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 Allegheny Commons

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Roughly bounded by North Ave., Cedar Ave., Stockton St., Ridge Ave., Brighton Rd. not for publication N/A

city or town Pittsburgh City Vicinity N/A

state Pennsylvania code PA county Allegheny code 003 zip code 15212

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

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

Allegheny Commons
Name of Property

Allegheny County, PA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

	private
X	public - Local
	public - State
	public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

	building(s)
	district
X	site
	structure
	object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	2	buildings
2	1	sites
7	2	structures
6	2	objects
17	7	**Total**

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)

LANDSCAPE / Park
RECREATION AND CULTURE / Outdoor recreation
RECREATION AND CULTURE / Monument/marker

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)

LANDSCAPE / Park
RECREATION AND CULTURE / Outdoor recreation
RECREATION AND CULTURE / Monument / Marker

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions.)

N/A

Materials (Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: N/A
walls: N/A
roof: N/A
other:

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

Allegheny Commons is a relatively level, 62-acre park on Pittsburgh's North Side, located across the Allegheny River from downtown Pittsburgh. Its landscape was originally designed in 1867 by the New York firm of Mitchell and Grant and modified to plans by Ralph Griswold in 1935 and John Ormsbee Simonds in 1967; the park retains integrity to all three of these periods of design. It is comprised of contiguous sections known as North, South, East, and West Commons. Of these, North, East, and South Commons are narrow, linear, symmetrical, and overall more formal in design than West Common, whose broader expanse allowed for a more pastoral design with meandering paths and a water feature, Lake Elizabeth. The park's approximately 1000 trees, representing more than 100 different species, date to various periods in its history and include stands, specimens, and allees defining linear features such as roads, paths, and the railroad cut that bisects West Common. Monuments dating to various periods in the park's development punctuate the landscape and serve as focal points throughout the park. A modern aviary stands on a site in West Common formerly occupied by a penitentiary and a conservatory. The park evolved to serve the changing city around it during the late 19th and 20th centuries, acquiring more active recreational areas – such as a swimming pool, tennis courts, and playgrounds – while remaining true to its character as a passive, ornamental Victorian park.

Narrative Description

Allegheny Commons is located one-half mile north of the Allegheny River near its confluence with the Monongahela and Ohio Rivers in Pittsburgh's North Side (before annexation in 1907, the independent City of Allegheny). On its north, east, and west, the park is bounded by the streets of old Allegheny City: North Avenue on the north, Cedar Avenue on the east, and Brighton Road on the west. Each of these streets belongs to an architecturally-distinguished, late-19th-to-early-20th century residential neighborhood. The park's southern edge is formed by local streets running just north of and parallel to Interstate 279 and by the Norfolk Southern Railroad, whose curving track forms the park's southwest corner and its only curved edge. The interior edges of the park surround the historic core of Allegheny City, a 36-block area which suffered substantial demolition as a result of redevelopment in the 1960s. The park's inner boundary, once firmly defined by Sherman Street on the west, Union Street on the east, and Montgomery Avenue on the north, still follows the historic rights-of-way of these streets, though the actual cartways were fragmented during the urban renewal era. Playing fields located adjacent to the park's northern, inner edge give the appearance of extending the parkland even farther inward in places, but were added after the park's period of significance (1868-1967). A concrete ramp leading to the main entrance of an elementary school (built just outside of the park in 1973) is the only incursion into the park from more recent construction at its boundaries, and this is minor.

The park is comprised of four contiguous sections known as North, South, East, and West Commons in reference to their locations relative to Allegheny's central "in-lots" and to their prior, "common" usage as grazing land. Within the park are 24 resources, 17 of which are contributing and 7 of which are non-contributing. There are 4 buildings in the park, 2 of which contribute: a brick swimming pool house (ca.1940) located at the corner of Cedar and Stockton Streets in East Common, and a stone restroom building (ca. 1935) located adjacent to the tennis courts on West Ohio Street in West Common. The 2 non-contributing buildings in the park are a maintenance structure dating from the 1970s (after the park's period of significance) located between the railroad, Ridge Place, and Merchant Street, and the Aviary in West Common, whose extensive recent additions have compromised the integrity of its original, 1950s design. The park also contains seven contributing structures: a concrete pedestrian bridge (ca. 1910) over the railroad in West Common; two steel vehicular bridges built in 1903 to carry West Ohio Street and Ridge Avenue over the railroad in West Common;

Lake Elizabeth (1967) in West Common; two concrete footbridges (1967) over the lake; and the swimming pool near Cedar Avenue and Stockton Street in East Common (ca. 1940). Two noncontributing structures are the

railroad itself, constructed before the park in 1852 and sunk below grade in West Common in 1912, and a ca. 1970 concrete stage north of the swimming pool in East Common. The park has been a popular location of sculpture, monuments, and memorials since its founding, and six examples contribute to its historic character: the Hampton Battery Memorial (1871) in East Common and the Soldier's Monument (1871; relocated on new base in 1934), Thomas Armstrong Memorial (1889), George Washington Memorial (1891), USS Maine Memorial (1914), and deer sculpture (ca. 1870) in West Common. Two more objects, the Five Factors sculpture (1977) in West Common and a World War II memorial (ca. 1980) in South Common, are more recent additions which do not contribute. The park contains two tennis court areas, one of which, along West Ohio Street in West Common, dates from the period of significance (1930s) and is contributing, and the other of which, along Stockton Street in South Common, post-dates the period of significance (1970s) and, therefore, is non-contributing. In addition, the entire park, including its plantings, paths, and topography, is a contributing site. The park further contains numerous uncounted landscape and small-scale features, such as metal post-and-rail fencing around East Common and wrought iron fencing along the railroad; a variety of furnishings, such as benches, picnic tables, trash receptacles, lighting, and signage, throughout the park; and playground equipment in three locations: East Common near the pool, North Common near the elementary school, and West Common near the tennis courts and deer sculpture.

The park's topography is mainly flat, and its landscape consists predominantly of mature shade trees and lawn traversed by a network of pedestrian paths connecting to the surrounding streets. Overall, the park's appearance reflects a continuum of landscape design from the 1860s to the 1960s. The area of North and East Common retains considerable integrity to the 1860s; aspects of the park were affected by an improvement plan of the 1930s; and part of West Common has been changed several times, most recently in the 1960s. To the extent that large shade trees, lawn, and monuments exist throughout the park and its perimeter remains largely intact since its creation, the landscape remains visually unified and most consistent with its era of origin.

At the park's outer boundaries of Brighton Road on the west, North Avenue on the north, and Cedar Avenue on the east, the park functions as a collective "front yard" for the adjoining neighborhoods of predominately brick rowhouses and scattered commercial and industrial uses. These neighborhoods – Allegheny West, the Mexican War Streets, and East Allegheny – are each listed as Historic Districts in the National Register of Historic Places. These edges of the park are unchanged since its original design, and form a solid urban streetscape that conveys the size, scale, and style of the 19th century city which formed the original context of the park and continues to define its setting. Along the park's interior edges, a handful of Allegheny City landmarks along Sherman, Union, and Montgomery Streets survived the demolition of the urban renewal era and still face the park, along with newer construction from the 1960s through the 1980s. Many of the original street trees that lined these streets also remain, reinforcing continuity with the park's original setting. The park's planting scheme consists of grassy lawn shaded by approximately 1000 trees, forming a large canopy reflecting successive waves of planting and replanting during the park's lifetime. The park contains more than 100 different native and exotic species of shade tree, with those typical of urban parks – elm, linden, maple, gingko, and plane tree – being most plentiful. Like the buildings around the park, many trees within it date to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Together, the park's trees form a green connector linking the different areas and eras of the park's history. Monuments dating to various periods of the park's development punctuate the landscape and serve as focal points throughout the park.

Of the park's four sections, West Common is the largest and the most pastoral in character. Its spaciousness allowed it to be laid out with meandering paths and to become the location of most of the park's buildings, structures, and monuments, as well as a major water feature, Lake Elizabeth. It is bounded by West North

Avenue on the north, Brighton Road on the west, Ridge Avenue and the Norfolk Southern Railroad tracks on the south, and Sherman Street on the east. North, South, and East Commons are more linear, symmetrical, and formal in character and consist predominantly of open parkland without structures, at least north of East Ohio Street. They are linked by a central promenade strongly defined by allees of trees. North Common is a relatively narrow strip of land, extending from North Avenue south only as far as Montgomery Street. It, in turn, connects to East Common. East Common, approximately equal in area to North Common and similarly proportioned, lies between Cedar Avenue to the east and Union Street (and its extension) to the west, from North Avenue south to Stockton Avenue. South Common today exists as a trio of tennis courts located west of the pool and pool house, buffered from the surrounding streets by earth berms; an area of passive parkland between the southeastern edge of West Common and the western terminus of Church Street; and a narrow lawn planted with an allee of oak trees south of Church Street between Federal and Sandusky Streets.

West Common

Allegheny Commons' most spacious area, West Common, still retains the integrity of its basic 1868 design (photo 19). It features curving paths and undulating terrain with open meadows alternating with parklands (that is, areas of large trees in lawns, without undergrowth) and a water feature, Lake Elizabeth. West Common is divided diagonally by the depressed tracks of the Norfolk Southern Railroad and by the extension of West Ohio Street to Western Avenue. The principal structures of the park lie in West Common north and east of the tracks and West Ohio Street and include the National Aviary; several monuments and sculptures, detailed below; and Lake Elizabeth. The lake has been altered several times since the park was built, with its current incarnation dating to the 1967 design of Simonds and Simonds, but the role of Lake Elizabeth as a focal point in the design of West Common has remained the same.

The relative breadth afforded by West Common resulted in a different design treatment from that of East and North Commons, both originally and subsequently. Unlike the linear, symmetrical geometry of the park's northern and eastern sectors, in West Common Mitchell and Grant laid out an asymmetrical, curvilinear path system around a picturesque lake and a decorative fountain north of the railroad (photos 10, 11, 13). The fountain incorporated a central bust of Baron Alexander von Humboldt, a German scientist, explorer, and author, and was dedicated in 1869. South of West Ohio Street, a sloping greensward included another, elaborately-detailed cast-iron fountain, also installed in 1869. Both of these fountains were removed due to deterioration in the first half of the 20th century. The latter area – the park's present southwest corner, known as "The Groves" – retains a landscape essentially consistent with the park's earliest design, despite the loss of the fountain and subsequent changes to furnishings such as benches and lighting (photo 19). Throughout West Common, some paths were also removed or realigned during successive park improvement campaigns in 1935 and 1967. South of Ridge Avenue, a triangular area between Merchant Street and the railroad was added to the park in the 1960s to answer the need for a park maintenance compound.

True to West Common's pastoral design, tree plantings dot the landscape and relate less directly to the pedestrian path pattern than they do in more formal, symmetrical North and East Commons. Exceptions are impressive allees of single species reinforcing the edges of the park and linear features such as West Ohio Street and the railroad: maples along the western edge of the park at Brighton Road, London plane trees along West Ohio Street (photo 19), and ginkgos flanking the railroad tracks (photos 16 and 17). "The Groves" area near the intersection of Brighton Road and Ridge Avenue has always been planted with an assortment of specimen trees such as magnolia, Chinese chestnut, sawtooth oak, and bur oak (photo 19). Other species found in West Common and notable either for their uniqueness or the period they were introduced to the United States or Pittsburgh include bald cypress, black gum, and silver maple.[1] Plantings in West Common dating from the Simonds and Simonds plan of 1966 include flowering cherry trees and the introduction of

[1] Galuska, Joseph. Historic American Landscape Survey Report: Allegheny Commons, 2010, p. 7.

evergreens near Lake Elizabeth. Also attributable to the Simonds plan is mounding in the northern parts of West Common to create a hilly terrain.

Railroad tracks bisected the commons prior to the park's creation. Originally passing through West Common at grade, the tracks of what is now the Norfolk Southern line were depressed in 1912 and the right-of-way lined by a black wrought iron fence (photo 17) and the *allee* of gingko trees (photos 14, 16 and 17).

Widening of the railroad right-of-way from 50 to 58 feet in 1901 led to the construction of the three bridges which exist in West Common today. These replaced earlier pedestrian and vehicular bridges which had been built according to the Mitchell and Grant plan. The vehicular bridges, constructed in 1903 and rehabilitated in 1957-58, are rare examples of Warren pony trusses in which the lower chords are composed of built-up plates, forming a girder (photo 15). These bridges and the Smithfield Street Bridge (National Historic Landmark, 1976) are the only truss bridges in Allegheny County with three parallel trusses.[2] Of the two vehicular bridges in West Common, the Ridge Avenue bridge has the more intricate design, with a railing of interlaced Gothic arches.

The footbridge across the railroad has a closed spandrel, elliptical concrete arch design with Classical Revival detailing. Plans were drawn up by Price and McLanahan, architects out of Philadelphia, and the bridge was constructed between 1906 and 1911 (photo 14). The arches in its approaches were filled in ca. 1967. Today, the footbridge is derelict and closed. The vehicular bridges are also deteriorated, and their future is uncertain.

Three of the park's four buildings are located in West Common, as is one contributing site. The National Aviary complex (photos 26 and 27) occupies approximately three acres near Arch and Sherman Streets, a site previously occupied by the Western Pennsylvania Penitentiary (1826-1886, on a larger site) and then by Phipps Conservatory (1887-1927, on a smaller site). The site of a bandstand, added near the southern end of the conservatory in 1910, and an adjacent paved "music circle" which existed through the early and mid-20th century are also today part of the Aviary site. The bandstand burned and was replaced by a concrete shell, which was demolished by 1950. Originally constructed in 1952 and substantially remodeled in the 1960s with additions in 1996 and 2010, the Aviary is a group of brick, glass, and steel buildings whose contemporary additions have resulted in a loss of integrity such that the Aviary does not contribute to the historic character of the park.

The small restroom building (photo 21) adjacent to the tennis courts east of West Ohio Street was added to the park ca. 1935 as part of a WPA-funded campaign to integrate more recreational uses into the park. It is made of irregularly-sized blocks of quarry-faced limestone and has a hipped roof currently clad in asphalt shingles. A stone water fountain on the front of the building no longer functions, and the front-and-center entrance to the restroom is closed off with a padlocked wrought iron gate. Original paneled wooden doors on the side facades remain in place behind plywood security boards. Despite its current disuse, the restroom building retains integrity. The three tennis courts situated between the restroom building and West Ohio Street are surfaced in asphalt and individually fenced in chain link. The courts date from the period between 1912 and 1934 and collectively form a contributing site in the park. A contemporary playground is also located along West Ohio Street, between the northwestern end of the tennis courts and Brighton Road.

The non-contributing park maintenance complex was constructed ca. 1970 on a triangle of land between the railroad, Merchant Street, and Ridge Place which was not originally part of the park but was added in the late 1960s. Its one-story, red-brick structures are shed-roofed and utilitarian in design.

Five of the park's eight extant monuments, memorials, and sculptures are scattered throughout West Common. The colossal Soldiers Monument (photos 11 and 13) was part of the Mitchell and Grant plan and dates to 1871. Originally located in the park's southwestern corner, known as Monument Hill, it was erected to

[2] Wilson, Todd. www.bridgemapper.com /bridge_detail.php?ID=3508, retrieved Oct. 27, 2011.

commemorate the Civil War and consisted of an 11'6" figure of Fame by sculptor Peter C. Reniers of Pittsburgh atop a colossal tower of Masillon stone designed by Louis Morganroth from Mitchell and Grant's office. The monument's original base included a circular stone stairway leading to a 40-foot high balcony which

offered far-reaching views. A fortress-like foundation was added to the monument in the 1890s. Figure 1 shows a view of the monument in its original location in 1911. In the 1930s, it was relocated to West Common overlooking Lake Elizabeth on a new, shortened and streamlined masonry base. (Photos 11 and 13) Of the original monument, the Fame figure and a portion of the original spire on which it stands survive.

A finely-rendered sculpture of an iron deer (photo 22) in West Common between the railroad tracks and West Ohio Street is likely contemporaneous with the Soldiers Monument, but its exact dates of execution and installation are not known. It was restored in 1968 and in 2002.

The Thomas Armstrong Memorial (photo 25) was installed just north of West Ohio Street opposite its intersection with Merchant Street in 1889. This memorial by an unknown sculptor includes a 11'10" statue of Thomas Armstrong, a local labor leader, atop a 6'4" cylindrical pedestal, all of Westerly granite. Relief carving on the pedestal's base reads, "Advocate of the Rights of Labor."

The Maine Memorial (1914, photo 24), commemorating the Spanish-American War, consists of a relic of the warship U.S.S. Maine (part of its torpedo tube and deck plate) in a sunken, circular pool bordered by a semi-circular stone bench and a curved brick wall. Set into the wall are three stone tablets inscribed to commemorate the sailors of the Maine, veterans of the Spanish-American War, and Naval Lieutenant Friend W. Jenkins, the only Allegheny officer killed in the Maine disaster. The monument is situated just west of the Aviary and northeast of the due center point of West Common.

The abstract, steel Five Factors sculpture in The Groves area of West Commons is the park's single modern work. Created by sculptor Peter Calaboyias in 1977, it was relocated to the park near the intersection of Brighton Road and Ridge Avenues in the early 21st century.

A low brick retaining wall (photo 23), present on West North Avenue between Brighton Road and Sherman Street, dates to a park-wide re-design scheme of the mid-1960s by the landscape architecture firm of Simonds & Simonds that was contemporaneous with the redevelopment of the center of Allegheny City.

The lake area of West Common has seen the most change in appearance and usage over time. Lake Elizabeth was an original feature of the park designed by Mitchell and Grant to present an alternative focal point to the penitentiary which originally existed on the Aviary site in West Common. The lake was originally designed in 1868 as a picturesque water feature, purely a scenic highlight of the park, which included a Rockery. This feature can be seen in the undated postcard view in Figure 2. In 1893, the lake was altered to become an ovoid concrete pool with its eastern edge aligned to the railroad (Figure 3). Demand to use the lake for swimming and boating led to the addition of a utilitarian, one-story frame bath house in 1900, followed by a two-story, half-timbered Shelter House for bathing and boating, located close to the lake edge on the side opposite the railroad tracks, in 1912. In the 1940s, the boathouse was demolished, the lake was drained for use as a collection basin for metals during World War II, and the nearby Humboldt memorial fountain was removed. After the war, the lake was filled in rather than being repaired and restored to use as a swimming site, since the pool in East Common now served that need. Lake Elizabeth's present character dates to Simonds & Simonds park redesign of 1966. Simonds' plan re-created the lake as a concrete pool, trapezoidal in shape, on its original site (photos 11, 13). Stream boulders are embedded in the concrete lake bottom. A pair of arched pedestrian bridges made of concrete and steel connect from the lake's eastern and western shore to a small island in the middle (photo 12). Remaining elements of the original, Mitchell and Grant plan for this area are the site's continued use as a designed water feature, the broad carriage drive, a verdant vista within the otherwise enclosed character of the park, and assorted specimen trees.

North Common

North Common is much narrower and more formal in character than West Common. Its design is linear and symmetrical, with mature trees planted in straight lines to form an *allee* along a central east-west promenade running the length of the park (photo 8); subsidiary access paths cross this central path perpendicularly and

diagonally at each city block. The original path pattern was simplified somewhat in 1935 by straightening the original bow-shaped paths which intersect the main promenade on the diagonal, a change which persists in the current path alignments. (Mitchell and Grant's original, bow-shaped pattern can still be seen in upper East Common.)

Mitchell and Grant designed North Common to have a focal feature at each terminus of its central promenade. The George Washington monument at Sherman Street (photo 9) marks the junction of North and West Commons, and though the main east-west pathway extends westward beyond this point, the pattern of crossing paths ceases there, leading instead to West Common's more meandering pathways. The monument was dedicated in 1891 on a site near the intersection of West North Avenue and Sherman Street which was originally designated for a fountain in the Mitchell and Grant plan. Its prominence is emphasized by its location in the middle of a path alignment, which causes the east-west path to break around the monument. The monument itself, created by Edward Ludwig Albert Pausch, consists of a 9'10" granite statue of George Washington on horseback standing atop a 7' base which is carved on all sides with reliefs.

At the junction of North and East Commons, near the intersection of North and Cedar Avenues, there is a circular planting bed, bordered by stones, that marks the spot once occupied by a fountain (photo 7). This fountain, a circular stone basin 50 feet in diameter with a marble Grecian vase at its center, was one of the three fountains originally specified by Mitchell and Grant and installed in 1869. The Northeast Fountain can be seen terminating North Commons' tree-lined central promenade in the view in Figure 4, taken in 1911. The Northeast Fountain was removed due to deterioration in the early 20th century. Another fountain, known as the Hartzell Fountain, was added along Federal Street between North and Montgomery Avenues in 1909. Labeled, simply, "For Man, Beast, & Bird 1909," this fountain offered pure drinking water in stacked bowls and troughs for birds, small animals, large animals, and people. This fountain still exists, but has been relocated outside the Commons.

Westward of this, between Loraine and Sandusky Streets, a concrete ramp leading to the main entrance of the Martin Luther King Elementary School (built just outside the park's inner boundary in the 1970s) briefly interrupts the diagonal path pattern for this block. Play equipment used by the students from this school is present on either side of the ramp.

In North Common, as elsewhere, different tree planting patterns define distinctive landscapes in the various zones of the park. The central promenade in North Common (and East Common, as well) is lined with an assortment of species planted in alternation (photo 8). The original mix consisted of plane trees, Norway maples, and elms; in more recent years, the exotic Norway maples have been replaced with native sugar maples and zelkovas and the disease-stricken elms with disease-resistant varieties. The lawn areas between the promenades and the park's street edges have always been planted with a deliberate mix of specimen trees, such as horse chestnut, Amur corktree, and ginkgo. In recent years, other specimens have been added, including hornbeam, Kentucky coffeetree, and golden rain tree. These new varieties were added to enhance the diversity of the mix of trees in the park while following the original intent to feature specimen trees in these areas. At North Common's inner edge, where Union and Montgomery Avenues are today only partly extant, their alignments are nevertheless indicated by the remaining London plane trees planted along the park side of these streets years ago.

Replanting has occurred many times to replace trees lost to damage or disease, but has remained consistent with the park's original landscape design. For example, large elms which lined the park's northern edge along

West North Avenue succumbed to disease and were replaced – before the availability of disease-resistant elms – by three single-species "clumps:" red oaks in the park's westernmost third, zelkovas in the eastern third, and sugar maples in the middle. This planting scheme was chosen to reduce the risk of repeat major loss due to single-species planting.[3] Because of the length of this park edge, the transition between species is visible from only a few points; from most areas, one experiences views of only a single one of these species at a time.

East Common

Like North Common, East Common is a narrow strip of parkland still characterized by the original symmetry and formality designed by Mitchell and Grant. Their plan's main design element for this area – the symmetrical pattern of the central *allee* with its terminal focal points, cross-cut by perpendicular and bow-shaped diagonal paths at city block crossings – remains intact in the northern half of East Common (photos 1-3, 7). The curved diagonal pathways of lower East Common (below East Ohio Street) were straightened in 1935.

The planting scheme for East Common is the same as that described for North Common, above, with an *allee* of assorted species planted in alternation along the central promenade and a variety of specimen trees in the flanking lawn areas.

As noted above, the focal point at the northern terminus of East Common, the Northeast Fountain, is now marked by a raised circle of stones. East Common's southern end retains its original monument, the Hampton Battery Memorial (photos 2 and 3). Dedicated in 1871 at a location about 100 yards below East Ohio Street, this is a 16 foot high granite monument featuring a military figure holding a gun rammer atop a pedestal. The pedestal features the names of those in the unit who died, along with the names of the 23 battles in which the battery was engaged. On the front of the base is a bronze Pennsylvania coat of arms. The monument is surrounded by plantings and a low, circular hollow-steel fence.

A concrete stage south of the Hampton Battery Memorial in East Common dates to the 1970s. Contemporary play equipment is located between the stage and the pool. The approximate site of this playground was set aside for a monument in Mitchell and Grant's original park plan and was, for a time, occupied by a fountain known as the Elks Fountain, which featured a sculpture of an elk on a knoll as its centerpiece. The dates of the Elks Fountain's erection and removal are not known, but it appears in photographs taken in the early 20th century.

The area of East Common south of East Ohio Street (photo 4) is largely devoted to recreational facilities constructed ca.1940. At that time, an L-shaped swimming pool and one-story, yellow-brick pool house were constructed at the intersection of Cedar Avenue and Stockton Street to replace the swimming facility that had been offered by Lake Elizabeth and its shelter house in West Common. The pool house (photos 4 and 5) has a central, gable-roofed section containing the main entrance flanked by a three-bay, hipped-roofed wing on either side. Openings – a door and two windows – on the entrance pavilion are arch-topped facing Stockton Street and rectangular on the facade facing north toward the pool. The windows facing Stockton Street have been filled with glass block and the arched doorway has been partially filled with brick to fit a rectangular door. The building's side wings, which house the men's and women's changing rooms and showers, have smaller, four-pane windows high on the walls, under the eaves, to both admit light and allow privacy. The windows have been covered with steel safety mesh. The pool and pool house are surrounded by a combination of chain-link and hollow steel fencing.

In 2005, a 5-acre demonstration area in the East Common bounded by Stockton Street on the south, East Ohio Street on the north, Union Avenue on the west, and Cedar Avenue on the east underwent a restoration according to the Allegheny Commons Master Plan produced in 2002. This involved the planting of trees in historically appropriate species; the preservation of the 1935 path pattern and re-introduction of crushed stone paths; the installation of historically-appropriate furnishings, such as benches and trash receptacles, along the

[3] Schmidlapp, Christina. Communication with author, December 15, 2011.

Hampton Battery allee; and the lighting of the Hampton Battery Memorial with historically-appropriate lighting fixtures. As part of the project, this portion of the park was also surrounded by a two-foot metal post-and-rail fence, as seen in historic photographs of the park (photo 6; Figure 4).

South Common

South Common was historically the area of the park west of Sherman Street and south of Church Street. It has always been the slightest, most fragmented section of the park, tapering to a single row of trees between Federal Street and the railroad in Mitchell and Grant's original plan. Other than plantings, it contained for a time only one feature: a stone fountain, flanked by a curving staircase, was installed in the narrow strip of park between Stockton and Canal Streets sometimes in the late 19th century and removed ca. 1935.

With the eradication of Church Street's original alignment during the redevelopment of Allegheny City's historic center in the 1960s, the definition of South Common changed somewhat. It currently consists of three distinct areas: the tennis courts, built ca. 1970, adjoining the East Common pool and pool house; a long, linear, formal lawn defined by a double *allee* of oak trees south of Church Street between Federal and Sandusky Streets whose current design dates from WPA-funded improvements to the park in 1935 (photo 28); and an open meadow, dotted with trees, between the southeastern edge of West Common and the western terminus of Church Street. The World War II memorial, a noncontributing object since it was sited in South Common in the 1980s, after the park's period of significance, is located near the southwestern corner of the tennis courts. The courts are buffered from the surrounding streets by earth berms, consistent with the Simonds & Simonds era of park improvements in the late 1960s.

Numerous uncounted landscape and other small-scale features are located throughout the four sections of the park. The locations of playgrounds and types and locations of fencing are noted above. Different lighting standards also exist, with the most historically-appropriate being the gaslight-type ones installed in East Common in 2005 as part of the pilot Master Plan implementation project. Signage in the park predominantly addresses rules and regulations and is placed in heavily used areas, but the 2005 pilot project placed a metal park identification sign ("Allegheny Commons Est. 1788") in East Common. The park also includes miscellaneous, non-integral furnishings such as benches, trash receptacles, picnic tables, and flagpoles. Many of these features are not consistent throughout the park. Some benches are made of metal, others of wood; picnic tables are of painted wood and placed sporadically.

Integrity

Decorative features and park furnishings throughout the park have been removed or replaced over time even as the basic structure and design of the Commons has remained intact. Allegheny Commons possesses integrity of location; only the removal of Monument Hill in the 1930s and the realignment of the city's original street grid south of Church Street in the 1960s have affected the original boundaries of the park. The boundaries of North, East, and West Commons (minus Monument Hill) remain intact and clearly defined, while South Common – always the slenderest, least visually coherent area of the park, functioning mainly to connect East and West Common below Allegheny Center – remains so.

The park's integrity of setting, likewise, is strong. While the historic core of Allegheny was much altered by redevelopment in the 1960s, several key buildings – such as St. Peters Roman Catholic Church, Allegheny High School and Elementary School, the Whiteside Memorial Building, the Community House of the First United Presbyterian Church, the former U. S. Post Office, Buhl Planetarium, and Carnegie Library – still stand to attest to the historic character of the original commercial and civic core surrounded by Allegheny Commons for its first 100 years. On the streets which form the park's outer boundaries, the densely-built, architecturally-varied character of the 19th century neighborhoods, now historic districts, adjacent to the park remains.

The park's integrity of materials, design, and workmanship derive from the execution of its landscape planning, the continuity of its plantings, and the existence and quality of buildings, structures, sites and objects which communicate the park's historic functions as a place of outdoor recreation (both passive and active) and cultural remembering. In these respects, the park has good integrity to all eras of its history. The form of the park – its basic boundaries, cross-cut by the railroad and Ohio Street, and its overall path system – date from Mitchell and Grant's original plan, as does the park's overall character: the symmetrical formality of linear

North, East, and South Commons, linked to the pastoral expanse of West Common. Successive campaigns of park improvement in 1935 and in 1967 tinkered with, but did not substantially alter, the ways in which the park's four quadrants were designed to be experienced by pedestrian users. The swimming pool, pool house, and tennis courts are evidence of the City's early- to mid-20th century emphasis on active recreational facilities.

The streamlined path layouts of North and lower East Commons, which date to the Civil Works Administration-funded improvements designed by Ralph Griswold in 1934, also have integrity to this period. While introducing a modern design vocabulary to West Common, Simonds and Simonds' 1966 plan also resurrected Lake Elizabeth, an original feature of the park whose function has evolved from ornamental to recreational to ornamental again, after a 20-year period of nonexistence. West Common's meandering, pastoral character has its origins in Mitchell and Grant's original 1867 plan, while extant features such as the lake, its concrete arched footbridges, the mounded earth, and the brick perimeter walls have integrity to the Simonds plan of 1966.

Plantings from all periods are present and are true to the original park designers' intent, with formal *allees* emphasizing linear features and more informal specimen plantings filling in lawns and meadows. Among the trees and parklands, the park's first 50 years saw an accumulation of monumental furnishings, such has fountains and sculptures. The fountains were gradually removed as their maintenance became burdensome to the City and the park's emphasis on ornamentation shifted to one of recreation during the 20th century. Yet many major monuments and sculptures from the Victorian period remain: the Hampton Battery Memorial, the Soldier's Monument, the Thomas Armstrong Memorial, George Washington Memorial, Maine Memorial, and iron deer sculpture. These contribute not only to the park's integrity of materials, design, and workmanship, but to its feeling and association as a repository of cultural memory and political commemoration. Likewise, bridges erected to facilitate the interaction of the park's multimodal transportation systems – pedestrian paths, vehicular roads, and a railroad which predated the park itself – are still extant with integrity (although their condition currently is poor). No buildings from the park's first 50 years survive, but two from the park's second era as a recreational destination (the pool house and restroom building) do, also with integrity. Of the park's two non-contributing buildings, the maintenance building has little impact on the park's overall integrity since it is tucked into an out-of-the way location. The Aviary, though a primary presence in the park, does not present a major barrier to integrity because its location has always been the site of a city-owned institution, from the penitentiary to the former conservatory. Its use is compatible with that of the park, and its siting does not represent a removal of park land.

Together, the park's unchanged location, its strong and consistent boundaries, its largely intact setting, and the presence of its contributing buildings, structures, sites, and objects – including the park as a site, itself – contribute to its integrity of feeling and association. The park's green lawns and extensive tree canopy continue to represent a verdant oasis within a densely-built area of Pittsburgh. Its surrounding street wall of 19th and early 20th century buildings, combined with its gentle topography, its lush and varied plantings, its focal nodes occupied by historic statuary, its reflective water feature, and the presence of recreational resources, cumulatively communicate Allegheny Commons' history as an ornamental Victorian park which evolved to meet the wants and needs of the city it served over its first 100 years. Intact paths, roads, and bridges underscore the park's essential identity as a public work, a City-built pleasure ground which must nevertheless accommodate the urban region's industrial and transit functions. Only two noncontributing sculptures, unobtrusively sited, intrude on the feeling of Victorian commemoration supplied by the park's contributing monuments and memorials. Active recreational features such as ball courts and the swimming

pool are strategically-located along the park's edges and vehicular transit routes, preserving the feeling of a largely passive, ornamental Victorian landscape while reflecting the importance of active recreation to a changing urban population in the 20th century. Today, emphasis is on the restoration of the full continuum of this landscape, from Mitchell and Grant's 1867 design for a formal, passive Victorian park, through Ralph Griswold's early modern streamlining of path patterns and emphasis on active sport, through Simonds and Simonds' high modern re-affirmation of West Common as a pastoral landscape. The park's extant resources establish associations with all these eras of urban park design and use.

Allegheny Commons
Name of Property

Allegheny County, PA
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- [X] 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.
- [X] 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.
- [X] G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions.)

Community Planning and Development
Landscape Architecture

Period of Significance

1868-1967

Significant Dates

1868
1935
1967

Significant Person (Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Mitchell and Grant
Griswold, Ralph Esty
Simonds, John Ormsbee

Period of Significance (justification)

Allegheny Commons's period of significance begins with its construction to plans by Mitchell and Grant in 1868 and spans 99 years, to the time of changes to West Common designed by the modern landscape architect John Ormsbee Simonds in 1967 as part of the urban renewal of the Pittsburgh North Side.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

By the "50 year rule," Allegheny Commons' period of significance would end in 1962 – an arbitrary date, and one which precedes a milestone year in its history by only 5 years. In 1966, as part of an urban renewal plan for the entire North Side neighborhood in which it is situated, West Common in Allegheny Commons was redesigned by the modern landscape architect John Ormsbee Simonds, and some of Simonds' plans were implemented in West Common in 1967.

National Register Bulletin 22, "Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties That Have Achieved Significance Within the Past 50 Years," acknowledges that the 50 year period "was not designed to be applied mechanically on a year-by-year basis… but rather in periods of time which can logically be examined together." Events relating to the urban renewal of cities during the 1950s and 1960s, and to the modern theories and practices of urban design, architecture, and landscape design associated with urban renewal, represent such a period.

Urban renewal was pioneered in downtown Pittsburgh during the 1940s and 50s, and planners soon adapted its methods to other downtowns and neighborhoods nationwide. Open space planning was an important tenet of urban renewal, which sought in part to reduce density and congestion and to provide plentiful green space for residents of urban areas. The features added to Allegheny Commons during the North Side's urban renewal have integrity and contribute significantly to Allegheny Commons' present character, which embodies a continuum of park planning and landscape design from the 1860s to the 1960s. Moreover, the park's modern features are integral to Allegheny Commons and to understanding the park's full historic context. Park features added during the 1960s underscore the importance of open space planning to the urban renewal planners who sought to reverse the North Side's decline in that decade, as well as the link between such planning and the structural, functional language of modern landscape design. The fact that the planners sought to work within the existing Allegheny Commons landscape, even as they drastically altered the cityscape of the North Side, also demonstrates a prescient recognition of the enduring importance of this resource to the historic and modern city in which it is located.

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

Allegheny Commons is significant under National Register Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development and under Criterion C in the area of Landscape Architecture. With a period of significance extending from 1868 to 1967, Allegheny Commons is the oldest public park in Pittsburgh, the city's only formal urban park, and one of the first public parks developed west of the Allegheny Mountains. As such, Allegheny Commons embodies the distinctive characteristics of a sequence of movements in landscape design and urban park development from the 1860s to the 1960s, both as they emerged nationally and as they were adopted locally in Pittsburgh. Its character as a large park located in the center of a dense urban setting derives from the fact that the land was set aside for common grazing pasture when the once-independent town of Allegheny was surveyed in 1788. As Allegheny urbanized in the mid-19th century, the commons became derelict and disused, until its citizens pressed for it to be transformed into a public park. In this, Allegheny followed the lead of other cities such as New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, which were then developing elaborate public parks in which their citizens could seek respite from industrial pollution and urban overcrowding, and led the Pittsburgh region in public open space planning. The park was designed by the firm of Mitchell and Grant in 1867 utilizing a combination of formal, classical planning and picturesque landscape design which was ideally suited to its unique site. Over the ensuing 100 years, Allegheny Commons retained many of the character-defining features of its original design, while accommodating an increasing emphasis on recreational activities in the early 20th century as well as elements of modern landscape design added pursuant to park planning campaigns in the 1930s and the 1960s.

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

Allegheny Commons meets National Register Criterion A in the area of community planning and development and Criterion C in the area of landscape architecture. In terms of community planning and development, Allegheny Commons was at the forefront of urban park planning in the Pittsburgh region throughout its history. Founded as a park soon after the establishment of New York's Central Park and Philadelphia's Fairmount Park, Allegheny Commons was significantly associated with the planning ideals that made parks a vital part of the urban environment. Allegheny Commons was originally designed as a passive, ornamental Victorian park, but as ideals of park use and design changed over time, Allegheny Commons's planners upgraded the park to meet them. In the early 20th century, the park's planners altered the park to emphasize active recreation in response to the playground movement of the 1890s. During the 1930s, Pittsburgh city planners undertook further improvements in response to current planning ideals, making use of Federal works programs to accomplish these changes. Finally, as cities re-imagined themselves through urban renewal in the post-World War II period, the park's planners re-imagined and renewed Allegheny Commons. In terms of landscape architecture, Allegheny Commons clearly embodies the distinctive characteristics of landscape design as it has evolved over time, from passive designed landscapes in the 19th century to active recreational facilities in the early 20th century to modern design in the postwar period. The period of significance is 1868-1967, from the

beginning of Allegheny Commons' transformation to a park to its modification during the urban renewal of Pittsburgh's North Side. Because its period of significance ends more recently than 50 years ago, the park meets Criteria Consideration G for its inclusion of integral elements which contribute to its significance in community planning and development and in landscape architecture.

The historical development of the park took place in a number of phases. The first phase began in 1788 with the surveying of Allegheny City to include 102 acres of "commons," or grazing land for the use of all residents, and drew to a close with the urbanization of Allegheny in the mid-19th century. The second phase, from 1867 to about 1910, encompassed the transformation of Allegheny Commons from disused common grazing land to formal Victorian park and the heyday of that park in its original design. A third phase began with a new emphasis on parks as places for active play and recreation during the Progressive Era and continued through the early modern period that coincided with the Great Depression. A fourth phase was marked by the urban renewal efforts that resulted in the demolition of much of central Allegheny City and the most recent major improvements, executed in a modern design vocabulary, to West Common. Today, public emphasis is on the restoration and preservation of the Park as an urban green space, recreational amenity, and historic designed landscape.

Historical Narrative Phase 1: Allegheny Commons, 1788-1866

The Allegheny Commons were first set aside as common pasturage for the residents of the township of Allegheny, PA, as part of a formal plan for that town drawn in 1788. David Redick, a surveyor under contract with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, laid out a town of 36 square blocks surrounded by 102 acres – including the existing Commons – allocated for public grazing. The commons lay between the town and the "out-lots" that were originally intended for farming so that farmers could drive their animals to the common land to graze.

As Allegheny grew rapidly during the early-to-mid-19th century, the town proper (the "in-lots") filled up, and the population spilled across the commons into new residential neighborhoods that were built on the old out-lots. During this period, the commons acreage was used not only for pasturage but for various military and institutional purposes: a block house, built sometime during the 18th century as a refuge from Native Americans, was later converted to the first day school on the north bank of the Allegheny River, and the first church in the community, a one-story frame Presbyterian meetinghouse, was erected in 1815 at the site of a military camp used by United States soldiers during the War of 1812. During the Civil War, the commons accommodated a camp and training area for Union soldiers. No visible traces of these early features on the commons survive.

As Allegheny grew and urbanized, the town sold off the southern part of the commons for residential and commercial development, on or just north of Monument Hill next to what would become West Common. It also ceded 10 acres inside the western section of the commons for the construction of Western Penitentiary, a state institution completed in 1826 to the design of the Philadelphia architects William Strickland and John Haviland. The massive penitentiary housed Rebel soldiers during the Civil War and continued to dominate West Common until its demolition in 1888. The penitentiary was the first of three civic institutions to occupy this site (its successors, a conservatory and an aviary, being more consistent with the later transformation of the commons into a public amenity).

In the meantime, the first railroad in the area was built into Allegheny by the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne, and Chicago Railroad in 1851. The town provided a right-of-way across the western portion of the commons for the rail line. Though later depressed, this feature remains in active use today. Likewise, some of the public streets that crossed the original commons still pass through the park.

Historical Narrative Phase 2: Allegheny Commons, 1867-1910

By the middle of the 19th century, Allegheny's character had changed from rural to urban. As the city became more densely-populated and prosperous, the Commons were used less and less for their original, agrarian purpose, and public demand grew for improvement to this land. In 1867, the City of Allegheny authorized the conversion of the commons into a public park and hired the New York firm of Mitchell and Grant to produce a design. Allegheny Commons's construction occurred between 1868 and 1876 and cost $300,000. Funds were raised through the issuance of municipal bonds and through assessments on the property owners who would benefit from its development; the owners of abutting properties were to pay one-third the cost of park improvement, and lots farther from the park, a lesser amount. The work was overseen by Charles Davis, Superintending Engineer, and John Finan, who directed the planting and finishing of the grounds.[4]

Park features established during this phase are considered original to the park and include its boundaries and path system; its character, in which linear, formal East, North, and South Commons connect to more expansive, pastoral West Common; the original, naturalistic, ornamental Lake Elizabeth, which was stocked with goldfish and edged by a Rockery; three fountains, the Northeast Fountain near the corner of Cedar and North Avenues, the West Common Fountain in "The Groves," and the Humboldt Monument near West North Avenue and Resaca Place (none still extant); the Hampton Battery and Soldiers Monuments; the iron deer sculpture in West Common; a greenhouse for the propagation of park plantings (location unknown; demolished); and the planting of almost 1000 trees in 100 different varieties plus shrubs, bulbs, and annual and perennial plants. Furnishings such as lamp posts and benches were also installed, along with fencing. The intent seemed to be to enclose the grounds with "a cheap wooden fence" as quickly as possible for planting and later to replace it with ornamental iron.[5] Early 20th century photographs of the park, however, such as that reproduced in Figure 4, show the park perimeter in many places defined by a simple system of metal posts and railings. The original Mitchell and Grant plan shows some indication of this treatment in the dots, possibly representing posts, that outline the grass areas, suggesting that this method of enclosure may have been intended from the beginning.[6]

Mitchell and Grant's approach to pre-existing features which disrupted their pastoral landscape was camouflage. For instance, they screened the hulking behemoth of the penitentiary as best they could with masses of shrubbery, while providing for Lake Elizabeth, fed by natural springs that crossed the park, flowing from the hills to the north,[7] to establish an alternative focal point for West Common. Their approach to the railroad, still at grade in the 1860s, was to plant alongside the tracks, build a light wall or iron trellis to protect the plants from the trains, and use dirt excavated from the lake site to build two mounds on the sides of the railroad to support a pedestrian bridge near the northern end of the lake.

In 1876, the park was complete and the Park Commission turned it over to the City of Allegheny. Allegheny Commons quickly became the center of civic life and a focus of philanthropy. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the park accumulated many features which enhanced its role as a place of ornamental beauty, cultural commemoration, and pastoral refuge from urban problems.

In West Common, Henry Phipps donated a conservatory in 1887 to replace the penitentiary building after it was demolished. A smaller precursor to the 1893 Phipps Conservatory in Schenley Park, this structure featured a central hipped-roofed pavilion of brick and stone which led way to a series of glass houses. In the 1890s, Lake Elizabeth was reconfigured, enlarged, and edged with concrete, a treatment which eliminated the

[4] Allegheny Park Commission, *First Annual Report of the Park Commission of the City of Allegheny*, Pittsburgh: A.A. Anderson & Sons, 1869, p. 56.
[5] Ibid., p. 46.
[6] Brown, Eliza Smith, "In Pursuit of a Breathing Place: A History of Allegheny Commons," report prepared for the Garden Club of Allegheny County, September 1996, p. 28.
[7] Allegheny City Society, *Images of America: Allegheny City 1840-1907*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing Co., p. 86. Two other lakes shown on the Mitchell and Grant plan – one in West Common between Ridge Avenue and the railroad tracks and a small pond at the southernmost corner of East Common – are not discussed in the surviving Annual Reports.

rockery. Meanwhile, a life-size monument to labor leader Thomas A. Armstrong was dedicated in West Common near West Ohio Street in 1889, and a statue of George Washington on horseback was erected on a prominent corner site – originally designated for a fountain in the Mitchell and Grant plan – in North Common in 1891. A stone fountain was installed in the narrow strip of park along Canal Street in South Common. Martha Jamison gave a bandstand near the conservatory to the city in 1910; this became a prominent feature of the paved "music circle" that fronted the southern end of Phipps Conservatory. Also in 1910, an $18,000 bequest from socialite Annie Hartzell resulted in the gift of another fountain, designed to provide drinking water for people, animals, and birds, on Federal Street adjoining West Park between Montgomery and North Avenues.[8] In 1914, the BPOE Elks Lodge at Cedar Avenue and Lockhart Street adopted an earlier fountain on a site set aside for a monument in the Mitchell and Grant plan. The Elks expanded this fountain and ornamented it with a cast-iron elk and birds with outstretched wings.

Since the railroad effectively bisected West Common on the diagonal, bridges were necessary to give pedestrian and carriage (later, automobile) traffic access to the entire park. An arched, Neoclassical concrete pedestrian bridge (photo 14) and two steel vehicular bridges comprised of three parallel Warren pony trusses (photo 15, 16, and 18) were built to carry the park's paths and roads over the tracks. These bridges replaced earlier pedestrian and vehicular bridges constructed according to the Mitchell and Grant plan and were built in response to improvements to the railroad conducted in 1901.

The years leading up to, and immediately after, the turn of the 20th century were Allegheny Commons' heyday as a Victorian passive park. A major component of the park management program was the maintenance of order and decorum on park grounds. An 1870 ordinance outlined 21 rules of behavior "Relating to the Public Parks of the City of Allegheny"[9] which reinforced the intention that the park was to be enjoyed as an ornamental landscape; among other activities, kite flying, bathing, fishing, and walking on the grass except where posted as "Common" were prohibited. Certain seats in the park were reserved "For Ladies" and the gentlemen accompanying them. Carriages were permitted only on the roads designated drives, and at a rate not faster than a walk. To ensure that these regulations were enforced, the Park Commission maintained a force of between three and seven full-time Park Police.

In 1907, the City of Allegheny was annexed by the City of Pittsburgh. This change in political status, along with the emergence of new philosophies concerning the use of public parks in the early 20th century, heralded a century in which Allegheny Commons was asked to accommodate more active uses, even while remaining true to its original design as a formal Victorian pleasure ground.

Historical Narrative Phase 3: 1910-1945

The first sign of the park's adaptation, in the early 20th century, to more active recreational uses was the shelter house constructed along Lake Elizabeth in 1912 to accommodate swimming, boating, and skating. Constructed by the City of Pittsburgh after the overwhelming success of a summer swimming school at the lake in 1910, the Lake Elizabeth Shelter House legitimized sports and athletic pursuits which had previously been prohibited in the park. It was an impressive two-and-a-half story, symmetrical, Tudor Revival structure located on the edge of the lake opposite the railroad. Eventually, this shelter burned and was not replaced; after Lake Elizabeth was emptied in the 1940s, a pool was constructed at the south end of East Common for swimming in the park, while the City of Pittsburgh maintained boating and skating facilities outside of Allegheny Commons.

Also in 1912, the railroad tracks which cut through West Common were sunk below grade in an attempt to resolve clearance problems relating to the park's pedestrian and vehicular bridges. This improvement was celebrated by the community as one which also hid the trains from sight and mitigated their noise and pollution.

[8] "Handsome Fountain Woman's Monument," *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, May 11, 1908. William Faust, *Pittsburgh Press*, Sept. 7, 1952. In Smith Brown, 38. This fountain has been moved to a new location south of West Common.
[9] "An Ordinance Relating to the Public Parks of the City of Allegheny," May 12, 1870.

Extant features of the park dating from the time of this modification include the wrought-iron fence and rows of gingko trees which line the tracks.

Another reflection of the early-20th century emphasis on active recreation was the installation of tennis courts in West Park between the railroad tracks and West Ohio Street. The exact date of the tennis courts' addition is not established, but they appear on existing conditions plans of the park drawn in 1934.

The late 1920s and 30s also brought a reconsideration of Allegheny Commons' design according to the new aesthetic tastes of the time. First, in response to redevelopment programs, the top of Monument Hill – a section of the park's southwest corner overlooking downtown Pittsburgh – was leveled and the Soldiers Monument removed. With great attention from the public, political groups, and the Pittsburgh Art Commission, a new scheme for the monument was devised, which included a streamlined base, and it was relocated to West Common in 1931.

In 1934, the City of Pittsburgh City Planning Commission recommended applying to the federal Civil Works Administration "for a force of about fifty engineers to prepare plans and estimates of improvement projects which might be deemed urgent and desirable."[10] Between January and May of 1935 the Commission issued a full set of drawings showing existing conditions and proposed development plans for the Commons without Monument Hill. The drawings came from the office of Ralph Griswold, then the Superintendent of the Bureau of Parks, who would go on to design the landscapes at Chatham Village (National Historic Landmark, 2007) and Point State Park (National Historic Landmark, 1960). Griswold's scheme reflected a geometric, formalistic approach which incorporated existing trees, but streamlined walkways and installed walls and street furniture to fit an angular plan. (See accompanying reproductions of these plans.) It treated the park as four separate areas:

1. The southern area of the park near Canal Street and Stockton Avenue;
2. The East Common south of East Ohio Street;
3. The East Common north of East Ohio Street and wrapping around along North Avenue to Federal Street; and
4. The West Common.

The first phase of the proposed project, a development and planting plan for the area at Canal Street and Stockton Avenue, was approved in the City Planning Commission minutes of March 12, 1935. It eliminated an existing fountain and looping, curvilinear walkways in favor of a system of angular path alignments and a continuous bench with concrete supports. The present allee of trees, emphasizing the linearity of this strip of park, was also created. Plantings included trees of heaven, oriental plane trees, Japanese barberry, showy forsythia, and weeping forsythia.

Area Two, with its expanded pool and bath house area, was also to receive a more angular, geometric system of walkways. A central promenade, present in the Mitchell and Grant design from North Avenue to East Ohio Street, was extended south of East Ohio Street to the existing Hampton Memorial, which overlooked a rectangular lawn preceding the pool. Paths enclosed this rectangle, with branches connecting at right angles to adjacent side streets. A low wall with inset fencing was designed to enclose this section of East Common.

Area Three, already the most formally designed in the park, was shown with minimal alterations, save the same enclosing low wall seen in Area Two.

Area Four, the West Common, was shown with changes primarily related to the introduction of recreational facilities and a few planted gardens. The recreational facilities included a junior play area with playground equipment and a senior play area with a mush ball field, horse shoe courts, basketball courts, and volleyball courts. Here, too, walls were proposed to enclose the park areas.

[10] City Planning Commission Minutes, February 27, 1934, 1934-1935 Volume, p. 14.

The extent to which the 1935 proposals were implemented is not completely certain. Photographs document that the central promenade was widened by fourteen feet (added on either side of the original 22-foot-wide path), creating extra area for a double row of benches flanking the central walkway. Also, East Common from East Ohio Street to Canal Street and South Common between Canal Street and Stockton Avenue and between Federal and Sandusky Streets became formal panels of lawn with paths surrounding and crossing them at 90-degree angles. Major tree planting, especially along sidewalks of perimeter streets, from this period can also be documented. However, only some stone piers in East Common exist to suggest that the proposed perimeter wall was ever built, in whole or in part. The ball courts and other recreational facilities recommended for West Common do not appear to have been realized. A great value of the 1935 plans, however, is that the Existing Conditions drawings prepared for them provide documentation of the park as it had survived from the time of the Mitchell and Grant plan of 1867 through the modifications from the 1870s to the mid-1930s.

A significant change to the park in the 1930s, made independent of the City park improvement plan of 1935, was the draining of Lake Elizabeth. This had occurred by 1941, when the lake bed became the site of a city-wide aluminum scrap drive. Swimming as an important recreational function of the park was not abandoned, however; the City built a swimming pool and pool house at the southern end of East Common in around 1940. In around 1945, the lake bed was filled in to provide additional open park land. Though not officially a ball field, the former lake area contributed informally to the park's increasing role as a recreational amenity by providing space for neighborhood children to play baseball and football.

Historical Narrative Phase 4: Urban Renewal and the Modern Commons 1945-1968

The post-World War II period saw two major changes to Allegheny Commons: the addition of the Aviary in the 1950s and the park's inclusion in an overall urban renewal scheme for Pittsburgh's North Side in the 1960s.

The City of Pittsburgh constructed the Aviary in 1952 to replace the first Phipps Conservatory in West Common. The 1.5 acre site had been allocated to institutional use since before the park was created, having originally been occupied by the Western Penitentiary from 1826 until 1886. Upon the prison's demolition, the City of Allegheny jumped at the chance to replace it with an amenity compatible with the park and constructed the first Phipps Conservatory in 1887. However, this facility was soon eclipsed by the second Phipps Conservatory built in Schenley Park in the 1890s, and the City of Pittsburgh had no interest in maintaining two conservatories after its annexation of Allegheny in 1907. Thus the conservatory in Allegheny Commons was left to deteriorate after being damaged by a gas explosion in 1927. Beside the conservatory, the bandstand at the music circle burned and was replaced by a concrete shell, which was later demolished. These events freed the conservatory/music circle site for new construction by the mid-20th century.

The City initially owned and operated the Aviary, a glass-walled building of modern design, as an attraction within Allegheny Commons. The Pittsburgh Aviary was one of the first in the world to present its collection in free-flight rooms and natural exhibits[11], and became successful enough to be expanded (to 2.8 acres) in 1968. In the early 1990s, the Aviary transitioned from a City-owned facility to a private non-profit institution located on City-owned land. In 1993, it was renamed the National Aviary, and in 1996, it received an addition housing a new entrance, lobby, and gift shop. The most recent addition to the Aviary, built in two phases during 2009 and 2010, added a theater for live bird presentations, an educational classroom, a cafe, and a new entrance to the east side of the facility, facing Sherman Street. On the Aviary's north and west sides, brick walls and landscaping screen the complex from the park in much the same way that Mitchell and Grant's plan called for the Western Penitentiary to be screened.

Despite the success of the Aviary, however, Allegheny Commons – as well as the North Side neighborhood which surrounded it – had suffered a long deferral of maintenance during the lean years of the Great Depression and World War II and continued to decline during the 1950s and 60s. In the early 60s, the Urban

[11] Kurt Shaw, "National Aviary Addition About Ready for Launch," *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, August 29, 2010. http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/ae/museums/s_696962.html. Retrieved January 23, 2012.

Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh (URA) responded to the North Side's "blight" with an extensive plan for urban renewal. The first step was the massive demolition of buildings and areas considered deteriorated and outdated; then, on the large sites left behind, the City would build (or subsidize) new roads and facilities designed to remake the North Side into a modern center for living, commerce, and the movement and storage of automobiles. This plan resulted in the demolition of 518 buildings in the historic city of Allegheny, most of them in the central core surrounded by Allegheny Commons; the construction of modern apartment and office buildings and a shopping mall called Allegheny Center; and the disruption of the historic street grid to construct a high-speed, limited access ring road (called, confusingly, "Allegheny Commons") around the city's rebuilt core.

As part of this effort to remake the North Side, the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh hired the landscape architectural firm of Simonds and Simonds to devise a plan to refurbish West Common in 1967. The following year, the first phase of the plan (and the only phase to be built) was implemented. As part of this work, Lake Elizabeth was reconstructed with a concrete basin, an island, and two simple arched concrete footbridges. A triangular area south of Ridge Avenue and between the railroad and Merchant Street was added to the park to accommodate a park maintenance complex, while the northern parts of West Common were mounded to create a hilly terrain, the arches in the approaches to the ca. 1910 pedestrian bridge over the railroad were filled in with earth, and a low brick retaining wall was added to the edge of the park along West North Avenue between Brighton Road and Sherman Street.

Historical Narrative Phase 5: Preservation and Restoration: 1968-present

In 1988 the City of Pittsburgh designated Allegheny Commons as a City Historic District, with the consequence that any physical changes within the park must be reviewed and approved by the Pittsburgh Historic Review Commission. In the late 1980s, the adjacent neighborhoods became active in initiating improvements in the park, including the inventorying, labeling, pruning, maintenance, and planting of trees; the production of a Visitors' Guide; a written history of the park; walking tours organized by the neighborhoods with the help of the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation; and, ultimately, the Master Planning process for Allegheny Commons, completed by Pressley Associates for the Northside Leadership Conference, a community development organization, in 2002. Restoration of the park began with a pilot project involving East Common in 2005 and will continue until completion in 2018.

Significance: Community Planning and Development

Allegheny Commons is significant under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development for its expression of historical patterns of urban park development, design, and use from the 1860s through the 1960s. Three distinct phases are represented: the passive, pastoral, ornamental park of the Victorian era, which placed Allegheny City at the forefront of planning for the health and well-being of its citizens through the provision of professionally-designed open space; the recreational park of the early 20th century, in which a professional Bureau of Parks planned to integrate a new emphasis on active play and sports into Allegheny Commons's carefully-designed landscape; and the modern park of the 1960s, linked to large-scale planning for the urban renewal of the declining neighborhood – the former City of Allegheny – which it served.

The transformation of the degraded, disused Allegheny Commons into what today would be termed a "passive park" was inspired by the Victorian urban park movement of the mid-19th century. During this period, planning for major public parks emerged as a central concern of cities in Europe and quickly spread to the United States, inspired by dual needs for a healthy urban environment and leisure-time recreation. In both Europe and North America, the industrial revolution brought a mass migration of workers to the city in search of comparatively high-paying factory jobs. But in the absence of building, zoning, and environmental safety codes, the majority of those workers were housed in tenement districts characterized by overcrowding, pollution, and lack of adequate hygiene. In London, a cholera epidemic in 1832 underscored the public health rationale for public open space to serve as the "lungs of the city," and Victoria Park was established as a "people's park" in 1840. Prior to this, the only landscaped grounds designed for leisure and amusement were

royal hunting grounds, private estates, and, in the American colonies, the gardens of southern plantations – all open to a limited population, on a limited basis.

The first public park in the United States, Boston Common, was originally set aside – like Allegheny Commons – for animal grazing and provided a powerful model of this kind of transition from agrarian to urban amenity. Other early American open spaces were town squares, like those in William Penn's plan for Philadelphia in 1683 and John Oglethorpe's plan for Savannah in 1733. Blocks in the urban grid reserved to be surrounded, not built upon, by the city, these represented a vision of urbanity inspired by town planning ideas in England.[12] A major difference, however, was that in England, such residential squares were private; those in the United States were public in keeping with the American ideal of an egalitarian society. Yet Victorian reformers observed that the value of property surrounding such open spaces increased. And they saw additional commercial and moral benefits to the creation of parks, as well. During the industrial revolution, they argued that healthier, more contented workers could and would work harder, increasing production and profits. They also sought to provide urban dwellers a wholesome alternative to taverns as places of leisure-time activity.

While the Victorian urban park movement was taking hold in the United States, fueled by arguments for public health, outdoor leisure, capitalist profit, and moral uplift, the residents of growing American cities sought the benefits of open space where they could. Cemeteries became popular places for picnics and strolls. In response, the rural cemetery movement, in which extensive, landscaped burial grounds were established outside of churchyards, emerged in the first third of the 19th century with the establishment of Mt. Auburn Cemetery near Boston in 1831. The designed landscapes of rural cemeteries were an important precursor of the 19th century urban park movement, establishing as an ideal the creation of symbolic, man-made landscapes that appeared to be natural with artfully-arranged plantings and water features set among open meadows and parklands. In the western Pennsylvania region, Allegheny Cemetery (National Register of Historic Places, 1980) was established soon after Mt. Auburn as the area's first landscaped cemetery in 1844.

The popularity of rural cemeteries as recreational and tourist attractions highlighted the demand for professionally-designed public parks and provided an important training ground for landscape architects, whose field was then emerging from those of horticulture and planning as a distinct profession. Yet a foremost practitioner in the field, Frederick Law Olmsted, argued that cemeteries should not resemble pleasure grounds or double as recreational areas. His design (with Calvert Vaux) for New York's Central Park – set aside specifically for public respite and recreation in the 1850s – was the first of the professionally-designed American pastoral parks which were spoken of in this period as "rus in urb," or the country in the city. The designers of these parks combined agricultural methods, civil engineering techniques, and artistic principles to shape the land into simulated rural landscapes in the midst of industrial cities.

The planners and designers of Allegheny Commons were well aware of all of these motivations and traditions for providing public open space. Central Park, in particular, provided a stirring example of professional public landscape design as a remedy for the congestion and toxicity of the industrial city at a time when Allegheny City officials wished to redevelop a considerable acreage of public land. A prosperous city with an established tradition of far-sighted planning, Allegheny was eager to join the nationwide movement toward the provision of professionally-designed public parkland for its citizens.

The City Councils of Allegheny authorized the conversion of the Allegheny Commons into a public park just 10 years after the dedication of Central Park in New York. They were persuaded by a report of the municipal Committee on Common Grounds Improvement, which argued for the creation of a park on the grounds of "providing breathing places for an overworked population" along with increased property values, and therefore municipal revenue through taxation.[13] The city immediately established a Park Commission and appointed Charles Davis, City Engineer, to oversee the new park's planning, development and construction. One of Davis's first tasks as park planner was to visit the "Eastern cities" – Boston, New York (including Brooklyn),

[12] Anne Whiston Spirn, "Urban Parks," in *American Landscape Architecture: Designers and Places*, William H. Tischler, ed., Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 1989, p. 206.
[13] *First Annual Report of the Park Commission of the City of Allegheny*. Pittsburgh: A.A. Anderson and Sons, 1869, p. 9.

Philadelphia, Washington, and Baltimore – which had already begun the development of significant, professionally-designed public parks. West of the Alleghenies, small parks had been created in St. Louis, Columbus, and Chicago, but none were as large as the commons site, and apparently were not deemed to be instructive. The Commission reported specifically that it had toured Boston Common, Central Park, Prospect Park, Fairmount Park, and Druid Hill Park, and met with the engineers and officials connected with them.

The bid list compiled by Charles Davis for the park's design and construction was drawn from these individuals and shows the Allegheny Park Commission's ambition to create a park on par with the ones it had toured. Davis requested and received proposals for Allegheny Commons from each of the following five firms: Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, designers of New York's Central Park; William H. Grant of Mitchell, Grant, & Co., "late engineer of Central Park and now designing a park at Albany;" William Saunders, Superintendent of Experimental Gardens, Washington, D.C.; Shedd and Edson, Architects of Mt. Auburn, Boston; and General Viele, Topographical Engineer and author of first plans for improvement of Prospect and Central Parks. The selection of Mitchell and Grant may have acknowledged a regional preference for an engineer's practicality over an artist's creativity. The Allegheny Commons site, though flat, presented several major physical challenges: it was constricted by an existing urban plan, its broadest section was crossed by a major artery and a railroad, and it included a massive, active penitentiary. The required design was clearly one both attractive and utilitarian.

Across the river from Allegheny, the City of Pittsburgh would not embark on its own parks development program until over 20 years later, in 1889. In planning and commissioning the first professionally-designed urban park in the region, directly inspired by the first such parks in the country, the City of Allegheny proclaimed its position at the forefront of urban planning and design west of the Alleghenies. It established as its peers larger cities from outside the region, such as Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, which led the way in placing park planning at the core of their evolution from agrarian towns to modern industrial cities. And it demonstrated its ability to expand upon its own history of progressive planning for efficient physical functioning and the well-being of its citizens, first established with the set-aside of the Commons as public land in 1788.

From its completion through the end of the 19th century, Allegheny Commons epitomized the Victorian ideal of a passive, pastoral, ornamental urban park for the Pittsburgh region. But post-Victorian Progressive reformers decided it was not enough for an urban park to serve as the lungs of the city. As immigration into urban industrial centers continued, tenement districts teemed with children. Many of them worked in factories, and even after child labor laws were passed, the only places they had to play were unsafe streets, alleys, and vacant lots. Settlement houses, which eased the transition of immigrants into American metropolises, advocated for playgrounds, play equipment, and sports programs in public parks, and city parks departments began to provide recreational opportunities for children and adults. Like the original urban parks movement, which sought to provide a wholesome environment for working-class leisure, organized play was seen as having a moral component, directing the physical energies of youth toward healthful activities conducted in supervised settings.

Therefore, in the early 20th century, the ideal of the urban park as a pastoral refuge and ornamental pleasure ground gave way to a more active vision of a recreational amenity that could facilitate physical health and well-being through sports and games. In Allegheny Commons, a new generation of planners rose to meet this challenge. In 1907, the city of Allegheny was annexed to Pittsburgh, transferring authority for Allegheny Commons to the Pittsburgh Bureau of Parks. Unlike the ad hoc Allegheny Park Commission, established for the sole purpose of developing a single park and then disbanded, the Pittsburgh Bureau of Parks was a permanent office of the city government with employees – eventually including professional landscape architects – responsible for planning, programming, and maintaining the city's public parks, including, after 1907, Allegheny Commons. It was this office which strove to integrate a new demand for public recreational facilities into the city's oldest established park.

Shortly after annexation, West Common, in particular, began to show evidence of the Bureau of Parks' new recreation-oriented planning. Allegheny Commons continued to provide a green oasis and ornamental amenity

to the citizens of the former Allegheny City in the 20th century, but the emphasis on new additions to the park shifted away from decoration and commemoration; the USS Maine Memorial, dedicated in 1914, was the last monument added to West Common (although the Soldier's Monument of 1871 was relocated from Monument Hill to West Common in 1931). Faced with strict budgetary constraints during the Depression, city park planners also decided against the costly continued upkeep of the Victorian ornamental fountains which dotted the park. These were drained as they became unusable due to lack of maintenance, then used as planting beds, and finally dismantled and removed. The city did continue to maintain existing statuary, whose upkeep was not as demanding. But from about 1910 through 1950, planning for new investments in the park focused on active sports and recreational opportunities, beginning with Lake Elizabeth.

Since the expansion of Lake Elizabeth in 1893, it had become one of the park's most popular features, bringing large crowds to West Common; in response, in the summer of 1910, a women-run organization known as the Playground and Vacation Schools Association opened a swimming school for girls and boys on the lake. The overwhelming success of the swimming school prompted the City to erect the Lake Elizabeth Shelter House to support recreational activities, including boating and ice skating as well as swimming, on the lake in 1912. Another reflection of the early-20th century emphasis on active recreation was the installation of tennis courts in West Park between the railroad tracks and West Ohio Street. The exact date of the tennis courts' addition is not established, but they appear on existing conditions plans of the park drawn in 1934.

These plans were drawn in conjunction with a park-wide improvement program undertaken by the Bureau of Parks in response to the availability of federal Civil Works Administration (CWA) funds for the improvement of public infrastructure during the Great Depression. By the time of the Depression, the now-almost-60-year-old park was sorely in need of refurbishing. Ralph Esty Griswold, a professional landscape architect employed by the City of Pittsburgh, drew up the plans for its improvement in 1934. As consultant to the City Planning Commission in connection with planning and park work being done under the auspices of the Civil Works Administration, work he conducted prior to his direct employment by the City, Griswold had observed that public outdoor recreational facilities in Pittsburgh were sadly lacking: "At present No City Owned Recreation Areas, except those built by the Board of Education and Frick Park, have any planting whatever. They are practically all ugly and badly maintained."[14] Griswold documented Allegheny Commons' existing conditions and proposed improvements to allow for more active use of the park's previously passive landscape. His plans provided for the swimming pool and pool house which replaced Lake Elizabeth in around 1940, as well as for the restroom building in West Common adjacent to the tennis courts. Additionally, Griswold redesigned some of Allegheny Commons' circulation patterns, reorienting their purpose from contemplative strolling to providing efficient access to the pool and other recreational amenities. While funding was not present during the Depression to realize many of the other recreation-oriented features he proposed (consisting of extensive playgrounds and a variety of ball fields enclosed by walls), Griswold planned affirmatively for the integration of recreation and landscape design so that Allegheny Commons could be both beautiful and useful to a population which clamored for public facilities for sport and exercise.

By 1950, a new planning paradigm had taken hold in Pittsburgh that would eventually affect Allegheny Commons: urban renewal. Urban renewal is a national story of exceptional significance for the breadth and depth of its impact on traditional city neighborhoods and the buildings, streetscapes, and landscapes which served them. It began in downtown Pittsburgh with "Renaissance I," an ambitious government campaign, supported by powerful private interests, to reverse economic decline and pollution by demolishing large areas of older buildings in the downtown "Golden Triangle" and replacing them with modern office towers, plazas, a sports arena, and a major park, Point State Park, at the symbolic confluence of the Allegheny, Monongahela, and Ohio Rivers. With the effort heralded as a success, urban renewal methods began to be applied to other neighborhoods in Pittsburgh and elsewhere as officials sought to address large-scale urban decline and to position cities to compete effectively with the booming suburbs. Urban renewal was supposed to remake "blighted" neighborhoods and re-establish them as desirable to residents and businesses by introducing new

[14] Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, "Western Pennsylvania Conservancy: The Early Years," http://www.paconserve.org/75th/early.htm#gppa, retrieved November 16, 2011.

housing, educational facilities, commercial and professional space, plenty of parking, and a hierarchy of streets to reduce congestion by moving traffic efficiently.

Often, however, such drastic surgery to established communities worsened rather than improved those neighborhoods' decline. Among the unintended consequences of urban renewal were confusing new traffic patterns, blocked vehicular access to commercial centers, neighborhoods isolated or divided by highways, the disruption of existing businesses, and the removal of large numbers of minority residents. Also, the close association of urban renewal planning with modern architecture meant that the new construction in these neighborhoods was of disorientingly different scale and design than what had stood before. The storefronts of neighborhood main streets were replaced by massive interior shopping malls and their parking lots, and a multitude of small, mixed-use buildings by monolithic office and apartment towers.

However, open space – its preservation as well as its creation – was an important tenet of urban renewal. Planners wished to relieve density, pollution, and congestion, and to bring suburban levels of fresh air, greenery, and spaciousness to the city. The new developments resulting from urban renewal almost always included parks, plazas, and other outdoor places to provide these amenities, as well as places for residents and workers to sit, socialize, and eat, and to gather in numbers for concerts, theatrical events, and political demonstrations, which had begun to exert significant pressure on public outdoor spaces during the political turmoil of the 1960s.

Several factors contributed to the conditions which brought urban renewal to Pittsburgh's North Side and Allegheny Commons. The Great Depression, followed by World War II, had resulted in a long deferral of maintenance to the area's infrastructure and building stock by 1945. After the war's end, Federal subsidies for suburban housing construction, highways, and home ownership, along with urban racial tensions and continuing economic decline in the City of Pittsburgh generally, contributed to the abandonment of much of the North Side (along with other, formerly comfortable city neighborhoods) by much of the white middle class. As businesses followed their clientele to newly-built suburban communities with less traffic and ample free parking, urban neighborhoods such as Pittsburgh's North Side became seen as "blighted." Old buildings, outdated infrastructure, excessive density, and inefficient traffic patterns were all identified as culprits to be remedied.

In the early 1960s, the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh (URA) authorized an urban renewal scheme for the heart of the former Allegheny City on the North Side. Ultimately, 518 buildings were demolished and replaced by offices, apartment buildings, and a shopping mall called Allegheny Center. Most of the demolition and new construction took place in the historic core of Allegheny City. The neighborhoods beyond the outer boundaries of Allegheny Commons more or less successfully resisted wholesale eradication, opting instead for longer-term, incremental revitalization strategies. In terms of its open space agenda, the urban renewal plan for the North Side reduced density and introduced several plazas and a small, new public square, called Ober Park, to the core of old Allegheny. But the planners' primary open space initiative was focused on the neighborhood's existing well-used but deteriorated park, Allegheny Commons.

To revitalize Allegheny Commons, the URA hired the landscape architecture firm of Simonds and Simonds to devise a plan for West Common, the park's most spacious area, in 1966. John Ormsbee Simonds, who founded the firm with his brother, Philip, was an influential modernist landscape architect, environmental planner, and educator whose projects included Mellon Square in downtown Pittsburgh, Chicago's Botanical Garden, and 20 master-planned towns in Florida, including Miami Lakes and Pelican Bay. Simonds and Simonds flourished during the post-World War II boom and took part in the Pittsburgh Renaissance, using modernist forms and materials to design two major public spaces, Mellon Square and the Equitable Life Insurance Plaza, in downtown Pittsburgh during the 1950s. Simonds and Simonds grew from its founding as a small residential firm to a large, multi-disciplinary planning and design practice, earning regard for its work in designing and planning recreational facilities, parks, and open spaces. This led to a commission in Allegheny Commons during the 1950s, in which John Simonds partnered with architect Lamont Button and the Director of

the Pittsburgh Department of Parks and Recreation, Howard B. Stewart, to design the grounds and interior exhibit space of the Pittsburgh Aviary in West Common.

This experience likely helped Simonds obtain the commission to plan the redesign of Allegheny Commons in the following decade. The fact that the firm's office had been located adjacent to Allegheny Commons, during which time Simonds used the park daily, doubtless gave Simonds an intimate perspective on the resource he was hired to plan. His Long Range Development Plan for Allegheny Commons emphasized the centrality of the park to the overall health and attractiveness of the North Side. In fact, Simonds envisioned it as far more than a park, but the "key environmental center for the whole revitalized North Side."15 Such an ambitious vision was consistent with urban renewal thinking, which sought to remake existing neighborhoods on a grand scale.

Accordingly, Simonds' initial recommendations were extensive. They included new public gardens, play areas, a waterside amphitheater and band shell, an expanded Conservatory-Aviary, a restaurant with outdoor tables, a "lake-fountain-lagoon complex," and a second pedestrian bridge over the railroad. Ultimately, however, West Common did not receive a major new identity, but an updating of an old one to meet the modern vision of an urban park. The most major accomplishment of urban renewal planning in West Common was actually centered on one of the park's oldest features: Simonds received permission from city government to resurrect Lake Elizabeth, which had then been infilled for over 20 years, as an ornamental concrete basin on its original site, accented with an island and two arching concrete pedestrian bridges. Other interventions to West Common, such as the mounding of earth near the lake and the addition of a low brick retaining wall on West North Avenue, are subtle but reinforce the modern vocabulary of the new lake and its features. Of his work here, The Cultural Landscape Foundation says,

> The 1966 rehabilitation project was part of an effort to reclaim a historic park that had become unsafe and had fallen into disrepair. Here Simonds' respect for the history of a site, and his sensitivity to the work of others whose designs preceded his, combined with a consideration for contemporary needs, resulted in a preservation of the earlier picturesque design and a sympathetic integration of new modern materials, forms and features, including a trapezoidal lake that took advantage of the park's historic visual and spatial relationships.[16]

In retreating from more drastic interventions and preserving the park's underlying, original emphasis on pastoral design and passive recreation, Pittsburgh's urban renewal planners showed unusual sensitivity to the 100-year-old landscape they were charged with renewing. Their inclusion of Allegheny Commons in their broader urban renewal plans for the North Side neighborhood demonstrated the centrality of open space planning to urban renewal ideals, affirming the continued relevance of Allegheny Commons to the modern as well as the historic city. Ultimately, their approach provided a useful model for inserting modern improvements into older designed landscapes without destroying their character. The Master Plan completed by Pressley Associates (Boston, landscape architect) for the park in 2002 concurs with Charles Birnbaum (then of the National Park Service) and consulting landscape historian Barry Hannegan that the features of West Common which date to the urban renewal era are significant and intact, and recommends preserving rather than reversing them as the park is maintained and restored.

Significance: Landscape Architecture

Allegheny Commons is significant under criterion C in the area of landscape architecture because it illustrates the ways in which national trends in landscape design were expressed in Pittsburgh during the Victorian, early

[15] Long Range Development Plan for Allegheny Commons, Simonds and Simonds, 1966, in "John Ormsbee Simonds Remembered," University of Florida, George A. Smathers Libraries, text accompanying 2005-2006 retrospective exhibit, p. 11.
[16] Nancy Slade, "Remembering John Ormsbee Simonds," The Cultural Landscape Foundation, http://tclf.org/pioneer/john-ormsbee-simonds/biography-john-ormsbee-simonds, retrieved November 21, 2011.

modern, and modern periods by landscape architects Mitchell and Grant in the 1860s, Ralph Griswold in the 1930s, and John Ormsbee Simonds in the 1960s. As the oldest park in Pittsburgh, and the city's only formally-designed public open space, Allegheny Commons is uniquely able to convey these themes.

Mitchell and Grant provided the original design for Allegheny Commons in 1867 in the romantic tradition common to their peer park designers of the Victorian period. However, their approach to Allegheny Commons – a combination of Classical planning and the picturesque style – was not formulaic, but uniquely suited to the Commons' challenging site. The partnership of Mitchell and Grant was a short-lived one, lasting only from 1867-1868. However, both Donald Mitchell and William Grant had significant careers in their own rights, both before and after their collaboration on Allegheny Commons, which shed light on their particular design for this park.

Donald Grant Mitchell (1822-1908) was an author, agriculturist, and landscape gardener who was born and lived most of his life in Connecticut. He published 15 books, many of them under the pseudonym of Ik Marvel. After a peripatetic early career, he purchased a large farm, "Edgewood," near New Haven (now a park listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Edgewood Park Historic District) in 1855. His experience in planting and farming Edgewood inspired a series of books, the *Edgewood* series, about rural life – farming, home building, and town planning – using his farm as a model. This preoccupation with designing the land appears to have led him to partner with William Grant for a professional sojourn into the field of landscape design in 1867.

Where Mitchell was an artistic man of letters, William H. Grant (1815-1896) was the practical-minded engineer whose pre-eminent qualification to work on Allegheny Commons was his oversight of the construction of Central Park. Grant began his career as a surveyor on the New York and Erie Railroad and later worked as assistant engineer on the Erie Canal enlargement, gaining valuable experience in the management of large public works.[17] In 1858, Frederick Law Olmsted appointed him to replace Egbert L. Viele as Chief Engineer of the construction of Central Park. There, Grant supervised a corps of engineers as they undertook the Herculean task of sculpting the park's natural topography to fit Olmstead and Vaux's bucolic vision over the next 15 years.[18]

On the strength of his work at Central Park, Grant was appointed Superintending Engineer of the Department of Public Works of New York City, and later Constructing Engineer of the Department of Public Parks. He also furnished the plans for, and worked on the construction of, the Yonkers waterworks. He concluded his professional career as Superintendent of the United States Naval Observatory, collaborating again with the architect Richard M. Hunt, who had served as consulting architect to the partnership of Mitchell and Grant.

Mitchell and Grant formed their partnership in 1867 "for the conduct of Landscape Gardening, and its connected branches of business – including Rural Architecture and Engineering, with the Agricultural, Horticultural, and Sanitary treatment of public and private grounds." They offered services in the design of parks, cemeteries, farms, country seats, and village homesteads, along with plans for modifications of country houses and of "old-fashioned gardens or farms."[19] Allegheny Commons appears to have been the firm's primary commission during its brief (less than two years) existence, and the only public park designed by the partnership. By 1869, Mitchell had assumed editorship of *Hearth and Home* magazine, and Grant had accepted a government appointment to work on the rivers and harbors of Maryland and Virginia.[20]

However, Mitchell continued to accept landscape and building design commissions from time to time. Along with the City of Allegheny, his clients included Princeton University and Lafayette College, which engaged

[17] Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1992, p. 159.
[18] Louise Chipley Slavicek. *Building America Then and Now: New York City' Central Park.* New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009, p. 65.
[19] Mitchell and Grant promotional copy, copy obtained from Pressley Associates, Boston
[20] ACSE Obituary of Grant, p. 557.

Mitchell in campus planning during the 1870s, and the city of New Haven, CT, for whom Mitchell designed East Rock and Oyster Point (also known as Bay View) Parks in 1882 and 1891, respectively. As an advisor to New Haven's Parks Commission, Mitchell also drew detailed plans for a complete park system for that city, but these were not implemented due to cost considerations.[21]

Of Mitchell's designs, Allegheny Commons was the most formal, but contained elements that recurred in Mitchell's later designs. Mitchell's guiding principle for the Princeton campus was that it become an "English nobleman's park," featuring open lawns dotted with trees laid out in an informal, not geometric pattern; in this, Mitchell may have thought back to the pastoral design of West Common in Allegheny. East Rock Park, five times larger than Allegheny Commons, is characterized primarily by woodlands and a 365-foot-high rock outcropping. However, the fact that this outcropping is surmounted by a Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument echoes the importance of monumental sculpture in the plan for Allegheny Commons. And in Bay View Park, a naturalistic duck pond and tree-lined drive recall the original Lake Elizabeth and the use of rows of trees to give landscape definition to linear features of Allegheny Commons.

In producing a park design for Allegheny Commons, Mitchell and Grant offered their experience and expertise to the Allegheny Park Commission, which had informed itself about current practices in landscape gardening and design through methodical research. Not only did Superintendent Charles Davis visit the professionally-designed urban parks of New York, Boston, and other eastern cities, but the Commission also purchased several books and periodical subscriptions. The books were Kemp's *Landscape Gardening*, Smith's *Park and Gardens*, and Downing's Revised *Rural Architecture*. The periodicals were Tilton's *American Journal of Horticulture and Florist's Companion* and *The Gardener's Chronicle*.

These publications would have familiarized the Commission with the romantic, picturesque style of landscape design employed to create pastoral surroundings in urban parks during the mid-19th century. The ideal for landscapes designed in this style was to appear natural, although in fact they were almost entirely man-made and highly contrived in imitation of wilderness landscapes, which the designers idealized, or rural or pastoral landscapes, which were viewed as more appropriate for supporting park activities. The designers the Commission researched, and with whose work Mitchell and Grant were personally familiar, considered such idyllic landscapes wholesome for the body and sublime for the spirit. When applied to urban parks, the purpose of the picturesque approach was to provide a setting for relaxation and respite from the chaos, crowds, and pollution of the industrial city. The Victorians' ideal park landscape was romantic in design, naturalistic in appearance, and passive and ornamental in function. It was designed to be experienced through contemplation while one promenaded – or, in the case of more affluent citizens, drove in a carriage – through its artfully-designed landscape, as through a fine landscape painting.

Mitchell, with his extensive experience planting and farming his own land, and Grant, having hewn Central Park out of swamps and rocky outcrops, were well equipped to create such a landscape at Allegheny Commons. Moreover, they adapted the pastoral landscape ideal to the peculiar constraints of Allegheny Commons' site, which was embedded within, rather than set apart from, the dense urban grid of Allegheny City. While spacious West Common was well-suited to the Victorian ideal of a picturesque urban park (if one could surmount the challenges of the prison and the railroad), the North, South, and East Commons were narrow strips whose constrained, linear geometry made them unsuitable for a broad naturalistic treatment. Mitchell and Grant acknowledged this by linking pastoral West Common to a more classical, axial symmetry in narrow North, South, and East Commons. This treatment provided a transition between asymmetrical, pastoral West Common and the rigid orthography of the system of city blocks within which the Commons was situated. These linear areas were formally laid out for pedestrian circulation with a path system that concentrated points of entry into the park at road intersections. Once across the street and inside the park, however, there were usually two curving paths converging on, and diverging from, the main path. Mitchell and Grant's recognition and integration of diagonal "desire lines" – unplanned paths created by patterns of actual use – created a unique and flexible circulation pattern within these challenging narrow areas of the Commons. They also proved adaptable to later ideas about circulation within the park during the 20th century.

[21] Waldo H. Dunn. *The Life of Donald G. Mitchell, Ik Marvel*. New York: Scribner's Sons, 1922, p.312.

North Common's central promenade led to the broad expanse of West Common, which was designed with the hallmark features of a romantic Victorian landscape: a naturalistic Lake Elizabeth, meadows, a tree canopy without undergrowth, and a hierarchy of wider main paths and narrower secondary routes which meandered among the trees, past the lake, over the gently rolling lawns. Although some Victorian park design purists resisted the idea of statuary or monuments within pastoral landscapes, public sculpture of a commemorative nature formed an integral part of most major parks of this era, including Allegheny Commons. Far from being afterthoughts, Mitchell and Grant assigned specific locations for monuments and fountains, which functioned to provide focal points to the park's promenades and vistas, in their 1867 plan. Throughout, planting – including formal rows of street trees and allees along the central promenade, shrub massings, and bedding-out plantings – accentuated the park's permanent features.

The Mitchell and Grant plan persisted, unchanged but for the occasional addition or subtraction of a monument or fountain, through the mid-1930s. Later in the 19th century, the landscape parks movement was influenced by the introduction of City Beautiful principles of formal, neoclassical planning through Olmsted's work at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, as well as the redesign of Washington, D.C. by the McMillan Commission with Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr. in 1901. This movement inspired little change in Allegheny Commons, which was, by this time, an established public park with an already-formal layout of paths and plantings in East, North, and South Commons.

But concurrent with the City Beautiful era, and continuing into the 20th century, the Progressive Movement ushered in an era of emphasis on recreational opportunities such as swimming, boating, skating, and tennis in parks, followed, in more recent years, by baseball and basketball. One can see the imprint of this era, beginning in about 1910, in Allegheny Commons, which was made to accommodate a lakeside shelter for swimming, boating, and skating, followed by a swimming pool and poolhouse; tennis courts; and playgrounds.

The next era of deliberate landscape design in Allegheny Commons was the 1930s. Landscape architecture in this period was in transition from the formal, axial, neoclassical approach of the City Beautiful to a streamlined, geometric, early modern style which reflected the twentieth century's increasing rejection of socio-political authoritarianism and ornament for ornament's sake and its preoccupation with machine design and efficiency. The first indication of this in Allegheny Commons was the redesign of the Soldiers Monument in 1931. This was occasioned by the loss of that feature's original location, Monument Hill, a rugged section in the southwest corner of West Common which was removed from the park and leveled for redevelopment. The Soldiers Monument was taken from its colossal Victorian base and reinstalled in West Common on the new, streamlined base it occupies today.

Ralph Griswold, a professional landscape architect who served as the Superintendent of the Pittsburgh Bureau of Parks, also designed a revised scheme for parts of Allegheny Commons in 1935 which incorporated the existing circulation pattern and trees, but straightened many curved or meandering pathways to fit a more angular, geometric plan. This occurred mainly in North Common and lower East Common (south of East Ohio Street); Mitchell and Grant's original bow-shaped diagonals off the main promenade in upper East Common and meandering pathways in West Common were preserved. Griswold's experimentation with revising the Commons' original circulation plan reflects a growing reaction in the landscape architecture profession against gardens as formal artworks to be passively enjoyed, in favor of an emphasis on the design of spaces for active use. As more recreational amenities were being added to the Commons, Griswold saw fit to address the issue of how park users could most efficiently access them from the park's main entry points and promenades.

Perhaps as significant as what was added during the 1930s was what was removed, such as the decorative fountains from the park's original era. Their age made their continued upkeep costly, but their elaborate Victorian ornamentation had become unfashionable, as well, due to associations with outdated cultural mores. The final verdict for efficiency over ornamentation in this era was the draining of Lake Elizabeth. Its function as a swimming outlet would be assumed by a new, modern pool in East Common, but no one would suggest replacing the lake's ornamental function for over 20 years.

The changes that took place in Allegheny Commons' landscape during the 1910s-1930s were reflections of changing views of the uses of open space, design, and, ultimately, budgetary constraints during the Great Depression. While a philosophical de-emphasis on ornamental features was consistent with a lean budget for park design and maintenance during the 1930s, it was also a reaction to the perceived excesses – aesthetic as well as economic – which had preceded the stock market crash of 1929. The early modernists also rebelled against the false imitation of previous styles and sought to design landscapes, as well as buildings, that were functional and met the practical needs of users. The 1930s was the beginning of the modern era of landscape design which would leave its imprint on West Common, especially, after World War II. Ralph Griswold himself was evolving toward modernism as a landscape architect and would go on to distinction as the designer of Point State Park, a modern urban park which was an icon of the Pittsburgh Renaissance in the 1950s. Griswold's work on Allegheny Commons took place relatively early in his career, at the beginning of his term as a public servant. It exemplifies his lifelong commitment to public landscapes, in particular, to keeping Pittsburgh's old, established parks relevant to a 20th century population which clamored for recreational amenities, as well as the city administration charged with providing and maintaining the city's public spaces during the Depression.

During the1960s, it was no accident that modern landscape design came to Allegheny Commons as part and parcel of the urban renewal of the North Side neighborhood which surrounded it. While small-scale, mostly private garden design had been the traditional province of landscape architects, the profession was increasingly embracing large-scale master planning as part its mandate, and vice versa: planners – and architects – were increasingly collaborating to create a new synthesis between buildings, landscapes, and urban and regional spaces. The impact of modernism on public landscape design during the mid-20th century is a story of exceptional significance, and Allegheny Commons provides a unique example in Pittsburgh of its application to a major, existing historic landscape. In their design for the western portion of Allegheny Commons in 1966, landscape architects Simonds and Simonds demonstrated, first, their respect for the park's original landscape, and second, the possibility of overlaying modern features on this landscape to link it with the modern city beyond without harming its essential, picturesque character.

Simonds and Simonds was founded by John Ormsbee Simonds and his brother, Philip, in 1939, after John Simonds' graduation from Harvard University, where he earned a Masters in Landscape Architecture in 1938. While at Harvard, Simonds participated in the "Harvard Revolution," a student revolt against the hidebound teachings of the Beaux Arts style, and aligned himself with Walter Gropius, former head of the Bauhaus in Europe, who had arrived at Harvard from Germany in 1937.

Espousing a break from the past, Gropius exerted a profound effect on the future of architecture and landscape architecture in the United States with his promotion of a modernist movement in the design of buildings and spaces. His Bauhaus philosophy was inspired by modern art and natural forms and expressed in new shapes, materials, and spatial relationships. Gropius and his followers, including Simonds, rejected the authoritarianism they saw as inherent in classical symmetry and formality and promoted a new design vocabulary influenced by concurrent movements in modern art, particularly abstract expressionism and the movement-based abstractions of cubist paintings. Landscape architects who worked in the modern style used plantings in a structural way, to create places and experiences, rather than just for ornamentation; emphasized asymmetry and irregular forms; strove for low maintenance in consideration of reductions in gardening staff; and extended twentieth-century building materials, such as concrete, into the landscape.

Because West Common had never had a formal, classical design, but had always had a naturalistic, asymmetrical arrangement constrained by the roads, railroad, and buildings which occupied it before the park was established, Simonds saw little need to intervene in its essential spatial composition. Rather, his plan utilized plantings, grading, and hard building materials to emphasize existing and redesigned features. For instance, Simonds simplified West Common's meandering circulation paths so that they led more directly to and from park entrances and attractions; then, "to control points of entry and to decrease maintenance costs resulting from trodden grass and mutilated plant material," he specified the low brick retaining wall "with inviting entrance ways at logical points of entry" which currently exists on the West North Avenue edge of West

Common. Near the wall in West Common, earth was graded into low grassy mounds to "contain and define" the new pattern of walkways. Simonds was careful to preserve existing trees, while his intention to link the park with the urban renewal of the neighborhood was clear; he wrote that the revised circulation pattern was designed "to provide access and egress in best relationship to surrounding residential, institutional, and commercial areas." [22]

While these interventions represented a fairly subtle overlay of modern design vocabulary on Mitchell and Grant's original, pastoral landscape for West Common, Simonds' resurrection of Lake Elizabeth brought a major expression of modern design to a feature which had, historically, been present for most of the Commons' existence. Located on the site of the original lake, the new Lake Elizabeth had an irregular, angular rather than biomorphic shape. It was edged in concrete and featured a small island which was accessed from either bank by arched, concrete pedestrian bridges. Simonds' grand scheme for the lake envisioned "thousands of visitors each season"[23] being attracted to its fountain, overlooks, restaurant, boathouse, and ice skating concession, but, ultimately, these attractions did not materialize. As a result, the current lake is a modern version of the original, ornamental water feature with an island instead of a rockery and bridges which allow one to view it from different perspectives, including in motion while walking over the water itself.

Simonds and Simonds' redesign of West Common places Allegheny Commons on a continuum with other achievements of modernist landscape design in Pittsburgh – notably, Griswold's Point State Park and Simonds and Simonds' Mellon Square – which were designed and built as part of urban renewal programs to revitalize business and residential areas in the mid-20th century. Point State Park is a major park whose landscape exposes historical meanings of regional, even national, importance, while Mellon Park is a downtown plaza, primarily a hardscape, the first built in conjunction with an underground parking garage as a public amenity on the rooftop of that structure. Both were newly designed in the modern era by landscape architects who participated in the design history of Allegheny Commons. Allegheny Commons, uniquely, demonstrates how modern landscape design could be brought to bear on a park already 100 years old, its presence and existing features valued by planners and users alike.

The final phase of landscape architecture in Allegheny Commons is that of restoration, begun and ongoing in the late 20th and early 21st century. In 1999, a group committed to preserving Allegheny Commons formed to raise funds for a comprehensive Master Plan. The planning process was led by Pressley Associates of Cambridge, MA, and resulted in the Master Plan for Allegheny Commons, published in 2002. The Master Plan expresses respect for the historic continuum of the park, including the 1966 design by Simonds. Implementation of the Master Plan began in 2005 with the completion of a 5-acre demonstration area in the East Common to plans by Pashek Associates, a local landscape architecture firm with offices located a few blocks from the park. Restoration of the park in phases is ongoing and is expected to be complete by 2018, the sesquicentennial of the Commons.

Comparisons

Allegheny Commons has no direct comparisons in the Pittsburgh area during its early period of significance (1868-1888), when it was the region's first and only major, designed public landscape. Allegheny's progressivism in providing this amenity to its citizens, along with Mitchell and Grant's vision for designing a landscape purely for public enjoyment where none had existed before, contribute to the park's significance during this period.

Useful comparisons may be made, however, to the Victorian urban parks in other American cities which inspired Allegheny Commons, and whose design informed the basis for its planning. These comparisons demonstrate that planning and design for Allegheny Commons resulted in a unique adaptation, rather than imitation, of those parks. Among the most ideologically and geographically relevant parks studied by

[22] Simonds and Simonds, "Allegheny Commons: A Proposed Long-Range Development Plan," April 1966, Part 1.
[23] Ibid.

Allegheny Commons' planners were Central Park in New York, Fairmount Park in Philadelphia, and Boston Common.

There is a clear lineage between Central Park and Allegheny Commons, both as expressions of the Victorian landscape parks movement of the mid-19th century and through the person of William Grant, who contributed his engineering expertise to the creation of both parks. Like Central Park, Allegheny Commons represents a successful municipal initiative to transform underutilized urban land into a healthful and beautiful public amenity. Unlike Central Park, Allegheny Commons' origin as public land determined one of its distinguishing features: its central location. The centrality of Allegheny Commons owed to the unique layout of the settlement of Allegheny, described by planning historian John Reps in his book *Town Planning in Frontier America*: "Of particular interest is the town of Allegheny, planned in a neat square of thirty-two (*sic*) blocks, with an open central green four blocks in size. The commons surrounded the town on all sides, beyond which lay the garden or farm lots of the community."[24] In terms of planning, Reps notes, Allegheny was one of the pioneer cities of the Ohio Valley.

But Central Park was not, at first, central, and its location at a remove from New York's then-downtown center influenced its design, as did its size. At 843 acres, or 153 square city blocks, Central Park is considerably larger than Allegheny Commons, and its monumental scale allowed for a design which encompassed a variety of landscapes and features, including seven major meadows, a large area of natural woodlands, a number of lakes and ponds, a zoo, a wildlife sanctuary, bridle paths, carriage drives, a conservatory, theaters, and other attractions. While clearly influenced by Central Park's picturesque design, Allegheny Commons' compact size and geometry, not to mention the challenges of an existing railroad, prison, and roads on its premises, dictated that its designers apply a site-specific approach focused more narrowly on an ornamental landscape. In fact, Allegheny Commons' planners opted to work with Central Park's engineer rather than with its landscape designers, Olmsted and Vaux, who also submitted a proposal for developing the Commons site. Ultimately, Mitchell and Grant developed a unique design solution for the peculiar geometry of the Commons by applying Classical symmetry and formality to its linear north, south, and east sections while reserving the pastoral idiom for more spacious West Common.

In the state of Pennsylvania, Fairmount Park, whose Fairmount Park Commission was established contemporaneously with the Allegheny Park Commission, in 1867, provides another illustrative comparison. Land acquisition for Fairmount Park predated 1867, however. Fairmount Park's development originated in the City of Philadelphia's efforts to protect its municipal water supply from industrial development in the early 19th century and grew through cooperative efforts by the city and private citizens to purchase estates along the Schuylkill River; the date of the Park Commission's establishment reflects an enlargement of Fairmount Park's original purpose to embrace the urban parks movement and its mission to provide the healthful benefits of public open space to a metropolitan population. Thus, Fairmount Park is actually a vast park system, encompassing 9200 acres and 63 neighborhood and regional parks, as well as city squares, river valleys, rock outcroppings, a working farm, roads, a tunnel, and historic houses, institutional buildings, and an inn. Unlike the landscapes at Central Park or Allegheny Commons, which had unified designs, Fairmount Park evolved over decades through the agglomeration of the original estates, their trees and meadowlands, without significant alterations; followed by the landscapes and buildings associated with the United States Centennial Exposition of 1876 and later design schemes imposed on various areas of the park to enable them to serve special purposes during subsequent eras. In contrast, Allegheny Commons hews closely to boundaries established in the 18th century and exists today as a single discrete park whose entirety it is possible to experience, on foot, in a single visit. And, again, Allegheny Commons' central location resulted in an orthogonal site which fits within the historic urban grid, in contrast to Fairmount Park, which was only connected to the heart of central Philadelphia by a highway, the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, during the City Beautiful period.

In its conversion from common gazing land to public open space, Boston Common provides a comparison to a park which underwent a process similar to Allegheny Commons, and, at 50 acres, Boston Common's scale is

[24] John Reps, *Town Planning in Frontier America.* Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1980, p. 183.

more comparable. Allegheny Commons' transformation from agricultural to grazing land was much more the result of direct planning and deliberate design, however. The first of Boston Common's recreational promenades, Tremont Mall, was in place by 1728, but the dedication of other parts of the Common as parkland did not occur all at once. Boston Common was used as a Revolutionary War camp and for public hangings until 1817, and the grazing of cows continued to be permitted until 1830. By 1836, the Common was enclosed by an ornamental fence and its informal footpaths had been articulated to include pedestrian malls and promenades, signaling that its transformation to parkland was complete. But treeless Boston Common's landscape design would continue to evolve through the 19th and 20th centuries, with a major tree planting in the late 19th century, a renovation by the Olmsted Brothers between 1910 and 1913, and a general plan by Arthur Churchill in the 1920s.[25] Though Allegheny Commons' conversion to parkland occurred 30 years after Boston Common's, it was not the result of a gradual process, but instead of a deliberate planning and design initiative which affected the entire Commons at once.

Until the turn of the twentieth century, Allegheny Commons was the sole open space in Allegheny for the enjoyment of the citizens at large. The City of Pittsburgh had, in 1889, begun to develop its own system of large urban parks. By the time of Allegheny's annexation in 1907, there were three such parks in Pittsburgh – Schenley, Highland, and Frick Parks – as well as another large park, Riverview Park, in the former Allegheny City. The land for Riverview Park was acquired and developed in the 1890s and early 1900s, presumably in response to a rivalry between the two cities which caused the government and citizens of Allegheny to seek to create a public recreation facility on a par with those being created in Pittsburgh.[26]

Allegheny Commons thus joined four other major parks, as well as dozens of small neighborhood parks and squares, in the City of Pittsburgh Park system in 1907. However, it remains distinct in character from the considerably larger and more rustic parks of the 1880s and 90s, as well as from the city's smaller, neighborhood parks. Unlike Schenley, Highland, Frick, and Riverview Parks, which were sited on the outskirts of the densely-developed city where there were still large, open estates or undeveloped, wooded areas, Allegheny Commons occupied central urban acreage even before it became a park. Set within the regular blocks of old Allegheny City, it has always been more orthogonal and compact than the four sprawling, major Pittsburgh parks, yet considerably larger and more deliberately designed than the more intimate, informal neighborhood squares and parks. Allegheny Commons remains the only green space in Pittsburgh defined by Victorian landscape design, both formal and picturesque.

Another feature of Allegheny Commons which sets it apart from Pittsburgh's four large parks follows from its centrality: Allegheny Commons is designed primarily for pedestrians rather than carriages. This is a reflection of its denser, flatter urban site as well as its smaller acreage and earlier era of design. Allegheny Commons was, by necessity, part formal and only partly in the new "pleasure ground" style, because only West Common provided enough area for a single carriage drive past the lake. For the most part, Allegheny Commons' views are confined to corridors of allees ending in the focal points of fountains or monuments, rather than the scenic vistas over broad expanses of landscape afforded, in later years, by larger parks, like Schenley, Highland, Frick, and Riverview, located farther from urban centers. Mitchell and Grant did capitalize on the 1-acre hilltop overlooking Pittsburgh (known as Monument Hill on the original plan), siting their Civil War Soldiers Monument there, but this acreage was removed from the park in the 1930s. Still extant is the Hampton Battery Memorial in East Common, which anchors the park's central promenade and utilizes the gently sloping terrain to provide a dramatic view of the downtown Pittsburgh skyline.

Finally, Allegheny Commons' flat site and formality of design set it apart from the four large Pittsburgh parks, all of which feature significant acreage of forest over the steep, rugged terrain which is typical of western Pennsylvania topography. Highland Park featured a formal, symmetrical entrance court at its Highland Avenue portal, planted with flower beds and flanked by statuary, but the park as a whole incorporated steep topography, picturesque, winding roads and paths, woodlands, and rustic structures typical of late-19th century

[25] Cultural Landscape Foundation, "Boston Common," http://tclf.org/landscapes/boston-common, retrieved October 24, 2012.
[26] *Pittsburgh's Regional Parks Master Plan*, City of Pittsburgh & Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, 2002, p. 80.

pastoral park design. Allegheny Commons, with its geometrical, orthogonal layout and ornamental plantings, lacks the wilderness areas present in the larger parks, nor does it include rustic elements, such as dirt walking trails and stone shelters, which characterize Schenley, Highland, Frick, and Riverview Parks. It features instead narrow strips of land traversed by symmetrical paths and allees and one pastoral area, West Common, which is planted with specimen trees without the density or undergrowth of a wilderness forest.

In addition to the four major Pittsburgh parks, one other comparison to Allegheny Commons must be made: Point State Park. Like Allegheny Commons, Point State Park was created from central urban land that was not originally designed for recreation, and also like Allegheny Commons, Point State Park features major design elements by landscape architect Ralph Griswold. However, Allegheny Commons has always been public open space, and today retains its original, essential character as a formal park of the Victorian era. In contrast, the site of Point State Park had been a developed part of downtown Pittsburgh, consisting of an agglomeration of warehouses, railroad yards, and commercial and residential structures which were taken by eminent domain in the 1940s and demolished for parkland. At 36 acres, Point State Park is less than half the size of Allegheny Commons, and its landscape is a fully modern one, designed a century after Allegheny Commons to refer both to the 18th century history of the site at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers and to Pittsburgh's future as a modern city of business and commerce: areas adjoining the park were redeveloped contemporaneously with modern office towers, and the park was meant, in part, to stimulate private investment in the commercial center of downtown Pittsburgh. Allegheny Commons, by contrast, was created as an amenity to the densely-developed, low-rise, 19th century residential neighborhoods that surrounded it. It is linked to Point State Park, however, through the career of Ralph Griswold and through its own urban renewal history when, in the 1960s, a plan by landscape architects Simonds and Simonds sought to link Allegheny Commons to the broader revitalization of the North Side neighborhood in which it is located.

At nearly 150 years old, Allegheny Commons is the oldest public park in Pittsburgh. Throughout its history, the park has been a focus of municipal park planning efforts and landscape design initiatives reflective of successive eras, from the passive, pastoral ideal of the 1860s to the modernism associated with urban renewal planning in the 1960s. As such, Allegheny Commons expresses a continuum of approaches to public open space design, planning, and use unique in the Pittsburgh region.

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Allegheny Commons
Name of Property

Allegheny County, PA
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): N/A

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 61.9

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17	583423	4478872	3	17	584749	4477939
2	17	583480	4477730	4	17	584722	4478973

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

Allegheny Commons consists of contiguous tax parcels 8-B-150; 8-D-15; 8-G-250; 8-B-38; 8-B-39; 8-B-40; and 8-B-50, available from the Office of Property Assessments, 542 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Around North, East, and West Commons, the district boundaries are those of the original park plus two areas – the public works facility area immediately south of West Ohio Street and between Merchant Street and the railroad, and the parcel between the southern end of Sherman Street and the southwestern corner of the Allegheny Commons ring road – that were added to the park by the Simonds plan of 1966, during the period of significance. The boundaries of South Common encompass the portions of this section of the original park which currently remain as parkland.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Angelique Bamberg
organization Clio Consulting date
street & number telephone
city or town Pittsburgh state PA zip code
e-mail clioconsulting@me.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

  A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property:	Allegheny Commons
City or Vicinity:	Pittsburgh City
County:	Allegheny County
State:	PA
Photographer:	Angelique Bamberg
Dates Photographed:	Nos. 1-27 on November 7, 2011; no. 28 on November 6, 2012
Location of Digital Files:	CLiO Consulting 233 Amber Street Pittsburgh, PA 15206

Photographs were printed on Epson Luster photo base paper on an Epson Stylus 2400 printer using archival chromogenic inks.

Description of Photographs and number:

Photograph Number 1: Central Path, East Common
Address: Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: South

Photograph Number 2: Hampton Battery Monument
Address: East Common, Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: North

Photograph Number 3: Hampton Battery Monument overlooking downtown Pittsburgh
Address: East Common, Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: South

Photograph Number 4: Swimming Pool and Pool House
Address: East Common, Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: South

Photograph Number 5: Pool House, Stockton Avenue facade
Address: East Common, Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: Northwest

Photograph Number 6: Post-and-rail fencing around East Common
Address: East Common, Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: Southeast

Photograph Number 7: Stone circle at site of Northeast Fountain
Address: Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: South

Photograph Number 8: Central Promenade, North Common
Address: Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: West

Photograph Number 9: George Washington Monument
Address: North Common, Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: East

Photograph Number 10: West Common
Address: Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: West

Photograph Number 11: Lake Elizabeth (drained for winter) and Soldiers' Monument
Address: West Common, Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: Southwest

Photograph Number 12: Pedestrian Bridges, Lake Elizabeth
Address: West Common, Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: West

Photograph Number 13: Lake Elizabeth (drained for winter) and Soldiers' Monument
Address: West Common, Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: North

Photograph Number 14: Pedestrian Bridge over Railroad
Address: West Common, Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: Northwest

Photograph Number 15: Vehicular Bridges over Railroad
Address: West Common, Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: Southeast

Photograph Number 16: Vehicular Bridge Railing, Railroad Tracks, and Ginkgo Trees
Address: West Common, Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: North

Photograph Number 17: Wrought Iron Fencing and Ginkgo Trees Along Railroad
Address: West Common, Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: North

Photograph Number 18: West Ohio Street and Vehicular Bridges
Address: West Common, Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: Northeast

Photograph Number 19: "The Groves" area of West Common west of West Ohio Street
Address: Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: North

Photograph Number 20: West Ohio Street and Tennis Courts
Address: West Common, Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: Northeast

Photograph Number 21: Rest room building at tennis courts
Address: West Common, Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: Southeast

Allegheny Commons
Name of Property

Allegheny County, PA
County and State

Photograph Number 22: Iron deer sculpture
Address: West Common, Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: Northeast

Photograph Number 23: Brick retaining walls, corner of Brighton Road and West North Avenue
Address: West Common, Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: East

Photograph Number 24: Maine Memorial
Address: West Common, Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: East

Photograph Number 25: Thomas Armstrong Memorial
Address: West Common, Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: North

Photograph Number 26: Aviary, south facade
Address: West Common, Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: Northeast

Photograph Number 27: Aviary, Sherman Street facade/2010 addition
Address: West Common, Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: Northwest

Photograph Number 28: South Common allee
Address: South Common, Allegheny Commons
Direction of camera: West

Property Owner:

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

name City of Pittsburgh

street & number 414 Grant Street telephone 412-255-2539

city or town Pittsburgh state PA zip code 15219

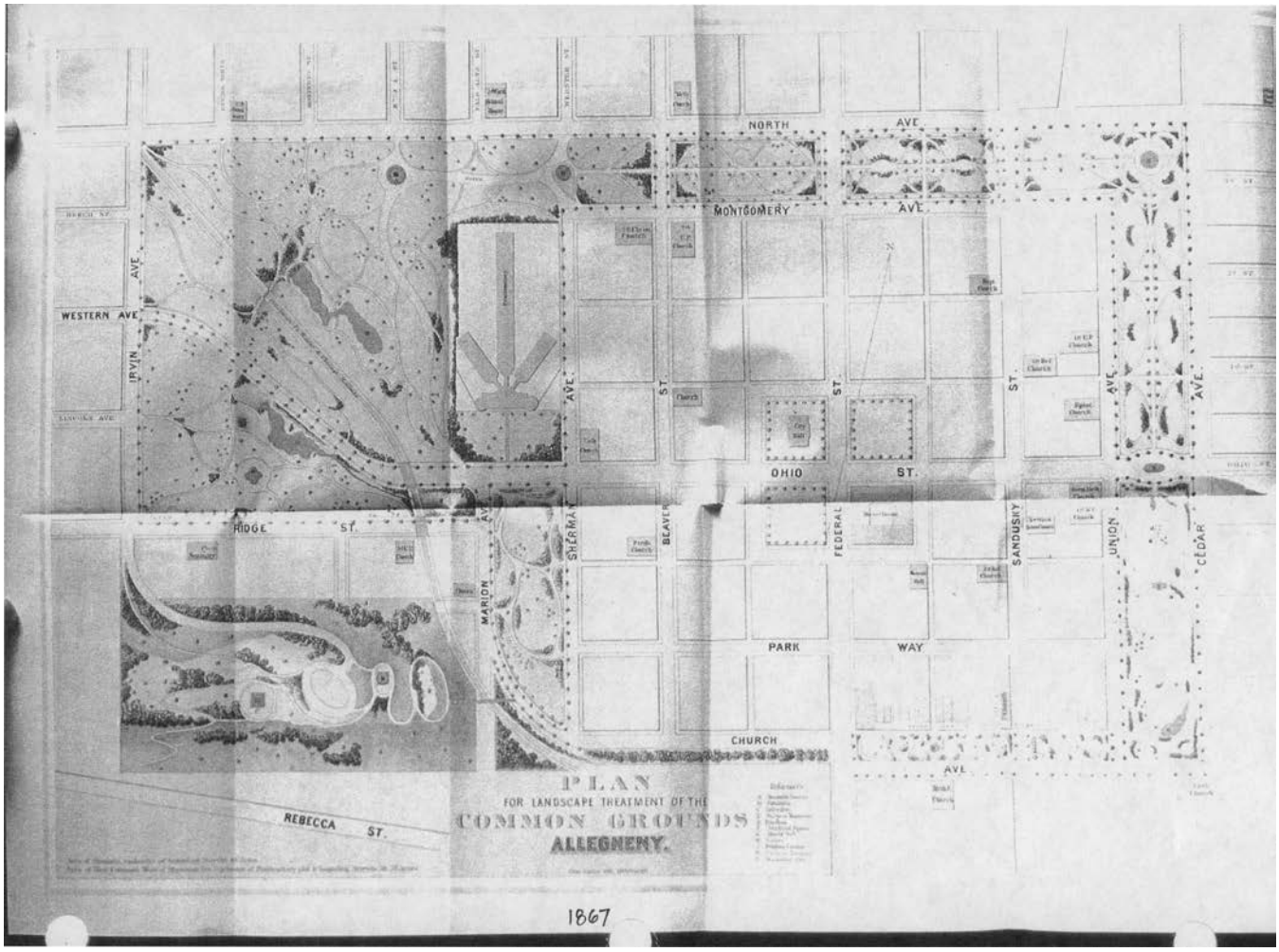
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain 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 18 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.

Figure 1: Soldiers' Monument in its original location on Monument Hill, 1911.

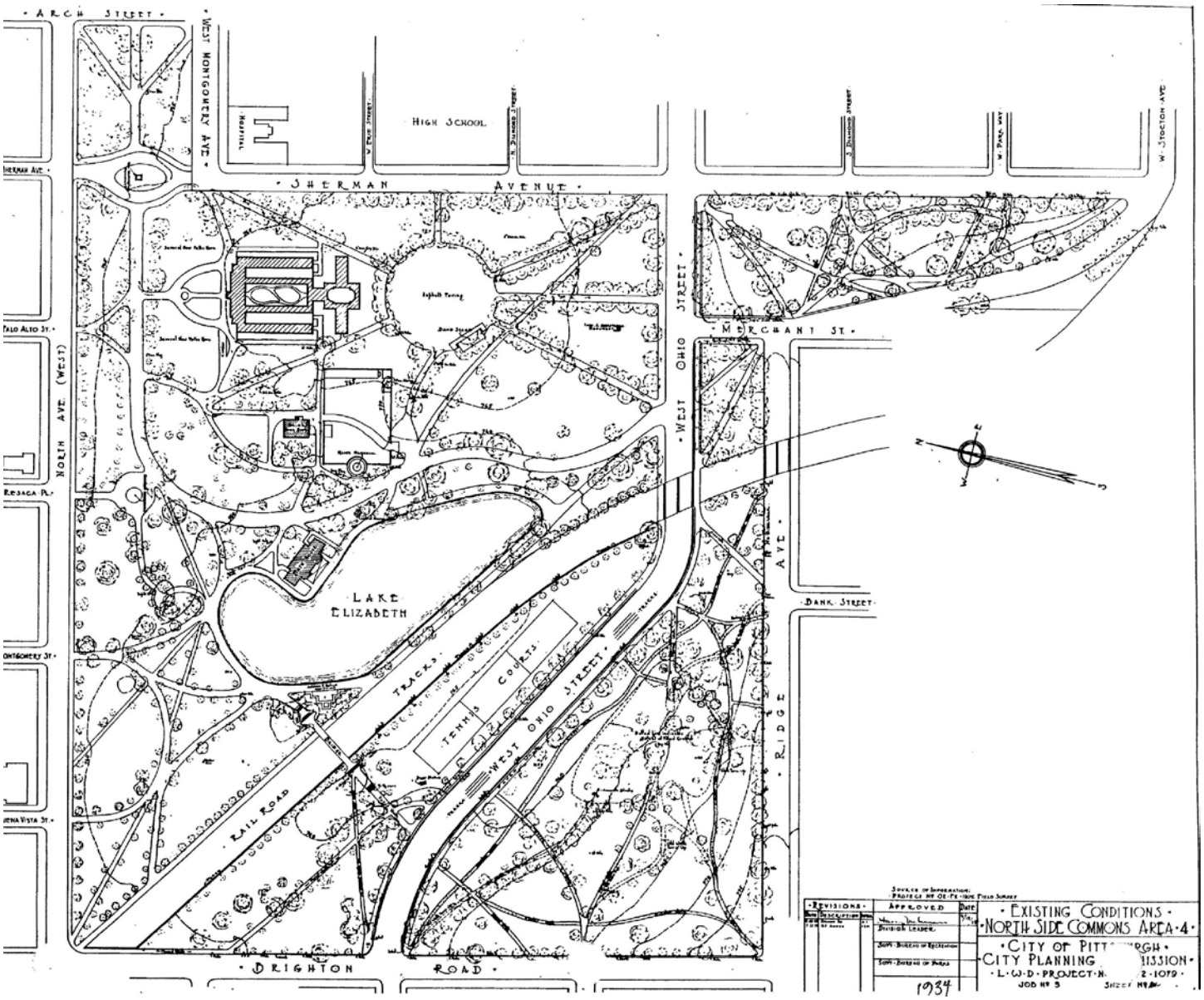
Figure 2: Lake Elizabeth with Rockery, undated (pre-1893) postcard view.

Figure 3: Undated view (between 1893 and 1912) of bathers in Lake Elizabeth.

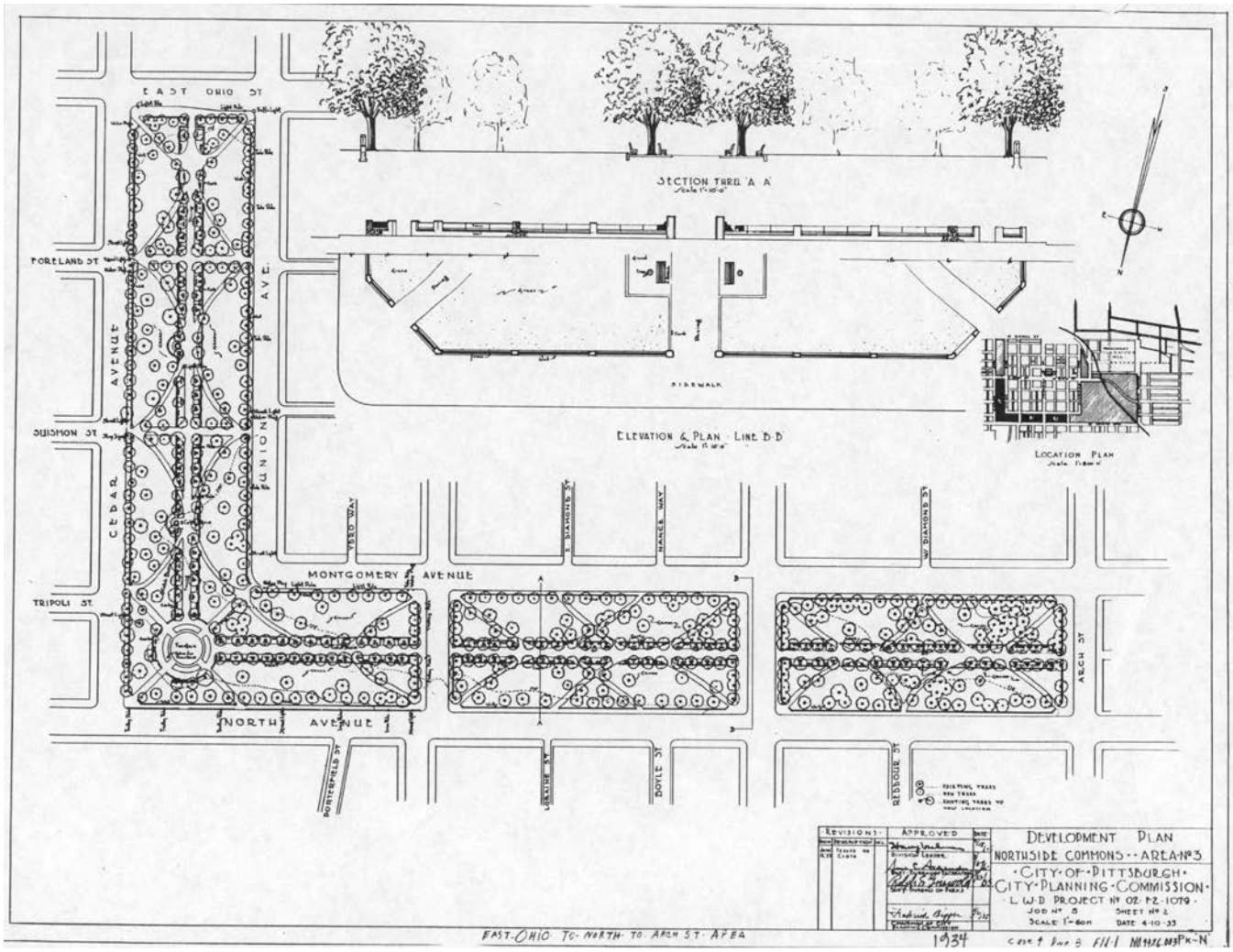
Figure 4: View of North Common central promenade, looking to Northeast Fountain, 1911.



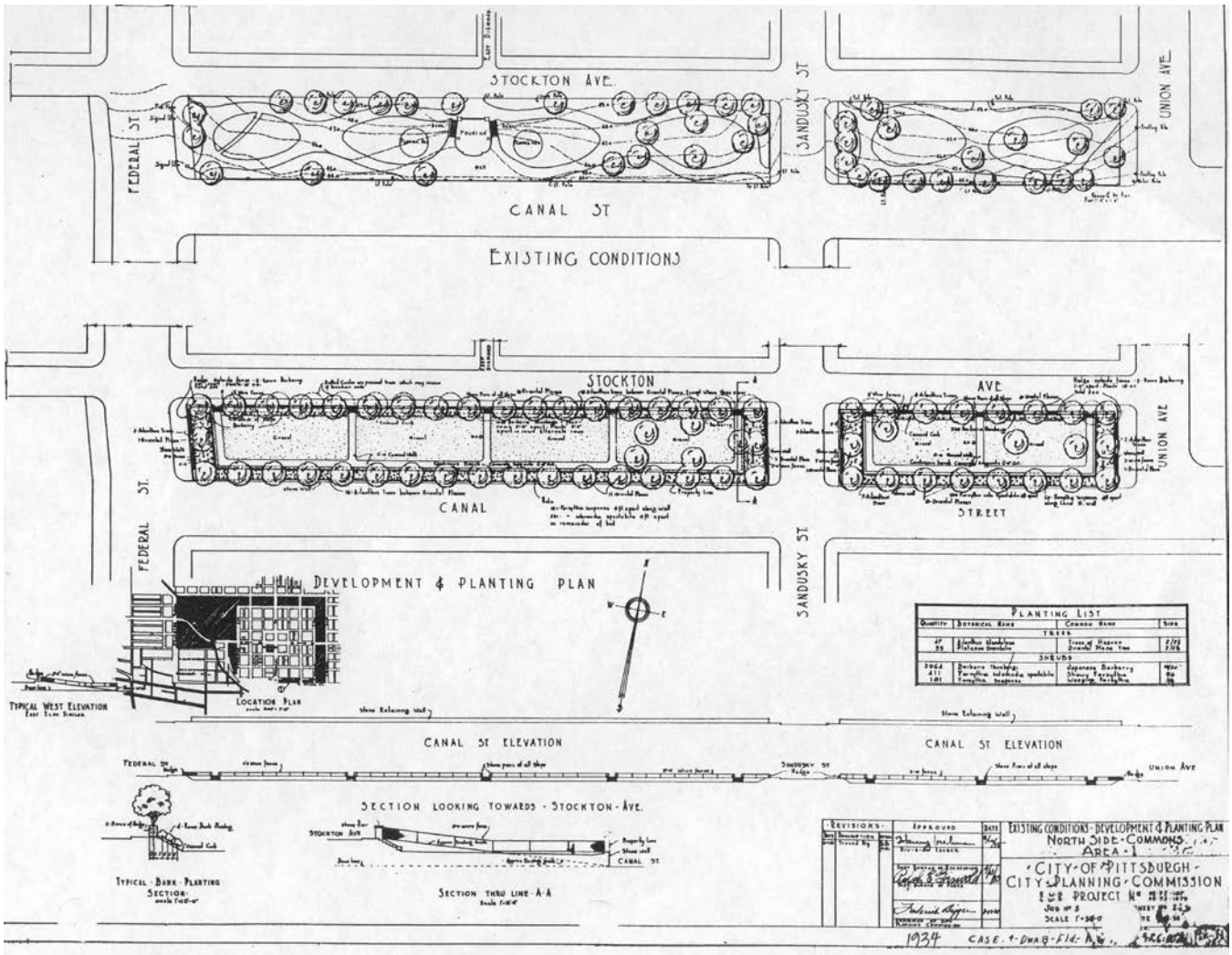
1867 map of Allegheny Commons.



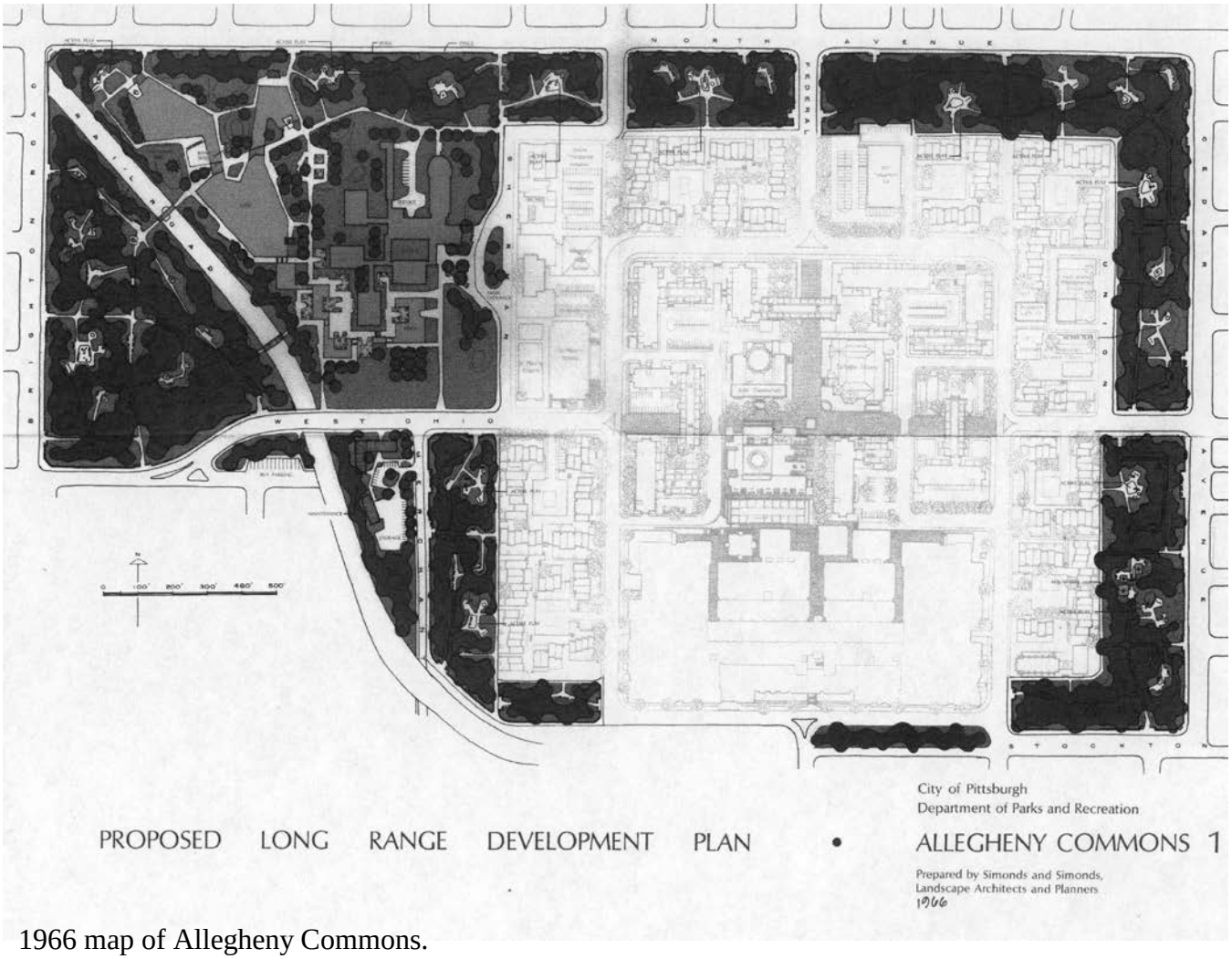
1934 map showing West Common.



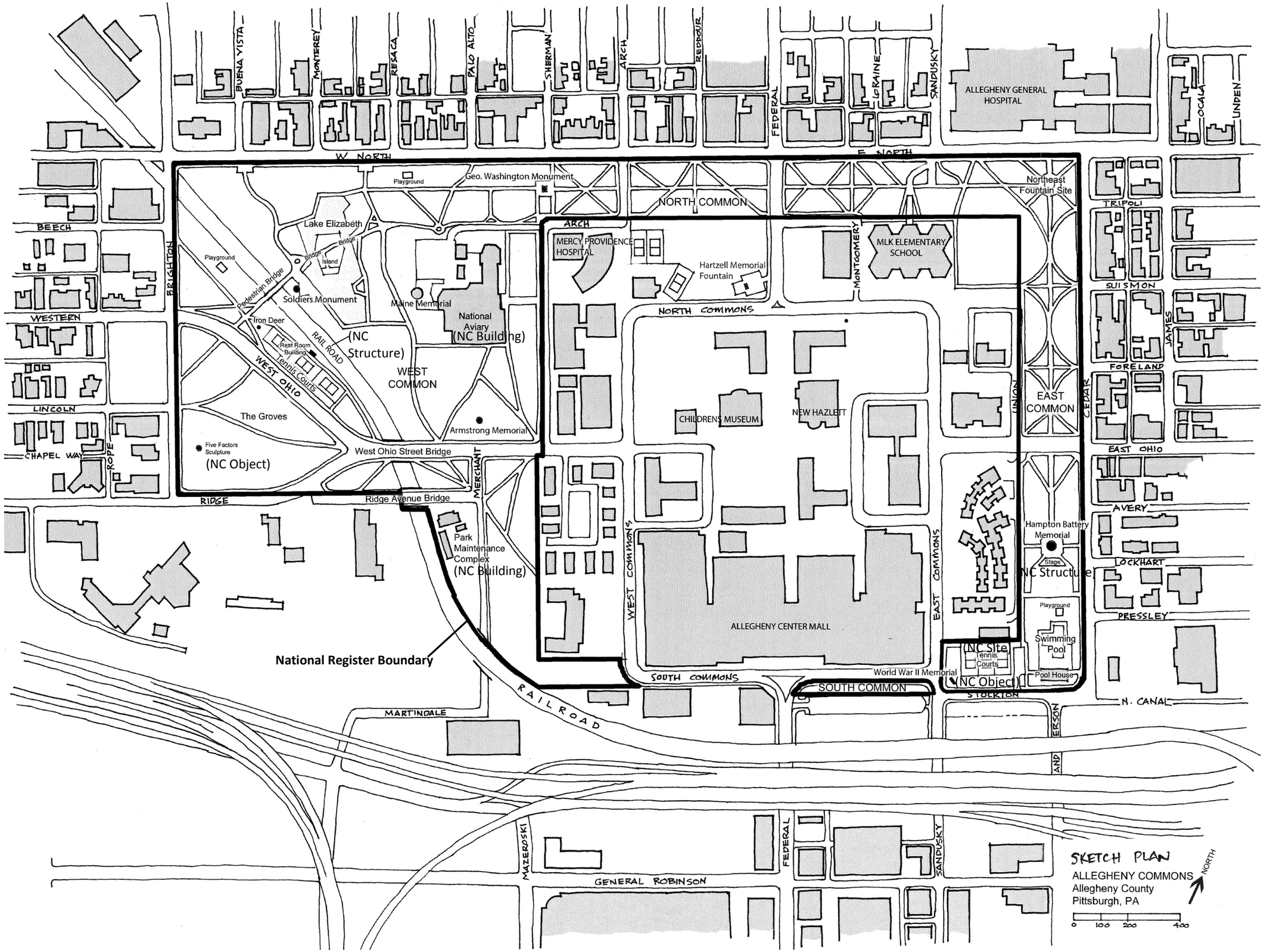
1934 map showing part of North and East Commons.



1934 map showing South Common.



1966 map of Allegheny Commons.


BUENA VISTA
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RESACA
PALO ALTO
SHERMAN
ARCH
REDDOVER
FEDERAL
LORAINE
SANDUSKY
ALLEGHENY GENERAL HOSPITAL
OCALA
LINDEN
W. NORTH
E. NORTH
Playground
Geo. Washington Monument
NORTH COMMON
Northeast Fountain Site
TRIPOLI
BEECH
Lake Elizabeth
Bridge
Island
Playground
Pedestrian Bridge
Soldiers Monument
Maine Memorial
National Aviary (NC Building)
(NC Structure)
Iron Deer
Rest Room Building
Tennis Courts
RAIL ROAD
WEST OHIO
WESTERN
WEST COMMON
The Groves
Five Factors Sculpture
(NC Object)
Armstrong Memorial
West Ohio Street Bridge
LINCOLN
CHAPEL WAY
ROPE
BRIGHTON
RIDGE
Ridge Avenue Bridge
MERCHANT
Park Maintenance Complex
(NC Building)
National Register Boundary
MERCY PROVIDENCE HOSPITAL
ARCH
Hartzell Memorial Fountain
MONTGOMERY
MLK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
NORTH COMMONS
SUISMON
JAMES
FORELAND
CHILDRENS MUSEUM
NEW HAZLETT
UNION
EAST COMMON
CEDAR
EAST OHIO
WEST COMMONS
EAST COMMONS
AVERY
Hampton Battery Memorial
Stage
(NC Structure)
LOCKHART
Playground
PRESSLEY
ALLEGHENY CENTER MALL
Swimming Pool
(NC Site)
Tennis Courts
Pool House
World War II Memorial
(NC Object)
SOUTH COMMONS
SOUTH COMMON
STOCKTON
N. CANAL
MARTINDALE
RAILROAD
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AND
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SANDUSKY
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SKETCH PLAN
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Allegheny County
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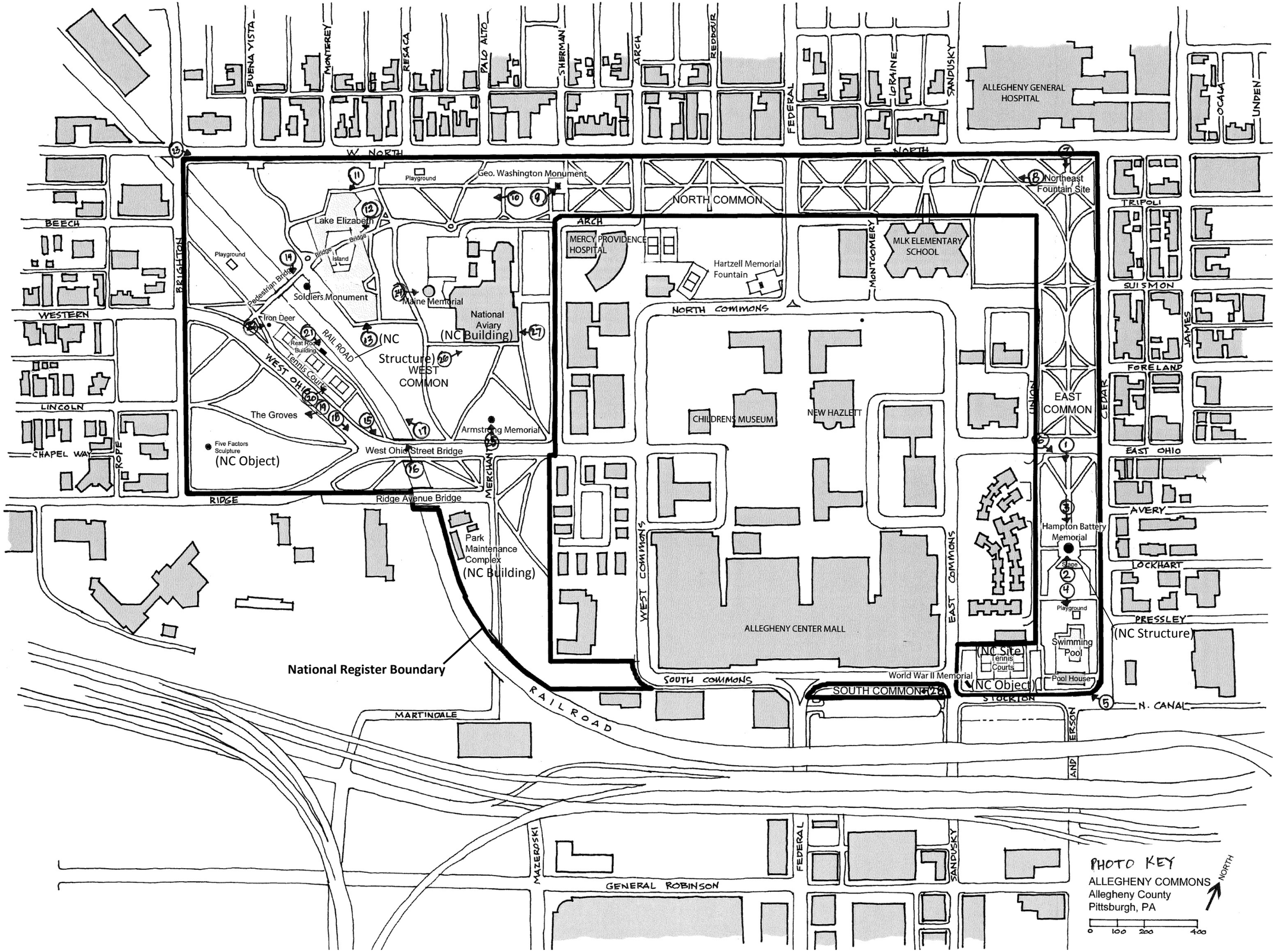
BUENA VISTA
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(NC Object)
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RAILROAD
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ALLEGHENY COMMONS
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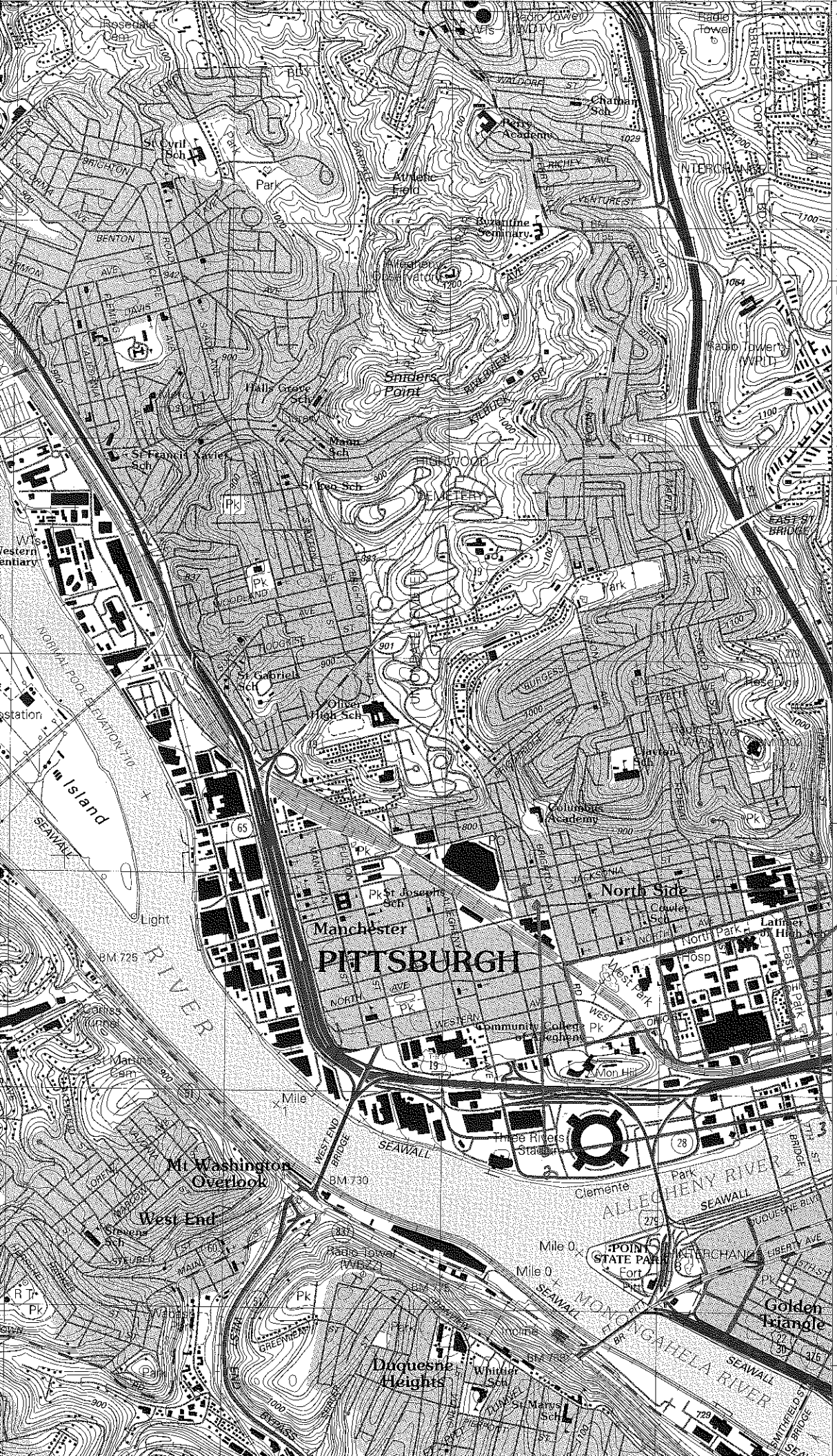
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Mt Washington
Overlook
West End
Duquesne
Heights
Golden
Triangle
Allegheny Commons
Park
Allegheny County, PA
UTM References
1. 17 Z 583423 Easting 4478872 Northing
2. 17 Z 583980 Easting 4477730 Northing
3. 17 Z 584749 Easting 4477939 Northing
4. 17 Z 584722 Easting 4478973 Northing

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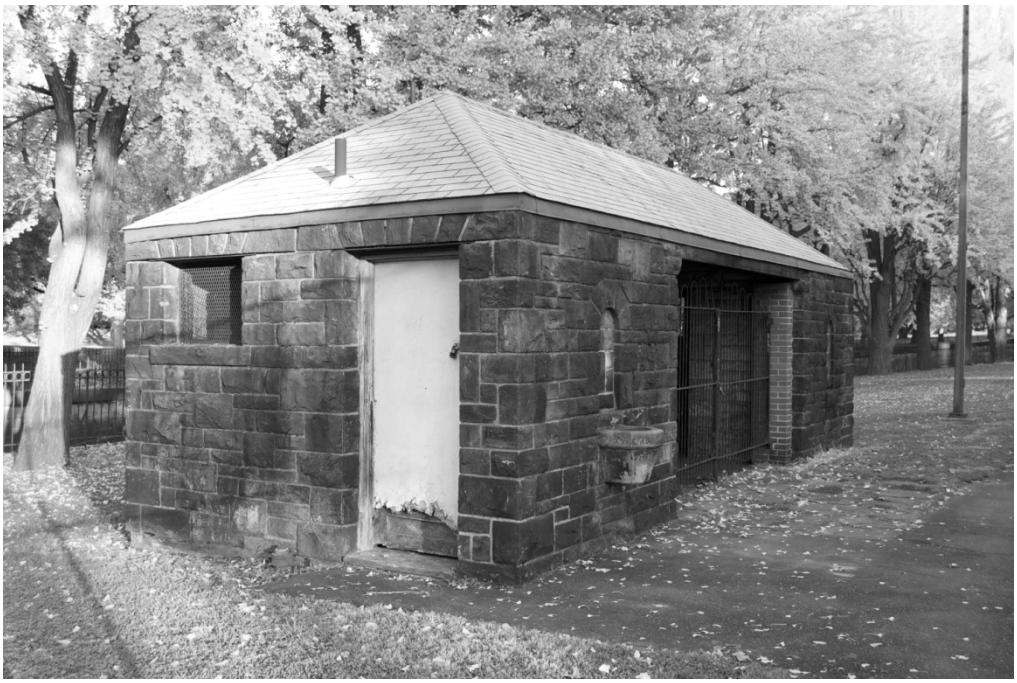

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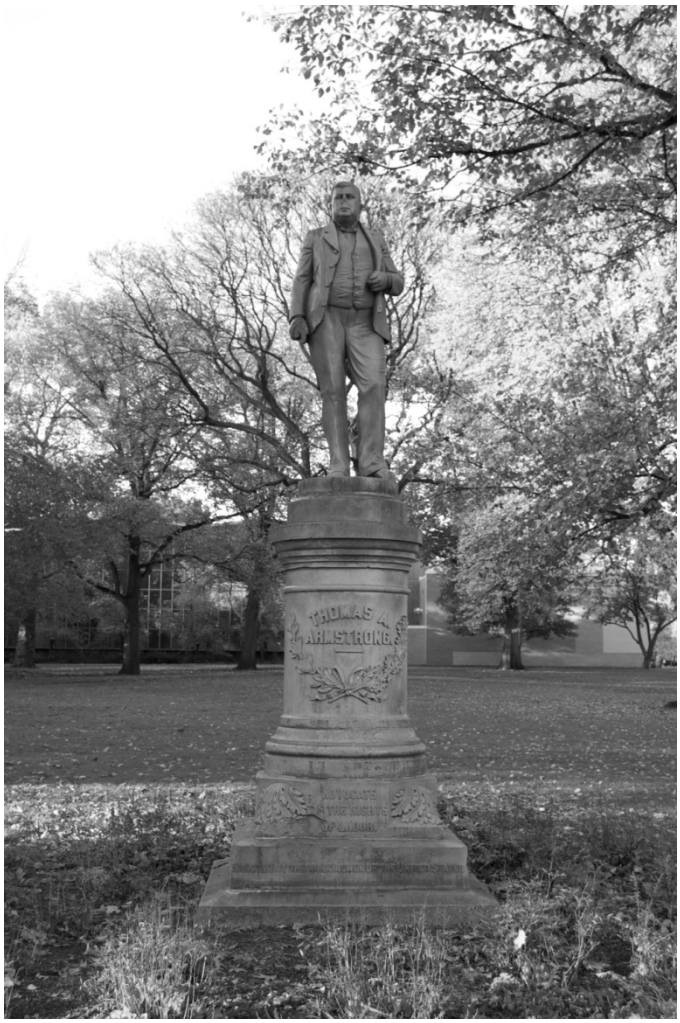

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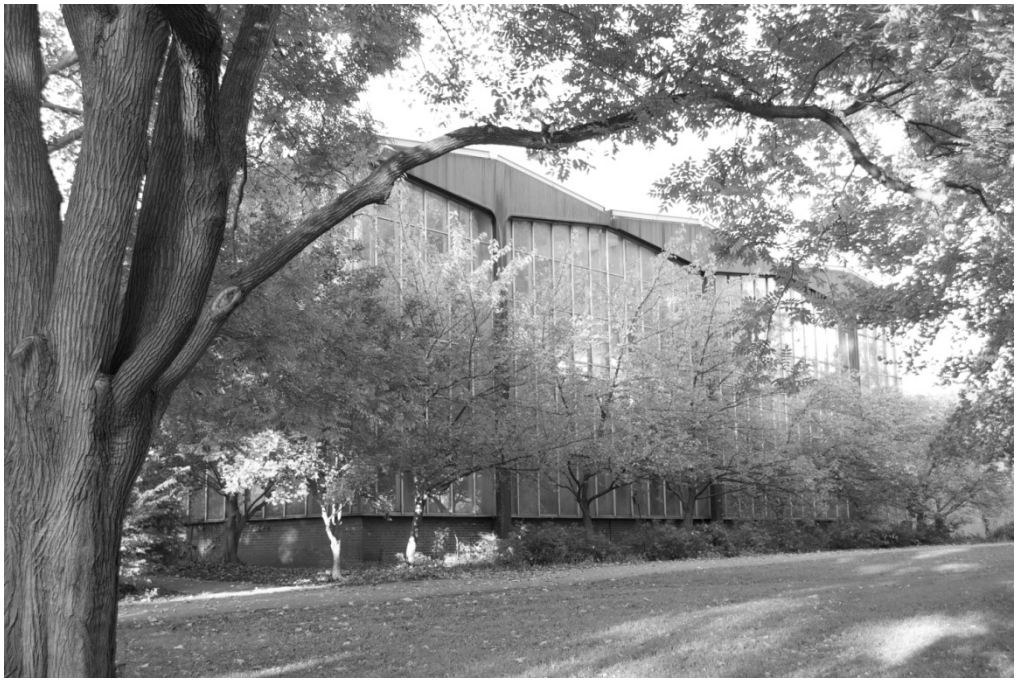

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