NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM



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NAME				
HISTORIC	Slater Park Hi	storic District		
AND/OR COMMON	Slater Park			
LOCATION				
STREET & NUMBER	Armistice Boul	evard (see c	ontinuation shee	t 1)
CITY, TOWN		<u> </u>	CONGRESSIONAL DISTR	-
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	ode Island	44	Providence	007
CLASSIFIC	ATION			
CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRES	ENTUSE
	XPUBLIC	_XOCCUPIED	AGRICULTURE	X-MUSEUM
BUILDING(S)	PRIVATE	UNOCCUPIED	COMMERCIAL	X_PARK
		WORK IN PROGRESS	EDUCATIONAL	PRIVATE RESIDENC
OBJECT	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	ENTERTAINMENT	RELIGIOUS
	_IN PROCESS	YES: RESTRICTED	GOVERNMENT	SCIENTIFIC
-	REING CONSIDERED	VYED INTERATOR		
OWNER OF	BEING CONSIDERED	_XYES: UNRESTRICTED NO	INDUSTRIAL MILITARY	TRANSPORTATION OTHER:
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Slater Park is composed of nine parcels. The Pawtucket Tax Assessor's Office lists them as follows:

> ---Plat-29,-lots-2,-693---Plat 30, lot 3 Plat 31, lot 1 Plat 32, lots 2, 61

1

Plat 42, lot 3 Plat 68, lot 11 Plat 69, lot 9.

The park is principally bounded; on the north, by Armistice Boulevard; on the west, by Newport Avenue; on the south, by a line northerly of and roughly parallel to Manton Avenue; on the east, by Alexander McGregor Road.

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CON	DITION	CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE	
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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Location & Dimensions. Slater Park covers 197 acres in Pawtucket's southeastern corner. The bulk of the land (181 acres), formerly known as the Daggett farm, was purchased by the City in 1894. The acquisition of two small abutting parcels in the early twentieth century brought the park to its present size. Three small ponds comprise 8.2 acres of the total park area, and another 4.4 acres form the bed of the Ten Mile River as it flows along the park's eastern margin.

Natural Features. Located on the western edge of the Seekonk Plain, Slater Park's surface is predominantly flat, except for a knoll rising south of the central pond, and two sharp depressions just west of the park's northern entrance. The larger of these depressions was a small pond in the 1890's and, with the now-much-enlarged central pond comprised the park's initial complement of still water. A third pond was created in 1913 from a swampy area above the central pond. During the Depression this third pond was redesigned into a series of islands laid out in flower beds and linked by rustic bridges. A similar project made the northern pond into an equally elaborate moated garden. The Ten Mile River is another major feature of the park. The long narrow island created in it by cutting a channel across the neck of what had been a heavily wooded peninsula was once one of the park's chief attractions. The bridges to that island have been removed, however, and rising levels of pollution have made the river area less attractive today.

Vegetation. The vegetation which existed on the Daggett Farm in 1894 is described in an account of the park's development printed in the Providence Journal in 1912. According to this article, the original 181 acre tract was "...part swamp and part remains of a wornout farm...In its primitive state less than one-quarter of this area was open to the public. The rest was either densely wooded or so swampy that it was impossible to penetrate anywhere without sinking deep into the mud." When the park was initially developed, between 1907 and 1917, major improvements were made to this situation. All the swamp growth was removed in the process of turning the low-lying areas into ponds. The heavy underbrush on higher ground was also cleared out, while the established pines and maples were carefully preserved. At the same time, hundreds of oak and pine saplings were set out in selected areas, and grass was coaxed to grow once more on the abandoned fields. The result of these programs is a park which today displays a nearly even balance between grassy fields and open woods.

Formal garden planting was at first quite limited, being largely confined to a bed surrounding the shelter on the knoll. In the 1930's two elaborate gardens were laid out on artificial islands created in what had formerly been open ponds: the Shakespearean (now Friendship)

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Garden in the upper pond in the middle of the park; and the Sunken Garden in the small pond near the Armistice Boulevard entrance. The former was carefully planted with specimens of each of the 68 varieties of plants specifically mentioned in Shakespeare's works, and was believed to be unique in America. Directed by Park Superintendant Lawrence Corrente, the project was sponsored by the Pawtucket Rotarians as part of their International Friendship Program, and was completed in 1935.

Both of these moated gardens gradually declined through neglect until the decision was finally made in 1975 to restore them. The Shakespearean Garden was restored under the direction of former Superintendant Corrente, who came out of retirement to take on the job. In 1976-1977, Corrente will also direct the renewal of the Sunken Garden.

Beyond these two elaborate gardens, the only artificially planted areas in the park today are the triangles formed at the two park entrances and the flower beds which border the drive from Armistice Boulevard to the Daggett House.

<u>Roads and paths</u>. In 1894, the only roadway on the Daggett farm ran in a straight line from Armistice Boulevard (then Brook Street) to the house. A major project in the first years of park development was the building of a network of winding drives which opened most of the park to the driving public. At the same time, a system of paths was begun, with emphasis on walks along the river bank, the shores of the upper and lower ponds, and out across a pair of bridges to the island in the Ten Mile River.

Buildings. The most significant building in Slater Park is the Daggett House, traditionally said to have been built for John Daggett, Jr. in 1685, remodelled and/or added to in 1701, 1790, and 1840, and stabilized by the Pawtucket chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution between 1902 and 1905. As it stands today, the Daggett House is a gable-flank, five-room plan, two-and-a-half-story, plankwalled house, with an added story-and-a-half eastern wing. Internal evidence indicates that the house originally had a two-room centerchimney plan, and that it may have stood no more than a story-and-ahalf high. If this is so, it was soon rebuilt to include two full floors above grade. Some time later a second rank of rooms on both floors was added across the back. In the mid-nineteenth century a wing was erected on the east.

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An 1880 atlas shows that a cluster of seven buildings then surrounded the Daggett House. How many of these were still standing when the city bought the farm in 1894 is not known, but at least two stood into the twentieth century. A large barn was located just west of the Daggett House and was torn down in 1917; and a story-and-a-half cottage, built for the Daggetts about 1874, was remodeled in the early twentieth century to serve as the Park Superintendant's house. Plans to restore the cottage's exterior to its original appearance, while remodeling the interior into offices for the Recreation and Parks Division, have recently been approved.

Not until 1903 was any serious development of the farm as a park undertaken, and apparently no new buildings were erected for several years more. By 1909, however, the city had erected a wooden boathouse on the lake near the Daggett House (replaced in 1917) and a stuccoed shelter which still stands on the rise south of the central pond. The shelter was designed and built by the City Engineer's office and is a rectangular raised platform with open arcaded walls under a high curved hipped roof.

In 1910 the City leased a small lot just south and east of the Daggett House to John Walker of Providence, a noted carousel concessionaire. Walker quickly erected a ten-sided wooden canopy and had a merry-go-round in operation by July. The carousel at Slater Park is almost surely the work of Charles I. D. Looff, a pioneer carousel craftsman who formerly lived in East Providence. This conclusion is based on the fact that the carved figures on the Slater Park machine are virtually identical to Looff's documented work of the 1880's. This dating indicates that the carousel must have originally been installed in some other location, and that Walker moved it to Pawtucket in 1910.

Though a great success during Slater Park's early years, the flying animals and the ten-sided wooden canopy had become severely dilapidated by the late 1960's. The carousel was shut down and, in 1971, the City solicited bids for the mechanism and the figures. Local residents and civic groups, however, raised such an outcry that the City Council relented, all bids were rejected, and the most imperative repairs were made the following year. Further work must be undertaken soon, however, if the City is to effectively preserve one of the

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mere handful of carousels remaining in Rhode Island.

Nineteen seventeen marked the peak of the city's building activity at Slater Park; in that year the old Daggett barn and the original wooden bandstand were replaced by new buildings, and a new 'casino' or-'resthouse' was built on the shores of the central pond. This last building was the gift of James C. Potter, a member of the Pawtucket Park Commission since its inception, and its president since 1904. A Pawtucket architect, Robert C. N. Monahan, designed the rest house in the Colonial Revival style, with walls of red tapestry brick, and a low hipped roof covered with green Ludovici tile. Its lower floor opened to the lake and was largely given over to an 'aquatic room' to serve canoeists and skaters; the upper floor contained men's and women's lavatories at the ends, separated by a wide 'rest room' finished in oak and furnished with easy chairs and popular magazines.

At the opposite end of the pond from the Potter Casino, the new bandstand was erected a short distance out from the northern shore. Of granolithic composition construction, the bandstand is in the form of a circular open temple, 24' in diameter, with ten columns carrying a steel dome and tile roof. The dome's underside is sheathed in quartered oak, and the temple's frieze carries the names of ten famous composers. The location of the new bandstand, and the layout of the paths leading to it, were determined in consultation with John C. Olmsted, nephew and former partner of the more famous Frederick Law Olmsted.

In the same building campaign of 1917, the old barn which had stood just north and west of the Daggett House was torn down. Its replacement, a long, single-story building with stucco and half-timber walls shaded by the wide eaves of a low hipped roof, was then crected in a far corner of the park.

The erection of the last major park building, the greenhouse, was also made possible by the generosity of James Potter. Constructed of steel and glass, the greenhouse was set up behind the Park Superintendant's cottage in 1925. Since that date, building activity in the park has been limited to the construction of a series of small concreteblock animal houses and concession stands for the new zoo in the late 1950's, a pair of concrete-block rest rooms in the picnic area along the river, and a small metal-roofed pavilion near the bandstand. In addition, the city erected a firehouse on park land on Newport Avenue

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in 1948, but this is more an encroachment into the park then a devel-

Recreational Facilities. Provision of facilities for both active and passive forms of recreation has always been an objective in Slater Park's development. The first athletic field was laid out in the park in 1905 and, by 1916, the park was provided with several tennis courts, a cricket field, a cinder track, and a baseball diamond. For those who wished a less strenuous form of recreation, boats were available for hire on the pond, the river was open to canoeists, and a wading pool and cluster of swings and see-saws were located near a shady picnic grove. For wintertime recreation, equipment was acquired in 1910 to make the pond suitable for skating.

Some of these early recreational facilities, including the wading pool, cricket field, and cinder track, have long since disappeared. Others, however, have been maintained and expanded. The park's complement of tennis courts is presently eight; and the original ballfield is now but one of a large group of athletic fields, the newer additions being located in the park's southwestern corner.

Quite early in Slater Park's development a small collection Zoo. of animals was put on display just across the drive from the Daggett House. In 1916 this miniature zoo contained only pigeons, rabbits, monkeys, and deer; the three former being kept in as many small houses, while the deer roamed in a fenced run. A small herd of elk were in residence by 1936 but not until the late 1950's were any really exotic animals added to the park's menagerie. At that time some of the deer were traded for a lion, a leopard, an Arctic wolf, a baboon, two aoudads, and some monkeys. A series of concrete-block shelters with fenced runs was constructed on the knoll to house the new arrivals and others soon to be purchased from the Ringling Brothers, Barnum & Bailey Circus. An arrangement was made with the circus to quarter all of their animals in the Pawtucket zoo for eleven months of the year, but this has since been terminated. Today, the Recreation and Parks Division is going ahead with plans drawn by Ecodesign of Cambridge, Massachusetts, to modernize the zoo facilities and to provide its inhabitants a more natural environment.

Monuments. The most notable monument in Slater Park is the Cogswell Fountain, located in the triangle at the Newport Avenue entrance. Its shaft of polished gray granite once bore aloft a bronze

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stork while pure water gushed from the carved figures at each side of its triangular base. The fountain was presented to the citizens of Pawtucket and Central Falls by Dr. Henry D. Cogswell in 1880, and was originally set up in front of the Miller Block at the corner of Main and Mill Streets, (now Main Street and Roosevelt Avenue). The fountain was relocated to Oak Grove Cemetery for a brief period before it was finally transferred to Slater Park about 1907. At the other entrance to the park, on Armistice Boulevard, a fountain and waiting bench of composition stone were erected in 1933. Besides these two fountains, a number of small war memorials are located within the park. The most notable of these are the ones erected by the Helpmates Club in 1939 to honor Pawtucket's World War I dead, and by Clan Fraser in 1945 to the memory of clan members killed in the two World Wars.

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by the ladies of the Pawtucket chapter of the D.A.R., who volunteered to repair the dilapidated Daggett farmhouse if the city would build a passable road to it. The proposition bore immediate fruit; the Daggett House was stabilized by the D.A.R. in the following three years (apparently without any outside assistance) and the new driveway became the first step in a major city program to open the entire area of the Park to the public.

The early development of Slater Park was largely directed by three men: the City Engineer, George Carpenter; the president of the Park Commission, James C. Potter; and the first Park Superintendant, George Saunders. The most influential of the three was probably Saunders, who was described in the previously-mentioned Providence Journal article of 1912 as "...a mechanical engineer who was an enthusiast on the subject of playgrounds for the people." It was Saunders' avowed intention to make of Slater Park a place where all of Pawtucket's citizens, regardless of class, could find a place to engage in a wide variety of active or passive recreations. His success is attested by newspaper accounts of the literally thousands of people who flocked to the park on summer Sundays; some to enjoy the scenery, others to play on one of the courts or fields. Many brought picnic lunches and settled on the grass to listen to the afternoon band concerts--all came to relax from the tensions of life in the city.

Slater Park, like most parks in America's burgeoning nineteenth century industrial cities, provided a major recreational outlet for the urban working class. Once a week the laborer and his family could escape the crowded factories and tenements in the heart of the city and ride the trolley out to the recreational facilities and more natural environment of the large public parks. The decision to create such a park on the old Daggett Farm is an indication that the image most Pawtucket residents held of their community at the turn of the century was no longer that of a small-scale manufacturing village; rather, it was one of a major industrial city. In this sense, Slater Park is one mark of Pawtucket's coming of age as a community.

The Daggett House, set into a rise just north of the park's central pond, is Slater Park's architectural and historic focus. It is the only 17th century structure today surviving in Pawtucket and one of only four buildings in the city which can be definitely dated before 1800. Tradition holds that it was built in 1685 for John Daggett, Jr., near the site of his father's house. (That first Daggett

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dwelling, like most others in this area, is said to have been destroyed during King Philip's War.) The "new" Daggett House is supposed to have passed by inheritance in 1707 from its original owner to his eldest surviving son, Joseph Daggett, a doctor of medicine, a wheelwright, and a miller. The farm was presumably inherited by Joseph's son Israel, a cooper, in 1727.

Upon Israel Daggett's death in 1777, the homestead is thought to have passed to the eldest surviving son, William; from William it passed by probate in 1819 to his three eldest sons William, John, and Abel.* William's only daughter Amey was given the use and improvement of one lower room and one chamber in the house, and a right in the cellar and cellar kitchen. The three sons partitioned the estate in 1830, John and Abel taking the house and the land immediately surrounding. John's portion was sold at auction to his sister Amey after his death in 1842; Abel willed her his share one year later.

Amey Daggett shared the farm with her niece Hannah and Hannah's family, willing it to Hannah in 1855. Hannah's husband Jefferson Daggett and his eldest son, Edwin O. Daggett, continued to farm the property at least until 1870, when Jefferson died. The family seems to have been fairly well off until that time, for assessors' records during the middle years of the century show that besides the land, buildings, and small stock of horses, swine and cattle, Amey and Jefferson Daggett usually had between \$2000 and \$3000 either invested in bank stock or out at interest. Family fortunes seem to have declined following Jefferson's death and the description of the property as a "wornout farm" when purchased by the city in 1894 would indicate that its last years as a farm were probably lean ones.

While the Daggett House appears today as a seemingly typical Rhode Island five-room-plan dwelling with an added wing, it is evident from within that the building achieved that form only after a long and complicated evolution. The only visible evidence for the first step in that evolution is to be found in the cellar, where the remains of a stone chimney base, and the very carefully finished (though unchamfered) summerbeam and joists for the first floor can still be seen.

*According to Grieve's Illustrated History of Pawtucket, Central Falls and Vicinity, William's fourth son Simeon was a practical millwright who is said to have designed and built most of Pawtucket's early textile mills, including the original Slater mill of 1793. Simeon can be presumed to have grown up on the Daggett farm.

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Also visible here are the doubled sills with the ends of the vertical wall planks projecting between. This defines the back wall of the original house, a house only one room deep. That this original oneroom-deep house may not have stood higher than a single story, or a story-and-a-half, is suggested by the very rough character of the exposed framing in the two second-floor front chambers, the only rooms in the house where the framing remains uncased. In the western chamber, two heavily-shouldered interior posts are exposed; in the eastern, the summerbeam (running from end girt to chimney girt), the plates, and the girts are visible. These second-story timbers all display a rudeness of finish which stands in sharp contrast to the careful treatment of the beams in the cellar.

The later eighteenth century brought the addition of the second rank of rooms across the back wall of the now two-story house, and the rebuilding of the chimney stack in brick. Elements of Georgian and, later, Federal trim were used to modernize the front rooms, producing an interior more in keeping with the now-18th-century character of the house form. A final remodeling of about 1840 accounts for the front staircase which spirals upward around a Doric column, the mantelpieces of the eastern front rooms, and the addition of the projecting entry porch and eastern kitchen wing.

All in all, the Daggett House presents a picture of growth extending over a period of some two hundred years, a picture amplified and given color by the collection of antique furniture and furnishings with which the D.A.R. has endowed it. Its location within Slater Park adds a dimension of historical and architectural interest to the park, while the park, in turn, maintains an uncrowded and well-kept setting for the house. Each profits from and enhances the other. Together they provide a valuable resource for the citizens of Pawtucket.

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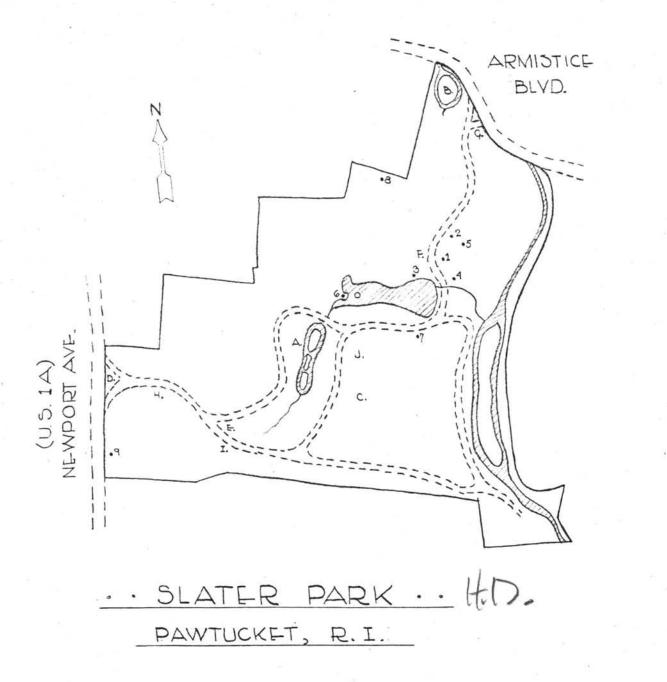
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Clarke, George C. "The Old	Daggett House."	Pawtucket Magazine,				
Vol. 1 No. 3, Sept. 1923, p	. 154	<u>.</u>		uation sheet 10		
10 GEOGRAPHICAL DAT ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY UTM REFERENCES						
	0 16 3 7 2 2 0		310,58,0,0 EASTING 30,57,60			
LIST ALL STATES AND COU	NTIES FOR PROPERTIES	3 OVERLAPP	ING STATE OR COUNT	Y BOUNDARIES		
STATE	CODE	COUNTY		CODE		
STATE	CODE	COUNTY		CODE		
	er, Senior Survey	y Special	List			
Rhode Island Historical Pre	eservation Commis	ssion	- ,	oril, 1976		
STREET & NUMBER			TELEPHO	^{DNE} 01-277-2678		
150 Benefit Street	<u> </u>		STATE			
Providence	• 			hode Island		
12 STATE HISTORIC PR						
THE EVALUATE	ED SIGNIFICANCE OF TH	IIS PROPERT				
NATIONAL	STATE	<u></u>	LOCAL	<u>×</u>		
As the designated State Historic Preser hereby nominate this property for inclu criteria and procedures set forth by the FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE	usion in the National Reg					
TITLE State Historic Pres	servation Office	 r	DATE /	April 30, 1976		
FOR NPS USE ONLY				T		
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PRO	PERTY IS INCLUDED IN	THE NATION	AL REGISTER			
			DATE	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·		
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLO ATTEST:	GY AND HISTORIC PRES	SERVATION	DATE	×		
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGIS	TER CAR	×. • •	·			

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2. SUPERINTENDANT'S HOF. 3. POTTER CASINO 4. CAROUSEL 5. GREENHOUSE G. BANDSTAND 7. SHELTER 8. BARN 9. FIRE STATION OTHER FEATURES .. A. FRIENDSHIP GARDEN B. SUNKEN GARDEN C. 200 D. COGSWELL FOUNTAIN E. W.W.I. MEMORIAL F. CLAN FRAJER MEMORIAL G. WAITING BENCH H. MCINTYRE MEMORIAL I. CODIMINI MEMORIAL J. WAR MEMORIAL 1000' 2000

BUILDINGS . .

1. DAGGETT HOUSE

R. I. H. P. C. 20 OCTOBER 1975 S. J. R. DEL.

24

Slater Park Historic District

Pawtucket, Rhode Island

Stephen J. Roper

October 1975

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

Site plan



Friendship Garden (Shakespearean Garden). Slater Park

Historic District

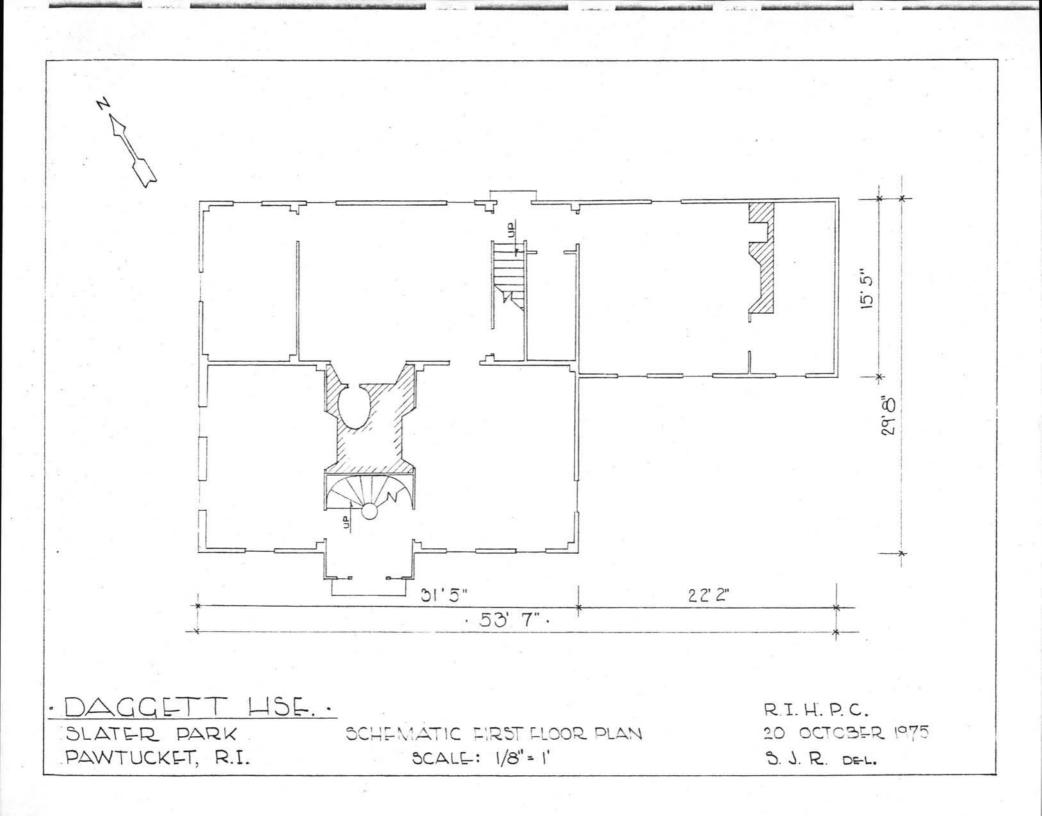
Pawtucket, Rhode Island

Stephen J. Roper

October 1975

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

Looking southward from the northern end of the garden. SP 2



Daggett House. Slater Park Historic District

Pawtucket, Rhode Island

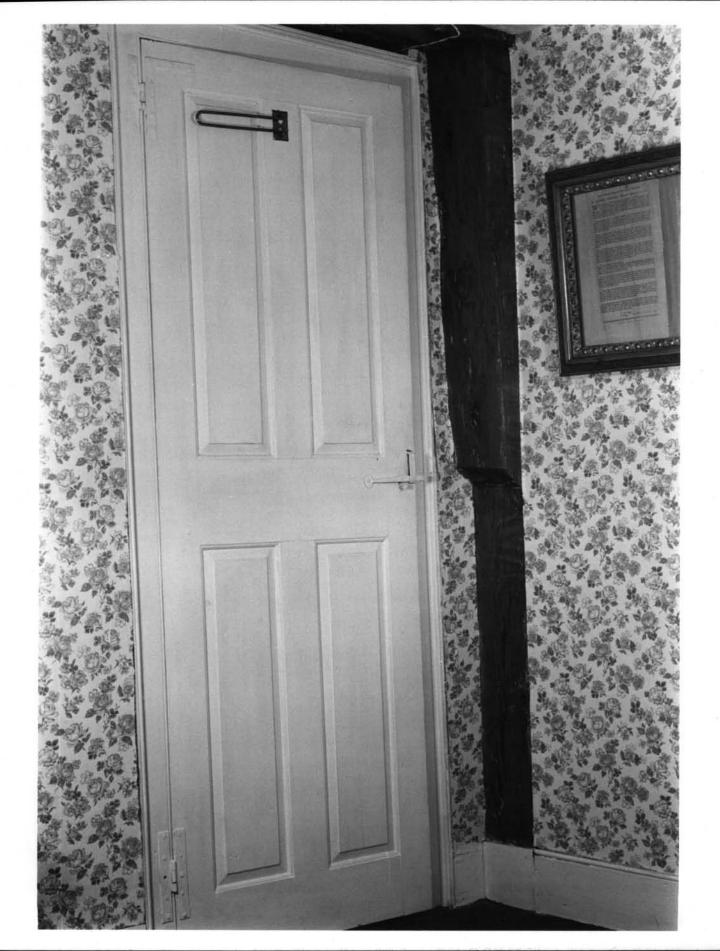
Stephen J. Roper

October 1975

Sales and and and a second second

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

Schematic first floor plan



Daggett House. Slater Park Historic District Pawtucket, Rhode Island Stephen J. Roper December 1975 Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission Intermediate post, southeast corner of front room, second floor, west side



Carousel canopy. Slater Park Historic District Pawtucket, Rhode Island

Stephen J. Roper

December 1975

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

Carousel canopy from south



Potter Rest House. Slater Park Historic District Pawtucket, Rhode Island Stephen J. Roper December 1975 Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

Rest house from southern shore of the pond, facing north SP 7



Bandstand. Slater Park Historic District

Pawtucket, Rhode Island

Stephen J. Roper

October 1975

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

Bandstand from southeast across pond.

