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**Olmsted Park:**

**Modified Historic Structures and Furnishings Reports**

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## Preface

At first glance, Olmsted Park appears to have relatively few structures, with no bridges for vehicular traffic and only four ashlar footbridges. Research and thorough site inspection have, however, revealed a multitude of small-scale structures, most of them related to the complex engineering arrangements devised by the Olmsted firm for controlling the water in Leverett, Wards and Willow Ponds and the former elaborate system of Natural History Pools, with their connecting streams and picturesque waterfalls.

All of the structures in Olmsted Park, with the exception of the 1936 Leverett Pond headwall, are original, although some have had later modifications (the Route 9 Overpass has been listed in the Riverway Report, although it affects both parks equally).

Although the structures in Olmsted Park were built less than 100 years ago, an unusually large proportion of them are either gone altogether or are in near-ruinous condition. This is due to, first, the abandonment of the Natural History Gardens and subsequent filling of most of the pools, and, second, Superintendent Pettigrew's arbitrary dislike of boulder structures, which led him to dismantle many of them almost as soon as they were built, including things unrelated to the Natural History Pools. There are also several fragmentary, original lighting fixtures.

Because most of the structures in Olmsted Park are minor, there is less documentation, both written and graphic, than for the monumental structures elsewhere in the park system. This, combined with the partial or complete demolition of so many, has made this park a particularly challenging research problem. In the other Historic Structures and Furnishings Reports, we have included extant structures only, mentioning demolished ones only in passing. Because of the peculiarities of the history of Olmsted Park, as described above, we have in this report included a section on structures that were planned but not executed and another on those constructed but demolished.

Kenneth Story has provided historical data, physical descriptions, and assessments for most of the structures. Richard Burck has added information for the structures related to the "hidden hydrology" of Olmsted Park, as well as Sections 1 and 2.

Cynthia Zaitzevsky  
October, 1986

## Introduction

The structures and furnishings of Olmsted Park bear certain similarities to those in the Riverway, but there are also some significant differences. The designs for the structures in both parks were developed by the firm at approximately the same time, and thus, as was discovered at the Riverway, the Olmsted firm designed all the structures initially and brought in the prominent Boston architectural firm of Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge only on a consultancy basis. However, Olmsted Park was always a large and somewhat isolated park and did not require all the structures for through traffic that were necessary in the Riverway. Also, more pedestrian paths were possible. Thus smaller scale structures predominated in Olmsted Park, and the style leaned more toward the bouldered and very rustic.

The most interesting difference was the Natural History pools project and its outcome. In 1889, after numerous overtures by the Boston Society of Natural History, the Boston Park Commission requested that the Society submit a proposal for the establishment of natural history gardens in the new public parks. The Society's response followed the City's recommendation that these gardens be sited at City Point (in South Boston), Franklin Park, and "near Jamaica Pond." Olmsted Park was designated as the site for fresh water natural history pools, which were excavated in the early 1890's. However, the project languished in the mid-1890's, and by 1899 the Commissioners' reports indicate that the pools were filled, and the project was abandoned. The Riverway was realized much as it had been planned by the Olmsted firm in the late 1880's, but Olmsted Park underwent several changes in attaining its final form by 1900.

Throughout Olmsted Park, it seems evident that the firm responded to the existing scenic character of the place, and made every effort to preserve its natural picturesque charm. As is evident from the material below, the firm went to great lengths to provide all the facilities to maintain a safe and adequate public park while not sacrificing the rural and unspoiled quality that distinguishes Olmsted Park.

# 1. Structures Investigated or Planned but Never Constructed

## 1.1 Shelters at Cove Overlook, Leverett Pond overlook and Nickerson Hill

**Name (original & present):** Shelters

**Date(s) of plan or written evidence:** These all appear on the 1892, "Plan of the Parkway Between Muddy River Gate House and Jamaica Park."

**Designer:** Not designed, although probably intended to be very similar to existing structure in Riverway.

**Intended Material:** See existing Riverway structure.

**Style:** See existing Riverway structure.

**Intended Use:** Shelter from rain, destinations in landscape, picturesque punctuation in landscape vistas, promontory points from which to view surroundings.

**Intended Location:** See 1892 plan.

**Reasons for not being constructed:** Most likely they were eliminated from consideration due to budgetary concerns during the severe recession of the mid-1890's.

**Comment:** On one plan (unknown) one shelter was shown in plan as a circle, another was shown as a hexagon, the last was shown as an octagon.

## 1.2 Boathouse and related siting studies

**Name (original & present):** Boathouse; Boat Landing

**Date(s) of plan or written evidence:** See list below.

**Designer:** Olmsted firm

**Intended Material:** Wood construction

**Style:** Unknown

**Intended Use:** Storage of boats, equipment, renter's stall and dock.

**Intended Location:** Various sites around Leverett Pond as described below

**Reasons for not being constructed:** Unknown, although a temporary dock was installed and a variety of boats were available for rent on Leverett Pond.

**Comment:** Relevant plans:

<u>Sheet title</u>	<u>F.L.O.N.H.S</u> <u>Sheet No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Description</u>
Sketch for location of Boat House in Cove on East Side of Leverett Pond	923-130	1/29/95 2/4/95	A rectilinear and curvilinear scheme for "U" shaped boathouse at end of cove.
Sketch for location of Boat Landing at foot of Leverett Pond	923-131	1/29/95	Boathouse sited on east side of Leverett Pond near Tremont Street headwall
Sketch of Boat House on Cove of East Side of Leverett Pond	923-132	1/29/95	Boathouse sited on south side of cove
Sketch of boat landing at foot of Leverett Pond	923-133	1/29/95	Boathouse sited on east side of Leverett Pond near Tremont Street headwall
Sketch for Boat Landing at South End of Leverett Pond	923-134	n.d. (1/29/95?)	Near Daisy Field
Leverett Pond Boad House, A and B	923-137 923-138	n.d. (March 1896) 3/6/96	Alternative schematic designs for a boat house

### 1.3 Allerton Street Overlook/Tool House

**Name (original & present):** Unknown

**Date(s) of plan or written evidence:** F.L.O.N.H.S plan 927-125 and others

**Designer:** Unknown

**Intended Material:** Concrete?

**Style:** N.A.

**Intended Use:** Overlook belvedere with tool house underneath

**Intended Location:** Between Riverdale Parkway and Pond Avenue on axis with Allerton Street

**Reasons for not being constructed:** Unknown

**Comment:** This was the only formal landscape structure conceived for Olmsted Park. It created an overlook above the picturesque elements of Leverett Pond below. The overlook structure formed the roof of the tool house below, as shown in F.L.O.N.H.S. plan 927-125: "Steps and tool house near Allerton Street," 1/23/93. By April of 1892 (F.L.O.N.H.S. plan No. 927-105) this structure had been eliminated and was replaced by a flight of stairs in a similarly formal plan.

## 1.4 Wards Pond Gate House

**Name (original & present):** Unknown

**Date(s) of plan or written evidence:** Shown as a simple box on a certain plans, the last being: City of Boston Park Department, Olmsted Park, 1"=200', December 24, 1900.

**Designer:** N.A.

**Intended Material:** N.A.

**Style:** N.A.

**Intended Use:** This may have been intended as the southern entrance gate to the Boston Society of Natural History Fresh Water Aquaria.

**Intended Location:** N.W. corner of the Jamaicaway and Perkins Street

**Reasons for not being constructed:** Unknown

**Comment:** This structure occurs on a 1900 plan that otherwise appears to be an "as-built" plan.

## 1.5 Boston Society of Natural History, Fresh Water Aquaria Museum

**Name (original & present):** Unknown

**Date(s) of plan or written evidence:** Appears on the Revised Plan for The Parkway, 1889, and other plans and written documents.

**Designer:** N.A.

**Intended Material:** N.A.

**Style:** N.A.

**Intended Use:** Structure to house exhibits, equipment, classrooms, and research facilities

**Intended Location:** East of Willow Pond

**Reasons for not being constructed:** Failure of the Boston Society of Natural History to raise funds for construction purposes.

## 1.6 Sanitary Building

**Name (original & present):** "Sanitary Building"

**Date(s) of plan or written evidence:** Boston Park Commission Twenty-Seventh Annual Report for the Year Ending January 31, 1902, p. 11.

**Designer:** none known

**Intended Material:** Unknown

**Style:** Unknown

**Intended Use:** No additional information other than sanitary use

**Intended Location:** Unknown

**Reasons for not being constructed:** Unknown

**Comment:** The statement that a "sanitary building" was planned is the only known evidence relative to this building.

## 2. Structures Constructed or Pre-Existing and Since Removed

### 2.1 Leverett Pond Headwall and Stop Plank Structure

**Name:** Tremont Street Culvert (southern end)

**Date (design & construction period):** 1890-1891 (design); 1891-1892 (construction)

**Designer:** John C. Olmsted; Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge

**Contractor:** Blanchard and Sias; Wm. A. Norton

**Material:** Seam-faced granite, random ashlar, with red granite coping

**Style:** N.A.

**Original Use:** Culvert for passage of water and Tremont Street (Route 9) retaining wall, as it passed over the Muddy River.

**Location:** Northern end, Leverett Pond

**Date of Removal:** 1936-1937

**Reasons for removal:** Construction of the Route 9 overpass, requiring substantial land area for ramps. A new and much larger headwall was constructed further south into what was formerly pond area (see Section 3.11).

**Comment:** Within the culvert carrying Leverett Pond beyond the headwall was a slotted frame holding wood stop planks which were adjustable to vary the height of the pond. This structure was altered during the construction of the new south headwall. The wood planks were replaced with concrete that cannot be adjusted.

For description of the northern end of this original structure, which still stands, see Riverway Modified Historic Structures and Furnishings Report, pp. 25-26.

**Figure 2-1:** Original Tremont Street Culvert looking north. Photograph, August 1, 1896 (FLONHS, 923-14)

## 2.2 Temporary Boat Landing

**Name:** Temporary boat-landing

**Date (design & construction period):** 1895

**Designer:** Unknown

**Contractor:** Unknown

**Material:** Unknown (most likely all wood construction)

**Style:** N.A.

**Original Use:** Boat-landing

**Location:** North end of Leverett Pond on the Brookline side, as documented in F.L.O.N.H.S. photograph, 923-7, which shows Leverett Pond looking south and is described as being taken from the boat landing.

**Date of Removal:** Unknown

**Reasons for removal:** Unknown

**Comment:** Although it was located in Brookline, the temporary boat-landing was constructed by the City of Boston to be used by a private boat-rental enterprise that was contracted by the City to make available a number of different boats for rent on both Leverett and Jamaica Pond. It was intended to be replaced by a permanent landing and boat-house as soon as possible. This never happened.

## 2.3 Wards Pond Outlet Structure

**Name (original & present):** Small boulder bridge and dam/waterfall at outlet of Wards Pond; footbridge, Wards Pond outlet

**Date (design & construction period):** Probably 1892-93

**Designer:** John C. Olmsted

**Contractor:** Unknown

**Material:** Boulders (probably Roxbury pudding-stone)

**Style:** Rustic, similar to existing bridges at Wards and Willow Pond inlets

**Original Use & Present Use:** Pedestrian walkway over pond outlet, and dam/waterfall to regulate and slow flow of water from Wards Pond to small stream

**Later alterations:** Disassembled. Remnants only exist.

**Location:** Northern end of Wards Pond, at beginning of outlet; structure and associated dam downstream are shown in Olmsted Park Grading Plan 923-99, at F.L.O.N.H.S.

**Recent rehabilitation & restoration:** None

**Assessment of present condition:** In ruins.

This is another example of one of the charming bouldered bridges of John Olmsted which has deliberately or otherwise fallen into neglect. It would greatly add to the spirit of the original design if this bridge were also restored.

It is also needed to restore pedestrian circulation around Wards Pond. This may have been part of a larger dam-like structure that stretched across the west side of Wards Pond (see Figure V.1 in Olmsted Park Historic Landscape Report).

## 2.4 Spring Pond Footbridge

**Name (original & present):** Spring Pond Footbridge

**Date (design & construction period):** 1893-94

**Designer:** John C. Olmsted

**Material:** Roxbury pudding-stone

**Style:** Rustic

**Original Use & Present Use:** Allowed pedestrian traffic to pass over small stream that connects Spring Pond to Willow Pond

**Later alterations:** Now dissembled; remnants of a dam upstream from the bridge also exist

**Location:** Over Spring Pond outlet

**Recent rehabilitation & restoration:** None

**Assessment of present condition:** Poor

This was one of several boulder bridges designed by John Olmsted in Olmsted Park. It is characterized by rectangular, roughly dressed stone foundations, granite spanning slabs and crenellation-like, rough boulders used as parapet walls. Existing bridges of similar design are found at both the Wards and Willow Pond inlets. It should be noted that Roxbury pudding-stone is indigenous to Olmsted Park. The small scale and rustic design of this bridge was exemplary of the unobtrusive architecture preferred by the firm, and yet served to welcome the casual visitor to this now neglected section of the park. Its restoration would be a welcome improvement. The Spring Pond Footbridge can be seen in a 1930 air photo and is identified as a "Dam" in a 1967 survey of a portion of Olmsted Park. In addition, it is shown in two photographs at F.L.O.N.H.S. (923-20, and 964-26), but neither photograph shows the structure in close detail. They can be dated ca. 1900 by the fact that the parapet walls are gone, making them post-Pettigrew.

## 2.5 Small Waterfall Structures

**Name:** Unknown

**Date (design & construction period):** F.L.O.N.H.S. plans: 927-88, 2/12/92; 923-66, 11/9/92; 923-99, 4/20/93; 927-140, 7/5/93; 923-124, 8/18/94.

**Designer:** Unknown

**Contractor:** Unknown

**Material:** Boulder

**Style:** N.A.

**Original Use:** To dam the flow of water creating a pond or smaller pool and to create a waterfall for snow

**Location:** Between Wards Pond outlet and Leverett Pond inlet

**Date of Removal:** 1898-1900 and 1963

**Reasons for removal:** Lack of adequate water at the end of the 19th century and stream bed dredging operations in 1963

**Comment:** Numerous studies wrestled with the number of waterfalls, their locations and alignments

## 2.6 Engine House at Wards Pond

**Name:** Engine House

**Date (design & construction period):** Unknown; pre-park

**Designer:** Unknown

**Contractor:** Unknown

**Material:** Unknown

**Style:** Unknown

**Original Use:** Pumped water from Jamaica Pond to City of Boston

**Location:** N.E. corner of Perkins Street and Chestnut Street

**Date of Removal:** 1895 or later

**Reasons for removal:** Unclear, although there are two possible reasons: it required repairs, and was considered to be an ill-fitting industrial use in a picturesque park

**Comment:** The pumphouse consisted of two structures. A smaller smokestack and a larger engine-room and boiler-room structure. These buildings were purchased from the Jamaica Pond Aquaduct Corporation by the Boston Parks Department to be used to pump water from Jamaica Pond to sprinkle the parkways (for dust control) and to supply a newly constructed reservoir in Franklin Park via newly laid waterpipes. The water was to be used to supply ponds during the summer dry periods.

### 3. Existing Structures

#### 3.1 Village Brook Drain

**Name (original & present):** Village Brook Channel; Village Brook drain

**Date (design & construction period):** 1893, construction commenced

**Designer:** Sterns, chief engineer

**Contractor:** Unknown

**Material:** Granite block wearing surface with concrete or rubble sides and concrete arch

**Style:** N.A.

**Original Use & Present Use:** Drain involved both the culverting of the historic Village Brook and directing it into the newly designed Leverett Pond as its principle water source. Brookline was the first municipality to use Portland cement extensively for arches resulting in a considerable savings.

**Later alterations:** N.A.

**Location:** See Metcalf and Eddy 1966 Sewer and Drain report for Town of Brookline

**Recent rehabilitation & restoration:** N.A.

**Assessment of present condition:** Original drain had a settling basin at its point of origin in acknowledgement of problem of sediment carried by storm flow. Sediment carried by drain has continued to be a serious problem since its construction, resulting in the filling of Leverett Pond with sediment. The drain is now also a source of oil and possibly bacterial introduction into Leverett Pond.

### 3.2 Chestnut Street Drain into Willow Pond

**Name (original & present):** Original unknown

**Date (design & construction period):** Early to mid-1890's

**Designer:** A.H. French and Olmsted firm (?)

**Contractor:** Unknown

**Material:** 42-inch diameter brick conduit

**Style:** N.A.

**Original Use & Present Use:** This drain carried the former headwaters of the Muddy River into Willow Pond avoiding the small stream bed that it formerly fed next to Riverdale Parkway. It is the primary water source for Willow Pond.

**Later alterations:** Unknown

**Location:** The drain carries the former headwaters of the Muddy River, down Chestnut Street and north under Riverdale Parkway emptying into the southern end of Willow Pond.

**Recent rehabilitation & restoration:** Unknown

**Assessment of present condition:** This drain is problematic in ways similar to the Village Brook drain but to a lesser degree (introduction of sediment, oil, and possibly bacteria).

### 3.3 Jamaica Pond outlet

**Name (original & present):** Unknown

**Date (design & construction period):** Mid-1890's

**Designer:** Olmsted firm

**Contractor:** Unknown

**Material:** Unknown

**Style:** N.A.

**Original Use & Present Use:** Originally the outlet for Jamaica Pond

**Later alterations:** Gate house on Jamaica Park side of Perkins Street was removed, as was related Engine House and smokestack above Wards Pond.

**Location:** Culvert runs underground between Jamaica Pond and Wards Pond at their closest point.

**Recent rehabilitation & restoration:** Culvert has undergone many repairs over the past century.

**Assessment of present condition:** Presently inoperative

### 3.4 Meadow Drain under Daisy Field

**Name (original & present):** No name known

**Date (design & construction period):** 1890's

**Designer:** Unknown (Olmsted firm?)

**Contractor:** Unknown

**Material:** 18"-diameter iron pipe

**Style:** N.A.

**Original Use & Present Use:** Drains a collection of Jamaicaway catch basins into Leverett Pond. This drain may also carry the deadwaters of the former stream that fed Willow Pond from the east prior to park construction.

**Later alterations:** Unknown

**Location:** Receives flow of catch basins at intersection of Willow Pond Road and Jamaicaway and carries flow to southeast corner of Leverett Pond near Daisy field. See F.L.O.N.H.S. 923-67, and Boston Bath House "Locations of Drains...at Leverett Park, Dec. 1899."

**Recent rehabilitation & restoration:** Unknown

**Assessment of present condition:** Bank at outlet suffers from serious soil erosion. Drain is a source of Leverett Pond sedimentation. See F.L.O.N.H.S. plan (tube #4021), H.H. Blossom of 1915.

### 3.5 Footbridge over the Cove at Leverett Pond

**Name (original & present):** Footbridge over the east bay of Leverett Pond; footbridge over the cove at Leverett Pond

**Date (design & construction period):** 1892-1894

**Designer:** Olmsted firm; Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge, Consulting Architects

**Contractor:** J.D. Fallon & Company

**Material:** Granite, random dressed ashlar with capstones

**Style:** N.A.

**Original Use & Present Use:** Walkway over cove of Leverett Pond

**Later alterations:** Unknown

**Location:** Over southeastern cove of Leverett Pond

**Recent rehabilitation & restoration:** Unknown

**Assessment of present condition:** Serious spalling of granite due to fires set against stone. Brick in the arch is badly deteriorated. Badly in need of stone replacement and repointing in several locations, in addition to cleaning and removal of graffiti.

This footbridge was intended to serve as a pedestrian connection over the cove, with small boathouses intended for the banks of the pond. It is also a visual accent in the Leverett Pond landscape: its only built element in a prominent location.

A drawing exists for this bridge at the 'L' Street Bath House, which shows a markedly different approach to design, not only from the bridge as constructed but from any other bridge in the Boston system. It shows a structure of exactly the same dimensions as the present one but depicted in a High Victorian style fashionable twenty or thirty years earlier and reminiscent of the bridges in Central Park designed by Calvert Vaux and Jacob Wrey Mould. It has an elaborate balustrade decorated with quatrefoils. The drawing does not appear to have come from the Olmsted firm, and its origins are something of a mystery. Stylistically, it is an aberration - both for the period and for the Boston parks.

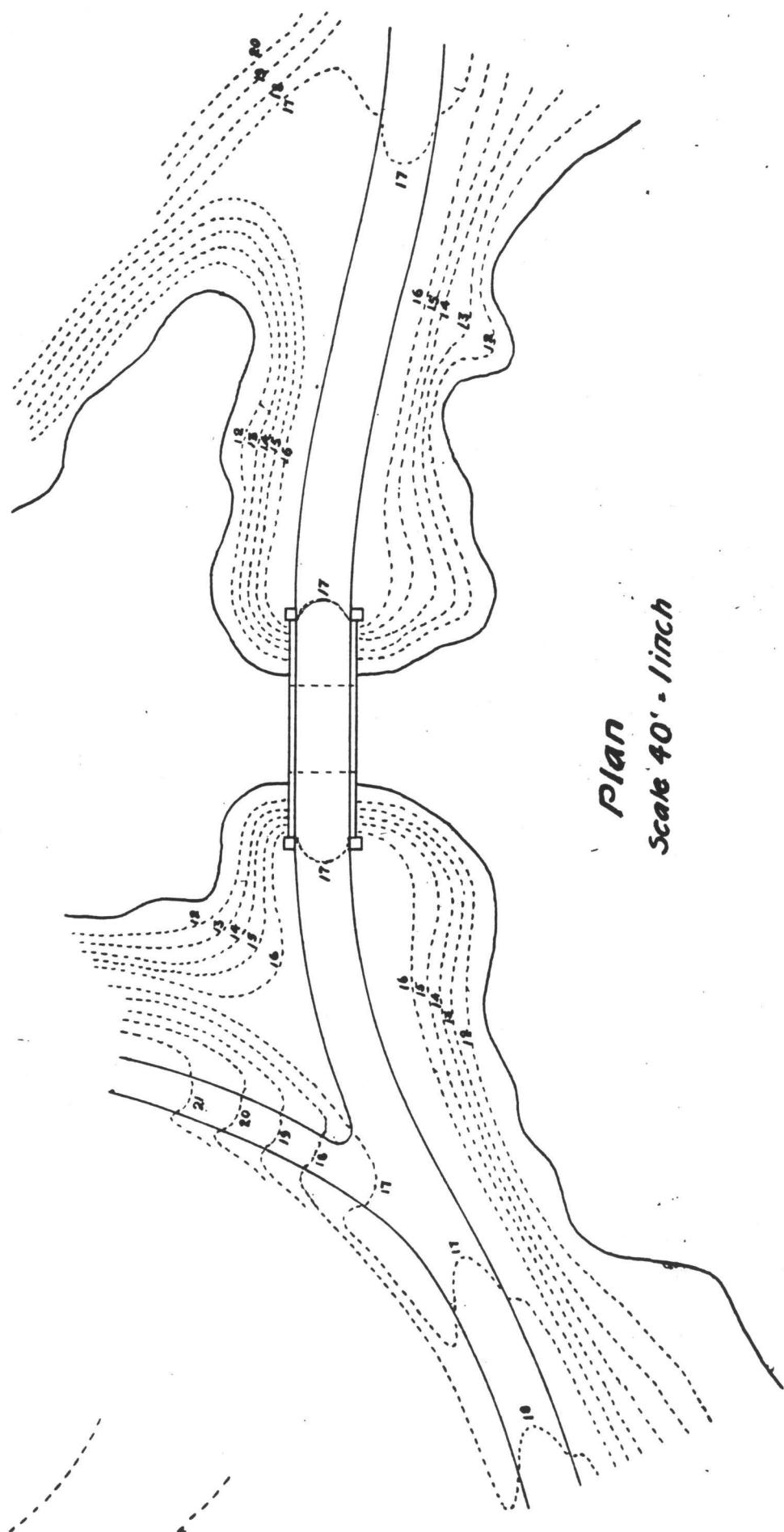


Figure 3-1: Bridge at Cove Head of Leverett Pond (FLONHS, 923-18)

### 3.6 Cumberland Avenue Footbridge

**Name (original & present):** Cumberland Avenue Footbridge

**Date (design & construction period):** 1892-93

**Designer:** John C. Olmsted; Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge, Consulting Architects

**Contractor:** Kelley & O'Hearn

**Material:** Seam-faced Roxbury stone faces in modified random ashlar, with red granite coping

**Style:** N.A.

**Original Use & Present Use:** Pedestrian walkway over southern inlet of Leverett Pond

**Later alterations:** Unknown

**Location:** Opposite Cumberland Avenue, across Riverdale Parkway

**Recent rehabilitation & restoration:** Rebuilt and restored in 1981; P. Leone, contractor, and Preservation Technology Associates, consultants. The bridge was cleaned and repointed.

**Assessment of present condition:** Very good

Original engineer's drawings at the Town Engineer's Office, Town of Brookline, reveal the total length as 35 feet, and the width at the center as 18 feet, 6 inches. This structure has been successfully restored recently, and needs little further attention. However, boulders should probably be set along bank of stream bed and against bridge structure as per F.L.O.N.H.S. plan #927-87, and other plans.

**Figure 3-2:** Cumberland Road Bridge (FLONHS, 923-7)

### 3.7 Willow Pond Footbridge

**Name (original & present):** Footbridge at head of Willow Pond; Willow Pond Footbridge

**Date (design & construction period):** 1892-93

**Designer:** Olmsted firm; Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge

**Contractor:** Kelley & O'Hearn

**Material:** Seam-faced Roxbury stone walls, with red granite coping

**Style:** N.A.

**Original Use & Present Use:** Pedestrian walkway over head of Willow Pond

**Later alterations:** Unknown

**Location:** Southern end of Willow Pond

**Recent rehabilitation & restoration:** Rebuilt, cleaned and repointed in 1983

**Assessment of present condition:** Very good

The recent work on this bridge has restored it to very good condition, and thus it needs little further attention. Its length is 30 feet, and its width is 14 feet. Boulders should probably be set along bank of stream bed and against bridge structure per F.L.O.N.H.S. plan 927-87, and other plans.

**Figure 3-3:** Willow Pond Footbridge. Photograph (FLONHS, 964- )

### 3.8 Wards Pond Footbridge

**Name (original & present):** Wards Pond Footbridge

**Date (design & construction period):** 1892

**Designer:** John C. Olmsted; Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge, Consulting Architects

**Contractor:** Kelley & O'Hearn

**Material:** Seam-faced Roxbury stone walls, with red granite coping

**Style:** N.A.

**Original Use & Present Use:** Pedestrian walkway over small stream bed (now dry)

**Later alterations:** Unknown

**Location:** To north of Wards Pond, next to Riverdale Parkway

**Recent rehabilitation & restoration:** Rebuilt, cleaned and repointed in 1983

**Assessment of present condition:** Good

This bridge is in good condition, and requires little further work. It measures 19 feet, 6 inches in width and 12 feet in length along stair platform. Boulders should probably be set along bank of stream bed and against bridge structure per F.L.O.N.H.S. plan 927-87, and other plans.

**Figure 3-4:** Wards Pond Footbridge. Photograph (FLONHS, 964- )

### 3.9 Footbridge at inlet to Willow Pond from Spring Pond

**Name (original & present):** Footbridge over Willow Pond-Spring Pond outlet

**Date (design & construction period):** 1893-94

**Designer:** John C. Olmsted

**Material:** Roxbury pudding-stone and granite

**Style:** N.A.

**Original Use & Present Use:** Footbridge for pedestrian traffic, incorporating dam near bridge.

**Later alterations:** Unknown

**Location:** Over outlet from Spring Pond

**Recent rehabilitation & restoration:** Unknown

**Assessment of present condition:** Fair, many stones are missing. The dam exists only in fragments.

This rustic structure was one of several such boulder bridges in this style designed by John C. Olmsted without consulting Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge for Olmsted Park. It is one of only two remaining in reasonably intact condition, although some boulders seem to have fallen off. Figure 3-5 illustrates one of these bridges at Willow Pond.

Plans at F.L.O.N.H.S. and existing remnants clearly show that these small boulder bridges, most of which were removed by Pettigrew, were generally associated with dams. In the Natural History Pools area, the dams were upstream from the bridges, so that park visitors crossing the bridges would both see and hear the waterfalls. Two exceptions are the rustic bridge and dam at the outlet of Wards Pond (Section 2.3), where the dam was located downstream from the bridge (because the Natural History Pools were all below this point) and the footbridge at the inlet to Wards Pond (Section 3.10), where there never seems to have been a dam.

**Figure 3-5:** Rustic Bridge, Willow Pond. Photograph, January 27, 1901. (FLONHS, 923-16)

### 3.10 Footbridge, at inlet to Wards Pond

**Name (original & present):** Small footbridge over inlet of Wards Pond

**Date (design & construction):** 1892-93

**Designer:** John C. Olmsted

**Material:** Roxbury pudding-stone and granite

**Style:** Rustic

**Original Use & Present Use:** Pedestrian bridge over inlet to Wards Pond

**Later alterations:** Unknown

**Location:** Southern inlet of Wards Pond

**Recent rehabilitation & restoration:** None

**Assessment of present condition:** Fair condition; original boulders standing on either side of bridge, which served as walls, have tumbled down into the stream on either side of the bridge.

This bridge, in spite of the deterioration that has taken place, is the best example of an original Olmsted bouldered bridge and illustrates the diminutive, subdued place such structures took within the overall landscape scheme. Unlike the other extant boulder bridge (Section 3.9), which has a straight lintel, this one has a scalloped granite lintel. This bridge is difficult to locate, even when standing on it, so well is it blended into the landscape. The side boulders should be restored to give back the intended sense of being in a place ordered by human hands, but only slightly, and long ago.

### 3.11 Leverett Pond Headwall

**Name (original & present):** Leverett Pond Headwall

**Date (design & construction period):** 1936

**Designer:** Unknown

**Contractor:** Unknown

**Material:** Ashlar-faced granite

**Style:** N.A.

**Original Use & Present Use:** Culvert beneath Washington Street (Route 9) to allow passage of water from Riverway to Leverett Pond.

**Later alterations:** No apparent alterations to the present structure

**Location:** Brookline, beneath Route 9

**Recent rehabilitation & restoration:** Unknown

**Assessment of present condition:** This structure is missing some granite capstones, suffers from a major structural crack approximately in the center of the structure, and there is substantial soil erosion at its base. It also is missing at least one face stone and needs repointing.

This large culvert, most visible from the south from across Leverett Pond, and virtually invisible from the northern side of Route 9, replaced an earlier, much smaller but stylistically similar structure, designed by the Olmsted firm, with Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge, Consulting Architects. The northern part of the original structure, the Tremont Street culvert, still stands (see Riverway, Modified Historic Structures and Furnishings Report, pp. 25-26). Since a good sized portion of the northern tip of Leverett Pond had to be filled for the Route 9 Overpass, the present structure stands considerably further south than its predecessor. At the time of construction the existing adjustable, wood stop plank structure was changed to a permanent concrete weir. This weir maintains the water elevation in Leverett Pond at approximate elevation 109.2, M.D.C. datum.

### 3.12 Willow Pond Outlet Structure, Outfall Structure, and Waterfall

**Name (original & present):** Willow Pond Road culvert; Outlet structure and culvert near outlet of Willow Pond

**Date (design & construction period):** Designed 1892; constructed, 1892-93

**Designer:** John C. Olmsted; Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge, Consulting Architects

**Contractor:** Thomas J. Kelly and M.J. O'Hern

**Material:** Seam-faced Roxbury stone for walls, and red granite coping, all laid in Portland cement; 48"-diameter culvert is brick and one-foot diameter iron pipe to stream bed.

**Style:** N.A.

**Original Use & Present Use:** Culvert to allow water to flow from Willow Pond to Leverett Pond via two separate channels, and to allow pedestrian and vehicular traffic along Willow Pond Road.

**Later alterations:** Unknown

**Location:** Western terminus of Willow Pond Road, next to Riverdale Parkway, both sides.

**Recent rehabilitation & restoration:** Culvert was cleaned and repaired during 1963 dredging operations. At same time small stream bed north of Willow Pond Road was paved with granite blocks, inconsistent with original design.

**Assessment of present condition:** Poor; smaller drain beneath road that allowed small flow of water for stream that ran parallel to Riverdale Parkway is now clogged, and no water flows at all. The drains on the southern side of the culvert have been blocked by a pollution control device, and thus encourage stagnation of the water in that immediate vicinity; and the stream bed to the north has become extremely overgrown.

**Description:** Above ground, this appears to be two retaining walls in the familiar Olmsted/Shepley firm style, one on either side of the road. Close examination of the structure and of the plans for it reveal a remarkably complex three-part system:

1. Outlet Structure, south side of Willow Pond Road, includes:

- a. Retaining wall;
- b. Weir;
- c. Two culverts that leave it: the smaller metal pipe that goes under Willow Pond Road and comes out the other side and the larger brick culvert that loops under Riverdale Parkway and comes back to feed Leverett Pond below the waterfall.

2. Outfall Structure, north side of Willow Pond Road, includes:

- a. Retaining wall;

- b. Opening of metal pipe under Willow Pond Road
- 3. Waterfall structure at end of stream fed by outfall structure. Divides stream from Leverett Pond.

This large structure, with its two pipes and elaborate system of flow control to allow for the preservation of the small stream that runs to Leverett Pond, is easily the most elaborate structure in Olmsted Park. John C. Olmsted made a study for the outlet structure as early as 1890, and one final design as built closely resembles his original conception. The clear concern on the part of the Olmsted firm to maintain the small scale of the stream while allowing for all the necessary drainage through an alternate, much larger pipe, is in keeping with the firm's general philosophy of preserving the natural setting and keeping man-made alterations to a minimum. The renewal of that plan through the necessary cleaning and restoration of the entire system is clearly one of the major priorities.



**Figure 3-6:** Willow Pond Outlet Structure. Rough study by John C. Olmsted, May 18, 1890 (FLONHS)

### 3.13 Stone steps, corner of Perkins Street and the Jamaicaway

**Name (original & present):** Perkins Street steps

**Date (design & construction):** 1894

**Designer:** Not known, but probably John C. Olmsted

**Contractor:** Unknown

**Material:** Cape Ann granite

**Style:** N.A.

**Original Use & Present Use:** Steps leading from street grade to bank of Wards Pond

**Later alterations:** Boulder check walls may have been pulled out when Pettigrew, the Boston city architect, redesigned some parts of Wards Pond around the turn of the century.

**Location:** Corner of Perkins Street and the Jamaicaway

**Recent rehabilitation & restoration:** None

**Assessment of present condition:** Poor; several have moved slightly from their original placement, and all should be checked for structural integrity.

These large, slightly curved steps, were envisioned as the main entrance to Wards Pond from the Boston side, and led down to a walkway that surrounded the pond, which is now overgrown. They should be restored, as should the walkway.

**Figure 3-7:** Stone Steps, Wards Pond. Photograph, June 4, 1929, by Leon Abdalian  
(Boston Public Library, Print Department)

### 3.14 Stone Steps at Nickerson Hill

**Name (original & present):** Nickerson Hill steps

**Date (design & construction period):** 1894

**Designer:** Unknown

**Contractor:** Unknown

**Material:** Cape Ann granite

**Style:** N.A.

**Original Use & Present Use:** Carry pedestrian path up and down saddle of Nickerson Hill

**Later alterations:** Boulder check walls may have been removed by Pettigrew.

**Location:** Steps leading up saddle east of Nickerson Hill on north and south sides of hill.

**Recent rehabilitation & restoration:** Unknown

**Assessment of present condition:** Poor; some flights of stairs are lost in vegetative overgrowth to the northeast of Nickerson Hill, most require foundation reconstruction and replacement of boulder check walls.

Note that per F.L.O.N.H.S. (tube #4021) H.H. Blossom annotated plan of 1915, Blossom records that steps on northeast side of Nickerson Hill are badly arranged and not as original plan dictated. These may be seen in the background of Figure II.b of the Olmsted Park Historic Landscape Report.

### 3.15 Retaining Walls Along the Jamaicaway

**Name (original & present):** Rustic masonry walls

**Date (design & construction period):** 1894

**Designer:** Olmsted firm

**Contractor:** Unknown

**Material:** Roxbury pudding-stone boulders and finely dressed granite bollards.

**Style:** Rustic

**Original Use & Present Use:** In an area of steep topographic change, these retaining walls supported the bridle path above the pedestrian path and the pedestrian path above the cove.

**Later alterations:** Unknown

**Location:** Between the former Leverett Pond cove and the Jamaicaway

**Recent rehabilitation & restoration:** None

**Assessment of present condition:** Poor condition, boulder parapet walls require replacement stones, one bollard from two pairs of bollards is missing. These apparently marked the descent and ascent of the pedestrian path relative to the Jamaicaway adjacent to the cove.

The lower wall, which was intended to support the pedestrian path above the cove, is no longer evident and may have been dissembled by Pettigrew, or covered by erosion in the cove area. This should be investigated.

### 3.16 Perkins and Chestnut Street Retaining Wall and Iron Fence

**Name (original & present):** Perkins and Chestnut Street Retaining Wall and Iron Fence

**Date (design & construction period):** 1894-1895

**Designer:** Olmsted firm (?)

**Contractor:** Unknown

**Material:** Roxbury pudding-stone and iron pipe-rail fence

**Style:** N.A.

**Original Use & Present Use:** To support Perkins Street and Chestnut Street above the Park at Wards Pond.

**Later alterations:** The iron fence was removed quite recently and replaced with a chain link fence.

**Location:** Above Wards Pond along Perkins Street and Chestnut Street

**Recent rehabilitation & restoration:** None

**Assessment of present condition:** Appears to be in satisfactory condition. Foundation is exposed due to soil erosion. Iron fence should be replaced. Wall is 1,368 feet long ranging from 4 to 14 feet in height. The iron rail was 261 feet long and was located on the Chestnut Street side of the wall.

### 3.17 Pedestrian Path Retaining Wall above Small Stream at Nickerson Hill

**Name (original & present):** None

**Date (design & construction period):** Approx. 1894

**Designer:** Olmsted firm

**Contractor:** Unknown

**Material:** Roxbury pudding-stone

**Style:** N.A.

**Original Use & Present Use:** Retain pedestrian path along steep slope of Nickerson Hill

**Later alterations:** Boulder parapet wall probably removed by Pettigrew.

**Location:** Between stream and Nickerson Hill

**Recent rehabilitation & restoration:** None

**Assessment of present condition:** Probably requires some structural work and repointing. Boulder parapet wall should be investigated and re-established if original to design.

### 3.18 Allerton Street Stairs

**Name (original & present):** Allerton Street Stairs

**Date (design & construction period):** 1892

**Designer:** Unknown

**Contractor:** Unknown

**Material:** Concrete. Originally had iron hand rails.

**Style:** N.A.

**Original Use & Present Use:** Pedestrian access

**Later alterations:** Hand rails removed.

**Location:** Between Riverdale Parkway and Pond Avenue on axis with Allerton Street

**Recent rehabilitation & restoration:** None

**Assessment of present condition:** Needs replacement of handrails and improvement of surrounding landscape.

**Comments:** These stairs were apparently built as a substitute for an elaborate overlook belvedere with toolhouse, which was planned but never constructed (see Section 1.3).

### 3.19 Miscellaneous Small Structures

Other small structures or details integral to the original park design included:

- granite curbstones
- Cobble gutters (still exist along some roads)
- manholes
- catchbasins with drain pipes into the park
- boulders set:
  - at stream outlets
  - at bridge foundations
  - to retain soil in steep banks
  - to retain soil at roots of trees where grading operations occurred
  - for ornamental effect along banks of ponds, streams and in landscape
- macadam roads later upgraded to bituminous
- gravel walks changed to macadam, later changed to concrete along the east side of the Jamaicaway

## 4. Furnishings

### 4.1 Electric lights

**Name (original & present):** Electric lights

**Date (design & construction period):** Electric lights turned on for first time in Leverett Park, June 29, 1895; total of 34 lamps.

**Designer:** Unknown

**Contractor:** Unknown

**Material:** Concrete footings, cast iron pull boxes, wood or iron bases, wooden posts, metal fixture

**Style:** Two styles (see *Comments* section below)

**Original Use & Present Use:** Illumination of paths and areas of park.

**Location:** Plans showing locations are available at the Boston Bath House repository

**Date of Removal:** Unknown

**Reasons for Removal:** Unknown

**Comments:** Seven remnants have so far been located, most in the vicinity of Wards Pond. They range from bases only to bases and poles to one that is complete with lamp. It appears that there were two types, one with a square, cast-iron base marked with "EL" in script, supporting an octagonal wooden pole with foot brackets, topped by a shepherd's crook lamp. This is the type of which one survives in nearly intact condition on the northeast side of Nickerson Hill. The same kind of fixture with base and pole but no lamp may be seen when entering the park over the Wards Pond Footbridge. A third (base and pole) is located on the south side of Wards Pond but is in accessible for close inspection because of dampness. Old photographs show that this was the shepherd's crook type.

The shepherd's crook type appears to have been used to light pedestrian paths, whether on the periphery of the park or within it. The vertical type was probably used for general illumination of key areas of the park; they are seen, for example, in photographs at the Natural History pools (920-3). Photographs at F.L.O.N.H.S. that show the shepherd's crook lights are 920-43, 920-44, and 923-2.

Figure II.3 in the Olmsted Park Historic Landscape Report, an undated photograph of Wards Pond (FLONHS 964-24) also shows the shepherd's crook lamp on the south side of Wards Pond of which the base and pole still survive.

The second type of light has a round, cast-iron base with a Greek meander pattern and a fluted wooden pole. Good examples of these (bases only) are found at the top of Nickerson Hill and the southwest corner of Wards Pond and (bases and poles) near the Willow Pond Outlet Structure and Willow Pond Bridge. (The exact same base is found at Jamaica Pond near the entrance to Pinebank.) This type probably held the vertical lamps seen in old photographs.

## 4.2 Benches

**Name (original & present):** Benches

**Date (design & construction period):** Late 19th century

**Designer:** Unknown

**Contractor:** Unknown

**Material:** Believed to be wrought iron metal strap work and wood slats.

**Style:** N.A.

**Original Use & Present Use:** N.A.

**Location:** Ganged-up benches can be seen in photos of Wards Pond area.

**Date of removal:** Unknown

**Reasons for removal:** Unknown

**Comments:** The design of these benches can be deduced from numerous photographs (F.L.O.N.H.S. 964-23 and 964-24), and some post cards. The 964-24 photograph shows ganged benches at Wards Pond. Numerous benches would be desirable today in the park.

**Figure 4-1:** Wards Pond, showing bench and lights (Boston Public Library, Print Department)

### 4.3 Drinking Fountain

**Name (original & present):** Drinking fountain

**Date (design & construction period):** 1898 (constructed)

**Designer:** Unknown

**Contractor:** Unknown

**Material:** Unknown

**Style:** Unknown

**Original Use & Present Use:** To supply drinking water in an area of the park that was seeing increased active recreational use.

**Location:** Probably directly north or south of Willow Pond Road on Boston side, possibly in location of existing fountain

**Date of removal:** Unknown

**Reasons for removal:** Unknown

**Comments:** This may appear on 1930 air photo of park in Daisy Field area.

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