

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District

other names/site number Washington Park

Name of Multiple Property Listing \_\_\_\_\_

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

## 2. Location

street & number Michigan Avenue and Sheridan Road

☐ not for publication

city or town Wilmette

☐ Vicinity

state Illinois

county Cook

zip code 60091

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance: \_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide \_\_\_ local

Applicable National Register Criteria: \_\_\_ A \_\_\_ B \_\_\_ C \_\_\_ D

Signature of certifying official/Title: Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Illinois Department of Natural Resources - SHPO

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

\_\_\_ entered in the National Register

\_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register

\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register

\_\_\_ removed from the National Register

\_\_\_ other (explain:)

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor

Name of Property

Cook ,Illinois

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## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	District
<input type="checkbox"/>	Site
<input type="checkbox"/>	Structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	Object

### Number of Resources within Property

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	4	buildings
1	0	site
13	3	structure
4	0	object
19	7	<b>Total</b>

Number of contributing resources previously  
listed in the National Register

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LANDSCAPE/ park

RECREATION & CULTURE/ outdoor rec.

OTHER/ U.S. Coast Guard Station

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LANDSCAPE/ park

RECREATION & CULTURE/ outdoor rec.

OTHER/ U.S. Coast Guard Station

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS/

Colonial Revival

LATE 18<sup>th</sup> & EARLY 20<sup>th</sup> CEN. AM. MVMTS./

Prairie School

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Brick

roof: Asphalt

other: Vegetation

Limestone

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### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity).

#### Summary Paragraph

The Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District is a 59.2-acre lakefront greenspace in Wilmette, Illinois. A significant cultural landscape that possesses an extremely high level of historic integrity, the park and harbor are largely comprised of “made land” along the Lake Michigan shoreline. The park and harbor’s initial creation was spurred by the development of the North Shore Channel, a drainage canal constructed by the Sanitary District of Chicago (SDC) between 1907 and 1911 to increase the flow and improve the water quality of the North Branch of the Chicago River. (The SDC is now known as the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago.)

The Wilmette Park District (WPD) improved Gillson Park’s landscape during two major phases of development. The initial 22-acre park, which incorporated the harbor and southwest side of the current landscape, followed an original ca. 1915 plan by landscape architect Benjamin Gage (Figure 1). The second phase allowed for the park’s expansion in the 1930s and was funded through the federal government’s Works Progress Administration (WPA). Landscape architects Charles Dudley Wagstaff and Robert E. Everly created a comprehensive scheme in 1936 for this second phase of development (Figure 2).

Today, the site is largely comprised of contributing resources and many character-defining features. Altogether, the Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District possess nineteen (19) contributing resources including its landscape – counted as a single contributing site; two buildings – the Coast Guard Station and Sheridan Shore Yacht Club; thirteen (13) structures – including the harbor, the Sheridan Road Bridge and Pumping Station, the picnic shelter, drives, and several structures of historic stonework; as well four (4) objects. The non-contributing resources are comprised of four (4) buildings, all of which fit well into the context of the historic park and harbor; and three structures — a parking lot, a playground, and a tennis court which remains in its historic location. The Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District possesses a very strong level of integrity and warrants listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

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### Narrative Description

#### OVERVIEW

Gillson Park (originally known as Washington Park) and Wilmette Harbor are located near the southern border of Wilmette, Illinois along the shoreline of Lake Michigan. The initial creation of the site was spurred by the Sanitary District of Chicago (SDC) which developed the North Shore Channel between 1907 and 1911 to improve sanitation and water quality for the region. That project resulted in the construction of the Sheridan Road Bridge and Pumping Station and Wilmette Harbor. The initiative also inspired community leaders to form the Wilmette Park District (WPD) in 1908.

The initial property for the new lakefront park extended from Washington Avenue at the north to the south side of the harbor. It included residential lots with riparian access east of Michigan Avenue along the

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original bluff line of Lake Michigan that had been acquired by the SDC. After the construction of breakwaters and revetments, the SDC created 22 acres of “made land” utilizing dredged material from the channel excavation which was then dumped into Lake Michigan to provide for the channel inlet and surrounding area (Figures 4 and 5). The property rises in a gradual slope from the lake level on the east to what was then the bluff line on the west (Figure 6). This landfill was blended to the original bluff line just south of Washington Avenue and created the original boundaries of the park.

Gillson Park had two major periods of development, each steered by a full plan for the park. Benjamin E. Gage, a talented local landscape architect and nurseryman, created the original plan for Washington Park around 1915 (Figure 1). Gage’s plan featured a curvilinear circuit drive, which was soon laid out as planned, as well as the entry drives from Washington Avenue and from the intersection of Sheridan Road and Michigan Avenue. It included the harbor and set forth a naturalistic vision for the landscape.

Over time, the park’s boundaries were expanded including a late 1930s extension spurred by a project to dredge and enlarge Wilmette Harbor. Dredged materials from the harbor project and clay that was excavated as part of the Winnetka Grade Separation project were used to add landfill to the park, thus extending its boundaries to the north and east. The 1936 Wagstaff and Everly Plan (Figure 2) provided the vision for the expanded park including previously constructed areas of the landscape that had followed Gage’s Plan of ca. 1915.

The Wagstaff and Everly 1936 Plan provided areas of naturalistic or Prairie style landscapes with lawns edged by irregular groupings of plants, many of which were native to the Midwest, and stonework details including full and partial council rings. The plan included an outdoor amphitheater (later named the Wallace Bowl) which was nestled in the remaining lake bluff site (Figure 3).

Gordon B. Wallace, who worked for the WPD from 1937 to 1968, made additional improvements to the park’s landscape including a major project in 1946 to expand the amphitheater stage and screen it with lush plantings.

## **SETTING**

Gillson Park is bordered on the north by the Michigan Shores Club—the community’s first country club—and the Wilmette Water Treatment Facility. (The Water Treatment Plant was initially constructed in 1931 on what was then known as Ouilmette Park.) Both of these historic properties stand just north of Lake Avenue and west of Gillson Park’s sailing beach. Lake Michigan serves as the eastern edge of the park and the harbor. Although Gillson Park beaches were expanded over the years, Lake Michigan and the beach shoreline have always served as the eastern boundary of the park.

The Baha’i House of Worship at 100 Linden Avenue (also known as Baha’i Temple) stands just west of Sheridan Road at the south end of the park. Designed by French Canadian architect Louis Bourgeois, the imposing white concrete domed building was constructed between the late 1920s and early 1950s. The nine-sided structure rises above a stunning terraced landscape and is quite visible from Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor. (The monumental structure is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.) The Baha’i House of Worship also owns an expansive property directly south of the harbor on the east side of Sheridan Road. This was the site of architect Benjamin Marshall’s mansion and studio, which was demolished in 1950. A well-landscaped parking lot sits north of a flat-roofed white building at 536 N. Sheridan Road, which is part of the Baha’i Temple complex.



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Historic residences on wide lots stretch along the west side of Michigan Avenue at the western border of Gillson Park. These include the 1911 Floyd and Alta Bateman House at 735 Michigan Avenue. Floyd Bateman was an early and long-standing member of the WPD, and the triangular green space south of the house between Sheridan Road and Michigan Avenue was later named in his honor. (Historically part of Gillson Park, Bateman Park lies within the boundaries of the historic district.) Beyond the southern terminus of Michigan Avenue, Sheridan Road and the Sheridan Road Bridge and Pumping Station lie within the historic district.

## **LANDSCAPE**

**Landscape Architect: Benjamin Gage, ca. 1915**

**Landscape Architect: C.D. Wagstaff and Robert E. Everly, 1936**

**Forester and Park Superintendent: Gordon B. Wallace, 1937-1968**

A lovely greenspace with breathtaking views of Lake Michigan, gently sloping topography, curving drives and paths, broad lawns edged by trees and shrubs, Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor have a naturalistic appearance. However, the site is a cultural landscape largely made of “filled land” (Figures 4 and 5). Substantial engineering and design work was undertaken to create the landscape. Following full plans for the park produced by Benjamin Gage around 1915 and Wagstaff and Everly in 1936, the park’s landscape was rendered in an informal, naturalistic or Prairie style. Today, the landscape of Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor retains many of its important character-defining elements and possesses an extremely high degree of integrity.

## **Topography**

Gillson Park’s topography includes some areas that follow the natural slope of the site’s historic bluff as well as substantial areas of reshaped land that resulted from the Harbor and Channel dredging operations. Landscapes along Michigan Avenue north of the Washington Avenue entry reflect the higher level of the original Lake Michigan bluff line, while the gently sweeping landforms south of Washington Avenue are almost entirely made of excavated and dredge material from the first phase of the park’s development in the late 1910s. The seating tiers of the Wallace Bowl are nestled into the slope of the original bluff. This area of the park reflects the transition between these two distinctive landforms. The amphitheater is integrated into the natural site with the performance and stage areas at the toe of the bluff topography and the top of the seating tiers located at the edge of the 1908-10 landfill. (A description of the Wallace Bowl can be found under the Structures and Building Section below.)

The expert shaping of the original landfill created a gradually sloping landform that extends from the top of the natural bluff, and slopes down in a northeastward direction to the lakeshore. The major features of Gage’s Plan (Figure 1) were shaped into this made land. In the second design phase of development, Wagstaff and Everly created a lovely eastern edge of new landfill and reshaped the terraced harbor promenade on the northeast side of Wilmette Harbor (Figure 2).

The park and harbor landforms were designed to reflect the combination and unique qualities of natural and created topography. Beach extensions were created by both engineered and natural processes. In several areas, dramatic slopes down to the harbor required stairways and ramped walkways and drives. Today, the park’s topographic form and character retains a high level of historic integrity.

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## **Circulation System**

The park's existing drives are contributing resources that date to its Period of Significance. In addition to providing a circulation system for park and harbor users, the drives are important features of the landscape's layout and spatial setting.

### **Circuit Drive: Upper and Middle Drives and Park Entry Drives**

A kidney-shaped circuit drive serves as the centerpiece of Gillson Park's landscape. The gracefully curving 20-foot-wide drives form a loop with Upper Drive at the west and Middle Drive to the east. An entry drive at Sheridan Road provides access to the Harbor Drive entry driveway. This stretch forms a triangular landscape area as it meets with Upper Drive. A second historic entry drive provides a connection with Washington Avenue. This remains fully intact but has served as an exit-only drive for vehicular traffic for many years. At the east end of Washington Avenue, another triangular landscape area is formed at the juncture of Upper and Middle Drives. Directly to the north, an oval shaped planted area is edged by a stretch of drive that was originally a pedestrian path.

Most of the existing kidney-shaped circuit drive dates to Gage's Plan (Figure 1) and has followed its existing configuration since the plan was first executed around 1917. Although originally composed of gravel, the roadway system was fully paved by the early 1930s. Wagstaff and Everly respected and retained the circuit drive in their 1936 plan (Figure 2). Although concrete bollards have been used to restrict vehicular access to Middle Drive for many years, the historic drive remains intact. Reinforced by informal tree masses, the circuit drive is an important character defining element that retains a high level of integrity.

### **Harbor Drive/Overlook Drive**

The original stretch of Harbor Drive served as the south end of Gage's ca. 1915 circuit drive (Figure 1). The Wagstaff and Everly Plan of 1936 (Figure 2) provided an extension to Harbor Drive called Overlook Drive for the new filled area at the east side of the park. Overlook Drive created a dramatic beachfront roadway with a gentle curve that parallels Upper and Middle Drives (Figure 15). Historically the drive extended north and connected to Middle Drive. That stretch remains intact and links to the picnic grove and Lakeview Center today. During the property's Period of Significance, Overlook Drive was extended north further along the beach to Lake Avenue. At the west end of the curved Harbor Drive entry driveway, a large boulder and plaque are dedicated to Louis K. Gillson, the first president of the WPD Board. The commemorative boulder was installed in 1955, the same year that Washington Park was renamed in his honor.

### **Sheridan Road/Michigan Avenue**

Sheridan Road, a historic pleasure drive that extends north from the Evanston border, curves gently at the eastern edge of the Baha'i Temple's landscape and straightens to provide access to the Sheridan Road Bridge (description below). Most of Sheridan Road is comprised of asphalt; however, this changes at the Sheridan Road entrance to Gillson Park. The stretch of Sheridan Road that meets with the Michigan Avenue/Harbor Drive entry drive is comprised of red brick set in a herringbone pattern. Although asphalt shoulders stretch along both sides of the Sheridan Road vehicular drive, a red herringbone brick crosswalk borders the shoulder on the east side. The stretch of brick roadway and crosswalk were constructed around

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2010. Although they are not part of the landscape's historic fabric, these brick paved areas mark the entryway of Gillson Park in a manner that is suggestive of Wilmette's historic brick roadways.

Just east of Sheridan Road, the intersection of Michigan Avenue and Harbor Drive forms a V-shaped paved entrance drive into the park. This area is also comprised of asphalt paving; however, as Michigan Avenue extends to the north, a transition occurs adjacent to the landscape known as Bateman Park. The entire stretch of Michigan Avenue from the first residence (735 Michigan Avenue) to Lake Avenue is paved in vitrified red brick pavers. Dating to ca. 1910, the Michigan Avenue brick paving is characteristic of Wilmette's historic streets. Michigan Avenue has a generous 80-foot right-of-way, with wide concrete pedestrian sidewalks and broad tree-canopied parkways on both east and west sides. Ornamental lamp posts are located along the parkway on both sides of Michigan Avenue. (These replicas of historic lighting fixtures match those along other Wilmette streets.)

At Washington Avenue, the Michigan Avenue brick paving forms a U-shaped plaza that provides an entryway into the park. A pair of tapered pylons of rusticated ashlar limestone flank the entry drive. These handsome stone piers have marked the original northern entryway to the park since the late 1910s or early 1920s.

### **Lake Avenue**

Gillson Park was expanded to the north between Washington and Lake Avenues in the 1930s. However, only a small stretch of the western end of Lake Avenue then extended into the park (Figure 15). At that time, a walkway led to the Water Plant, which sat just north of the park. Beaches stretched along the northeast edge. Over the years, Lake Avenue was extended to the east and linked with Overlook Drive. Today, Lake Avenue curves to the north beyond Overlook Drive and extends northerly to the end of the sailing beach.

### **Spatial Configurations/ Land Uses**

Both the Gage (Figure 1) and the Wagstaff and Everly (Figure 2) plans for the park used roadway alignments and plantings to create landscape spaces. Both schemes featured informal groupings of large and small trees along the circuit drive and irregularly shaped lawn areas between Upper Drive and Middle Drive, and perimeter areas. The Gage Plan proposed these lawn spaces for picnicking and other passive recreational pursuits such as field sports and lawn tennis. The Wagstaff and Everly design continued this pattern while also adding paved tennis courts and a ball field in a new lawn area directly east of Middle Drive (Figure 2). Today, the tennis courts remain in their historic location. The ball field provides a lawn with picnic areas, but it now also includes a playground and sand volleyball courts. (Baseball diamonds no longer exist in the park.)

The harbor was an existing feature at the time that both the Gage (Figure 1) and Wagstaff and Everly (Figure 2) plans were developed. The Gage Plan called for extensive plantings along the north bank of the harbor and a formal promenade with an overlook at its east end. By the time the Wagstaff and Everly produced their plan in the mid-1930s, the U.S. Coast Guard Station (Figure 11) had already been constructed on the north side of the harbor west of the promenade.

The proposed location for the new Sheridan Shore Yacht Club is shown as a parking area on the Wagstaff and Everly Plan. However, according to *Wilmette Life* articles of 1937, discussions about the need for a

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permanent home for the club helped spur the development of the Wagstaff and Everly plan. This design scheme called for a more naturalistic treatment to the promenade walkway and surrounding landscape. Wagstaff and Everly's design for the amphitheater (now known as the Wallace Bowl) also expressed this naturalistic idiom. Directly southeast of the amphitheater, the plan shows a field house. Although the Lakeview Center wouldn't be built until the 1980s, it was erected in the location that Wagstaff and Everly had earmarked for such a building.

### **Planting Design and Vegetation**

Throughout the history of Gillson Park, planting designs and vegetation have been extremely important to the landscape's development and appearance. While no historic planting plans have been discovered, many other resources help provide an understanding of the park's historic planting designs and materials. Plants were not listed in either the ca. 1915 Gage Plan (Figure 1) or the 1936 Wagstaff and Everly plans (Figure 2); however, both indicate the planting design included trees and shrub masses. Historic journal and newspaper articles also provide a strong sense of design intent, and several cases even call out specific plants. In addition, historic aerial photographs have been reviewed, and a site assessment of the park's existing vegetation has been conducted.

After the WPD followed Gage's recommendations for treating the filled-in site, initial tree planting began in 1917 (Figure 8). Despite the lush plantings shown in Gage's plan (Figure 1), it seems that implementation of the early landscape occurred slowly. Historic photographs show that by 1931, while the area west of Michigan Avenue and both sides of the inlet were well planted with lawn, shrubs, and trees (Figures 9 and 10), the remainder of the finished parkland was composed of lawn with very sparse tree plantings.

In the mid-1930s, New Deal funding gave the WPD the opportunity not only to enlarge the park, but to complete its' only partially realized landscape. Several articles that appeared in *Wilmette Life* in 1937, indicated that in planting the park's landscape, the designers and the WPD intended to give preference to native flora. Jens Jensen, who is considered the dean of the Prairie style of landscape architecture, espoused the concept of using plants that were indigenous to the Midwest. As he was Everly's mentor and held in high regard by many Wilmette residents at that time, it is not surprising that native plants were considered a priority in developing the palette. Several newspaper articles of 1937 noted that the Everly and the WPD had met with the Wilmette Garden Club to discuss the selection of plants and that there was a strong consensus for utilizing plants that are native to Illinois including dense hawthorn and wild crab apples. According to the articles, native cedar, juniper, and pines were also recommended as plant materials for the park.

Today, groupings of native hawthorns (*Crataegus Mollis*) and crabapples (*Malus lowensis*) can be found along Gillson Park's lakeshore, harbor promenade, near the amphitheater, and adjacent to the council ring. Other existing specimen trees that were clearly planted during the site's Period of Significance include red and white oaks, hackberry, linden, silver maple, American elm, cottonwood, and willow, all native to the region. Today, the park's fine collection of trees includes several varieties of evergreens including Douglas fir, Austrian pine and red cedar.

While some of the older examples of these plantings may date from the late 1930s, others may have been planted a bit later by Gordon Wallace. In 1946, he planted more than ninety specimens of evergreen

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shrubs and trees as part of his design for a new amphitheater stage. Other large trees in the park that appear to date within the Period of Significance include ginkgoes, bald cypress, and various types of maples.

Historic images reveal a much denser planting of canopy trees along the park drives than is currently evident. However, tree masses along circuit drives and the resultant open lawns between Overlook, Middle and Upper Drives remain as a strong character defining aesthetic for the park landscape. This is particularly evident in the expansive views across the broad lawn between Upper and Middle drives.

Over the years, the WPD continued to plant trees, shrubs, and perennials of types and in locations that remain consistent with the late 1930s plan and philosophies. For example, the harbor promenade has been planted with a diverse palette that includes many native perennials. In 2016, the WPD received grants to plant a habitat for migratory birds near the existing wildflower garden at the north side of the park. Both of these spaces include native plants in informal planting designs that are compatible with the Park's naturalistic context. Memorial tree plantings in various locations have also helped with the succession of canopy trees. (That program seems to have been particularly active in the 1990s and early 2000s.)

An additional planted landscape feature is the 1921 World War I memorial grove and stone marker. The memorial is composed of a plaque mounted on a boulder which is surrounded by thirteen Norway Maple trees located near the Lakeview Center and the triangular island terminus of the Washington Avenue entrance drive. While original plans for the memorial grove have not been discovered, newspaper sources indicate that an original grove of thirteen Norway Maple trees and the boulder and plaque were installed on the south side of the Park near the harbor. It seems quite possible that the memorial may have been replanted in a new location after the original trees died. While the exact location of the original memorial grove is not certain, the existing memorial includes the historic boulder, the same type of trees as had been originally planted, as well as the same overall planting form as had been described in 1921.

Trees, shrubs, and flowers are ephemeral, and only a small percentage of mature plants are expected to be found in a historic landscape. However, the groupings, patterns of planting and tree specimens that remain in Gillson Park's landscape today are consistent with the site's historic context. The plants and planting design remain as important character defining features of the park and the site possesses a high level of landscape integrity.

**Stonework Elements**

Gillson Park's landscape includes several stonework elements that are expressive of a Prairie Style aesthetic. Like the native plant palette, these features reflect the influence of Jens Jensen. The pre-eminent designer created landscapes that were meant to evoke the beauty of natural Midwestern scenery. He often included limestone details that emulated natural stone outcroppings. His stratified stonework was evocative of the striated bluffs found along the Lake Michigan shoreline and other natural areas of Illinois.

Wagstaff and Everly created similar limestone details in their work to complete Gillson Park's landscape. Their naturalistic redesign of the promenade that stretches along the southeast side of the park included a substantial amount of stratified stonework. Limestone walkways and steps and other stretches of asphalt with flagstone inserts remain in the promenade area. Adjacent stacked sedimentary limestone terrace walls include a long two-tiered seat wall with a gentle curve in the center and retaining walls with steps at

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the fan-shaped lake overlook at the east end of the promenade. Nearby, stone steps edged with stratified stonework lead from the area just east of the Coast Guard Station to the north side of the harbor.

Among the most noteworthy elements of stonework in Gillson Park are two council rings, one that forms a full circle and the other a partial circle. Both are located on the north side of the park. Providing spaces for people to gather and to commune with nature, council rings were one of Jensen's favorite elements, and their presence at Gillson Park clearly connects this landscape to the Prairie style of landscape design. He included such limestone circular benches in many of his parks and natural areas. The Gillson Park council rings reflect the type found at the Mahoney Bird and Wildflower Sanctuary, a Jensen-designed landscape from 1933 located in nearby Kenilworth, Illinois. Wagstaff and Everly's stonework detail remain important elements of Gillson Park's landscape. The use of rusticated and stratified limestone in their design of the park provides a touchpoint to the Prairie style, a design expression that celebrated the natural qualities, landscape forms, materials, and plantings of the region.

## **STRUCTURES AND BUILDINGS**

Gillson Park is primarily a landscape of green spaces, scenic roadways, paths, planted areas and beaches where architectural structures are not dominant. However, the park features several historic structures and buildings that are contributing resources to the historic district. These include the Wallace Bowl, the Picnic Shelter, Wilmette Harbor, Sheridan Road Bridge and Pump House, the United States Coast Guard Station, Sheridan Shore Yacht Club, and the Yacht Club Parking Lot.

### **Wallace Bowl**

**1936-1937**

**Landscape Architects:**

**Wagstaff and Everly, original**

**Gordon Wallace, 1946**

**Barton Aschman Associates, 1984**

Known originally as the amphitheater, the Wallace Bowl was designed by Wagstaff and Everly (Figure 3) and constructed by WPA craftsmen (Figure 13). Located northeast of the Washington Avenue entry drive, the bowl is among the most distinctive features of the park. With seventeen semicircular rusticated limestone tiers, the amphitheater was meant to have a naturalistic appearance. In fact, a *Wilmette Life* article of September 16, 1937, suggested that the new concert bowl fit so well into the natural-looking setting that it appeared as though the amphitheater had "...been hewn from a solid ledge of rock." Not only did the limestone amphitheater fit well with the Prairie style design of the landscape, but this type of stonework is a hallmark of the WPA park work in the region.

The configuration of the bowl follows the tradition of ancient Greek theaters. As noted in the Topography section above, the semicircular amphitheater was carefully integrated into the topography at the dividing line between the made land of the southern park and the remains of the steep lake bluff of the northern part of the park. The curving wall that forms the upper enclosure of the stepped amphitheater transitions to a high wall on its east side into which support elements such as restrooms were originally inserted.

The amphitheater's seating terraces and retaining walls were constructed of rusticated limestone with additional limestone flagging as walkways. Records indicate that the structure originally had redwood seats atop the limestone bases. At the base of the bowl, a turf lawn extends to the edge of the raised stage.

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Historically, the stage was located at the base of the amphitheater. In 1946, Gordon Wallace designed improvements that included a raised and enlarged stage (Figure 14). His design features a continuous set of limestone steps that tiered down from the stage which had a floor of green concrete. As noted above under Planting Design and Vegetation, Wallace provided extensive plantings as a backdrop and at the wings of the stage. When Gordon Wallace retired from his long-held position as Wilmette's Park Superintendent in the late 1960s, the amphitheater was aptly named in his honor.

The Wallace Bowl underwent a sympathetic rehabilitation project in 1984. The work included another expansion to the stage which included replacing a set of steps and reconstructing the outer wall with closely matching stone. The project closed off the underground support spaces and restrooms that had originally been tucked into the high wall at the lower level. (The subterranean restrooms were replaced by the construction of the Lakeview Center.). The stone steps of the stage were replaced with a low stone wall that matched the original stonework. New sensitively designed stone wing walls were built at the lower end of the bowl, and an entry terrace with low curved walls was added at the structure's upper level. A panel with incised letters spelling out Wallace Bowl is well integrated into the curved wall on the west side of the entry plaza. The project also included a new drainage system, as well as the construction of new seats made of Douglas fir to emulate the original redwood seats, (The original wooden seats had become so severely deteriorated that they were removed in the 1970s.) Over the years, the evergreen stage backdrop has been carefully maintained and persists as an important character defining feature of the amphitheater.

The 1984 additions to the Wallace Bowl had only a modest visual impact on the historic form and appearance of the structure. The amphitheater remains an intact character-defining feature of the park and possessing all seven aspects of integrity: location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, the property retains a historic integrity at a very high level. Today, the WPD is planning another rehabilitation to the Wallace Bowl, and the intention is to be as respectful to the historic integrity of the structure as possible.

### **Picnic Shelter**

**ca. 1972**

**Architect: Unknown**

Gillson Park's picnic shelter stands to the east of Overlook Drive and south of the beach house parking lot. Nestled in a grove of historic evergreens, the shelter is rectangular in plan. Constructed of wood, the open structure has a gabled roof supported by narrow square columns. The roof is sheathed in asphalt shingles. This simple structure might have been custom designed, or it could have been purchased from a company that manufactured recreational structures of that era. With a simple rustic appearance, the picnic shelter fits in with the naturalistic character of the park. The picnic grove and shelter reflect their time of construction, purpose, and location, and contribute to the historic character of this area of the park. Picnicking has always been a popular activity in the park, and the WPD provides many picnic tables under and near the shelter.

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**Wilmette Harbor**

**1907- 1920**

**Sanitary District of Chicago (SDC)**

**1938-1972**

**Wilmette Harbor Association, SDC and WPD**

Developed by the SDC as part of the dredging and engineering that produced the North Shore Channel inlet, Wilmette Harbor is located directly east of the Sheridan Road Bridge and Pumping Station. Although the water feature was originally constructed as a settling basin to prevent excess sand from entering the canal, the SDC adapted it for use as a boat harbor in 1912. Comprised of a narrow rectangular inlet at the west and a larger basin that edges Lake Michigan, its configuration has essentially remained the same throughout its history.

The waterway has been edged in concrete since 1920, when the SDC conducted an improvement project to beautify Wilmette Harbor (Figures 9 and 16). Two historic metal railings stretch along the edge of the walkway at the north side of the harbor. Several original concrete lamp posts are located on the east side of the Pumping Station; however, they are no longer topped with their original round globes. (One has no luminaire, and the others have lanterns that replaced the globes.) A boat lift crane extends the nautical complex eastward. The crane was originally located near Yacht Club's previous clubhouse in the Marshall mansion on the harbor's south side and was moved to the north when the new clubhouse opened in 1937. The historic crane continues to be used by the Yacht Club.

At the far east end of the harbor lakefront revetments of riprap boulders flank the harbor opening. These revetments replaced the concrete piers that had historically edged the harbor (Figure 16). Various jetties and moorings have been built over the years; however, the harbor's overall appearance has had little change throughout its history.

**Sheridan Road Bridge and Pumping Station**

**1907-1910**

**Architect: Frederick L. Barrett, SDC**

**Engineers: George M. Wisner and Carlton R. Dart, SDC**

The Beaux Arts-style design of the Sheridan Road Bridge and Pumping Station was inspired by a sketch produced by Robert R. McCormick, President of SDC. Plans for the structure were prepared by the SDC's engineering department under the direction of engineers George M. Wisner and Carlton R. Dart and architect Frederick L. Barrett. This unique, integrated, multi-functional structure includes the Sheridan Road Bridge at its upper level and the Pumping Station at the lower level (Figure 7). The Sheridan Road Bridge allows vehicular traffic to cross over the North Shore Channel inlet. The Pumping Station was designed to provide lock-facilitated passage for boats, as well as a pumping facility that would flow Lake Michigan water into the North Shore Channel. The pumping station was engineered to generate electricity needed for its operation.

The Sheridan Road Bridge is a concrete encased deck girder structure. It measures 210 feet in length and 63.3 feet in width (from the outer edges of the deck). The Sheridan Road Bridge and Pumping Station are faced in smooth Bedford limestone. At the upper level, the bridge features parapet walls of cut limestone in the motif of a Classical balustrade (Figure 7). Ornamental light fixtures stand at intervals on both sides of the parapets. Several bronze plaques provide historical information about the structure.



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Tucked beneath the bridge, the Pumping Station features an enclosed center space flanked by two wide U-shaped openings between the bridge bents on each side. The east and west facades of the enclosed portion of the structure are nearly identical. Five tall arched openings stretch across each of these primary façades. They are topped with keystones. Other simple, but elegant Classical details enliven the elevations. Along with upgraded internal working components, exterior additions were made including some fencing and scaffolding structures. Despite these additions, the Sheridan Road Bridge and Pumping Station continue to provide their historic functions, and the structure possesses a high level of historic integrity.

**United States Coast Guard Station**  
**1931**

**U.S. Coast Guard Architects**  
**Additions: ca. 1955, 1980**

The Wilmette Harbor U.S. Coast Guard Life Saving Station was completed in 1931. Designed by in-house Coast Guard architects, the building represented a hybrid of two station types that had been developed by consulting architect Victor Mindeleff—the “Chatham” and the “Roosevelt” station. Both models are expressive of a Colonial Revival style, with intersecting gabled roofs, dormers, six-over-six double-hung windows with shutters, and porches. The stations were often painted white with red roofs to provide a high level of visibility.

When first completed, the two-and-a-half- story brick Wilmette Harbor Coast Guard Station was painted white, and its pitched roof was clad in red ceramic tiles (Figure 11). Today, the building has exposed orange brick and a roof of red asphalt shingles. Rectangular in plan, the building’s north and south façades both feature a large center-gabled dormer and smaller dormers on each outer end. At the center of the north façade’s lower level, a two-bay garage is flanked by two, symmetrically placed open porches with shed roofs. The garage bay at the south/harbor elevation features a launch for stored watercraft. The structure was enlarged to include a flat-roofed brick addition in the mid-1950s. Renovations, ca. 1980, included the construction of gabled roof over the addition as well as the removal of the white paint, and replacement of the original ceramic tile roof with asphalt shingles. Contemporary security gates are in place, and the Harbor Drive lawn is surrounded by a chain-link fence. Despite the alterations to the building, the property continues to be used for its original function. Today, the U.S. Coast Guard Station retains the integrity of location, design, feeling, association and setting.

**Sheridan Shore Yacht Clubhouse**  
**1937**

**Architect: Walter T. Stockton (Assisted by: Raymond Emerson and Berseford E. Beck)**  
**Addition: Booth & Nagle Architects, ca. 1972**

The Sheridan Shore Yacht Club Clubhouse is jointly used by the Wilmette Harbor Club, Sheridan Shore Yacht Club, and the Sailing School. Constructed in 1937, the handsome Colonial Revival style building stands just west of the U.S. Coast Guard Station (Figure 12). Sited in a manner that is reflective of its purpose, the structure is set at an angle to provide magnificent views in a southeastward direction across the harbor to Lake Michigan. Set within the sloped site, the structure rises to one-and-a-half stories at its Harbor Drive front and two full stories on the rear harbor side.

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The main mass of the building is topped with a gabled roof that includes several gabled dormers. At the Harbor Drive (north) façade, a one-story portion with an intersecting gable roof forms an L. This front façade has a residential appearance. The building has a more monumental scale at the (north) rear façade, where a handsome addition is topped by a flat roof.

The building's east elevation features an exposed brick chimney flanked by French doors. Outdoor patios are adjacent. The west side of the clubhouse breaks the symmetry of the end gabled colonial style main structure with the front gabled wing that is original to the structure. The southern half of this wing was extended south to create an expanded dining room. Window fenestration on this addition is sensitive to the original and gives the impression that this "prow" extension was part of the original structure. The entire enclosed porch at the south has a colonial style balustrade that is expressive of a widow's walk. Although the 1970s project included recladding the white clapboard structure in artificial siding, the structure possesses all seven elements of integrity.

**Sheridan Shore Yacht Club Parking Lot**  
**1938**

A large brick parking lot with a sloped driveway is located just east of the Yacht Club. The driveway is edged with stacked stone laid in tiers that follow the slope towards the harbor. Funded by the WPA, the project relied on the same kind of vitrified brick that is characteristic of Wilmette's older streets. (Interestingly, many of Wilmette's historic brick streets were repaired by the WPA in the 1930s. Some even have small markers that say "Relayed by WPA.")

**Non-Contributing Resources**

Over the years, Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor have been well maintained. Only moderate alterations and new construction have been needed in the years since 1973, the end of the Historic District's Period of Significance.

A park maintenance building which has been in the same location (south of Lake Avenue and west of the beach parking lot) for decades has been updated over the years. A small fish cleaning building designed by architect Larry Lasky was built near the southwest end of the harbor in the early 2000s. The Lakeview Center (1989) and the Beach House (2019) are buildings that enhance the public experience of the park. Both reflect the architecture of a later era, however neither of these non-contributing buildings intrudes on the historic character of the park or harbor. The Lakeview Center is well nestled into the bluff and planted alcove near the Wallace Bowl. The Beach House project included enhancement such as dune plantings that fit well within the park landscape.

As noted in the discussion above, other structures, such as the tennis courts, have been updated, but remain in their historic location. Today the 59.2-acre greenspace and harbor site retain their most important contributing resources and character-defining features and have very few non-contributing features. Without a doubt, this well-loved and beautiful historic park and harbor historic district is worthy of listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

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## LIST OF CONTRIBUTING AND NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

### **Contributing Resources**

#### **Site**

Landscape (including plantings, paths, lawn areas, beaches)

#### **Buildings**

Coast Guard Station  
Sheridan Shore Yacht Club

#### **Structures**

Circuit Drive- Upper/Middle Drives and Entry Drives  
Sheridan Road/Michigan Avenue  
Harbor Drive/Overlook Drive  
Lake Avenue  
Sheridan Road Bridge/Pumping Station  
Boat Harbor  
Sheridan Shore Yacht Club brick parking lot  
Picnic Shelter  
Wallace Bowl  
Council Ring (Full)  
Council Ring (Partial)  
Harbor Promenade (with stonework)  
Stone steps near harbor

#### **Objects**

Gillson Boulder and Plaque  
War Memorial Boulder and Plaque  
2 Stone Entry Piers

### **Non-Contributing Resources**

#### **Buildings**

Lakeview Center  
Beach House  
Maintenance Building  
Fish Cleaning Building

#### **Structures**

Beach Parking Lot  
Playground  
Tennis Courts

#### **Objects**

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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 a 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Landscape Architecture

Engineering

Entertainment/ Recreation

OTHER/ Sanitation

### Period of Significance

1907-1973

### Significant Dates

### Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation (if applicable)

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Benjamin E. Gage

C.D. Wagstaff and Robert E. Everly

Walter T. Stockton

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations).

Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor, a locally significant lakefront greenspace and waterway, meets National Register Criterion A for its significance to the environmental and recreational history of Wilmette, Illinois; and Criterion C as an important work of engineering and landscape architecture. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, plans for dredging the North Shore Channel, a drainage canal that would link the North Branch of the Chicago River to Lake Michigan, provided the opportunity to create a lakefront park for the Village of Wilmette. Spearheaded by Robert M. McCormick, President of the Chicago Sanitary District, the proposal tied in with other City Beautiful initiatives that sought to improve the region's lakefront as environmental and recreational amenities.

After the North Shore Channel was constructed between 1907 and 1910, the Chicago Sanitary District (now known as the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, or MWRD) built the Beaux-Arts style Sheridan Road Bridge with a pumping station at its lower level. The newly formed Wilmette Park District (WPD) soon began making plans to transform the area around the channel inlet into parkland. The park board hired Benjamin E. Gage, a professional landscape architect and nurseryman, to design the park. Taking advantage of the site's exceptional location, Gage produced an original ca. 1915 plan that included a kidney-shaped circuit drive system, gently winding paths, a lakefront promenade, a bathing beach, a boat harbor, and naturalistic lawn areas with trees and shrubs—all affording fine views of Lake Michigan. Between approximately 1913 and 1916, Gage provided a method for treating the landfilled site's soil conditions and implemented his original plan.

During the mid-1930s, the WPD received federal relief funds to expand and improve the greenspace and hired two highly respected landscape architects to design the ambitious project—Charles D. Wagstaff, a prolific designer of golf courses, residential landscapes, and some public projects; and Robert E. Everly, who then served as Superintendent of the Glencoe Park District. Wagstaff and Everly's 1936 plan retained elements of the earlier Gage plan such as the circuit drive and provided new connecting roadways and gently winding paths, lawn and planted areas, recreational features, parking areas, an expansive amphitheater, and an expanded boat harbor. Inspired by Prairie style landscape architect Jens Jensen, the project included native plants and well-crafted stonework elements such as full and partial council rings, retaining walls, steps, a terraced seating area with stratified stone walls. Most of the Wagstaff and Everly plan was implemented in the late 1930s, and much of the work was completed by WPA laborers.

As originally conceived, the Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor site remains the easterly end of the North Shore Channel. Its beaches, landscape areas, and harbor have been used and enjoyed by generations of Wilmette residents. The 59.2-acre property possesses a Period of Significance that spans from 1907 when the construction of the North Shore Channel commenced to 1973, the current 50-year cut-off date for the National Register of Historic Places.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

## DRAINAGE CANAL PLANS SPUR PARK PROPOSAL

Located on the edge of Lake Michigan near the southern border of Wilmette, Illinois, the 59.2-acre Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor site is comprised of extensive landfill. The first major stage in the park's development was spurred by the creation of the North Shore Channel, a drainage canal planned in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to link the North Branch of the Chicago River with Lake Michigan. The project was headed by the Sanitary District of Chicago (SDC), an agency formed by the Illinois General Assembly in 1889 to improve public health throughout the entire region. (The SDC is now known as the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago.)

### Sanitary District of Chicago and Canal Projects

During the 1880s, as Chicago experienced unprecedented growth, the city was facing a public health crisis. Untreated sewage that flowed from the Chicago River was contaminating Lake Michigan, the magnificent Great Lake which supplied drinking water to the entire area. As a result, "Frequent epidemics of water-borne diseases plagued the city; the typhoid death rate alone reached 174 per 100,000 people in 1891."<sup>1</sup>

To remedy this problem, the newly formed SDC was authorized to build an ambitious 28-mile-long canal between the Chicago River and Des Plaines River. With a dual purpose of accommodating steamboat traffic and improving water quality, the project reversed the flow of the Chicago River and diverted the contaminants into the Mississippi Basin. When the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal was completed in early 1900, the *Chicago Tribune* hailed the project as "one of the greatest engineering works of all time."<sup>2</sup>

Despite the success of its ambitious engineering project, the Sanitary and Ship Canal "...was not intended to solve the persistent unsanitary problems of the North Branch, only those problems on the Main Stem and South Branch" of the Chicago River.<sup>3</sup> After exploring several different proposals, the SDC settled on a plan to excavate an eight-mile-long canal that would originate on the lakefront in Wilmette, Illinois. The idea was to provide "A big flush of clean Lake Michigan water," to enter the proposed "...channel at Wilmette and join the North Branch in Chicago, [thereby] diluting the water of the North Branch all the way to Wolf Point."<sup>4</sup> (Wolf Point is the location in which the North, South, and Main Branches of the Chicago River converge.)

In early 1901, the *Chicago Tribune* published a schematic plan and article about the channel project. It explained that originating at the edge of Lake Michigan, the canal would pass "...through the southern half of Wilmette, and then southwest through the lowland lying near the Evanston Golf course grounds to the North Branch at Bowmanville."<sup>5</sup> The newspaper noted that by building this channel, sewage problems would be alleviated not just for Evanston or Wilmette, but for all of the towns and villages on Chicago's North Shore.

In order for the SDC to move forward with the construction of the North Shore Channel, its jurisdiction had to be expanded beyond the limits of Chicago. After the Illinois Legislature passed an act to enlarge the district's boundaries to include all of Cook County in 1903, the SDC began working in earnest on plans for the proposed sanitary canal.

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<sup>1</sup> Harold M. Mayer and Richard C. Wade, *Chicago: Growth of a Metropolis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969) 273-74.

<sup>2</sup> "Chicago's Quest for Pure Water," *Chicago Tribune*, January 2, 1900, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Libby Hill, *The Chicago River: An Unnatural and Natural History* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000) 121.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>5</sup> "Sanitary Canal Proposed for North Shore," *Chicago Tribune*, March 21, 1901, 3.

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Robert R. McCormick Suggests Park Improvement

As project planning progressed, Col. Robert Rutherford McCormick (1880-1955) became the head of the SDC. Born into an extremely prominent Chicago family, Robert R. McCormick was a nephew of Cyrus McCormick—the famous inventor and businessman—and grandson of Joseph Medill, editor of the *Chicago Tribune* and a former Chicago Mayor. After studying law and entering the bar, Robert R. McCormick co-founded Kirkland and Ellis, the law firm that represented the Tribune Company.

McCormick became involved in public service prior to taking over as editor and publisher of the *Chicago Tribune*. In 1904, the “...self-described “progressive Republican” was elected alderman of the old 21<sup>st</sup> Ward on the North Side.”<sup>6</sup> At the time, he aspired to eventually become governor of Illinois. The following year, while serving a two-year term on the City Council, McCormick ran for and was elected as President of the SDC. McCormick took immediate action, “Announcing that merit—not patronage would determine who gets employment at the district, McCormick fired hundreds of political hacks and replaced them with engineers.”<sup>7</sup>

One of McCormick’s first goals as head of the SDC was to construct the North Shore Channel. He and other SDC leaders believed that the proposed canal would have value beyond improving the region’s water quality. They thought an important byproduct of the project could be the development of a lakefront park. During a presentation to the fledgling Men’s Club of Wilmette, McCormick explained that the soil:

“...excavated in the digging of the North Shore Channel would be dumped into the lake between the inlet and Washington Avenue. By law, man-made land unoccupied and within the boundaries of an organized park district could be taken for park purposes. Wilmette...would be wise to move promptly, and acquire the 22 acres to be created.”<sup>8</sup>

McCormick’s suggestion resonated with the audience, particularly because the Village of Wilmette was then experiencing substantial growth.

## HISTORY OF WILMETTE, ILLINOIS

Like many of the lakefront communities on Chicago’s North Shore, Wilmette possessed fine natural resources that attracted settlers and visitors throughout its history. For centuries, indigenous people lived in or passed through the area that would become Wilmette, Illinois. There people found “a lakeshore of high bluffs and thick dark woods of elm, oak, and ash.”<sup>9</sup> This lakefront region became part of the tribal lands of the Council of Three Fires—an alliance of the Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Odawa tribes.

In the late 1820s, Wilmette’s namesakes, French Canadian fur trader Antoine Ouilmette and his wife, Archange Chevalier Ouilmette—a woman of Potawatomi and French descent—built a cabin near what is now the northern edge of Gillson Park. The federal government was then actively involved in removing Native Americans from their tribal lands and forcing them to resettle west of the Mississippi River. As explained by John N. Low, “American negotiators frequently employed chicanery to secure signatures” from tribal representatives on treaties “...that “sold” their lands to the United States —usually at fraction of the lands’ true value.”<sup>10</sup> It is unclear what tactics were used to secure signatures for the 1829 Treaty of Prairie du Chien, which gave the

<sup>6</sup> John McCarron, “A Little-Known Legacy from the Colonel,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 5, 1997, 1.

<sup>7</sup> “Our Benefactor,” Robert R. McCormick Foundation, 2023. <https://www.mccormickfoundation.org/about-us/our-benefactor/>

<sup>8</sup> George D. Bushnell, *Wilmette: A History* (Wilmette, IL: Wilmette Bicentennial Commission, 1976) 121.

<sup>9</sup> Kathy Hussey-Arntson and Patrick Leary, *Wilmette* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2012) 9.

<sup>10</sup> John N. Low, *Imprints: The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians and the City of Chicago* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2016) 22.

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federal government title to much of northern Illinois. However, according to many sources, after Archange Ouilmette helped convince local Native Americans to sign the treaty, federal authorities rewarded her with a deed to more than 1200 acres of present-day Wilmette and Evanston for Ouilmette and her family.<sup>11</sup>

After maintaining a large farm on their land for less than a decade, the Ouilmettes were likely forced to move west. In 1838, they left their home and land to join "... other Pottawatomi [sic.] families in Iowa.<sup>12</sup> Over the next several decades, the Ouilmette cabin and surrounding area was occupied by a small group of farmers and other early settlers of European descent.

Growth of Wilmette from the Mid-19<sup>th</sup> to Early-20<sup>th</sup> Centuries

In the mid-1850s, the Chicago & Northwestern Railway laid tracks through Wilmette for a line that extended from Chicago to Waukegan, Illinois. The small settlement of Wilmette residents, "...were unable to pool the funds needed to build a station along the line until 1869."<sup>13</sup>

The Village of Wilmette was incorporated in 1872. Still sparsely settled, Wilmette had only 419 residents in 1880. The new train stop helped spur growth. Between the early 1880s and the late 1890s "Wilmette transformed from a scattered settlement of houses surrounded by thick woods and huddled within a few blocks of the depot, to a rapidly growing Chicago suburb."<sup>14</sup>

Along with the convenient railway service, the natural beauty of the Lake Michigan shoreline attracted many well-to-do families to settle in Wilmette and other nearby North Shore communities. In 1889, an organization called the North Shore Improvement Association (NSIA) formed to unite representatives of the North Shore suburbs "for the common good."<sup>15</sup> One of NSIA's major goals was to improve Sheridan Road as a lakefront pleasure drive. They intended for the lakefront pleasure drive to stretch from Lincoln Park in Chicago to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The NSIA wanted the state to pass a Sheridan Road Bill "...allowing municipalities to create special park districts to facilitate construction" of the proposed lakefront roadway.<sup>16</sup> Although the act was not approved, individual suburbs including Wilmette began to improve their own stretches of the pleasure drive. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Sheridan Road was becoming a popular scenic roadway for early automobile owners.

Wilmette's populace had reached approximately 1,500 in 1890. Around this time, a controversial proposal to annex the village to Evanston was being considered. Proponents argued that Wilmette residents would benefit from the use of various Evanston assets including existing utilities such as a water plant and electric lights. But this group was not in the majority. A large number of local residents wanted to maintain autonomy. They believed that "Wilmette was indeed financially strong and could expect a bright future independently."<sup>17</sup> The proposition failed, and within the next several years, Wilmette had six miles of paved roads and its own water and sewage systems. Around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Village began paving streets with red vitrified brick from the Purington Brick Company. Eventually, the community would have approximately 14 miles of red brick streets.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Adam H. Stewart, "Wilmette, IL." *Encyclopedia of Chicago*, <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1360.html>

<sup>12</sup> Hussey-Arntson and Leary, *Wilmette*, 12.

<sup>13</sup> Ann Durkin Keating, ed., *Chicago Neighborhoods and Suburbs: A Historical Guide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 308.

<sup>14</sup> Bushnell, *Wilmette: A History*, 59.

<sup>15</sup> Michael H. Ebner, *Creating Chicago's North Shore* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988) 105.

<sup>16</sup> Ebner, *Creating Chicago's North Shore*, 109.

<sup>17</sup> Bushnell, *Wilmette: A History*, 63.

<sup>18</sup> Blair Kamin, "Follow the Mellow Brick Road," *Chicago Tribune*, August 22, 2003, B1.



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As Wilmette continued to attract new residents and its population rose to 2,300 in 1900, there was growing support for the SDC's proposed North Shore Channel. Meetings to discuss the idea were held with "delegates from each community along the shoreline from Waukegan south to Wilmette as well as representatives of the state Board of Health."<sup>19</sup> Although Evanston's participation in the project was critical, its mayor refused to participate "claiming no benefits were to be gained."<sup>20</sup>

That changed after a wet spring and terrible summer rainstorm in 1902 which caused considerable flooding in areas of Chicago and western Evanston. Outbreaks of typhoid fever, smallpox, and diphtheria brought renewed attention to the sorely inadequate drainage on the North Side of Chicago and the adjacent suburbs. An Evanston "physician who surveyed the diphtheria cases, which originated in the portion of the city covered by floodwater, pointedly commended the idea of becoming attached to the sanitary district."<sup>21</sup> Local support for enlarging the SDC's boundaries grew rapidly. In 1903, the Illinois state legislature approved an act that extended the jurisdiction of the SDC to include Evanston and Wilmette.

## INFLUENCE OF CITY BEAUTIFUL MOVEMENT

The planning of the North Shore Channel in the early 1900s reflected the goals, priorities, and ideas of the burgeoning City Beautiful movement. Inspired by the development of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition fairgrounds under the guidance of landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted and architect Daniel Hudson Burnham, City Beautiful was a movement to provide social harmony and order by creating beautifully designed and highly functional public spaces.

William H. Wilson, author of *The City Beautiful Movement* explains that "The heyday of the City Beautiful movement, from about 1900 to 1910, saw middle- and upper-middle class Americans attempt to refashion their cities in beautiful, functional, entities."<sup>22</sup> He indicates that this movement often involved the public sector and relied on the passage of enabling legislation that spurred the creation of new public institutions such as park boards and laws to support the efforts of existing park boards.

### SDC and the City Beautiful

When the *Chicago Tribune* announced in 1904 that the SDC had formally decided on the official route for the North Shore Channel, the newspaper noted that the project would not just be functional, but it would also be beautiful. The article explained that as it extended through Evanston, the canal would "...be wide enough for the building of a boulevard and parkway on either side."<sup>23</sup> The newspaper also suggested that Wilmette citizens were interested in "beautifying the lakeshore at the entrance of the drainage canal," even though plans had not yet been drawn for the inlet, harbor, or the proposed lakefront park.<sup>24</sup>

McCormick espoused the ideals of the City Beautiful movement when he promoted the North Shore Channel project. When speaking to the Men's Club around 1905 or 1906, he explained that it would be practical to use excavated spoil of the project to create parkland. Emphasizing the importance of establishing a park district to improve the site around the inlet into a public greenspace, McCormick said "...the citizens of Wilmette would do well to organize a district and thus acquire without cost a substantial site for a park."<sup>25</sup> He also suggested that

<sup>19</sup> Ebner, *Creating Chicago's North Shore*, 188.

<sup>20</sup> Ebner, *Creating Chicago's North Shore*, 188.

<sup>21</sup> Ebner, *Creating Chicago's North Shore*, 190.

<sup>22</sup> William H. Wilson, *The City Beautiful Movement* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989) 1.

<sup>23</sup> "Route Selected for New Canal," *Chicago Tribune*, June 19, 1904, 2.

<sup>24</sup> "Route Selected for New Canal," *Chicago Tribune*, June 19, 1904, 2.

<sup>25</sup> "Canal Projects Marks the Start of Park District," *Wilmette Life*, August 23, 1934.

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if the Village of Wilmette did not develop a park on the site, the canal project “would mar the beauty of the shoreline.”<sup>26</sup>

Sheridan Road Bridge and Wilmette Pumping Station

The SDC’s North Shore Channel project was quite substantial. It involved an elaborate plan that included the realignment of streets, planned re-subdivision of lots, design and engineering of numerous street crossings, and the creation of buffer zones that would allow the channel pass through residential districts. The terminus of the project would be a unified composition of City Beautiful landscape and architectural elements along Sheridan Road in Wilmette.

The project included elegant alignments for Sheridan Road and Michigan Avenue as well as a new Beaux Art style bridge and pumping station. A 1911 article suggested that with this development “...the engineers of the Sanitary District of Chicago most happily combined usefulness with architectural beauty.”<sup>27</sup> As the Sheridan Road Bridge would stand about 400 feet west of the mouth of the inlet, “...it was necessary to lift that water 3 feet higher than the lake in order to cause a flow in the canal.”<sup>28</sup> Locks were also needed to separate the canal and the boat harbor. At times of heavy rain or snow melts, the locks could be “opened to allow the overflow into the lake.”<sup>29</sup>

According to an original bronze plaque on the structure, the SDC’s in-house architect and engineers based their design for the Sheridan Road Bridge and Wilmette Pumping Station on a sketch that had been prepared by President McCormick. The project team included architect Frederick L. Barrett (1871-1945), engineers George Monroe Wisner (1870-1932) and Carlton Rollin Dart (1862-1929). The three had worked together in the SDC’s engineering department since at least 1904.<sup>30</sup> At that time Barrett had the modest position of bridge draftsman, while Wisner served as assistant chief engineer and Dart as bridge engineer. The SDC promoted Frederick L. Barrett to the position of architect in 1905.<sup>31</sup> One of his first major projects in the new position was to prepare plans for the Lockport Powerhouse, a monumental Beaux Arts style structure on the Main Channel of the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. (The Lockport, IL Powerhouse is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.)

Implementation of North Shore Channel Plans

Wilmette leaders agreed to the channel proposal, and construction of the ambitious project began with official Shovel Day ceremonies at the future site of the inlet on September 26, 1907. Although Robert R. McCormick wasn’t present, a crowd of approximately 500 people attended the event and the “...official spade was wielded by Miss Louise Elizabeth Paullin, the 12-year-old daughter of George W. Paullin, the north shore representative on the board of sanitary trustees.”<sup>32</sup> Speakers included Consulting Engineer Isham Randolph, Chief Engineer George Wisner, Joseph E. Paden, Mayor of Evanston; and L.J. Pearson, a State Representative from Wilmette.

The long-debated idea of establishing a park district to transform the area around the channel inlet into greenspace finally came to a conclusion when a referendum was held on January 14, 1908.<sup>33</sup> Wilmette “residents

<sup>26</sup> “Canal Diggings Result in Splendid Park,” *Wilmette Life*, June 12, 1941.

<sup>27</sup> Horace Patton Ramey, “The Wilmette Pumping Station,” *Rock Products*, Volume 10, No. 7. January 22, 1911, 3.

<sup>28</sup> Ramey, “The Wilmette Pumping Station,” *Rock Products*, 3.

<sup>29</sup> Hussey-Arntson and Leary, *Wilmette*, 95.

<sup>30</sup> *Proceedings of the Board of Trustees of the Sanitary District of Chicago*, January 1, 1904 to December 31, 1904, 10164.

<sup>31</sup> *Proceedings of the Board of Trustees of the Sanitary District of Chicago*, January 1, 1905 to December 31, 1905, 10528.

<sup>32</sup> “Channel Work On: Girl Uses Spade: Drainage Board Celebrates Beginning of Construction of Evanston Channel,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 26, 1907, 4.

<sup>33</sup> David C. Leach, Rollie B. Schmitt, and Roland D. Bautzmann. *Wilmette’s Nautical Leach Heritage: A Pictorial History*. (Wilmette, IL: Sheridan Shore Yacht Club, 1982), 12.

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overwhelmingly approved—174 to 34—a proposition to organize a park district adjacent to Lake Michigan in the vicinity of the North Shore Channel then under construction.”<sup>34</sup>

At this time, renowned architects Daniel H. Burnham and Edward H. Bennett were actively working on their seminal *Plan of Chicago*. They believed that Lake Michigan and its shoreline were among the region’s most important assets. To make the lakefront more functional, expansive, and beautiful, the duo proposed the use of landfill to create a linear stretch of parkland that would extend from Chicago’s South Side to Wilmette. Published in 1909, the *Plan of Chicago* includes a rendering entitled “Park Development Proposed for the Lake Shore from Jackson Park to Wilmette,” with the caption: “This park, enclosing lagoons for boating, would be a continuous playground for the people, and may be built by utilizing the wastage of from the city and excavated material at practically no cost.”<sup>35</sup>

The concept of increasing parkland along the Lake Michigan shoreline through coastal engineering was not a new one at this time. Landfill projects that expanded Chicago’s lakefront parkland had begun as early as 1869 in Grant Park (then known as Lakefront Park). In Lincoln Park, lakefront expansion projects that included filling operations took place in the late 1880s and again in the early 1900s around the same time that the North Shore Channel was being planned. (Lincoln Park went on to have several additional landfill extensions.) Like the SDC’s Wilmette proposal, these Chicago park projects had practical as well as aesthetic goals—they provided lakefront revetments to protect the shoreline from erosion as well as beautiful recreational spaces. The *Plan of Chicago* emphasized that improving the lakefront as greenspace was a high priority: “First in importance is the shore of Lake Michigan, which should be treated as park space to the greatest possible extent.”<sup>36</sup>

The SDC had suggested integrating a boat harbor into the plans for the North Shore Channel years before the park development had begun. In 1908, Col. Robert McCormick explained that the SDC intended to give Wilmette “...a breakwater and harbor that will improve the entire north shore, facilitate lake commerce, and provide a means of reaching Chicago from the North Shore.”<sup>37</sup>

## FIRST PHASE OF PARK DEVELOPMENT

When the Wilmette Park District held its first meeting on February 17, 1908, Louis K. Gillson (1852-1942), a civic-minded patent attorney was elected as president of the five-member board. The construction of the North Shore Channel was completed in 1910. The Park Board focused on acquiring some small parcels of land adjacent to Lake Avenue and also secured a lease from the CDC for lake bluff land on the east side of Michigan Avenue, south of Washington Street and extending to the harbor. In 1911, the State of Illinois officially conveyed the 22-acre site adjacent to the channel inlet to the Wilmette Park District (WPD).

As the new lakefront park would stretch from Washington Avenue to the south edge of the harbor inlet, the WPD called the proposed greenspace Washington Park. Members of the WPD board realized that improvements to Washington Park would present substantial challenges. The dredged site would be filled with material that had been excavated for the canal project. The site was described as “a barren pile of clay” that had a “series of valleys and ridges with maximum ranges in elevation of fifteen or twenty feet.”<sup>38</sup> The WPD learned

<sup>34</sup> Ebner, *Creating Chicago’s North Shore*, 237.

<sup>35</sup> Burnham, Daniel H, Edward H. Bennett, and Charles Moore, ed. *Plan of Chicago*. Centennial Edition, (Chicago IL: Commercial Club of Chicago, 1909, reprinted 2009) plate L.

<sup>36</sup> Daniel H. Burnham, Edward H. Bennett, and Charles Moore, ed. *Plan of Chicago*., 50.

<sup>37</sup> “Big Harbor for Wilmette Planned by Sanitary Board,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 21, 1908, 3.

<sup>38</sup> Benjamin E. Gage, “Building a Park on Hard Blue Clay,” *The American City*, Volume XVIII, No. 3, March, 1918, 234.

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that the cost of covering the entire site in black soil would be \$40,000. (That cost would be equivalent to approximately \$1.2 million today.)<sup>39</sup> To provide an alternative, less costly treatment for the site, the WPD brought in Benjamin E. Gage, a landscape architect and nurseryman, to develop an overall design for the park, as well as a strategy for preparing the site for planting.

Landscape Architect and Nurseryman Benjamin E. Gage

Born in New York, Benjamin Emmons Gage (1881-1956) was the son of Benjamin Stevens Gage, a proprietor of a bookstore. The Gages were related to Mary Gage Peterson, a North Side civic leader and wife of pioneering Chicago forester and nursery owner, Pehr S. Peterson. Sometime around 1900, Benjamin S. Gage moved his family from New York to Chicago, so that both he and his son could join the staff of Peterson Nursery. Initially, Benjamin S. Gage served as the firm's bookkeeper and Benjamin E. as a nurseryman. The elder Gage went on to become the nursery's long-time financial manager.<sup>40</sup>

Although specifics about Benjamin E. Gage's training remain unclear, in 1904 he was admitted as a member of the Western Society of Engineers.<sup>41</sup> During the same period, Gage was active in organizations for nurserymen such as the American Association of Nurserymen.<sup>42</sup> In 1906, a *Chicago Tribune* article about the importance of pergolas in the landscape, featured Benjamin E. Gage's design for a pergola at the Midlothian Golf Course.<sup>43</sup> Gage reported his position as landscape engineer when the U.S. Census was taken in 1910. (Newly married, he and his wife, Ethel Austin Gage, were then residents of Evanston.)

Benjamin E. Gage and his young family moved to Wilmette in 1912. Still with Peterson Nursery, he was active in business clubs such as the Chicago Association of Commerce.<sup>44</sup> Gage began consulting the WPD as a representative of Peterson Nursery around 1914. Two years later, President Gillson wrote an article that reported "Our fellow townsman is the engineer in charge and to his enthusiasm and civic pride and his ability are due to the very satisfactory progress that has been made."<sup>45</sup>

In 1916, the WPD appointed Charles Strombach as its head gardener. A Swedish immigrant, Charles J. Strombach (1842-1920) was a highly respected horticulturist. Having served as the head gardener for Lincoln Park in Chicago for decades, he was forced into retirement in 1904 and began a consulting practice. When he accepted the position with the WPD, Strombach was a widower living in Wilmette with his daughter and her family. *The Florist's Review* reported that as head gardener, Strombach would be "the right-hand man for Benjamin E. Gage of Peterson Nursery."<sup>46</sup>

In February of 1917, Gage withdrew from Peterson Nursery and opened an office in Chicago's Stock Exchange Building to establish himself as "landscape advisor."<sup>47</sup> By this time, he was considered the consulting superintendent and engineer for the WPD. His involvement included serving with Louis Gillson, President of the WPD, on a committee to advise the Village of Wilmette on how to eradicate the Tussock Moth.<sup>48</sup> Gage ran advertisements in trade journals at that time touting "At present engaged in developing a Park System at

<sup>39</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, CPI Inflation Calculator

<sup>40</sup> "Benjamin Gage Dies: Long Nursery Official Dies," *Omaha World Herald*, March 22, 1932, 9.

<sup>41</sup> *Western Society of Engineers*, 1904, 93.

<sup>42</sup> *Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the American Association of Nurserymen*, 1905, 69.

<sup>43</sup> "Plan to Save Millions of Dollars Lost by Rain in Chicago," *Chicago Tribune*, September 23, 1906, 52.

<sup>44</sup> "Rock Island Men Give Chicagoans Hearty Welcome," *Rock Island Argus*, June 25, 1915, 7.

<sup>45</sup> Louis K. Gillson, "Wilmette Park District," *The Lake Shore News*, February 26, 1916, 14.

<sup>46</sup> "Various Notes," *The Florist's Review*, Volume 38, September 21, 1916, 29.

<sup>47</sup> "Nursery News," *The Florist's Review*, Volume 39, February 15, 1917, 80.

<sup>48</sup> "Local Board Plans to Drive out Moth," *The Lake Shore News*, September 6, 1917, 1.

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Wilmette, Illinois.”<sup>49</sup> His work for the WPD would include designing improvements for West Side Park, (later renamed Vattmann Park).

In 1919, Gage briefly practiced with the firm of North Shore Landscape Architects in Evanston.<sup>50</sup> Around that time, he moved back to Evanston with his family and was soon running a landscape architecture office from his home. Gage produced landscape plans for Levy Mayer Hall at Northwestern University in Chicago in the mid-1920s. By the mid-1930s, he was focusing on small residential projects but also patented a golf course design layout.<sup>51</sup> Benjamin and Ethel Gage soon left the Midwest and moved to California. (Interestingly, their son, Benjamin Austin Gage (1914-1978) was a radio star who married the famous swimmer and actress, Esther Williams.)

Gage’s Original Plan and Implementation

Gage initially met with the WPD sometime before the summer of 1914.<sup>52</sup> As an alternative to the very pricey proposition of spreading tens of thousands of dollars of topsoil over the hard clay, Gage proposed a multi-year effort to improve the Washington Park site’s poor conditions. According to an article in *Park and Cemetery and Landscape Gardening*:

“...after a thorough investigation of the conditions, his [Gage’s] report to the commissioners stated that he believed that three years treatment of the clay would bring it to a condition where seed might be planted with reasonable certainty of obtaining a good lawn.”<sup>53</sup>

Gage’s treatment method called for breaking up and pulverizing the clay, planting a succession of cover crops such as peas, oats, millet, and rye, and then plowing the crops under to enrich the soil. After several years, the soil quality would be sufficiently improved to allow the implementation of Gage’s original plan for the 22-acre park.

Gage’s ca. 1915 plan took full advantage of Washington Park’s premier lakefront location. Published in several nationally syndicated journals, the scheme featured a kidney-shaped circuit drive, gently winding paths, lawn areas, playfields, irregular groupings of trees and shrubs, small garden areas, a bathing beach, and a lakefront promenade near the boat harbor. (Gage’s plan includes a design for the triangular area between Michigan Avenue and Sheridan Road that later became known as Bateman Park.)

President Gillson’s article of 1916 described the progress of the park development. He reported that the process of plowing under cover crops had been going on for several years and that the soil was improving nicely. Gillson noted that grading was completed, a drive had been “roughed out,” some trees had been planted, and that sand “...filling at the north end of the park... will furnish an excellent bathing beach,”<sup>54</sup>

At the time, there was strong community interest in developing additional bathing beaches. In 1914, an organization known as the Wilmette Beach Improvement Association formed to transform “the crowded, unsupervised, garbage-strewn Wilmette shoreline” in a “tidy, a safe, and respectable place for recreation.”<sup>55</sup> The

<sup>49</sup> “Classified Advertising,” *Park and Cemetery and Landscape Gardening*, Vol. VXIII, March 1917, 31.

<sup>50</sup> “News of the Nursery Trade,” *The Florist’s Review*, Volume 45, December 23, 1919, 108.

<sup>51</sup> *Official Gazette of the United States Patent Office*, May 28, 1935, 962.

<sup>52</sup> “Park Board Buys Michigan Avenue Lot for \$12,300,” *The Lake Shore News*, July 2, 1914, 1.

<sup>53</sup> “Lawn Making in Reclaimed Park Area,” *Park and Cemetery and Landscape Gardening*, Vol. XXVII, No. 9, November 1917, 240.

<sup>54</sup> Louis K. Gillson, “Wilmette Park District,” *The Lake Shore News*, February 26, 1916, 14.

<sup>55</sup> Kathy Hussey-Arntson and Patrick Leary, *Wilmette* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2012) 100.

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association established a modest bathing beach with a small bath house, umbrellas, and lifeguards on the lakefront north of the proposed new park. Wilmette residents were eager to have other improved beaches with amenities on the lakefront.

Implementation of the original park plan continued over the next several years. By the early 1920s, a pair of handsome stone entry pillars were installed at the Washington Avenue entryway into the park.

By then, Washington Park had become an important gathering space for the community. For example, on Armistice Day in 1921, the Wilmette Post of the American Legion planted 13 trees in the park to symbolize each of the local men who lost their lives in WWI. The installation included a boulder with a memorial plaque listing each of the war heroes. As part of the ceremony, members of the Legion's Women's Auxiliary laid a wreath near the plaque.<sup>56</sup> This began a long tradition of planting memorial trees with plaques in the park.

## WILMETTE HARBOR DEVELOPS

A masonry breakwater had been constructed by the time the North Shore Channel was completed in 1910, and two years later, the SDC constructed a harbor that covered a five-acre area.<sup>57</sup> In 1920, the SDC engineers created plans for a more permanent breakwater. That July, the trustees approved a \$250,000 harbor contract with the Great Lakes Dredge and Dock Company. The project included "beautifying the harbor" by surfacing the harbor revetments with concrete.<sup>58</sup>

### Yacht Clubs and the Harbor

During the 1920s, Wilmette Harbor became a popular location for pleasure boating. Two yacht clubs that used the harbor grew out of the Evanston Boat Club, an organization that had been founded in 1880. One of the groups—the Buccaneer's Club—was headed by Julian Armstrong, a wealthy industrialist, who had agreed to gather information about establishing a new club house in Wilmette Harbor and report back to the club. Without consulting the other members, however, Armstrong went ahead and purchased an old 70-foot-long lumber schooner named "Petrel" for use as a floating clubhouse.<sup>59</sup> When some of his fellow members objected, Armstrong decided to form a new club of his own. In May of 1921, the floating clubhouse was first towed into the inlet "and moored just off the north wall of the harbor."<sup>60</sup> The Buccaneer's Club put the "Petrel" into storage every winter. The members held "a major event of the season" when they towed it back into the water each spring.<sup>61</sup> Made up of affluent North Shore men, the club was known for holding wild parties. (The club disbanded, and the hull was destroyed in 1929.)

Another group that had grown out of the Evanston Boat Club had become known as the Evanston Yacht Club. This group had a clubhouse at a small harbor at the foot of Greenleaf Street in Evanston that kept filling with sand. In 1921, the group decided to move to Wilmette Harbor. Hoping to attract members from the entire North Shore, the group at first used the name North Shore Yacht Club. Member William H. "Bill" Noble, a young engineer who was living in Evanston, headed the effort to establish a clubhouse. He became acquainted with Benjamin H. Marshall, a talented Chicago architect known for designing lavish houses and luxury apartments. Marshall had recently purchased property on the south side of Wilmette Harbor. He planned to build a mansion

<sup>56</sup> "Dedicate 13 Trees as Hero Memorials," *The Lake Shore News*, November 11, 1921, 1.

<sup>57</sup> "Wilmette Has a Fine Harbor, But It's Full of Sand," *Chicago Tribune*, August 30, 1937, 22.

<sup>58</sup> "\$250,000 Harbor Contract," *Chicago Tribune*, July 8, 1920, 16.

<sup>59</sup> Marcy Christerson, "The Buccaneer's Club," April 17, 2018, Wilmette Harbor Club, <https://wilmetteharbor.org/wilmette-harbor-users-sail-into-the-future>

<sup>60</sup> Marcy Christerson, "The Buccaneer's Club," April 17, 2018.

<sup>61</sup> Marcy Christerson, "The Buccaneer's Club," April 17, 2018.

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for his family that would include his architectural office. But he was having trouble obtaining a permit from the Village of Wilmette because the property was not zoned to include commercial uses.

Bill Noble suggested a strategy to help the Yacht Club and Marshall both achieve their goals. If Marshall would agree to lease the basement of his studio to serve as the clubhouse, Noble and another prominent club members would ask Wilmette officials to reconsider the permit application. The architect agreed to the idea and on "...May 4, 1921, the Village issued a building permit to Ben Marshall for a "Studio-club room" of the [sic.] construction cost of \$10,000."<sup>62</sup> (It was believed that the total costs for building Marshall's palatial lakefront villa were somewhere between \$500,000 and \$1 million.)<sup>63</sup> The following year, the club held a dinner dance on the newly-dried concrete floor of the basement space. This special event marked the opening of the clubhouse.<sup>64</sup>

The North Shore Yacht Club soon learned that there was already a club with that name in Highland Park, so in early 1923, they received a charter of incorporation under the name Sheridan Shore Yacht Club.<sup>65</sup> Making good use of the harbor and the adjacent park and its bathing beach, the club sponsored Star Class sailboat races, dances, basket beach parties, swimming events, and ladies bridge parties. They had Fourth of July celebrations, and an annual Water Carnival with a "Canoe Tipping Contest."<sup>66</sup> By the late 1920s, the Sheridan Shore Yacht Club's organization included a Ladies Auxiliary Board and events such as "Ladies Skipper Races" were held to "induce wives to make more use of the club."<sup>67</sup>

#### U.S. Coast Guard Station

In the late 1920s, officials of the United States Coast Guard began to consider the relocation of a long-operating lifesaving station in Evanston. Situated on Evanston's Clark Street Beach, the station could only launch small boats because the water was so shallow there. In addition, severe storms "had undermined the foundation of the station house."<sup>68</sup> It seemed more practical to build a new Coast Guard Station in a different location than to keep repairing the existing one.

The WPD board encouraged representatives of the U.S. Coast Guard to consider building a new facility at Wilmette Harbor. The "protected vantage" of the harbor "helped the government to decide to move the coast guard" to this location.<sup>69</sup> Many North Shore yachtsman supported the proposal. To make the project possible, in 1929, the state legislature amended the harbor grant which had restricted the use of the adjacent land to park purposes only. The Coast Guard prepared plans for the building.

The following year, the U.S. Coast Guard awarded a \$40,000 contract for the construction of the building.<sup>70</sup> Completed in 1931, the small brick building provided "quarters for the crew and captain, but no quarters for the captain's family."<sup>71</sup> Rather than moving to the new facility with his crew, Capt. Otto W. Fricke, the longtime commander of the Evanston Coast Guard Station, requested to be transferred to a location that provided living quarters for his family.<sup>72</sup> Sometime after the completion of the station, the Coast Guard built an observation tower near the northeast end of the park. (Only the concrete footings for this tower are extant today.)

<sup>62</sup> Leach, Schmitt, and Bautzmann. *Wilmette's Nautical Heritage: A Pictorial History*, 21.

<sup>63</sup> George Castle, "The Great Depression Doomed Wilmette's Most Eccentric Mansion," *Patch*, January 30, 2012, <https://patch.com/illinois/wilmette/architect-marshall-s-home-at-wilmette-harbor-was-like32b38b3128>

<sup>64</sup> Leach, Schmitt, and Bautzmann. *Wilmette's Nautical Heritage*, 22.

<sup>65</sup> Leach, Schmitt, and Bautzmann. *Wilmette's Nautical Heritage*, 22.

<sup>66</sup> Leach, Schmitt, and Bautzmann. *Wilmette's Nautical Heritage*, 24.

<sup>67</sup> Leach, Schmitt, and Bautzmann. *Wilmette's Nautical Heritage*, 29.

<sup>68</sup> "Clear the Way for Wilmette Trek of Coast Guard," *Chicago Tribune*, June 9, 1929, 13.

<sup>69</sup> "Coast Guard is Ready to Move to New Station: Evanston Loses Post to Wilmette" *Chicago Tribune*, May 24, 1931, G2.

<sup>70</sup> "Let \$3,162,000 Building Jobs in Half Month," *Chicago Tribune*, November 17, 1930, 22.

<sup>71</sup> Coast Guard is Ready to Move to New Station, G2.

<sup>72</sup> "Wilmette Coast Guard Chief to Go to Duluth," *Chicago Tribune*, September 24, 1931, 3.



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Sheridan Shore Yacht Club Plans New Building Despite Silting

By the early 1930s, the Sheridan Shore Yacht Club had a problem with Wilmette Harbor. Sand kept accumulating at the harbor entrance, forming a “sand bar” that had become a constant headache for boaters.<sup>73</sup> The club had asked the SDC to dredge the harbor. However, due to the financial difficulties of the Depression, the SDC informed the club that it could not justify allocating \$50,000 for the project. The club decided to take the matter up with the Army Corps of Engineers.

Despite the fact that many wealthy families were losing their fortunes during this period, the Sheridan Shore Yacht Club continued to grow. Membership increased and the group still held an impressive list of annual events. After having used space in Benjamin Marshall’s house for over a decade, the club’s situation became tenuous in 1934, when Marshall declared bankruptcy. If Club leaders had hoped to continue the leasing arrangement with the new owner, they soon discovered that this would not come to pass. Nathan Goldblatt, co-owner of a major department store chain, purchased Marshall’s lavish lakefront mansion in 1936. Members of the Club quickly realized they would have to vacate the premises. According to *Wilmette’s Nautical Heritage*, Goldblatt had previously tried to join, but was refused because the Sheridan Shore Yacht Club did not accept Jewish members.<sup>74</sup>

The SDC agreed to lease property on the north side of the harbor to the Yacht Club and allow the organization to build their clubhouse there. Representatives of the WPD informed the SDC that they were in favor of the project. Architect Walter T. Stockton, a member and previous commodore of the Sheridan Shore Yacht Club, prepared plans for the new clubhouse, donating his services to the project.<sup>75</sup> Stockton was assisted by two aspiring architects who were also members of the club, Raymond Emerson and Berseford E. Beck.<sup>76</sup>

The grandson of General Joseph Stockton, the celebrated Chicago Civil War hero for whom Stockton Drive was named, Walter Thaw Stockton (1895-1989) grew up in Evanston.<sup>77</sup> After completing a degree at Princeton University in 1917, he joined the Illinois Reserve Militia and served as a captain. Returning home after WWI, he began training under architect Chester Walcott who soon formed the firm of Clark & Walcott.<sup>78</sup> A short time after Stockton received his license in 1923, he went to work for Robert Seeley DeGolyer (1875-1952) a fellow Evanstonian who had worked under Benjamin Marshall for about a decade. By the early 1920s, DeGolyer was receiving his own high-profile commissions for apartments and hotels. Soon after Stockton joined his firm, DeGolyer promoted him to partner. They produced many prominent buildings together including 1120, 1242, and 1430 N. Lake Shore Drive and the Ambassador East Hotel. The two remained in partnership until 1950, when Stockton went to work for Philip B. Maher for several years and then for the firm of Fugard, Firth, Wilkinson, and Orth.<sup>79</sup>

The Village of Wilmette issued a permit for Stockton’s handsome two-story Colonial Revival style Sheridan Shore Yacht Club building on May 6, 1937. Two other club members, Max Hayford and Jack Scanlon helped supervise the construction.<sup>80</sup> The new clubhouse was occupied and dedicated on July 4, 1937, although it was

<sup>73</sup> “Pleas to Dredge Wilmette Harbor Denied,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 24, 1933, 13.

<sup>74</sup> Leach, Schmitt, and Bautzmann. *Wilmette’s Nautical Heritage: A Pictorial History*, 33.

<sup>75</sup> Leach, Schmitt, and Bautzmann. *Wilmette’s Nautical Heritage*, 33.

<sup>76</sup> “New Clubhouse Ready July 4 for Yachtsmen,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 9, 1937, A5.

<sup>77</sup> “Walter Thaw Stockton ’17,” Princeton Alumni Weekly Memorial, <https://paw.princeton.edu/memorial/walter-thaw-stockton-%E2%80%9917>

<sup>78</sup> “Oral History of Walter T. Stockton, interviewed by Betty J. Blum,” 1983, 3-7.

<sup>79</sup> “Oral History of Walter T. Stockton,” 29-33.

<sup>80</sup> “New Clubhouse Ready July 4 for Yachtsmen,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 9, 1937, A5.



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not fully completed until that August. Work was finalized before the club celebrated its Fourth Annual Race Week from August 15 through 21, 1937.<sup>81</sup>

## SECOND PHASE OF PARK DEVELOPMENT

By the early 1930s, WPD had substantially enlarged Washington Park through the acquisition of residential lots on the east side of Michigan Avenue who had riparian rights as well as additional fill projects. The WPD hoped to receive federal relief funding from President Roosevelt's New Deal Program—the Works Progress Administration (WPA)—to improve the park. Park District leaders knew that the harbor needed to be dredged and enlarged. They made a request for WPA funds for the harbor work as well as other major improvements to the park. At the time there was great excitement about the Baha'i Temple which was under construction just west of Wilmette Harbor. An article in *Wilmette Life* suggested that with proper planning, "the three improvements, park, harbor, and temple, will become in appearance a coordinated and harmonious whole."<sup>82</sup>

In 1936, the WPD commissioned landscape architect and Glencoe Park Superintendent Robert E. Everly to "make a survey of the grounds and harbor, make tentative plans and submit recommendations."<sup>83</sup> Everly collaborated on the project with a respected colleague, landscape architect Charles D. Wagstaff.

### Robert E. Everly

Born in Dubuque, Iowa, Robert Edward Everly (1904-1996) was working on a landscape construction crew in the 1920s when he met renowned Prairie style landscape architect Jens Jensen.<sup>84</sup> (It seems likely that Everly's crew was implementing projects that Jensen had designed.) Jensen must have been quite impressed with Everly because based on a recommendation from him, Everly was appointed as Superintendent of the Glencoe Park District in 1930.<sup>85</sup>

Jensen's influence on Everly was evident in much of the younger landscape architect's work. For example, in 1934, Everly created a sanctuary of native flowers and shrubs near a public elementary school in Glencoe. Not only did the sanctuary preserve species that had "entirely disappeared from this locality" but it also gave school children the chance to commune with nature.<sup>86</sup> Several years later, Everly and John McFadzean, the Superintendent of Glencoe's public schools, collaborated on a Park-School program for Glencoe, an initiative that was clearly inspired by Jensen's School-Park plans of the late 1910s. (The two went on to form a partnership called McFadzean, Everly & Associates which prepared plans for schools, parks, and zoos throughout the nation.)

When the WPD leaders commissioned Robert E. Everly to make plans for Washington Park, they selected him for his "experience in originating and supervising similar works under the Works Progress administration" and because of "his reputation as a landscape engineer."<sup>87</sup> Although Everly received the consent of the Glencoe Park District to take on this consulting project, he was extremely busy at the time. In addition to his full-time position, he was active in parks and recreation organizations at the national level and often wrote articles for journals such as *Recreation Magazine*. The WPD board selected Charles Dudley Wagstaff to collaborate with

<sup>81</sup> Leach, Schmitt, and Bautzmann. *Wilmette's Nautical Heritage: A Pictorial History*, 33.

<sup>82</sup> "Lakefront Improvement Program: Plans of Park Board Still in Tentative Form," *Wilmette Life*, January 28, 1937, 27.

<sup>83</sup> "Lakefront Improvement Program," 27.

<sup>84</sup> Interview of Bruce Everly by James Gamble, Sept. 14, 2015.

<sup>85</sup> Everly noted that Jensen had recommended him as Superintendent of the Glencoe Parks in several sources including a letter from Robert E. Everly to Jens Jensen dated March 1, 1940. Archival Collections of the Morton Arboretum, 3.2322.

<sup>86</sup> "Develop Wildflower Sanctuary," *Glencoe News*, April 27, 1934.

<sup>87</sup> "Lakefront Improvement Program," 27.

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Robert Everly on the design and planning for Washington Park. The well-respected landscape architect who had some previous history with the WPD would lighten Everly's load and take a leading role in the project.

Charles D. Wagstaff

Born in Kansas and raised in Indiana, Charles Dudley Wagstaff (1894-1977) received a degree in landscape architecture from the University of Illinois. After serving in the U.S. Navy for two years during WWI, he moved to Evanston. Wagstaff had some early ties with the WPD. Early in his career, he briefly practiced alongside Benjamin E. Gage in the firm of North Shore Landscape Architects.<sup>88</sup> In 1922, an Indiana newspaper reported that C.D. Wagstaff of the North Shore Landscape Architects had been appointed as superintendent of the Wilmette parks.<sup>89</sup>

Sometime in the early 1920s, Wagstaff opened his own landscape architectural office in Evanston. C.D. Wagstaff & Associates was soon considered one of the region's leading firms for the design and management of golf course landscapes. Among the dozens of public golf course and country club grounds that Wagstaff produced were the Tam O'Shanter Golf Course in Niles, the Kildeer Country Club in Long Grove, and a 36-hole course for the University of Illinois in Champaign. Wagstaff also designed parks, campuses, and residential landscapes. In addition to creating landscapes for Chicago's second world's fair, the 1933-34 *A Century of Progress*, he also contributed to the *Great Lakes Exposition* fairgrounds in Cleveland. His noteworthy projects include the grounds for the Morse Estate in Lake Forest and a landscape for a model house in Winnetka.

Wagstaff and Everly's 1936 Plan

Wagstaff and Everly's 1936 plan provided a vision for the much-enlarged Washington Park. They retained elements from Gage's earlier plan such as the circuit drive, lawn areas, and winding paths. The park had incrementally expanded to the north and the east, and plans to dredge and improve the harbor would also provide approximately ten more acres of fill.<sup>90</sup> The plan anticipated the harbor improvements including extending the existing roadway system onto this new landfill and creating Harbor Drive and a beachfront drive with parking spaces now known as Overlook Drive. This harbor and beachfront roadway, "approximately 1,734 lineal feet of concrete pavement, 21 feet wide" was meant to "complete the improvement in the southeast part of Washington Park, along the lakefront."<sup>91</sup> Along with dredging the harbor and increasing the acreage along the east side of the park, improvements were proposed for the pier north and east of the Coast Guard Station.

The Wagstaff and Everly plan called for additional recreational features, including ball fields, tennis courts, an archery range, shuffleboard and badminton courts, and children's playgrounds. A major highlight of the plan, an expansive amphitheater, would later become known as the Wallace Bowl. In a *Chicago Tribune* article about the Wallace Bowl's 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Bill Lambrecht, a longtime Park Superintendent, and Patrick Leary, Wilmette Historical Museum Curator, explained that the outdoor amphitheater was meant to provide a better venue for a program of concerts performed by the Illinois Symphony Orchestra and funded by the WPA.<sup>92</sup> During the summer of 1936, these concerts had been held at the Esplanade—a makeshift venue on top of the nearby Water Treatment Facility—just north of Lake Avenue. The concerts had drawn enormous crowds, and in order to provide adequate seating and amplification, thousands of chairs and an expensive sound system had been rented for the concert series.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>88</sup> "News of the Nursery Trade," *The Florist's Review*, Volume 45, December 23, 1919, 108.

<sup>89</sup> "Dudley Wagstaff Employed," *Tipton Daily Tribune*, July 12, 1922, 4.

<sup>90</sup> Lakefront Improvement Program: Plans of Park Board Still in Tentative Form," *Wilmette Life*, January 28, 1937, 36.

<sup>91</sup> "Park Board Given \$11,143 Grant for Improvements," *Wilmette Life*, November 14, 1935, 3.

<sup>92</sup> Kathy Routliffe, "Wallace Bowl Celebrates 80 Years of History," *Chicago Tribune*, July 25, 2017.

<sup>93</sup> "Plan Series of Free Concerts Here," *Wilmette Life*, June 18, 1936, 1.

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Designing a venue in the tradition of ancient Greek theaters, Wagstaff and Everly created a facility that addressed the need for built-in seating and good acoustics. They nestled their “natural amphitheater” into the “face of the bluff overlooking Lake Michigan,” creating a 17-tiered semi-circle of stone seating terraces facing the outdoor stage.<sup>94</sup> When the bowl was under construction in July of 1937, *Wilmette Life* published an article with a detailed rendering of the amphitheater signed C.D. Wagstaff & Co. landscape architects. The newspaper noted that in developing the outdoor amphitheater, the WPD wanted to create “a spot that would be a joy to the eye, a spot... for almost any outdoor gathering or event,” and gathering space not only for Wilmette, “but the entire north shore.”<sup>95</sup>

In addition to the new recreational facilities, Wagstaff and Everly’s plan also envisioned lovely passive landscape areas with stonework and plantings. In July, 1937, an article in *Wilmette Life* noted:

“...landscaping has been given special consideration, and will add to the general attractiveness of the whole. It is the intention to utilize as much as possible the native flora of rare and rugged beauty so much admired, such as crab, hawthorn, flowering cherry, sumac, shad-blow, wild plum and others as well as flowering shrubs, so that blooms will be assured throughout the summer months.”<sup>96</sup>

A few months later, another article in *Wilmette Life* mentioned planting treatments for specific locations:

“Along the drive leading from the Washington avenue entrance will be a dense hawthorne [sic.] planting interspersed with pink and white flowering wild crabapple. This is to be bordered by shrub groupings of witch hazel, wild rose, dogwood, and viburnums. The entrance to the drive is to be emphasized by evergreen plantings of native cedar, juniper, and pine.”<sup>97</sup>

The article explained that before the final plant selection had been made, the WPD, Robert E. Everly, and the Wilmette Garden Club had a joint meeting to discuss the plantings for the park. At that meeting, there was consensus that “...in keeping with the theme of natural development,” the palette “...would adhere to the planting of material that is native to Illinois.”<sup>98</sup>

This recommendation reflects an ideology that had long been espoused by Jens Jensen, who had become extremely well-respected throughout the North Shore. During the 1920s and early 1930s, Jensen lived in Wilmette and was often asked to speak before local organizations including the Garden Club. In fact, in November of 1930, *Wilmette Life* reported that the Wilmette Garden Club had scheduled an evening event for the following week in which “Jens Jensen, noted landscape architect” would “give one of his inspirational talks.”<sup>99</sup>

Jensen’s inspiration appears to have included stonework details that were designed by Wagstaff and Everly. Among their landscape improvements were full and partial stone council rings located near the north end of the park. *Wilmette Life* described these elements as “Circles where Boy and Girl Scouts may meet.”<sup>100</sup> Council rings—or stone circular benches—were one of Jensen’s favorite elements, particularly in public parks. Gillson

<sup>94</sup> “Wilmette’s Natural Amphitheater, *Wilmette Life*, July 15, 1937, 37.

<sup>95</sup> “Wilmette’s Natural Amphitheater, 37.

<sup>96</sup> “Wilmette’s Natural Amphitheater, 37.

<sup>97</sup> “Announcing Plans for Landscape at Amphitheater,” *Wilmette Life*, September 16, 1937, 37.

<sup>98</sup> “Announcing Plans for Landscape at Amphitheater,” 37.

<sup>99</sup> “Jens Jensen is the Speaker on Garden Club Program,” *Wilmette Life*, November 28, 1930. 42.

<sup>100</sup> “Canal Diggings Result in Splendid Park,” *Wilmette Life*, June 12, 1941.

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Park's council rings are not dissimilar to those that Jensen included in a number of his plans. They are particularly reminiscent of several full and partial council rings that Jensen designed only a few years earlier for the Mahoney Bird and Wildflower Sanctuary in nearby Kenilworth, Illinois. Along the south side of Gillson Park's landscape, Wagstaff and Everly created stone steps and a terraced seating area with stratified stone walls near the lakefront promenade. These, too, are evocative of limestone details in Jensen-designed parks, including his masterpiece, Columbus Park in Chicago.

Gordon Wallace Oversees Park Improvements

In 1935, prior to the completion of the Wagstaff and Everly plan, the WPD received a WPA grant of just over \$11,000 for some of the initial work involved in expanding and improving the park.<sup>101</sup> After the two landscape architects completed the plan at the end of the following year, the WPD asked them to estimate the costs of the proposed work. The duo determined that a budget of just over \$205,000 would be needed for the park improvements. (This did not include the costs related to the work on the harbor.) In the spring of 1937, the WPD received word from the federal government that a grant of approximately \$140,000 had been approved. The WPD agreed to cover the remainder of the budget through a combination of funds, equipment use, and materials. Labor costs of approximately \$130,000 were not part of the total project estimate because much of the work was undertaken by Work Progress Administration forces.<sup>102</sup>

To oversee the execution of Wagstaff and Everly's plan, the WPD hired Gordon Wallace in early 1937. Born in Tomah, Wisconsin, Gordon Belden Wallace (1907-1982) studied forestry at the University of Wisconsin and the University of Montana. After working for a short time for the U.S. Department of the Interior in Montana and Idaho, he accepted the position of Assistant Superintendent of the Glencoe Parks and worked under Robert E. Everly for two years.<sup>103</sup> He then served as managing engineer for the park board of the Village of Park Forest, Illinois in or just before 1935.<sup>104</sup> Tasked with overseeing the development of a 15-acre park that had WPA-funding, Wallace was soon promoted to superintendent of parks for Park Forest.<sup>105</sup> His new position was short-lived. He resigned from Park Forest in 1937 "to become associated with the park improvement program in Wilmette, Ill."<sup>106</sup> In March, 1938, the WPD Board appointed Wallace as its first full-time superintendent. He remained in this position for thirty years.

Harbor Improvements

By the mid-1930s, Wilmette Harbor was in dire need of the long-proposed dredging project. The problems with silting continued, and lake levels were extremely low. The State of Illinois had agreed to cover the costs of dredging, and work began in 1937. However, the United States Army Corps of Engineers quickly shut the project down, and "Despite efforts to get the Army to permit the dredging to proceed, no more was done that year."<sup>107</sup>

In 1938, political leaders cleared the way for the harbor project. The Army Corps of Engineers agreed to provide a permit for the dredging. The State of Illinois offered to finance the major costs of the project if another entity would cover the costs of the metal sheet piling that would protect the edge of the harbor. The Wilmette Harbor Association formed as a non-profit organization on March 28, 1938, to raise funds for the necessary metal sheeting for the revetment and help develop and maintain harbor and mooring facilities.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>101</sup> "Park Board Given \$11,143 Grant for Park Improvements," November 14, 1935, 3.

<sup>102</sup> "Funds Granted for Wilmette Parks by PWA," *Wilmette Life*, March 25, 1937, 1.

<sup>103</sup> "Name Wallace Supervisor of Park District," *Wilmette Life*, March 31, 1938, 5.

<sup>104</sup> "Wallace Tells of Plans for 15 Acre Recreation Park," *The Forest Parker*, Vol. XLVI, No. 49, October 24, 1935, 1.

<sup>105</sup> "Recreation Project Presents Program of Activities," *The Forest Parker*, Vol. XLVII, No. 25, May 21, 1936, 15.

<sup>106</sup> "Thormahlen to Replace Wallace as Park Supt." *The Forest Parker*, Vol. XXIII, No. 18, May 7, 1937, 1.

<sup>107</sup> Leach, Schmitt, and Bautzmann. *Wilmette's Nautical Heritage: A Pictorial History*, 61.

<sup>108</sup> Leach, Schmitt, and Bautzmann. *Wilmette's Nautical Heritage: A Pictorial History*, 61-62.

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That June, a contractor began driving piles for a revetment along the shore on the east side of the park, north of the Coast Guard observation tower. The spoil from the dredging project would be dumped near the tower and used as fill material to expand the park.<sup>109</sup>

While the dredging project was underway, another nearby initiative was undertaken utilizing WPA funding and labor—the creation of a parking lot for the harbor. The project relied on the same kind of red vitrified brick that was then being used by WPA forces to repair many of Wilmette’s historic streets.<sup>110</sup> Altogether, 40,000 bricks were used for the new harbor parking lot.<sup>111</sup>

Park Use During and After WWII

During the stressful period in which America had entered WWII, the park provided an oasis for residents as well as visitors from other communities. Park patrons enjoyed the lovely greenspace and its many recreational features. In addition to informal users, leagues had begun playing on the baseball fields and tennis courts. The bathing beach remained an important attraction. To fill the void when so many young men had gone off to war, the WPD hired accomplished women swimmers to serve as lifeguards for the first time.<sup>112</sup>

The amphitheater had featured the annual outdoor concert series, the Starlight Symphonies, for six years, through the summer of 1941. As the final season of the WPA-funded Starlight Symphonies drew to an end, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that more than 300,000 people had enjoyed listening to the concerts since they had first begun.<sup>113</sup>

Although the concert series had ended, the community continued to use the outdoor amphitheater for other kinds of programming during this period. For example, a Civilian Defense jamboree featured a dramatic presentation called “Air Raid,” and a program about the vital role of civil defense in the war effort by Village President Harry C. Kinne.<sup>114</sup>

Throughout the war years, Wilmette residents had begun gathering for a program they called “Sing for Victory.” In 1945, the group held four vocal concerts with community participation at the amphitheater. This program represented “...the first musicals performed in the bowl since the discontinuance of the Illinois Symphony orchestra program at the beginning of the war.”<sup>115</sup>

As the war drew to a close, the WPD worked with the Village of Wilmette’s Recreation Board to plan a new series of summer concerts. Charles H. Feltman, co-owner of a successful shoe store chain and member of the WPD Board, provided a \$10,000 donation for improvements to the amphitheater in 1946. As part of the project, the old stage was demolished and replaced with a larger raised stage with stone steps and a floor of green colored concrete. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, Gordon Wallace designed the improvement and selected “more than 90 specimen evergreen plants and shrubs which form a backdrop and wings for the stage.”<sup>116</sup> The project was completed and dedicated in late July, in time for the summer concert series that August.

POST WAR II ERA

<sup>109</sup> “Work at Last is Started on Harbor Project,” *Wilmette Life*, June 2, 1938, 1.

<sup>110</sup> The Living New Deal, Street Paving, Wilmette, IL, <https://livingnewdeal.org/projects/street-paving-wilmette-il/>

<sup>111</sup> Leach, Schmitt, and Bautzmann. *Wilmette’s Nautical Heritage: A Pictorial History*, 36.

<sup>112</sup> Kathy Hussey-Arntson and Patrick Leary, *Wilmette* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2012), 101.

<sup>113</sup> “String Duo Will be Featured at Wilmette Bowl,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 17, 1941, N3.

<sup>114</sup> “Wilmette Dramatizes Part in War,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 23, 1942, N1.

<sup>115</sup> “Group Singing Concerts to be Held in Suburb,” July 15, 1945, 27.

<sup>116</sup> “Dedicate New Wilmette Park Theater Today,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 28, 1946, 40.

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As Wilmette experienced substantial growth during the Post WWII era, the WPD focused on providing new parks and playgrounds during the 1940s. In 1955, the WPD Board shifted its attention to memorializing the contributions of Louis Gillson by renaming the park in his honor. (Gillson had died in 1942.) A boulder and plaque that stands near the park's south entrance at Michigan Avenue recognizes that Gillson was the "co-founder and for twenty-six years the President of the Board of Commissioners of the Wilmette Park District." The plaque also notes "his foresight and untiring efforts made this park possible."

Like Gillson, Gordon Wallace had also made important contributions to the park and WPD over a long period of time. In 1969, the year after he retired, the WPD officially named the amphitheater the Wallace Bowl.

Park Improvements from the late 1940s to the early 1970s

With its iconic amphitheater, beautiful landscapes, and numerous recreational features, including its vibrant harbor, Gillson Park was very popular and well-utilized during the Post WWII era. By this time, Wilmette Harbor was in dire need of improvements. Several plans had been proposed for enlarging the harbor, but they continually stalled due to disagreements about how these projects should be funded. As this issue dragged on, the harbor entrance was often so shallow that the Coast Guard could not operate boats at this location. To address the immediate problem, the harbor was dredged several times in the early 1950s. This was largely due to the fact that "Studies had shown that if the breakwalls could be extended out into deeper water, the amount of sand settling each year in the mouth would be reduced."<sup>117</sup> As the debate continued to drag on throughout the 1950s, the Wilmette Harbor Association sponsored several smaller projects to repair and extend the breakwalls.

By this time the Marshall/Goldblatt mansion had been demolished and the Baha'i Temple had acquired its site on the south side of the harbor. Every time a dredging or breakwall project was undertaken, permission had to be obtained from the Baha'i Temple as well as the Army Corps of Engineers, State of Illinois, and SDC.

In 1962, after many years of negotiations, the SDC "...gave the Wilmette Harbor Association a 50-year lease on the harbor and the 500-foot pier to the north." The agreement included a provision requiring that the Association would be responsible for maintaining and improving harbor facilities.<sup>118</sup>

The Wilmette Harbor Association continued with dredging projects and other work through the 1960s and early 1970s. They built a dry-sail area on the south side of the harbor in 1963. Among numerous improvements the following year, the association dredged an area outside of the harbor and used some of the fill "to create new land by the south breakwall" that would "provide protection from southeast storms."<sup>119</sup>

Although the WPD did not undertake major projects in Gillson Park at the time, the picnic shelter was constructed in 1972. The Wilmette Harbor Association continued making various improvements throughout the 1970s. These included making repairs to the existing 500-foot pier after being turned down by the SDC for a request to demolish the deteriorated structure. (The pier was later replaced by revetment comprised of riprap boulders.)

Gillson Park 1970s to 2020s

In recent years, several events and projects spurred changes and improvements to the park. In 1973, a merger of the Village Recreation Board with the Park District set in motion a major expansion of recreational programming. In the 1970s the Sheridan Shore Yacht Club constructed an addition to its clubhouse. The Coast

<sup>117</sup> Leach, Schmitt, and Bautzmann. *Wilmette's Nautical Leach Heritage: A Pictorial History*, 72.

<sup>118</sup> Leach, Schmitt, and. Bautzmann. *Wilmette's Nautical Leach Heritage: A Pictorial History*, 76.

<sup>119</sup> Leach, Schmitt, and Bautzmann. *Wilmette's Nautical Heritage: A Pictorial History* 76.

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Guard Station made alterations and expanded its building in 1980. Several years later, the WPC completed construction of the Lakeview Center.

By this period, the nearly 50-year-old Wallace Bowl was suffering from deterioration. In addition to drainage problems in the lower grassy area, the “aging flagstone seats” needed to be replaced.<sup>120</sup> In 1984, the WPD retained the firm of Barton Aschman Associates to respectfully renovate the amphitheater and stage. The project utilized Lannon stone from the same quarry that originally supplied the stone. The Ouilmette Foundation contributed funds to the \$450,000 effort.

In the late 1970s, the WPD built the Lakeview Center in Gillson Park. The structure provides staff offices, restrooms, and recreational space. Since its original construction, the facility has had an exterior deck addition and interior improvements.

Landscape improvements and enhancements have also been made over the years. In the early 2000s, a perennial garden was planted along the harbor promenade and dedicated as a memorial to the September 11, 2001 victims. There are many memorial trees and benches near this area.

In 2016, the WPD received a grant from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to create a migratory bird and wildflower sanctuary. Following a design created by landscape architects Living Habitats, community volunteers planted thousands of native trees, shrubs, and herbaceous perennials to provide habitat for resident birds and the millions of birds that migrate along the Mississippi flyway each spring and fall.

One of the most recent improvements is the Gillson Park Beach House. Designed by Woodhouse Tinucci Architects, the building won a 2021 Small Projects Award from the Chicago Chapter of the American Institutes of Architects.<sup>121</sup> It includes bathrooms, concessions stand, eating area, and lifeguard station. The expanded adjacent parking lot uses permeable pavers, and the building is surrounded by extensive native dune plantings. Designed to be unobtrusive, the building utilizes natural materials, and curves to fit within the landscape of the dunes in which it sits.

Over the years, the WPD and MWRD have maintained Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor and have continued to provide many of the facilities and features for which it has been long treasured. A valued oasis from life’s stresses, the park and harbor possess a magnificent historic landscape that is cherished by Wilmette residents as well as outside visitors.

<sup>120</sup> Steve Steinberg, “Wallace Bowl Renovation to Revive its 1930s Image,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 25, 1984, H39.

<sup>121</sup> “Gillson Park Beach House,” Woodhouse Tinucci Architects, <http://www.woodtinarch.com/2019-gil>

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Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor

Name of Property

Cook, Illinois

County and State

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor

Name of Property

Cook, Illinois

County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** 59.2

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage; enter "Less than one" if the acreage is .99 or less)

### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	_____	_____	3	_____	_____
	Latitude	Longitude		Latitude	Longitude
2	_____	_____	4	_____	_____
	Latitude	Longitude		Latitude	Longitude

### Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District is bounded on the north by the northwest curb-line of Lake Avenue at Michigan Avenue and extending east along the northern curb-line of Lake Avenue following the curb-line as Lake Avenue curves to the north, and extending northerly to the end of Lake Avenue, to the northern end of the Gillson Park Sailing Beach. The historic district is bounded on the east by Lake Michigan including the most easterly entrance to Wilmette Harbor. The district's south boundary extends from the southwest corner of the Sheridan Road Bridge at the southwest end of the Pumping Station and extending easterly along the west curb line of the pumping station service drive to the southeast end of the Sheridan Road Bridge; and continuing to the easterly along the south edge of the harbor. The western boundary of the district extends from the west curb-line of the Pumping Station service drive to its terminus at Sheridan Road and from there across Sheridan Road along the east curb-line of Sheridan Road to the northern boundary of Bateman Park. From there the western boundary extends along the west curb-line of Michigan Avenue to the northwest curb-line of Lake Avenue.

### Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

These boundaries include the property historically associated the Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor during its period of significance. The boundaries include Michigan Avenue which is a character-defining feature of the park's landscape and Bateman Park which was originally conceived, designed, and developed as part of Washington (Gillson Park).

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Julia S. Bachrach, landscape historian, and Malcolm Cairns, FASLA date 8/23/2023

organization Landmarks Illinois telephone 312-922-1742

street & number 30 N. Michigan Ave. #2020 email kparzen@landmarks.org

city or town Chicago state IL zip code 60602

Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor  
Name of Property

Cook, Illinois  
County and State

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **GIS Location Map (Google Earth or BING)**
- **Local Location Map**
- **Site Plan**
- **Floor Plans (As Applicable)**

**Photo Location Map** (Include for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map and insert immediately after the photo log and before the list of figures).

### GIS Map of Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District with location coordinates



1	42.0828383	-87.690669
2	42.0788311	-87.679801
3	42.0770272	-87.679555
4	42.0767492	-87.681485
5	42.0758079	-87.68346
6	42.0751724	-87.68551
7	42.0764876	-87.686719
8	42.0770021	-87.686291
9	42.0798522	-87.690738
10	42.081947	-87.691969

Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor

Name of Property

Cook, Illinois

County and State

**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

**Photo Log**

<b>Name of Property:</b>	<u>Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District</u>		
<b>City or Vicinity:</b>	<u>Wilmette</u>		
<b>County:</b>	<u>Cook</u>	<b>State:</b>	<u>IL</u>
<b>Photographer:</b>	<u>Julia S. Bachrach and Malcolm Cairns</u>		
<b>Date Photographed:</b>	<u>June 27, 2022; October 19, 2022; July 19, 2023</u>		

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

**Photo 1 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0001  
Park entry plaza and piers at Washington Avenue looking east.

**Photo 2 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0002  
Wallace Bowl looking south.

**Photo 3 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0003  
Wallace Bowl looking northwest.

**Photo 4 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0004  
Flagstone paving, terrace wall and seating at Wallace Bowl.

**Photo 5 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0005  
Stone council ring looking northeast.

**Photo 6 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0006  
Partial stone council ring near the top of the Wallace Bowl looking northwest.

**Photo 7 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0007  
Lakeview center looking northwest.

**Photo 8 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0008  
Trees and lawn from Upper Drive looking southeast.

**Photo 9 of 32:**  
IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0009  
Middle Drive and Great Lawn looking northwest.

**Photo 10 of 32:**

Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor

Name of Property

Cook, Illinois

County and State

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0010  
Great lawn between Upper and Middle Drives looking south.

**Photo 11 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0011  
Sheridan Shore Yacht Club looking south.

**Photo 12 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0012  
Boat crane at Sheridan Shore Yacht Club and Wilmette Harbor looking south.

**Photo 13 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0013  
Sheridan Shore Yacht Club and Wilmette Harbor looking northeast.

**Photo 14 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0014  
Fish Cleaning Building at Wilmette Harbor looking northeastward to Yacht Club.

**Photo 15 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0015  
Sheridan Road Bridge and Pumping Station looking northwest.

**Photo 16 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0016  
Sheridan Road Bridge and Pumping Station looking east toward harbor.

**Photo 17 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0017  
Balustrade, Sheridan Road Bridge and Pumping Station looking east.

**Photo 18 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0018  
Sheridan Road Bridge and Pumping Station from North Channel looking northeast.

**Photo 19 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0019  
United States Coast Guard Station looking south.

**Photo 20 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0020  
Harbor Access Steps from Promenade looking northeast.

**Photo 21 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0021  
Harbor Drive along Harbor Promenade looking east.

**Photo 22 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0022  
Evergreen grove at Harbor Promenade looking southwest.

**Photo 23 of 32:**



Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor

Name of Property

Cook, Illinois

County and State

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0023

Lake overlook terrace, stone steps and stone seatwall looking southwest from terminus of Harbor promenade.

**Photo 24 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0024

Harbor promenade seat wall looking east.

**Photo 25 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0025

Evergreen grove near Picnic Shelter looking north from Overlook Drive.

**Photo 26 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0026

Gillson Beach House looking northeast.

**Photo 27 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0027

Louis Gillson commemorative boulder looking northeast.

**Photo 28 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0028

World War I commemorative stone.

**Photo 29 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0029

Picnic Shelter and grove looking north,

**Photo 30 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0030

Brick-paved driveway and parking lot at Harbor looking south.

**Photo 31 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0031

Light standard Sheridan Road Bridge looking east.

**Photo 32 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0032

Brick paved Michigan Avenue looking northeast.

**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.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

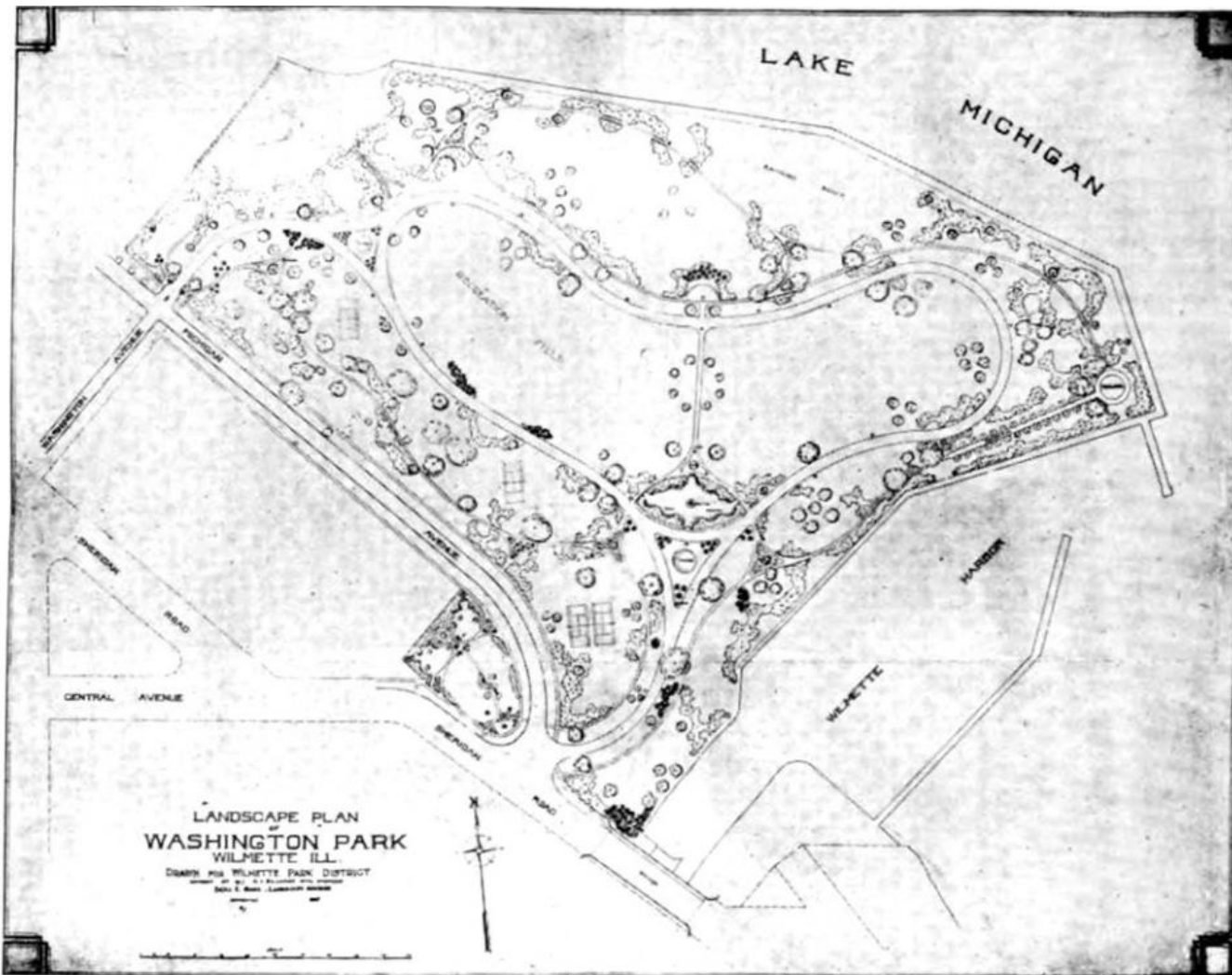
Section number Additional Documentation

Page 46

### List of Figures

(Resize, compact, and paste images of maps and historic documents in this section. Place captions, with figure numbers above each image. Orient maps so that north is at the top of the page, all documents should be inserted with the top toward the top of the page.)

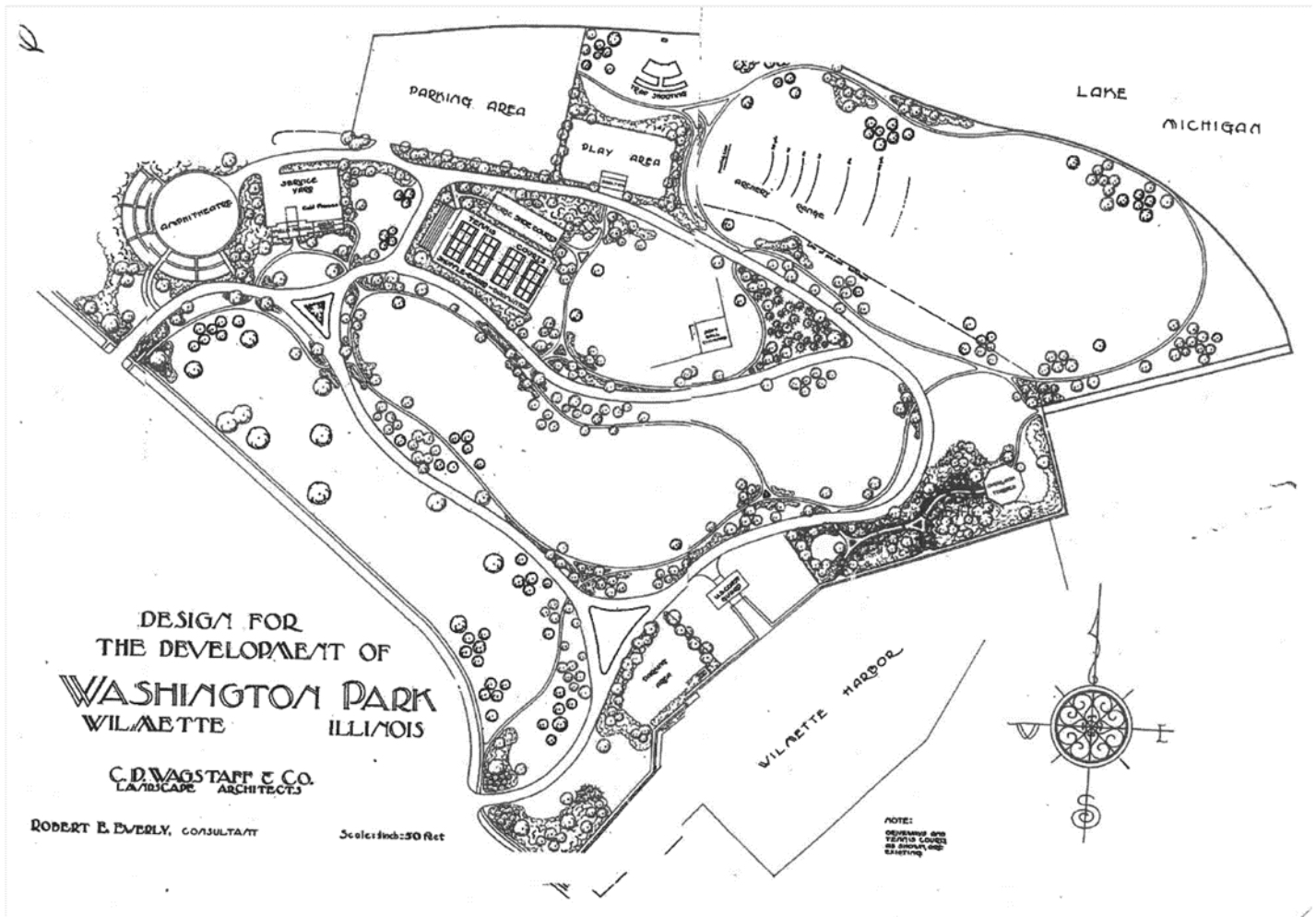
Figure 1) "Landscape Plan of Washington Park, Wilmette, ILL," by Benjamin E. Gage. Published in "Lawn Making in Reclaimed Park Area," *Park and Cemetery and Landscape Gardening*, Vol. XXVII, No. 9, November, 1917, 240.



PLAN FOR DEVELOPMENT OF RECLAIMED PARK, WILMETTE, ILL.  
Benjamin E. Gage, Landscape Architect.

Property name:  
Illinois, County:

Figure 2) Design for the Development of Washington Park, Wilmette, Illinois, C.D. Wagstaff & Company, Landscape Architects, and Robert E. Everly, Consultant, published in *Wilmette Life*, January 28, 1937.



Property name:  
Illinois, County:

Figure 3) Wallace Bowl Design Sketch. C.W. Wagstaff. *Wilmette Life*, July 15, 1937.



Figure 4) Gillson Fill Operation 1908, Wilmette Historical Museum. d241.





Property name:  
Illinois, County:

Figure 5) Gillson Fill Operation 1909. Wilmette Historical Museum. d251.



Figure 6) Wilmette Beach, showing original lake bluff ca. 1900, Wilmette Historical Museum. A16.



**Property name:**  
**Illinois, County:**

Figure 7) Drainage Canal Bridge Sheridan Road (and Pumping Station) Looking from Lake, ca. 1920. Courtesy of Wilmette Historical Museum.



Figure 8\_) Gillson Tree Planting, 1917. Wilmette Historical Museum. d491.





Property name:  
Illinois, County:

Figure 9) Wilmette Harbor photo from Benjamin Marshall's property. Photo by Peter Fish, Chicago, 1925. Wilmette Harbor Club Historical Photos.



Figure 10) Aerial View of Bahai Temple and Wilmette Lakefront. 1931. *Chicago Tribune* Photo Archive.



**Property name:**  
**Illinois, County:**

Figure 11) U.S. Coast Guard Station in Wilmette. 1942. Wilmette Historical Museum. a42.



Figure 12) Sheridan Shore Yacht Club Clubhouse, 1938. Wilmette Historical Museum. b998.



*Wilmette Historical Museum*



Property name:  
Illinois, County:

Figure 13) Wilmette (Wallace) Bowl construction, 1937. Wilmette Historical Museum.



Figure 14) Wilmette (Wallace) Bowl new stage, ca. 1950. Wilmette Historical Museum.



**Property name:**  
**Illinois, County:**

Figure 15) Aerial Photograph dated 11/15/1938 showing bulkhead installed for 1937 Washington (Gillson) Park landfill and recently completed Wilmette (Wallace) Bowl.



16) Wilmette Harbor, 1940 showing recently installed planting along the promenade.  
<http://www.idaillinois.org/digital/collection/wilmette/id/76>





## Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District Images



**Photo 1 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor  
Historic District\_0001  
Park entry plaza and piers at Washington Avenue looking  
east



**Photo 2 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and  
Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0002  
Wallace Bowl looking south





**Photo 3 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor  
Historic District\_0003  
Wallace Bowl looking northwest



**Photo 4 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor  
Historic District\_0004  
Flagstone paving, terrace wall and seating at Wallace  
Bowl





**Photo 5 of 32:**  
IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and  
Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0005  
Stone council ring looking north east



**Photo 6 of 32:**  
IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor  
Historic District\_0006  
Partial stone council ring looking northwest





**Photo 7 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and  
Wilmette Harbor Historic  
District\_0007  
Lakeview center looking northwest



**Photo 8 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and  
Wilmette Harbor Historic  
District\_0008  
Trees and lawn from Upper Drive  
looking southeast





**Photo 9 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and  
Wilmette Harbor Historic  
District\_0009  
Middle Drive and Great Lawn  
looking northwest



**Photo 10 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and  
Wilmette Harbor Historic  
District\_0010  
Great lawn between Upper and  
Middle Drives looking south





**Photo 11 of 32:**  
IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and  
Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0011  
Sheridan Shore Yacht Club looking  
south



**Photo 12 of 32:**  
IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor  
Historic District\_0012  
Boat crane at Sheridan Shore Yacht Club and Wilmette  
Harbor looking south





**Photo 13 of 32:**  
IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and  
Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0013  
Sheridan Shore Yacht Club and  
Wilmette Harbor looking northeast (17)



**Photo 14 of 32:**  
IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor  
Historic District\_0014  
Fish Cleaning Building at Wilmette Harbor looking  
northeastward to Yacht Club (MC16)



**Photo 15 of 32:**  
 IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and  
 Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0015  
 Sheridan Road Bridge and Pumping  
 Station looking northwest



**Photo 16 of 32:**  
 IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor  
 Historic District\_0016  
 Sheridan Road Bridge and Pumping Station looking east  
 toward harbor





**Photo 17 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor  
Historic District\_0017  
Balustrade, Sheridan Road Bridge and Pumping Station  
looking east



**Photo 18 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor  
Historic District\_0018  
Sheridan Road Bridge and Pumping Station from  
North Channel looking northeast (MC9)





**Photo 19 of 32:**  
IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0019  
United States Coast Guard Station  
looking south



**Photo 20 of 32:**  
IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor  
Historic District\_0020  
Harbor Access Steps from Promenade looking northeast





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Harbor Drive along Harbor Promenade  
looking east



**Photo 22 of 32:**  
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Historic District\_0022  
Evergreen grove at Harbor Promenade looking  
southwest





**Photo 23 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and  
Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0023  
Lake overlook terrace, stone steps and  
stone seatwall looking southwest from  
terminus of Harbor promenade



**Photo 24 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and  
Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0024  
Harbor promenade seat wall looking  
east





**Photo 25 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor  
Historic District\_0025  
Evergreen grove near Picnic Shelter looking north from  
Overlook Drive



**Photo 26 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and  
Wilmette Harbor Historic District\_0026  
Gillson Beach House looking northeast





**Photo 27 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor  
Historic District\_0027

Louis Gillson Commemorative stone



**Photo 28 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor  
Historic District\_0028

World War I commemorative stone





**Photo 29 of 32:**  
IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and  
Wilmette Harbor Historic  
District\_0029  
Picnic Shelter and grove looking  
north



**Photo 30 of 32:**  
IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor  
Historic District\_0030  
Brick-paved driveway and parking lot at Harbor  
looking south





**Photo 31 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor  
Historic District\_0031  
Light standard Sheridan Road Bridge looking east



**Photo 32 of 32:**

IL\_Cook County\_Gillson Park and Wilmette Harbor  
Historic District\_0032  
Brick paved Michigan Avenue looking northeast

PHOTO LOCATION MAP

**Gillson Park & Wilmette Harbor  
Historic District**  
Wilmette, Cook Co., Illinois

LAKE  
MICHIGAN



# Gillson Park & Wilmette Harbor Historic District

Wilmette, Cook Co., Illinois

