being done at Charlesbank by reformer Kate Gannett Wells and the Massachusetts Emergency and Hygiene Association. This organization sought to instill better health practices among low income families, and toward that end ran Charlesbank's gymnasium for women and children, where they provided free gymnastic instruction, child care, and children's crafts.

Land for a park was not the only recreational need in Charlestown; there were also no facilities for beach bathing. Olmsted's plan for Charlestown Heights makes no mention of the small lot and six acres of river flats across Medford Street that made up the remaining two parcels of the former Dehon estate. However, his plan for Charlestown Playground, to be built on similar flats where a beach had existed historically, did call for a variety of active recreational facilities including a riverfront promenade and bathhouses. Charlestown Playground was endlessly delayed in construction and finally built with nothing but ballfields, whereas in the meantime, in 1898 (after

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Olmsted's retirement) Dewey Beach was constructed on the flats at Charlestown Heights (and in 1912 a bathhouse was added).

City government's continuing responses to evolving needs of the community in the 20th century are directly related to the "playground movement" and included in the discussion below.

Recreation Facilities at Charlestown Heights Within the Context of the Playground Movement

Both the initial design and, especially, subsequent changes in Charlestown Heights' recreational facilities are representative of the playground movement which spread across the country from the 1890s through the first half of the 20th century. The movement was characterized by the development of walk-to parks in neighborhoods, relatively small in scale, and relatively structured in terms of active recreational facilities. Olmsted's park at Charlesbank provided a model for parks in many other cities as well as Boston, and a large number of them were designed by Olmsted Brothers. These parks were initially equipped with such features as gymnasiums, sand courts, and running tracks. By the 1930s and 1940s when baseball, football, basketball, and swimming were immensely popular, large-scale facilities ballfields and swimming pools were common as well.

In Boston the movement was led by Mayor Josiah Quincy who took office in 1896. While supporting the recreational facilities in Olmsted's parks, he sharpened the focus on active recreation, especially ball playing and other competitive sports for boys over age 10, which prior to this time had taken place largely in vacant lots or the street. In 1898 Quincy initiated legislation for a system of playgrounds, at least one in every ward of the city; by 1932 there were 41. At sites unconnected with parks, the Massachusetts Emergency and Hygiene Association's tot lots with sand courts and play equipment for little children continued to flourish and were ultimately absorbed by the schools. In 1942, responding to a new focus on overall city planning, the City Planning Board prepared a master plan which included recreational facilities. In 1945, Mayor Maurice Tobin appointed the first Board of Recreation to study the recreational needs of the city in cooperation with the Planning Board.

In 1946 the Planning Board published a playground study that examined the extent to which children were served by playgrounds in various districts of the city. The study showed that 37% of children in Charlestown between the ages of six and 15 were not served by playgrounds. Plans for what was to become the Paul Clougherty Pool complex, urgently advocated by Charlestown's political representatives to replace polluted Dewey Beach, appear to have been a direct result of this study.

Clougherty Pool was built by the George Robert White Fund, a city-administered permanent charitable trust fund established in 1919, whose income is to be used for creating works of public utility and beauty for the use and enjoyment of inhabitants of the City of Boston. White Fund projects for the most part comprise community health centers and recreation facilities; they also

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built the (Paul Revere) North End Prado and Schoolboys Stadium in Franklin Park. Clougherty Pool was the first pool built by the White Fund. A few years later they built the Mirabella Pool in the North End Park, and in 1995 built another as part of a new youth development center in Dorchester.

The changes in Doherty Playground to incorporate more active reaction facilities for children of all ages exemplify the playground movement. By 1932 swings had been added to the central lawn, in the 1940s the wading pool and swimming pool complex. In the late 1960s and 1970s the basketball courts and new children's playground features were added. Though these facilities have dramatically changed the character of the original simple central lawn, they are consistent with the active functions Olmsted planned for this space, and reflect evolving nationwide recreational trends.

Archaeological Significance

No prehistoric sites are documented on the Charlestown Heights or along the Mystic River in the immediate vicinity. Prehistoric sites in this area could be very important in providing information on subsistence/settlement patterns in this coastal and riverine environment and in contributing data for understanding the cultural, economic and social systems of these people. Information relating to the prehistoric environmental reconstruction of the area would also be significant.

A moderate potential exists for the location of historical archaeological remains. The Contact Period shoreline of Boston is documented as following Medford Street and is significant to the historical environmental reconstruction of the area. No archaeological evidence exists for the development of the area prior to 1885. The southern half of the parcel was significantly altered during the construction of the Olmsted park between 1891 and 1895. The extensive regrading process may have destroyed any cultural remains, both prehistoric and historical archaeological sites. Any historical archaeological remains located on this parcel would contribute information on the use of this area as a park.

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Dehon Estate to City of Boston on October 23, 1876 for \$1117.82. 165,353 feet of land on Bunker Hill Street to corner of Quincy Street and extending through to Medford Street. Recorded November 3, 1876 Suffolk County Registry of Deeds, vol 1352, p 117.

Dehon Estate to City of Boston on October 23, 1876 for \$362.65. 25,480 feet of land and 306, 995 feet of flats in the rear of the northeasterly side of Medford Street. Recorded November 3, 1876 Suffolk County Registry of Deeds, vol 1352, p 117.

City of Boston to William B. Bacon on January 12, 1877 for \$1150.85. 165,353 feet of land on Bunker Hill Street to corner of Quincy Street and extending through to Medford Street. Recorded February 12, 1877 Suffolk County Registry of Deeds, vol 1364, p 207.

City of Boston to William B. Bacon on January 12, 1877 for \$374.74. 25,480 feet of land and 306, 995 feet of flats in the rear of the northeasterly side of Medford Street. Recorded February 12, 1877 Suffolk County Registry of Deeds, vol 1364, p 208.

William B. Bacon and William P. Blake to City of Boston on July 13, 1891 for \$50,000. Three parcels: 165,262 square feet on Bunker Hill, Quincy & Medford Streets; 20,150 square feet opposite above parcel bounded westerly by Medford Street; and 270,000 square feet of flats bordering on said parcels and in and to the location of the Boston and Lowell Railroad Company. Recorded July 14, 1891 Suffolk County Registry of Deeds, vol 2006, pp 606-608 with attached survey by Garbett & Wood, Surveyors.

City of Boston to The American Sugar Refining Company on March 26, 1957 for \$60,000. Two parcels: 20,385 square feet plus 321,500 square feet of land, of which 290,150 square feet is land

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known as Dewey Beach previously conveyed to City of Boston by William B. Bacon and William P. Blake on July 13, 1891 (remainder abuts Dewey Beach, running to Belmont Street). Recorded March 26, 1957 Suffolk County Registry of Deeds, vol 7223, p 500-502.

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(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 3

Charlestown Heights
Boston (Charlestown), (Suffolk County)
Massachusetts

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(end)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 10 Page 1Charlestown Heights
Boston (Charlestown), (Suffolk County)
Massachusetts

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 3.8 acres

UTM References:

	<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
1	19	329740	4694180
2	19	329820	4694140
3	19	329740	4693960
4	19	329680	4694040

Verbal Boundary Description:

The nominated area comprises two City of Boston Tax Assessor's parcels in Ward 2: Parcel 1503 (the pool complex of 65,340 square feet owned by the City of Boston - George Robert White Fund), and Parcel 1465 (the remainder of 99,922 square feet, including the splash pool).

Boundary Justification:

The present legal boundaries (the area extending from Medford Street to Bunker Hill Street) encompass one of the three parcels of land taken by the City of Boston for the park. It is the only parcel to which the F. L. Olmsted & Co. design applied. On the others (a small land area plus flats on the Mystic River across Medford Street), the Boston Park Department built Dewey Beach shortly after Olmsted retired and his firm's official connection with the park ended. This beach became polluted in the 1940s, Clougherty Pool was built to replace it in the (Olmsted-designed) central play area of the park, and the beach was sold. The beach area has now been filled and developed as a sugar refinery and no longer retains any historic fabric. The remaining area contains much historic fabric and all the historic functions.

(continued)



Photo 1 Bunker Hill Street and promenade, facing southeast; October 18, 1895

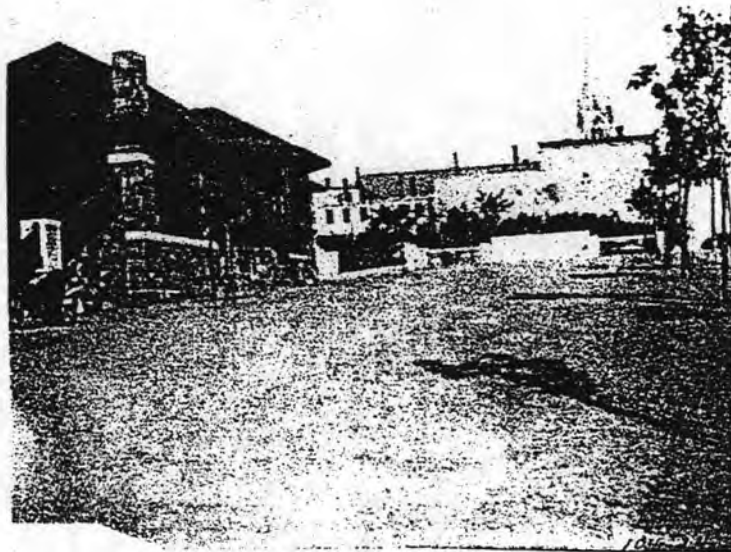


Photo 2 South and west sides of pavilion, and promenade, facing southeast; undated (after 1895)

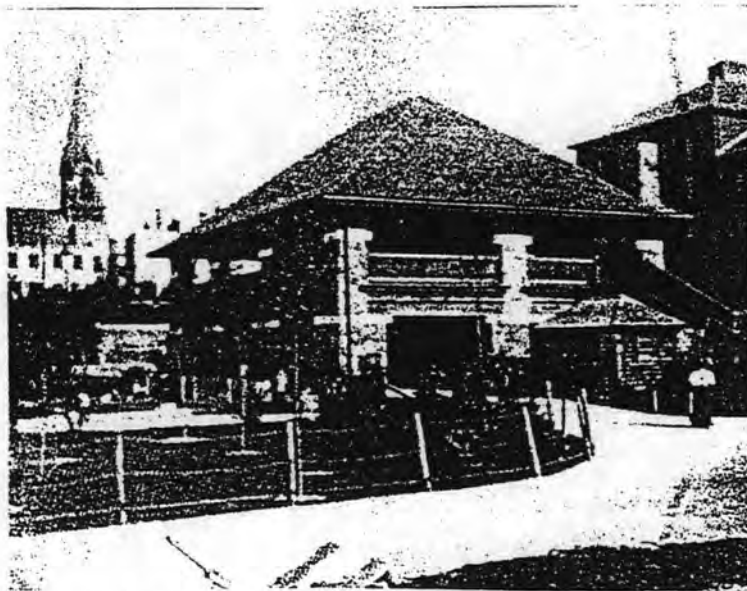


Photo 3 North and west sides of pavilion, sand courts and portion of central lawn, facing east; undated (after 1895)

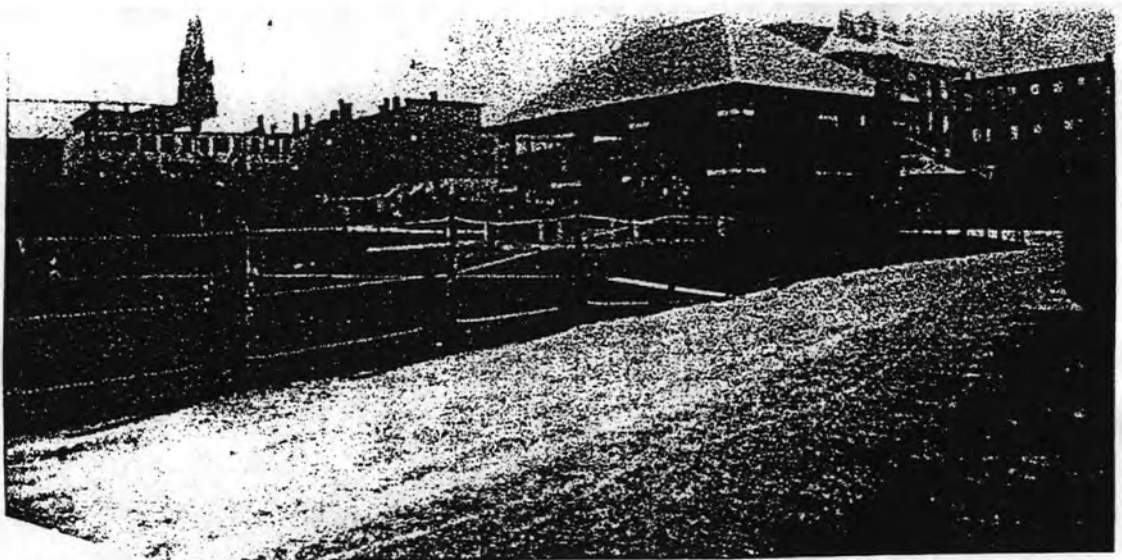


Photo 4 North and west sides of pavilion and central lawn, with St. Francis de Sales Roman Catholic Church and Bunker Hill Street in background, facing east; October, 1895



Photo 5 Central lawn at overlook, with St. Martin Street and Mystic River in the background, facing north; October, 1895

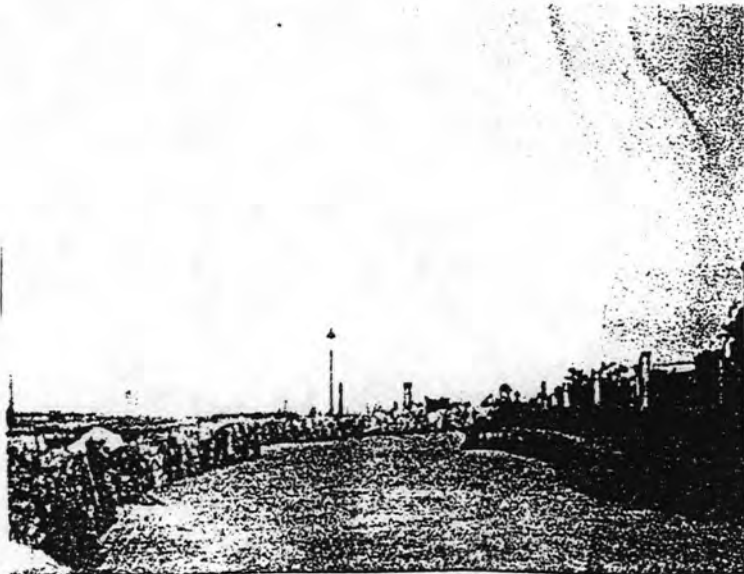


Photo 6 Overlook with seats, facing east; undated (after 1895)

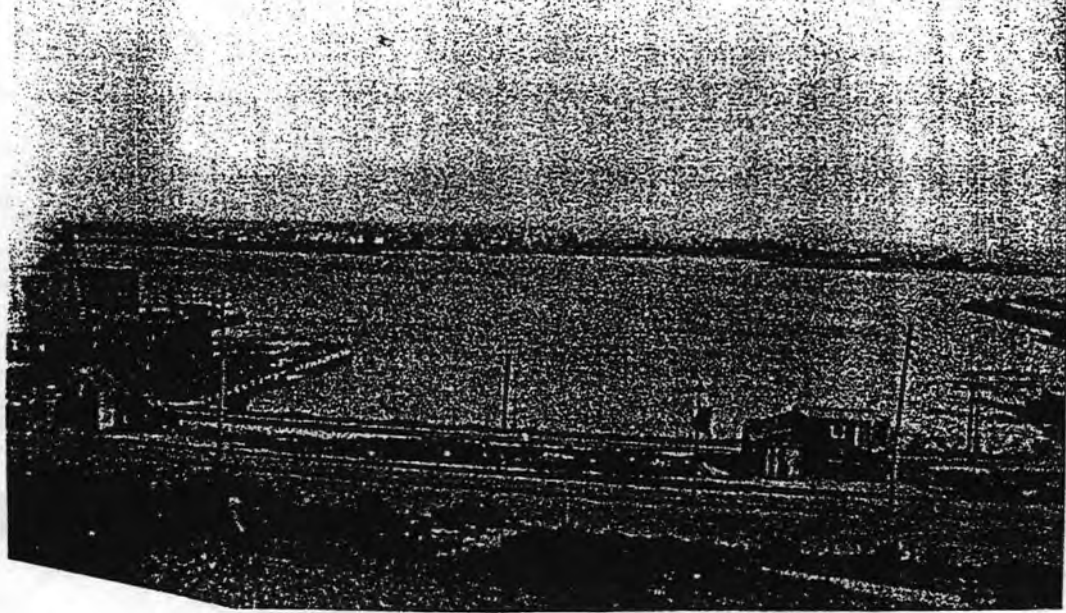


Photo 7 Medford Street and Mystic River from near overlook, facing northeast; October 30, 1895



Photo 8 Path at stone terrace below overlook, with seats, facing southeast; undated (after 1895)

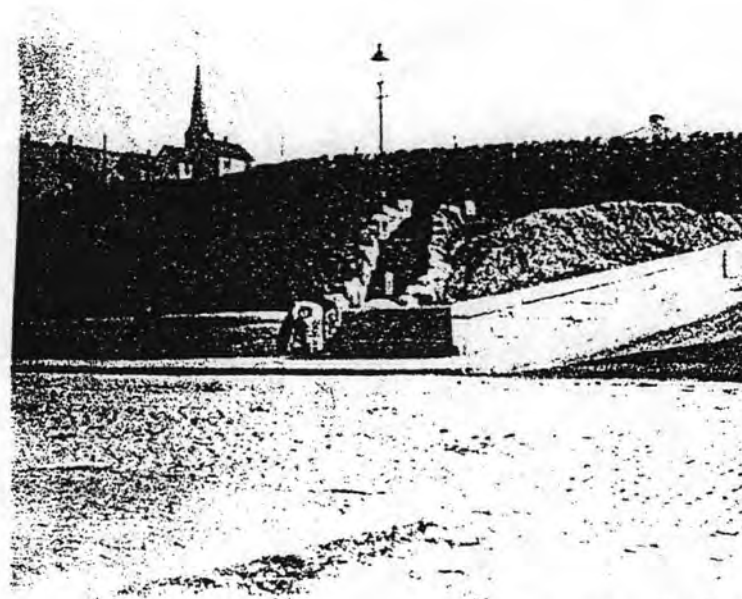


Photo 9 Northwest corner of park at Medford Street, corner St. Martin Street, facing south; undated (after 1895)

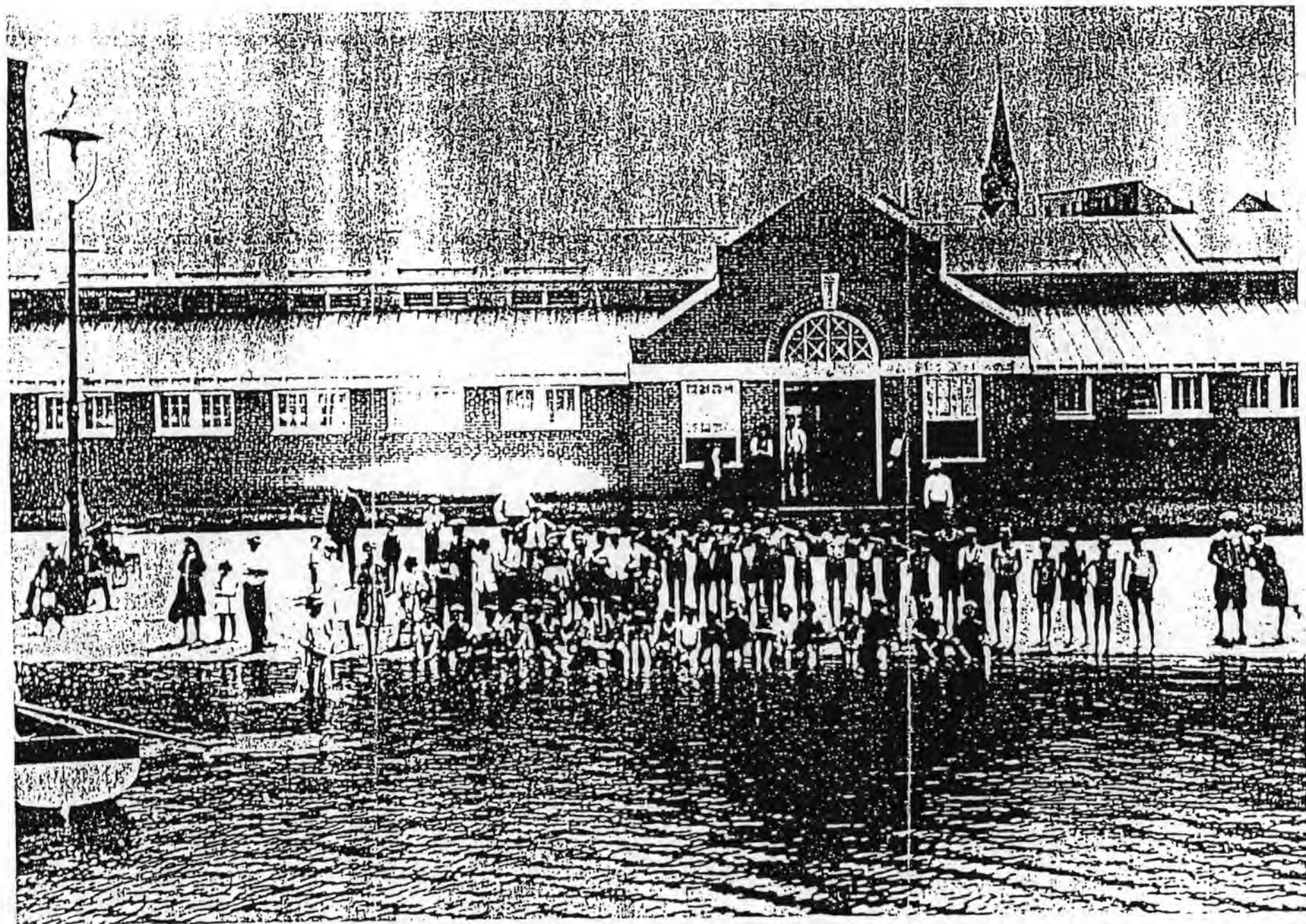


Photo 10 Bathhouse at Dewey Beach, facing south ; undated (c1912) (Courtesy of Friends of Doherty Park, Inc.;
photographer and location of negative unknown)

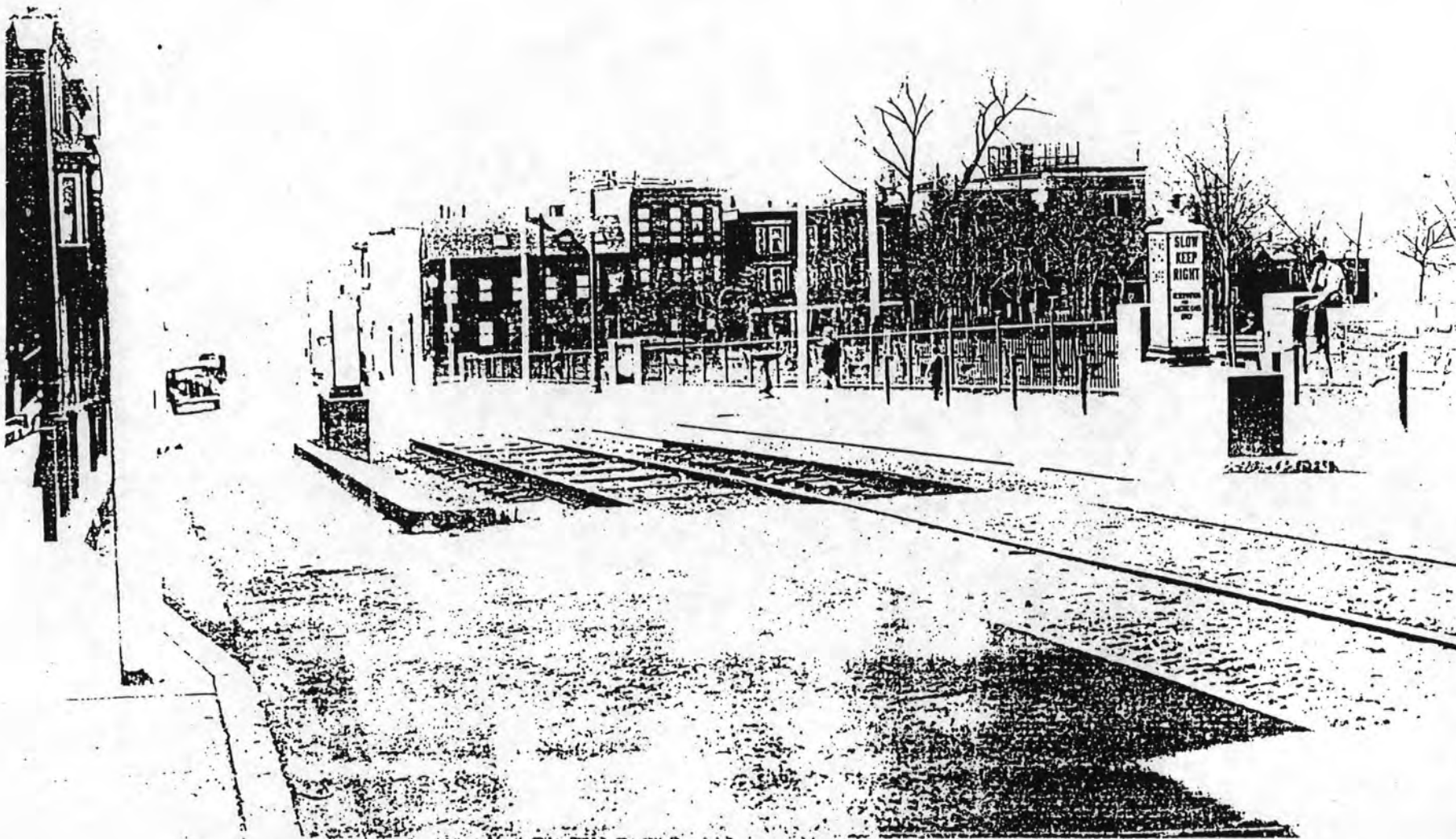


Photo 11 Bunker Hill Street at Playground, facing northwest; 1938 (Courtesy, Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities from Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority collection)

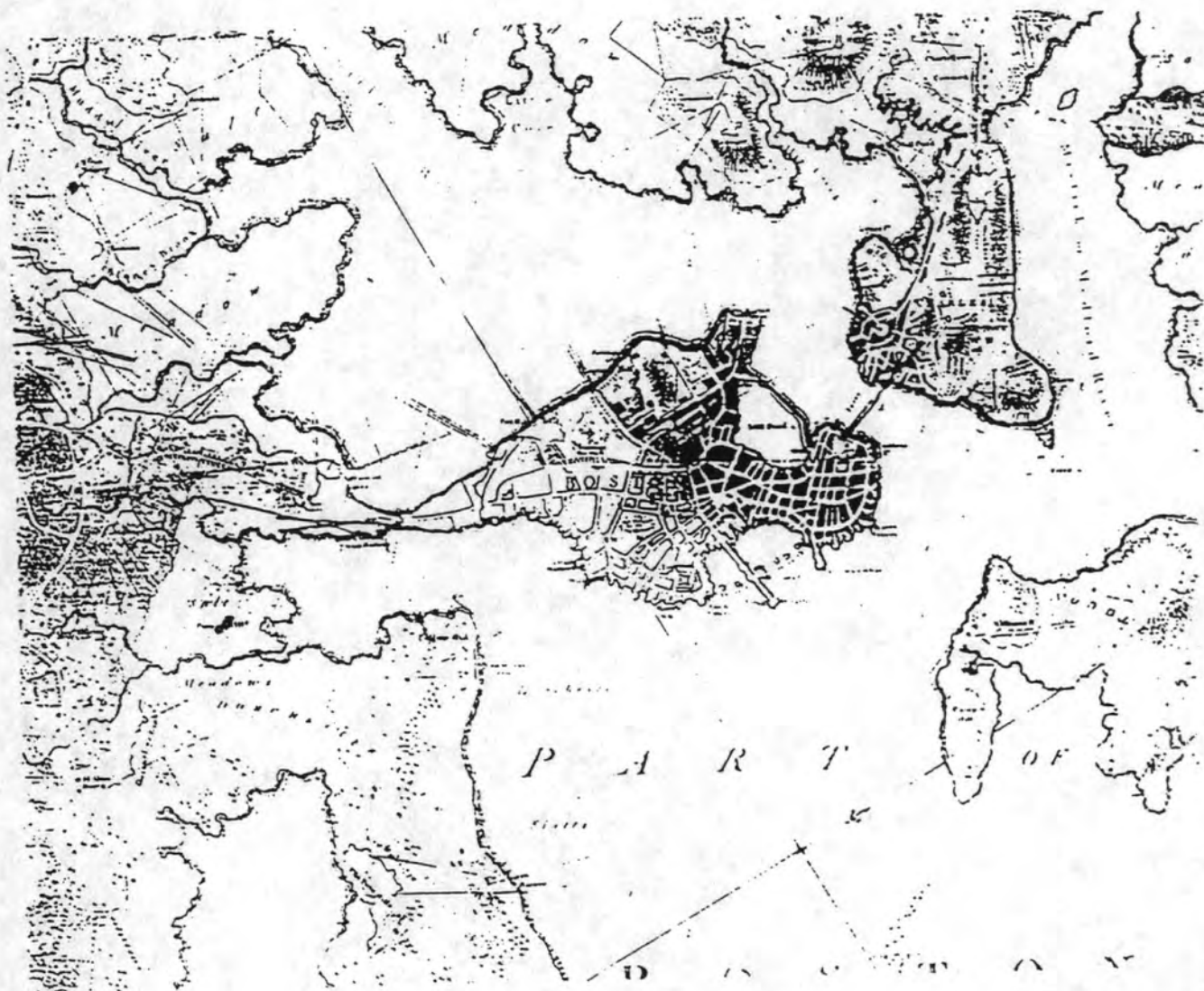


Fig. 1 Detail from Map of Boston and Environs, 1777, with the Military Works Constructed in Those Places in the Years 1775 and 1776. Henry Pelham



A VIEW OF CHARLES TOWN, AND THE BACK GROUND, AS FAR AS THE NARROW PASS.
Taken from the Beacon Hill.

Fig. 2 'A View of Charles Town and the Back Ground, as Far as the Narrow Pass. Taken from the Beacon Hill'
(undated; from Frothingham, Richard Jr. *The History of Charlestown, Massachusetts*)

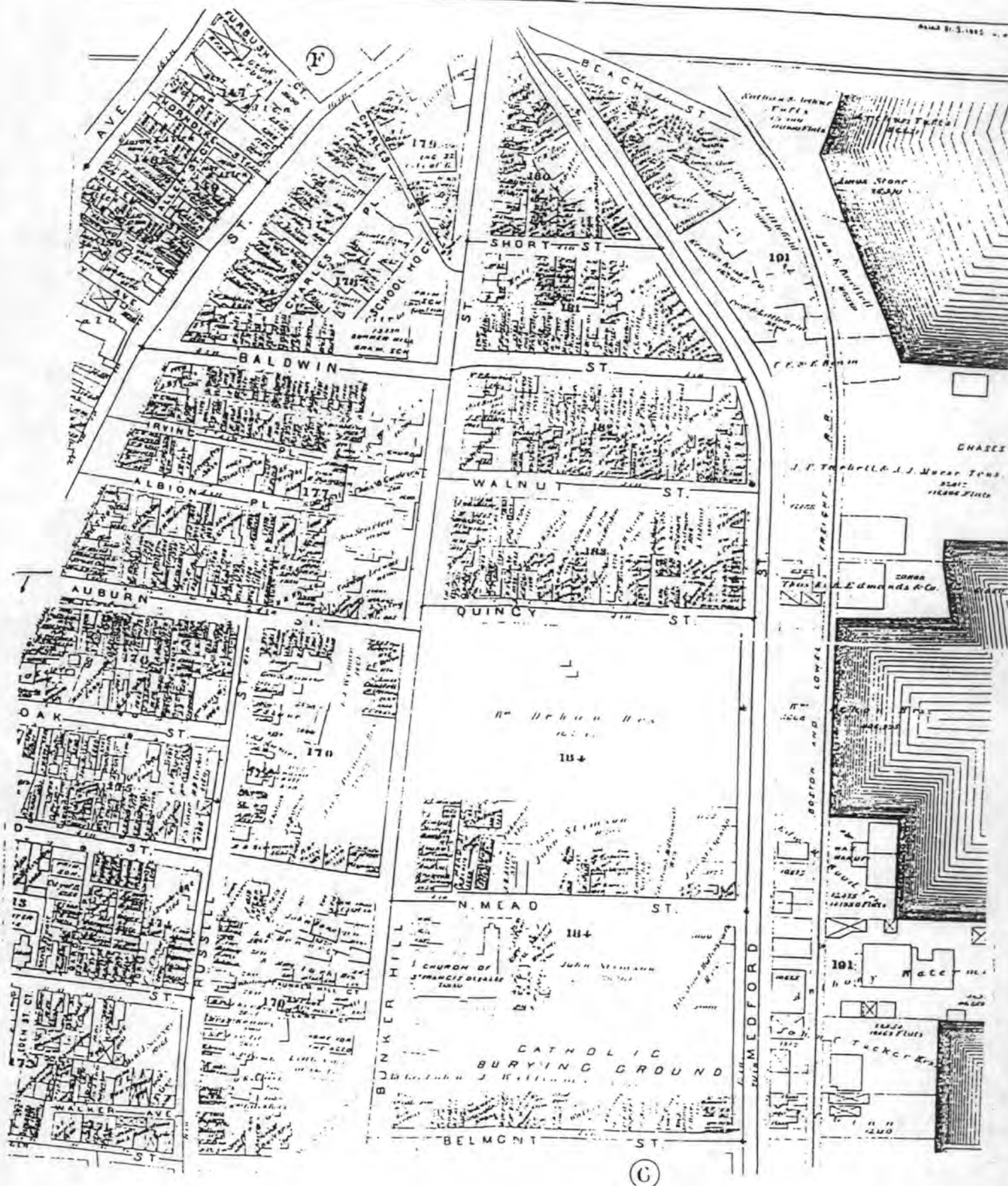
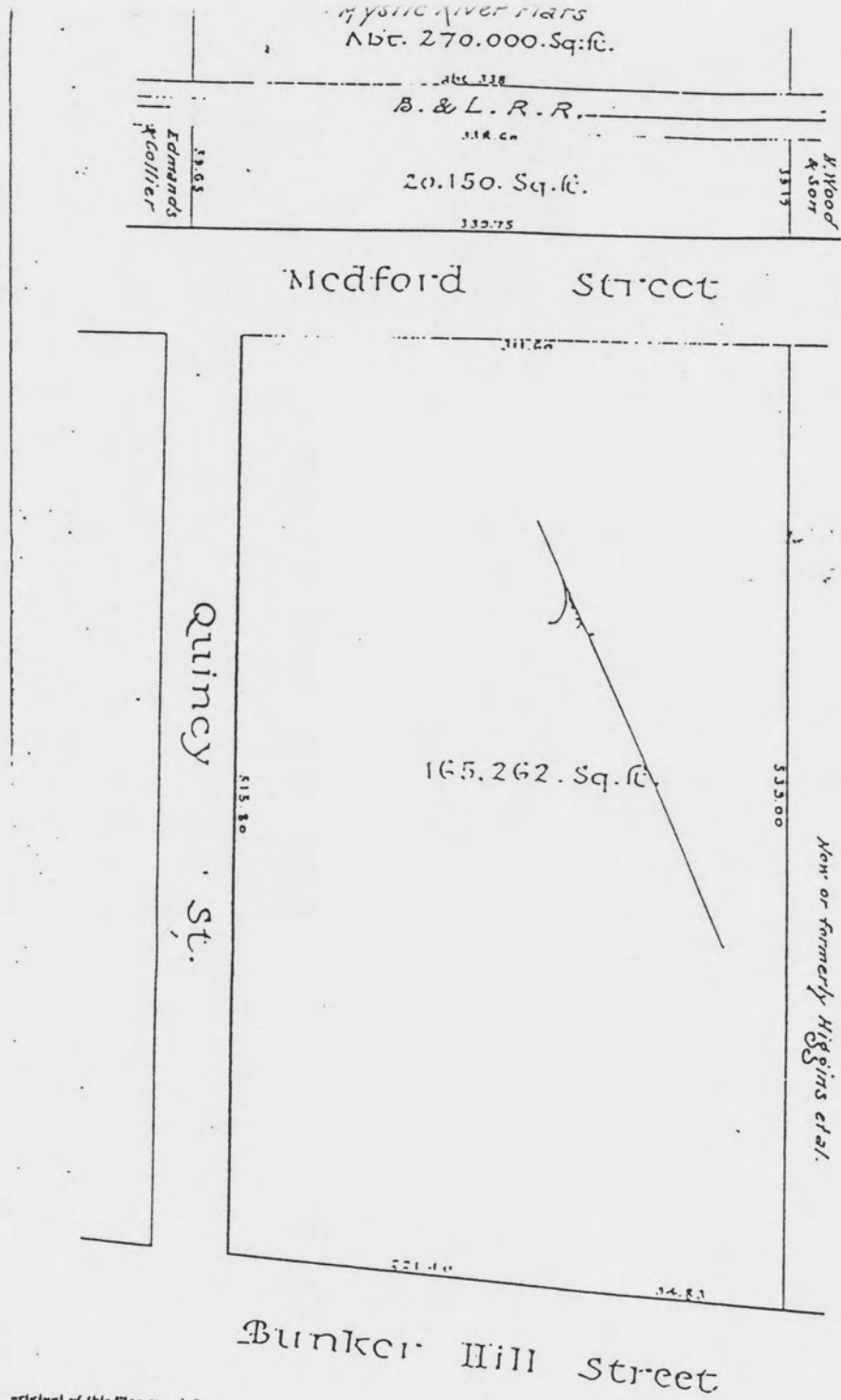


Fig. 3 Atlas of the City of Boston, Charlestown & Brighton Vol 6; 1885



original of this Plan was left
 moved in the Suffolk Registry
 etc. and 1.00 ft.

Surveyed by
Henry H. Williams C.E.

Scale 40 feet to an inch.
 Boston, Feb. 20, 1891.
Garbett & Wood, Surveyors
 Copied July 16, 1891,
William Jackson, City Engineer.

Fig. 4 Survey of Portion of Dehon Estate between Bunker Hill Street and Medford Street; February 20, 1891. Garbett & Wood, Surveyors

6-79

City of Boston - Park Department.
 Contour Plan of a portion of the Dehon Estate in
 Charlestown.

May, 1891.

Scale 1 inch = 20 feet.

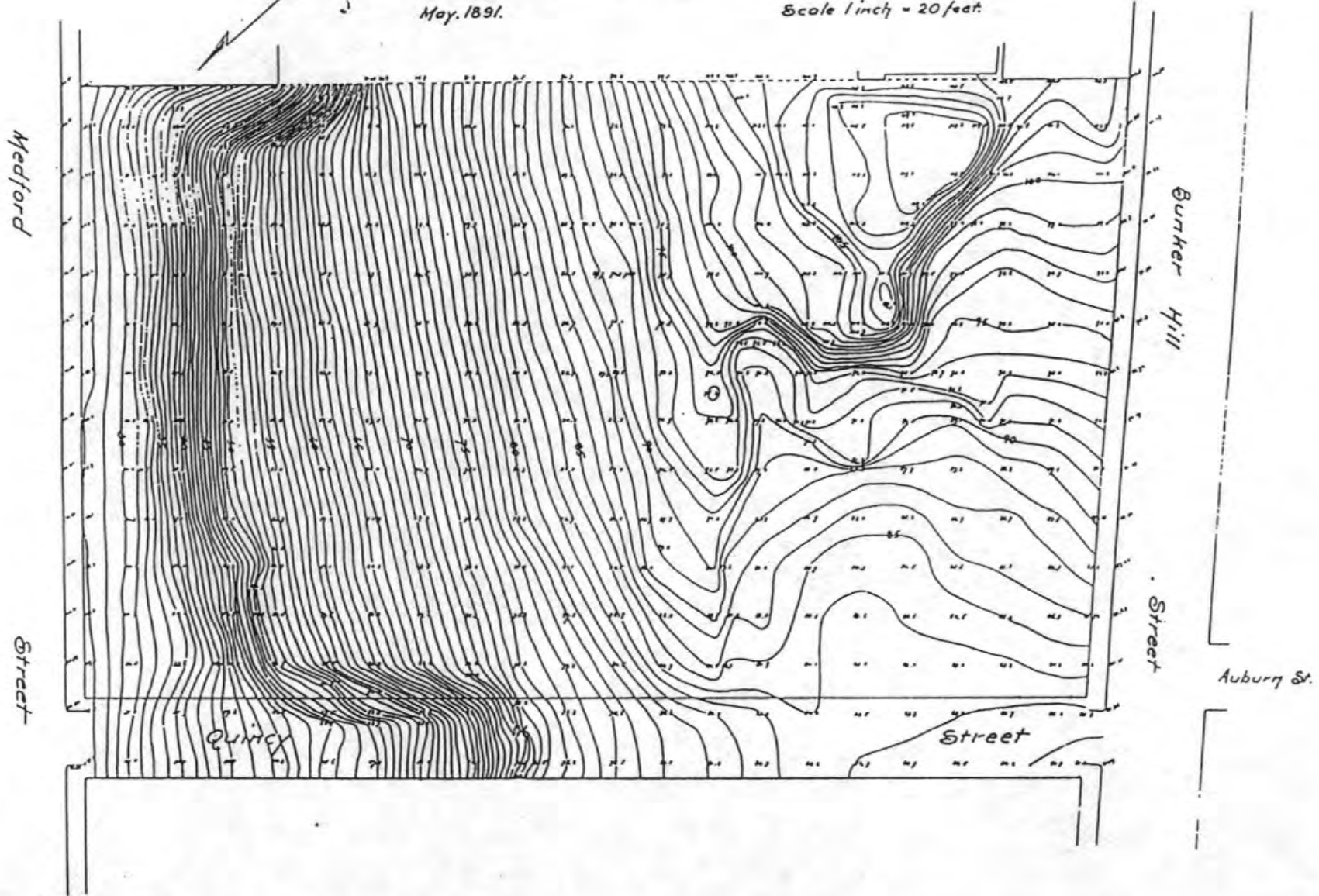


Fig. 6 Contour Plan of a Portion of the Dehon Estate in Charlestown; May, 1891. City of Boston Park Department (Courtesy: National Park Service Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site)

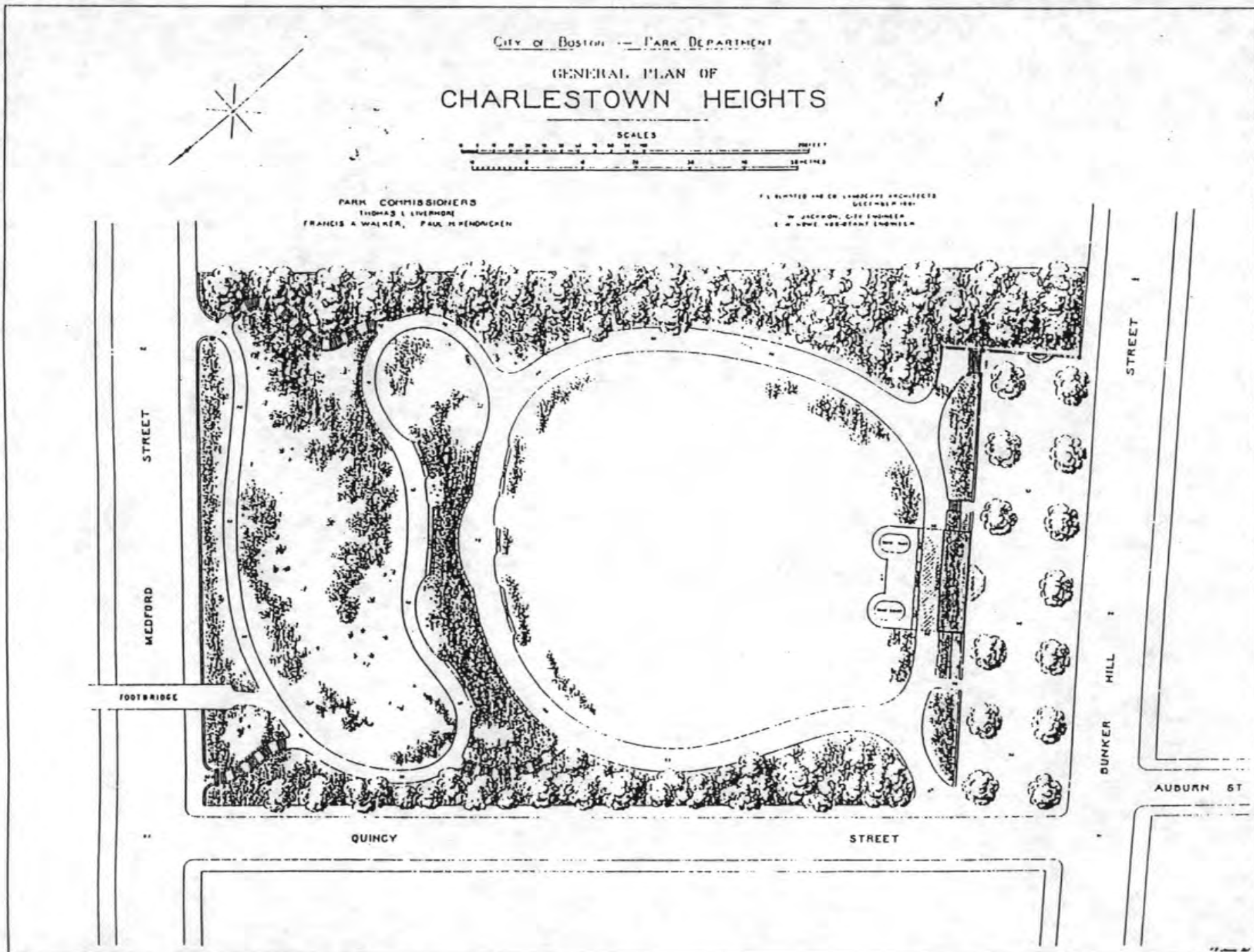


Fig. 7 General Plan of Charlestown Heights; December 1891. F. L. Olmsted & Co. Landscape Architects
(Courtesy: National Park Service Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site)

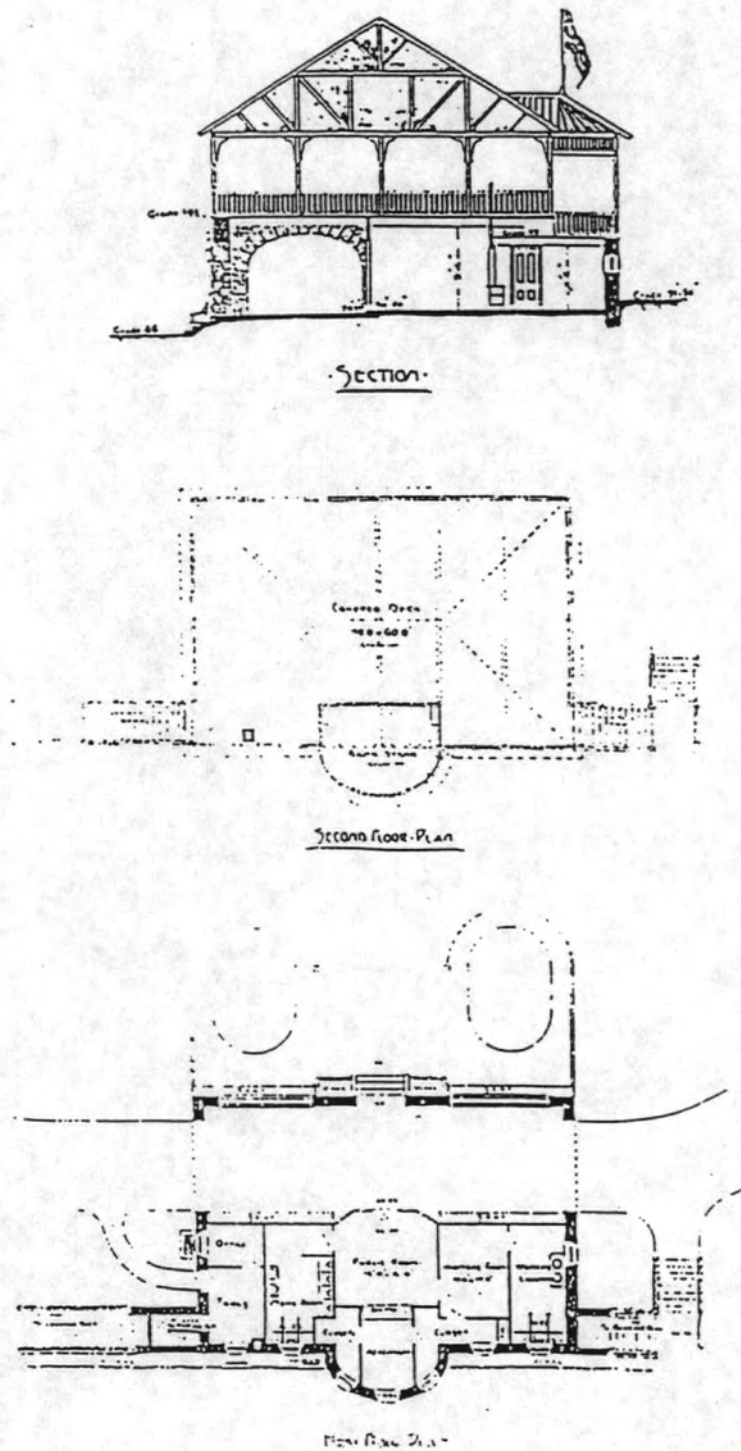


Fig. 8 Preliminary Plans for Pavilion; August 1891. F. L. Olmsted & Co. Landscape Architects (Courtesy: National Park Service Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site)

Fig. 9 Charlestown Heights Playground, undated plan (before 1932). City of Boston Park Department

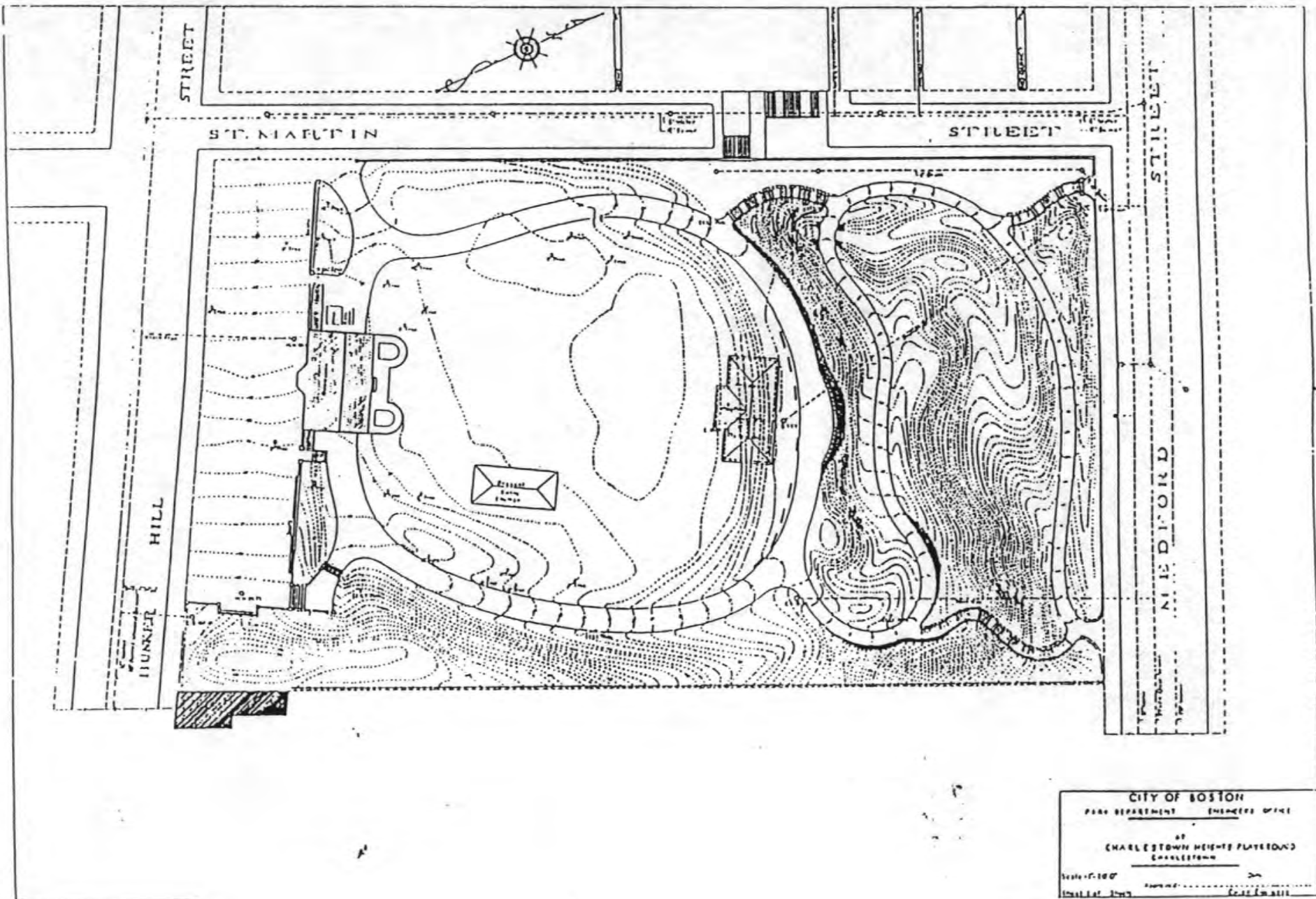
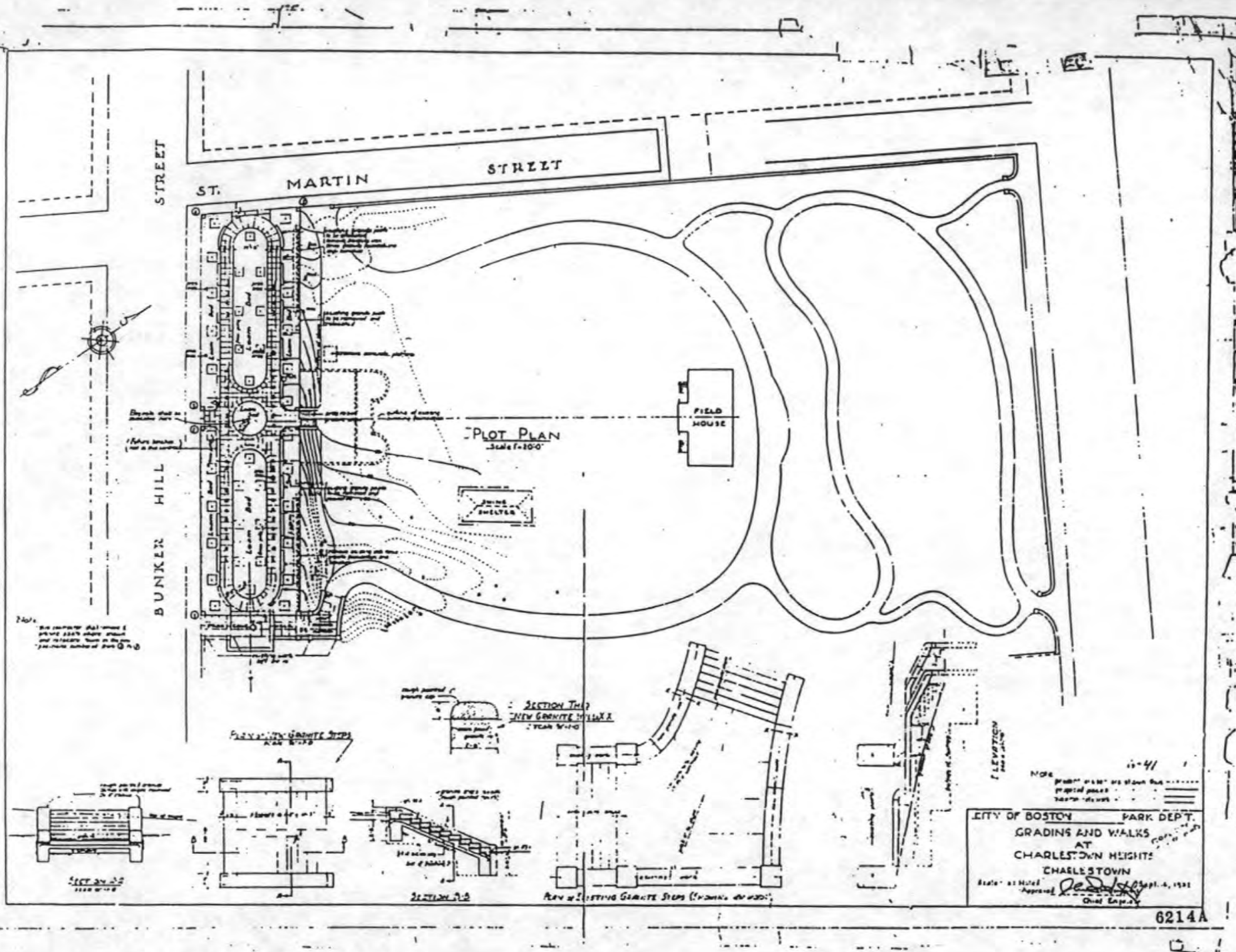


Fig. 10 Grading and Walks at Charlestown Heights, Charlestown; September 16, 1932. City of Boston Park Department



6207 B

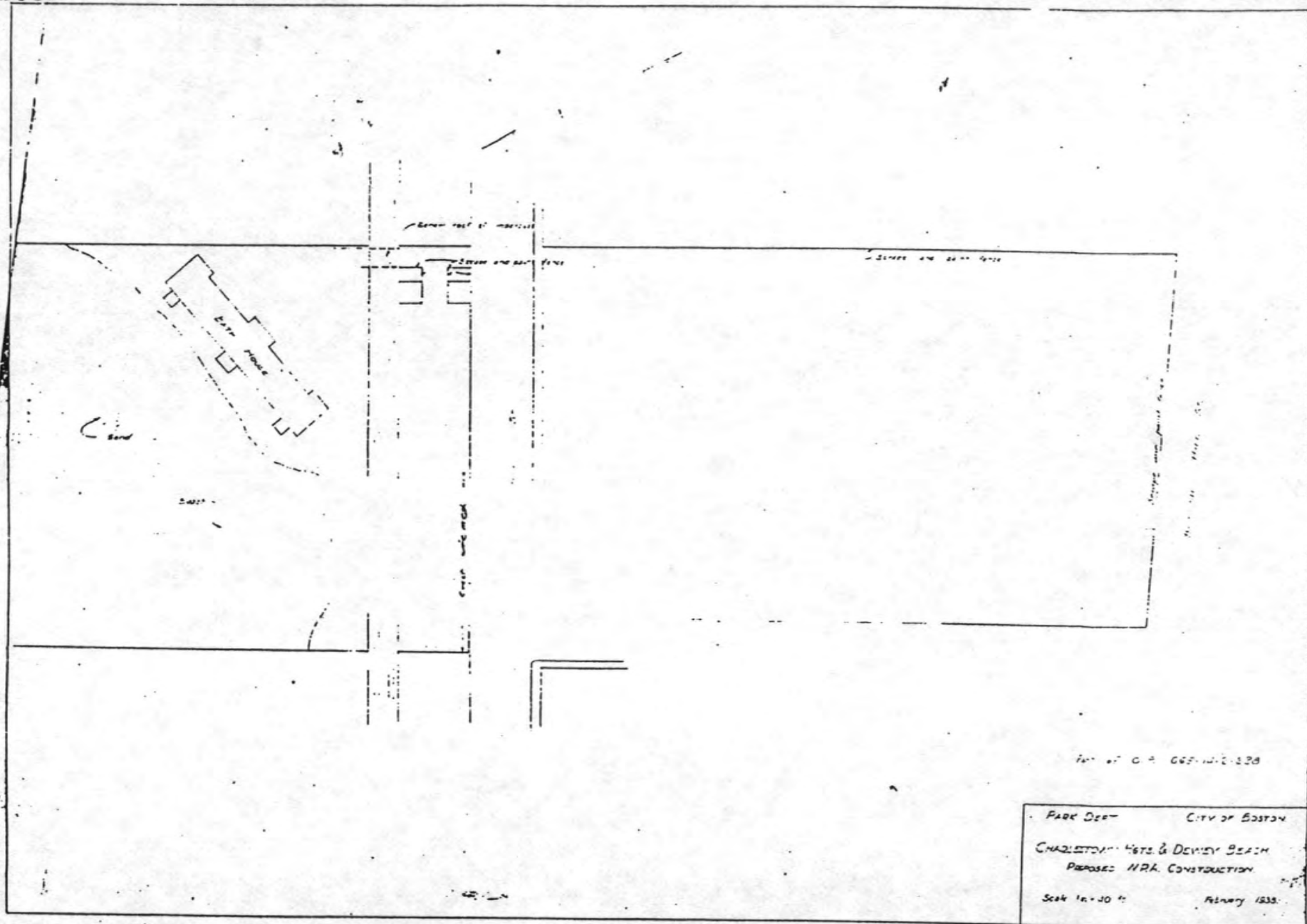
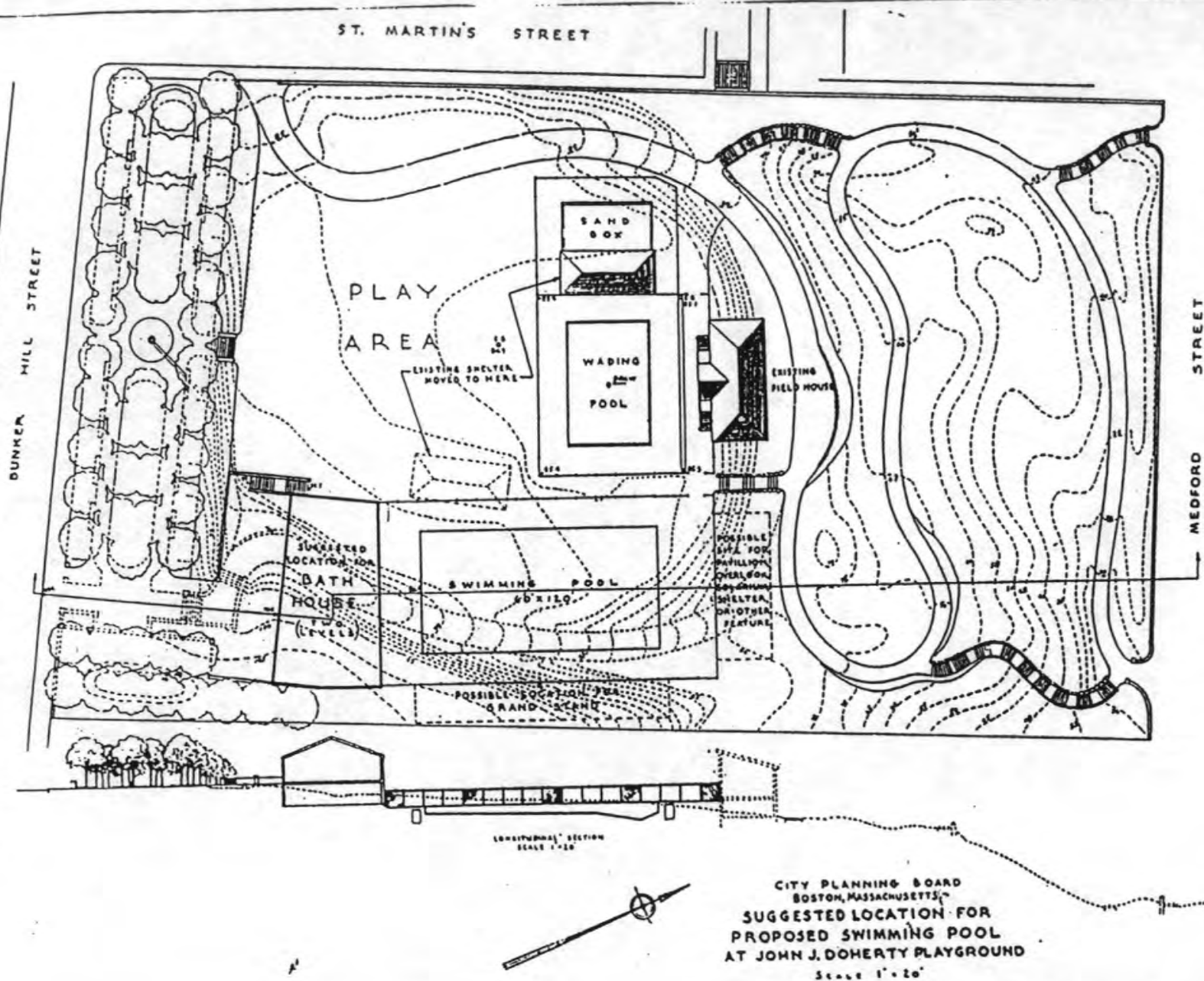


Fig. 11 Charlestown Heights & Dewey Beach Proposed WPA Construction; February, 1938. City of Boston Park Department

Fig. 12 Suggested Location for Proposed Swimming Pool at John J. Doherty Playground, undated plan c1947.
City Planning Board



Doherty Playground Site Plan & Details (reconstruction of passive areas); August 16, 1977. Shurcliff Merrill & Footitt Landscape Architects

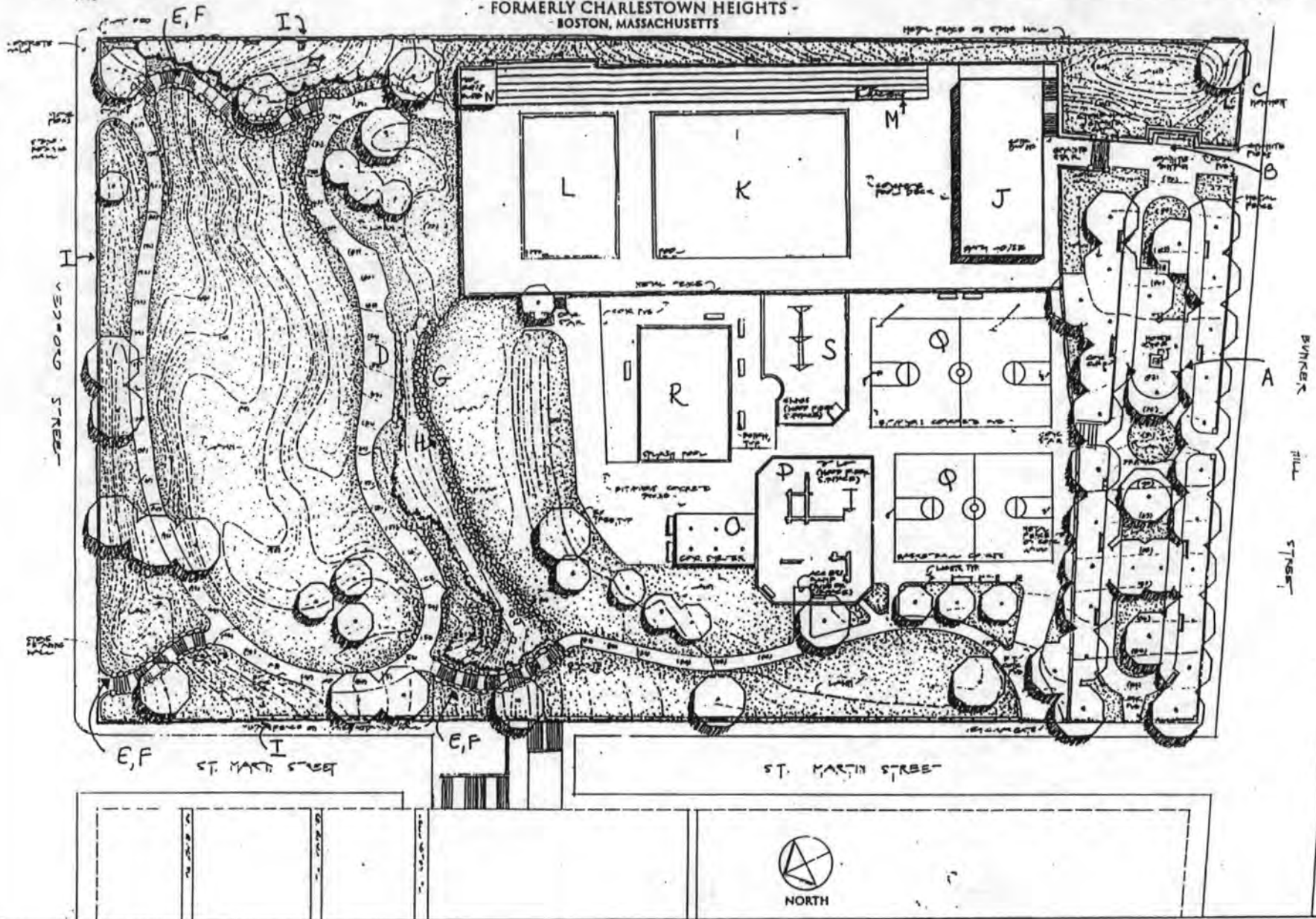


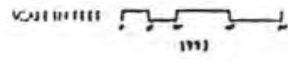
SCALE IN FEET 1" = 10' 1993

EXISTING CONDITIONS PLAN
DOHERTY PLAYGROUND
- FORMERLY CHARLESTOWN HEIGHTS -
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

RESOURCE MAP

FOR: THE BOSTON PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
BY: WALKER-KLUESING DESIGN GROUP - LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS





EXISTING CONDITIONS PLAN
DOHERTY PLAYGROUND
FORMERLY CHARLESTOWN HEIGHTS
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

FOR THE BOSTON PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
BY WALKER-KLUESING DESIGN GROUP - LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

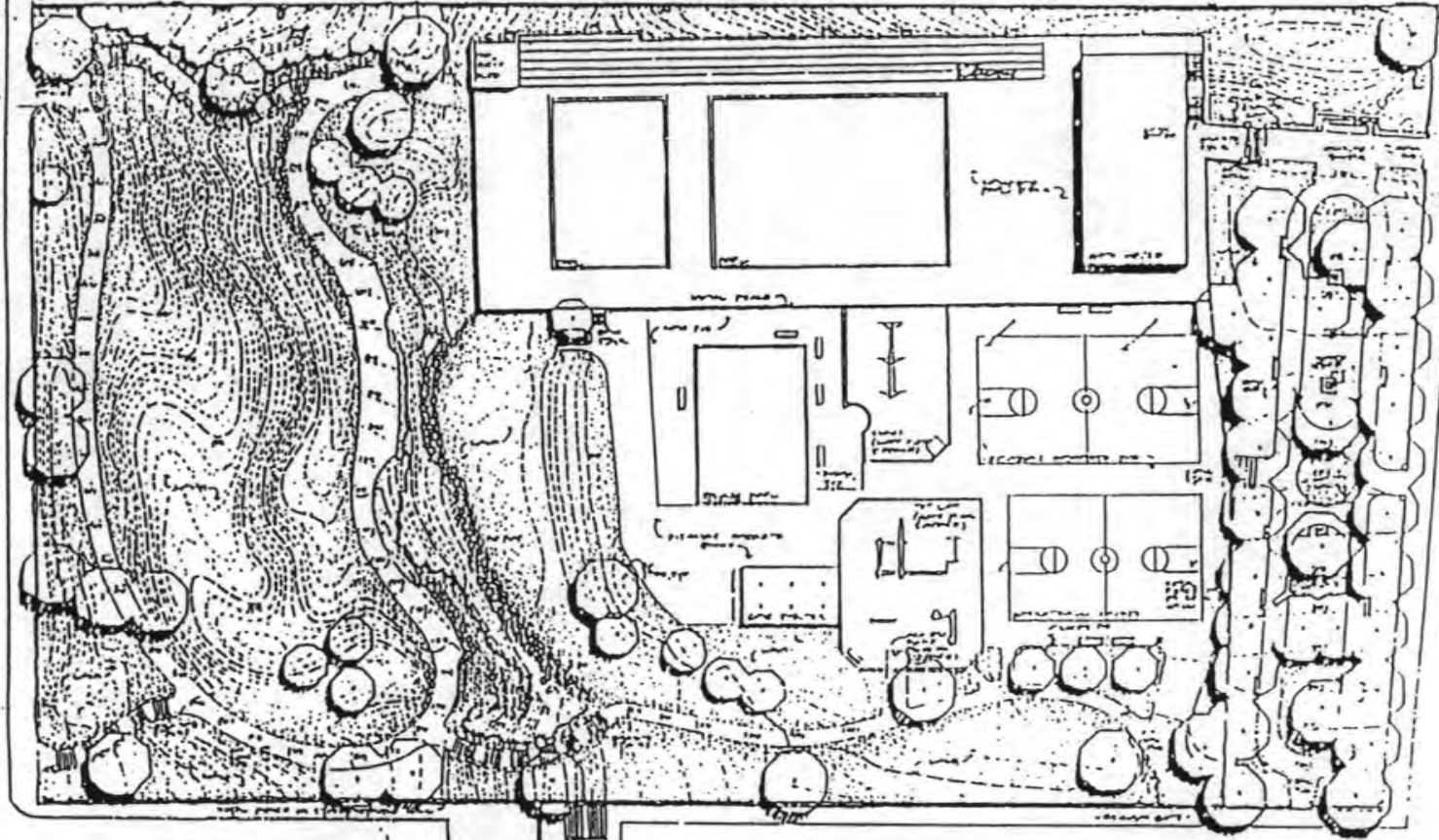
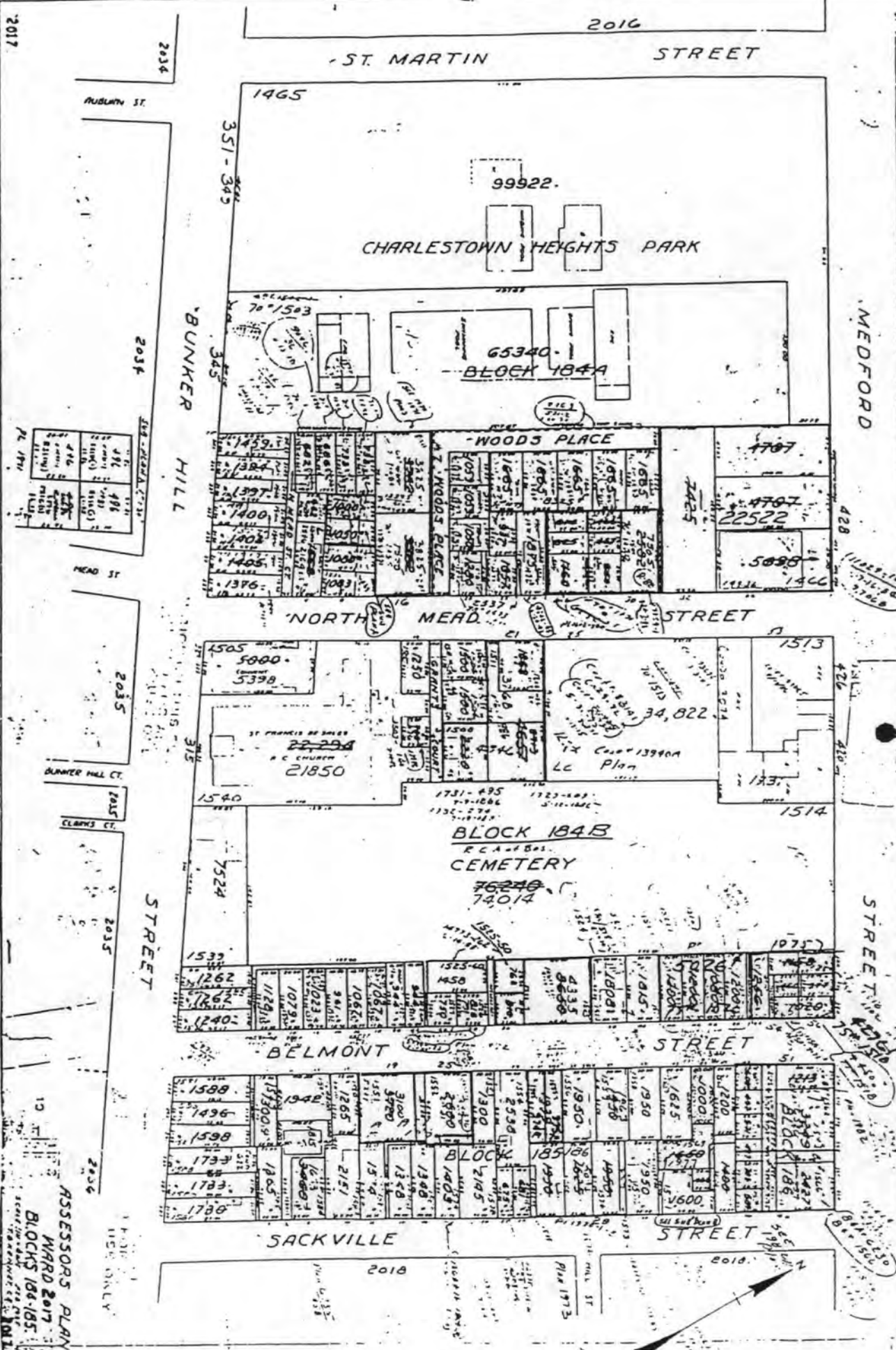


Fig. 14 Doherty Playground (Formerly Charlestown Heights) Existing Conditions Plan, 1993. Walker-Kluesing Design Group Landscape Architects for the Boston Parks and Recreation Department

2017 2016 2015 2003 2012



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

BF
RECEIVED

SEP 19 1997

MASS. HIST. COMM

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Charlestown Heights

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Suffolk

DATE RECEIVED: 8/01/97 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/11/97
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 8/27/97 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/15/97
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 97000969

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: Y NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

___ACCEPT ___RETURN ___REJECT ___DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

This is a well-documented nomination of a significant property. The form must be returned, however, because it is missing some critical elements. There are 18 contributing and 6 non-contributing resources listed in section 5 of the form, but these are not described or identified in the text nor the site map.

Please provide an inventory describing all contributing & non-contributing resources; also please identify them on the site map and please keep the photographs to the

RECOM./CRITERIA Return site plan. Also, there is no photo sheet included

REVIEWER Patrick Andrus DISCIPLINE Historian providing the

TELEPHONE _____ DATE 9/11/97 required

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N information.

Data Collector Recommendation: SLR ☒ Clarification/ReturnLower Action: SLR Final ☒ Return
None

DOCUMENTATION ISSUES--DISCUSSION SHEET

State Name MA County Name Suffolk Resource Name Charlestown Heights
Reference No. 97000969 Multiple Name _____
Listed Date _____

Section of Nomination:

☐ Classification
☐ State/Agency Certification
☐ Function

☒ Description
☒ Significance
☐ Bibliographical References

☐ Geographical Data
☐ Accompanying Documentation
☐ Other

See Page _____ Paragraph _____

Solution:

This is very curious & a major problem - nomination must be returned

NR Staff:

P. Andrus

Date:

9/11/97

Data Collector's Explanation of Problem:

1. This is an ambitious, well researched, well-documented nomination that satisfactorily addresses and answers the questions surrounding the development of the park from its inception in 1891 up to the present. It possesses several problems however:

A. There is no listing of contributing (18) and non-contributing (2) resources.

→ P.D.Data Collector: Nathan Ace

Date:

8/13/97

Resolution in Data Base:

D.B. Corrected:

Date:

B. Several ~~properties~~ resources were constructed after the 50 year mark - are these contributing structure? (pool, bathhouse, related structures) and extraordinarily significant, or non-contributing? Criterion Consideration G is not checked.

C. The sketch map does not identify the photographs, nor what angle they were taken from.

D. The active playground area (pool, basketball courts, parking lot) has almost completely lost the integrity of Olmsted's plan, but the passive recreation area retains most of its integrity. - The nominator states that the active playground area has "retained all the functional aspects of its design and intent..." (8,9)

Additionally, (but less importantly)

2. There is no photo sheet included, and the first ten photographs are actually photocopies. ^{would be nice to have} copies.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



Resub.



969

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 Charlestown Heights

other names/site number Ensign John J. Doherty, Playground

2. Location

street & number Bunker Hill, St. Martin, and Medford Streets N/A not for publication

city or town Boston (Charlestown) N/A vicinity

state Massachusetts code MA county Suffolk code 025 zip code 02129

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ 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 ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Judith B. McDonough 7/24/97
Signature of certifying official/Title Judith B. McDonough, Executive Director Date
Massachusetts Historical Commission, 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 certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

- I, hereby certify that this property is:
- ☒ entered in the National Register
 - ☐ 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 the Keeper

Patrick Anderson

Date of Action

1/8/98

Charlestown Heights

Name of Property

Suffolk, MA

County and State

5. Classification

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

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing

Noncontributing

2	0	buildings
1	0	sites
13	6	structures
2	0	objects
18	6	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE: park

RECREATION AND CULTURE: outdoor recreation

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE: park

RECREATION AND CULTURE: outdoor recreation

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

PARK/OTHER: urban designed landscape

POOL COMPLEX: Moderne

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Concrete

roof Asphalt

other

Narrative Description

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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1Charlestown Heights
Boston (Charlestown), (Suffolk County)
Massachusetts

7. DESCRIPTION

Summary

Charlestown Heights (also known as Doherty Playground) is a 3.8-acre park on an extraordinary hillside site overlooking the Mystic River in Charlestown, a neighborhood of Boston, Massachusetts. It is one of the earliest parks in Boston, being one of five designed by F. L. Olmsted & Co. for densely crowded urban neighborhoods.

Olmsted capitalized on the site for both active and passive recreation, dividing the park along topographical lines into three separate functional areas, and within them establishing variety by creating two very distinct types of landscape. Along Bunker Hill Street at the crest of the hill the sidewalk was widened to allow a generous space for games and "promenading" focused on a fountain at one end, and planted with shade trees (Photos 1 and 2). This relatively formal treatment continued into the middle section of the park, which featured a large grassy play area for small children, sand courts, and a pavilion (Photos 3 and 4). At the opposite end, where the ground dropped off sharply to the river, the landscape was made dramatically picturesque. Here was a terraced overlook with graceful "seats" (Photos 5 and 6) and the winding paths and steps of rough boulderwork found in Olmsted's larger parks (Photos 8 and 9).

Today the park's neighborhood continues to be densely residential bordered by commercial and industrial development on Medford Street (Photos 12, 13, and 25). The essence of the park's original plan remains intact, as well as the intent of the Olmsted firm that it serve active as well as passive recreational uses.

The active play area has changed the most, due to the city's periodic need to introduce updated recreational facilities. A swimming pool and bathhouse complex replaced the function of a bathing beach added shortly after Olmsted's time on the flats by the river (which had become polluted); the pavilion was replaced with a new field house, itself later replaced with the bathhouse; and the central lawn was paved over for basketball courts and play equipment (Photos 15-20). Nevertheless, these changes were made to an area already intended for active play space, and all but the pool complex are reversible.

The passive areas at the upper and lower ends of the park have retained the most historic character. The upper promenade has matured into the tree-shaded refuge Olmsted envisioned, still focused on the original granite fountain. It now has paved paths and seats, and is in good condition (Photo 14). The lower overlook and hillside, on the other hand, have suffered from deferred maintenance and vandalism. The play area encroaches on the tranquil overlook, which has lost its path and the seats Olmsted positioned to take advantage of river views (Photo 21). Much of the charming system of winding paths and stone steps remains intact. However, a portion of the eastern stair is closed off due to collapse from abutting site work (Photo 25) and some stone elements are missing.

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 2Charlestown Heights
Boston (Charlestown), (Suffolk County)
Massachusetts

Planting are overgrown, and the slope below the pool needs repair from erosion and damage from frozen pipes. Lastly, the riverfront has experienced continuing landfill and industrial development which has altered both near and distant views from the park. In Olmsted's day the "hither bank" housed factories and docks (Photo 7), although sections of undeveloped riverfront allowed for a "grand sweeping view over the marshes of the Mystic" (Photo 21). This once picturesque view is now obscured by the early 20th-century sugar refineries which line Charlestown's industrial waterfront. Nevertheless, even the original Olmsted plan intended for the judicious use of plantings to screen out "intrusions."

There is some name confusion associated with this park. The correct names pertaining to it are its original name, Charlestown Heights (sometimes Charlestown Heights Playground is used in Parks Department reports); its current name conferred in 1942, Ensign John J. Doherty Playground; and its pool, the Paul Clougherty Pool. This site should not be confused with the nearby Charlestown Playground also designed by Olmsted (renamed Ryan Playground in 1942), or the John A. Doherty Playground, located elsewhere in Boston.

Current Description

Charlestown Heights occupies the northern slope of Bunker Hill. It is well known in American history as the supposed site of the Battle of Bunker Hill, the first great battle of the Revolutionary War on June 17, 1775, though the battle was actually fought on nearby Breed's Hill.

This rectangular hillside park occupies the western two-thirds of a city block bounded by Bunker Hill Street to the south, Medford Street to the north, and St. Martin (formerly Quincy) Street to the west (Fig. 15). The remainder of the block not covered by the park, beginning at a gas station at the Medford Street base, is bounded by North Mead Street to the east.

Bunker Hill Street is a major commercial and residential thoroughfare (Photo 12), and Medford Street parallels the Boston and Maine Railroad which services the riverfront industrial complex. The neighborhood between these two arteries is made up primarily of multi-family row houses (Photo 13). The hillside area east of North Mead Street is dominated by an old Catholic cemetery, with the St. Francis de Sales Roman Catholic Church (1862), convent, and rectory situated at the crest of the hill along Bunker Hill Street.

Fences in rich variety surround the park. The Bunker Hill Street border is defined by a painted cast-iron picket fence whose two entrance openings are flanked by granite posts. The other perimeters along St. Martin Street, Medford Street, and the interior are largely marked by gray granite ashlar **retaining walls**, 4' high and 2' wide with 10" high granite coping, generally topped by iron pickets except along Medford Street (Photo 24, **Map H**).

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 3Charlestown Heights
Boston (Charlestown), (Suffolk County)
Massachusetts

The park is divided into three functional sections (Fig. 14) corresponding to its topography, the highest point being an elevation of 111' at the southeast corner. There is a relatively flat **upper promenade (Map A)** along Bunker Hill Street (a constant slope from elevation 99 to 84), a somewhat flatter central play area (falling from elevation 87 to 80), and a steep slope leading down to Medford Street (a drop from elevation 80 to 27). The central play area is separated from the promenade above by a concrete wall topped with iron fencing (Photo 15) and pierced by two sets of granite stairs, while a **stone terrace** topped by a parapet of individual puddingstone blocks and boulders (Photo 21, **Map G**) separates the play area from the slope below.

The promenade (Photo 14) provides a formal transition from sunny, busy Bunker Hill Street by affording shady places to walk and sit. It is accessible from both Bunker Hill and St. Martin Streets. A long parallel path system of concrete is bordered by precast concrete and wood benches and mature trees; it surrounds a lawn dotted with additional trees. The original granite **drinking fountain** with surrounding seats completes the east end; it is currently filled with concrete and not functional. (**Map B**) A lawn extends beyond the fountain up to the property line. Close to Bunker Hill Street, halfway up the lawn to the property line, is a gray granite **monument** with a bronze plaque honoring the Battle of Bunker Hill. It was erected in 1926 by the Daughters of the American Revolution. (**Map C**) Non-historic park features include an accessible drinking fountain and several Boston Parks and Recreation Department signs, the largest of which gives the park's name and is fastened to a metal standard just inside the fence along Bunker Hill Street.

The central play area contains all the park's active recreational facilities. 1.5 acres is given over to the **Clougherty Pool complex**, which abuts the eastern property line and extends the full length of the play area from the edge of the promenade to the edge of the overlook. This complex was designed by John M. Gray Company, Architects for the George Robert White Fund (described in section 8 below). It comprises a **bathhouse**, a 7500-square-foot **swimming pool**, a 2400-square-foot **diving pool**, concrete **bleachers**, and a **pumphouse**, all for summer seasonal use (Photos 18 and 19, **Map J-N**).

The commodious Moderne bathhouse (Photos 16 and 18) is a simple rectangular concrete structure whose decorative elements impart great interest and style. The two-story building is topped by a flat roof furnished with a partially-covered deck. An open section faces north over the adjacent pool and distant Mystic River, while a covered (but open-sided) section faces south to the promenade and Bunker Hill Street. Three-story stair towers anchor the Bunker Hill Street corners. The two-pile structure has six bays and is nearly symmetrical. Its main entrance is at the far end of the Bunker Hill Street facade, opposite the street entrance to the park. The principal facade, however, faces the pool. The central core is flanked by tower-like vertical projections marking entrances to the men's and women's facilities through double metal doors on the ground floor. Another even wider metal door is at the end beyond the left tower. Both floors have horizontal bands of metal awning-style windows, symmetrically spaced and arranged mostly six over two (at

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second-floor level, four over two in the towers and six over three at the ends). Ventilation louvers take the place of panes in some cases. The St. Martin Street facade has two additional metal doors with transoms, the rightmost door being opposite the vehicular entrance at St. Martin Street and equipped with double doors for vehicle and wheelchair access. Bathhouse facilities include women's and men's locker rooms; a first aid room and facilities for the handicapped, elderly, and children; lifeguard room; and staff office. The roof deck, which houses a concession area, is presently closed.

The bathhouse's streamlined exterior is accented with richly decorative trim. The primary emphasis is horizontal, achieved through facade incising, the horizontal windows, flat roof, and linear metal balustrade elements surrounding the roof deck. Vertical contrast is provided by the towers, whose edges are highlighted by stepped pilasters. The tower facades are decorated with sculpted friezes displaying streamlined plant and animal motifs (Photo 17 shows details of the women's side, where a female figure poised on a dolphin is riding the waves). Red paint gives a playful touch to the metal doors and window trim. Commemorative bronze plaques marking the pool's establishment in 1949 by the George Robert White Fund decorate the center of the pool facade and an interior corridor. The pool was given a massive renovation in 1989 and is presently in good condition.

Beside the pool complex are two **basketball courts** and facilities for small children (**swings, splash/wading pool, concrete shade shelter, and playground**, as seen in Photos 15 and 20 **Map O-S**). The area is accessible from both the upper promenade and St. Martin Street; service vehicles can enter through a steel pipe vehicular gate on St. Martin Street. Iron-picket-topped concrete walls, like those separating the recreation areas from the promenade above, surround the pool complex (Photos 16 and 19) and segments of chain link fencing surround portions of the children's playground (Photos 15 and 20).

The lowest portion of the park is a sloping meadow which retains its original picturesque circulation system and informal, naturalistic feeling. A graceful run of rustic stone steps leads to a broad path beneath the **overlook** (Photo 23, **Map E**). Additional stone steps and curving paths wind down to Medford Street below. The granite steps and puddingstone **cheek walls** are a signature Olmsted landscape feature. (**Map D**) The paths, originally gravel or macadam, are now paved with bituminous concrete.

Olmsted's design called for plantings whose principal aim was function. He framed the park and screened it from the sights and sounds of the surrounding neighborhood with large shade trees along the entire eastern and western boundaries and dense shrubbery at the Medford Street base (Photo 9). Within this framing, each of the three sections had plantings appropriate to its particular function serving to separate those functions from one another.

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The upper promenade featured an allee of large trees parallel to Bunker Hill Street to provide shade and a grove for city concerts (Photo 2). The central play area featured a large, open lawn for the gentle play of small children, and for a smooth foreground to the distant river view. Scattered shrub groupings eased the transitions at either end. At the promenade end, shrubs surrounded the steps leading down into the play area from the fountain, flanked the pavilion in two elongated islands facing the promenade, and likewise flanked the sand courts facing the grass (Photos 3 and 4). At the overlook end, shrubbery concealed the quiet seat area from the adjoining lawn (Photo 6). The hillside below, in contrast to the two upper areas, was intended to appear quite wild. The rocky terrace wall supporting the overlook was thickly planted with low shrubs and clambering vines; an especially picturesque rough boulder "grotto" was framed with unruly vines near the steps under the northwest terrace wall (behind the path in Photo 8). The remaining hillside had a few open areas of rough meadow (Photo 7) and many strategically-placed groupings of large, densely-planted shrubs. They served to make this part of the park appear larger than it is by offering periodic fresh views from the winding paths and stone steps. Vines and shrubs dripped in picturesque profusion over the steps' puddingstone cheek walls, especially at the steepest northeast corner.

It appears that only a handful of large oak and maple trees, and perhaps some tangled vines remain from the original planting. One cannot be certain, however, as no planting lists describing exactly what was used on the site have been found to date. However, Olmsted preferred to use native materials in a manner consistent with the original character of the land, and there are documented plantings for similar landscapes undertaken by the Olmsted firm at roughly the same time as Charlestown Heights, such as Franklin Park and the Muddy River Improvement in Boston's "emerald necklace" of parks.

For tall shade trees such as those on the periphery and the promenade allee, Olmsted often used red oak, white oak, sugar maple, silver maple, and American elm. For medium-sized shrubs in groups like those about the edges of the central lawn, he used such plants as privet, barberry, shining sumac, and viburnum. For the boulder retaining wall beneath the overlook, Olmsted would have sought the appearance of old, spontaneous growth by inserting among the boulders some close-growing ground covers, vines, and small shrubs. Typical plantings were low rambling rose, honeysuckle, grape, ampelopsis, trailing euonymus, and American bittersweet. On the wilder lower hillside, large shrubs might have included staghorn sumac, common witch hazel, and viburnum; whereas low-growing shrubs and groundcovers might have included yellowroot, bittersweet, fragrant sumac, and potentilla. In steep areas near the boundaries, where it was necessary to discourage use, he might have used spiny shrubs like barberry and briar.

Probably original large oak and maple trees stand at each Medford Street corner, to the right of the vehicular gate at St. Martin Street and outside the fence by the southeast corner of the basketball court (both could be original promenade trees), and at the southeast Bunker Hill Street corner by the DAR monument. None is in good condition.

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Olmsted's design intent remains evident throughout the park except in much of the central play area, discussed further below. There continue to be large shade trees (silver and Norway maple, elm, and oak) along the eastern and western boundaries, though they are probably less dense than Olmsted envisioned (**Photos 18 and 19**). The promenade continues to have a quiet feeling and formal plantings consistent with Olmsted's intent, though paved walkways surrounding long grass beds have replaced the original gravel. When the pathways were installed in 1932, they were lined inside and out with new trees of unspecified species. In 1977, Norway maples were added. A few remnants of the original allee remain, as noted above, apparently among those noted as "existing trees" of about 20" diameter on the 1977 plan. Grass continues in use behind the fountain.

Clearly the central play area's vegetation is entirely new because new surfaces were needed underfoot when recreational facilities changed to meet modern needs and accommodate older children. Initially a large circular lawn enclosed by a shrub-dotted walk and ending at a scenic overlook, most of the lawn and the north and east portions of the walk were later paved to accommodate a new field house (now gone), the pool complex, basketball courts and tot lot. However, the western perimeter along St. Martin Street, where most of the younger children's facilities are concentrated, continues to have the type of vegetation Olmsted envisioned; tall shade trees and grass remain outside the perimeter walk, and there is grass inside this walk up to the concrete shelter. Small trees and shrubs have been added beside the tot lot, and grass has been planted at the overlook where originally there were a path and seats. On the east side, masses of evergreen shrubs were recently planted beside the splash pool.

The lower hillside retains much of the Olmsted feeling, though it is both more and less civilized than he intended. In addition to the (probably original) large trees at the Medford Street corners (described above) smaller trees here now include honeylocust, ash, crabapple, elder, and red chokecherry. There is more meadow and it is less rough, while the shrubs have as a result of deferred maintenance become very overgrown. Blackberry and bittersweet (both possibly original) choke the hillside along with other (probably volunteer) vines and poison ivy, and volunteer trees have grown into the rocky area below the overlook. The general impression now is of an area more overgrown than picturesque.

Night lighting for most evening use of the park comes from street lights along its perimeter. Additional lighting is provided by four 40' concrete poles encircling the basketball courts, the cobra head lights on concrete poles at the top of the southwest and northwest stairs, and security lights in the swimming pool complex.

Archaeological Description

Charlestown Heights is located between Medford, St. Martin, and Bunker Hill Streets in Charlestown, and is bounded and fenced on the eastern limits by a residential neighborhood. The

(continued)

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park was originally designed in 1891 by F. L. Olmsted and Company as part of the planned park system of Boston. The city acquired the parcel in 1876 from the Estate of William Dehon. This parcel originally extended across Medford Street and included the Mystic River waterfront. The waterfront parcel of the property is presently occupied by Mystic Park, an industrial park which contains a storage facility, office space and a parking lot. The land-use history of the project area does not appear to be extensive, however without completing a detailed study of the parcel it is difficult to assess what archaeological survivals might remain. Charlestown Heights now serves as a multi-purpose recreational area which is occupied by a bath house and pool area, a tot lot, a pavilion area, basketball courts, a flat tree lined park area, and a scenic overlook containing stairs, bordering walls and pathways.

No prehistoric sites are recorded in the parcel known as Doherty Park. Thirteen prehistoric sites are located within a one mile radius of the property, however eight of these sites are located in Boston Proper, and five are located along or near the water, either on the Charles River or Boston Harbor. The Paleoenvironmental reconstruction of the parcel has not been determined, however the historical environmental reconstruction of the property shows that Medford Street follows the original Contact Period shoreline. Prehistoric sites may survive in areas that were not affected by construction impacts, or in filled areas, a process which would have protected any extant cultural remains. Depending on the land-use history of the property, a moderate potential for the location of prehistoric sites exists.

A moderate potential exists for the recovery of historic archaeological survivals on the Charlestown Heights. A map of Charlestown in 1794 shows the shoreline of the Mystic River just north of and following the route of Medford Street (Thompson, 1794). By 1830, a few small dwellings were located on the south side of Bunker Hill Street and near Malden Bridge. Development continued in the surrounding area, however no structures were evident on the property until at least 1885. In an atlas of 1885, two wood sheds are located in the center of the property owned by Wm. Dehon's heirs (Bromley, 1885).

(end)

Charlestown Heights

Name of Property

Suffolk, MA

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

(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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1891-1947

Significant Dates

1891 and 1947

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

F. L. Olmsted & Co. Landscape Architects

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Massachusetts Historical Commission

Boston Landmarks Commission

Charlestown Heights

Name of Property

Suffolk, MA

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 3.8 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1. 19 329740 4694180
Zone Easting Northing

2. 19 329820 4694140
Zone Easting Northing

3. 19 329740 4693960
Zone Easting Northing

4. 19 329680 4694040
Zone Easting Northing

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.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elsbeth T. Magnarelli, Preservation Consultant with Betsy Friedberg, National Register Director, MHC

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date July 1997

street & number 220 Morrissey Boulevard telephone 617-727-8470

city or town Boston state MA zip code 02125

Additional Documentation

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)

Property Owner

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

name City of Boston Parks and Recreation Department

street & number 1010 Massachusetts Avenue telephone 617-635-4744

city or town Boston state MA zip code 02118

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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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

Charlestown Heights is significant as a work of F. L. Olmsted & Co. under the direction of Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., specifically as the best remaining example of the small neighborhood parks that were an integral part of the metropolitan park system the firm designed for Boston.

In addition, it is significant as a reflection of city government's response to the recreational needs of an increasingly dense urban population at the turn of the century.

Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. and the Boston Parks

Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903) was the acknowledged father of American landscape architecture and preeminent practitioner of the profession for 40 years. In the 1850s he and his first partner, Calvert Vaux, created Central Park in New York, the country's first large urban public space designed solely for recreation. He and his several partners took on over 600 other commissions including dozens of other city and state parks (such as Prospect Park in Brooklyn, Mount Royal Park in Montreal, Belle Isle Park in Detroit), and comprehensive systems of parks connected by parkways (for Brooklyn, Chicago, Buffalo, and Boston). In addition, his firm set the standard for public site planning (the U. S. Capitol grounds and the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago), residential subdivisions (Riverside, Illinois), private estates (George W. Vanderbilt's Biltmore in North Carolina), and campuses (Stanford University).

F. L. Olmsted was operating in unique times. In the mid-19th century cities throughout the United States experienced unprecedented growth through industrialization and immigration. Olmsted and others saw the need to create public "breathing spaces" to prevent disease and preserve dwindling open space. He strongly espoused public parks as places for all people to escape city pressures through the restorative power of soothing scenery and what he called "communitiveness," the friendly mingling of people from a variety of social classes. An often-quoted phrase from Olmsted's writings about public parks states:

.... We want a ground to which people may easily go after their day's work is done.... seeing, hearing, and feeling nothing of the bustle and jar of the streets.... We want the greatest possible contrast with the streets and the shops and the rooms of the town.... We want, especially, the greatest possible contrast with the restraining and confining conditions of the town, those conditions which compel us to walk circumspectly, watchfully, jealously, which compel us to look closely upon others without sympathy....

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Under his influence, landscape design, especially park design, took on social aims; land came to be arranged not only for scenic effect but also to promote the health, comfort, and wellbeing of everyone who used it.

Frederick Law Olmsted's designs were pastoral and picturesque, as spontaneous and inevitable as the natural landscape. More than any other landscape designer of his era he was able to promote a sense of tranquillity through the consistent application of the principles of subordination and separation. Subordination (of individual elements to overall design) is found in his parks, where structures merge into the landscape, and walks and drives flow through it with such gentle grades and curves that moving along them requires minimal attention. Separation (of conflicting uses) is found in his park systems, where large parks designed for the enjoyment of scenery are supplemented by smaller recreational areas for other activities, and where pedestrian traffic is separated from vehicles. Other important design principles he espoused are as follows:

- Scenery need not be spectacular, but should have a pleasing, simple, rural aspect. Extended views across water are especially calming. Within a limited area, sinuous curves can be used to provide fresh views of central open spaces from several points.
- Promenades and scenic overlooks are ideal for restorative non-exertive recreation and the enjoyment of scenery.
- Trees and shrubs can effectively shut out city sights and sounds, and separate areas of passive and active recreation.
- Plantings should be mostly of native materials.
- Any necessary buildings should be as inconspicuous as possible.

Completed at the end of F. L. Olmsted's career, the Boston park system is one of his boldest and most complex undertakings, perhaps his most influential design. It is the country's most comprehensive park system of the era.

After the highly publicized success of Central Park, Boston made improvements to its own Public Gardens in 1859 and 1860, and began seeking suitable land for additional public parks. Several plans were put forth over a period of years. Olmsted's involvement (informally beginning in 1870, formally in 1878) was a major factor in his decision to move his home and office from New York to the Boston suburb of Brookline in 1883.

Boston's overall open space was intended to provide two types of parks: scenic outer rural parks for the recreation of the entire city, and inner urban parks with waterfronts on the harbor and rivers for daily relief of citizens in the most crowded areas. The outer, or continuous, part of the system, which came to be known as the "Emerald Necklace," comprised five miles of linked parks, ponds, and parkways running from the already established Boston Common and Commonwealth Avenue

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Mall to the Back Bay Fens, then along the Muddy River Improvement to Jamaica Pond, the Arnold Arboretum, and Franklin Park.

Olmsted's Neighborhood Parks

In contrast to the pastoral larger parks of the Emerald Necklace, the urban parks were small breathing places to promote public health in tenement neighborhoods. Specifically, Olmsted noted in the Second Report of the Commissioners of the Boston Parks Department,

"The urban parks have been located as near as possible to the present densely occupied parts of the city, for..... sanitary reasons, and also to serve as everyday play-grounds, where the children can exercise with safety, and as resorts for their parents at the close of a busy day."

Charlestown Heights was one of only five such parks designed under Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. for Boston. The others were Charlesbank, the embankment along the Charles River in the West End; Wood Island Park in East Boston; Charlestown Playground, a separate Charlestown park near Sullivan Square; and North End Park, also known as Copps Hill Terraces. Many more were designed by the Olmsted firm in Boston and elsewhere in the first decades of the 20th century.

The most basic requirements F. L. Olmsted, Sr. had for such neighborhood parks were very simple:

Usually.....there is nothing better for the purpose of this class of grounds than a simple open grove, or, on the smaller spaces, a group of forest trees (selected with regard for probable vigor and permanent health under the circumstances) with a walk through or around it, proper provisions against injury and unseemly use, a drinking fountain, and convenient seats out of the lines of passage....

Plans for the five Boston neighborhood parks, however, went significantly farther. They all followed the prototype of Charlesbank - the first playground in the country - although with variations according to the size and topography of the site. They were designed for use by local residents of all ages and included such features as sandboxes, swings, and grassy play areas for small children; outdoor gymnasiums and playing fields for older children and adults (where space permitted); gathering places for families, with walks and sitting areas for passive recreation, strolls, and relaxation. All were sited along river or ocean banks to provide refreshing breezes and distant views, and to incorporate public bathing or swimming, as many tenements lacked private bathing facilities.¹

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¹ Only the beach intended for Charlestown Playground was not built, possibly because Dewey Beach had been built at Charlestown Heights in the meantime.

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Boston (Charlestown), (Suffolk County)
Massachusetts**The Charlestown Neighborhood and Bunker Hill

Charlestown is the second-oldest settlement of the Massachusetts Colony, founded in 1629 by English settlers. Failing to find a source of fresh water there, Governor Winthrop and most of the settlement party relocated to a neighboring peninsula in 1630, establishing the town of Boston.

Though later augmented by substantial landfill operations (see below), Charlestown originated as a small peninsula separated from Boston to the south by a narrow, deep channel, with the Mystic River to the east and the Charles River to the west. It was about one mile from north to south, and about one-half mile wide at the southern tip near Boston; at the north the land narrowed to a pass or "neck" connecting it with the mainland (Fig. 1).

Bunker Hill is one of three prominent hills on this peninsula. It rises gradually from the neck, slopes on the north and east toward the Mystic River, and connects by a ridge on the south with Breed's Hill, then Moulton's Point at the southeast corner (Fig. 2). The eastern portions of the hills separated the densest settlement on the south and west from the clay pits that stretched along the Mystic River, and were initially used chiefly for hay and pasturing; in the custom of the times, Bunker Hill derives its name from the wealthy emigrant George Bunker, who arrived in 1634 and had a large pasture running over the summit. The Battle of Bunker Hill, however, actually took place on Breed's Hill where the Bunker Hill Monument stands today.

Charlestown's economic prosperity resulted from its location. As early as the first decade of settlement, the natural deep water port created by the confluence of the Charles and Mystic Rivers attracted several wharves and a shipyard to the eastern shoreline. After the Revolutionary War, further transportation developments solidified Charlestown's position as a major port. The peninsula became linked to its surrounding towns by new bridges (to Boston in 1786, Chelsea in 1802, and Cambridge in 1810), and to the interior Merrimack River Valley in 1803 by the opening of the 27-mile-long Middlesex Canal which terminated at the neck. Maritime activity was clustered along the numerous wharves which lined the harbor, eventually producing the industrial ring of shipping (and later rail) development around Charlestown's core residential community that survives to this day.

The creation of additional land for commercial uses began in the mid-1840s with the filling of the Middlesex Canal, which had been rendered obsolete by the advent of rail transportation. Then the Charles River tidal basin was filled in the 1870s to facilitate railroad traffic on the three separate rail lines which had been reaching Charlestown's wharves via causeways. Warehouses, breweries, factories, and railyards were constructed on landfill stretching along the southern and western shores to the neck.

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A similar transformation had begun on the northern shore when Medford Street was laid out in the 1830s. Medford Street skirted the hill along the Mystic River, beginning at the neck beside a beach at the base of Bunker Hill (now Sullivan Square). This waterfront became Charlestown's premier shipping center when the Charles River basin became landlocked through filling in the 1870s as noted above. Fringe commercial activities encircled residential development of Bunker Hill with a complex of rail yards and warehouses on the Mystic River. In 1873 the Mystic Docks were developed by the Boston and Lowell Railroad between Medford Street and the river. Transferred to the Boston & Maine in 1887, these docks became the center of Boston's export timber trade and were the receiving point for great quantities of coal used and distributed by the railroad. Other new industries were a foundry, bakery, and furniture factories. Facilities for manufacturing black lead (graphite) for stove polish, shoe blacking and shoemakers wax stood at the foot of N. Mead Street in 1885.

The development of all these port, transportation, and manufacturing facilities in Charlestown led to dramatic increases in population density which, in turn, spurred multi-family tenement development. Between 1830 and 1870 the population tripled, reaching 28,000 in 1870. It peaked at 41,400 in 1910. Charlestown was annexed by the City of Boston in 1873.

Many working-class residents, including the mushrooming immigrant population in both Charlestown and Boston, were especially attracted to Charlestown by the availability of public transportation. As early as 1860 a street railroad into Boston operated on Bunker Hill and other streets; in 1901 it was converted to electricity at the same time that an elevated railroad was built over Main Street from Boston to Sullivan Square. By the turn of the century Charlestown had become 90% Irish in nationality.

In the early 20th century, population growth stagnated but commercial activities continued to expand on the fringes. Landfill activity continued along the northern border. On Medford Street flanking the base of Doherty Playground, the Revere Sugar Refinery was built in 1918 and Schrafft's confectionery plant in 1927.

Today Charlestown covers an area of 1.4 square miles with a population of 14,700, about 96% white, representing 2.8% of Boston's population (according to 1990 census statistics). Its population density is 17 people per acre, a little less than the Boston average.

Historic Development of Charlestown Heights and its Remaining Integrity

In 1891 the city acknowledged Charlestown's lack of open space and acquired two sites for a small park and playground: the former Dehon estate on Bunker Hill (later Charlestown Heights), and the nearby Guild Tannery property on Tufts Mill Pond by Sullivan Square (later Charlestown Playground).

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The city first acquired the William Dehon estate in 1876 for non-payment of taxes; the tract was sold to William B. Bacon in 1877, reverting back to city ownership in 1891. The land appears to have been vacant, though surrounded by commercial and residential development on all sides. The atlas of 1875 shows no use, while that of 1885 (Fig. 3) depicts two buildings. The Dehon tract consisted of three parcels totalling 10.5 acres. 3.8 acres sloped from the highest part at Bunker Hill Street down to Medford Street. This comprised the original part of the park known as Charlestown Heights, and the subject of this nomination. Medford Street separated Charlestown Heights from the remaining land which lay on the other side: an additional .5 acre between Medford Street and the Boston & Lowell Railroad track, and 6.2 acres of flats on the Mystic River, which became Dewey Beach (Figs. 4,5). The Dehon tract's varied topography and river view made it an inspired choice for a new neighborhood park. The site (Fig. 6), design intent (Fig. 7), and pavilion structure (Fig.8) were later described as follows by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., writing in 1897 in *Harper's Weekly*:

...Charlestown Heights...is situated on the northern slope of Bunker Hill - the real Bunker Hill, not the spurious one where the battle took place and the monument was built. It reaches from near the crest of the hill to its foot, a distance of about five hundred and fifty feet, dropping down a declivity of about sixty feet. The feature of Charlestown Heights is a grand sweeping view over the marshes of the Mystic, as yet almost untouched, except upon the hither bank, by the growth of the city, to the distant suburbs of Malden and Everett, with the permanently forested hills of the Middlesex Fells in the distance beyond. The design in this case.....takes the peculiar advantage of the location as its controlling motive throughout, and attempts to make the most of it.

At the high end of the ground upon the street is a small graveled plaza, which serves for the games that ordinarily have to go on in the street, and which will serve admirably for a concert grove when the trees get large enough. At the edge of the little plaza the ground drops to a lower level. The upper floor of the house shown on the plan is open but for the posts which support the roof, and stands at a level overlooking the plaza, as well as the lower ground to the north and the broad view beyond. Immediately in front of the building are sand courts for little children, and the basement is recessed to provide a sheltered walk with seats for the mothers. The basement contains also the toilet-rooms, refreshment stand, etc. Before the sand courts a lawn slopes down to a rough boulder parapet and terrace wall overgrown with creepers and other plants, and commanding the same view, with a different foreground. Below this terrace the hill is very steep, and is, in the main, a series of rocky slopes with a rich plant growth, through which a winding path and steps lead down to the street below.

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The pavilion/shelter (from plans of Walker & Kimball fleshing out Olmsted's preliminary design) was heated with coal and lighted by electric lights.

Two pieces of correspondence regarding construction are available. A February 4, 1892 memorandum, apparently responding to architect's plans for the shelter, notes among many other details that the seats for mothers by the sand courts "... should all be divided off every 20 inches by iron arms to prevent loafers lying upon them." Following this, a lengthy letter of April 29 to the Chairman of the Boston Park Commission attempts to dismiss once and for all the persistent suggestion of a local historian that the park design be modified to preserve a larger portion of the highest part of the original surface, in honor of alleged remains from a small, temporary fortification (a "redoubt") built by the British during the Revolutionary War on the site of the present St. Francis de Sales Roman Catholic Church. In this letter (signed only with the firm's name but apparently written either by Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. or, more likely, his nephew and stepson John Charles Olmsted) two important points are emphasized about the park's function and its separation from the encroaching urban landscape. First, the central lawn "both as a play-ground for little children and as a beautiful foreground to the fine distant view, is the most important feature of the plan." And second, it was intended that trees planted along the west border (now St. Martin Street), screen the park from "ugly, three-story, wooden tenement houses, with flat roofs upon which clothes are hung out to dry," as well as "frame in and form an agreeable foreground for the beautiful and unobstructed view to the north over the Mystic River."

Charlestown Heights was constructed according to plan; only the intended bridge across Medford Street was not built. Such a bridge was used to span St. Martin Street when it was constructed in 1896, while at Medford Street an underpass to what became Dewey Beach was built in 1898.

Substantial regrading of the hilly site was needed to flatten the upper promenade and central play areas. Surplus stone found in the excavation and not used in the walls supporting the terrace below the overlook was broken up and deposited on the walks for surfacing. Granite retaining walls were built on the three sloping sides, and steps were constructed of granite with puddingstone cheek walls. Graceful iron-framed wooden seats with iron armrests were placed at the overlook and on the curving path below it (Photo 8). Lamp-posts were installed for electric lighting. The park opened in 1895.

Subsequent alterations have focused on expanding the active recreational facilities in the central area, and the structures to serve them, while making the plaza/promenade area more formal as its trees matured. These alterations are discussed in detail below for each of the three sections, along

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with comments as to the remaining integrity of each section, followed by a discussion of the integrity of those aspects which apply in large part to the park as a whole, namely its location, setting, and association.

Changes in the promenade began in 1901 with the installation of an iron fence (planned since 1896) on each side of the pavilion; then or later (by 1932) seats were placed along it. In 1909 a similar iron picket fence was constructed along Bunker Hill Street, probably to protect the growing trees, or in connection with electrification of the street railway (both fence and railway are prominent features of Photo 11). By 1932 the pavilion was demolished (see discussion below). The promenade was made more formal in 1932, possibly triggered by ongoing maturation of the trees, which would have prohibited active games in this area, (Fig. 10). The wide gravel surface was replaced with concrete walks surrounding two oval grassy beds with a circular bed and flagpole between them. The original allee was supplemented by additional trees (of unspecified species) in pits inserted at intervals inside and outside the concrete walks. The iron fencing and benches previously introduced were now removed; new benches were installed facing the new grass beds inside the newly paved walks. New granite steps leading down to the grassy play area were inserted on centerline with the pavilion. Similar alterations were made in 1977 (Fig. 13): new concrete curbing and iron fencing were installed at the north end, the flagpole was removed, a new base was made for the DAR monument (see description, p. 4), the present precast concrete and wood benches were introduced, and 14 Norway maple trees were planted outside the concrete walk.

A comparison of the historic plan (Fig. 7) with the current plan (Fig. 14) (not considering the pavilion, which is discussed below) shows continuing integrity of design intent: it fulfills Olmsted's vision of a tree-shaded promenade with a granite fountain at the south end as focal point. The granite ashlar wall surrounding the fountain (both wall and fountain were built by Walker & Kimball, architects of the pavilion) may be the same material used in the pavilion. The later additions of concrete paths and benches are consistent with Olmsted's intent for a quiet resting place shaded by mature trees. Integrity of materials is retained in the fountain, but not the paving, where concrete and grass replaced gravel. Integrity of feeling is definitely conveyed in this quiet, shady area (Photo 14), which continues to be a restful "resort for [the children's] parents at the close of a busy day."

The central play area, the "most important feature of the plan," has seen the greatest amount of change, reflecting the 100-year evolution of needs and trends in facilities for active recreation. It was built as a grassy lawn for little children's play, with sand courts in front of the pavilion housing convenient seats for their mothers. The play area was protected with wooden post-and-rope fencing and encircled by a walk of gravel or macadam (Photos 3 and 4). At its farthest edge was a dramatic wide overlook built on stone terraces with a boulder parapet. Olmsted furnished this area with curving seats for resting and admiring the view over the Mystic River below (Photos 5-7).

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The play facilities were supplemented by construction of Dewey Beach across Medford Street in 1898, and a bathhouse in 1912 (Photo 10). (The relationship of the beach and bathhouse to Medford Street and the main park area can be seen in Fig. 11, a plan for WPA work undertaken in 1938.) By 1932 a swing shelter was added to the lawn, the pavilion at the upper promenade was demolished, and a new field house built at the edge of the grass near the overlook (Fig. 9). The field house appears to have redirected the park user's attention at this key spot into the play area rather than out of it. It is unclear at what time after this seats were removed from the overlook. In 1945 the wading pool was built, with the swimming pool complex following in 1948-49 (Fig. 12), and the field house was demolished (quite likely its functions overlapped with those of the new bathhouse). The construction of the pool complex is the most significant (and irreversible) change in the central play area. Though it continues the active play function intended in this space, it also began the process of diminishing, squaring off, and paving over the naturalistically-styled lawn area. Additional active recreation facilities were introduced: in 1968 the concrete shade shelter, in 1972 the tot lot for small children, in 1975 the basketball courts, in 1987 more play equipment for small children, and in 1995 a new splash/wading pool. The swimming pool complex underwent major renovations completed in 1989, including extensive plumbing changes and the installation of new toilets and showers. No changes were made to either the interior or the exterior walls.

A comparison of historic Photos 4, 5, and 6 with current Photos 16, 20, and 21, respectively, demonstrates the effect of the exchange of the original pavilion and picturesque lawn for the hard-surfaced games of the 20th century. The concrete shade shelter and splash pool do not have the traditional craftsmanship of Olmsted's structures. Thus this section of the park has lost its integrity of materials, workmanship, and feeling, but nevertheless retains all the functional aspects of its design and intent as an active play space.

In contrast, the informal lower hillside has experienced remarkably little change, as is evident from a comparison of historic Photos 8 and 9 with current Photos 23 and 24. It was designed to be "a series of rocky slopes with a rich plant growth, through which a winding path and steps lead down to the street below," with strategically placed benches for rest and enjoyment of the view. While the area suffers from neglect and vandalism, the only intentional changes are replacement of the gravel or macadam surface with bituminous concrete, and removal of the benches. The original path system is unchanged, as are its granite steps with puddingstone cheek walls (some need repair and replacement). As to plantings, only a few large perimeter trees appear to remain from the originals, and there are fewer large shrubs and more meadow and overgrown brush than intended. However, with proper maintenance this lower portion of the park can demonstrate integrity of design, most materials, workmanship, and feeling.

In summary, all three sections retain substantial integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling. The park entity as a whole retains integrity of location, setting, and association. Its present size of 3.8 acres is the same as the original size of Charlestown Heights. (As a consequence of

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Dewey Beach becoming polluted, it was replaced by the pool in the central play space, and sold to industrial interests.) The present area is the only portion to which the original Olmsted design applied. As to setting, the character of the neighborhood continues to be largely multi-family residential with fringe commercial and industrial development, as can be seen by comparison of Bunker Hill Street in the background of historic Photo 1 with its virtually identical present aspect in Photo 12, and St. Martin Street in historic Photo 5 with the very similar present Photos 20 and 13. Likewise the 1885 atlas (Fig. 3) and the 1995 assessor's map (Fig. 15) show the same type of densely populated area. Though a comparison of historic Photo 7 with present Photo 21 shows the "grand sweeping view of the marshes" diminished through landfill and industrial development, the setting was clearly industrial even in Olmsted's time. The association with the work of F. L. Olmsted & Co. under the direction of Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. remains evident in the remaining clarity of design.

Significance of Charlestown Heights as an Olmsted-Designed Neighborhood Park

For his neighborhood parks, Olmsted had alerted the Park Commissioners to watch for a particular type of urban site:

... topographical circumstances may compel spaces unsuitable for building to be left between streets, which it will be economical to use for such grounds..... It is most desirable to make use of any local circumstance of the slightest dignity of character to supply a centre of interest for such grounds..... for instance, in a natural feature, as a notable rock, or in a historical feature, as the site of an old fort.....or simply in a point of vantage for a view, as a prospect down the harbor.

The former William Dehon estate on Bunker Hill overlooking the Mystic River, and the park Olmsted designed for it, Charlestown Heights, is an outstanding example of both the siting and design Olmsted envisioned.

The most important feature of the site is its location in a densely populated neighborhood overlooking the river. The steep hillside had thus far been too difficult for development, yet could provide a beautiful view in an historic location.

As to design, Olmsted's plan made the most of the varied topography which, with substantial regrading, permitted him to include separate areas for active and passive recreation linked by gracefully curving walks and the trademark rustic stone steps and puddingstone boulders found in his larger parks. He was able to incorporate most of the features of the Charlesbank ideal: sandcourts and a grassy play area for young children, a graveled mall for street games (a concert grove after the trees matured), and picturesque areas for walking and sitting. The small site was inadequate for ball fields and outdoor gymnastic grounds, which were relegated to Charlestown

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Playground. From the design principles discussed above, Olmsted incorporated an extended view across water, walks winding around a central open space, promenades, a scenic overlook, perimeter trees and shrubs to provide visual separation from the surrounding neighborhood, and a rustic building intended to be subordinated to the landscape.

Today, Charlestown Heights is significant because it retains more of its original design and feeling than any of the others among the five neighborhood parks. The view is not as refreshing because of increasing industrialization along Medford Street and beyond, and much of the park is overgrown and suffers from deferred maintenance. Nevertheless, beneath the somewhat derelict appearance, much of its charm and the originally-envisioned design and use remain intact, albeit changed to meet modern conditions and recreational needs. The upper promenade has matured into the shady oasis Olmsted envisioned. While the steep hillside has lost the focus of the planting plan that Olmsted had in mind, it can be reclaimed with proper planting and maintenance. The central play area continues to function as an active play area as planned.

The other four parks have been more severely altered or destroyed. Charlesbank was modified substantially through landfill and street widening, the Olmsted design obliterated by a Metropolitan District Commission swimming pool and athletic field. Wood Island is under a Logan Airport runway. Charlestown Playground is intact but was scaled back dramatically from the Olmsted design and is devoted entirely to ballfields. At North End Park, only a small portion remains of the historic design and feeling.²

Significance of Charlestown Heights as City Government's Response to Recreational Needs of an Increasingly Dense Population

Charlestown Heights/Doherty Playground is also significant as an example of the City of Boston's solutions to public recreational needs in both the 19th and 20th centuries. Being one of the areas of earliest settlement, Charlestown had become overcrowded crowded by the time planning began for

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² Interestingly, this park has many similarities to Charlestown Heights. Also a difficult site, it is on a steep hill on the Boston side of the Boston Harbor, directly opposite the Charlestown Navy Yard and the Bunker Hill Monument, and it is from this spot that British troops fired on Charlestown in the historic Battle of Bunker Hill. Likewise it is in a crowded residential and commercial area adjacent to an historic burial ground, so dense that the park could accommodate only quiet resting places on steep stone terraces on the hillside along the street, plus a beach with bathhouses and promenade piers across the street. Today only the stone terraces survive. The beach, polluted like the Mystic River, was replaced by a large ball field and outdoor swimming pool (the Mirabella Pool built by the George Robert White Fund shortly after Clougherty Pool).

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the Boston park system in the 1870s. Along with the other long-settled Boston neighborhoods, it had by far the largest average number of inhabitants per acre (56, compared to the city average of 15). Ironically, this very density meant no park could be accommodated there initially. As the Second Report of the Board of Commissioners of the Department of Parks for the City of Boston, 1876 noted:

The Commissioners regret that they are unable to recommend in this report any location for a park within the limits of the Charlestown district. No unoccupied land of sufficient area and appropriate character for the purpose exists. The best provision that can be made for the accommodations of its citizens, at the present time, is to extend the Charles-river Embankment [Charlesbank].....to enable them to reach the general system of parks in the pleasantest and most direct way.

The community persisted in petitioning for recreation areas of some sort, however, as reported by the Commissioners in 1889:

....in view of the rapidly increasing population of the Charlestown district, and the entire absence of any public park or playground in its limits, the Board of Park Commissioners be requested to consider the expediency of acquiring or purchasing the whole or parts of certain lands herein specified.....

until the sites for Charlestown Heights and Charlestown Playground were finally taken for parks in 1891.

In addition to providing recreational space, the city also made available instruction in constructive recreational activity and general hygiene. Supervised "kindergarten" classes were held at Charlestown Heights beginning in 1895 as an extension of work being done at Charlesbank by reformer Kate Gannett Wells and the Massachusetts Emergency and Hygiene Association. This organization sought to instill better health practices among low income families, and toward that end ran Charlesbank's gymnasium for women and children, where they provided free gymnastic instruction, child care, and children's crafts.

Land for a park was not the only recreational need in Charlestown; there were also no facilities for beach bathing. Olmsted's plan for Charlestown Heights makes no mention of the small lot and six acres of river flats across Medford Street that made up the remaining two parcels of the former Dehon estate. However, his plan for Charlestown Playground, to be built on similar flats where a beach had existed historically, did call for a variety of active recreational facilities including a riverfront promenade and bathhouses. Charlestown Playground was endlessly delayed in construction and finally built with nothing but ballfields, whereas in the meantime, in 1898 (after

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Olmsted's retirement) Dewey Beach was constructed on the flats at Charlestown Heights (and in 1912 a bathhouse was added).

City government's continuing responses to evolving needs of the community in the 20th century are directly related to the "playground movement" and included in the discussion below.

Recreation Facilities at Charlestown Heights Within the Context of the Playground Movement

Both the initial design and, especially, subsequent changes in Charlestown Heights' recreational facilities are representative of the playground movement which spread across the country from the 1890s through the first half of the 20th century. The movement was characterized by the development of walk-to parks in neighborhoods, relatively small in scale, and relatively structured in terms of active recreational facilities. Olmsted's park at Charlesbank provided a model for parks in many other cities as well as Boston, and a large number of them were designed by Olmsted Brothers. These parks were initially equipped with such features as gymnasiums, sand courts, and running tracks. By the 1930s and 1940s when baseball, football, basketball, and swimming were immensely popular, large-scale facilities ballfields and swimming pools were common as well.

In Boston the movement was led by Mayor Josiah Quincy who took office in 1896. While supporting the recreational facilities in Olmsted's parks, he sharpened the focus on active recreation, especially ball playing and other competitive sports for boys over age 10, which prior to this time had taken place largely in vacant lots or the street. In 1898 Quincy initiated legislation for a system of playgrounds, at least one in every ward of the city; by 1932 there were 41. At sites unconnected with parks, the Massachusetts Emergency and Hygiene Association's tot lots with sand courts and play equipment for little children continued to flourish and were ultimately absorbed by the schools. In 1942, responding to a new focus on overall city planning, the City Planning Board prepared a master plan which included recreational facilities. In 1945, Mayor Maurice Tobin appointed the first Board of Recreation to study the recreational needs of the city in cooperation with the Planning Board.

In 1946 the Planning Board published a playground study that examined the extent to which children were served by playgrounds in various districts of the city. The study showed that 37% of children in Charlestown between the ages of six and 15 were not served by playgrounds. Plans for what was to become the Paul Clougherty Pool complex, urgently advocated by Charlestown's political representatives to replace polluted Dewey Beach, appear to have been a direct result of this study.

Clougherty Pool was built by the George Robert White Fund, a city-administered permanent charitable trust fund established in 1919, whose income is to be used for creating works of public utility and beauty for the use and enjoyment of inhabitants of the City of Boston. White Fund projects for the most part comprise community health centers and recreation facilities; they also

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built the (Paul Revere) North End Prado and Schoolboys Stadium in Franklin Park. Clougherty Pool was the first pool built by the White Fund. A few years later they built the Mirabella Pool in the North End Park, and in 1995 built another as part of a new youth development center in Dorchester.

The changes in Doherty Playground to incorporate more active reaction facilities for children of all ages exemplify the playground movement. By 1932 swings had been added to the central lawn, in the 1940s the wading pool and swimming pool complex. In the late 1960s and 1970s the basketball courts and new children's playground features were added. Though these facilities have dramatically changed the character of the original simple central lawn, they are consistent with the active functions Olmsted planned for this space, and reflect evolving nationwide recreational trends.

Archaeological Significance

No prehistoric sites are documented on the Charlestown Heights or along the Mystic River in the immediate vicinity. Prehistoric sites in this area could be very important in providing information on subsistence/settlement patterns in this coastal and riverine environment and in contributing data for understanding the cultural, economic and social systems of these people. Information relating to the prehistoric environmental reconstruction of the area would also be significant.

A moderate potential exists for the location of historical archaeological remains. The Contact Period shoreline of Boston is documented as following Medford Street and is significant to the historical environmental reconstruction of the area. No archaeological evidence exists for the development of the area prior to 1885. The southern half of the parcel was significantly altered during the construction of the Olmsted park between 1891 and 1895. The extensive regrading process may have destroyed any cultural remains, both prehistoric and historical archaeological sites. Any historical archaeological remains located on this parcel would contribute information on the use of this area as a park.

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Dehon Estate to City of Boston on October 23, 1876 for \$362.65. 25,480 feet of land and 306, 995 feet of flats in the rear of the northeasterly side of Medford Street. Recorded November 3, 1876 Suffolk County Registry of Deeds, vol 1352, p 117.

City of Boston to William B. Bacon on January 12, 1877 for \$1150.85. 165,353 feet of land on Bunker Hill Street to corner of Quincy Street and extending through to Medford Street. Recorded February 12, 1877 Suffolk County Registry of Deeds, vol 1364, p 207.

City of Boston to William B. Bacon on January 12, 1877 for \$374.74. 25,480 feet of land and 306, 995 feet of flats in the rear of the northeasterly side of Medford Street. Recorded February 12, 1877 Suffolk County Registry of Deeds, vol 1364, p 208.

William B. Bacon and William P. Blake to City of Boston on July 13, 1891 for \$50,000. Three parcels: 165,262 square feet on Bunker Hill, Quincy & Medford Streets; 20,150 square feet opposite above parcel bounded westerly by Medford Street; and 270,000 square feet of flats bordering on said parcels and in and to the location of the Boston and Lowell Railroad Company. Recorded July 14, 1891 Suffolk County Registry of Deeds, vol 2006, pp 606-608 with attached survey by Garbett & Wood, Surveyors.

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known as Dewey Beach previously conveyed to City of Boston by William B. Bacon and William P. Blake on July 13, 1891 (remainder abuts Dewey Beach, running to Belmont Street). Recorded March 26, 1957 Suffolk County Registry of Deeds, vol 7223, p 500-502.

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 3.8 acres

UTM References:

	<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
1	19	329740	4694180
2	19	329820	4694140
3	19	329740	4693960
4	19	329680	4694040

Verbal Boundary Description:

The nominated area comprises two City of Boston Tax Assessor's parcels in Ward 2: Parcel 1503 (the pool complex of 65,340 square feet owned by the City of Boston - George Robert White Fund), and Parcel 1465 (the remainder of 99,922 square feet, including the splash pool).

Boundary Justification:

The present legal boundaries (the area extending from Medford Street to Bunker Hill Street) encompass one of the three parcels of land taken by the City of Boston for the park. It is the only parcel to which the F. L. Olmsted & Co. design applied. On the others (a small land area plus flats on the Mystic River across Medford Street), the Boston Park Department built Dewey Beach shortly after Olmsted retired and his firm's official connection with the park ended. This beach became polluted in the 1940s, Clougherty Pool was built to replace it in the (Olmsted-designed) central play area of the park, and the beach was sold. The beach area has now been filled and developed as a sugar refinery and no longer retains any historic fabric. The remaining area contains much historic fabric and all the historic functions.

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Maps and Plans

(To track evolving park design most easily, wherever possible plans are oriented with Medford Street at the top and Bunker Hill Street at the bottom, though the lettering is sometimes upside down as a result.)

Fig. 1 Detail from Map of Boston and Environs, 1777, with the Military Works Constructed in Those Places in the Years 1775 and 1776. Henry Pelham

Fig. 2 "A View of Charles Town and the Back Ground, as Far as the Narrow Pass. Taken from the Beacon Hill" (undated; from Frothingham, Richard Jr. *The History of Charlestown, Massachusetts*)

Fig. 3 Atlas of the City of Boston, Charlestown & Brighton Vol 6; 1885

Fig. 4 Survey of Portion of Dehon Estate between Bunker Hill Street and Medford Street; February 20, 1891. Garbett & Wood, Surveyors

Fig. 5 Plan of Dewey Beach (Charlestown Heights North of Medford Street); June 19, 1895. City of Boston Park Department

Fig. 6 Contour Plan of a Portion of the Dehon Estate in Charlestown; May, 1891. City of Boston Park Department (Courtesy: National Park Service Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site)

Fig. 7 General Plan of Charlestown Heights; December 1891. F. L. Olmsted & Co. Landscape Architects (Courtesy: National Park Service Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site)

Fig. 8 Preliminary Plans for Pavilion; August 1891. F. L. Olmsted & Co. Landscape Architects (Courtesy: National Park Service Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site)

Fig. 9 Charlestown Heights Playground, undated plan (before 1932). City of Boston Park Department

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**Charlestown Heights
Boston (Charlestown), (Suffolk County)
Massachusetts**

Section number illus. Page 2

- Fig. 10 Grading and Walks at Charlestown Heights, Charlestown; September 16, 1932. City of Boston Park Department
- Fig. 11 Charlestown Heights & Dewey Beach Proposed WPA Construction; February, 1938. City of Boston Park Department
- Fig. 12 Suggested Location for Proposed Swimming Pool at John J. Doherty Playground, undated plan c1947. City Planning Board
- Fig. 13 Doherty Playground Site Plan & Details (reconstruction of passive areas); August 16, 1977. Shurcliff Merrill & Footit Landscape Architects
- Fig. 14 Doherty Playground (Formerly Charlestown Heights) Existing Conditions Plan; 1993. Walker-Kluesing Design Group Landscape Architects for the Boston Parks and Recreation Department
- Fig. 15 City of Boston Assessor's Plan, Ward 2 Blocks 184-185; 1996

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**Charlestown Heights
Boston (Charlestown), (Suffolk County)
Massachusetts**

Section number photos Page 1

Copies of Historic Photographs

(Photos 1-9 Courtesy of National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, Brookline MA, from records of F. L. Olmsted & Co. Landscape Architects; photographer and location of negatives unknown)

- Photo 1 Bunker Hill Street and promenade, facing southeast; October 18, 1895
- Photo 2 South and west sides of pavilion, and promenade, facing southeast; undated (after 1895)
- Photo 3 North and west sides of pavilion, sand courts and portion of central lawn, facing east; undated (after 1895)
- Photo 4 North and west sides of pavilion and central lawn, with St. Francis de Sales Roman Catholic Church and Bunker Hill Street at rear, facing east; October, 1895
- Photo 5 Central lawn at overlook, with St. Martin Street and Mystic River in the background, facing north; October, 1895
- Photo 6 Overlook with seats, facing east; undated (after 1895)
- Photo 7 Medford Street and Mystic River from near overlook, facing northeast; October 30, 1895
- Photo 8 Path at stone terrace below overlook, with seats, facing southeast; undated (after 1895)
- Photo 9 Northwest corner of park at Medford Street, corner St. Martin Street, facing south; undated (after 1895)
- Photo 10 Bathhouse at Dewey Beach, facing south ; undated (c1912) (Courtesy of Friends of Doherty Park, Inc.; photographer and location of negative unknown)
- Photo 11 Bunker Hill Street at Playground, facing northwest; 1938 (Courtesy, Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities from Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority collection)

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number _____ photos _____ Page 2

**Charlestown Heights
Boston (Charlestown), (Suffolk County)
Massachusetts**

Current Photographs

(all photographed by Elsbeth T. Magnarelli, July, 1995; negatives property of Friends of Doherty Park, Inc.)

- Photo 12 Bunker Hill Street across from Doherty Playground, facing south
- Photo 13 St. Martin Street across from Doherty Playground, facing north
- Photo 14 Promenade with modern concrete and wood seats, facing southeast
- Photo 15 Central play area, facing northeast
- Photo 16 Bathhouse and basketball court, facing south
- Photo 17 Bathhouse facade, facing southwest
- Photo 18 Interior of pool complex, facing southwest
- Photo 19 Interior of pool complex with view of play area and St. Martin Street, facing northwest
- Photo 20 Concrete shelter, facing west
- Photo 21 Parapet at overlook, with view over Mystic River, facing northeast
- Photo 22 Grassy hillside with view of pool and overlook parapet from Medford Street, facing southwest
- Photo 23 Steps and path at terrace below overlook (seats removed), facing southwest
- Photo 24 Northwest corner of park at Medford Street corner St. Martin Street, facing southwest
- Photo 25 Northeast corner of park at Medford Street, with Mobil station, facing southwest

**Charlestown Heights
Boston (Charlestown) (Suffolk Co.) Massachusetts**

Data Sheet

Letters of identification are keyed to 1993 Doherty Playground Resource Map/photograph location map

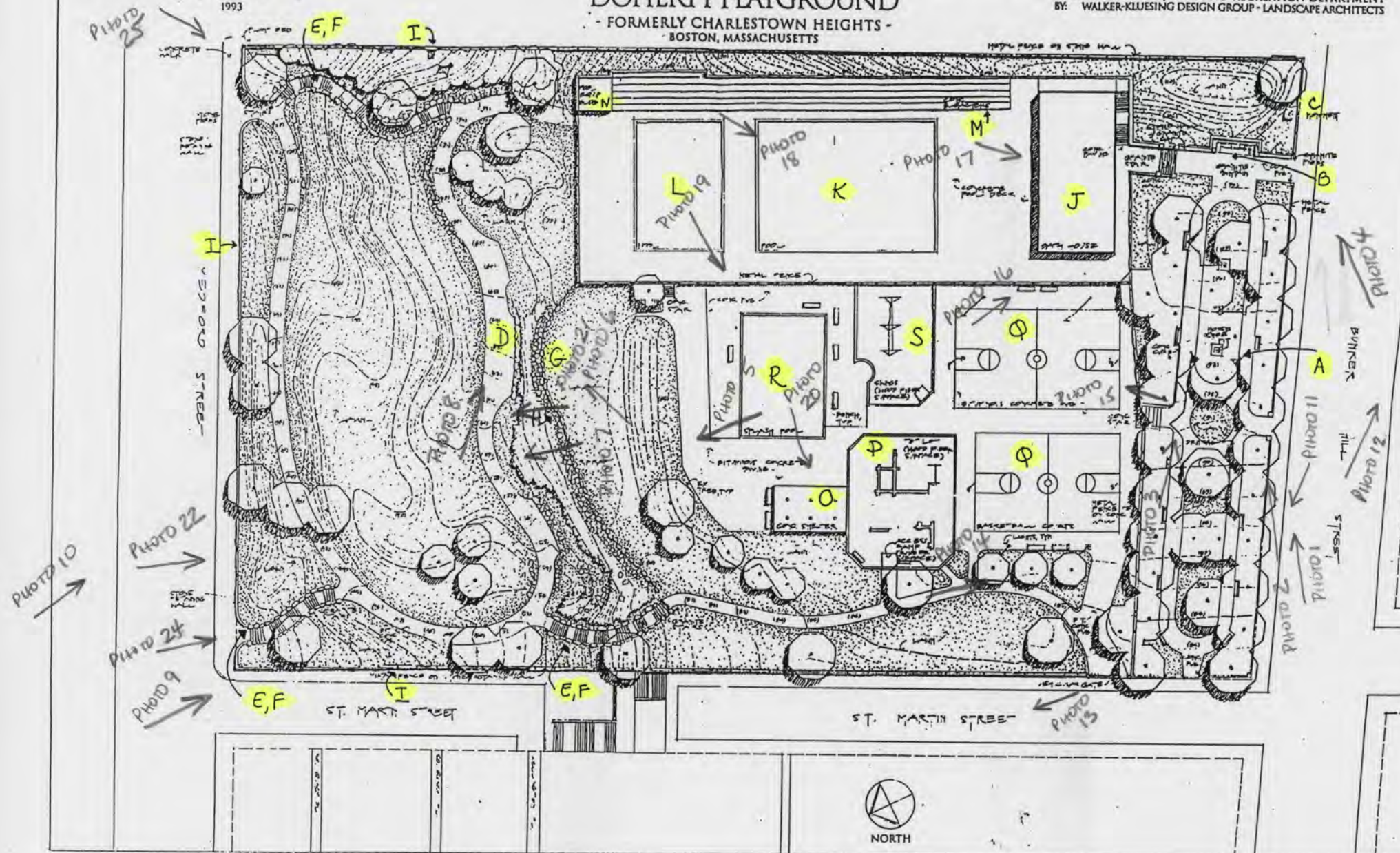
Letter	Name	Type	Material	Resource	Date	Status
A	PROMENADE	WALKWAY	CONCRETE	SITE	1932	C
B	FOUNTAIN	OBJECT	GRANITE/CONCRETE	OBJECT	1892	C
C	D.A.R. MONUMENT	MONUMENT/ MARKER	GRANITE/BRONZE	OBJECT	1926	C
D	PATH SYSTEM	WALKWAY	CONCRETE/EARTH	STRUCTURE	1892	C
E	STEPS (3)	WALKWAY	GRANITE	STRUCTURE	1893, 1932	C
F	CHEEK WALLS (3)	LANDSCAPE	PUDDINGSTONE	STRUCTURE	1893	C
G	OVERLOOK TERRACE	LANDSCAPE	CONCRETE/PUDDINGSTONE	STRUCTURE	1893	C
H	RETAINING WALL	LANDSCAPE	GRANITE	STRUCTURE	1892	C
I	PERIMETER RETAIN- ING WALL	LANDSCAPE	GRANITE	STRUCTURE	1892	C
J	BATHHOUSE	SPORTS FACILITY	CONCRETE	BUILDING	1947	C
K	SWIMMING POOL	SPORTS FACILITY	CONCRETE	STRUCTURE	1945	C

**Charlestown Heights
Boston (Charlestown) (Suffolk Co.) Massachusetts**

Letter	Name	Type	Material	Resource	Date	Status
L	DIVING POOL	SPORTS FACILITY	CONCRETE	STRUCTURE	1948	C
M	BLEACHERS	SPORTS FACILITY	CONCRETE	STRUCTURE	1947	C
N	PUMPHOUSE	SPORTS FACILITY	CONCRETE	BUILDING	1947	C
O	SHELTER	STREET FURNITURE	CONCRETE	STRUCTURE	1968	N/C
P	TOT LOT	RECREATION	ASPHALT/ PLASTIC	STRUCTURE	1972	N/C
Q	BASKETBALL COURTS (2)	SPORTS	ASPHALT	STRUCTURES	1975	N/C
R	SPLASH POOL	RECREATION	CONCRETE	STRUCTURE	1995	N/C
S	SWINGS	RECREATION	PLASTIC/IRON	STRUCTURE	1972	N/C

Totals:	Contributing	Non-Contributing	
	2	0	Buildings
	1	0	Sites
	13	6	Structures
	2	0	Objects
	18	6	Total

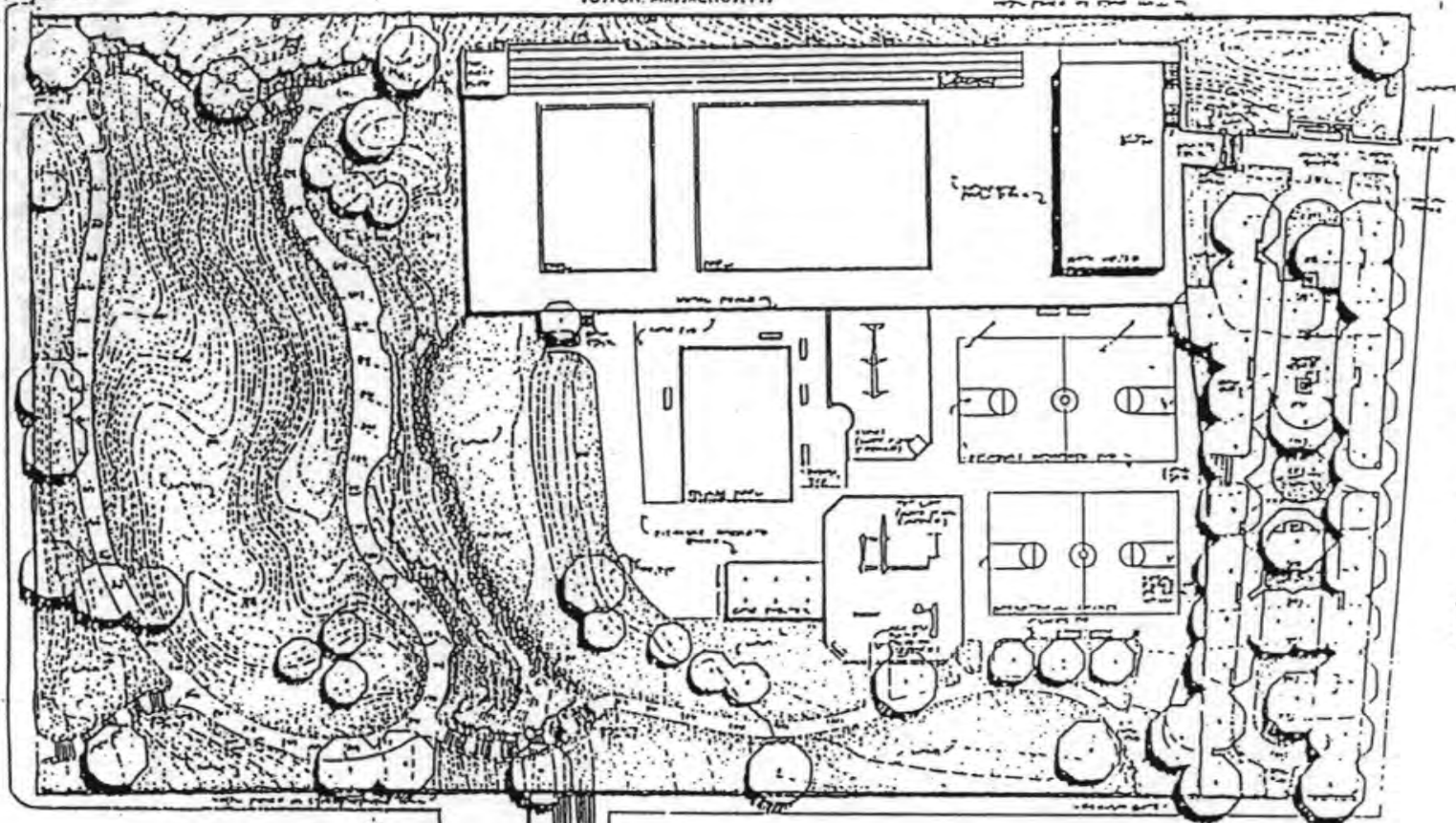
DOHERTY PLAYGROUND
- FORMERLY CHARLESTOWN HEIGHTS -
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS



SCALE 1" = 20'

EXISTING CONDITIONS PLAN DOHERTY PLAYGROUND FORMERLY CHARLESTOWN HEIGHTS BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

FOR THE BOSTON PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
BY WALKER-KLUSING DESIGN GROUP - LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS



ST. MARTIN STREET

ST. MARTIN STREET



NORTH

Fig. 14 Doherty Playground (Formerly Charlestown Heights) Existing Conditions Plan; 1993. Walker-Klusing Design Group Landscape Architects for the Boston Parks and Recreation Department

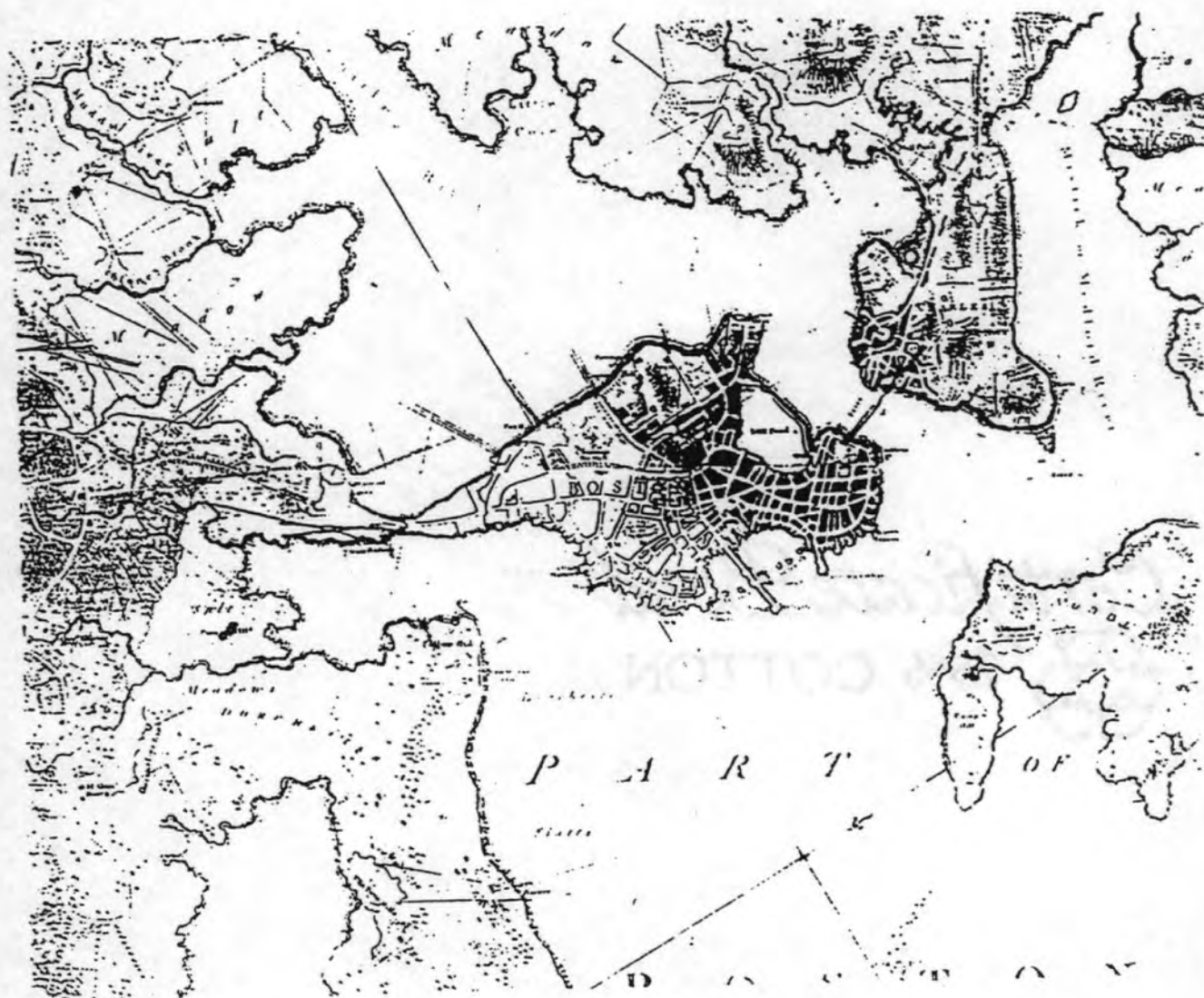


Fig. 1 Detail from Map of Boston and Environs, 1777, with the Military Works Constructed in Those Places in the Years 1775 and 1776. Henry Pelham



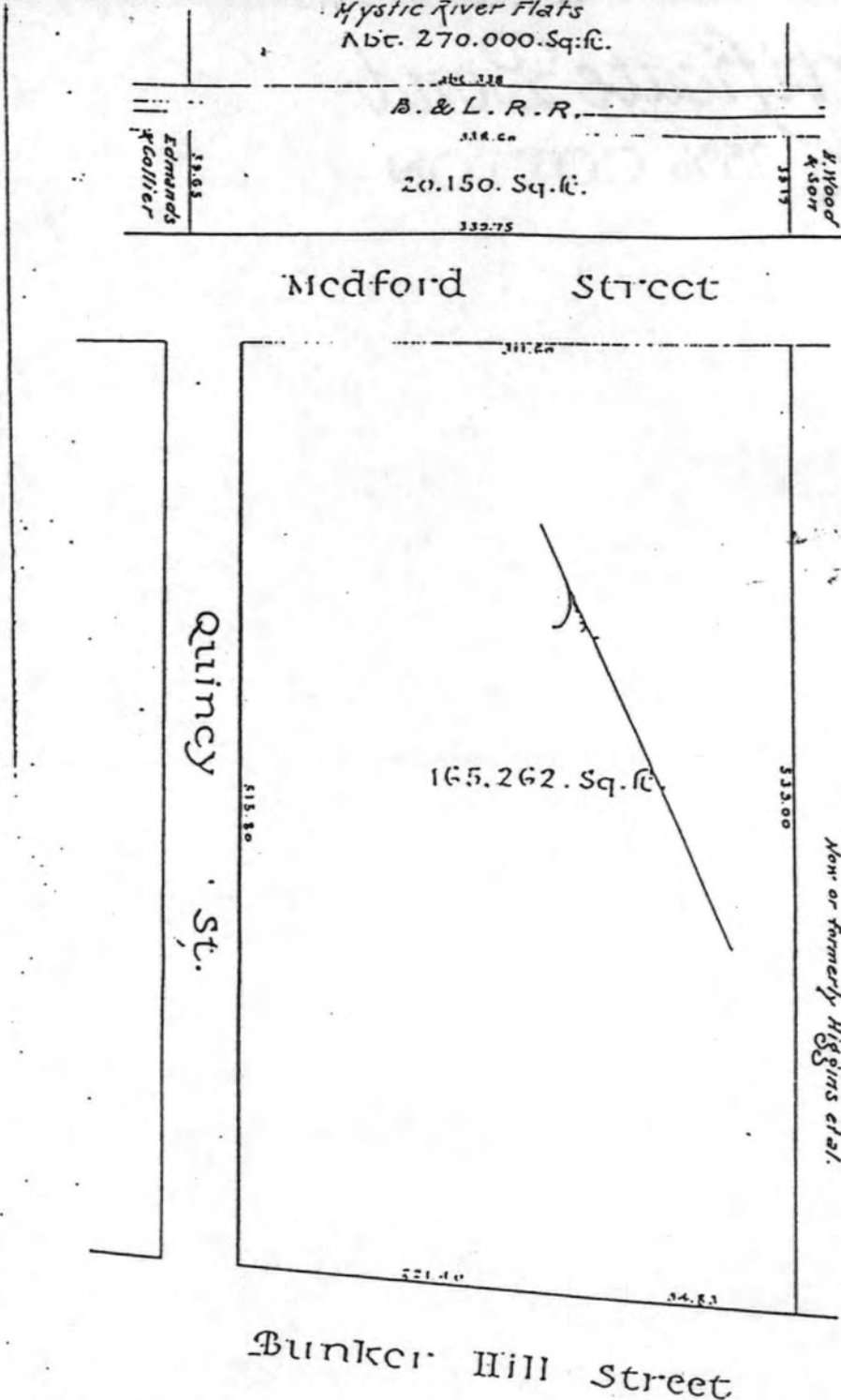
A VIEW OF CHARLES TOWN, AND THE BACK GROUND, AS FAR AS THE NARROW PASS.

Taken from the Beacon Hill.

Fig. 2 'A View of Charles Town and the Back Ground, as Far as the Narrow Pass. Taken from the Beacon Hill'
(undated; from Frothingham, Richard Jr. *The History of Charlestown, Massachusetts*)



Fig. 3 Atlas of the City of Boston, Charlestown & Brighton Vol 6; 1885



original of this Plan was left
over in the Suffolk Registry
office, and is now lost.

Edward J. H.
Henry H. Wilson & Co.

Scale 40 feet to an inch.

Boston, Feb. 20, 1891.

Garbett & Wood, Surveyors

Copied July 16, 1891,

William Jackson, City Engineer.

Fig. 4 Survey of Portion of Dehon Estate between Bunker Hill Street and Medford Street; February 20, 1891.
Garbett & Wood, Surveyors

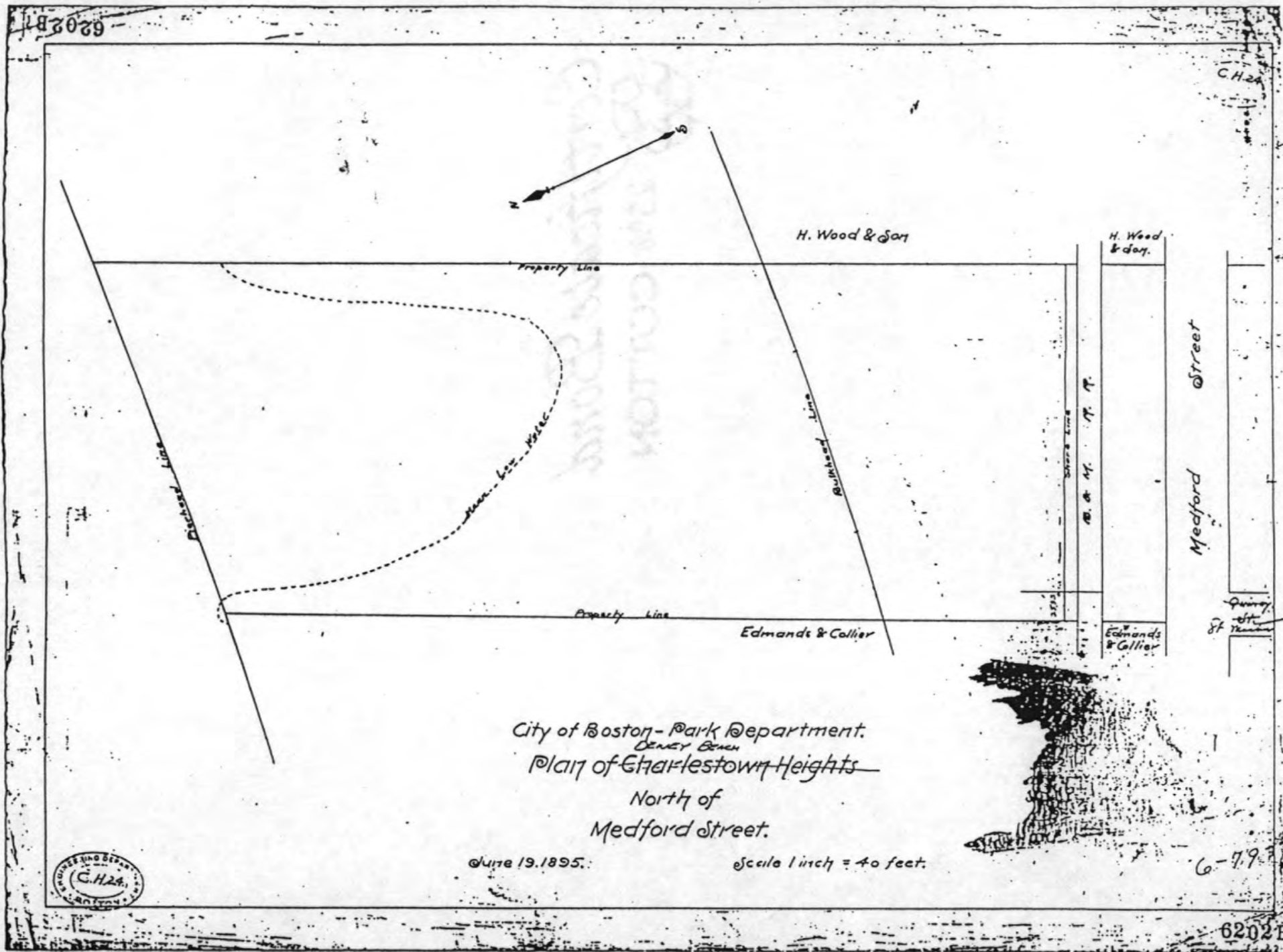


Fig. 5 Plan of Dewey Beach (Charlestown Heights North of Medford Street), June 19, 1895. City of Boston
Park Department

City of Boston - Park Department.
 Contour Plan of a portion of the Dehon Estate in
 Charlestown.
 May, 1891. Scale 1 inch = 20 feet.

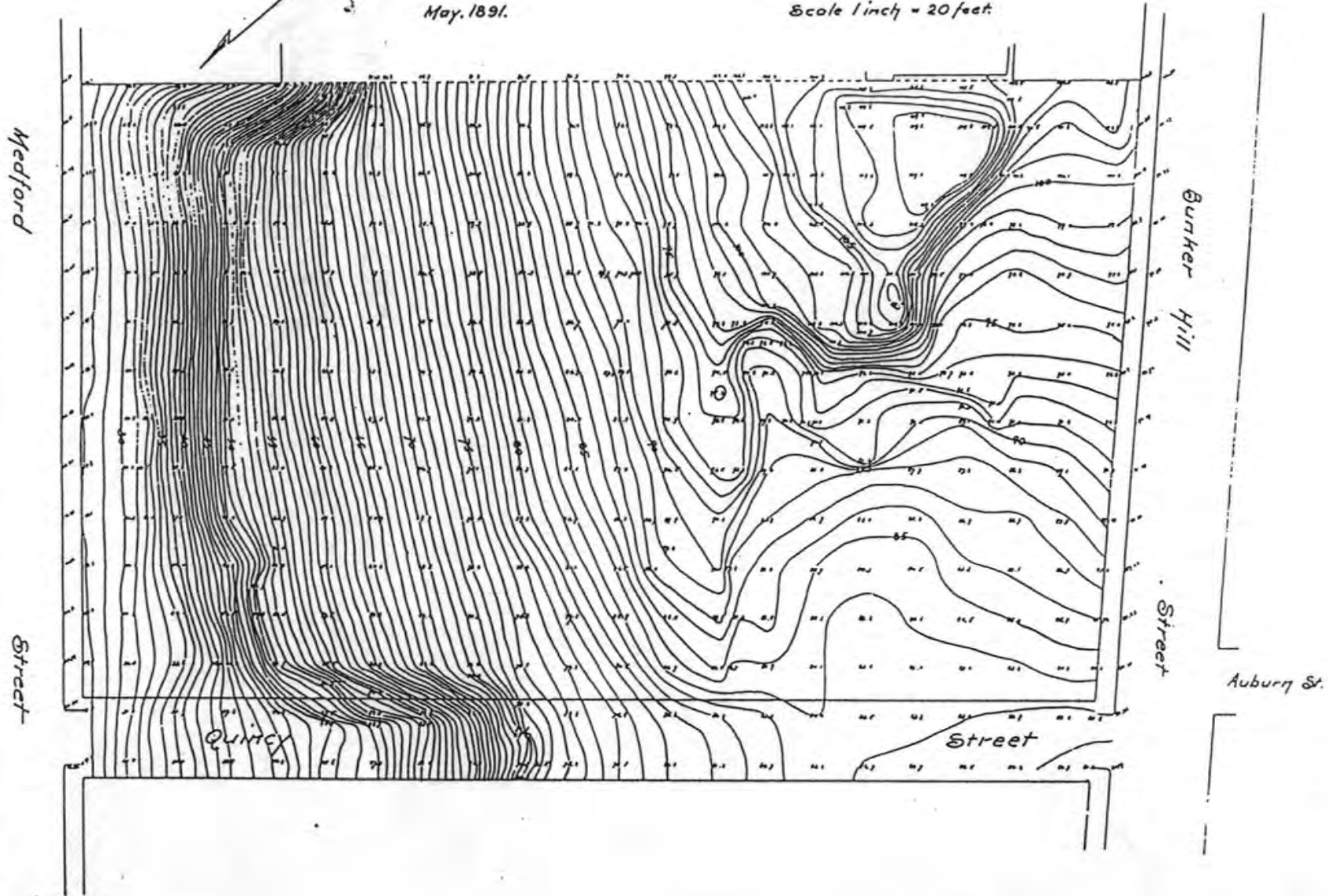
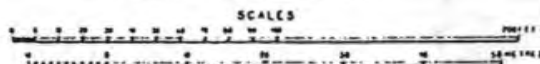


Fig. 6 Contour Plan of a Portion of the Dehon Estate in Charlestown; May, 1891. City of Boston Park Department (Courtesy: National Park Service Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site)

CITY OF BOSTON — PARK DEPARTMENT
GENERAL PLAN OF
CHARLESTOWN HEIGHTS



PARK COMMISSIONERS
THOMAS S. LIVERMORE
FRANCIS A. WALKER, PAUL H. HENDRICKEN

F. L. OLIMSTED AND CO. LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS
DECEMBER 1891
W. JACKSON, CITY ENGINEER
E. W. HOWE, ASSISTANT ENGINEER

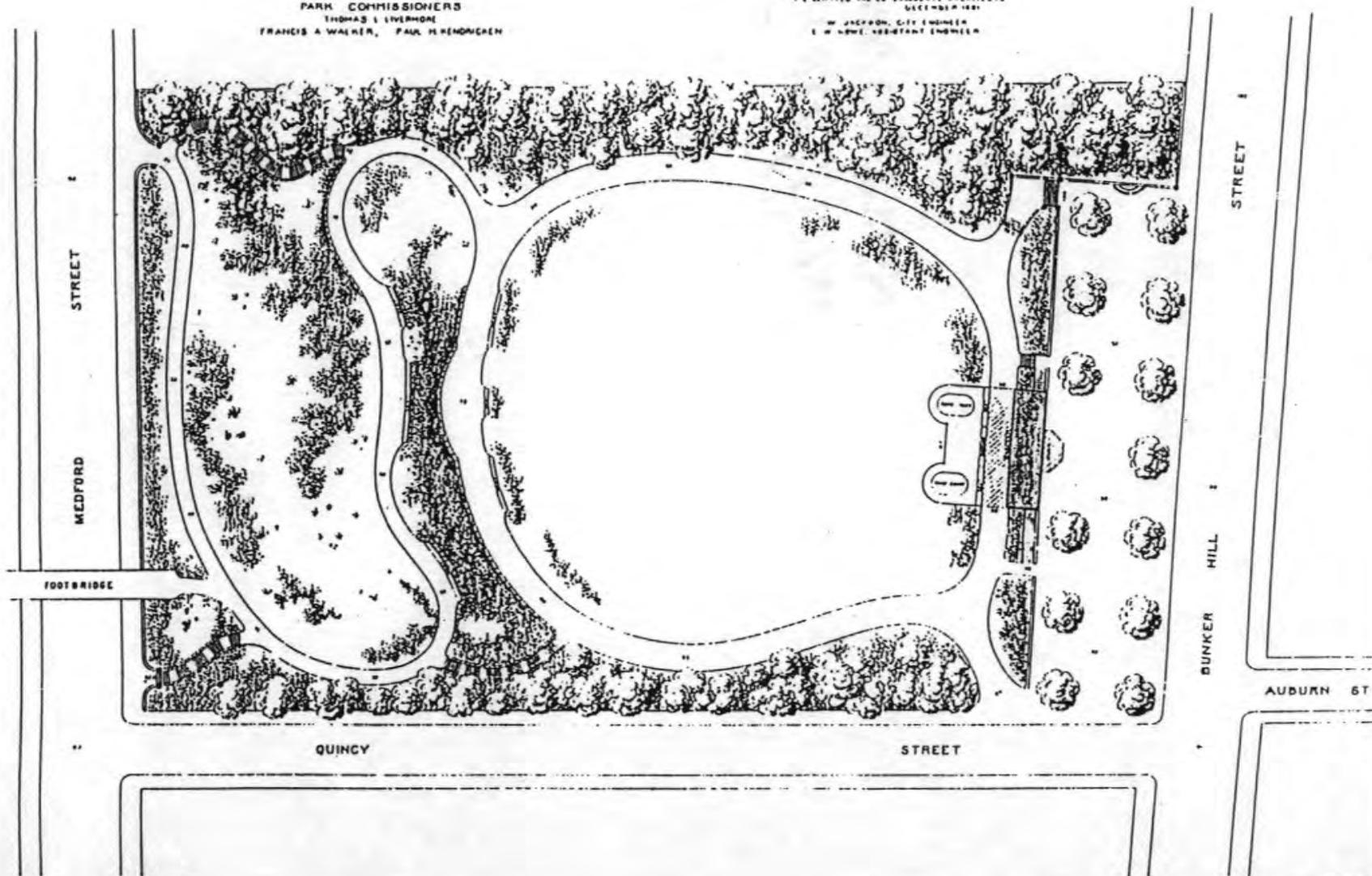


Fig. 7 General Plan of Charlestown Heights; December 1891. F. L. Olmsted & Co. Landscape Architects
(Courtesy: National Park Service Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site)

Fig. 9 Charlestown Heights Playground, undated plan (before 1932). City of Boston Park Department

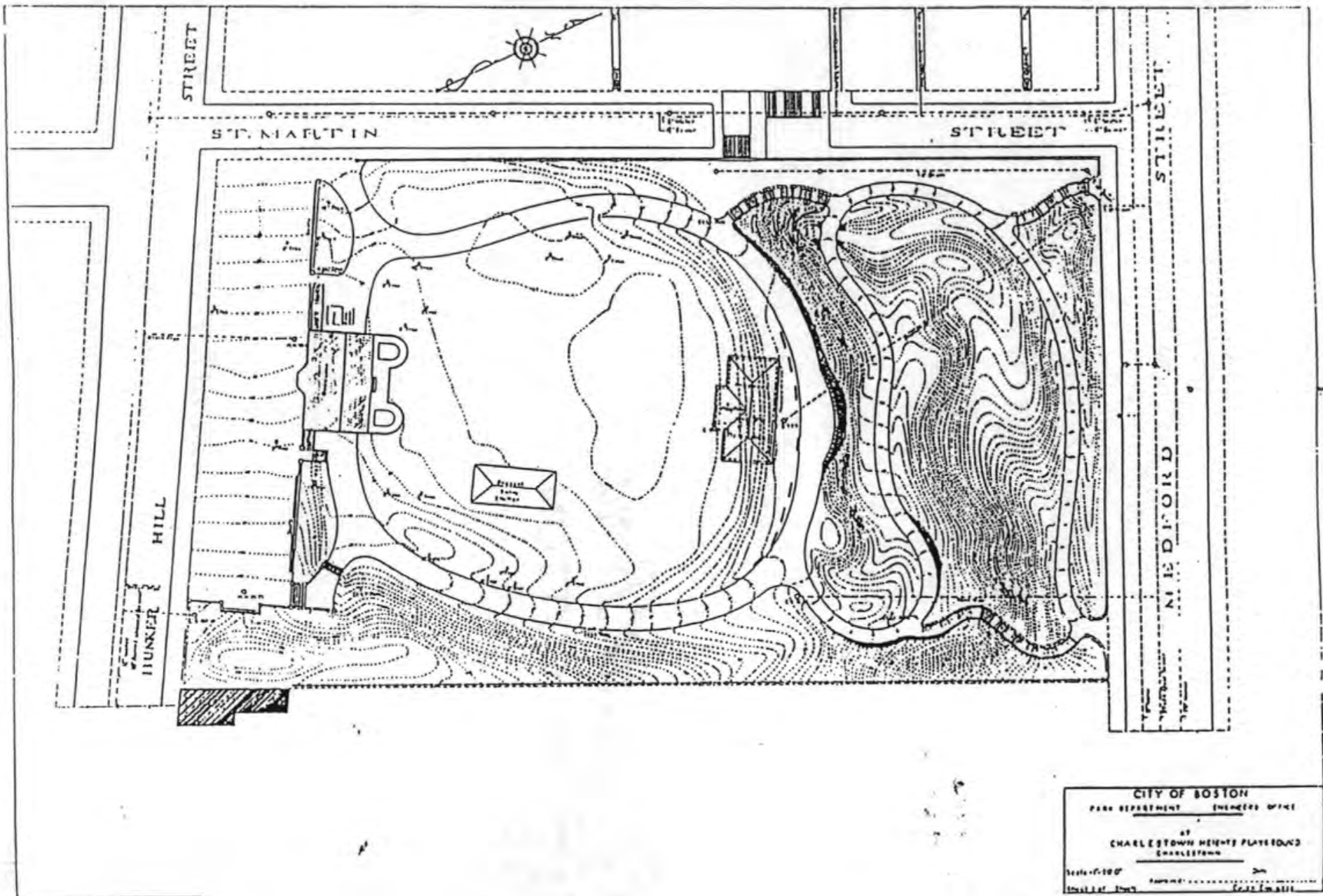


Fig. 10 Grading and Walks at Charlestown Heights, Charlestown; September 16, 1932. City of Boston Park Department

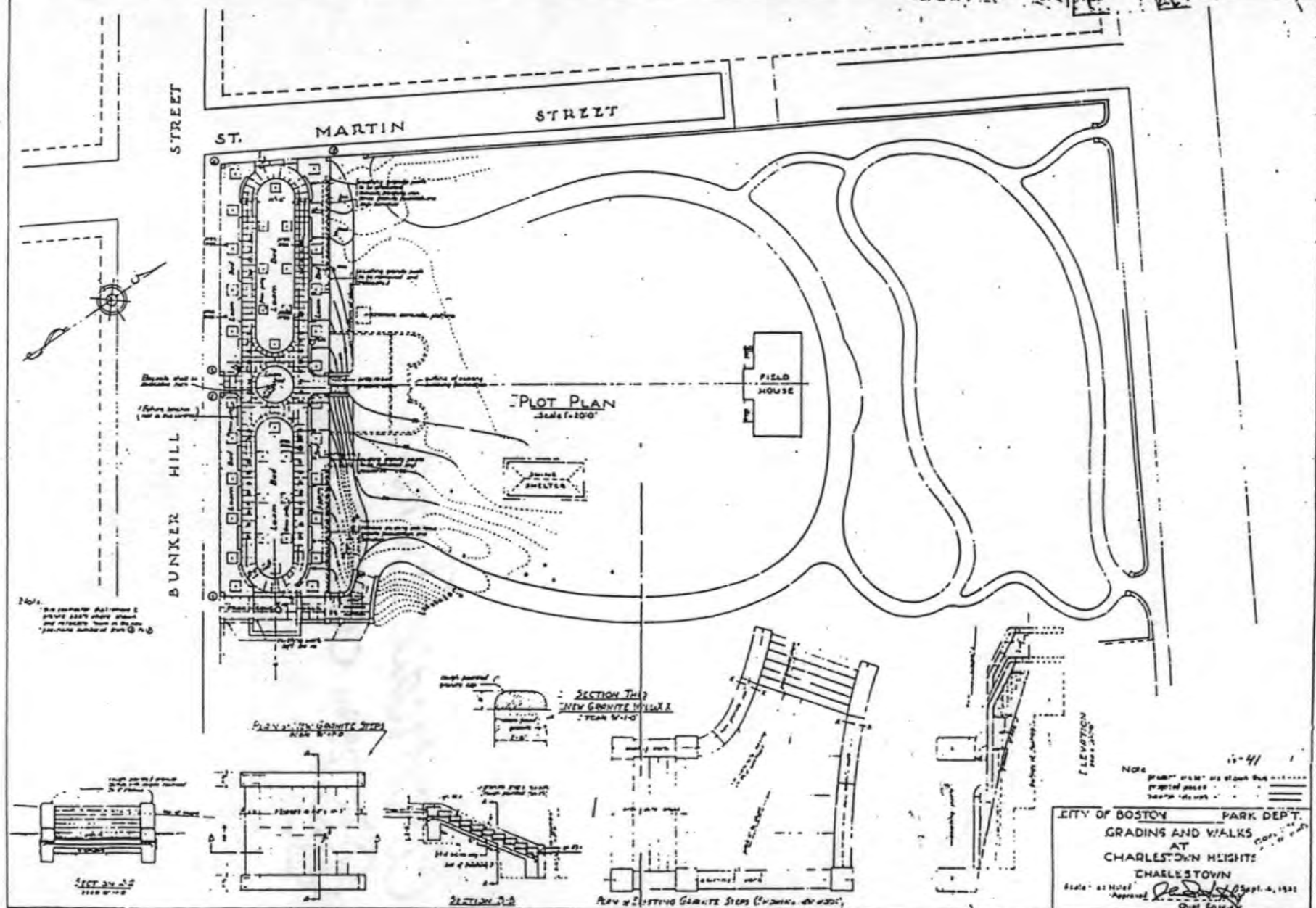


Fig. 11 Charlestown Heights & Dewey Beach Proposed WPA Construction; February, 1938. City of Boston Park Department

Fig. 12 Suggested Location for Proposed Swimming Pool at John J. Doherty Playground, undated plan c1947.
City Planning Board

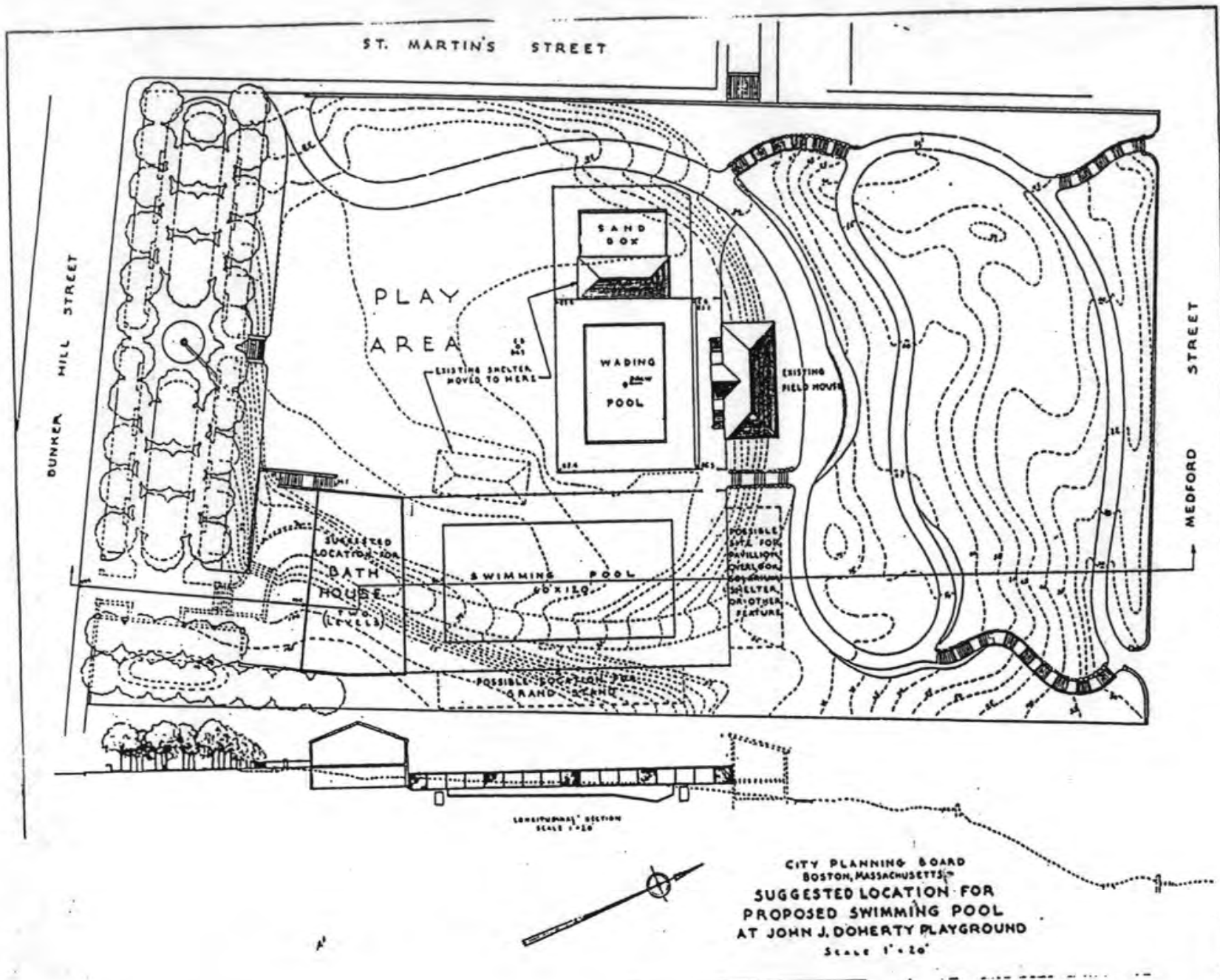




Photo 1 Bunker Hill Street and promenade, facing southeast; October 18, 1895



Photo 2 South and west sides of pavilion, and promenade, facing southeast; undated (after 1895)

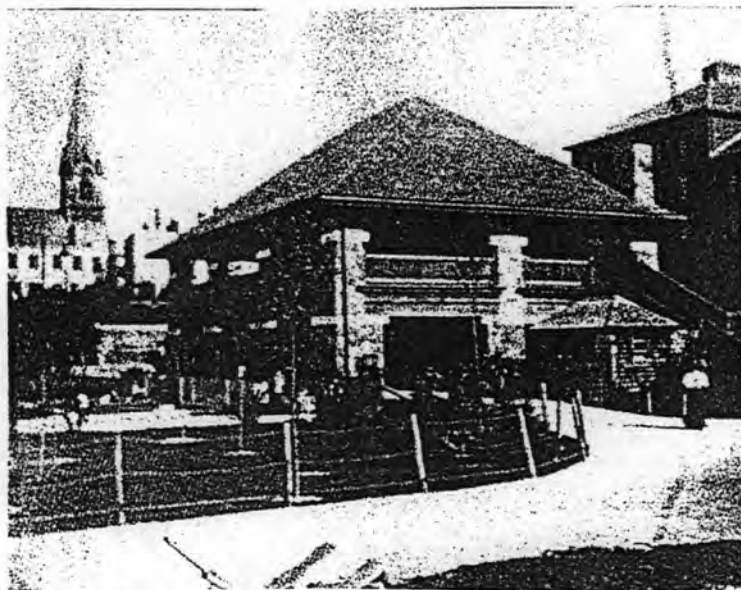


Photo 3 North and west sides of pavilion, sand courts and portion of central lawn, facing east; undated (after 1895)

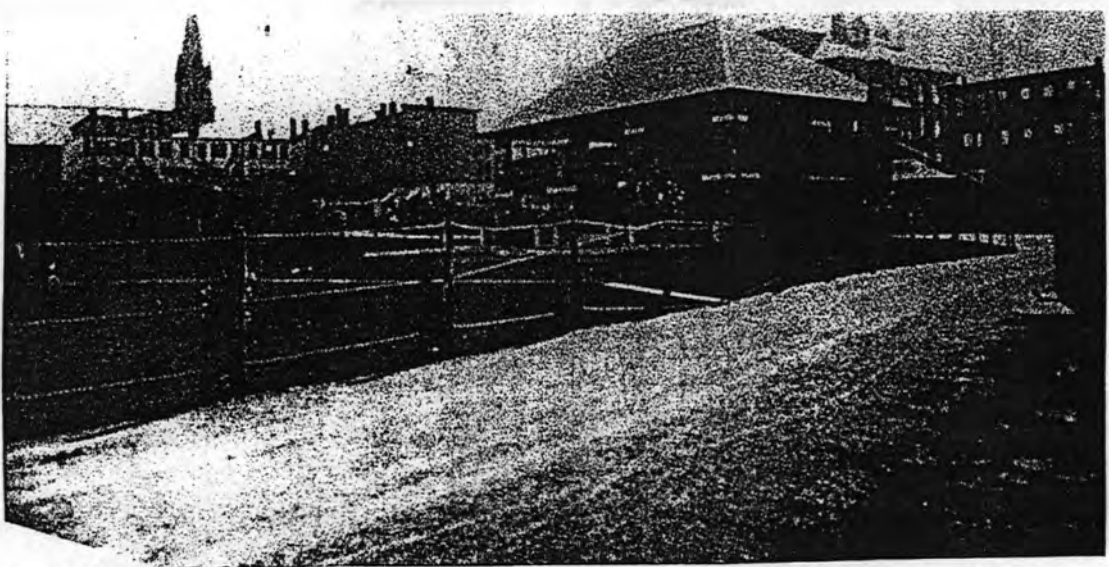


Photo 4 North and west sides of pavilion and central lawn, with St. Francis de Sales Roman Catholic Church and Bunker Hill Street in background, facing east; October, 1895

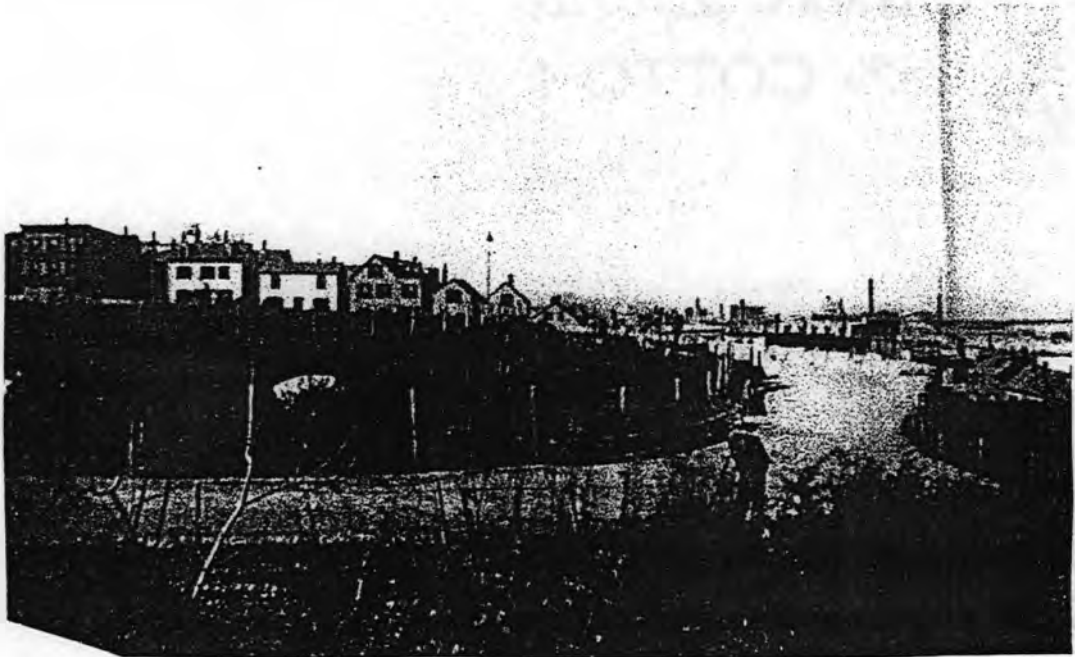


Photo 5 Central lawn at overlook, with St. Martin Street and Mystic River in the background, facing north; October, 1895

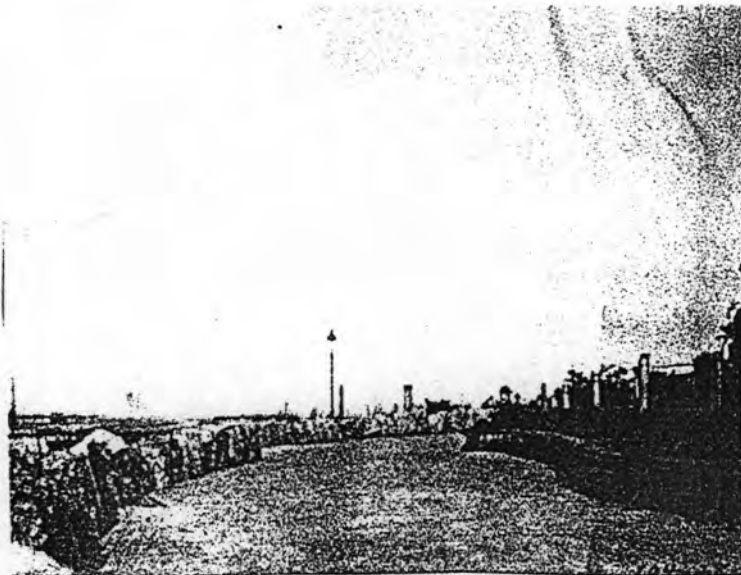


Photo 6 Overlook with seats, facing east; undated (after 1895)

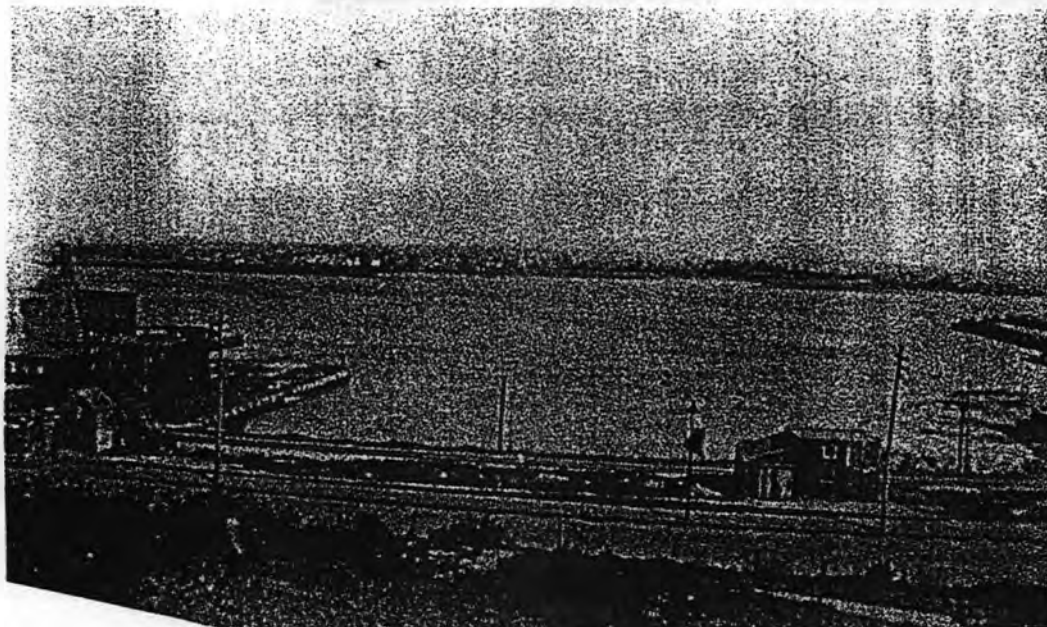


Photo 7 Medford Street and Mystic River from near overlook, facing northeast; October 30, 1895



Photo 8 Path at stone terrace below overlook, with seats, facing southeast; undated (after 1895)

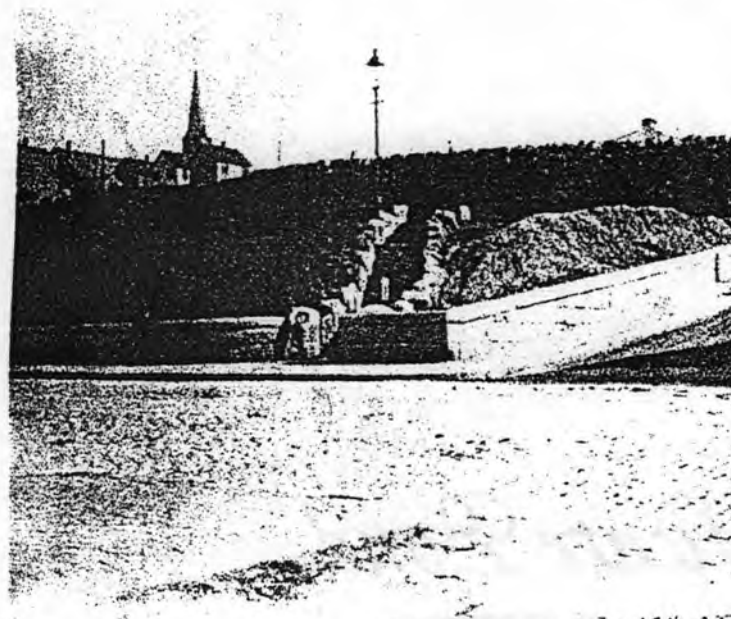


Photo 9 Northwest corner of park at Medford Street, corner St. Martin Street, facing south; undated (after 1895)

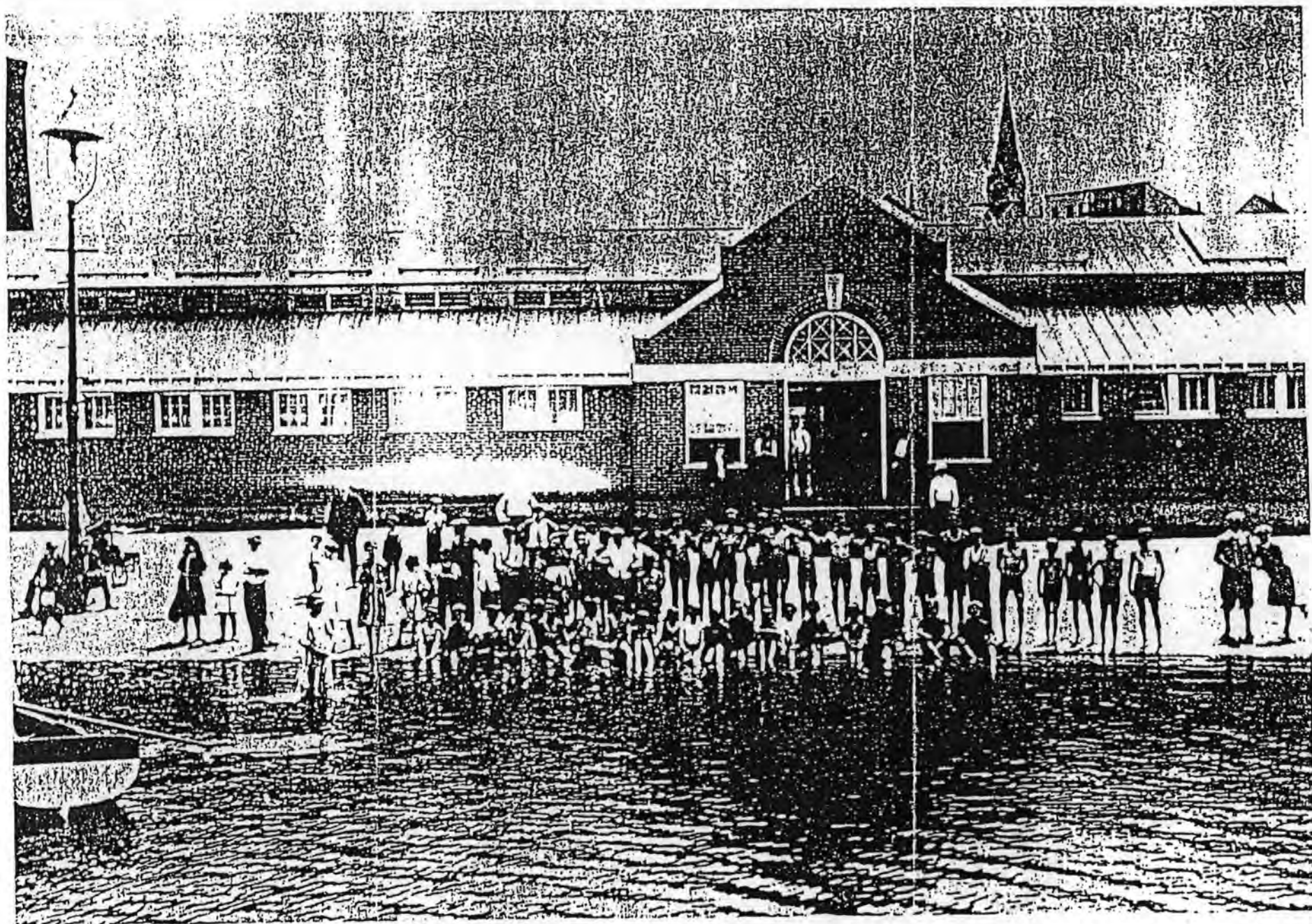


Photo 10 Bathhouse at Dewey Beach, facing south ; undated (c1912) (Courtesy of Friends of Doherty Park, Inc.;
photographer and location of negative unknown)

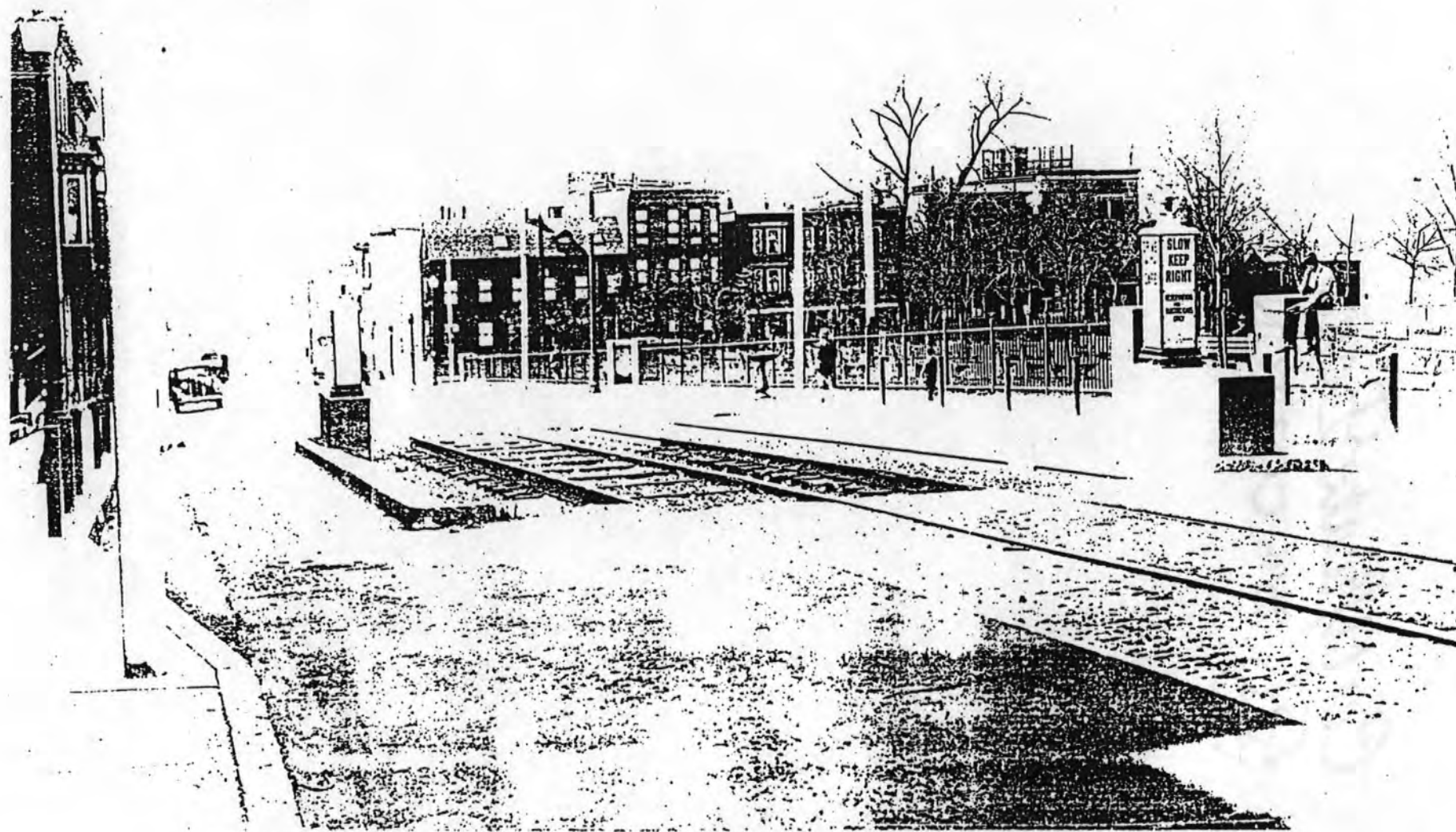


Photo 11 Bunker Hill Street at Playground, facing northwest; 1938 (Courtesy, Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities from Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority collection)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: RESUBMISSION

PROPERTY NAME: Charlestown Heights

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Suffolk

DATE RECEIVED: 11/26/97

DATE OF PENDING LIST:

DATE OF 16TH DAY:

DATE OF 45TH DAY:

1/10/98

DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 97000969

NOMINATOR: STATE

DETAILED EVALUATION:

___ACCEPT ___RETURN ___REJECT _____DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

On resubmission the State has provided an inventory of all contributing and non-contributing properties and a map key for the photographs.

RECOM./CRITERIA accept A&C

REVIEWER Patrick Andrus

DISCIPLINE Historian

TELEPHONE _____

DATE 1/8/98

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



Charlestown Heights
Charlestown MA

3940411 1/1
Photo 12



Charleston Heights
Charleston MA
Photo B

111011011



Charleston Heights

Charleston 14A

11 04 04

Photo 14



Charleston Heights

Charleston H.A.

Photo 15

0940411 H



Charlestown Heights

Charlestown 1911

Photo 16

11 1100000



Charlestown Heights
Charlestown MA
Photo 17

11 1160480



Charlestown Heights

Charlestown MA

Photo 18

11 11 11 11 11



Charlestown Heights

Charlestown MA

Photo 19



Charlestown Heights

Charlestown MA

Photo 20

0940411 11



Charlestown Heights
Charlestown MA
Photo 21

094 0411 1 N



Charlestown Heights
Charlestown MA
Photos 22

3940411 1 11



Charlestown Heights

Charlestown MA

Photo 23

11 111010C



Mobil

Charlestown Heights
Charlestown MA

Photo 24

3940411 111



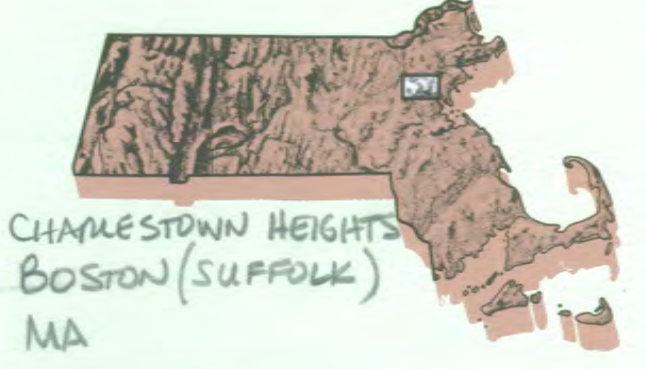
Charlestown Heights
Charlestown MA
Photo 25

3940411 1 1



Boston North MASSACHUSETTS

1:25 000-scale metric
topographic map



7.5 X 15 MINUTE QUADRANGLE
SHOWING

- Contours and elevations in meters
- Highways, roads and other manmade structures
- Water features
- Woodland areas
- Geographic names



Produced by the United States Geological Survey
in cooperation with Massachusetts Department
of Public Works
Controlled by USGS, NOS-NOAA, and Commonwealth of
Massachusetts agencies
Compiled by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs
taken 1978. Field checked 1979. Map edited 1985
Supersedes Boston North and Lexington 1:25,000-scale
maps dated 1971
Selected hydrographic data compiled from NOS chart 13272 (1982)
This information is not intended for navigational purposes
Projection and 1000-meter grid: Universal
Transverse Mercator, zone 19
10,000-foot grid ticks based on Massachusetts coordinate
system, mainland zone. 1927 North American Datum
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983
move the projection lines 6 meters south and
41 meters west as shown by dashed corner ticks
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of
the National or State reservations shown on this map

CONTOUR INTERVAL 3 METERS
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
CONTROL ELEVATIONS SHOWN TO THE NEAREST 0.1 METER
OTHER ELEVATIONS SHOWN TO THE NEAREST 0.3 METER
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN METERS
DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO DATUMS IS VARIABLE
SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE
OF MEAN HIGH WATER
THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 2.9 METERS

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092

CONVERSION TABLE		DECLINATION TABLE		ADJOINING MAPS		
Meters	Feet	1 2 3		1	2	3
1	3.2808	1	2	1	2	3
2	6.5617	4	5	4	5	6
3	9.8425	6	7	6	7	8
4	13.1234					
5	16.4042					
6	19.6850					
7	22.9658					
8	26.2467					
9	29.5275					
10	32.8084					

To convert meters to feet
multiply by 3.2808
To convert feet to meters
multiply by 0.3048

UTM grid convergence
(from 1983
at center of map)
Diagram is approximate

1 Billerica
2 Reading
3 Salem
4 Maynard
5 Lynn
6 Framingham
7 Boston South
8 Hull



Topographic Map Symbols

- Primary highway, hard surface
- Secondary highway, hard surface
- Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
- Unimproved road, trail
- Radio marker: intermediate, U. S. State
- Railroad: standard gage; narrow gage
- Bridge: drawbridge
- Footbridge: overpass; underpass
- Railway area: only selected features shown
- House, barn, church, school, large structure
- Boundary
- National, with monument
- State
- County, parish
- Civil township, precinct, district
- Incorporated city, village, town
- National or State reservation; small park
- Land grant with monument; forest section corner
- U. S. public lands survey: range, township, section
- Range, township, section line: location approximate
- Fence or field line
- Power transmission line, located tower
- Dam; dam with lock
- Cemetery; grave
- Campground; picnic area; U. S. location monument
- Woods; water well; spring
- Mine shaft; prospect; adit or cave
- Control: horizontal station; vertical station; spot elevation
- Contours: index; intermediate; supplementary; depression
- Disturbed surface: strip mine, bare land
- Bathymetric contours: index; intermediate
- Perennial lake and stream; intermittent lake and stream
- Rapids, large and small; falls, large and small
- Submerged marsh; marsh, swamp
- Land subject to controlled inundation; woodland
- Scrub; mangrove
- Orchard; vineyard

A pamphlet describing topographic maps is available on request



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
Massachusetts Historical Commission

July 24, 1997

Ms. Carol Shull
National Register of Historic Places
Department of the Interior
National Park Service
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, DC 20013-7127

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed please find the following nomination for:

Charlestown Heights; Bunker Hill, St. Martin, and Medford Streets, Boston
(Charlestown) (Suffolk County), MA

The nomination has been voted eligible by the State Review Board and has been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. The owners of property in the Certified Local Government community of Boston were notified of pending State Review Board consideration 60-120 days before the meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsy Friedberg".

Betsy Friedberg, National Register Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

cc: Thomas M. Menino, Mayor, City of Boston
Justine Liff, Commissioner, Boston Parks & Recreation Department
Robert Fleming, Director, George Robert White Fund, City of Boston
Alan Schwartz, Chair, Boston Landmarks Commission
• Maura FitzPatrick, Boston Landmarks Commission, CLG coordinator
• Elsbeth Magnarelli, Preservation Consultant
• Catherine Radford, Friends of Doherty Park, Inc.



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth

Massachusetts Historical Commission

November 21, 1997

Ms. Carol Shull
National Register of Historic Places
Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Mail Stop 2280, Suite 400
1849 C Street
Washington, D. C. 20240

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed please find additional documentation for the following National Register nomination as requested by Patrick Andrus (see attached letter of September 11, 1997). Requested inventory, photograph sheet, and annotated site map is provided.

Charlestown Heights, Boston (Charlestown) (Suffolk Co.), MA. Reference number
97000969

Please let me know if I can be of further service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsy Friedberg /nb".

Betsy Friedberg
National Register Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

enclosures

PROPERTY NAME: Charlestown Heights

OTHER NAME/ Ensign John J. Doherty, Playground
SITE No. :

MULTIPLE NAME: NOT APPLICABLE

ADDRESS/ Roughly bounded by St. Martin, Bunker Hill, Medford, and Sac
BOUNDARY : kville Sts.

CITY: Boston

COUNTY: Suffolk

STATE: MASSACHUSETTS

Restricted Location Information: Owner: LOCAL Resource Type: SITE

Contributing Noncontributing

Buildings	1	0
Sites	1	0
Structures	14	6
Objects	2	0

Nomination/Determination Type: SINGLE RESOURCE

Nominator: STATE GOVERNMENT

Nominator Name:
NOT APPLICABLE

Federal NOT APPLICABLE
Agency:

NPS Park Name: NOT APPLICABLE

Certification: DATE RECEIVED/PENDING NOMINATION

Date: 08/01/97

Other NOT APPLICABLE
Certification:

Historic LANDSCAPE
Functions: RECREATION AND CULTURE

Historic PARK
Subfunctions: OUTDOOR RECREATION

Current LANDSCAPE
Functions: RECREATION AND CULTURE

Current PARK
Subfunctions: OUTDOOR RECREATION

Level of LOCAL Applicable Criteria: EVENT
Significance: ARCHITECTURE/ENGINEERING

Significant Person's Name: NOT APPLICABLE

Criteria Considerations: NOT APPLICABLE

Area of Significance: COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Periods of: 1875-1899 1900-1924 Circa: Specific Sig. Years:

Significance: 1925-1949

1891

1947

Architect/Builder/Engineer/
Designer:

Cultural Affiliation:

Olmstead, F.L. & Co.

NOT APPLICABLE

Other Documentation:

NOT APPLICABLE

HABS No. N/A

HAER No. N/A

Architectural Styles: OTHER
MODERNE

Describe Other Style: urban designed landscape

Foundation Materials: CONCRETE
Wall Materials: CONCRETE
Roof Materials: ASPHALT
Other Materials: NONE LISTED

Acreage: 3.8

UTM	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
Coordinates:	19	/3 29 740	/46 94 180	19	/3 29 820	/46 94 140
	19	/3 29 740	/46 93 960	19	/3 29 680	/46 94 040