


Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No:	CON.964	
Historic Name:	Concord Center Memorial Park - Monument Square	
Common Name:		
Address:	Monument Sq	
City/Town:	Concord	
Village/Neighborhood:	Concord Center;	
Local No:	H9-1693;	
Year Constructed:	C 1920	
Architect(s):	Prentiss, Cliff;	
Use(s):	Park;	
Significance:	Archaeology, Historic; Community Planning; Exploration Settlement; Landscape Architecture; Military; Politics Government; Recreation;	
Area(s):	CON.A, CON.DV	
Designation(s):	Local Historic District (03/05/1973); Nat'l Register District (09/13/1977);	
Building Materials:		
Demolished	No	

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125
www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

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FORM H - PARKS AND
LANDSCAPE FEATURES

Massachusetts Historical Commission
Massachusetts Archives Building, 220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

USGS Quad Concord Area(s) A DV Form No. 964 Forms within 965, 966
(Parcel H9-1693)

Town Concord

Place (neighborhood or village) Concord Center

Address west corner of Monument Square
and Main Street

Historic Name site of Middlesex Hotel and
County Jail

Ownership: private public

Type of Park or Landscape Feature
(check one):

- park
- green or common
- garden
- boulevard/parkway
- other _____
- farm land
- mine or quarry
- training field

Date of Construction early 20th C.

Source Town Reports

Landscape architect none

Location of Plans _____

none

Alterations/Intrusions (with dates) _____

(see page 2)

Condition good

Acreage 1.17 acres

Setting In center of Concord at edge of

town common and downtown commercial -

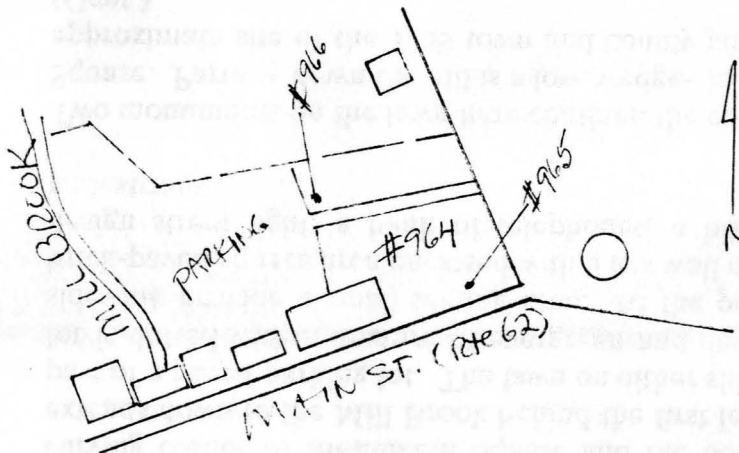
district. Backs up to Mill Brook.

roll frame number

96-II 13-15; 23

Sketch Map

Draw a map of the area indicating properties within it. Number each property for which individual inventory forms have been completed. Label streets, including route numbers, if any. Attach a separate sheet if space is not sufficient here. Indicate north.



Recorded by Anne Forbes, consultant

Organization Concord Historical Comm

Date 12/96

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FEB 03 1997

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CON. 964

LHD 31573

NAD 213177

PARKS AND LANDSCAPES FORM

VISUAL/DESIGN ASSESSMENT [X] *see continuation sheet*

Describe topography and layout. Note structures such as bandstands, gazebos, sheds, stone walls, monuments, and fountains. Note landscaping features such as formal plantings, agricultural plantings, and bodies of water. If possible, compare current appearance with original.

The east upper half of this 1.17-acre piece of land is landscaped as an open green space on the curving corner of Monument Square and the bottom of Main Street. Its narrower west portion extends down to the Mill Brook behind the first few buildings on the north side of "the Milldam" as part of a paved parking lot. The lawn on either side of the central asphalt drive down to the parking lot is dotted with a mixture of evergreen and deciduous trees, and two wooden benches near the sidewalk provide a small seating area. At the park's southwest corner on Main Street is a small brick-paved square area enclosed with a low wall of granite block, where another bench, an antique-design street light, a bank of telephones, a bike rack, and a signboard provide amenities for pedestrians.

Two monuments on the lawn here continue the commemorative function of the adjacent Monument Square. Partway down the hill is a low, wedge-shaped granite slab with a bronze plaque marking the approximate site of the 1789 town and county jail, which stood here until the early 1870's (#966). (Cont.)

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE [X] *see continuation sheet*

Discuss history of use. Evaluate the historical associations of the landscape/park with the community.

The memorial park at the west corner of Main Street and Monument Square, which today provides a place for passive recreation in Concord's busy downtown, has a long and important local and regional history. According to tradition, it was associated with the very founding of the town, for it was here under a large oak tree in 1636 that the Rev. Peter Bulkeley and Major Simon Willard confirmed the bargain with representatives of the local Indian tribe for the purchase of the six-mile-square plantation that became the town of Concord. One of the Indians who later described the occasion was named Jethro, and the tree was ever after known as "Jethro's Oak."

This property was part of the large houselot granted to the Rev. Peter Bulkeley, the senior of the two original ministers of Concord, whose house stood just beside the famous oak tree. Although there is some speculation about the exact location on the lot of the house and tree, historian Ruth Wheeler's later research placed them both here near the present corner. The house apparently descended to Dr. Timothy Minot, Jr. (1726-1804), who owned it in 1775, when, at the start of the Revolution, the Provincial Congress ordered the probate records removed to it for safekeeping. Wounded soldiers were cared for there on April 19, and it was also the residence of President Langdon of Harvard College when the college was removed here that summer. Early nineteenth-century descriptions of this side of the common indicate that the house may have later been moved a few rods west, adjacent to the Town School, and that it was destroyed in the early 1830's. (See Form #333--7 Lowell Road). (Cont.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES:

- Sanborn maps from 1903-1942.
- Concord Natural Resources Commission files.
- Concord Town Reports. (Cont.)

[X] Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places*. *If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.* *within bounds of existing NR District.

CON. 964

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Community

Property

Massachusetts Historical Commission
Massachusetts Archives Building
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Concord

Area
A

Site of Middlesex Hotel
and jail
Form No.
964; 965, 966

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE, cont.

In about 1789, when the county wanted to build the new jail, John Richardson, who had opened a tavern in the building at 70 Monument Square in the early 1780's (see Form #330), traded that building, with some land behind it for the jail, to the county for the former county house, which he opened as a hotel, called the Middlesex House, or Middlesex Hotel. It burned down in 1845, but was rebuilt the next year by its proprietor of the time, Thomas Wesson, into a large, 3 1/2-story hotel. It faced Main Street, and had a long veranda along its northeast side, facing the Square.

By the mid-1840's, however, the heyday of the Middlesex Hotel had passed. Standing at a major crossroads of stagecoach lines, and located a few steps from the courthouse, for decades it had been filled to capacity during the four yearly court terms, and the building, especially its first-floor bar room, was at the center of Concord's social life. With the coming of the Fitchburg Railroad in 1844, however, stage-coach traffic rapidly dwindled, and fewer jurors, lawyers, and justices stayed in town for court week. The growing temperance movement reduced the patronage of the bar, and business in general declined.

Since Richardson's time, when he himself was the jailer, the prisoners were provided with meals from the hotel kitchen. Later jailers and sheriffs included Capt. Abel Moore (from 1815 to 1843), who employed the prisoners to fill the swampy land on his Lexington Road farm (see Form #164--343-355 Lexington Road), followed by Samuel Staples, the jailer at the time of Thoreau's arrest. Sam Staples, who married Thomas Wesson's daughter in 1839, had been barkeeper at the hotel. When he became jailer, he employed his brother-in-law, Johnny Wesson, the "town fiddler," as turnkey, and Johnny entertained both the hotel guests and the prisoners with his fiddling.

In 1867, when the county removed the last of the courts from Concord and conveyed all the county property to the town (see Form #301), the jail was demolished. For a few years the town rented jail space from St. Bernard's Parish, which had bought the County House. Some of the granite blocks from the jail were moved to Bedford Street for the wall at Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, where the holes for the prison bars were still visible. Much of the rest of the material was sold, or reused in walls and sluices.

The hotel closed by the early 1880's, and stood empty and deteriorating for nearly twenty years, until 1900, when a group of four civic-minded citizens bought the property and had the building torn down. The next year, as a memorial of the Concord Fight, Town Meeting appropriated \$6650 to buy back the property for a park, and possibly for a future memorial hall or municipal building. One legacy from the hotel days of this site remains in the bulletin board at the south corner of the lot. Used as a general signboard for town events, it continues a tradition that harks back to the days when the large stable for the horses of the hotel customers stood at this end of the property, (later burned). In the words of J.S. Keyes, "This corner was the favorite bill posting place for the town, and had all the singers, circuses, caravans, and shows stuck on and painted on all over its front. What a list it would be if saved."

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VISUAL/DESIGN ASSESSMENT, cont.

The plaque commemorates the 1846 imprisonment in the jail of Henry Thoreau, and reads thus:

Henry David Thoreau was imprisoned for one night in a jail on this site, July, 1846 for refusing to recognize the right of the state to collect taxes from him in support of slavery--an episode made famous in his essay "Civil Disobedience."

Closer to Main Street is a vertical, rough granite monument on a square base (#965). On its face are three bronze plaques. The largest plaque is dedicated to the memory of the Concord men who died in the Second World War. Below it is a narrow plaque to the two soldiers killed in the "Korean Conflict", and another dedicated to the one local man who died in the Dominican Republic and five in the Vietnam War. Beside the granite-walled enclosure is a metal sign for the Milldam and Jethro's Oak.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE, cont.

The Rev. Peter Bulkeley's lot had stretched from this point along the southwest edge of the common past the foot of the present Lowell Road. In 1687, Capt. Timothy Wheeler, who had later acquired much of the Rev. Bulkeley's former property, bequeathed to the town the entire three acres of land on this side of the common, stretching from today's Main Street to 7 Lowell Road, and bounded on the west side by the Mill Brook. On the three acres the town later built a schoolhouse, sold off a portion of the rest, and, in an arrangement with the county, constructed a combined town hall and county courthouse (1721), a granite jail (1788-89), and provided a house for the jailers and county court officers.

The easternmost of those buildings, the jail and the original "county" house, where the jailer and court officials were housed, stood on this property. Little is known about that first county house. (According to one theory, the old Bulkeley/Minot House was not removed from the site, but was enlarged to become the county house, instead.) The jail, which stood near or astride the eastern waste-water outlet from the millpond, was built in 1788-9 to replace the former wooden jail which had been built behind the South Burying Ground in 1755-56 during the French and Indian War. A fairly large building, the 1789 jail was three stories high, 65 by 32 feet, and constructed of granite blocks. It had 18 "apartments", seven for criminals, and the others probably for debtors, who were allowed to leave the building, at least in the daytime. They were confined to "jail limits" of about an eighth of a mile south and east, however. Still, within those limits, some of the debtor prisoners, such as compass-maker Benjamin Haggar, (see Jarvis), managed to find jobs or carry on their former trades. The jail's best-known association is with Henry Thoreau, who spent the night here in the summer of 1846, when he refused to pay taxes in protest of government policies on slavery and the Mexican War. (A house and barn had formerly stood on the one-acre plot for the granite jail. The fate of the barn is unknown, but the house may have been moved several rods west. Possibly, that house, and not the Bulkeley House, was the one moved to 7 Lowell Road. (Cont.)

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

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Form No.
964; 965, 966;
993; 994

Area
A

VISUAL/DESIGN ASSESSMENT, cont.

A group of Vietnam veterans were associate members of the committee, and supplied most of the volunteer labor in the construction, remembering their buddies who would be named on the monuments. The two new stones, from a Vermont quarry owned by a man who "worked on the Melvin Memorial," were bought--one for the Korean veterans, and one for those of the Dominican Republic and Vietnam conflicts. Landscaping for what was now a true memorial park was designed and largely installed by Cliff Prentiss, a Concord native, veteran, and landscape architect. Some tall trees that had formerly backed the 1940s monument were removed, and new varieties installed. Most of the materials were given at cost by local businesses. After working on weekends through the autumn of 1997 (all labor was volunteer,) the new memorial park was formally dedicated on December 6, 1997. The ceremony was attended by over a thousand people, and highlighted by a surprise flyby of an F-16, arranged by Dick Hale of Shoemaker & Jennings.

BIBLIOGRAPHY, cont.

Interview with Molly Bergin, War Memorial Committee, March, 2001.

INDIVIDUAL RESOURCES INCLUDED ON THE SITE, #964:

<u>MHC#</u>	<u>Historic Name</u>	<u>Date</u>
965	World War II Monument	late 1940s
966	Middlesex County Jail Marker	early 20th C.
9003 993	Korean Conflict Monument	1997
9004 994	Vietnam/Dominican Republic Monument	1997

CON. 964

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A DV

964; 965, 966;

993; 994

9003 9004

Additional information by Sara W. Wilbur and Anne Forbes, March, 2001:

VISUAL/DESIGN ASSESSMENT, cont.

In 1997, the area around the mid-twentieth-century war monument (#965) at the south edge of the former Middlesex Hotel and jail site was landscaped and redesigned into a small memorial park. Two more granite monuments were added, one on either side of the existing stone. Smaller and lower than their predecessor, these are vertical slabs of pink-gray granite, about 45 inches high, with smooth front and rear faces and rough edges, mounted on rectangular granite bases. The top plane of each stone is slanted upward toward the taller monument between them. Each has a large rectangular bronze plaque fastened to the front, south face. The plaque on the westernmost monument lists the names of Concord residents killed in the Korean Conflict of 1950-53 (#993), and the eastern one (#994), lists those who died in the Dominican Republic in 1965-66 and in Vietnam between 1961 and 1975. The reverse (north) face of each slab is incised with the insignias of the five armed forces of the United States.

9003

9004

The two small lower bronze plaques on the large, center monument (#965), have been replaced by a new pink-gray granite plaque which reads "A grateful community dedicates this memorial to those who served our country."

A narrow path formerly leading from the sidewalk to the central war monument has been replaced by a broad brick walk and circular ground-level terrace around the three monuments. The outside edge of both the walk and brick circle is lined with granite cobblestones. A 6-foot-long rectangular granite-slab bench is positioned on either side of the walk. A flat-topped, curving fieldstone wall, about two feet high, forms a backdrop to the memorials. Behind the wall, a few tall trees have been removed and replaced with lower coniferous evergreens and rhododendrons.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE, cont.

The first war memorial on this site, originally the **World War II Monument** (#965,) was designed in the late 1940s as part of a high school project to honor the war dead. The proposal submitted by Peggy Flynn Wright, a high school student at the time, was the winning project. Over the next three decades, the two bronze plaques commemorating Concord residents who died in Korea, Vietnam, and the Dominican Republic were added below the large World War II plaque on the upper section of the stone. In 1996-67, Peggy Wright's daughter, Meg Gaudet, raised the idea of adding individual monuments to Concord residents killed in wars and conflicts after 1945. A committee consisting of Ms. Gaudet, Molly Bergin and Tom Hudner, Concord's Congressional Medal of Honor winner, was appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The Concord Rotary Club helped raise the needed funds for the two new monuments and the landscaping of the area.

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INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

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Area
A

BIBLIOGRAPHY, cont.

Concord Free Library: photo and pamphlet files.

Heaton, Mary L. "The Middlesex Hotel--the Glory and the Fall." The Concord Patriot. 5/15/1975.

Jarvis. Traditions and Reminiscences.

Keyes. "Houses in Concord".

"The Middlesex Hotel--a Bygone Era." Undated article.

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Social Circle Memoirs: John Richardson.

Swayne. The Story of Concord. 1906.

Walcott. Concord in the Colonial Period. 1885.

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Thoreau / Jail Site
Tablet
(CON. 966)



Vietnam Memorial
(CON. 965)



Looking Southwest



Site of Middlesex Hotel and Jail