

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.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name:     Frick Park    

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of related multiple property listing:  
    N/A    

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

### 2. Location

Street & number:     1981 Beechwood Blvd.    

City or town:     Pittsburgh     State:     PA     County:     Allegheny    

Not For Publication:  N/A Vicinity:  N/A

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this      nomination      request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property      meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

     national           statewide           local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

     A           B           C           D

<p>_____</p> <p><b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	<p>_____</p> <p><b>Date</b></p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property <u>    </u> meets <u>    </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____</p> <p><b>Signature of commenting official:</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>Title :</b></p>	<p>_____</p> <p><b>Date</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>

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#### 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object



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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER: designed landscape

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: \_\_\_\_\_

### Narrative Description

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

#### Summary Paragraph

Frick Park is a large, predominantly wooded city park in the east end of Pittsburgh. It is located among residential neighborhoods and adjacent to Homewood Cemetery and the preserved estate of industrialist Henry Clay Frick, whose bequest of 151 acres—now known as “Frick’s Woods”—formed the initial area of the park in 1919. The park’s current acreage is 644, of which 538 are included in the National Register boundary; 106 acres that follow the Nine Mile Run stream bed south of the Penn-Lincoln Parkway (U.S. I-376) to the Monongahela River are not included because they were added to the park in 1996. The historic area of Frick Park was largely assembled, designed, and developed in the 1930s. Its character is dominated by a scenic landscape of stream beds, ravines, wetlands, wooded hillsides, meadows, and hilltop plateaus, all traversed by a system of paths and walking trails. Vehicular and active use areas, such as ball courts and playgrounds, are concentrated along the park’s perimeter, preserving the naturalistic character of its interior for passive recreation. Architecture in the park consists of four stone gatehouses plus one stone cairn designed by John Russell Pope ca. 1935; two other small buildings constructed between 1930 and 1940; a modern complex of staff housing and maintenance buildings constructed in 1959; and an environmental education facility completed in 2016. Also at this time, a formal landscape composition at the Clayton Hill entrance to the park, designed by Innocenti and Webel in the 1930s, was restored. A 1901 steel arch bridge which carries Forbes Avenue over Fern Hollow, a deep ravine, is a conspicuous feature of the park. Landscape architects Simonds and Simonds contributed a sensitively-designed playground at the park’s Riverview entrance in 1963. Frick Park has very good integrity. Its primary threat has been neglect during the later half of the 20th century, with few incompatible uses or intrusive features. Recent years have seen increased interest and activity in restoration of Frick Park’s historic landscape and architectural elements.

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## Narrative Description

Frick Park is the largest park in the City of Pittsburgh at approximately 644 acres, 538 of which are included in the proposed National Register eligible boundary. The park is located about 5 miles from downtown Pittsburgh in the city's east end. Its largest area lies south of Forbes Avenue and north of the Penn-Lincoln Parkway (U.S. I-376) between the neighborhoods of Point Breeze and Regent Square (to the park's east) and Squirrel Hill (to its west). Narrower segments extend the park north of Forbes Avenue alongside Homewood Cemetery to Reynolds Street opposite Clayton, the historic Henry Clay Frick estate; east, following the course of the Nine Mile Run stream valley on the northern edge of the Parkway; and south, following the Nine Mile Run stream below the Parkway almost to the Monongahela River. This area of Frick Park south of the Parkway is excluded from the proposed National Register eligible boundary because it was added in 1996, after the park's period of significance (1927-1968).

On its interior, Frick Park's dominant feature is its natural landform of wooded slopes and valley floors, ridges, ravines, and creeks, which serve as a rich habitat for native plant and animal species. Fern Hollow (photo 1), Falls Ravine (photo 2), and Nine Mile Run (photo 3) form a system of lowland stream beds and watersheds. Steep, wooded hillsides lead from these up to plateaus, such as Clayton Hill and Riverview, with views of surrounding areas.

Trails ranging from 1/2 to 2 miles in length, from flat to steep, extend and loop through this landscape of wetlands and woodlands. The trails cross Nine Mile Run and other, smaller streams that meander through the park on simple footbridges (photo 4-5). Trails are paved in asphalt, gravel, crushed stone, or earth, depending on location and use. Some sections close to the Nine Mile Run stream bed are boardwalks, and wooden steps ascend some of the steeper hills (photo 6). Vehicular access, active use areas, recreational facilities, and architectural gateways are focused along the park's perimeter, where it abuts adjacent residential neighborhoods. The character of these neighborhoods is of predominantly single-family homes constructed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A few businesses face Frick Park across S. Braddock Avenue, and across Forbes Avenue lies Homewood Cemetery, a Lawn Park Style cemetery established in 1878 which contains the burials of the Frick family.

Park signage is rustic except for that incorporated into the five stone entrance structures designed for four park gateways by John Russell Pope (described below). Four of these ca. 1935 structures are shelters or gatehouses; one is a cairn. The park contains five additional buildings: the Biddle Building (ca. 1930), the Frick Park Lawn Bowling Club (1940), two buildings in the English Lane complex (1959), and the Frick Environmental Center (2016). The Biddle and Lawn Bowling buildings contribute to the park's historic landscape, but the English Lane complex and Environmental Center do not. The English Lane complex is architecturally inconsistent and not integrated with the rest of the park, and the Environmental Center post-dates the park's period of significance. A steel arch bridge carrying Forbes Avenue over Fern Hollow is located within the boundaries of the park and contributes. The park also contains miscellaneous uncounted small structures and furnishings, such as simple picnic shelters, picnic tables, utilitarian restroom buildings, benches, bulletin boards, fencing, stairs, footbridges, interpretive signage, and trash receptacles (photos 5, 7).

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Frick Park generally lacks firm boundaries among its various zones, but is large enough to be described in terms of them. Some of the park's areas retain characteristics associated with their previous uses along with design elements from the development of the park landscape during the 1920s, 30s, and 40s. These areas are described from north to south:

Homewood Gateway, Reynolds Street and Upper Frick Park

Frick Park above Forbes Avenue is the area closest to Henry Clay Frick's estate, Clayton. It is part of the 151-acre original Frick bequest and located directly east of Homewood Cemetery.

The Homewood Gateway is at the northernmost tip of Frick Park, opposite Reynolds Street from the Frick Art and Historical Center, a cultural complex which contains Clayton (now a house museum), various other buildings original to the Frick estate, an art museum commissioned by Helen Clay Frick and opened in 1970, and a modern visitors' center. The gateway is marked by a stone gatehouse built to the design of John Russell Pope ca. 1935 (photo 8). The gatehouse has an arched center pavilion with limestone trim, a tall slate chateausque roof which echoes that of Clayton, and a single chimney on one side. It is flanked by windowed storage rooms, accessed via doors inside the main arch, and angled stone walls. Limestone tablets in the walls, one on each side of the gatehouse, are inscribed "FRICK PARK." The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy restored the gatehouse as a pilot project of the Pittsburgh Parks Master Plan in 2000 and added new plantings of sugar maples, juneberries, flowering dogwoods, and forsythia to its setting.

A paved path leads through the arch into a pastoral landscape of lawn dotted with shade and specimen trees along Reynolds Street (photo 9). At the southeastern end of this are two 120-foot-square lawn bowling greens and the building of the Frick Park Lawn Bowling Club, a small stone structure constructed by the National Youth Association in 1940 (photos 10-11). Trails lead from the lawn area along Reynolds Street into the wooded interior of the park (photo 12). These trails descend to meet the Tranquil Trail, which follows the floor of Fern Hollow 1.2 miles north-south through the park (photo 13).

Forbes Avenue

Forbes Avenue runs east-west between Squirrel Hill and Point Breeze/Regent Square. It is one of only two local streets to cross Frick Park, but it does so far above the grade of the park itself.<sup>1</sup> A three-hinged steel arch bridge constructed in 1901 (reconstructed 1972) carries Forbes Avenue over the Fern Hollow Ravine below (photo 14). On the southwestern end of the bridge, where a short spur trail enters the park from Forbes Avenue to connect to the Clayton Loop Trail, stands another of John Russell Pope's 1930s gatehouse structures. This is a small shelter house with arched openings, a hipped slate roof, and a limestone tablet inscribed "FRICK PARK" (photo 15).

West of the bridge, Forbes Avenue serves as the northern boundary of Frick Park; on its opposite side lies Homewood Cemetery. A cylindrical stone cairn by John Russell Pope stands at the intersection of Forbes Avenue and Beechwood Boulevard. It has a copper pointed dome roof and flanking stone walls and bears a limestone tablet inscribed "FRICK PARK" (photo 16).

S. Braddock Avenue

<sup>1</sup> The other is Commercial Street through the Nine Mile Run park addition below the Parkway, an area not originally planned as park land.

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At the eastern end of the Forbes Avenue Bridge lies the intersection of Forbes and S. Braddock Avenues, a busy gateway into Frick Park. From here to Biddle Avenue along S. Braddock is the park's most active edge. There is a large, nature-themed playground southwest of the intersection at Forbes and Braddock which features an imaginary stream, natural rocks, and native plantings (photo 17). South of the playground are a baseball field and Pittsburgh's only red clay tennis courts, constructed with clay moved from the Pittsburgh Country Club purchased by the Frick Park trustees in 1936 (photos 18-19). South of the tennis courts is the Biddle entrance to the park. This features a surface parking lot with access to the head of the Braddock Trail and the Biddle Building, a one-and-a-half-story, red-brick, nominally Colonial Revival Style building designed by the Pittsburgh Department of Public Works in 1929 to house park offices and maintenance facilities (photo 20).

Clayton Hill

Clayton Hill, off of Beechwood Boulevard just south of its intersection with Forbes Avenue, contains much of the original Frick Park bequest ("Frick's Woods") and the park's most formal landscape composition, designed by Innocenti and Webel in the 1930s and restored with the construction of the new Frick Environmental Center in 2016.

A governor's drive off of Beechwood Boulevard defines a crescent-shaped lawn planted with mature shade trees (photo 21). On the park side of the drive are a pair of stone gatehouses designed, like the park's other stone entrance structures, by John Russell Pope and constructed ca. 1935 (photo 22). The gatehouses have chateausque slate roofs and limestone trim. The larger of the two is fully enclosed and displays an arched entrance doorway, arched wall dormer, and a tall chimney. The smaller is an open shelter with ornamental wrought iron window and door grates.

The gatehouses flank a broad paved path leading through a double allee of trees to the site of the Clayton Fountain. The original fountain was removed in the mid-20th century; the current fountain is a modern interpretation on the original site (photo 23). Open meadows and demonstration gardens lie to either side of the path. South of the axial pathway is the 2016 Frick Environmental Center building (photo 24) and north of it is a sheltered parking lot. The Environmental Center's design steps down the south side of Clayton Hill alongside a new amphitheater.

Beyond these features, meadowland transitions to woodland. The Clayton Loop trail encircles a part of the original 151 acres of Frick Park now called "Frick Woods Nature Reserve," dedicated to ecological conservation and outdoor environmental educational (photo 25).

Riverview Hill

This is a major active use area accessed from Beechwood Boulevard approximately 3/4 mile south of the gatehouses at Clayton Hill. Riverview Hill includes 84 acres that served as a golf course and equestrian facility for the exclusive Pittsburgh Country Club prior to its purchase by the Frick Park trustees in 1936. Landscape plans designed by Innocenti and Webel and carried out by the City in the late 1930s and 1940s strove to integrate the country club's groomed landscape into the more naturalistic one of Frick's Woods to the north.

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Major work on this area of the park continued past the Innocenti and Webel era into the early 1960s. At Beechwood Boulevard between the Riverview entrance to the park and English Lane are ball fields and the Blue Slide Playground designed by Simonds and Simonds in 1963. Its terraced design steps down Riverview Hill to street level so that the playground intrudes minimally on the views from the ridge of the hill (photos 26-27). The Riverview Trail leads past the playground to a rolling meadow landscape, edged by woods and offering a view of the Mon River Valley (photo 28). On the northern side of the trail's entrance from Beechwood Boulevard is a long, sloping bowl used as a sledding hill, ending in grove of trees (photo 29). Farther along the Riverview Trail, an off leash exercise area for dogs was established ca. 2000.

English Lane, a small, dead-end street off of Beechwood Boulevard, is the site of a complex of brick staff residences, offices, and park maintenance facilities constructed in 1959 to the designs of Wolfe and Wolfe, a Pittsburgh firm (photo 30). These buildings' International Style architecture contrasts with the eclectic designs of the park structures of the 1930s. However, their impact is minimal as they are hidden from view down the secluded lane and away from public use areas of the park.

Nine Mile Run

Nine Mile Run is an ecologically-restored stream whose landscape consists of stream banks and wetlands edged by wooded hills with trails following, and occasionally crossing, the stream bed (photo 31). The Penn-Lincoln Parkway (I-376 East) is carried over the valley on concrete arches (photo 3). A soccer field at the intersection of the Tranquil, Firelane, and Nine Mile Run trails is the only instance of an active recreational feature on the park's interior. The northeastern section of the Nine Mile Run stream valley above the parkway lies within Frick Park's historic boundary. Nine Mile Run south of the Parkway was incorporated into the park in 1996 and is outside of its historic boundary.

Integrity

Frick Park retains integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association. Its location includes the original 151 acres bequeathed by Henry Clay Frick in 1919 and subsequent lands added by the Frick trustees during the 1920s, 30s, and 40s; the only changes to the park's boundaries have been its incremental enlargement during and after its period of significance.

The park's integrity of setting is also strong. Now, as when it was developed, it exhibits a naturalistic interior of woodlands and wetlands designed for passive recreation, with active uses concentrated at its edges, bounded by residential neighborhoods built in the late 19th through early 20th centuries.

The park's integrity of design, workmanship, and materials are evident in this historic treatment of the landscape and in the park's well-preserved historic gatehouses and other structures from ca. 1930-1940. Later additions to this landscape, such as the 1959 English Lane staff and maintenance complex, the 1963 Blue Slide playground, and 2016 Frick Environmental Center, are either discreetly sited away from main use areas of the park (English Lane) or carefully designed for compatibility with the park's historic design intent (the playground and environmental center).



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Frick Park's intact setting, contributing resources, and continued use as a facility for nature education and immersion since before 1930 establish its integrity of feeling and association as a large city park designed to serve as a natural oasis in the city.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

### Criteria Considerations

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

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Community Planning and Development

Entertainment/Recreation

Landscape Architecture

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1927-1968

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1927

1935

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

John Russell Pope

Innocenti & Webel

Simonds & Simonds

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

Frick Park was established by the bequest of 151 acres to the City of Pittsburgh by industrialist Henry Clay Frick in 1919 and opened to the public in 1927. By 1942, additional land purchases had increased its area threefold. Frick Park has local significance under National Register Criterion A in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Entertainment/Recreation and under Criterion C in the area of Landscape Architecture. The last of the major parks to join the Pittsburgh system by 30 years, and the result of a bequest that established a lasting tie to the Frick family and trustees, Frick Park was planned, designed, and developed according to different goals and influences than Pittsburgh's earlier Victorian and Progressive-era parks, which were largely shaped by city engineers. Its naturalistic character derived from the vision of Henry Clay Frick's daughter, Helen Clay Frick, and the ongoing collaborative efforts of the Pittsburgh Bureau of Parks; the landscape architects who cultivated and unified disparate tracts into a coherent public landscape designed primarily for passive recreation; and the Frick family heirs and trustees, who supported and oversaw these efforts. Unique in Pittsburgh, Frick Park's primary attraction is its landscape itself, a carefully cultivated wilderness with vehicular access and active recreational facilities kept to its perimeter. Frick Park's period of significance is 1927-1968. 1927 is the year the park opened to the public. In the absence of any singular historical event to mark the end of Frick Park's significance to Pittsburgh, 1968 ends the period of significance in accordance with the National Register's 50 year guideline.

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

Historical Development: The Frick Family

Henry Clay Frick (1849-1919) was a Pennsylvania native, industrialist, and financier who became a millionaire through the activities of his H.C. Frick and Company, which supplied coke to Andrew Carnegie's steel mills. Eventually, Frick became chairman of the Carnegie Steel (later United States Steel) Company. In 1881, the year he met and partnered with Carnegie, Frick married Adelaide Howard Childs of Pittsburgh and purchased an estate on Penn Avenue in a wealthy enclave of the city's East End. The Fricks hired Frederick Osterling, a respected local architect, to enlarge and improve their house, which they named Clayton, in the Chateausque style. The couple moved into the home in 1883 and had four children there: Childs (b. 1883), Martha (b. 1885), Helen Clay (b. 1888), and Henry, Jr. (b. 1892). Only Childs and Helen lived to adulthood; both would be instrumental in the development of Frick Park. The Fricks are buried in Homewood Cemetery adjacent to Frick Park.

By 1905, the Fricks had relocated to New York City, but the family maintained Clayton, and Helen Clay Frick remained attached to the Pittsburgh of her youth. Folklore holds that when her father offered to grant her any wish on the occasion of her society debut in 1908, she asked that he give a park to the children of Pittsburgh so that they could experience the deep pleasure she had had when roaming the undeveloped woodlands of her family's estate. In 1915, Henry Clay Frick wrote his will, bequeathing 151 acres of land south of his home on Penn Avenue to the City of Pittsburgh for use as a public park. Known as the Gunn's Hill tract, the land consisted of

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former farms, streams, and forested hills. Frick's bequest also provided a \$2 million endowment for additional park land acquisition and maintenance, to be managed by the Union Trust Company of Pittsburgh. The City was charged with the maintenance, improvement, and embellishment of the park, and the trustees with the oversight of these duties.

### Early Development, 1919-1935

Henry Clay Frick died in 1919. The first decade and a half after the execution of his will was marked by legal proceedings to transfer the land to the City and preliminary forays into park planning and construction. Park trustees soon began adding to the original park area. In 1924, Pittsburgh City Council voted to accept a deed for 189 acres, increasing the park to 340 acres, and authorized the engagement of a landscape architect, the Boston firm of Lowell and Vinal, to undertake master planning for the organization and linkage of park land. On June 25, 1927, the park officially opened to the public, though the first trail had not yet been constructed.

The most visible legacy of the park's earliest era was the construction of four park gateways, announced in 1931 and built by 1935 with \$70,000 in Works Progress Administration funds. They are: an arched gateway at Homewood Avenue and Reynolds St., paired gate houses at Beechwood Blvd., a small stone shelter on Forbes Ave., and a stone cairn at the juncture of Beechwood Blvd. and Forbes Ave. The structures were designed by the famed New York architect John Russell Pope (1874-1937), whose involvement in Frick Park in the early 1930s can probably be explained by the fact that he was simultaneously renovating the Frick residence on Fifth Avenue in New York City into a museum to house the Frick family art collection.

### Innocenti and Webel Era, 1935-1957

Despite the Great Depression, income from the park's endowment also allowed its trustees to continue to assemble hundreds more acres to be added to its area during the 1930s. Most of this land lay south of the original bequest, extending to the upper reaches of the Nine Mile Run basin. The largest acquisition was the former Pittsburgh Country Club, whose 84 acres carried the park southwest along Beechwood Boulevard. The club had lost members, and hence income, during the Depression and became available for purchase for \$197,500 in 1936.<sup>2</sup> The trustees also acquired an eight-acre parcel on Nine Mile Run that had been the site of the old Swisshelm grist mill, which had once ground most of the area's grain. South of this to the Monongahela River, however, most of the Nine Mile Run valley was unavailable for purchase as parkland, despite having been repeatedly recommended for this purpose. Its proximity to both the riverfront and Pittsburgh steel mills made Nine Mile Run as or more attractive to industry, and in 1923 it had been purchased by the Duquesne Slag Products Company, which degraded the stream and the landscape with the dumping of industrial waste through 1970.

In 1935, the landscape architecture firm of Innocenti and Webel was hired to design the further development of Frick Park, beginning a long and productive association. The late 1930s and the early 1940s were an especially fertile period of activity. Initiatives recommended by Innocenti and Webel and implemented by the city included the construction of the Terminal Fountain in 1936 and the Clayton Hill Fountain in 1937; the development of the Bowling Green along Reynolds Street in the mid-1930s and its elegant shelter in 1940; and demolition of the old clubhouse and re-grading of the golf greens and tees on the old country club property. In 1940,

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<sup>2</sup> Beche, et. al., 32.

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Innocenti and Webel began to plant the park as a natural arboretum, arranging new plantings in large masses as natural ecological groupings. By 1942, the park's trail system appears to have been largely in place, and Frick Park included 457 acres, including ten double tennis courts, nine nature trails, seven shelters, and one baseball field.

In the same year, funding for Pittsburgh's city parks transferred from the WPA to the City's Public Works reserve. Progress on Frick Park trickled almost to a halt during World War II, though Innocenti and Webel did make recommendations concerning the construction of the Penn-Lincoln Parkway (now known as US I-376 or the Parkway East) on the Nine Mile Run portion of Frick Park in 1943-1944, proposing plans for grading, planting, and curb installation. During the ensuing years, they pressed for the clean-up of industrial slag dumping in Nine Mile Run; sought to protect the park and stream during the construction of the parkway; developed efficient designs that would minimize the need for expensive maintenance; and emphasized a need for long-term planning to ensure the park would remain sustainable as a natural landscape. In 1948-1949, plans for the parkway were revised to accommodate an entrance to the park on Braddock Avenue.

Activity in Frick Park during the 1950s consisted largely of maintenance. Innocenti and Webel continued to make recommendations on specific issues, such as the continued reforestation of the country club property, the provision of shelter for children attending day camp in the park, and the relationship of the park to Clayton. In this regard, the landscape architects called for the area along Reynolds Avenue, which faced the rear of the Frick estate, "to be treated in a natural park manner similar to the Park itself, rather than an exhibition garden area," which would require prohibitive maintenance.<sup>3</sup>

Maintenance was becoming an increasingly vexing issue. In the 1950s, Frick Park—like many urban parks—began to suffer from a population shift from city to suburbs, decreasing city tax revenues, a decline in the skilled labor force, and increasing privatization of open space and recreation. The park's stewards struggled to manage the ill effects of deferred maintenance, erosion, degraded waterways, and the proliferation of exotic and invasive species. In 1955, the Allegheny Conference on Community Development took an interest in these issues. Conference Executive Director Park H. Martin toured Frick Park, met with landscape architect Richard Webel and Bureau of Parks Director Robert Templeton, and prepared a report. Outcomes of this process included plans for funding continued improvement as well as deferred maintenance items in the park; definition of a supervisory role for the Allegheny Conference over the City's maintenance and administration activities and budget; affirmation of the Frick trustees' responsibility to see that the natural character of the park was preserved; and an agreement that Innocenti and Webel should prepare a master plan to guide Frick Park's future development. However, no master plan was produced. Innocenti and Webel's long association with Frick Park ended in 1957.

Modern Period, 1958-1979

Despite the departure of Innocenti and Webel and Frick Park's overall tendency toward decline in the mid-20th century, improvements were made during this period and evidenced increased involvement by the surviving members of the Frick family.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 34.

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In 1959, the Pittsburgh firm of Wolfe and Wolfe designed the complex of staff residences, offices, and maintenance facilities on English Lane off of Beechwood Boulevard. These assumed the function of the earlier Biddle Building on S. Braddock Avenue, which took on a more community-oriented purpose. In 1963, the City hired the landscape architecture firm of Simonds and Simonds to design a large new playground (widely, if informally, known as the Blue Slide Playground after its most conspicuous feature, a large concrete slide built into the hillside) at the Beechwood Boulevard edge of the Riverview section of the park.

Also in the early 1960s, Childs Frick donated money for the construction of a new nature center to replace the one funded by his sister Helen in the 1930s. After Childs Frick died in 1965, Helen Frick shepherded the project to completion, assuring that the building fit the contours of the surrounding landscape. With the opening of the Frick Environmental Center in 1979, the City's nature education programming was officially consolidated in the Frick Park facility.

#### Recent Developments, 1980-Present

A reorganization of the Department of Parks and Recreation in 1992 left maintenance of Frick Park to the Department of Public Works, while the former Department of Parks and Recreation—now renamed CitiParks—administered programming. This bifurcation resulted in lack of consistent oversight over park planning, design, and construction, further degrading the park's aesthetic character. The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy was formed in 1998, in part, to address this issue in Frick and other major city parks. Modeled on the Central Park Conservancy in New York, the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy undertook fundraising for park master planning and maintenance in partnership with the City. A demonstration project, the restoration of the Reynolds Street gatehouse, was completed in 1998.

Perhaps the most important development of the past 50 years has been the addition of 106 acres of the Nine Mile Run stream valley to the park in 1996, realizing the 1910 vision of Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. (see below) and increasing the park's acreage to 644. Slag dumped by the Duquesne Slag Products Company from 1923 to 1970 had accumulated to 17 million cubic yards in a steeply-sided heap 120 feet high. In 1996, the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh acquired 238 acres and began environmental remediation and redevelopment of 132 of them into a master-planned residential development known as Summerset at Frick Park. It deeded the remaining 106 acres to the City of Pittsburgh for an extension of Frick Park. New trails now follow the restored stream almost to its outlet at the Monongahela River.

In 2002, the Frick Environmental Center was destroyed by fire. A new LEED Platinum environmental center was built in 2016. Site work during its construction restored the historic entrance composition of an axial walkway leading from the park's Beechwood Boulevard gatehouses to the Clayton Hill fountain.

#### Significance: Community Planning and Development

Frick Park has local significance under National Register Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development. In contrast to earlier parks which were established and administered by city engineers, the circumstances of Frick Park's creation placed its development at a unique nexus of city planning, landscape architecture, and philanthropy. Frick Park was an early and

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influential example of public-private partnership to create a high-quality civic asset for Pittsburgh.

Planning for public park systems began in Pittsburgh and its sister city of Allegheny, across the Allegheny River, after the Civil War, and joined when the two cities merged via the annexation of Allegheny to Pittsburgh in 1907. The two cities followed a nationwide trend of urban park planning which emerged in the middle of the 19th century. Allegheny was a leader in this regard, establishing the first park west of the Alleghenies, Allegheny Commons Park, in 1867. Frick Park was the fourth of Pittsburgh's large regional parks to be created, after Highland and Schenley Parks (both est. 1889) and Riverview Park (est. in 1894 for the then-independent City of Allegheny). Of these, Frick is the only one to be entirely developed in the 20th century. A fifth regional park, Emerald View Park, was formed from a conglomeration of smaller parks and greenways in 2012.

The earliest public open spaces in American cities were town squares, like those in William Penn's plan for Philadelphia in 1683 and at the center of the original town plan for Allegheny, drawn in 1788. But as cities industrialized, crowding, pollution, and concerns about sanitation and safety highlighted the public health benefits of larger reservoirs of open space. Prior to the establishment of city parks, 19th century urban workers sought fresh air and natural beauty where they could, often seeking out the tranquil green spaces in cemeteries. This helped give rise to the rural cemetery movement, in which extensive, professionally-landscaped burial grounds were established outside of church yards. At the same time, the field of landscape architecture was differentiating from that of horticulture. Rural cemeteries designed by landscape architects, such as Pittsburgh's Allegheny Cemetery (est. 1844), were an important precursor to the 19th century urban park movement, providing symbolic landscapes that artfully mimicked natural ones within urbanized areas.

However, Frederick Law Olmsted, a pioneer and foremost practitioner in the field of landscape architecture, argued that cemeteries should not be pressed into service as public recreation areas. His design (with Calvert Vaux) for Central Park in New York City in 1858 set a powerful example of a simulated natural "pleasure ground" in the middle of a dense, industrialized, modern American city.

After the Civil War, the provision of such urban parks became an important mission of city planning in Allegheny, Pittsburgh, and elsewhere. Parks enjoyed widespread support: by the workers and families meant to enjoy them; by industrial leaders who anticipated more productivity from healthy, contented workers; and by Victorian reformers, who sought wholesome alternatives to taverns and street corners as places of leisure. In 1867, under the direction of city engineer Charles Davis, the City of Allegheny transformed a disused common grazing area adjacent to its downtown into an elegant, ornamental park, one of the first west of the Allegheny mountains. Allegheny Commons Park (NRHP 2013), which came under the jurisdiction of the City of Pittsburgh Bureau of Parks upon annexation in 1907, is today Pittsburgh's oldest park and continues to display a Victorian ideal of a pastoral, picturesque landscape.

Across the river, Pittsburgh began its own public park system under the energetic leadership of Public Works Director Edward Manning Bigelow in 1889. Bigelow began working for the City



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of Pittsburgh as a city engineer in 1880 and became Director of Public Works in 1888. Among his many responsibilities, Bigelow brought a particular zeal to the establishment and planning of a park system for Pittsburgh, which at the time had only one small city park at Second Avenue and Grant Street, downtown.<sup>4</sup>

His initial effort, Highland Park, piggybacked on a public works project already on his docket, the city's fledgling public water system. Two reservoirs, the Highland Reservoir Number One (now the "upper reservoir" in Highland Park) and the Herron Hill reservoir, had been completed in 1879 and soon became popular places for picnics and strolls. In May 1889, at Bigelow's behest, City Council appointed a committee on parks and passed ordinances setting aside the land around these reservoirs and authorizing the Department of Public Works to improve them. Director Bigelow soon spent \$900,000 of city funds to purchase additional land for Highland Park, which opened in 1893. In November 1889, he sent an envoy to England to successfully persuade heiress Mary Schenley to donate 300 acres of her family's farmlands in the Oakland section of the city instead of selling the tract to a developer. This was the origin of Schenley Park, to which Bigelow added over 100 acres of additional land purchases by 1891. Thus, by the early 1890s, Bigelow had laid a broad foundation for extensive public park lands in Pittsburgh.

As a civil engineer, Bigelow was especially concerned with circulation among and within the parks and with the construction of roads and bridges. Schenley Park, for example, is reported to have had the city's first macadamized roadway, and Bigelow oversaw the construction of a road system within the park including three bridges to provide access to the sites of its various attractions.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, his vision included a park system with scenic boulevards to connect the parks. During his tenure at the City, Bigelow also initiated work on these boulevards, including Grant (later renamed Bigelow in his honor), Beechwood, and Washington Boulevards.

Bigelow personally supervised Highland and Schenley Parks' planning and design. Although a Superintendent of Parks, James McKnight, was appointed within the Public Works department in 1892, "Bigelow was the real man behind the scenes, and all of the developments were of his making." In 1902, the City set up a separate Bureau of Parks within the Department of Public Works to administer Bigelow's creations. Bigelow's tenure at the City ended in 1903. George Burke served as Superintendent of Pittsburgh Parks from 1903 to 1926, a "difficult period of growth" for the parks agency during which the City acquired many new neighborhood parks, made substantial improvements to them and to existing parks, and absorbed the annexation of the former independent city of Allegheny. Burke was succeeded by James Moore, a former laborer who saw "no major changes in park planning or construction" until his retirement in 1934.<sup>6</sup> In this year, Ralph Griswold was appointed Superintendent of the Bureau of Parks. His influence on Frick Park is discussed below.

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<sup>4</sup> Marianne Maxwell, "A History of Pittsburgh's Frick Park and the Urban Parks Movement in the United States" (Unpublished Master's thesis, Pittsburgh: Carnegie Mellon University, 1984), 4, and Michael Eversmeyer, National Register of Historic Places Nomination for Highland Park, Pittsburgh, PA (draft, Harrisburg: PA SHPO, 2001), 8:1.

<sup>5</sup> Barry Hannegan, "Historical Summary: Schenley Park" in "Pittsburgh's Regional Parks Master Plan" (Prepared by LaQuatra Bonci, et. al., for City of Pittsburgh & Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, 2002), 99.

<sup>6</sup> Howard Stewart, "Historical Data: Pittsburgh Public Parks" (Pittsburgh: Greater Pittsburgh Parks Association, 1943), iii.

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As Bigelow was developing Highland and Schenley Parks in Pittsburgh, the City of Allegheny acquired land in 1894 for another major park, Riverview Park, which at some 200 acres was considerably larger than Allegheny Commons. Just as Bigelow may have been motivated by Pittsburgh's rivalry with Allegheny to establish a park system in the 1880s, Allegheny Mayor William M. Kennedy may have wished to provide a public park of a scale and amenities on a par with Pittsburgh's Highland and Schenley Parks in the 1890s.<sup>7</sup> However, although it was dedicated immediately, the only indication of Riverview Park's development before the second decade of the 20th century was the layout of a system of roadways by the Allegheny city engineer, Charles Ehlers.<sup>8</sup> Along with Allegheny Commons, Riverview Park became part of the Pittsburgh park system when that city was annexed to Pittsburgh in 1907.

Planning for new parks in Pittsburgh continued in the early 20th century, although it was not always heeded by top city officials. Ten years before Frick Park was deeded to the City, the prospect of Nine Mile Run captured the attention of landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.. Son of the designer of New York's Central Park, Olmsted, Jr. was renowned in his own right for his work on the the U.S. Capital McMillan Commission, his role in the creation of the National Park Service, and his design of parks, campuses, and master plans nationwide. In 1909, he was retained by the Pittsburgh Civic Commission, created by reform Mayor George Guthrie, to study the built and natural environment of the city and make recommendations for its planning and development. The Civic Commission adopted Olmsted's report in December, 1910. At a time when Highland, Schenley, and Riverview Parks were in their infancy and few neighborhood parks existed, Olmsted advocated for the expansion of neighborhood parks and called the Nine Mile Run stream valley "perhaps the most striking opportunity noted for a large park." A tributary of the Monongahela River, Nine Mile Run flows along a valley from the banks of the river in Duck Hollow, up under what is now the I-376 Parkway East, into land south of Frick's original bequest. Olmsted wrote:

[The valley's] long meadows of varying width would make ideal playfields; the stream, when it is freed from sewage, will be an attractive and interesting element in the landscape; the wooded slopes on either side give ample opportunity for enjoyment of the forest, for shaded walks and cool resting places, and above all it is not far from a large working population... and yet it is so excluded by its high wooded banks that the close proximity of urban development can hardly be imagined.<sup>9</sup>

However, Olmsted's vision was shelved when Mayor William Magee succeeded Guthrie shortly after the Civic Commission was appointed. Magee adopted only the transportation recommendations of Olmsted's report.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Eversmeyer, 8:1, and Hannegan, "Historical Summary: Riverview Park," in "Pittsburgh's Regional Parks Master Plan" (Prepared by LaQuatra Bonci, et. al., for City of Pittsburgh & Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, 2002), 80.

<sup>8</sup> Hannegan, *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., "Pittsburgh: Improvements Necessary to Meet the City's Present and Future Needs" (Report to Pittsburgh Civic Commission, 1911), 119.

<sup>10</sup> Matthew A. Beche, Daphne Quinn, Rita Walsh, "Phase I Cultural Resource Inventory for the Proposed Nine Mile Run Ecosystem Restoration Project, Pittsburgh, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania" (July 2000, on file at State Historic Preservation Office, Harrisburg, PA), 31.

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Ten years later, Frick's bequest made planning for a park in the vicinity of Nine Mile Run a real necessity. The volunteer Citizens Committee on a City Plan of Pittsburgh issued a report in 1923 ("Parks—A Part of the Pittsburgh Plan") noting that 11,500 persons lived within a 15-minute walk of the as-yet undeveloped Frick Park and advising its enlargement and the preparation of plans for its development "after the most careful study and with the advice and assistance of the best landscape architect obtainable." The report also echoed Olmsted's earlier recommendation that the Nine Mile Run valley be acquired and developed for public recreation.<sup>11</sup> Instead, however, the Duquesne Slag Products Company purchased the sections of the stream valley closest to the river for the dumping of slag, a byproduct of steel production at the nearby Jones & Laughlin and Homestead Works steel plants.

Whereas Highland and Schenley Parks were planned and laid out by Bigelow and his successors in the Department of Public Works, in the 1920s the City of Pittsburgh contracted a landscape architecture firm, Lowell and Vinal of Boston, to undertake the master planning of Frick Park. This decision may reflect the increasing professionalization of the field of landscape architecture, higher expectations of public landscape design as city park systems matured, the influence and financial means of the Frick trustees, or all three. Lowell and Vinal's plan was issued by February, 1927. However, Guy Lowell died shortly thereafter, and park planning was transferred to the Pittsburgh mining and civil engineering firm of Blum, Weldin, and Company. Neither of these firms' plans survives, though some of their content can be inferred by early projects, such as the layout of the park's first trails and the location of the Pope-designed park entrance gateways in the early 1930s.

Ultimately, the significant planning and design of Frick Park took place through the cooperative efforts of the Pittsburgh Bureau of Parks, the Frick Park trustees, and the landscape architects they hired from the 1930s through the 1960s. This collaboration distinguished the establishment, planning and development of Frick Park from that of the city's previous parks.

In particular, the role of philanthropy in Frick Park was unprecedented. It began with Helen Clay Frick, Henry Clay Frick's daughter, who urged her father's bequest. A number of Helen's personal experiences had acquainted her with the idea of transforming private land into public asset through philanthropy. When she was thirteen, Theodore Roosevelt—known as the "conservation president" for setting aside millions of acres of land as protected park, forest, and nature preserve—visited Clayton and dined with the Frick family. Helen also would have been familiar with heiress Mary Schenley's gift of Schenley Park to the City of Pittsburgh when Helen was a baby, and her own father's donation of a city block—also known as Frick Park—with lawns, play areas, and a water fountain to the nearby town of Homestead, where the Homestead Works of Carnegie Steel was located. Her upbringing in a wealthy family and her education, which included courses at the New York School of Philanthropy, also prepared her for charitable giving.<sup>12</sup>

The structure of Frick's bequest, which consisted of not only land but of an endowment to be managed by appointed trustees, ensured the gift's lasting value and also its ties in perpetuity to

<sup>11</sup> Citizens' Committee on City Plan of Pittsburgh, "Parks: A Part of the Pittsburgh Plan" (Pittsburgh: Municipal Planning Association, 1923), 30, 66.

<sup>12</sup> Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, "Frick Park's Enduring Legacy: A Treasure by Design" (Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, 2013), 10, 15-16.

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the guidance and support of the Frick family and trusted advisors. Other Pittsburgh parks were also the products and/or recipients of philanthropy. In particular, Schenley Park had been donated by Mary Schenley (after Bigelow's persuasion), Phipps Conservatory in that park was given by Henry Phipps, and the memorial to Mary Schenley was funded by Andrew Carnegie and others. But only in Frick Park did philanthropy guide the ongoing planning and development of the public landscape from its donation to the City to its maturity. Frick Park's unique circumstances set it on a course different from those of earlier parks administered by city engineers, even those which were or contained gifts.

Managed by public servants, shaped by landscape architects, and guided, augmented, and protected by the Frick family and trustees, Frick Park represents an early and important example of public-private collaboration to develop a major public landscape in Pittsburgh. By holding the purse strings, the Frick Park trustees upheld the unique woodland character essential to Helen Clay Frick's vision. The threefold expansion of Henry Clay Frick's original bequest by 1942 was the direct result of the active pursuit of land by the park trustees and the economic power of the park's endowment. Frick Park enjoyed ongoing enlargement, development, and improvement even during the Depression because of the family's close involvement and because of the ever-growing trust fund, which supplemented federal money and labor made available for civic projects through the WPA. The Pittsburgh Bureau of Parks' 1939 report summarized the success and influence of this model: "The maintenance, operation, and development of Frick Park under the Frick Park Trust Fund by the Frick Park trustees is a practical demonstration of efficient, far-sighted park administration which might well be followed by the City administration."<sup>13</sup> After the WPA funding stream ended, revenue from Frick Park's endowment helped cushion it from slashed appropriations and a new emphasis on efficiency during the 1940s.

Direct involvement of the Frick family and trustees continued into the later 20th century. In 1963, they ensured that Simonds and Simonds' design for a new playground maintained the principle, established in the 1930s, of keeping active recreational facilities to the park perimeter, supporting a multi-level plan integrated with park topography so as to be minimally visible from the park's interior. In the later 1960s and 70s, Childs and Helen Clay Frick were closely involved with the donation, siting, and construction of the Frick Park Nature Center, underscoring the primacy of nature education which had always been at the core of Frick Park's mission.

Significance: Entertainment/Recreation

Frick Park has local significance under National Register Criterion A in the area of Entertainment/Recreation. The last of Pittsburgh's large city parks and the only one entirely developed in the 20th century, Frick Park reflected different goals and values than earlier Victorian and Progressive era parks. Passive recreation and nature appreciation have been key experiences provided to users of Frick Park since its early development in the 1930s.

In the 1860s, Allegheny Commons Park was designed as an ornamental landscape for decorous recreation, such as promenading and simply sitting amidst the restorative qualities of picturesque surroundings. A carriage drive allowed those who could afford such conveyance to ride through the landscape at a stately pace. Allegheny Commons' original design included copses of trees and an ornamental lake—later adapted for swimming, skating, and boating—but unlike the larger

<sup>13</sup> "Annual Report of Bureau of Parks," City of Pittsburgh, 1939, 3.

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parks of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Allegheny Commons did not include forests, streams, or wilderness areas. Allegheny Commons was later adapted to include active recreational features, but as originally designed, it epitomized the Victorian ideal of a passive, pastoral, ornamental refuge from the rigors of urban life. Commemoration, another important function of Allegheny Commons, extended also to Schenley and Highland Parks. All of these parks acquired significant monuments, fountains, and other sculptures in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Allegheny Commons and later Victorian parks, such as Highland, Schenley, and Riverview, had a component of moral uplift to their purpose. Middle-class urban reformers saw parks as providing a wholesome environment for working-class leisure and believed in the civilizing influence of harmonious, artfully-improved natural landscapes. Pittsburgh City Controller Henry Gourley articulated this view in 1895: “Give the people attractive parks; show them beautiful things and give them innocent amusements to entice them away from degrading things.... Let us open the doors which lead to pure influence and to the better side of human nature.”<sup>14</sup> Some of the “innocent amusements” which appeared in city parks at around this time included picnic pavilions, bandstands, and carousels. Ornamental ponds such as Lake Carnegie in Highland Park and Lake Elizabeth in Allegheny Commons were stocked with fish. Schenley Park had a dance pavilion and a casino (the name at the time denoting an indoor arena for sporting events and theatrical productions). Both Highland Park and Riverview Park had zoos; Allegheny Commons and Schenley Parks acquired conservatories. (After Allegheny was annexed to Pittsburgh, only the Highland Park Zoo and Phipps Conservatory in Schenley Park were maintained.) Riverview Park also had an aviary, which later moved to the former conservatory site in Allegheny Commons.

Around the turn of the 20th century, the purpose and appearance of urban parks continued to evolve as new social movements influenced park planners to shape them in new ways. In Pittsburgh, Olmsted’s 1910 report emphasized the “urgent civic need” for parks for “healthful recreation.”<sup>15</sup> His observation echoed an important tenet of the early 20th century Progressive Movement, which brought an emphasis on the physical and moral benefits of healthful outdoor activity and organized athletics. Advocates sought to build playgrounds for children and sports facilities for adults. Pittsburgh’s vast industrial wealth also bestowed cultural facilities which needed suitable homes.

As public lands dedicated to recreation and enjoyment, parks naturally became the focus of many of these ambitions. From about 1910 to 1940, Pittsburgh added numerous small, neighborhood parks and playgrounds to its system. Meanwhile, Highland, Schenley, Riverview, and even Allegheny Commons Parks were loaded with a great variety of recreational facilities and attractions. Lakes were opened to swimming, diving, boating, and skating; boathouses and swimming pools were built. Paths were dedicated for walking, bicycling, and horseback riding. Riverview Park had a stable, and Schenley Park had, in addition, a horse racing track and polo ground. Organized sports facilities included tennis courts, ball fields, and the Schenley Golf Course. The Allegheny Observatory was constructed in 1900 for the present-day University of Pittsburgh in Riverview Park. The number of construction projects in Schenley Park alone

<sup>14</sup> In Eversmeyer, 8:1.

<sup>15</sup> Olmsted, Jr., 113.

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“demonstrates just how far from Olmsted’s notion of a park, as a refined and unsullied expression of nature, the Pittsburgh planners were willing to depart in their concern for maximum usability.”<sup>16</sup>

Frick Park was intended, from the beginning, to offer something closer to Frederick Law Olmsted’s ideal. Its primary attraction was its rustic woodland landscape, designed for passive respite from the urban environment and communion with nature. Frick Park’s planners and designers did not reject active recreational facilities, which were still in high demand in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s. Rather, they committed to focus these at the park’s edges, preserving the interior as an intact forest landscape. Frick Park’s primary offering to its users was nature: immersion, appreciation, and education.

Even when the Frick trustees acquired a former country club property, already appointed with a club house, tennis courts, golf course, and bridle paths, the park’s planners (then Pittsburgh Park Superintendent Ralph Griswold and landscape architects Innocenti and Webel) chose not to maintain these facilities in the interior of the park. Instead, they demolished the club house and reverted the golf course to meadow and woodland. They rejected horses, like motorized traffic, as disruptive to Frick Park’s wilderness interior, and established a policy of confining tennis to the Braddock Avenue courts, eliminating the courts of the former country club and other, earlier courts at Kensington Street.

In 1949, after Griswold’s departure from the Bureau of Parks, the City considered utilizing approximately 20 “convenient and available” acres of Frick Park’s Riverview area as the site of a planned outdoor theater for the Civic Light Opera. Though the City Planning Commission and the Mayor favored the site, the park’s landscape architects, Innocenti and Webel, opposed it, arguing that it would be vacant most of the year and “contrary to the spirit and intent of the original bequest of Frick Park.”<sup>17</sup> The facility, known as the Civic Arena, was eventually built in the Hill District.

All of this was consistent with the dedication of Frick Park to nature study, which was further underscored by the nature education program which began in the 1930s. While the romantic landscapes of Pittsburgh’s 19th century parks had moralistic overtones of civilizing the lower classes, Frick Park brought a more modern emphasis on the natural science behind its scenic beauty. Helen Clay Frick donated a converted mansion on Beechwood Boulevard as a nature museum, and the City hired a naturalist, Dr. William LeRoy Black, to work there. Near the museum, workers from the National Youth Administration, a New Deal program that provided jobs and education for young people, built an outdoor Nature Study Amphitheater in 1939. Exhibits and programs highlighted the plants, animals, and ecology of the park. A nature study group, the Naturalist Society of Frick Park, published a newsletter, titled *Nature News*, between 1937 and 1939. Its first volume highlights Frick Park’s unique character as a setting for scientific inquiry as well as passive immersion in nature:

The unique fact that we have a large territory of primeval land in the very center of a highly artificial and industrialized area affords all who are interested in nature the fullest

<sup>16</sup> Hannegan, “Historical Summary: Schenley Park,” 99.

<sup>17</sup> “Pittsburgh Regional Parks Chronology” (Prepared by Heritage Landscape, LLC for Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, 2000), 32-33.

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opportunity for the utilization of our leisure time in a pleasant and profitable manner... [Frick Park contains] 460 acres where nature may be seen at her best, affording a great outdoor laboratory where observations are made easier because of the absence of all the formal settings of a park.<sup>18</sup>

In 1939, the annual report of the City's Bureau of Parks proclaimed that nature education in Frick Park was "one of the outstanding nature education programs conducted by any park system in the country and has received national recognition."<sup>19</sup> These activities presaged the establishment of Frick Park as the locus of the Parks Department's environmental education program in the late 1970s, housed in successive environmental center buildings near the original Nature Museum location on Beechwood Boulevard. Frick Park's historic role as Pittsburgh's outdoor nature classroom has been well-preserved.

#### Significance: Landscape Architecture

Frick Park has local significance under National Register Criterion C in the area of Landscape Architecture as a carefully-designed sequence of scenic landscapes. Dating from the early-to-mid 20th century, its design is neither wholly romantic nor modern, but on the interior of the park, cultivates a sense of not having been designed at all. At the park's edges, where it touches adjacent residential neighborhoods, it provides sensitively-designed vehicular access, recreational facilities, and sometimes formal gateways leading through interim meadowlands to a scenic experience of native Pennsylvania woodlands and wetlands. The treatment of its perimeter, interior, and transitional zones is unique among Pittsburgh's designed landscapes and reflects early 20th century concerns about the separation of disparate uses and users, in particular pedestrians and automobiles. It is largely attributable to the landscape architecture firm of Innocenti and Webel, who assumed the park's planning and design in 1935 and remained involved until 1957. Significant contributions were also made by Ralph Griswold during the 1930s and 40s and by Simonds and Simonds in the 1960s.

Frick Park was not the first Pittsburgh park to be designed by landscape architects. In 1867, the City of Allegheny hired the New York firm of Mitchell and Grant to design the transformation of Allegheny Commons, a former public grazing land which had become a disused dumping ground, into an elegant public park. Mitchell and Grant's work was typical of post-Civil War landscape design and well-suited to its site, which was surrounded by established city blocks and narrow on three sides. Formal promenades, punctuated by sites for fountains or commemorative sculpture, in these narrow areas opened up into a pastoral, picturesque "pleasure ground" of lawn studded with specimen trees. A carriage drive allowed those who could afford such conveyance to ride through the landscape at a stately pace. The site also contained pre-existing intrusive uses: a penitentiary and a railroad. These Mitchell and Grant dealt with as best they could, mainly through camouflage. Allegheny Commons' original design included copses of trees and an ornamental lake—later adapted for swimming, skating, and boating—but unlike the larger parks of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it did not include forests, streams, or wilderness areas.

<sup>18</sup> Naturalist Society of Frick Park, *Nature News*, vol. 1, April 1937, 17, in Marianne Maxwell, "A History of Pittsburgh's Frick Park and the Urban Parks Movement in the United States" (Unpublished Master's thesis, Pittsburgh: Carnegie Mellon University, 1984), 19.

<sup>19</sup> "Annual Report of Bureau of Parks," City of Pittsburgh, 1938, 1939, Nature Division Report.

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Allegheny's and Pittsburgh's later Victorian parks—Highland, Schenley, and Riverview, all established ca. 1890—have more in common with Frick Park in terms of their expansive size, rugged terrain, and scenic views. These parks' locations on the outskirts of developed urban areas made such broad expanses and varieties of terrain possible. Pittsburgh's late Victorian parks were not designed by landscape architects, but by city engineers, starting with Edward Bigelow in the 1890s (the City of Pittsburgh would not have a professional landscape architect on staff until Ralph Griswold in 1934). Bigelow and his successors generally followed the model of the romantic landscape parks of Frederick Law Olmsted, heavily influenced by New York's Central and Prospect Parks and adapted to the rugged topography of western Pennsylvania.<sup>20</sup> City civil engineers and horticulturalists cultivated park land and vegetation for romantic visual effect, including dramatic stonework, overlooks and vistas, open fields alternating with woods and groves of trees, fountains, and lakes.<sup>21</sup> They designed curvilinear roads to wind through this landscape, leading to and around the uplands and plateaus upon which attractions were sited. In keeping with late Victorian and Progressive-era ideals about parks, many such attractions filled the interiors of Highland, Schenley, and Riverview Parks, with buildings and structures ranging in style from rustic—such as an early picnic shelter in Allegheny Commons (no longer standing)—to elaborate, such as the Schenley Park Casino (burned 1896) and Phipps Conservatory. Often, buildings associated with previous land uses were incorporated and repurposed in the parks, such as a farmhouse in Highland Park and a chapel in Riverview. Landscapes themselves also included formal elements, such as the Highland Avenue entrance gardens at Highland Park.

Frick Park's design sought to maintain and enhance a passive, immersive woodland experience on the interior while acknowledging the desire of park users for recreational opportunities by siting facilities—chiefly ball courts, playgrounds, and two lawn bowling courts—at the park's periphery, where it abutted adjacent residential neighborhoods. Its designers took a similar approach to sequestering motorized vehicles, which had not existed when Pittsburgh's previous parks were designed and so posed a new challenge for Frick Park's landscape architects.

Evidence of their intent is found in the earliest designs for the park. Though the written materials of Lowell and Vinal and of Blum, Weldin, and Company, do not survive, some clues are found in news accounts proximate to the park's opening in 1927. On July 9 of that year, the Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce published an article noting that the first planned trail—spanning two and a half miles through Fern Hollow from the Bowling Green to Beechwood Boulevard—was soon to be constructed, along with two children's playgrounds, shelter houses, picnic tables, and locker rooms. The article further notes that while park entrances would be conveniently accessible by streetcar, many park visitors were anticipated to arrive by automobile, so that convenient access for motorists would be provided.<sup>22</sup>

In 1929, Frick Park Supervisor Harvey Crass elaborated on the accommodation of motor vehicles and recreational uses in Frick Park, characterizing playgrounds as a “side issue” to the park plan. He told the *Pittsburgh Press*,

<sup>20</sup> Eversmeyer, 8:1.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> H.W. Correll, “Frick's Woods—How City's Second Largest Park is Being Prepared to Delight Multitudes” (*Greater Pittsburgh*, July 9, 1927), NP.



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We want to keep the park just as natural and as wild as we possibly can.... It is planned for nature lovers, for people who love to ramble around in picturesque outdoors. So it is not our plan to make many automobile roads through the park. We will build only the necessary ones to bring people into the park interior. Aside from that, all other paths will be five-foot trails.<sup>23</sup>

This was carried out. Only one lane, an extension of Lancaster Avenue in Regent Square, penetrates Frick Park to access an interior parking area and trailheads.

The Frick Park gatehouses were another early indication of the park's designers' approach to connecting its landscape to visitors and to the residential neighborhoods at its edges. While hardly grandiose, their design is refined, with rooflines conveying an architectural relationship to Clayton, the Fricks' Chateausque Pittsburgh home. The stone gatehouses helped establish an urbane identity and sophisticated design vocabulary for Frick Park in its earliest era. Their locations also hint at the largely unknown structure of Lowell and Vinal's first landscape plan for the park.

Frick Park's landscape was predominantly designed and implemented by Innocenti and Webel, who worked to integrate the many miscellaneous tracts assembled by the Frick trustees throughout the 1930s into an aesthetically unified whole. Umberto Innocenti (1895-1968) and Richard Webel (1900-2000) met while working for Vitale and Geiffert and founded their own firm in Roslyn, Long Island in 1931. Childs Frick had settled in Roslyn in 1917 and might have been familiar with the firm's work or even known the partners personally. Their partnership was long and successful, lasting until Innocenti's death in 1968 (the firm is still active today). A biographical essay on Innocenti characterizes their collaboration as:

based on the contrasting talents and nearly opposite working styles of the two principals. They often worked entirely separately. Webel was the erudite, Harvard-schooled designer with a passion for drawing and a deep devotion to the orthodoxy of landscape theory and practice. Innocenti was a horticultural virtuoso whose love for the work and great skill were manifested principally on site.<sup>24</sup>

Their work together began with the design of elegant private estates, including the landscape around the guest cottage of Childs Frick's estate—named, after his childhood home, Clayton—in the 1930s and 40s. Based on this body of work, the firm gained a prestigious reputation. In the 1950s and 60s, they expanded into the campuses of corporations, colleges, and universities. Their designs were noted for strong formal geometric shapes, axial relationships, and references to the iconographies of historic European gardens, including ornamental features such as gates, balustrades, and fountains.<sup>25</sup> Frick Park was Innocenti and Webel's first large-scale municipal project, on which the firm would work until 1957.

<sup>23</sup> Harvey S. Crass in Marie McSwigan, "Frick Woods to be Transformed into City Dwellers' Paradise" (*Pittsburgh Press*, Jan. 25, 1929), NP.

<sup>24</sup> Gary R. Hilderbrand, "Umberto Innocenti" in Charles Birnbaum and Robin Karson, *Pioneers of American Landscape Design* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2000), 192.

<sup>25</sup> Cultural Landscape Foundation, "Innocenti and Webel," <https://tclf.org/pioneer/innocenti-and-webel>. Retrieved August 17, 2017.

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Innocenti and Webel's formal strengths can be seen in the Clayton Hill entrance to the park, with its axial symmetry between the elegant, Pope-designed gatehouses at Beechwood Boulevard and a fountain placed by Innocenti and Webel at the far end of a double allee of trees. Yet in most of the park, Innocenti and Webel successfully sustained a ruggedly scenic vision. They designed Frick Park's trails to draw visitors to the interior of the park, and there to foster urban dwellers' bond with nature by leading them through a picturesque, apparently unspoiled woodland interspersed with wetlands, meadows, and pastoral lawns shaded by scattered trees.

Actually, centuries of human use had already profoundly altered the natural landscape. Frick Park was assembled from a mosaic of tracts that had served as farms, forests, Native American hunting trails, Civil War fortifications, a golf course, and a grist mill. The essence of Innocenti and Webel's design was to combine these various lands into a coherent whole that effectively recreated the experience of an untouched, scenic forest.<sup>26</sup> This approach is perhaps most vividly illustrated by the deliberate reversal of the groomed country club property to meadow and woodland. Innocenti and Webel directed the demolition of the club house, re-grading of the golf course, elimination (or conversion to foot trails) of the bridle paths, and the removal of clay from the tennis courts to the park's Braddock Avenue edge, where new courts were constructed upland from passive use areas.

During the first and most productive ten years of their association with Frick Park, Innocenti and Webel worked in unique partnership with Ralph Griswold (1894-1981), an accomplished landscape architect in his own right. Griswold served as superintendent of the Pittsburgh Bureau of Parks from 1934-1945 and was the first professional landscape architect hired by the city. He had studied landscape architecture at Cornell and, under Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., for three years in Rome. He moved to Pittsburgh to establish his own private landscape architecture practice in 1927, the year Frick Park opened.

Griswold was a strong advocate for the city park system. Though his specific contributions to Frick Park are not attributed, he headed the city's parks agency during Frick Park's most active years of development, and his expertise almost certainly helped guide the park from a patchwork of miscellaneous parcels to coherent public landscape. Griswold's understanding of both landscape design and, from the civil service side, efficient management, would have helped Innocenti and Webel and the Frick trustees to make sustainable decisions for the park's future.

Timing suggests that Griswold was responsible for securing the WPA funding that supported the construction of the park's first structures, the stone gatehouses and cairn designed by John Russell Pope. He may also have been influential in the decision to restrict active recreation, automobile access, and parking to the park's edges. The protection of pedestrians and pedestrianized experiences—such as parks—from the noise, pollution, and dangers of motor vehicles was a significant concern in the 1920s and 30s. In these decades, automobile ownership became more affordable and prevalent, and professionals concerned with the built environment faced new problems of integrating demands for motorcar movement, storage, and maintenance into their designs. Griswold's work as landscape architect for Chatham Village, a park-like planned residential community in the Mt. Washington neighborhood of Pittsburgh, in the early 1930s familiarized him with the challenge of separating a tranquil landscape and its users from

<sup>26</sup> Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, 33.

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vehicular roads and parking. It is not far-fetched to suppose that the solution on Mt. Washington—restricting commercial businesses and automobiles to perimeter roadways and preserving the interiors of blocks for a landscape designed for pedestrians—may have informed the similar treatment of the issue at Frick Park. After his tenure at the City, Griswold returned to private practice and went on to design Pittsburgh’s Point State Park in the 1950s.

In the early 1960s, the respected modern firm of Simonds and Simonds left a limited but significant mark on Frick Park with one of its most popular features, the Blue Slide Playground at the park’s Riverview entrance. The location of the playground at the neighborhood edge of the park was consistent with the precedent established by Griswold and Innocenti and Webel. Beyond its location, the playground is notable for its sensitive, tiered design, such that it is highly visible from the adjacent neighborhood but lies over a ridge and out of sight of the Riverview Trail on the park’s interior. The playground is among Simonds and Simonds’ significant contributions to public landscape design in Pittsburgh during the Modern era, including Mellon Square downtown and a redesign (only partially implemented) of Allegheny Commons Park on the North Side in 1966.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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**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: Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy

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

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 538

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

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

Frick Park consists of City of Pittsburgh tax parcel 127-H-100-0-1, available from the Office of Property Assessments, 542 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15219.

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

The boundaries correspond to the historic boundaries of Frick Park during the period of significance.

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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Angelique Bamberg  
organization: Clio Consulting  
street & number: \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town: Pittsburgh state: PA zip code: 15206  
e-mail clioconsulting@me.com  
telephone: 412-956-5517  
date: April 10, 2018

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. **Key all photographs** to this map.
- Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)



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### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

Name of Property: Frick Park  
City or Vicinity: Pittsburgh  
County: Allegheny  
State: PA  
Photographer: Angelique Bamberg  
Date Photographed: Nov. 17, 2017  
Location of Original Digital Files: 233 Amber St., Pittsburgh, PA 15206

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

Photo 1 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0001)  
Tranquil Trail through Fern Hollow, camera facing south

Photo 2 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0002)  
Falls Ravine Trail, camera facing west

Photo 3 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0003)  
Nine Mile Run and Penn-Lincoln Parkway, camera facing west

Photo 4 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0004)  
Wooden footbridge over stream on Iron Grate Trail, camera facing north

Photo 5 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0005)  
Stone footbridge over stream alongside Tranquil Trail, camera facing northeast

Photo 6 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0006)  
Wooden steps from Fern Hollow to S. Braddock Ave., camera facing east

Photo 7 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0007)  
Rest room building, picnic shelter, and bulletin board at intersection of Tranquil, Falls Ravine, and Nine Mile Run Trails, camera facing southwest

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Photo 8 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0008)

Reynolds Street Gatehouse (John Russell Pope, ca. 1935), camera facing southeast

Photo 9 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0009)

Parkland landscape along Reynolds St., camera facing northwest

Photo 10 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0010)

Lawn bowling green at Reynolds St., camera facing southeast

Photo 11 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0011)

Lawn bowling shelter (1940), camera facing southeast

Photo 12 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0012)

Entrance to Homewood Trail from Reynolds St. gateway area, camera facing southeast

Photo 13 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0013)

Tranquil trail from Forbes Avenue Bridge, camera facing southeast

Photo 14 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0014)

Forbes Avenue Bridge from Tranquil Trail, camera facing north

Photo 15 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0015)

Forbes Avenue gatehouse/shelter (John Russell Pope, ca. 1935) at west end of Forbes Avenue Bridge, camera facing southeast

Photo 16 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0016)

Entrance cairn (John Russell Pope, ca. 1935) at intersection of Forbes Ave. and Beechwood Blvd., camera facing east

Photo 17 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0017)

Playground at Forbes and S. Braddock Avenues, camera facing southeast

Photo 18 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0018)

Ball field at S. Braddock Ave., camera facing south

Photo 19 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0019)

Red clay tennis courts at S. Braddock Ave., camera facing northwest

Photo 20 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0020)

Biddle Community Building at S. Braddock Ave., camera facing south

Photo 21 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0021)

Approach to Clayton Hill and Frick Environmental Center from Beechwood Blvd., camera facing north

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Photo 22 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0022)

Beechwood Blvd. gatehouses (John Russell Pope, ca. 1935) frame axial view to Clayton Hill Fountain, camera facing east

Photo 23 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0023)

View from Clayton Hill Fountain (reconstructed) back to Beechwood Blvd gatehouses; Frick Environmental Center at left, camera facing west

Photo 24 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0024)

Frick Environmental Center and amphitheater (2016), camera facing west

Photo 25 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0025)

Entrance to Clayton Loop Trail encircling Frick Woods Nature Preserve, camera facing southeast

Photo 26 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0026)

Riverview entrance and Blue Slide Playground off of Beechwood Blvd., camera facing east

Photo 27 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0027)

Riverview Trail facing back toward Beechwood Blvd.; playground hidden from view over rise in distance, camera facing southwest

Photo 28 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0028)

Riverview Trail and Mon Valley viewshed, camera facing southeast

Photo 29 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0029)

Sledding hill/bowl near Riverview entrance to park, camera facing northeast

Photo 30 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0030)

Staff residence, office, and maintenance complex on English Lane (Wolfe and Wolfe, 1959), camera facing east

Photo 31 (PA\_AlleghenyCounty\_FrickPark\_0031)

Nine Mile Run Trail, camera facing northwest

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC. et, NW, Washington, DC.

Key # \_\_\_\_\_

ER# \_\_\_\_\_

# USGS Pittsburgh East, PA



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Pittsburgh, Allegheny County

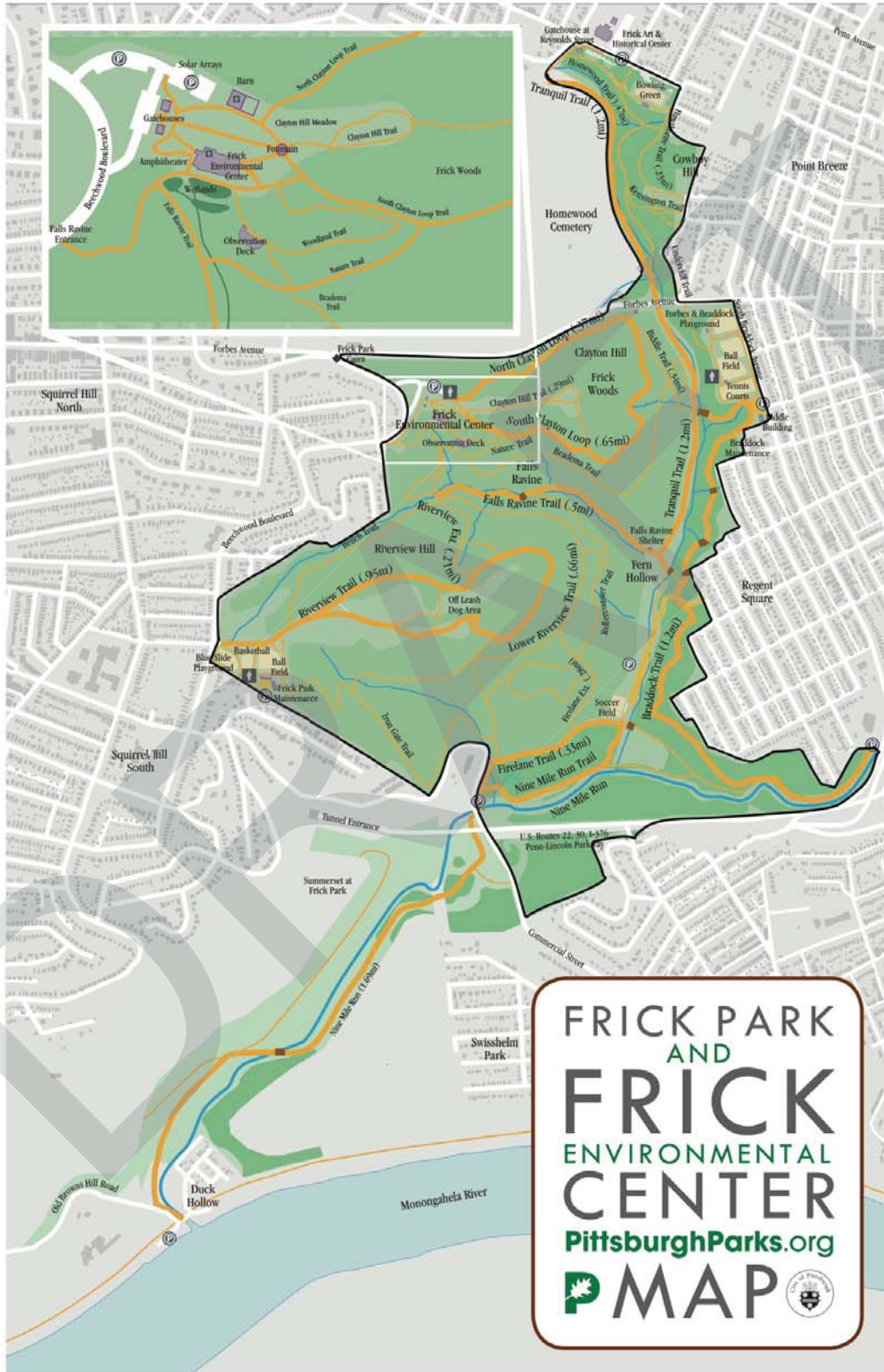


Figure 1. Frick Park Trustees' "Pictorial Map of Frick Park," 1939

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Key # \_\_\_\_\_

ER# \_\_\_\_\_



**FRICK PARK**  
AND  
**FRICK**  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
CENTER  
[PittsburghParks.org](http://PittsburghParks.org)  
**MAP**