

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

SENT TO D.C.
7-3-03

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name : **Armour Square**

other names/site number : **Park No. 3**

2. Location

street & number: **3309 South Shields Avenue (mailing address)** _____ Not for publication

city or town : **Chicago** _____ vicinity

state **Illinois** code **IL** county **Cook** code **031** zip code **60616**

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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 nationally _____ statewide _____ locally. (_____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

William L. Wheeler 15/11/03
Signature of certifying official

7-2-03
Date

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (_____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

American Indian Tribe

Armour Square
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain):	_____	_____

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	objects
<u>7</u>	<u>5</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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

Historic Resources of the Chicago Park District

Armour Square
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois
County and State

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE/ park

RECREATION AND CULTURE/ outdoor recreation

RECREATION AND CULTURE/ sports facility

OTHER/ field house

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE/ park

RECREATION AND CULTURE/ outdoor recreation

RECREATION AND CULTURE/ sports facility

OTHER/ field house

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Beaux Arts Classicism

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: **CONCRETE**

Roof: **ASPHALT TILES**

Walls: **CONCRETE**

Other: **EARTH**
VEGETATION

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Armour Square
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

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

- 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 a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Entertainment/ Recreation

Social History

Architecture

Landscape Architecture

Period of Significance: **1905 - 1953** Significant Dates: **N/A**

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above): **N/A**

Cultural Affiliation **N/A**

Architect/Builder: **Burnham, D.H & Company**
Olmsted Brothers

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) **See Continuation Sheet**

Armour Square
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: **10 acres**

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

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
16	447273	4631375	3	16	447456 4631197
2	16	447450 4631380	4	16	447273 4631192

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

See Continuation Sheet

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

See Continuation Sheet

Armour Square
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Julia Sniderman Bachrach

organization: Chicago Park District

date: February 21, 2003

street & number: 541 N. Fairbanks

telephone: (312) 742-4698

city or town: Chicago

state: IL

zip code: 60611

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

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

name **David Doig, General Superintendent, Chicago Park District**

street & number **541 North Fairbanks**

telephone

city or town **Chicago**

state **IL**

zip code **60611**

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. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Armour Square

Narrative Description

Conceived as part of a revolutionary system of 14 parks in 1903, Armour Square was originally known as Park No. 3. The innovative new parks were conceived by South Park Commission General Superintendent J. Frank Foster and designed by the prominent firms, Olmsted Brothers landscape architects, and D.H. Burnham & Co. architects. Armour Park consists of twelve resources: seven contributing and five non-contributing. The contributing resources include one building complex, five structures and one site consisting of playfields and pathways.

Dedicated on March 31, 1905, Armour Square was the first of the proposed new parks to open to the public. By the fall of 1905, a total of ten south side small parks provided recreational, social, and educational opportunities to hundreds of thousands of people in Chicago, as well as a new prototype for the design and programming of neighborhood parks throughout the nation.

Over the years, Armour Square has continuously adapted to the frequently changing needs of the surrounding community while retaining a high level of integrity. The property retains a great deal of fabric dating from its period of significance, and is primarily composed of contributing features. In order to clearly describe Armour Square and show that it retains sufficient integrity to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, three corresponding plans are submitted as part of this nomination: the original Olmsted Brothers Plan [A], a Chicago Park District plan of 1939 [B], and a recent plot plan [C].

Armour Square is bounded on the north by West 33rd Street, on the south by West 34th Street, on the east by South Wells Street and the west by South Shields Avenue. The site lies just to the north of the US Cellular Stadium (formerly known as Comiskey Park), which is surrounded by a large area of surface parking lots. The surrounding neighborhood is composed of frame houses, brick bungalows and two-flats, and some new residential construction. The thriving Chinatown neighborhood is located approximately one-mile to the north. The site's community area, known as Armour Square, takes its name from the park.

The Olmsted Brother's original plan for Armour Square [A], placed the field house complex on the far northwest corner of the park on a diagonal axis. They reinforced the diagonal layout by centering the playfield on axis and southeast of the field house. Originally, the playfield [1] was a sunken meadow surrounded by an oval path and trees [A]. To increase the recreational use of the playfield, the Chicago Park District removed the oval path and regraded the field in 1939. The outer path [2], which now surrounds the playfield, has been in the same location and configuration since the original construction of the park [A].

A skater's shelter and service yard appears on plans as early as 1908¹, though not on the original plan [A]. This skating facility located on the far southeast corner of the park, diagonally across from the field house [3], was considered temporary, and was likely installed during the early winter and removed at the end of each skating

¹ South Park Commissioners. Armour Square. "Typical of Other Small Parks," 1908

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 2

Armour Square

season. In the 1930s, the Chicago Park District constructed a more permanent facility. This included separate skaters' shelters with bathrooms for men and women, a tool shed, and a service yard in the same location as the earlier facilities [B]. These features were removed sometime before 1957, when the empty southeast corner was considered as a possible site for handball courts. This proposal did not move forward, and instead the area was planted with trees. The original path leading to the skating shelter and service yard is still in place [4].

North of the playfields is the original women's open-air gymnasium [A]. Historically, this area included a circular wading pool [5] edged with a semi-circular platform with sand courts [6]. A semi-circular concrete bench and a pergola with a retractable awning once lined the platform. This area provided a shady resting place for mothers who watched while their children played in the wading pool and sand courts. Although the bench and pergola have been gone for decades, the area retains a good deal of historic fabric. Sometime before 1965, the original wading pool was converted to a spray pool. This was done with minimal alteration to original feature. Today, the spray pool retains the wading pool's location, configuration, and curbing and the surrounding concrete platform and sand courts [6] remain intact [C].

The Olmsted Brother's original plan included playground equipment and a shelter in the women's open-air gymnasium area [A]. It is unlikely that a shelter was ever built in this location, considering that the shelter was omitted in plans as early as 1908.² There was always playground equipment in this area. The original plan included a small area of playground equipment [7] near the wading pool, and exercise equipment for women to west. By the 1930s, the children's playground had expanded into the area that was originally reserved for women's equipment [B]. Over the years, the playground equipment has been updated many times. The Chicago Park District installed the existing soft surface playground in 1989 [C]. Some small picnic tables with attached seats were also added to this area in recent years [8].

The original men's open-air gymnasium is located on the west side of Armour Square just south of the field house. In the original plan, only a running track [9] was depicted, however, it was likely that the Olmsted Brothers intended for the center of the track to be used for exercise equipment [A]. A plan of 1909 shows handball courts and some type of early outdoor equipment in this area.³ In the late 1930s, the Chicago Park District removed the running track, and installed three tennis courts [10] at the south end of the men's open-air gymnasium [B]. (Although the original plan shows tennis courts on the east side of the park, there is no evidence that these were ever installed.) There are still three tennis courts in this location [C].

Today, there is also a basketball court [11], a sand volleyball court [12], a handball court [13] and shuffleboard court [14] in this area [C]. The basketball play slab [11] and the shuffleboard court [14] were installed in their

² Ibid.

³ South Park Commissioners. Armour Square. March, 1909.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 3

Armour Square

existing locations by 1940. The handball court [13] was moved from the west side of the men's open-air gymnasium to its present location in 1957. In recent years, the park district removed horseshoe courts to install a sand volleyball court [12].

The field house complex [15], located on the northwest corner of the park is Armour Square's most prominent feature. Historically, the field house and play field were divided by an elegant concert grove. The field house's front stairway leads to this area, which was once a paved terrace with a small grove of trees planted in an oval configuration. Most of the old concert grove was removed in the late 1930s to provide an enlarged play field. Shortly thereafter, the remaining part of the concert grove became a small parking lot in front of the field house.

Although the field house [15] is now a single building, the South Park Commission originally built this as a complex of two separate buildings—the field house with clubrooms and an auditorium at the front—and gymnasium building at the rear—with a swimming pool in the center. Two pergolas extending over walkways originally connected the two buildings. The field house, oriented on a diagonal axis, was originally configured as a 6-sided oblique form in plan and the gymnasium building was originally V-shaped in plan. The structures both have hipped roofs, now clad in asphalt tiles, but were originally composed of green clay tiles.

The tile roofs, the building material of exposed aggregate concrete, and the two pergolas originally unified the two structures. The field house building was the most elegant part of the complex. Located on the southeast side of the complex, it was the front building—one had to enter the field house to get to the gymnasium building. The field house's primary façade has three angled planes. In the center section, the entryway was accentuated with two round arched openings, divided by three pilasters. Originally both of these arched opening had doorways with sidelights and transom lights. This fenestration remains at the northeast arched opening, but the one on the southwest side was altered in the 1930s, to accommodate the addition of an office in part of the lobby space. At that time, the doors were removed, the arch filled in, and three double hung windows were installed. Extending above the pilasters and arched openings is a simple entablature. There are scroll shaped keystones piercing the top of both arches, and unadorned roundels flanking the upper portion of the arches.

On the second story of the field house façade, continuous bands of molded fretwork adorn the wall between the windows. This treatment extends from the top to the bottom of the fenestrated area of the outer angled planes (northeast and southwest of the entry façade). The fretwork extends across the entry façade, but here the second story windows are higher than the architectural detail. These look like 4-over-4 double hung windows, but in fact the upper lights are fixed transoms, the lower portions are double hung. These windows are echoes on the outer angled planes of the façade, but here the fixed transom is only two divided lights and not as large. At the first story of each of the angled outer planes of the front façade, there is a projecting three-sided bay, which each have four windows with three lights vertically stacked. A pair of small double hung windows is located next to the bays, beneath the outermost sets of windows of the second story.

The field house and gymnasium complex became a single building in 1936, when the Chicago Park District removed the west pergola and walkway, and constructed a bathhouse addition with bathrooms. This one story

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 4

Armour Square

addition, which has a flat roof, is composed of exposed aggregate concrete. Ten years later, this was converted to four craft rooms and a dark room and the bathrooms remained. Today most of this area is used as a corridor although the bathrooms and one clubroom remain. The Chicago Park District removed the pergola and walkway on the east side of the field house in 1963, as part of a major remodeling of the complex. In its place, a one-story blue glazed brick covered walkway was constructed. A small portion of the women's gymnasium was demolished as part of this project. As part of the 1963 alteration to the field house, the Chicago Park District removed Armour Square's original oval shaped pool and replaced it with a large L-shaped swimming pool [16]. As part of this project, the surrounding deck was replaced with concrete.

In 1996, a fire broke out in Armour Square, causing severe damage to the women's side of the gymnasium building. After the fire, the Chicago Park District repaired the gymnasium and installed a fitness center in an adjacent room. Despite the fire and a few insensitive alterations such as blue glazed brick walkway, Armour Square retains good integrity. The field house retains many fine interior features, such as paired Ionic columns in the lobby, original molding, trim, and balusters. The exterior orientation of the building, the configuration of paths, location of many historic outdoor features such as the play field, tennis courts, basketball courts, early trees, and original fabric such as the concrete platform and sand courts all reflect the park's period of significance.

In recent years, the Armour Square community has experienced change including the demolition of the old Comiskey Stadium and construction of a new stadium now know as US Cellular field. Many older homes in the area have been rehabilitated and there is some new construction in the neighborhood. Despite these changes, Armour Square has changed little in the last sixty years. It continues to convey its historic character as a small green oasis and active community center providing breathing space and programs to the bustling Armour Square community that surrounds the small park.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 5

Armour Square

Contributing Features

Field house and
Gymnasium Complex (3/15)

Buildings

Sites

Landscape including
Playfield (1) and Paths (2 and 4)

Structures

Tennis Courts (10)
Basketball Court (11)
Shuffleboard Court (14)
Sandcourts (6)
Spraypool (5)

Objects

Non-contributing Features

Soft surf. Playground (7)
Swimming Pool (16)
Handball Court (13)
Sand Volleyball Court (12)

Picnic tables and chairs (8)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 6

Armour Square

Statement of Significance

Armour Square meets Criterion A and Criterion C for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The property is nationally significant as part of the revolutionary plan by the South Park Commission in the early 20th century to provide breathing spaces with recreational facilities and social services to the densely populated tenement districts within its jurisdiction. In addition to the innovative programming, the design of the new parks by D.H. Burnham & Co. architects and landscape architects the Olmsted Brothers influenced the development of small neighborhood parks throughout the country. The South Park Commissioners began efforts to create a system of fourteen new parks in 1903. On April 1, 1905, Armour Square was the first of the new parks to open to the public. Nine others opened between April 8 and September 23, 1905. The new parks were so impressive that in 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt recommended that park administrators throughout America should "... see the magnificent system that Chicago has erected in its south park section, one of the most notable civic achievements in any American city."⁴

Armour qualifies for listing on the National Register under the multiple documentation form, "The Historic Resources of the Chicago Park District." The property is nationally significant during a period spanning from 1905 when construction commenced to 1953, the current fifty-year cut-off date for the National Register of Historic Places. The property meets with the following areas of significance: Entertainment/ Recreation, Social History, Architecture, and Landscape Architecture.

The South Park Commission was one of three park systems established in 1869 to create a series of parks and boulevards that would encircle Chicago. As explained in section E (page 3) of the multiple property nomination form "The Historic Resources of the Chicago Park District," the South Park Commission served a geographic region spanning from the Chicago River south to 138th Street and from Lake Michigan west to Cicero Avenue. Its jurisdiction included the towns of South Chicago, Lake, and Hyde Park. Its original parkland consisted of South Park (later renamed Jackson and Washington Parks and the Midway Plaisance) and boulevards linking the park to downtown and the West Park System.

By the late 1890s, the South Park Commissioners were concerned that the existing parkland could no longer satisfy the needs of all of the people they served. The city had experienced tremendous industrial growth and the population was surging. In 1869, when Chicago's original park commissions were formed, the city's population was 300,000. By 1900, that figure had increased to 1.7 million, and at that time nearly 750,000 people a mile away or farther from any park.⁵

Aware of the deplorable living and working conditions and lack of open spaces in the tenement districts within its jurisdiction, the South Park Commission drafted a bill that would empower it to build new parks for the first

⁴ As reprinted in South Park Commission, *Report of the South Park Commissioners For a Period of Fifteen Months from December 1, 1906 to February 29, 1908, inclusive*. Chicago: 1908, 62.

⁵ Dwight Heald Perkins, *Report of the Special Park Commission to the City Council of Chicago on the Subject of a Metropolitan Park System*. Chicago: 1904, 39.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 7

Armour Square

time in 30 years. The act, approved by the State Legislature in 1899, allowed for the creation of a new park if it were contiguous to an existing park or boulevard. The following year, the South Park Commission acquired a 34-acre site adjacent to a boulevard, Western Avenue, and near the Union Stock Yards. Providing ball fields, swimming and wading lagoons with changing rooms, and playgrounds, the experimental McKinley Park proved to be an immediate success. This prompted the commissioners to begin efforts to create a whole system of neighborhood parks that would provide beautiful landscapes, recreational programs and social services to the densely populated neighborhoods throughout their district.

The South Park Commission secured enabling legislation in 1901 that would allow it to issue bonds to acquire and improve new parks. This law stipulated that the proposed parks could not be more than ten acres in size. In 1902, the commissioners brought the proposal before public referendum, receiving strong public support. The following year, the South Park Commission went to the State Legislature to amend the 1901 act. The 1903 amendment, known as the Lundberg Act, removed the size limitation, allowed the park commissioners to locate the new parks anywhere in their district, and authorized the issuance of bonds. With the legal authority and funding in place, the commission began to plan the new parks.

As explained in the multiple property form, South Park Commission Superintendent, J. Frank Foster, was largely responsible for conceiving the neighborhood park concept (FIII, p. 11). Foster believed that the new parks could function as neighborhood centers and uplift and improve the lives of the residents of the overcrowded tenement districts. He suggested that in addition to the ball fields, swimming facilities, and playgrounds that had been tested in McKinley Parks, the new parks should also a variety of features. These included separate outdoor gymnasiums for men and women, running tracks, children's sand courts, and a new type of building, the field house. Based on the precedent of Chicago's settlement houses, these innovative parks buildings "would provide athletic, educational, recreational programs and social services throughout an entire year."⁶ This was particularly useful because Chicago's cold climate had traditionally limited the use of the parks between the late fall and early spring.

The South Park Commission hired the Olmsted Brothers landscape architects and D.H. Burnham & Company architects to design the innovative system of fourteen parks. Both firms had a long tradition of designing for Chicago's South Park System. The Olmsted Brothers were successors to Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903). Designer of many of the nation's premier parks and landscapes including New York's Central Park and the town of Riverside Illinois, Olmsted created the original plan for Chicago's South Park in 1871. In 1875, his stepson and nephew, John Charles Olmsted (1852- 1920) went into practice with him. Frederick Law Olmsted laid out the gleaming campus of the World's Columbian Exposition that opened in Jackson Park in 1893. After the fair, the firm, then known as Olmsted, Olmsted, and Eliot transformed the site back to parkland. In 1898, John Charles and his younger stepbrother, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. formed the Olmsted Brothers firm. The brothers went on to produce plans and landscape designs for thousands of sites throughout the nation.

⁶ Julia Sniderman Bachrach, *The City in a Garden: A Photographic History of Chicago's Parks*, Center for American Places, Harrisonburg, VA: 2001, 12.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 8

Armour Square

Daniel H. Burnham (1846 – 1912), Chicago's renowned architect and planner, helped inspire the City Beautiful Movement throughout the nation and the world. Burnham formed an 18-year partnership with John Welborn Root in 1873, and the two produced hundreds of buildings and helped develop the Chicago School of Architecture. Burnham & Root designed several buildings for the South Park Commission including the stables and refectory buildings in Washington Park. Root died suddenly in 1891, while deeply involved in planning the World's Columbian Exposition. Burnham took over preparations for the fair and his firm became known as D.H. Burnham and Company. Burnham and architect Edward H. Bennett (1874- 1954) authored the seminal *1909 Plan of Chicago*. Burnham's firm also produced city plans for Cleveland, San Francisco, and Manila.

Early in 1904, both the Olmsted Brothers and D.H. Burnham and Company entered into contracts with the South Park Commission to collaboratively design the 14 parks. At the time, Burnham was awaiting the arrival of a young designer from New York, Edward Bennett, joining the firm specifically to work on this project. Therefore, the landscape design proceeded ahead of the architecture, with the Olmsted Brothers submitting preliminary plans on March 1, 1904, even before Bennett arrived and began designing the buildings.⁷

The original plan for a system of fourteen new parks included seven considered squares because they were less than ten acres in size and seven known as small parks because they were larger than ten acres. The design for each of the fourteen parks was to include the program components conceived by Superintendent Foster. In the Olmsted Brothers initial recommendations of the design of the squares and small parks, they expressed a strong feeling that most, if not all, of the properties should be designed in a formal idiom. Having designed beautiful large romantic landscapes along side their father, Frederick Law Olmsted Sr., they were afraid that informal designs on such small sites would become "a petty rendering of what can be far better accomplished in parks many times as large."⁸

The need to fit in all of the program requirements was most challenging in the design of the squares. In order to create a unified and attractive composition that would incorporate such extensive programming, the Olmsted Brothers drew ideas from the emerging fields of city planning and zoning which were particularly taking shape in Europe. A 1903 sketch of a prototypical square reflected the Olmsted Brothers approach to organizing the functions within the small sites. In this sketch:

All park activities were divided by type of facility needed and placed in different zones of the park. Women's activities were separated from men's. Facilities requiring supervision were clustered along a single edge of the park. The front entry court, children's playground area, running track, wading pool, men's and women's open air

⁷ William W. Tippens and Julia Sniderman, "The Planning and Design of Chicago's Neighborhood Parks," *A Breath of Fresh Air: Chicago's Neighborhood Parks of the Progressive Reform Era 1900-25*, Chicago: The Chicago Public Library and the Chicago Park District, 1989, 22.

⁸ Correspondence from Olmsted Brothers to Henry G. Foreman, President of the South Park Commission. December 7, 1903, 11 Library of Congress, Manuscript Division..

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 9

Armour Square

gymnasiums, swimming tank, and changing booths were symmetrically arranged around the field house. The remaining portion of the park was devoted to a ball field and areas for passive pursuits.⁹

Walkways edged with trees and shrubbery bordered the ball field and smaller lawn areas, and a concert grove with formally planted trees and a bandstand flanked the entry to the field house.

In their early recommendations for the entire system of new parks, the Olmsted Brothers asserted that although many of the sites would offer similar accommodations "it would be undesirable to make these playgrounds substantially all alike."¹⁰ They suggested that varying the designs could prove challenging due to the similarities in the characteristics of the sites and program requirements. The five sites that were ten acres or less, which had been designated as squares, were particularly similar:

"Considering that a number of them are precisely alike as to area, shape and arrangement of surrounding streets, and that all are flat and completely devoid of any topographical or other important controlling conditions which might be availed of in making plans for them it will not be an easy matter to find good reasons or differentiating them."¹¹

The solution was often to allow natural characteristics of the site to influence the differences in the designs. When the unimproved site was lower than the surrounding streets, the play field could be depressed. If the surrounding streets were not highly traveled, the play field could be left without walls or fencing. If the neighborhood pedestrian traffic warranted, there could be diagonal paths across the field.

In the Olmsted Brothers design for Armour Square, the entire site plan followed a diagonal axis. By placing the field house complex at the far northwest corner of the park there was ample space for an oval play field and surrounding lawn areas, men and women's outdoor gymnasium areas, and a children's playground and wading pool. This diagonal layout was unique to Armour Square.

Armour Square's play field was also a unique feature of the design. Although Hamilton Park also had an oval field, the park was three times larger than Armour Square, and the community did not want all of the programming features that were being included in the other parks. Because of this, Hamilton's play field was quite large. In contrast, Armour Square's oval shaped play field was quite small. Originally, there were lawn areas for passive recreation around the edges of the oval play field. Historian William W. Tippens has suggested that Armour Square's smaller play field and greater passive lawn area "may have been considered

⁹ William W. Tippens, "The Olmsted Brothers in the Midwest," *Midwestern Landscape Architecture*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana: 2000, 169.

¹⁰ Correspondence from Olmsted Brothers to Henry G. Foreman, President of the South Park Commission. December 7, 1903, 2, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division..

¹¹ Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 10

Armour Square

appropriate since a large athletic facility already existed in the neighborhood.”¹² This was a large athletic field located at South 39th and Princeton streets which was the original home of the Chicago White Sox, and later leased to the American Giants Negro League team.

While it is doubtful that this field would have been available for the neighborhood children, another possible reason for devoting more area to attractive passive lawn space was that there was a city dump located next to the park, just south of South 34th Street. Due to the unsightly condition of the dump, perhaps the designers wanted Armour Square to be especially verdant and beautiful. This approach followed South Park Commission President Henry Foreman’s recommendation to devote considerable areas of the small squares to lawn and greenery that would make them “to some extent beautiful in nature” and would be uplifting to community residents.¹³

On February 29, 1904 the South Park Commissioners approved the Olmsted Brothers plan for Armour Square. Plans for the park’s buildings proceeded in the spring after the young architect, Edward H. Bennett joined Burnham’s firm. When Bennett joined the project, “he entered an undefined area in architecture.”¹⁴ D.H. Burnham & Co. already had a long and productive relationship with the South Park Commission. Earlier park structures, however, tended to have a utilitarian purpose such as horse stables, or a singular function emphasizing passive recreation, such as a refectory, and most of these were only open during summer months. Superintendent J. Frank Foster intended for the new park architecture to achieve much more. Inspired by Chicago’s settlement house movement, these buildings were intended as vehicles of social reform. The structures would include indoor gymnasiums, allowing for year-round active recreation in the parks for the first time. Clubrooms, auditoriums and the earliest branches of the Chicago Public Library would be included, and various lectures and classes would be provided, making the field houses social and educational centers in the community. There would be locker rooms with showers and swimming pools, offering many tenement district residents their only access to public bathing.

Foster, the South Park Commissioners, Burnham, and Bennett all shared the belief that the aesthetics of the park buildings could have an important impact on the immigrants living in filthy, squalid neighborhoods. According to one architectural critic of the period:

“The effect of a good building, in which an untrained boy studies or plays, is far more insidious than is that of some imposing, but remote public monuments... Such surrounding cannot fail in the long run to make for a higher standard of public or private taste.”¹⁵

¹² William W. Tippens, “Synthesis of Reform: The Development of the Small Parks in Chicago’s South and West Park Commissions.” Unpublished Master’s Thesis, Columbia University, 1988.

¹³ Correspondence from President Henry G. Foreman to the Olmsted Brothers, Dec. 26, 1903, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division.

¹⁴ William W. Tippens and Julia Sniderman, “The Planning and Design of Chicago’s Neighborhood Parks,” *A Breath of Fresh Air: Chicago’s Neighborhood Parks of the Progressive Reform Era 1900-25*, Chicago: The Chicago Public Library and the Chicago Park District, 1989, 24.

¹⁵ “Chicago Parks and Their Landscape Architecture,” *Architectural Record*, v. 24, July, 1908, 26.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 14

Armour Square

Between 1935 and 1941, the newly consolidated Chicago Park District received more than \$82 million in federal funding through the WPA (Works Progress Administration) and PWA (Project Works Administration). State and city funds increased this total to more than \$100 million.²⁶ Using these funds, the park district made numerous improvements throughout the system, which then included 130 parks with a total of 83 field houses and 50 swimming pools.

In Armour Square, improvements were made to increase the recreational uses of the site. In 1936, the Chicago Park District removed the pergola on the west side of the field house and constructed a bathhouse addition in its place. This one story structure housed men and women's bathrooms, showers, dressing booths and a counter with baskets for checking clothes. These facilities made the use of the outdoor swimming pool more convenient for park patrons.

The Chicago Park District removed the park's oval path and its surrounding trees to enlarge the play field in 1939. By this time, the men's running track had been removed. Tennis courts were installed at the south end of the men's open-air gymnasium. The park district also constructed a skating shelter and a service yard on the southeast corner of Armour Square, on axis with the field house. This shelter had been shown in earlier plans for the park. It was considered temporary, and removed by 1957.

Although federal relief funding for park improvements ended in 1941, the Chicago Park District continued making alterations and improvements to the park. In 1946, the bathhouse addition was converted to a series of clubrooms and a darkroom. At this time, the library and cafeteria rooms flanking the field house lobby were also converted to clubrooms. Additional partitions were constructed in the lobby to form an office.

Over the years, Armour Square has continuously provided a variety of athletic, recreational, social, and educational programs and services to the community. Although it has adapted to modern needs, the park retains a good deal of historic fabric. Today Armour Square offers many of the same kinds of programs as were historically offered in the park such as basketball, football, swimming, tumbling, and arts and crafts. Though only ten acres in size, the park remains a vital part of the Armour Square community.

²⁶ Julia Sniderman Bachrach, *The City in a Garden: A Photographic History of Chicago's Parks*, Center for American Places, Harrisonburg, VA: 2001, 24.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 15

Armour Square

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 16

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 17

Armour Square

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Chicago Park District. Armour Square. Bathhouse. April 18, 1936

Chicago Park District. Armour Square. Field House. June 14, 1937.

Chicago Park District. Armour Square. Pavilion and Storage Yard. June 14, 1937.

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 18

Armour Square

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 10 Page 19

Armour Square

Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The property is bounded on the north by the south curb-line of West 33rd Street, on the south by the north curb-line of West 34th Place, on the east by the west curb-line of South Wells Avenue, and on the west by the east curb-line of South Shields Avenue.

Boundary Justification

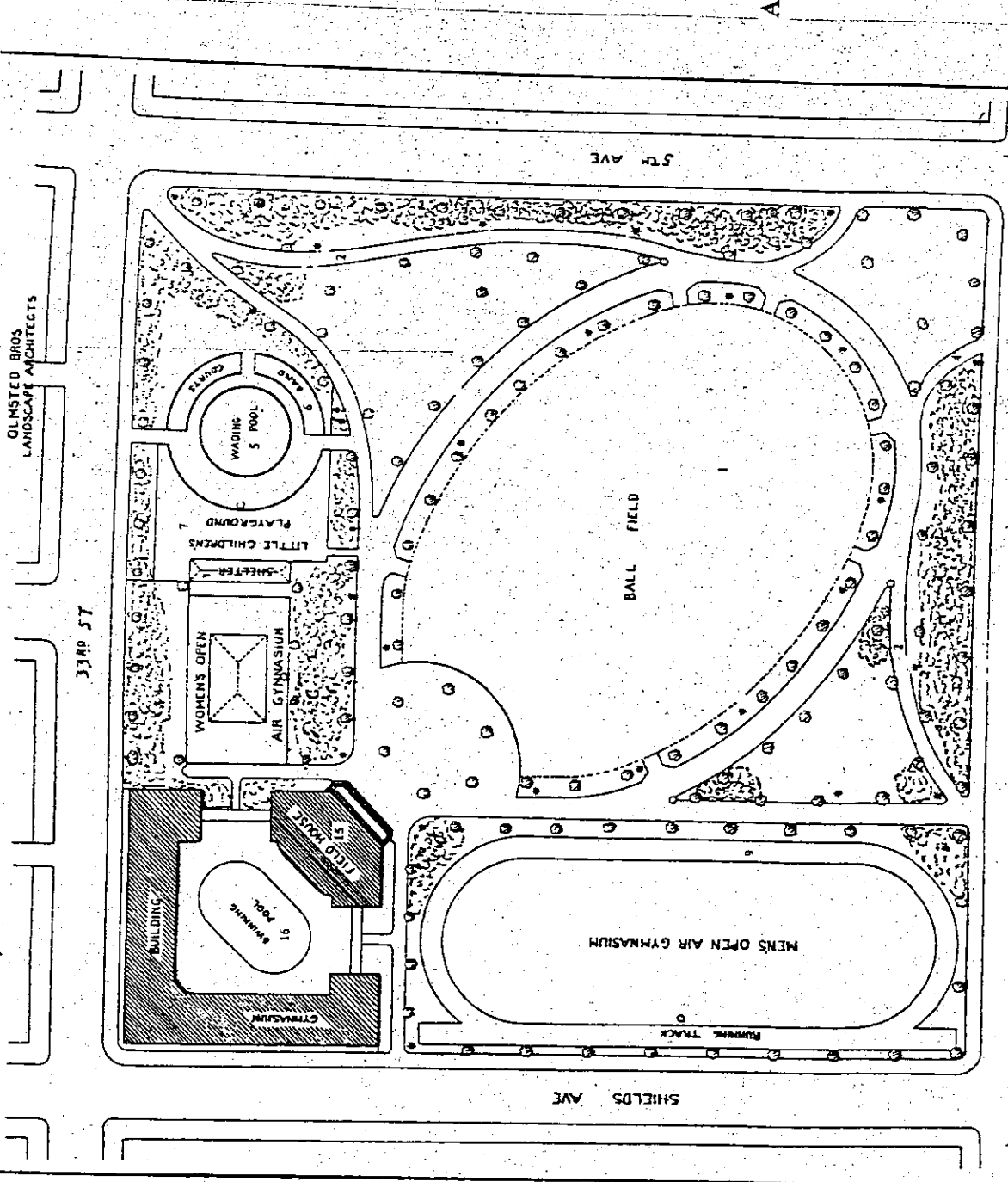
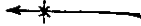
This the plot of land historically associated with the park during its period of significance.

SOUTH PARK COMMISSIONERS
ARMOUR SQUARE
CHICAGO

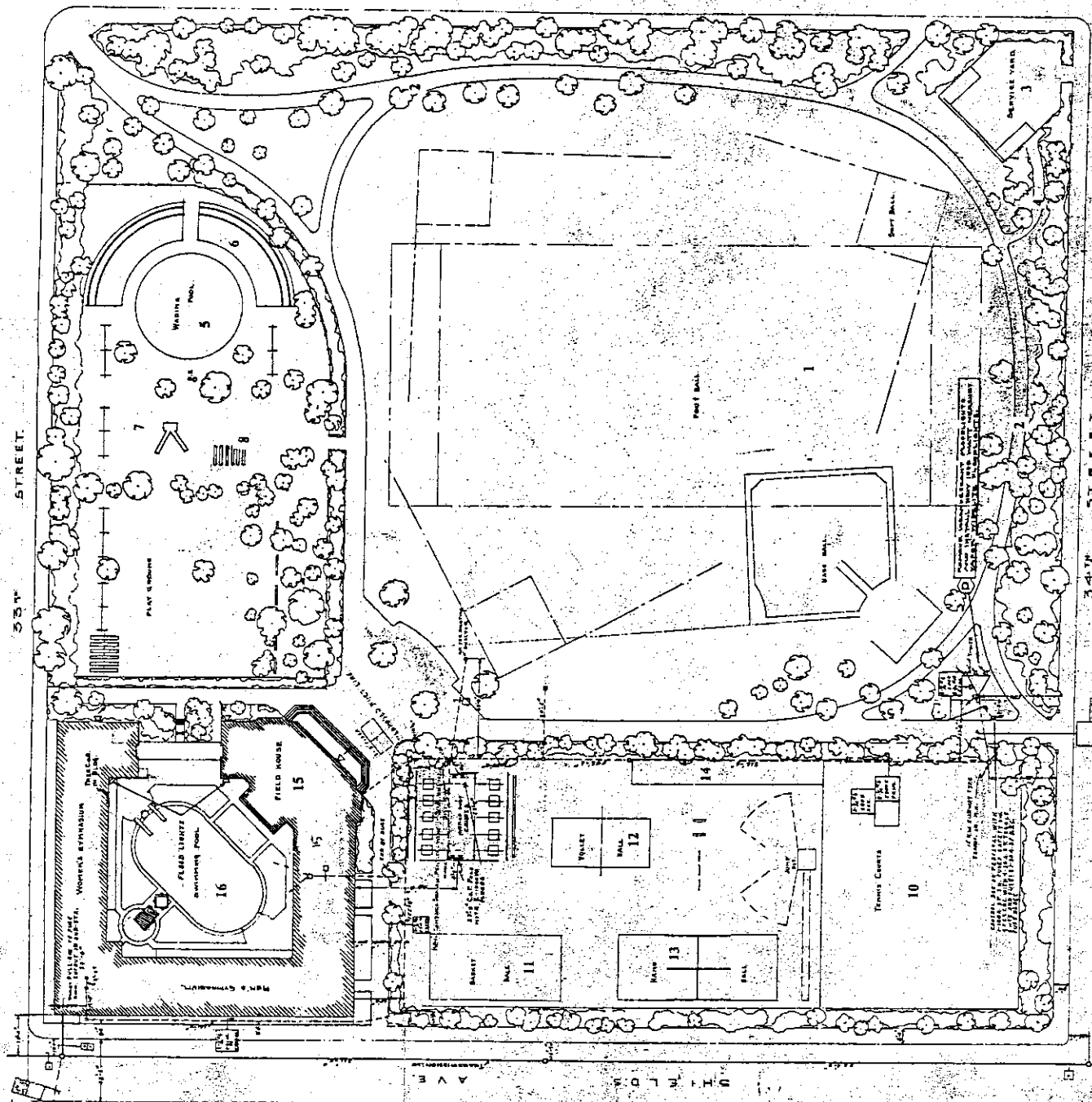
1804

OLMSTED BROS
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

3389 57



Olmsted Brother Plan A
Armour Square
Chicago, Cook County, IL



STREET
WELLS

33rd STREET

34th STREET

Chicago Park District Plan B

Armour Square
Chicago, Cook County IL

DATE	BY	REVISION
1/17/26	W.G. Gill	Original
1/17/26	W.G. Gill	Revised
1/17/26	W.G. Gill	Revised
1/17/26	W.G. Gill	Revised
1/17/26	W.G. Gill	Revised
1/17/26	W.G. Gill	Revised

NOTE:
FOR PRESENT PURPOSES SEE SHEET 'A'

SYMBOL
INDICATES POSITION

B

REV. D LEG. ITEM # SA. W.G. GILL

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT
ARMOUR SQUARE
ELECTRIC LIGHTING SYSTEM
(OUTSIDE)

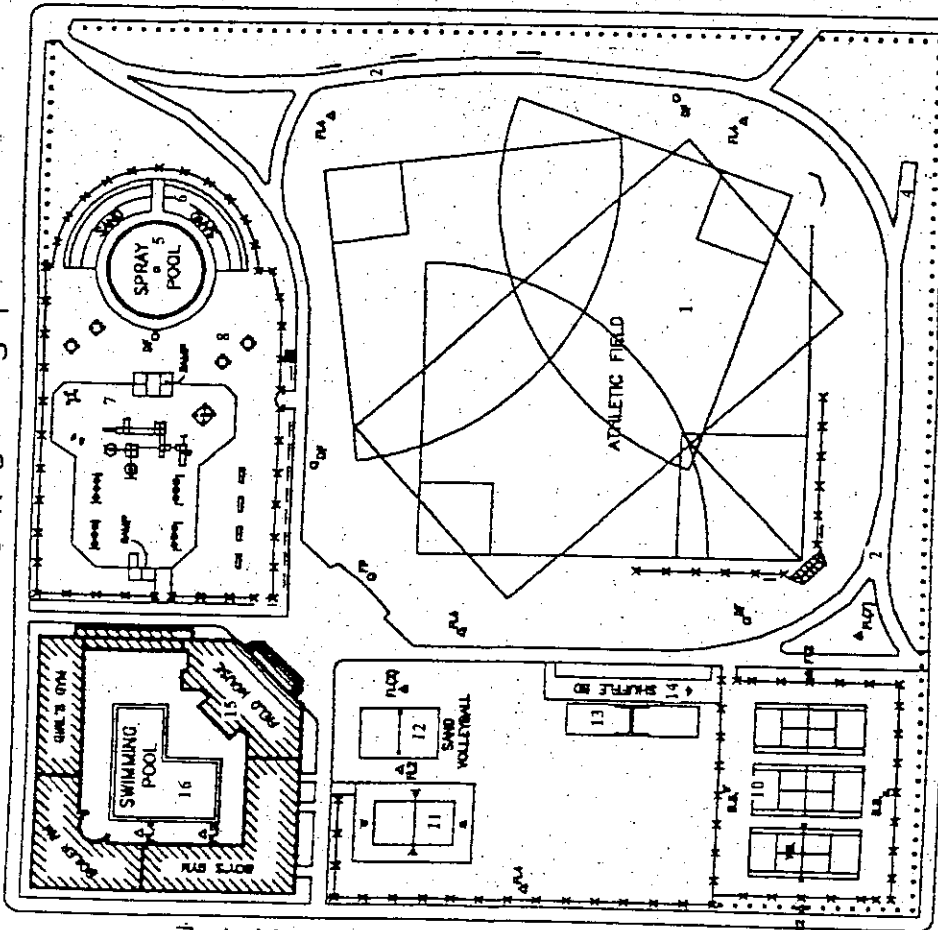
DRAWN BY: W.G. Gill
CHECKED BY: W.G. Gill
APPROVED BY: W.G. Gill
APPROVED BY: W.G. Gill
APPROVED BY: W.G. Gill
APPROVED BY: W.G. Gill
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"
DATE: DEC. 1926

E-E-1034

Amor 11

Landscape including Playfield (1) and Paths (2 and 4)--contributing
 Field house and Gymnasium Complex (3/15) --contributing
 Spraypool (5) --contributing
 Sandcourts (6) --contributing
 Soft surf. Playground (7)--non-contributing
 Picnic tables and chairs (8) --non-contributing
 Tennis Courts (10) --contributing
 Basketball Court (11) --contributing
 Sand Volleyball Court (12) --non-contributing
 Handball Court (13) --non-contributing
 Shuffleboard Court (14) --contributing
 Swimming Pool (16) --non-contributing

W 33RD ST



PARK NO. 3
 COMM. NO. 31A

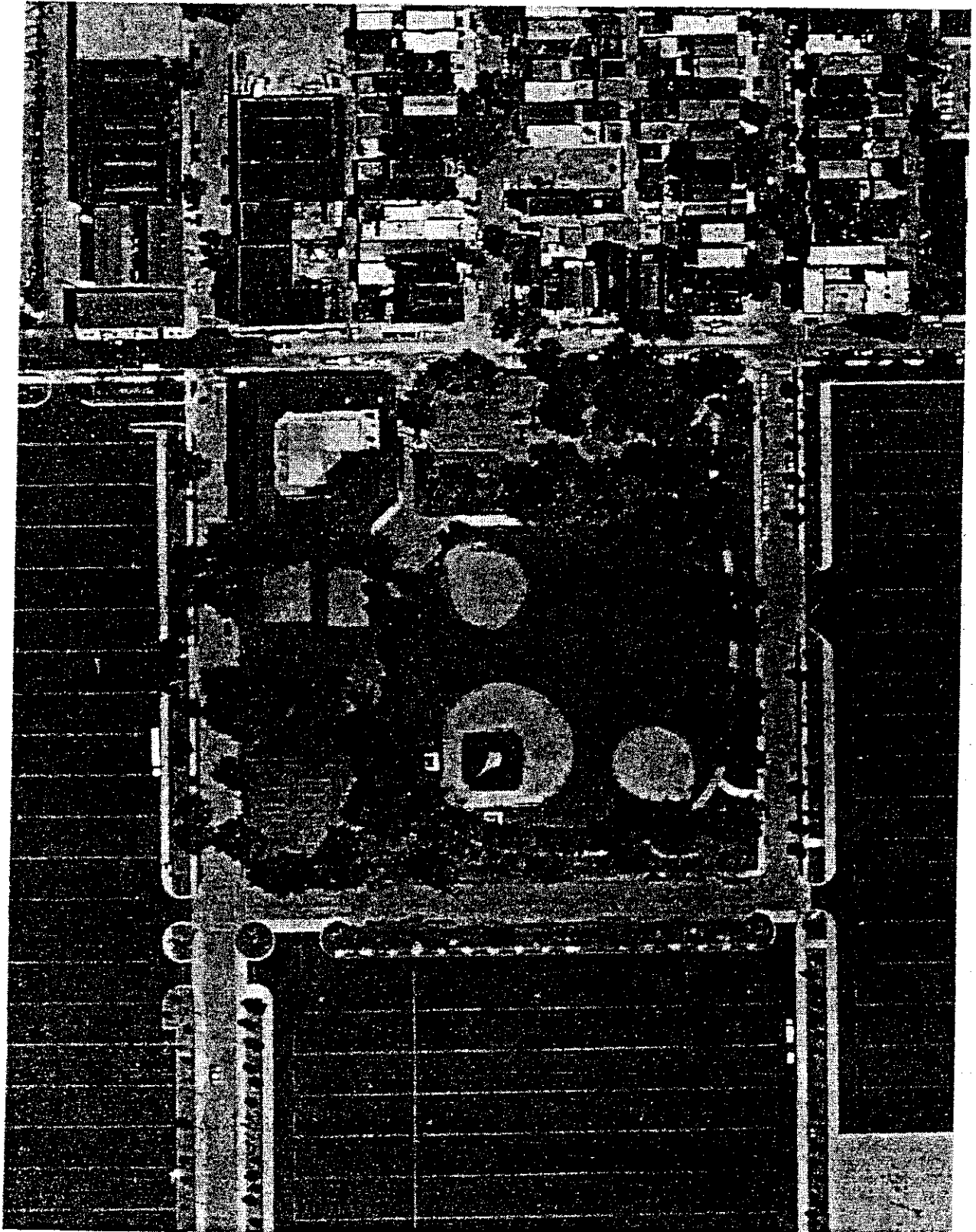
PLOT PLAN

ARMOUR SQUARE
 SCALE 1" = 100'
 CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

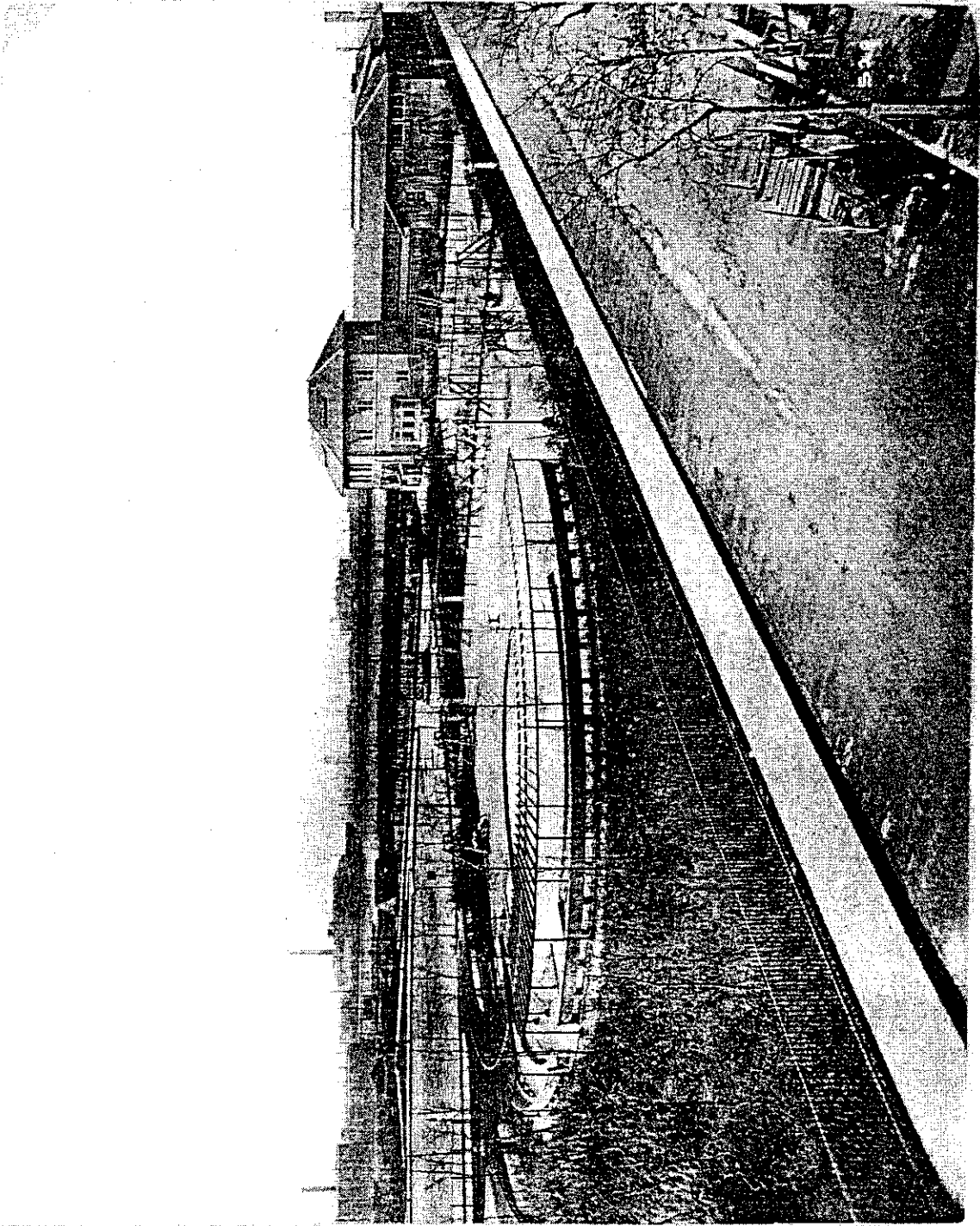
Recent Plan C
 Armour Square
 Chicago, Cook County, IL

3309 S SHIELDS AVE

DRAWN BY E.S. 1/99 C.PARKING



Armour Square
Chicago, Cook County, IL.



Historic Photograph
Armour Square
Chicago, Cook County, IL

Saint Johns vicinity, 97000347,
LISTED, 8/19/03

ARKANSAS, UNION COUNTY,
El Dorado Commercial Historic District,
Courthouse Square, portions of Main, Jefferson, Washington, Jackson, Cedar and
Locust Sts.,
El Dorado, 03000773,
LISTED, 8/21/03

CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES COUNTY,
Andalusia,
1471-1475 Havenhurst Dr.,
Los Angeles, 03000775,
LISTED, 8/21/03

COLORADO, DENVER COUNTY,
McPhee and McGinnity Paint Factory,
2519 Walnut St.,
Denver, 03000776,
LISTED, 8/21/03

COLORADO, SAN MIGUEL COUNTY,
Rio Grande Southern Railroad Trout Lake Water Tank,
along North Trout Lake Rd.,
Ophir vicinity, 03000777,
LISTED, 8/21/03

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA STATE EQUIVALENT,
Springland Springhouse--Springland (Boundary Increase),
3517 Springland Ln, NW,
Washington, 03000779,
LISTED, 8/21/03

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,
Armour Square,
Bounded by W 33rd St., W 34th Place, S. Wells Ave. and S. Shields Ave.,
Chicago, 03000789,
LISTED, 8/19/03
(Chicago Park District MPS)

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,
Calumet Park,
9801 South Avenue G,
Chicago, 03000788,
LISTED, 8/21/03
(Chicago Park District MPS)

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,
Davis Square,
Roughly bounded by W. 44th St., W, 45th St., S. Marshfield Ave. and S.
Hemitage Ave.,
Chicago, 03000787,
LISTED, 8/18/03
(Chicago Park District MPS)

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,
Palmolive Building,
919 N. Michigan Ave.,
Chicago, 03000784,
LISTED, 8/21/03

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,
Reid House,