⊼orm 10-300 (July 1969) UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

Rhode Island

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FOR NPS USE ONLY

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Wilcox Park is located in the heart of Westerly, Rhode Island. To the west is the central business district. North, east and southeast is the residential area. To the south is the town's civic center where public and

institutional buildings are concentrated.

Wilcox Park was founded by Harriet Hoxie Wilcox in 1898. It occupies the greater part of an irregular block bounded by High Street, Broad Street, Granite Street and Grove Avenue (see site plan) The Olmstead firm of Boston, founded by Frederick Law Olmstead who revolutionized urban park planning with designs for parks and park systems from Boston to San Francisco, designed Wilcox Park. It is a grassy valley crossed by meandering paths and accented by specimen trees and shrubs. Originally Babcock Brook coursed through the park; the stream has been diverted into an underground conduit for many years. A high knoll on the northeast edge of the park screens it from the rear of commercial buildings facing High Street. Informal scenic Wilcox Park contains a small pond, caretaker's cottage. band stand, and an interesting restroom building built into the knollside. Where the park fronts on High Street and Grove Avenue it is ringed by a field stone wall. Four commerative monuments are located on the park's statues of Christopher Columbus and a Spanish American War periphery: soldier, a World War I Memorial, and a fountain dedicated to the park's benefactoress and her husband, Samuel Wilcox.

Among the structues on lots abutting Wilcox Park are several of particular note. The Memorial and Public Library (1892, "C" on the site plan), the work of Hurd and Longstatt of Bridgeport, Connecticut, is a buff brick structure in the Richardsonian Romanesque manner. It was built and endowed in large part with funds provided by Samuel Wilcox. The Post Office (1913-14, "B") designed by James Knx Taylor, a suave neo-classical building, is already a National Register property. At 67-67½ High Street ("A") is a three story commercial block with an engaging cast iron facade. Contiguous with the park's northeast extremity is a group of modest but appealing Greek Revival and late XIX century houses facing High Street and Grove Avenue.

On the hillside east and southeast of Wilcox Park is a long-established residential area. On Grove Avenue, Granite and Elm Streets is a linkage of domestic structures representative of Westerly houses constructed over the span of 200 years. Despite this long history, they present a well integrated architectural progression, and suggest eras of Westerly's greatest prosperity and growth. At 16 and 18 Granite Street ("K") stand two small story and a half dwellings typical of Westerly area houses of the early XVIII century. On the opposite side of Granite Street and continuing down Elm as far as School Street is a series of thirteen substantial Greek Revival structures erected between 1830 and 1850. The late Victorian era is represented by the large mansard roofed houses at 22 and 24-26 Elm Street ("H"), and the massive Gothic Revival dwelling on the corner of Elm and School Streets ("I"). 15 Granite Street ("J") and 38 Grove Avenue ("L") are in the Shingle Style of the 1880's and 90's. Pattern book architecture of the late XIX and early XX centuries is illustrated by the row of houses on the east side of Grove Avenue. They form the eastern background for Wilcox Park.

South of the park is a complex of public buildings which establish an

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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7. Description (continued)

impressive skyline. Christ Church (1891-1905, "F"), designed by Henry M. Congdon of New York and built of grey Westerly granite, has a fine spire. It exemplifies the Episcopalian variety of English Rural Gothic. The Westerly Town Hall and Court House (1912, "E") by William R. Walker and Sons of Providence, also of local stone, has a colossal Ionic frontispiece. Its smooth-faced granite trim is set off against quarry-faced walls. The old Westerly Town Hall (1874, "D") is a two story brick building set on a high granite podium. Its tall clock tower is a local landmark. Together with the Post Office and Library on the park side of Broad Street, and the former Christian Church (c. 1845, "G"), these buildings create a compact civic center. Wilcox Park plays a major role in producing the distinctive character of this area.

The Wilcox Park District includes the entire block in which Wilcox Park is located, and structures adjacent to and in the vicinity of the park on Granite, Broad, Elm and Union Streets, and Newton and Grove Avenues. Buildings here are in good condition and are well preserved (see site plan for lot numbers).

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Early in 1898 the Rowse Babcock estate in Westerly, Rhode Island was put up for sale. The estate comprised 18½ acres of prime land. By size and siting this was an ideal location for a park and the suggestion was made that the town buy the land for that purpose. The taxpayers of Westerly, in a special town meeting held August 23, 1898, voted the proposal down 156 to 93. Spurred to action by this shortsighted act, a wealthy and public-spirited local citizen, Helen Hoxie Wilcox, purchased the Babcock estate and established Wilcox Park. Subsequently she endowed a private foundation to develop and maintain the park property for the benefit of the people of Westerly. Wilcox Park is the most handsome and best cared for park in southern Rhode Island, and illustrates the scenic park planning concepts espoused by the Olmstead firm, the most prominent landscape firm in the country at the close of the XIX century.

Residential streets and public buildings adjacent to Wilcox Park are included in this nomination because of their close relationship with the park and their own integrity, local historical significance and architectural quality. The Greek Revival structures on Granite and Elm Streets are particularly remarkable as a concentration of buildings representing the architectural tastes of Westerly's first great era of prosperity—the decades of the 1830's and 40's when local textile manufacture and granite quarrying were developed. Representative buildings of both earlier and later periods lend historic scope and variety to this residential area.

Eight buildings in the Wilcox Park District are important as focal design elements in the Westerly townscape. The intersections bordering the park have "T" and "Y" configurations. Thus buildings at the head of entering streets are experienced as visual termini or pivot points, closing vistas or establishing fixed axes around which traffic flows. Key buildings functioning in this monumental fashion are: the Post Office ("B" the Library ("C"), the former Christian Church, now the "Colonial Building of Christ Church" ("G"), Christ Church ("F"), 15 and 16 Granite Street ("I" and "J"), and 67-67% and 106 High Street ("A" and "M").

Wilcox Park acts as a buffer, an aesthetically rewarding transitional area between the citified bustle of Westerly's business district, a still vital residential neighborhood, and the area in which the town's public buildings are clustered. The park also acts as a hub, welding these areas into a cohesive urban core. Wilcox, and the structures which surround it give Westerly a certain amplitude of scale and amenity, a tone of long established and untarnished gentility. They create for the town an urbane and visually effective civic identity.

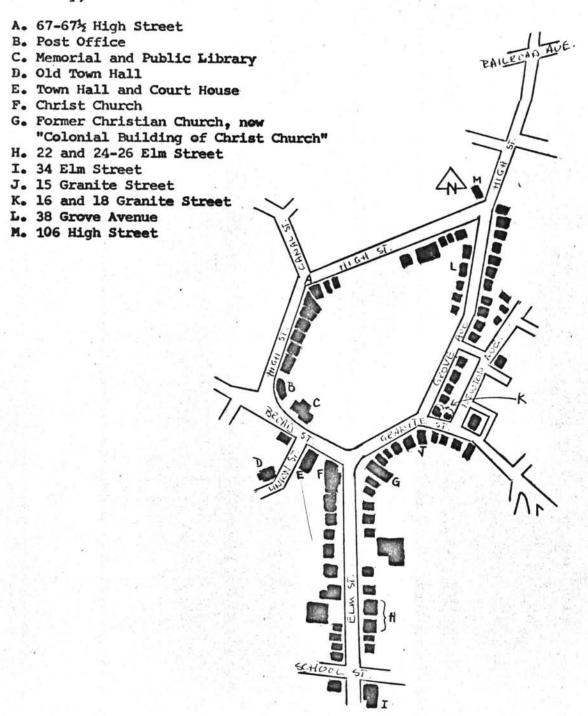
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D.W. Chase, Survey Director	DATE
Rhode Island Historical Preservation	on Commission 25 January
STREET AND NUMBER:	on Commitssion
52 Power Street	STATE CODE
CITY OR TOWN:] 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
Providence	Rhode Island 02906 44
STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION	NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION
As the designated State Liaison Officer for the Na-	
tional Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law	I hereby certify that this property is included in the
	National Register.
89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion	
, in the National Register and certify that it has been	
evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set	
forth by the National Park Service. The recommended	Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
level of significance of this nomination is:	
National State Local	
The State of the s	Date
Name	- ATTEST:
the state of the s	ALLESI.
I have been a supplied to the	
Title	
	Keeper of The National Register
	Weehet of The Mandial Washing
	Date

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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Site Plan Wilcox Park District Westerly, Rhode Island



The following lots are in the Wilcox Park District: Plat 58, lots 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 13A, 14, 15, 16, 199, and 16A and 69 to a line back 200' from and parallel to the east side of Elm Street; Plat 60, lots 1, 1A, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 85, 89, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 112A, 112B, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 129A, 130, 172, 173A, 174, 174A, 174B, 175, 176, 177, 178, 178A, 179, 180, 181, and 182; Plat 62, lots 90A, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 149A, 150, 150A, 155, 156, 157, 158, and 159.

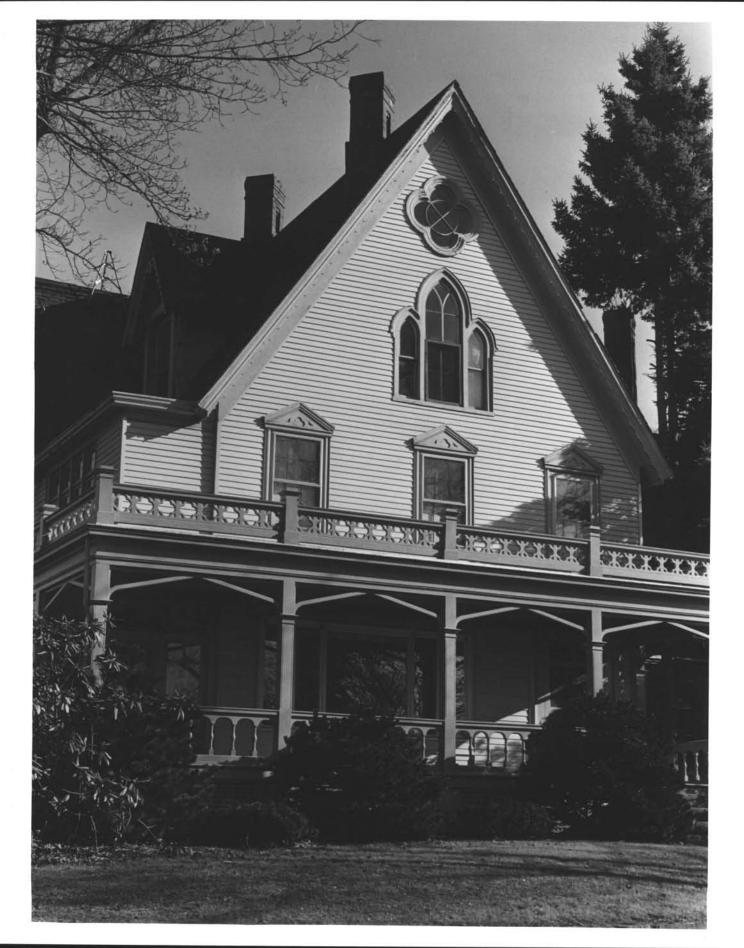
Form 10-301 (July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY MAP FORM

Rhode Island	
COUNTY	
Washington	
FOR NPS USE ON	LY
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map)		map)	ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

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PHOTO CRESTI		R.I. Hist. Pres. Comm.
David Chase	November 1972	52 Power Street
4. IDENTIFICATION		Providence, R. I.
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.		

34 Elm Street, large Gothic Revival house (c.1865), view from northwest.



FORM 10-301 A (6/72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

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View south from Wilcox Park

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

across Broad Street showing the masonry Westerly Town Hall and Court House (1912), William Waller & Sons, architects; in distance, the brick Old Westerly Town Hall (1874); east end of the Memorial and Public Library.



DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

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PHOTO CREDIT	DATE	R. I. Hist. Pres. Comm.
_David Chase	November 1972	52 Power Street
4. IDENTIFICATION		Providence, R. I.

Wilcox Park, view of restroom building (c.1900) from northeast.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

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4. IDENTIFICATION	1 HOVEHOLL 1972	Providence, R. I.

View from Wilcox Park south to intersection of Granite, Broad and Elm Streets; Greek Revival homes along Elm Street, and Christ Church (1891-1905), Henry M. Congdon, architect.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

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Wilcox Park, view of northwest corner of park from southeast showing late nineteenth century houses on Granite Avenue. southeast corner from northwest?



FORM 10-301 A (6/72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

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3. PHOTO REFERENCE	November 1972	R.I. Hist. Pres. Comm. 52 Power St. Providence, R.I.	

Memorial and Public Library (1892), Hurd and Longstatt, architects; view from southwest showing west and south (principle) elevations.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

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Wilcox Park, view across pond from southeast, showing caretaker's cottage and carriage house, rear of High Street commercial buildings.



FORM 10-301 A (6/72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

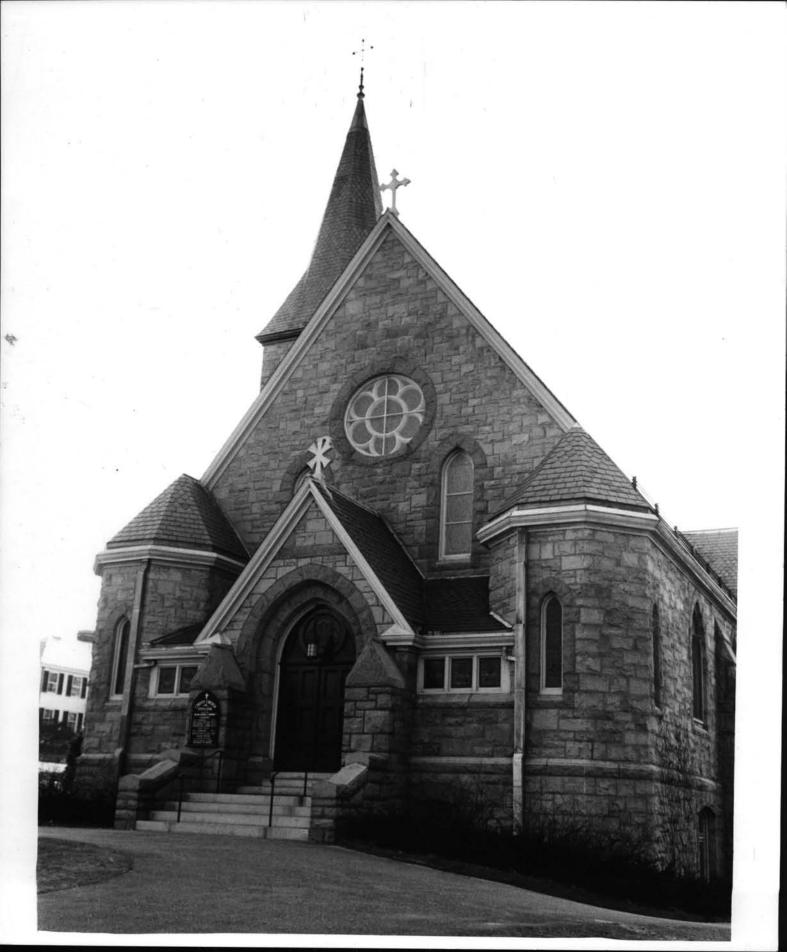
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

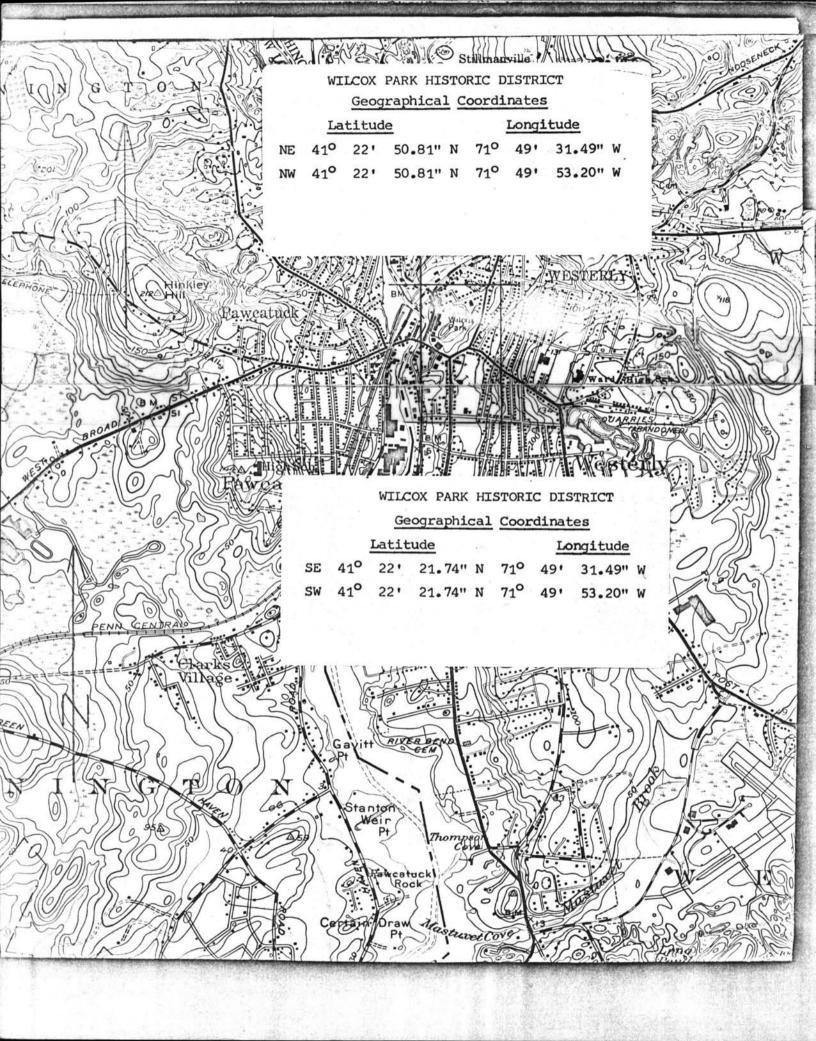
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David Chase	November 1972	52 Power St.
4. IDENTIFICATION		Providence, R. I.
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.		

117 Elm Street, Greek Revival House (c.1845), view from southwest.





Form No. 10-301 Rev. 7-72

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACE PROPERTY MAP FORM

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Rhode Island	
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FOR NPS USE O	NLY
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COMMON: Wilcox Park Historic Dist	rict		
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CITY OR TOWN: Westerly	7		
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