

# Cultural Landscape / History

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## **Pre-History**

## **Pre-European Settlement**

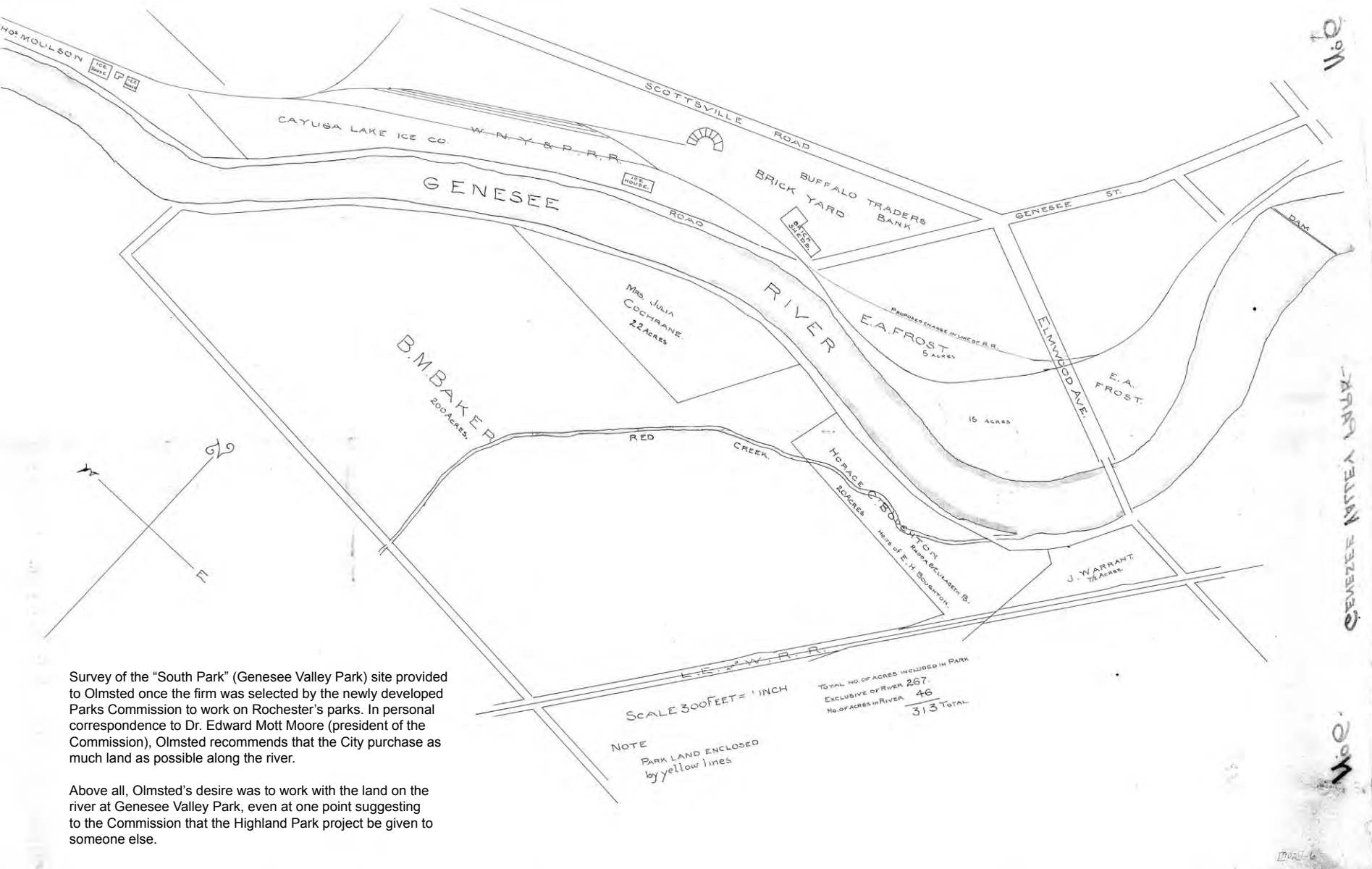
## **1870s Settlement / Genesee Valley Canal Era**

## **1890s Olmsted / Parks Commission** (GVP “Pleasure Ground”)

## **1900-1929 “Reform Park” Era**

## **1930-1965 “Recreation Park” Era**

## **1970+ Contemporary Park / Recreation**



**c.1888**

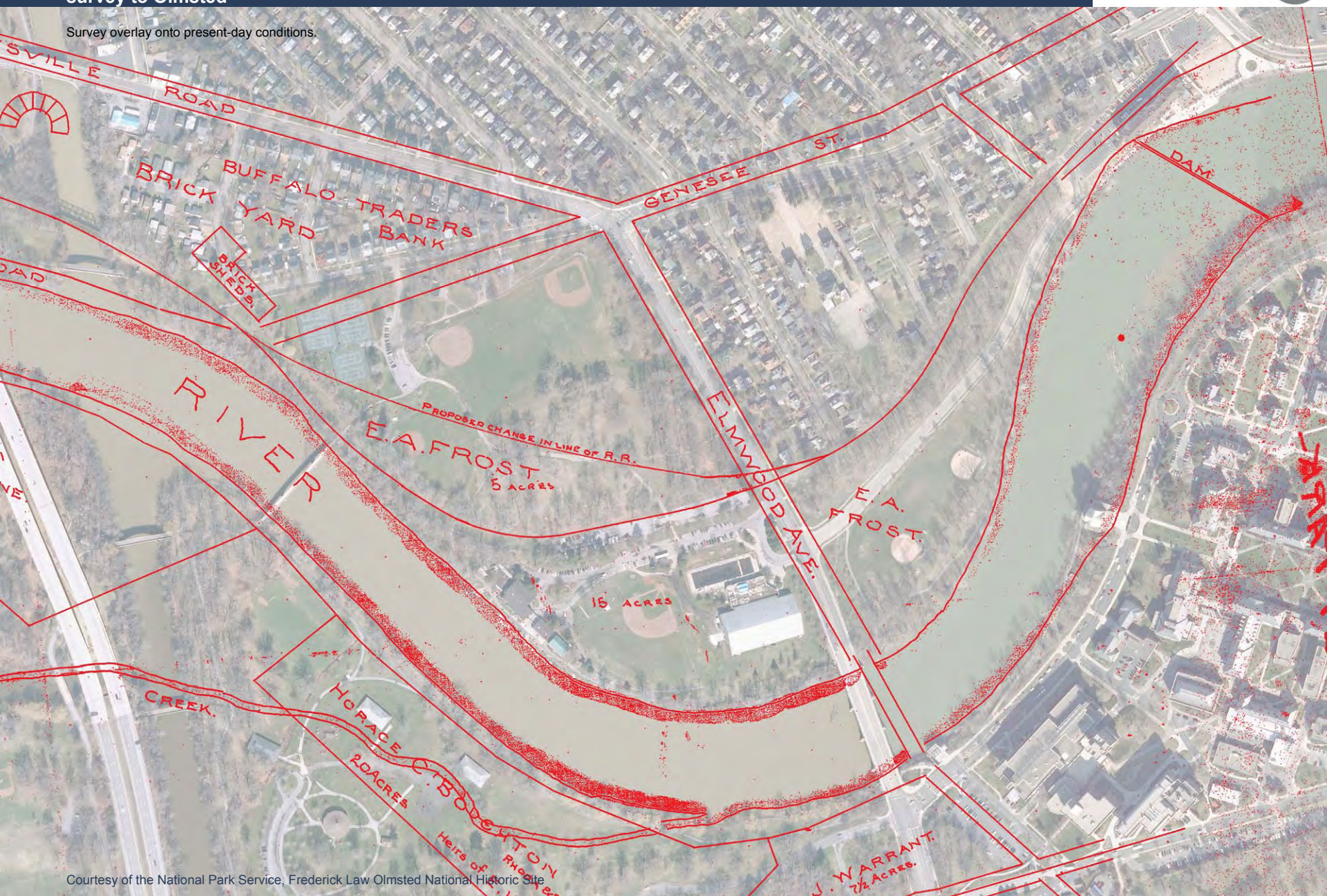
survey to Olmsted

Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site



# c.1888 survey to Olmsted

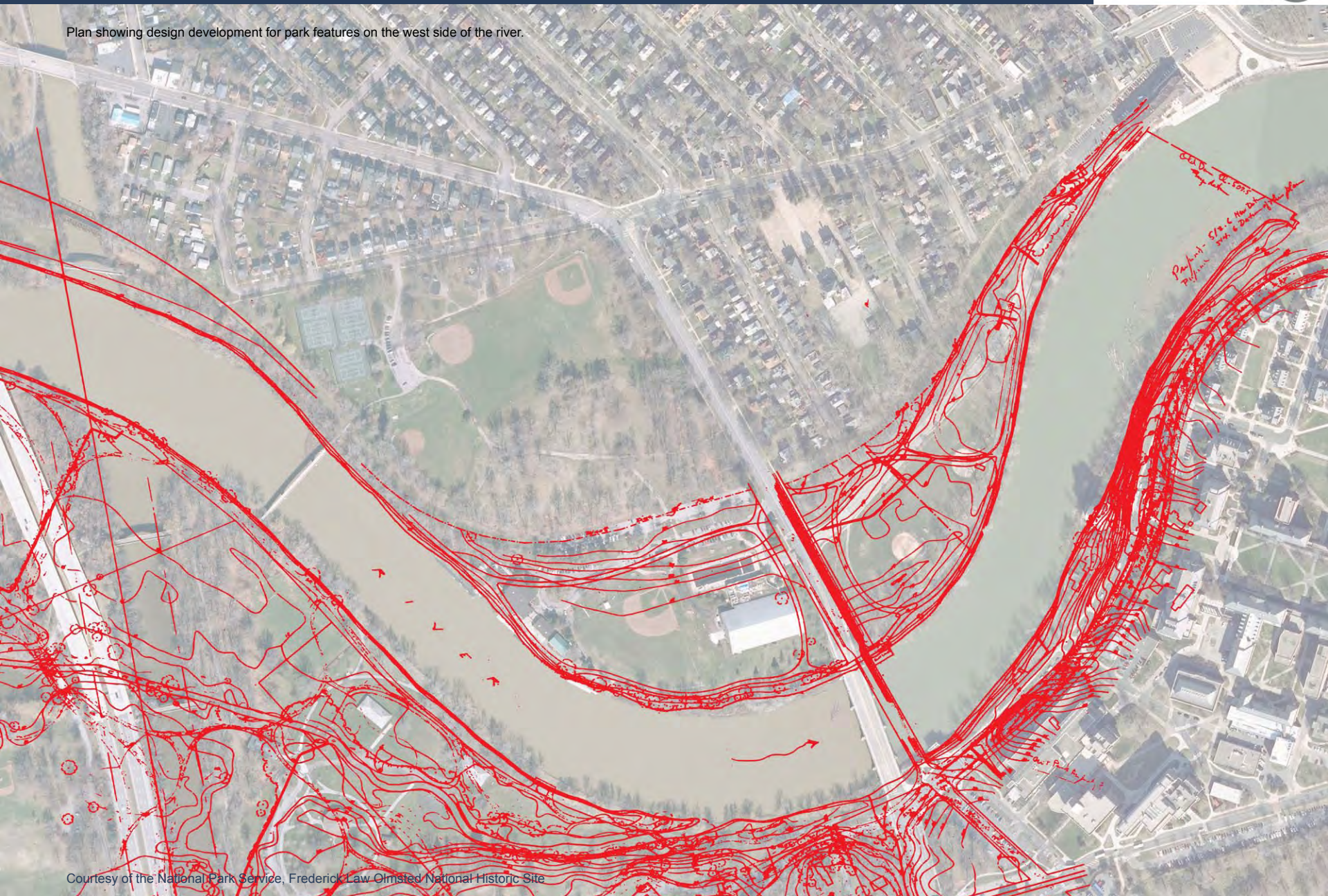
Survey overlay onto present-day conditions.



Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site

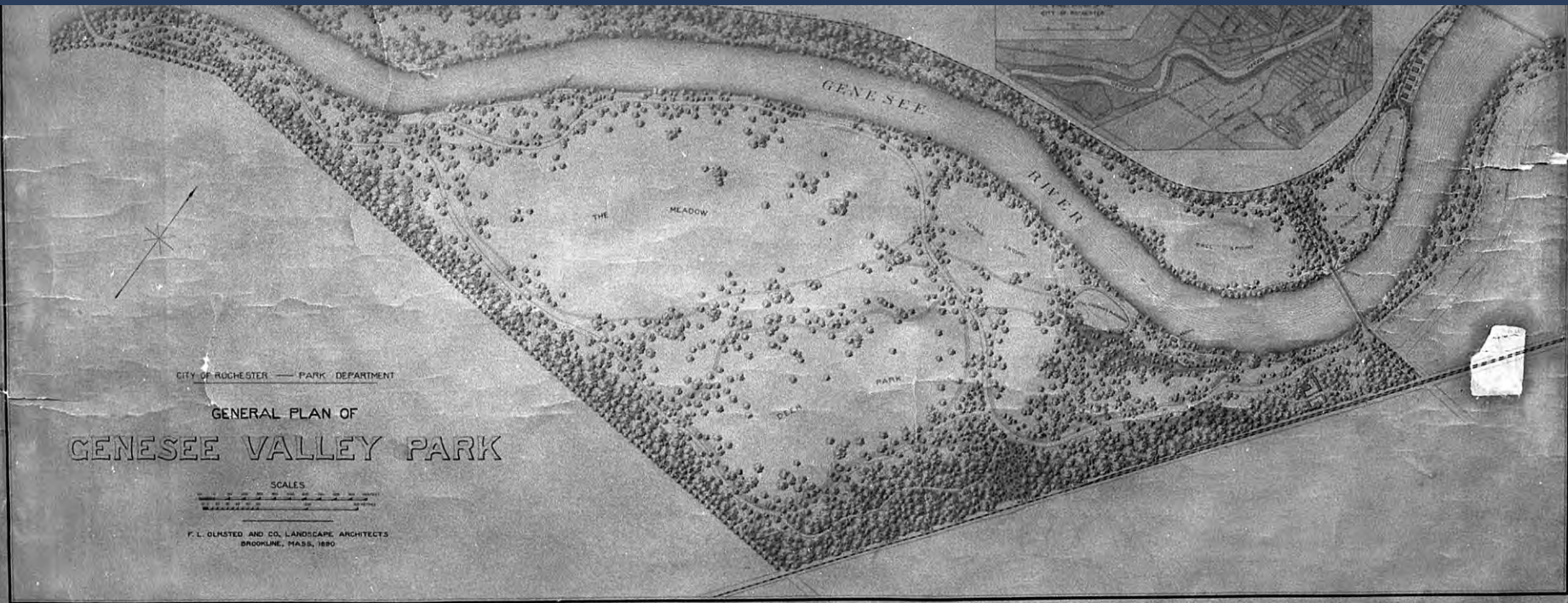


Plan showing design development for park features on the west side of the river.



Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site





For the western "recreational" component of the planned Genesee Valley park, the 1890 General Plan included ball fields south of Elmwood Avenue and clustered the high-intensity recreational infrastructure (such as boat houses, track and field sports and other structures) north of Elmwood. This arrangement was meant to preserve the wide river plain vistas of the pastoral river plain - experienced both east and west across the Genesee River.

The idea is consistent with Olmsted's design principles, including promoting the soothing pastoral experience, management of views and the subordination of individual park elements to the overall broader design.

Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site





Enlargement of 1890 General Plan showing intended uses of the western bank of the river, including ball fields south of Elmwood and more intense recreational facilities north of Elmwood.

Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site





The General Plan included landscape treatment for areas as far south as the present-day City limits. The wider meadow area on the western side of the river (top) is the present-day location of the Monroe County / City of Rochester Police / Fire Training Facility.

Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site

CITY OF ROCHESTER — PARK DEPARTMENT



1890  
JULY

working drawing  
(athletic grounds and boat facilities, north of Elmwood Ave)

0' 100' 200' 300' 400'

NORTH



Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site







1892  
MAY

# plan showing proposed location of athletic grounds

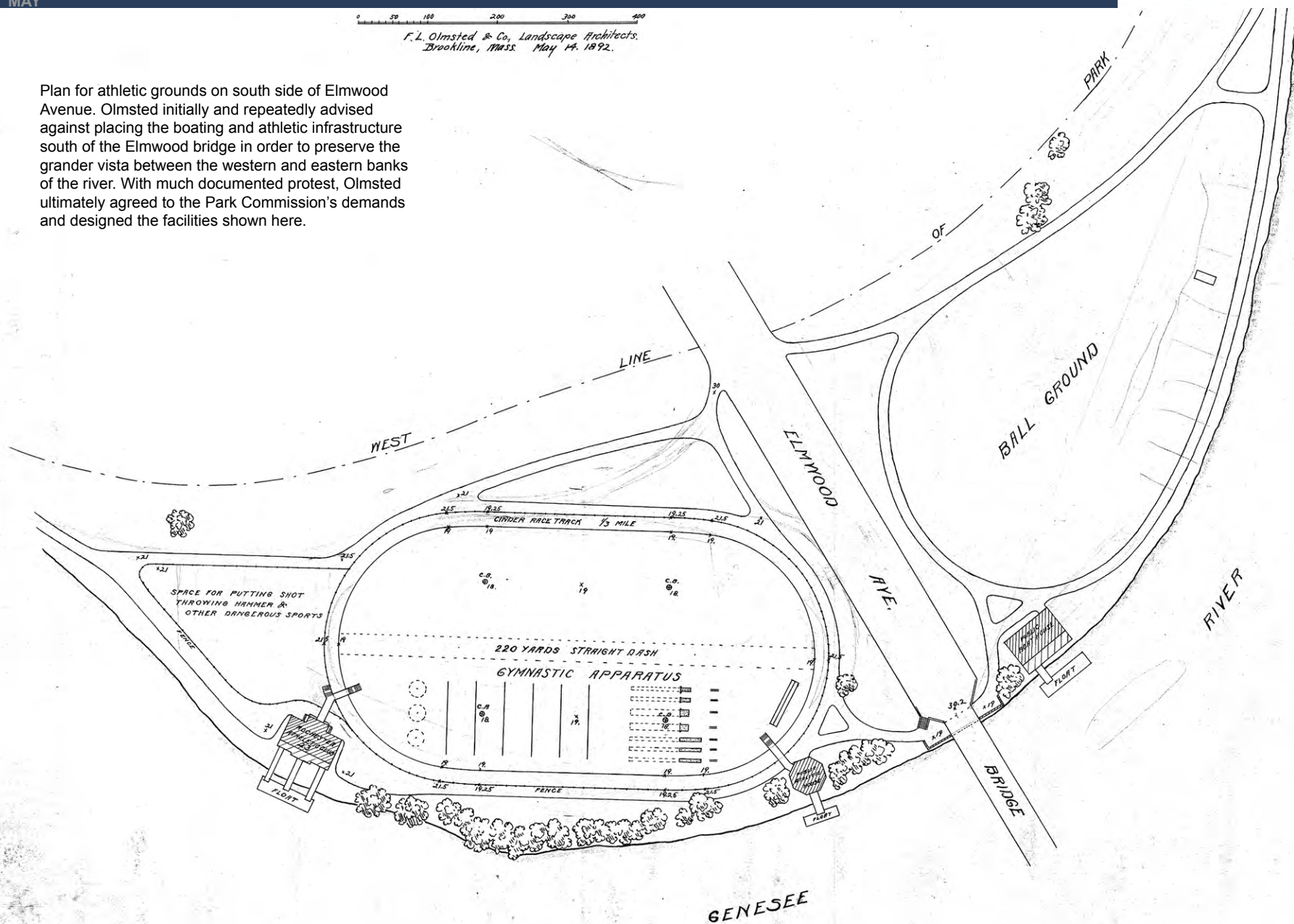
0' 100' 200' 300' 400'

NORTH

0 50 100 200 300 400

F.L. Olmsted & Co., Landscape Architects.  
Brookline, Mass. May 14, 1892.

Plan for athletic grounds on south side of Elmwood Avenue. Olmsted initially and repeatedly advised against placing the boating and athletic infrastructure south of the Elmwood bridge in order to preserve the grander vista between the western and eastern banks of the river. With much documented protest, Olmsted ultimately agreed to the Park Commission's demands and designed the facilities shown here.



Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site

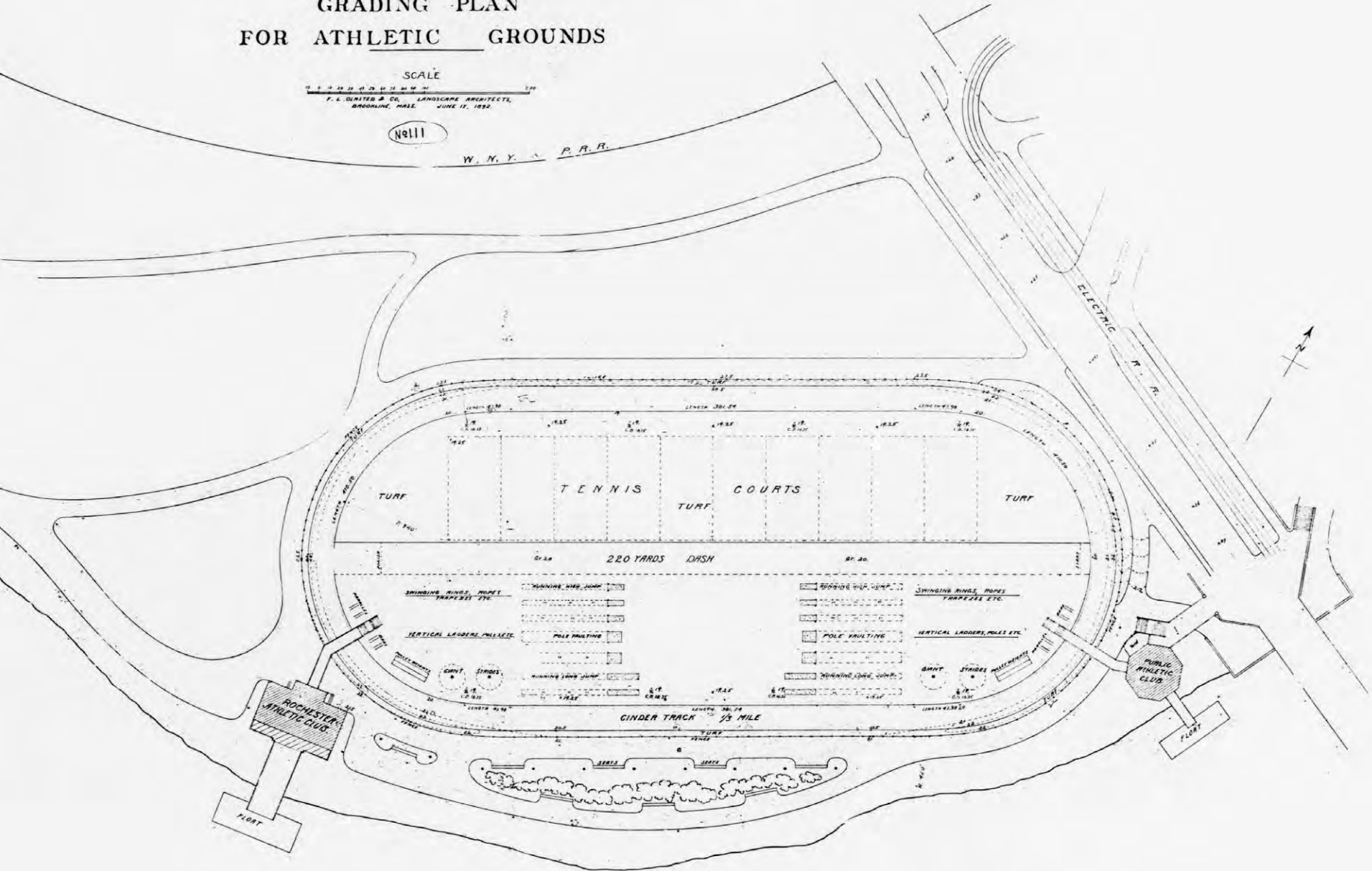


# GRADING PLAN FOR ATHLETIC GROUNDS

SCALE  
F. L. OLIMSTED & CO. LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS,  
BROOKLINE, MASS. JUNE 17, 1892.

NO. 111

W. N. Y. P. R. R.



Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site



1896

View looking north at Elmwood Avenue bridge from a vantage point on the east side of the river. GVPW shown at far left with vegetated shoreline.

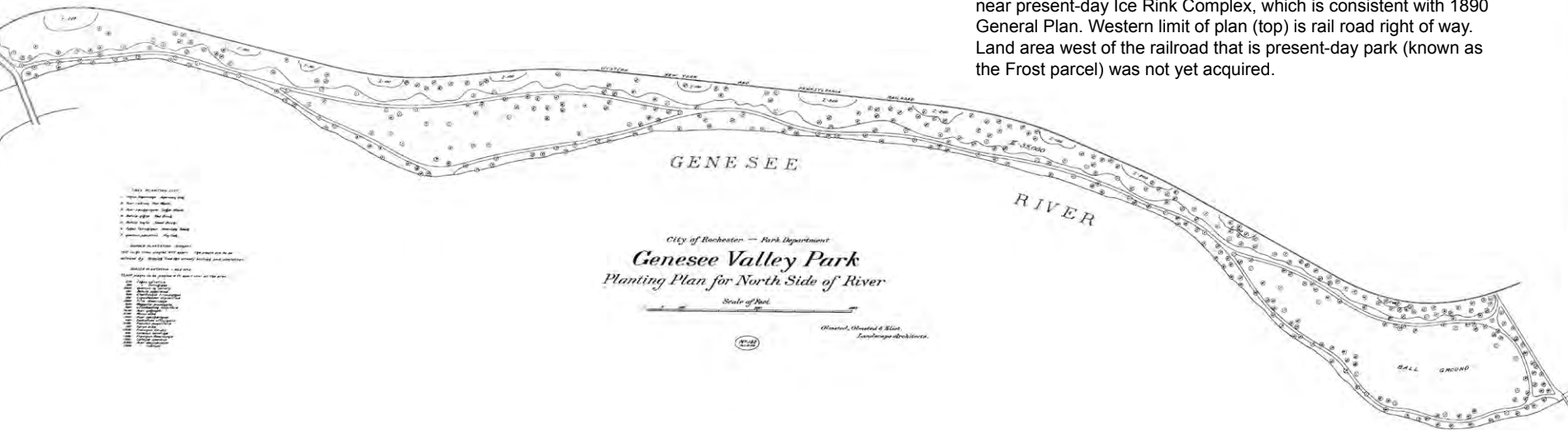


Rochester Public Library, Local History Division

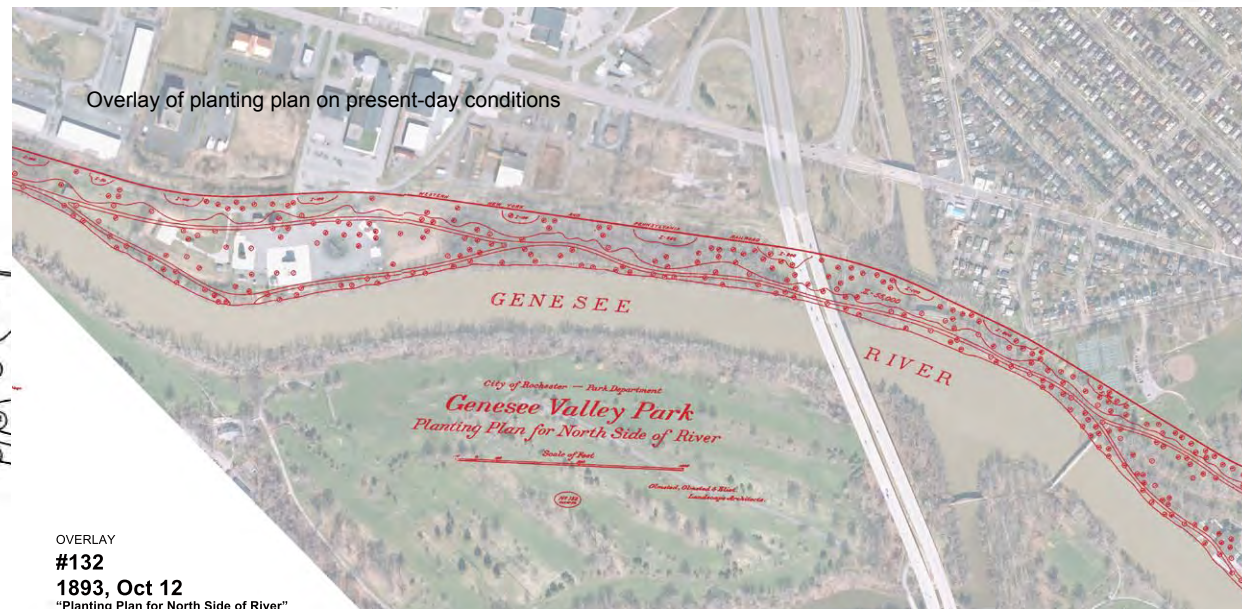
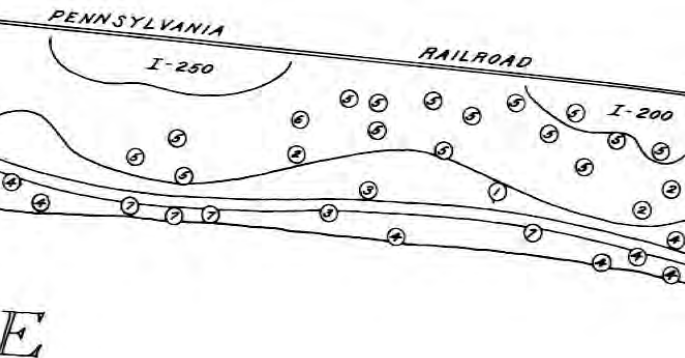


1893  
OCTOBER

# planting plan for "north" side of river



Enlarged view of planting plan showing heavily planted vegetation screens along western park boundary (railroad corridor)



OVERLAY  
#132  
1893, Oct 12  
"Planting Plan for North Side of River"

Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site



*Border plantation on North  
side of the river.*

Planting and order list for *Genesee Valley Park*

Original planting (trees and shrubs) purchase order for Olmsted's 1893 "Planting Plan for North Side of River". Shows quantities and species that are keyed onto planting plan.

Date, *Oct 11<sup>th</sup> 93*

*Estimate 650.*

No. on Plan.	NAME OF PLANT.	Quantity Ordered.	Quantity Received.	Size & Condition Ordered.	Where Ordered.	Condition.	Spac- ing.	Checking Blank.
	<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	570		12"-18"	Pin	10-M.	5.70	570
	<i>Fagus ferruginea</i>	380		2-3	Pin	3-C	11.40	380
	<i>Quercus in var</i>	1800		1-3	S	35" M	83.	3800
	<i>Quercus rubra</i>	2000		2-3	Pin	30" M	60.	
	<i>Betula papyracea</i>	200		3-5/8	Pin	2.50/pc	5.	190
	<i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i>	950		15"-24"	Pin	15-M.	14.25	950
	<i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>	190		2-3	mtm.	6-C	11.40	190
	<i>Lilia Americana</i>	1900		15-24S.	Pin	20-M.	38.	1900
	<i>Magnolia acuminata</i>	950		12-18S	mtm.	40-M	38.	950
	<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>	950		18-24 1/2	mtm.	20-M.	19.	950
	<i>Acer negundo</i>	7600		2-4	Ph.	5-M	38.	7600
	<i>Morus alba tortanica</i>	5700		2-3	Pin	5-M.	68.40	5700
	<i>Acer saccharinum</i>	1900		2-3 S.	Pin	15-M.	28.50	1900
	<i>Sassafras officinalis</i>	380		2-3	mtm.	8-C	30.40	380

Courtesy of the National  
Park Service, Frederick Law  
Olmsted National Historic Site



# 1900 Plat Map (Lathrop)

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Present-Day Arvine Heights area  
(still undeveloped)

Western park parcel acquired  
from Frost and used  
informally for ball fields and  
City nursery for park trees

Athletic Grounds area  
(not shown on map overlay)

Unknown boat house

First of the "Canoe Club(s)"



**c.1900**

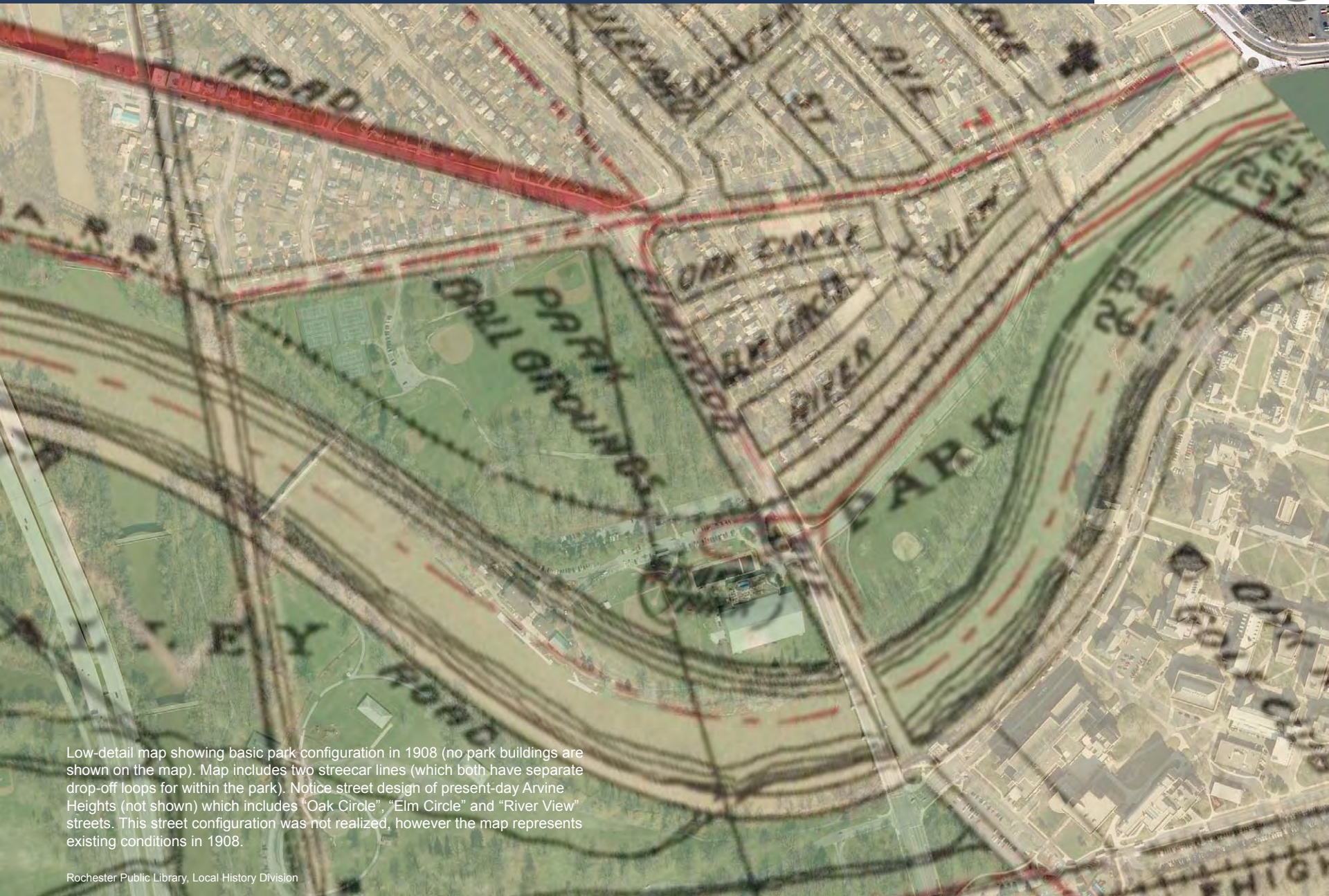
Photo of track and field area, looking northeast toward public Athletic Club and Elmwood bridge. Photo shows banked track ends, which are sometimes used on indoor tracks to this day. It is thought that a banked track end allows runners to run through a radius more comfortably, with less torque on the body. (Banked ends on GVPW track confirmed on grading plans within the Olmsted drawing records.)



Rochester Public Library, Local History Division



1908

Rochester & Environs  
(E. Fisher)

Low-detail map showing basic park configuration in 1908 (no park buildings are shown on the map). Map includes two streetcar lines (which both have separate drop-off loops for within the park). Notice street design of present-day Arvine Heights (not shown) which includes "Oak Circle", "Elm Circle" and "River View" streets. This street configuration was not realized, however the map represents existing conditions in 1908.

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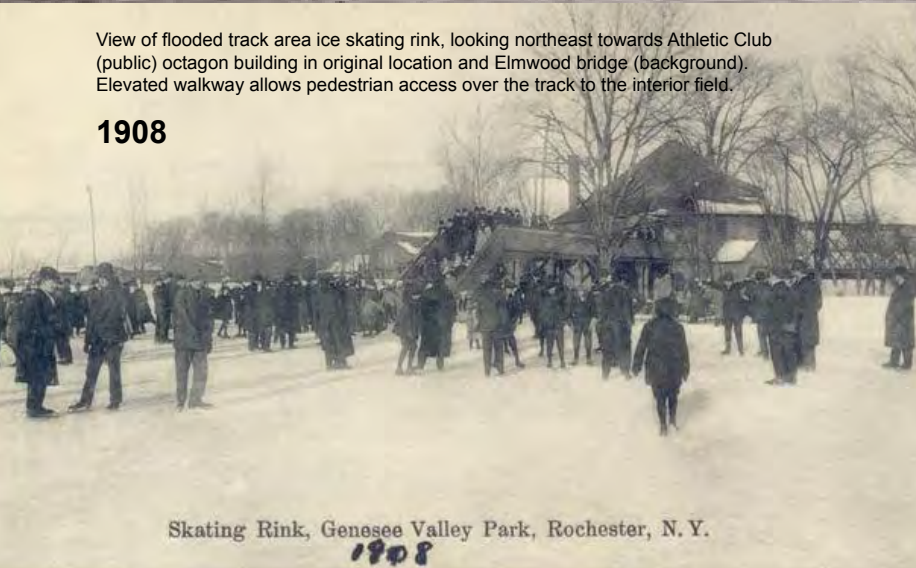
**1905**

Bath house and swimming pool (original pool),  
near present-day Genesee Waterways Center



View of flooded track area ice skating rink, looking northeast towards Athletic Club  
(public) octagon building in original location and Elmwood bridge (background).  
Elevated walkway allows pedestrian access over the track to the interior field.

**1908**



Skating Rink, Genesee Valley Park, Rochester, N. Y.

1908

Rochester Public Library, Local History Division





1908

View of "Canoe Clubs" on north side of park,  
looking northwest from Elmwood bridge



United States Library of Congress



1911

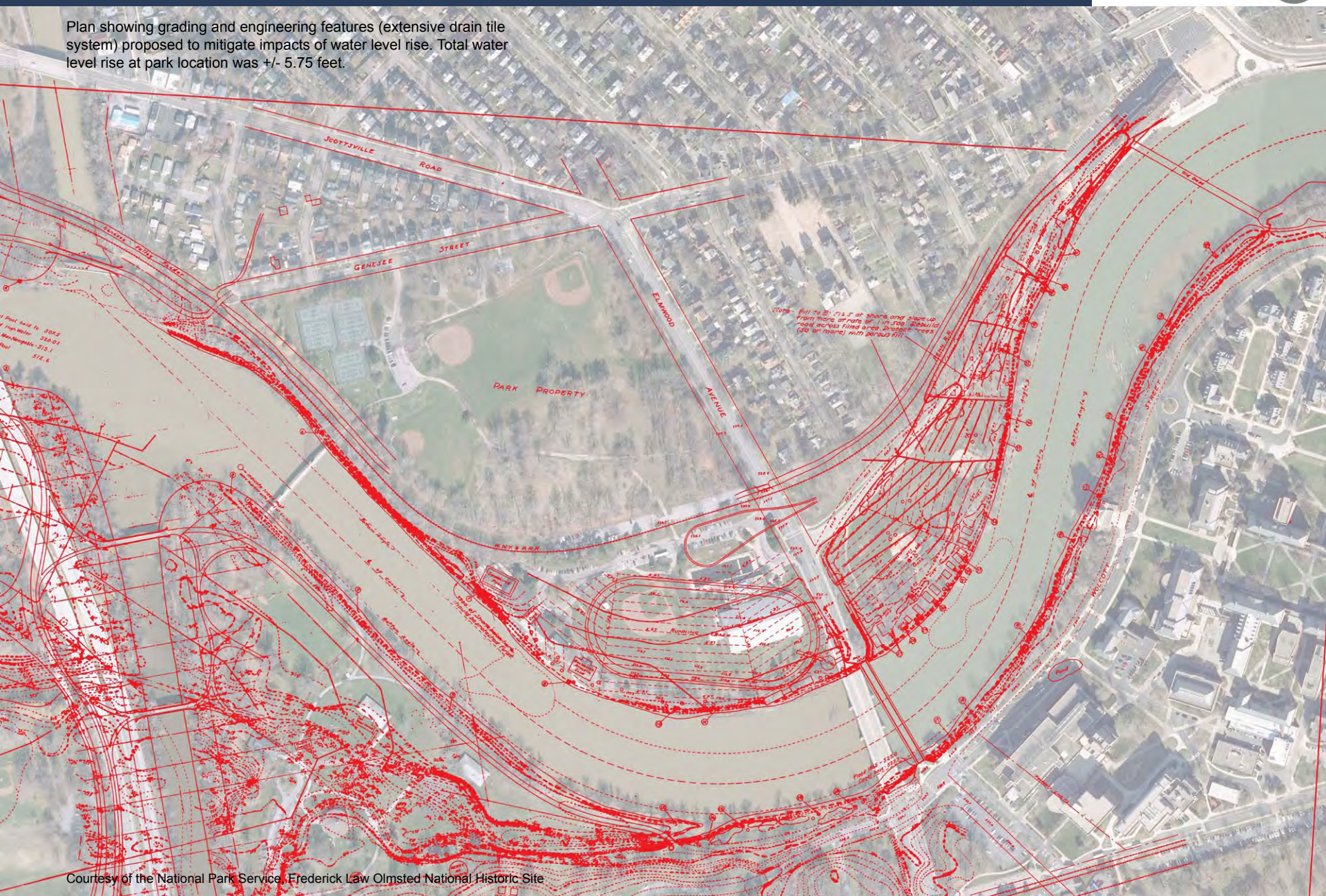
Construction of a temporary sandbag dam on the Genesee River at GVP to bring the water level higher for boat navigation during the Water Carnival.



United States Library of Congress



**plan for adjustment for rise in water level  
(5.75')**



Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site



Public Athletic Club  
(original location)

## Pool and Bath House

## Boat Livery

Rochester Athletic Club

## Durand Boat House

## Canoe Clubs

Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site





**1912**

Photos from Olmsted records, annotated by Olmsted design team in order to show water level rise impacts on shoreline vegetation. Red line is original to images and represents anticipated water level increase of +/- 5.75'.

Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site

By G.Gibbs 2-12

1102-13

POPLARS AND WILLOWS AT EL. 513-514 AT TOE OF SWIMMING POOL EMBANKMENT. ARE NOT FAR ENOUGH BACK OF POOL LINE TO ALLOW A NATURAL BEACH TO FORM, SHOULD BE CORRECTED.



By G.Gibbs 2-12

1102-14

TWO ELMS., ONE PROBABLY SAFE FAIR PROTECTION EVEN AT NEW LEVEL.



By G.Gibbs 2-12

1102-22

77" ELM 510-516 WILL SUFFER AND PROBABLY DIE, WOULD BE SAVED IF DAM AND PUMP IS PUT IN BELOW THIS POINT. TOP SHOWN IN 1102-18



Canoe Club buildings, as seen from Elmwood bridge during flood conditions

**1913**

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Flood damage to Durand Boat House, view looking south along river edge

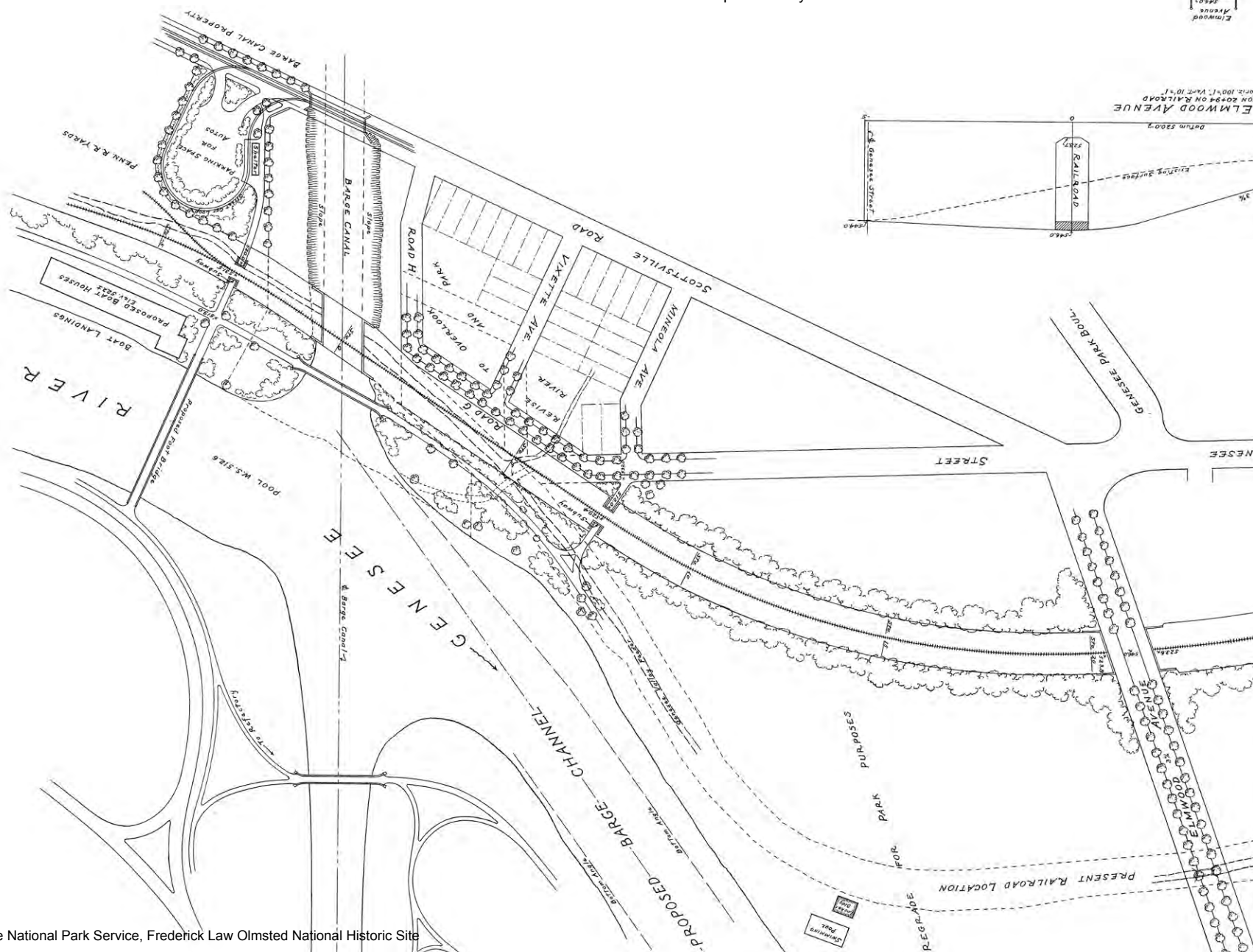
**1913**



Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site



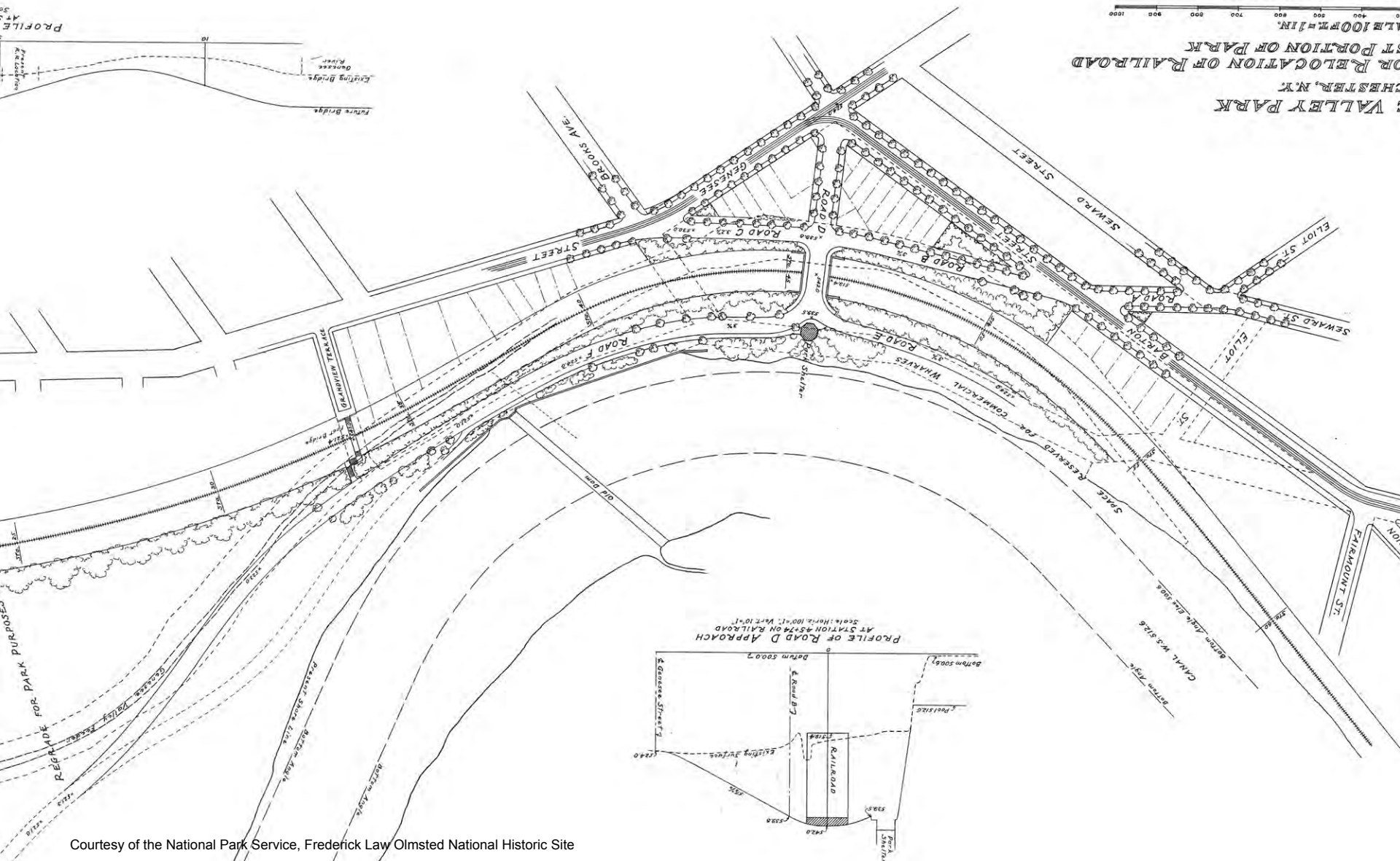
Enlargement of plan showing detailed urban design, parking, pedestrian bridge and waterfront treatments near the proposed Barge Canal / River intersection. Proposed boathouse and parking area on south site of canal is near present-day I-390.



Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site

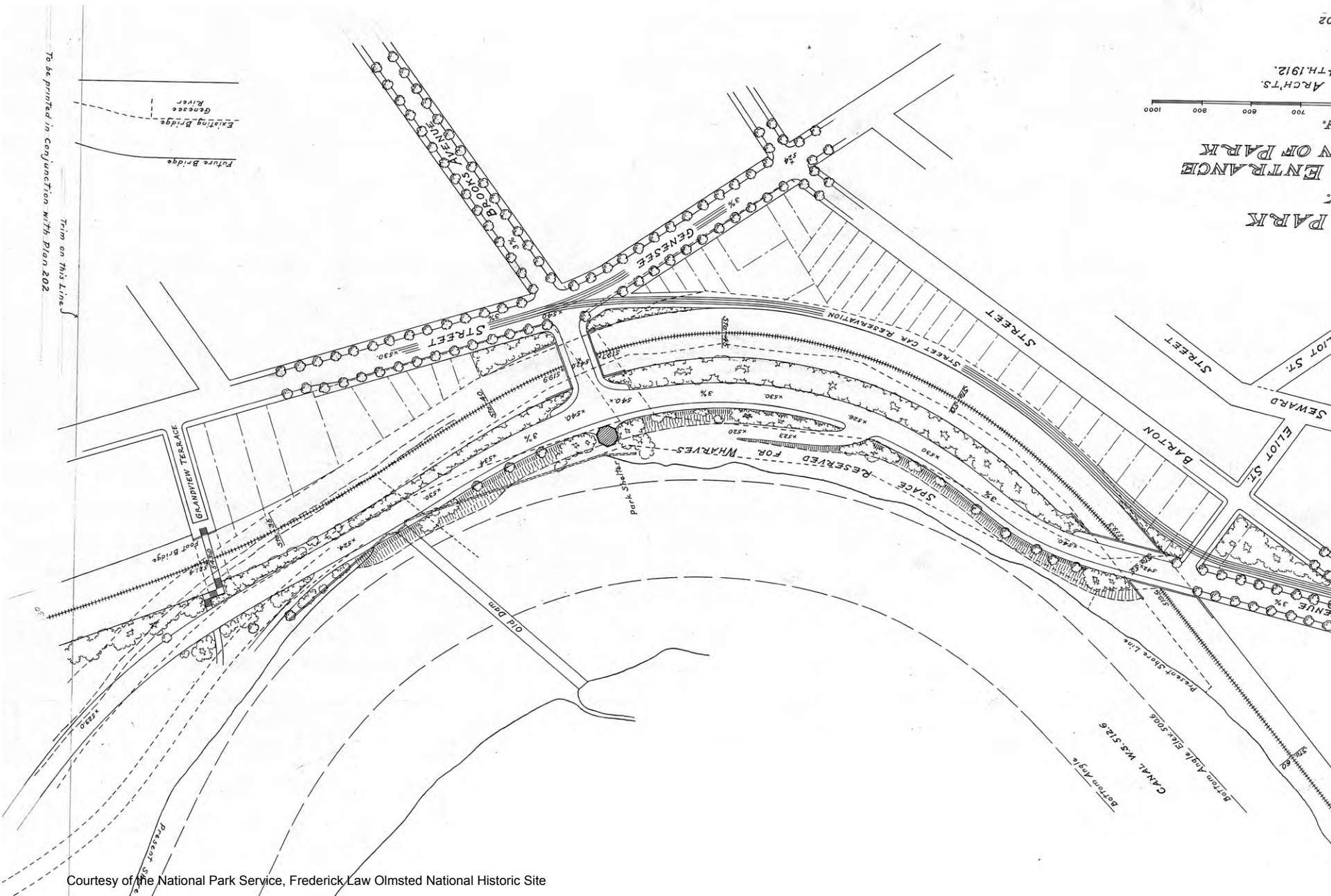


PROFILE  
AT  
5



Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site





Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site







1913



1913



**1915** Athletic Club (public)  
after relocation to street car loop area



1916



View of flooded river from Elmwood Avenue bridge (river is in foreground), Durand Boat House (left) with grandstand in background (located on western side of track field).

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1917

View of Durand Boat House at river edge,  
looking south from Elmwood Bridge



United States Library of Congress







1918



Barge Canal meets Genesee River,  
looking west from east bank

1920



"Olmsted" bridge over Barge Canal, railroad  
bridge in background, looking southwest

1920



Rochester Athletic Club  
(private)

View of the Rochester Athletic Club (private), looking north from river

Elmwood Bridge











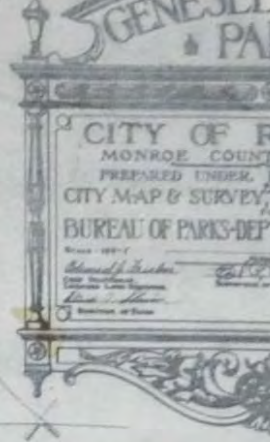


City of Rochester Archives



# 1935 city survey (south sheet)

AREA EAST OF RIVER - NORTH OF ELWOOD AVE. - 444.196 ACRES.  
 AREA WEST OF RIVER - NORTH OF ELWOOD AVE. - 7.052 ACRES.  
 AREA WEST OF RIVER - BETWEEN GENESEE STREET  
 ELWOOD AVE. & PENN. R.R. - 22.600 ACRES.  
 AREA WEST OF RIVER - ELWOOD AVE. SOUTH TO STATE  
 CANAL LINE - PENN. R.R. TO RIVER - 423 ACRES  
 AREA WEST OF RIVER - STATE CANAL LINE - SOUTH  
 TO SOUTH LINE - PENN. R.R. TO RIVER - 23.927 ACRES  
 TOTAL AREA PARK PROPERTY - 527 ACRES





1925

City of Rochester Archives



Refectory / Concessions Stand

1930

City of Rochester Archives



Durand Boat House

Elmwood Bridge

Looking west from east bank of river

1930

Rochester Public Library, Local History Division



Genesee River

Rochester Athletic Club

Fishing Club

Boat Livery

Bath House (orig. pool)

View looking south across track and field area, flooded track area used for skating, mechanically flooded via water connection



1933

Looking south under Elmwood  
bridge abutment, east bank of river



City of Rochester Archives





Southern-most  
"Canoe Club" building

Elmwood Bridge

1933

View of recreation area north of Elmwood,  
looking east toward Elmwood bridge from  
former Plymouth Avenue

City of Rochester Archives



1933

Elmwood Avenue (intersection of former  
Plymouth Ave) looking east towards bridge.



Elmwood Bridge

Iconic elm tree

Durand Boathouse (portion)



Contemporary photo showing  
similar Elmwood view



Elmwood Bridge

Ice Rink Complex

Google 2009





Bathhouse (orig. pool)

Boat Livery

Fishing Club

Rochester Athletic Club

Elmwood Bridge

c.1933

Looking north across river from east bank toward boat livery area



Refectory

Elmwood Bridge

1934

Looking west across river from east bank

City of Rochester Archives



1934

'34 Pool' Complex under construction (showing south side pool)





1936

Looking north. Construction of new Elmwood Avenue bridge.

City of Rochester Archives



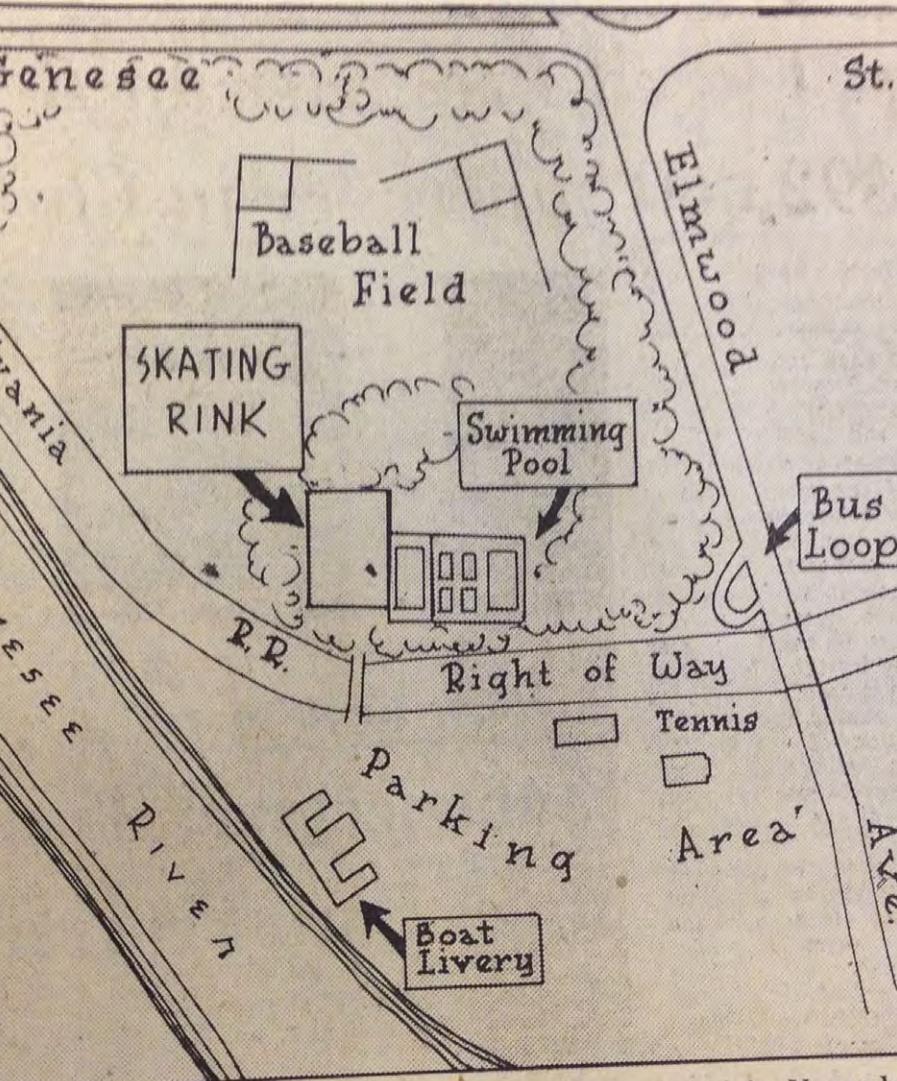
**1937**

Looking northeast to University of Rochester.  
Landscape restoration completed after  
new bridge construction and removal of old  
bridge. Refectory / concessions building  
shown near rail road.



Rochester Public Library, Local History Division





**SITE**—Artificial ice skating rink will be opened in November. The swimming pools in Genesee Valley Park, according to city officials, were the third selected in an effort to meet protests of area residents. The rink will be developed across Pennsylvania Railroad tracks.

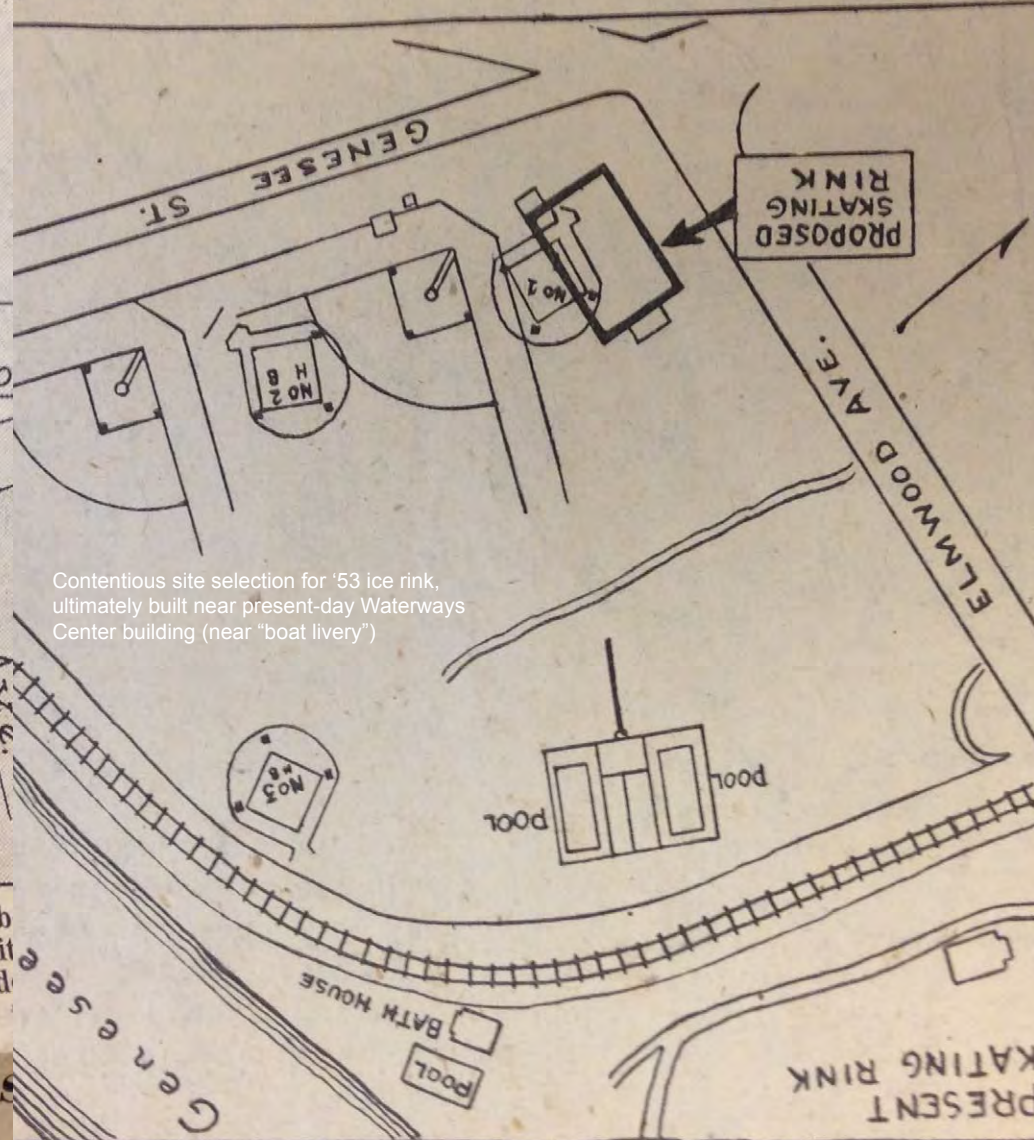
1953

Rochester Public Library, Local History Division

## Site in Genesee Park Chosen

The present natural ice skating rink is in the upper left of the map. The cost estimated \$180,000.

**OFFICIAL ICE RINK**—Site of city's proposed outdoor artificial ice skating rink is at bottom of the map. In Genesee Park, it will be on the site of present



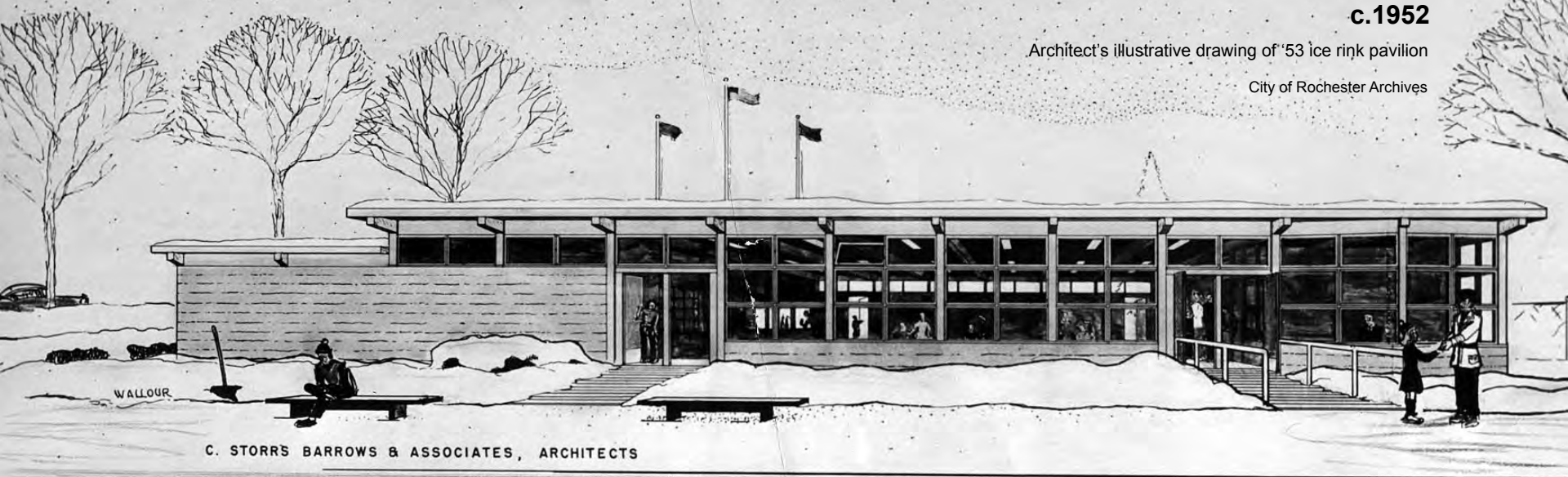
Contentious site selection for '53 ice rink, ultimately built near present-day Waterways Center building (near "boat livery")



c.1952

Architect's illustrative drawing of '53 ice rink pavilion

City of Rochester Archives



1956

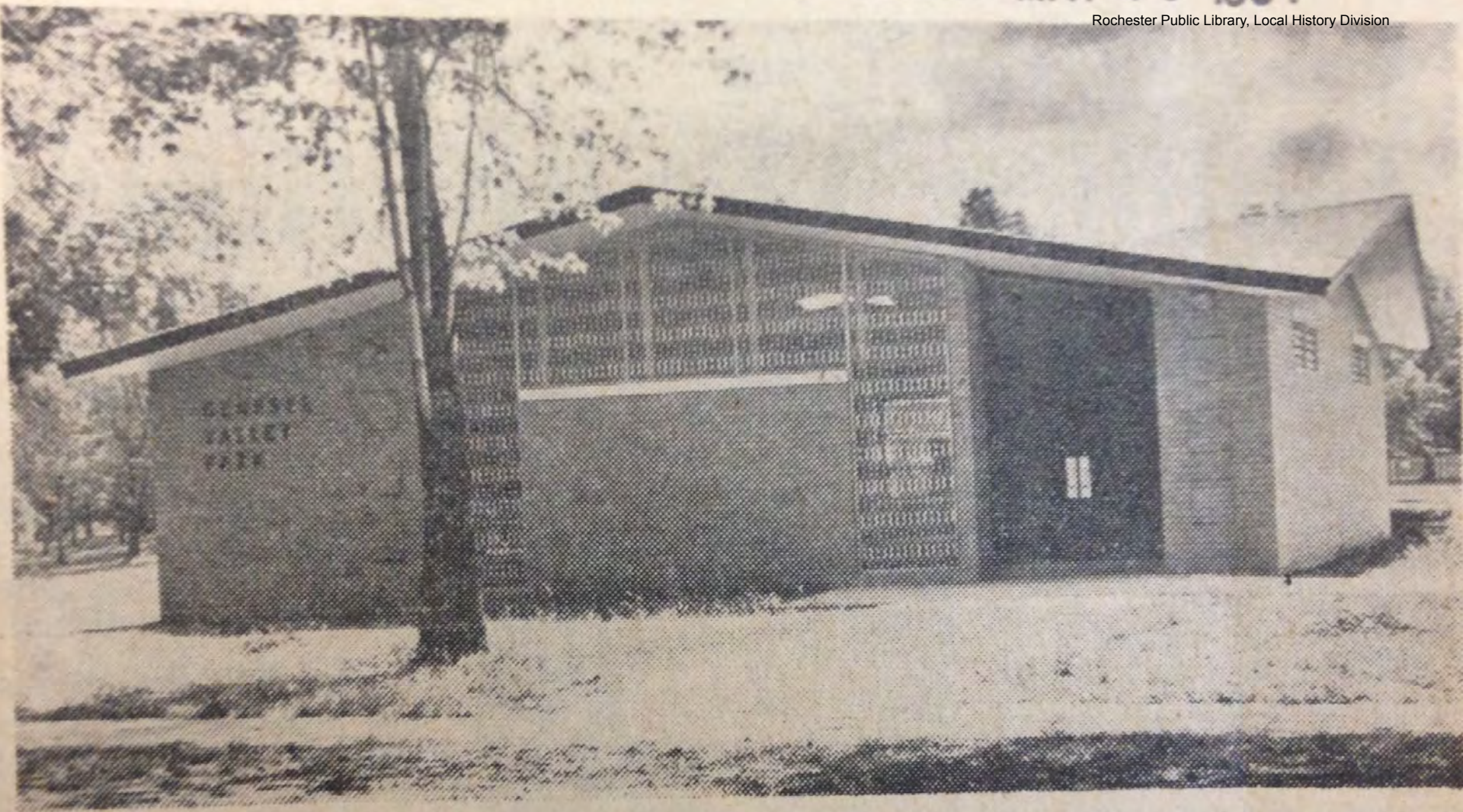
'53 ice rink undergoing repairs in 1956

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TIMES UNION MAY 29 1964

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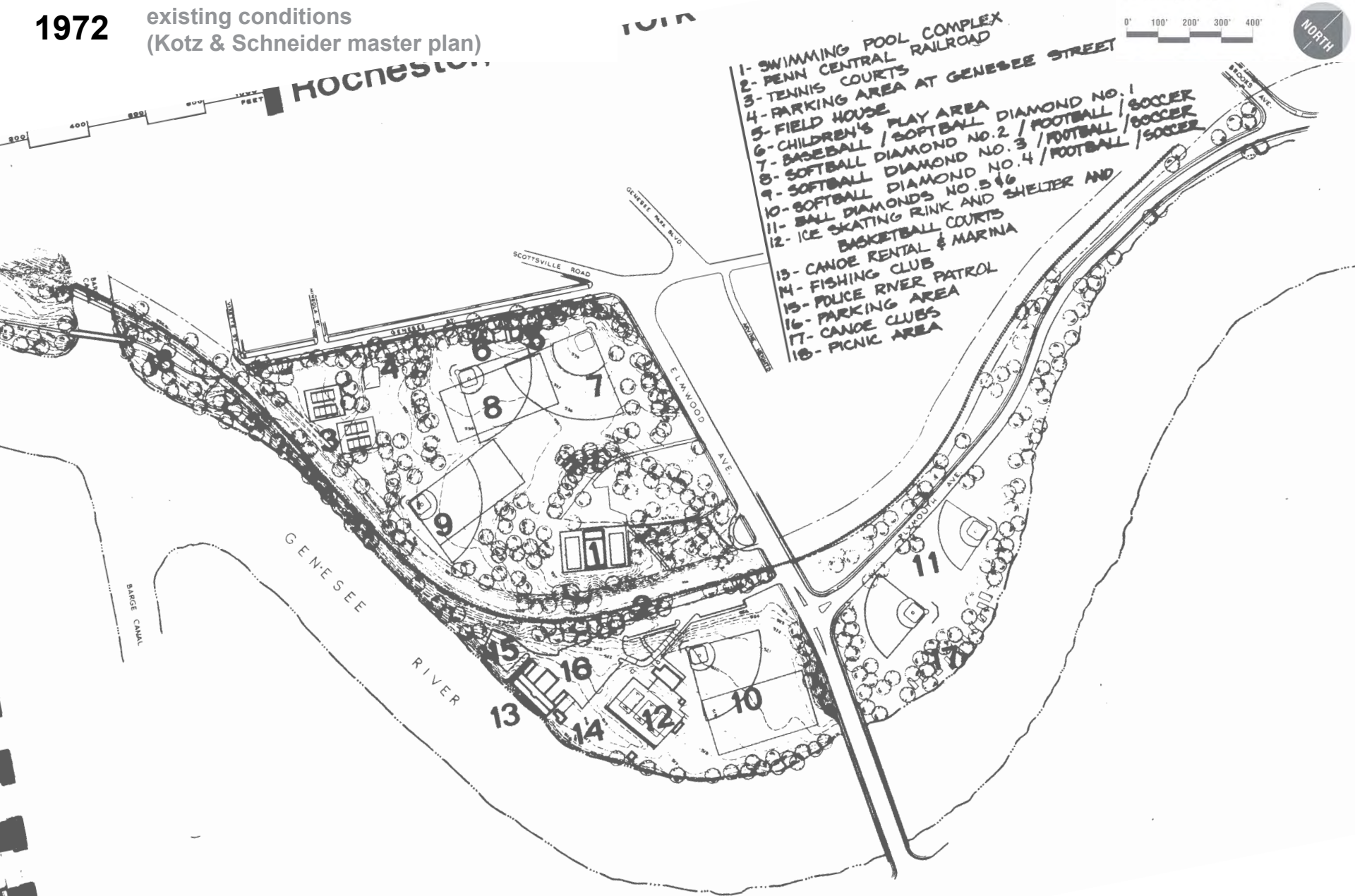
## *Field House in Park Dedicated*

Headquarters for the City Recreation | reation room in addition to showers and  
It was dedicated, yester



1972

existing conditions  
(Kotz & Schneider master plan)

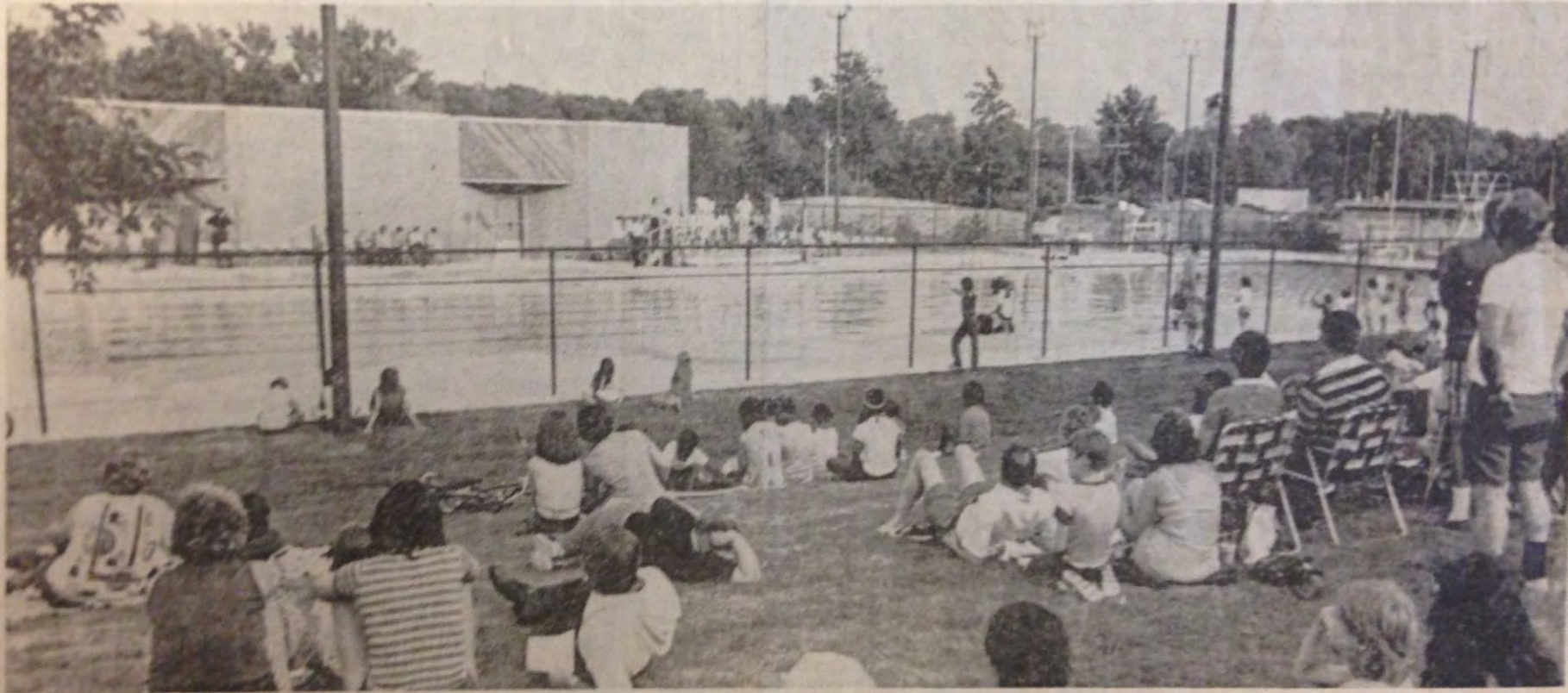




THE TIMES-UNION

8B Rochester, N.Y., Wednesday Evening, July 6, 1977

# Suburb



Times-Union photo—Bob Gapsky

## Long-Distance Pool

✓ A new pool at Genesee Valley Park, billed by the city as "one of the largest outdoor swimming pools" in the state, opened with ceremonies last night. The pool, 50 by 200 feet, is larger than Olympic size. It is open every day, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Rochester Public Library, Local History Division



Surviving "Canoe Clubs" on west bank, north of Elmwood (1979)



## Workout's over by D. & C. APR 29 1979

*D&C photo by Talis Bergmanis*

After blustery winds cut short his workout, Kevin O'Grady carries

his racing boat from the river in Genesee Valley Park yesterday.

The high temperature for the day was 54 at 2 p.m. and then within

the next hour the temperature dropped nine degrees to 45.



Minimal surviving landscape / park historic features



300 FT



## Importance of Cultural Landscape?

- River corridor is a network of linked sites, all which are which are extremely important in the development of Rochester / region
- Preservation of the river corridor was Olmsted's goal - way ahead of his time in noticing value of the recreational-river vs. the industrial-river
- Park system was the framework for City's post-1900 development
- Significance of Olmsted - the first public park, and successor firms
- Rochester is one of only 4 cities where Olmsted designed the full system (Buffalo, Boston, Louisville, Rochester). Only four full park systems were designed but Olmsted firm worked on +5000 projects.
- Genesee Valley Park (as a whole) is a premier example of the Pastoral park design aesthetic.



# 3 Programming / Next Steps

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## **Continue Analysis**

Comprehensive, including full Cultural  
Landscape Report

## **Program Development**

Park Features / Recreation Program  
Boat House Program

## **Public Meeting**

Late March 2013