

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Promontory Point

other names/site number 55<sup>th</sup> Street Promontory

Name of Multiple Property Listing \_\_\_\_\_

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

## 2. Location

street & number 5491 South Shore Drive  not for publication

city or town Chicago  vicinity

state Illinois county Cook zip code 60615

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance: \_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide \_\_\_ local  
Applicable National Register Criteria: \_\_\_ A \_\_\_ B \_\_\_ C \_\_\_ D

Signature of certifying official/Title: Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- \_\_\_ entered in the National Register
- \_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register
- \_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register
- \_\_\_ removed from the National Register
- \_\_\_ other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box.)

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

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
1	0	site
6	3	Structure
1	1	Object
9	4	<b>Total</b>

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LANDSCAPE/ park  
RECREATION & CULTURE/ outdoor rec.  
OTHER/ field house (pavilion)  
   
   
   
 

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LANDSCAPE/ park  
RECREATION & CULTURE/ outdoor rec.  
OTHER/ field house (pavilion)  
   
   
   
 

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER/ French eclectic  
OTHER/ Prairie style landscape  
   
   
   
 

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE  
walls: STONE/ Lannon stone  
   
roof: CERAMIC TILE  
other: Earth, trees, shrubs, lawn

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### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity).

#### Summary Paragraph

Promontory Point is a 40-acre landscape located at the south end of Chicago's 600-acre Burnham Park, a lakefront park made of landfill. Although Burnham Park was first envisioned in the 1890s, it evolved slowly and in stages. Landfill operations to create the southern part of Burnham Park commenced in 1922. After the 1934 consolidation of the Chicago Park District, Works Progress Administration (WPA) funding spurred Promontory Point's completion between 1936 and 1939. Landscape architect Alfred Caldwell designed the site's Prairie style landscape. Architect Emanuel V. Buchsbaum produced its French eclectic style towered pavilion that is sometimes likened to a lighthouse. In 1989, Caldwell worked with the Chicago Park District to oversee the revitalization of Promontory Point's landscape. Shortly thereafter, the Park District rehabilitated the historic pavilion.

Today, the site retains substantial integrity. Altogether, it possesses nine contributing resources including its landscape – counted as a single contributing site; one building – the stone pavilion; six structures – four council rings, the 55<sup>th</sup> Street underpass, and the step stone revetments bordering the lakeshore; as well as one object, the *David Wallach Memorial Fountain*. The only non-contributing resources are one object — a flagpole; and three structures — a soft surface playground, a concrete platform with “deflectors” built in the mid- 1960s to protect for shoreline from deterioration, and an early 2000s accessible ramp and walkway constructed at the southernmost side of the site bordering Jackson Park. Although the historic step-stone revetments are currently in need of repair, the site's landscape and pavilion have received substantial rehabilitation work over the years. Additionally, this 40-acre peninsula is the last remaining stretch of Chicago's lakefront parkland that still has its historic step-stone revetments. Today, Promontory Point retains strong integrity and is worthy of listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

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### Narrative Description

Promontory Point (known originally as the 55<sup>th</sup> Street Promontory) is located at the south end of Burnham Park between E. 54<sup>th</sup> and E. 56<sup>th</sup> streets. The 40-acre greenspace flanks South Lake Shore Drive (SLSD). A peninsula that juts into Lake Michigan, Promontory Point's eastern side is bordered by Lake Michigan and its western side is bounded by South Shore Drive. First envisioned in the 1890s, the site was created from landfill and improved between 1922 and 1939.

Landscape architect Alfred Caldwell said that in producing Promontory Point's planting plan, he sought to express “a sense of space and a sense of the power of nature and the power of the sea.”<sup>1</sup> This site, which provides exquisite views, has gentle, but dramatic grading, naturalistic plantings and council rings, a whimsical stone pavilion, and step-stone revetment ledges that terrace down to a lower platform near the lake. With substantial rehabilitation work undertaken in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Promontory Point is a special and lovely park site that remains much as it did when it was completed in 1939.

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<sup>1</sup> John McDermott, Jr. and Victoria Post Ranney, ed. *Promontory Point: Lake Michigan at 55<sup>th</sup> Street 1937-1987*, brochure printed by Friends of the Parks and Hyde Park Historical Society, 1987.

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South Lake Shore Drive divides the site's eastern and western sides. The eastern side, which possesses the majority of the site's landscape, is composed of the promontory or peninsula that juts into Lake Michigan. The landform has an irregular convex curved shape. At the peninsula's north and south sides, concave curves create large bay-like spaces in the lake. Along the lakeside, the step-stone ledges terrace down to the platform that edges the water. At the site's northernmost stretch, there are two areas where piles of riprap stone have been installed and the platform is no longer intact. With the exception of this area and the far southeastern side of the site's lake edge, the entire upper level of Promontory Point's landscape terraces down to the platform with tiers of step-stone revetments.

These tiered revetments, a character-defining feature installed when Promontory Point was initially constructed in the 1930s, are composed of large cut limestone blocks. (Geologists often consider this kind of quarry stone as dolomite.<sup>2</sup>) Along most of the site's edge, these step-stone revetments have as many as four tiers that lead down to the lowest platform level. Along the north and south sides of the peninsula, this lower platform is composed of cut stone blocks of various sizes with concrete mortar between them. Over the years, the platform has continuously been subjected to wave action, and a number of stones have shifted, creating uneven surfaces.

Along the center curving part of Promontory Point's peninsular edge, the lower platform is composed of concrete. Approximately 80 evenly spaced concrete deflectors are located on this platform. Composed of a rectangular form, each of the deflectors is 2' x 8' x 2' in size. The platform and deflectors were part of a shoreline repair project designed and specified by Chicago Park District in-house engineers in 1964, and constructed by the J.M. Corbett Company the following year.<sup>3</sup> During this project, the adjacent tiers of step-stone revetments were retained and reset.

While the 1965 concrete platform and deflectors were constructed during Promontory Point's period of significance, they have been deemed as a non-contributing feature because their design and materials do not relate to the original adjacent limestone revetments and platform (figure 11). The lower concrete platform is flanked by remaining stretches of the original stone platform, on the northeast and the southeast sides of the site. Despite the 1960s alterations, almost the entire eastern edge of Promontory Point retains the historic tiered step-stone revetments, which rise up to the parkland. The only exception is along the northern riprap areas and the southernmost part of the parkland's edge.

Along the southernmost stretch of Promontory Point's east side, following a line on axis with E. 56<sup>th</sup> Street to a line on axis with the south end of the parking lot, the area east of the Point's perimeter landscape is composed of a concrete accessible walkway edged on the park side by cut stone blocks. These stones are not tiered like the step-stone revetments, but rather, the stone blocks are wedged against the slope of the landscape. This is the only part of Promontory Point's eastern edge that has been altered by shoreline improvement work undertaken in the 2000s. This project included a concrete platform and accessible walkway that ramps down to the south, providing access to the 57<sup>th</sup> Street Beach in Jackson Park. Steel sheet piling and rip-rap stones are located at the water's edge in this area. (Historically much of Chicago's lakefront was edged with step-stone revetments. However, most of the original stone

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<sup>2</sup> Cheryl Nimz, et. al., *A Walking Guide to the History and Features of Burnham Park*, Illinois State Geological Survey and Chicago Park District, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Chicago Park District, "Burnham Park: E. 55<sup>th</sup> Street Promontory New Concrete Walk," (3 sheets) July 16 and Sept. 16, 1964, and Photograph 0001\_010\_006,021, Chicago Park District Records: Drawings/ Photographs, Special Collections, Chicago Public Library.

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revetments have been replaced with concrete, and Promontory Point is the only location that retains a large stretch of historic step-stone revetments.)

Chicago Park District designers had first developed plans for Promontory Point's grading and general layout including the pathway system in 1935, prior to Alfred Caldwell's involvement.<sup>4</sup> The implemented design largely follows this plan, and the final layout is shown in Caldwell's 1936 planting plan (figure 1).<sup>5</sup> Today, the site's layout closely follow this original design.

South Lake Shore Drive (SLSD), known originally as Leif Ericson Drive, extends through the site in a shallow convex curved configuration. Automobiles are not permitted on the eastern side of Promontory Point. (Maintenance vehicles and trucks affiliated with caterers and other special events vendors are allowed to drive slowly on the pathways.) Pedestrian access is provided by an underpass that extends beneath SLSD and connects the eastern and western sides of the site.

Designed by in-house Chicago Park District architects, this underpass was constructed in 1936.<sup>6</sup> Its long tunnel extends across the width of SLSD. Composed of concrete and faced with random ashlar limestone, the underpass has identical east and west elevations. Each side features a shallow segmental arched opening. A series of identical simple limestone voussoirs line the top of each arch. (There is no keystone.) Flanking the arched opening, a pair of vertical buttress elements project from the abutment walls. On the east side, wooden kiosks have been mounted on these buttress elements.

The east and west limestone facades of the underpass rise up to a shallow inverted V-shape, forming a parapet wall along the sidewalks that line SLSD. Limestone copings cap these parapet walls that serve as the top of the underpass. At regular intervals, there are crenellations that pierce the coping. Along with the buttress-like elements, these crenellations convey a streamlined expression of the Gothic Revival style.

There are concrete knee-walls extending from the north and side sides of both facades of the underpass. (These presumably protect the landscape from damage by maintenance vehicles.) On the underpass's east side, the path extends easterly and leads to Promontory Point's stretch of the Chicago Lakefront Trail. This 18-mile asphalt path for pedestrians, joggers, and bicyclists, stretches from Ardmore Beach on the north to South Shore Cultural Center Park on the south. Generally following the curve of SLSD, the Lakefront Trail serves as the western portion of Promontory Point's circuit path.

The *David Wallach Fountain* is located just west of the Lakefront Trail, on axis with the path that extends easterly from the underpass. A small semi-circular area, paved with asphalt and edged by low semi-circular concrete coping, provides a cove in which the sculptural fountain is located. In 2016, a small rectangular bronze plaque was installed into this knee wall at the lower portion of the cove. The plaque commemorates the restoration and re-dedication of the monument.

Artists Frederick Cleveland Hibbard and Elisabeth Haseltine Hibbard produced the *David Wallach Fountain* in 1939. The monument is composed of a bronze sculptural fawn surmounting a red granite base

<sup>4</sup> Chicago Park District, Landscape Planning Section, "Burnham Park: 55<sup>th</sup> Street Promontory General and Grading Plan," Revised, Nov. 16, 1935. Chicago Park District Records: Drawings, Special Collections, Chicago Public Library.

<sup>5</sup> Chicago Park District, Landscape Planning Section, "Burnham Park: Planting Plan 55<sup>th</sup> Street Promontory Areas," Sept. 1, 1936. (This plan is initialed AC and can be clearly identified as a plan produced by Alfred Caldwell.)

<sup>6</sup> Chicago Park District, *Second Annual Report of the Chicago Park District*. Chicago: 1936, p. 55.

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with built-in fountains. The bronze figure, which has a turquoise patina, depicts a young deer in a restful, curled-up position. The Wallach Fountain's granite base is mounted on an octagonal platform that is only a couple inches tall.

Modernistic in form, the base of the *David Wallach Fountain* is made of polished "Dakota Mahogany granite" that had been "mined near St. Cloud, Minn."<sup>7</sup> Serving as the pedestal for the bronze figure, the base's upper portion is circular in plan and follows the curvature of bronze pad on which the fawn lies. This circular pedestal rises from a lower rectangular base with chamfered corners. A semi-circular water trough for dogs and birds extends from the front of the base at the ground plane, and three granite water drinking fountains for humans project at each of the two sides and the back of the monument. The granite drinking fountains are rectangular in form with chamfered corners. Each has a circular water basin and a spigot.

The title "The David Wallach Fountain" is incised in the granite platform beneath the sculpture. The title is flanked by simple Art Deco style foliage ornamentation carved into the granite. There are also rectangular panels with similar carved stylized leafy ornamentation on the chamfered corners of the drinking fountains. The *Wallach Fountain* retains very strong integrity. In 2016, the monument was restored and rededicated in honor of Hyde Park residents Betty and Bob Wissler.

The landscape area along the Lakefront Trail is lower than SLSD. The trail slopes up to the same level as SLSD towards the Point's far north and south ends. At these areas, the trail paths fork near the landscape perimeters. At the forks, the paths extend towards the park's circuit path, forming triangular swaths of landscape at both the north and south sides. Though somewhat sparse today, these areas retain their historic character of lawn with irregular groupings of trees and shrubs.

Grading of the landscape on east side of Promontory Point is quite magnificent. The grade increases as the land slopes up towards the east. As one walks along the circuit path up the gentle slope in a curving easterly direction, the views are lovely and constantly changing. Though grade changes are seemingly subtle as one moves through the space, the site is dramatically higher at its east side near the pavilion than the west side.

The circuit path surrounds the site's central meadow—a broad lawn that is edged with trees, and shrubs. Along the circuit path, views of the pavilion are often completely obscured during summertime because of the slope and dense tree canopy. In some places, openings in the canopy provide glimpses of the pavilion's limestone tower and adjacent American flag. The flagpole (which was installed during the late 1970s or 1980s) stands just west of the building.

Concrete and wood benches are located at various intervals along the north and south sides of the curving circuit path. These are the standard type of benches that the Chicago Park District began installing in parks throughout the city in the mid-1930s. Most of Promontory Point's benches are of this concrete and wooden slat type, however, several modern black metal benches were added along the circuit path in the 2000s. These metal benches, which have small memorial plaques, sit on concrete pads.

<sup>7</sup> "David Wallach Memorial Fountain Dedicated Today," *Hyde Park Herald*, December 21, 1993, vol. 51, n. 4, p.4.

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Towards the eastern end of the Point, a slightly narrower path bisects the meadow and links the north and south sides of the circuit path. Towards the north side, this bisecting path connects with a short curving pathway that leads to the pavilion. On its north side, the bisecting path forms a fork, with a small triangular lawn space between the short path extensions.

The pavilion stands in a landscaped area defined on its west by the pathway that bisects the meadow and on its east by the Point's circuit path. Original grading plans indicate that Chicago Park District designers conceived this area as the highest point of Promontory Point's landscape.<sup>8</sup> The gentle but steep grading made this area into an attractive perch for the pavilion.

Designed by Chicago Park District architectural designer Emanuel V. Buchsbaum and his staff architects, Promontory Point's pavilion was conceived as a combination comfort station–shelter building. (As additional programming was provided there in later years, the building became known as the field house.) The Park District constructed the pavilion and made it available for public use in 1937, although some additional work was undertaken in the basement two years later.<sup>9</sup> The building was designed in a simplified expression of the French eclectic style, and can be considered an example of the towered and asymmetrical subtype.<sup>10</sup>

Composed of Lannon stone, red tile roofs, and copper gutters and downspouts with a turquoise patina, the pavilion is essentially V-shaped in plan. The building comprises two rectangular one-and-a-half story wings; the north wing is somewhat longer and taller than the south wing. Asymmetrically placed at the intersection of the wings, a round tower rises to a height of four stories. The rectangular wings have gabled roofs and the tower has a conical roof. The range of textures and colors apparent in the building's masonry enlivens its facades. Of particular note are the rusticated outer surfaces of the stones, an effect further amplified by the random order in which they were laid. The stones range in color from pale beige to yellowish and tan. White mortar provides an attractive, though subtle, contrast to the stone. The building has bluestone terraces that extend along both its west and east sides.

The pavilion's main entryway is situated within the west façade of the round tower. In recent years, the Park District built an unobtrusive accessible ramp leading to this front door. Composed of concrete and with a grade shallow enough so as not to require handrails, the ramp bisects the bluestone terrace. Over the years, the westerly bluestone terrace was often damaged by trucks that drove up to the building to drop off food and supplies for special events. A recent restoration project for this terrace included the installation of several large concrete bollards near the edge of the concrete ramp and along the south side of the western bluestone terrace to prevent vehicles from driving onto the terrace. There is another bluestone terrace along the pavilion's eastern façade. A steep stairway leads from this terrace to the east side of the circuit path.

The tall vertical tower retains its original double paneled oak doors at the building's west facade. Above the front doors, a segmental arched transom window has five lights. Stone voussoirs stretch above the arched opening, with a keystone just slightly larger than the other voussoirs. The tower houses a spiral

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<sup>8</sup> Chicago Park District, Landscape Planning Section, "Burnham Park: 55<sup>th</sup> Street Promontory General and Grading Plan," Revised, Nov. 16, 1935. Chicago Park District Records: Drawings, Special Collections, Chicago Public Library.

<sup>9</sup> Chicago Park District, *Third Annual Report of the Chicago Park District*. Chicago: 1937, p. 34; and *Fifth Annual Report of the Chicago Park District*. Chicago: 1939, p. 39.

<sup>10</sup> Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, revised edition, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015, pp. 485-87.

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staircase with overlooks at each level. At the second story overlook, a pair of French doors with divided lights opens onto a balcony. This balcony surmounts the front doorway on the pavilion's west façade. The balcony has simple rustic-looking railings made of "adzed oak" stained dark brown.<sup>11</sup>

The third story has two deeply inset small rectangular windows with divided lights on the north and south sides of the tower. At the fourth story, considered the "observation floor," the tower is encircled by four evenly spaced sets of three rectangular arched openings.<sup>12</sup> (These openings originally had no windows. Historic photographs reveal that they were closed up during wintertime.) They remained open for many years. The Chicago Park District installed fixed windows with horizontally-configured divided lights in the openings around the 1950s or 1960s. Topping the tower's conical tile roof, a bronze weather vane features a ship motif. Some park visitors liken the pavilion tower to a light house, and the weather vane's nautical theme reinforces this comparison.

The building's rectangular north wing includes what was originally known as the shelter. This room has exposed wooden trusses. Its east and west façades each have four rectangular openings topped by oak lintels. During the building's 1991 rehabilitation project, these openings were filled in with French doors, allowing for year-round use of the pavilion. Chicago Park District in-house architects designed these French doors to match the original doors overlooking the tower balcony. They are flanked by divided side lights, and topped with divided transom lights located beneath the original oak lintels.

Just north of the shelter wing, a small adjoining rectangular mass houses the bathrooms. This gabled extension of the north wing is slightly lower in height than the rest of the north wing. The east and west façades of this bathroom extension each have an oak door and two windows. These doors provide entry points allowing the bathrooms to remain open when the rest of the building are closed. The north façade of this bathroom extension includes two double windows with divided lights on the first story and a stationary porthole window in the gable end above them.

The shelter's east façade has a secondary entrance. This door is directly opposite and in line with the tower entrance. Its double oak door is topped by a divided light transom. The four openings with French doors lie directly to the south. Just north, a rounded blind recessed arch is surmounted by voussoirs. Within this recessed bay, a pair of casement windows with divided lights is topped by an oak lintel.

The south façade of the shelter wing intersects with the south façade of the south wing. This intersecting south façade has two windows that sit within blind recessed rounded arches matching the single one at the east façade of the shelter wing. Each of these openings houses a casement window that echoes the one on the other façade. Just northeast of these two arched recessions, there is a simple rectangular opening housing a window with divided lights topped by an oak lintel.

The pavilion's south wing is oriented on an approximate north-south axis at a diagonal from the tower. Behind the tower, within the intersection between the north and south wings, lie an office and a hall. The room within the diagonally oriented south wing, originally known as the lounge, features a handsome stone fireplace along its south wall.

<sup>11</sup> Chicago Park District, "Burnham Park: 55<sup>th</sup> Street Promontory Shelter, Elevations and Sections," January 2, 1936.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*



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Along the south wing's west façade, each window is mounted within a slightly recessed bay. There are four segmental arched openings, each with voussiors above an oak lintel. These openings house a fixed steel sash window flanked by a pair of casement windows. The east façade generally matches the west, however; it lacks the recessed bays. At the base of this façade, basement windows are set within a visible concrete water table. Along the south façade, two narrow rectangular steel sash windows flank the chimney. The chimney stack rises above the façade, and within the gable end, three rectangular recessions in the stonework create additional visual interest. At the base of this façade, basement windows are set within a concrete water table, as can be seen along the east façade of this wing.

The building's 1991 project followed the United States Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Rehabilitation. Since that time, the Park District has made other improvements to the pavilion. The stone has been cleaned and tuck-pointed. Its copper gutters and downspouts, red ceramic tile roof, and other character defining features are well intact, and the pavilion retains excellent integrity today.

The pavilion's rehabilitation was undertaken as a larger effort to revitalize Promontory Point. In the late 1980s, when the Park District was undergoing a major reform effort, Alfred Caldwell, then in his late eighties and still teaching at the Illinois Institute of Technology, agreed to donate his consulting services to revitalize Promontory Point's landscape. He worked closely with Park District landscape architects. The work included replacing the site's four poorly-designed and constructed hexagonal benches (figure 8) with the kind of council rings that Caldwell had originally envisioned. These stone council rings are all located on the perimeter landscapes, in the lawn areas between the circuit path and the step-stone revetments. Originally bluestone paths led to each of the hexagons. During the replacement project, two hexagon benches still retained those bluestone paths, and remnant paving stones remain today.

Three of the council rings are located near the eastern end of the Point, and one is along the north perimeter, kitty-corner from the Lakefront Trail. All four of the council rings follow the same design. Composed of knee-walls made of horizontal tiers of cut Lannon stone, they comprise two semi-circles with a narrow opening between them. At various intervals, the seating walls have small openings and a flat semi-circular capstone stretches across the top of both semi-circles. Each council ring has a flat hearthstone in the middle to provide a place for campfires. Although the council rings were built more than two decades after the park's period of significance, they have been deemed as contributing features because they follow Caldwell's original plans, and were designed by him when he directed the park's 1989 landscape rehabilitation effort.

During the 1989 initiative, Caldwell assessed the park's existing trees, which included tall shade trees that had been specified on his original plans such as aspen, maple, linden and American hophornbeam, as well as understory trees such as hawthorn trees and crab apples. Hundreds of native maples, hybridized elms, hawthorns, and crab apples were planted during this project. Throughout the 1990s, the Chicago Park District continued planting additional plant materials from Caldwell's original palette including serviceberry and sumac shrubs.

Although Promontory Point is often thought of as only the area east of SLSD, the site also includes landscapes and a parking lot west of SLSD. Along this western area, a paved path runs parallel and follows the curvature of SLSD. Historically, E. 55<sup>th</sup> Street intersected with SLSD. In the 1970s, this intersection was removed and E. 55<sup>th</sup> was truncated where it intersects with the curved path that runs parallel and to the west of SLSD.

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E. 55<sup>th</sup> Street divides the western side of Promontory Point into two wedge-shaped spaces. The area between E. 55<sup>th</sup> Street and E. 56<sup>th</sup> Street is almost entirely composed of a surface parking lot. Paved with asphalt, this lot is enclosed by black metal picket fencing. The lot is edged by a narrow buffer of lawn and trees on its east and west sides, and a small lawn area with a few scattered shade trees on its south side.

North of E. 55<sup>th</sup> Street, South Shore Drive juts out somewhat to the west, and has a fork with an eastern extension along the northwest side of Promontory Point. Historically, this eastern extension intersected with SLSD, but like the E. 55<sup>th</sup> Street intersection, it was altered in the 1970s, and truncated at the curving path that runs parallel with South Shore Drive.

The northerly wedged-shape area has lawn with irregular groupings of trees and shrubs. There is another path adjacent to E. 55<sup>th</sup> Street that curves to the north, running parallel with the outer curving pathway to its east. Towards the north, near the area where South Shore Drive also has a fork, this pedestrian path has a fork. Here, short extensions of the path form a triangular lawn space. Within this triangular lawn space, there is a soft-surface playground. Composed of low walls made of plastic timbers and filled with wood chips, this feature includes colorful playground equipment. This playground is deemed as a non-contributing feature because it was constructed well after the Point's period of significance.

Both east and west of SLSD, Promontory Point's landscapes are much sparser today than the historic condition. When the site was first designed and implemented in the 1930s, the WPA provided the Chicago Park District with funding levels and labor forces that far surpass opportunities provided during subsequent periods. In addition to decline of landscape plantings, the shoreline revetments have become seriously deteriorated, although some repairs were made over the years. But despite these issues, today Promontory Point strongly conveys its historic character. Its pavilion retains an extremely high level of integrity and the landscape possesses good integrity. The 40-acre greenspace retains all of its contributing features and has very few non-contributing features. This well-loved and beautiful historic park is clearly worthy of listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

### **Promontory Point Historic District Nomination - Features**

<u>Contributing Features</u>	<u>Non-contributing Features</u>
<u>Buildings</u>	<u>Buildings</u>
Pavilion	0
<u>Sites</u>	<u>Sites</u>
Landscape including paths, meadow, plantings, benches, SLSD, and other roadways	0
<u>Structures</u>	<u>Structures</u>
4 Council Rings	Soft-Surface Playground
Step-stone revetments	Concrete platform and "deflectors"
55 <sup>th</sup> Street Underpass	Accessible ramp and walkway
<u>Objects</u>	<u>Objects</u>
<i>David Wallach Fountain</i>	Flag Pole

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**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.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ENTERTAINMENT/ RECREATION

SOCIAL HISTORY

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1922 – 1967

**Significant Dates**

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

**Cultural Affiliation** (if applicable)

**Architect/Builder**

Alfred Caldwell

Emanuel Valentine Buchsbaum

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations).

Promontory Point, a 40-acre landscape located along the south end of Chicago's Burnham Park, meets with Criteria A and C for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Possessing local significance, Promontory Point qualifies under Criterion A because of its importance in social history and the history of entertainment/recreation, and criterion C due to its significance in landscape architecture and architectural history.

In the 1890s, Chicago's famous architect Daniel Hudson Burnham first envisioned what is now 600-acre Burnham Park as a vast stretch of lakefront greenspace with islands, lagoons, and a promontory. Due to legal and funding issues, however, landfill operations to create the parkland did not commence until the 1920s. The Great Depression caused further delays. Finally, during the mid-to-late 1930s, the newly-consolidated Chicago Park District used Works Progress Administration (WPA) funding to complete Promontory Point.

Two in-house Park District designers, landscape architect Alfred Caldwell and architect Emanuel V. Buchsbaum, created plans for the site and its stone pavilion in the 1930s. Now considered the "last master" Prairie style landscape architect, Caldwell designed Promontory Point's naturalistic landscape to take full advantage of its splendid lakefront location.<sup>13</sup> Architect Emanuel V. Buchsbaum and the in-house designers whom he supervised produced the site's stone pavilion as a combination shelter and comfort station. Designed in a simplified expression of the French Eclectic style, the building has a prominent central tower with an overlook that provides magnificent views of the park and Lake Michigan.

Over the years, generations of South Siders have enjoyed Promontory Point as a place to stroll, relax, convene with nature, have picnics, swim off of the step-stone revetments, and attend cultural programs, classes, and other events. Though the United States Army commandeered a large area of Promontory Point for a Nike radar installation during the Cold War, the site was returned to public use in the early 1970s. The Chicago Park District rehabilitated the landscape and building in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The site possesses local significance in social and entertainment/recreational history, and landscape and architectural significance as a place conceived by architect and planner Daniel H. Burnham, and designed by Alfred Caldwell and Emanuel V. Buchsbaum. The site's period of significance spans from 1922, when landscape operations began at this part of Burnham Park, to 1967, the current fifty-year cut-off date for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Promontory Point, a man-made peninsula in Burnham Park, was created between the early 1920s and the late 1930s. Chicago's renowned architect and planner Daniel Hudson Burnham (1846–1912) began sketching what would eventually become Burnham Park shortly after the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Having served as Director of Works for the World's Fair (which took place in Jackson Park), Burnham proposed preserving part of the fair site and creating a lakefront park "that would connect the exposition grounds with the business district in the center of the city."<sup>14</sup> He envisioned a long ribbon of greenspace with islands, a promontory, a

<sup>13</sup> Dennis Domer, "The Last Master," *Inland Architect*, v. 116, n. 1, March 1999, pp. 69-75.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas S. Hines, *Burnham of Chicago: Architect and Planner*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974, pp. 313-14.

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harbor and lagoons, boat houses, bicycle paths, and a scenic roadway. His proposal was originally considered the South Shore Development.

By the mid-1890s, Burnham had begun sharing his ideas for the South Shore Development with prominent Chicagoans. One the most influential was railroad magnate James Ellsworth (1849–1925), then President of the South Park Commission, a governmental agency that had formed in 1869 to create and manage South Park (later named Jackson and Washington Parks) as well as any proposed parks and boulevards south of the Chicago River. In October of 1896, Ellsworth hosted a dinner party for Burnham to present his plans for the South Shore Development to “such luminaries as Marshall Field and George Pullman.”<sup>15</sup> Burnham’s after-dinner speech was so well-received that a couple of days later, when the *Chicago Tribune* reported about the evening, the South Shore Development was described as “one of the grandest schemes ever contemplated in municipal improvement.”<sup>16</sup>

Numerous obstacles stood in the way of creating the South Shore Development. At that time the South Park Commission did not possess riparian rights to the lakefront site. Some years earlier, those rights had been transferred by the City of Chicago to the Illinois Central Railroad Company (ICRR). In order to move forward, the South Park Commission would have to negotiate for riparian rights, resolve other complex legal issues, identify funding sources for such an ambitious construction project, and obtain approvals from every level of government. Since Lake Michigan is a navigable body of water, even the United States Secretary of War would have to sign off before landfill operations could begin.

As the South Park Commissioners confronted these issues, Burnham continued refining his designs. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, he had hired a talented young architect, Edward H. Bennett (1874–1954), who helped Burnham incorporate his lakefront park ideas in their seminal 1909 *Plan of Chicago*. The Plan’s detailed illustrations show greenspace located between Grant and Jackson Parks and edged on the west by a scenic boulevard. East of the “mainland,” an inner lagoon was meant to be enclosed by a series linear offshore islands, with a wide promontory jutting into Lake Michigan near the park’s southern boundary.

Burnham and Bennett’s proposal for new landfill parkland extended beyond Chicago’s South Side. In fact, they envisioned an uninterrupted ribbon of lakefront greenspace from Jackson Park to Wilmette. Downplaying the ambitious scope of the project, the architects asserted that this great stretch of Lake Michigan parkland would provide “a continuous playground for the people,” and could “be built by utilizing the wastage of from the city and excavated material at practically no cost.”<sup>17</sup>

After the publication of Burnham and Bennett’s *Plan of Chicago*, representatives of the City of Chicago and South Park Commission were deeply committed to creating the proposed lakefront greenspace between Grant and Jackson Parks. Obtaining riparian rights to the lakefront was a pivotal issue. The City Council formed the Chicago Reclamation Commission in 1910 which sought to insure that rights to the lakefront would “be forever held by the City of Chicago or by the several park boards within said city in trust for all the people for recreation and park purposes.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Carl Smith, *The Plan of Chicago: Daniel Burnham and the Remaking of the American City*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006, p. 26.

<sup>16</sup> “The Lake-Front Scheme,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 12, 1896, p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> Daniel H. Burnham and Edward H. Bennett, *Plan of Chicago, Centennial Edition*, Chicago: Commercial Club of Chicago, 1909 (reprinted 2009), plate L.

<sup>18</sup> Dwight L. Akers, Ed. *The City Club Bulletin*, Chicago: City Club of Chicago, vol. VI, no. 15, December 16, 1913, p. 309.

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Daniel H. Burnham died on June 1, 1912. Less than two weeks later, the State of Illinois adopted an act granting the South Park Commissioners the right to enter into agreements with property owners or to undertake condemnation procedures to create the proposed new park. The commissioners and representatives of ICRR made an agreement to allow the South Shore Development to move forward. Through this agreement the South Park Commission would receive riparian rights in exchange for a new train station site near 12<sup>th</sup> Street, as well as substantial acreage so that the ICRR could increase the railroad's right-of-way. A citizens' committee argued that this deal gave too many concessions to the railroad company. As a result, a supplemental agreement was drafted requiring the ICRR to provide "further depression of tracks and limitation of the use of the right of way" and insuring "that the newly acquired portion would not be used until at least four tracks were electrified."<sup>19</sup> The citizens' committee supported the amended version and the Circuit Court of Cook County confirmed this agreement on July 10, 1912.

With the resolution of the riparian rights issue, the South Park Commission began efforts to gain all other necessary approvals for the project. But this complex process dragged on for years. Negotiations with the United States government were especially slow after America entered WWI.<sup>20</sup> Finally, in the summer of 1919, the City Council approved the Lake Front—Illinois Central Ordinance. By early that winter, this ordinance had been approved by the South Park Commissioners and ICRR, and the Secretary of War signed the permit giving the commissioners the authority to proceed with plans. On February 24, 1920, the public signified its support for the project "by voting, nearly three to one, an initial twenty million dollar bond issue," to fund the first phase of construction, allowing landfill operations to begin.<sup>21</sup>

In 1921, Linn White, Chief Engineer to the South Park Commissioners, published an article entitled "A Great Project: Chicago's South Shore Development Underway." Though twelve years had passed since detailed illustrations for the linear park had appeared in the *Plan of Chicago*, it is clear that the commissioners and its in-house designers remained committed to Burnham's vision. The article's rendering, entitled *1920 Preliminary Plan for the Lake Shore Development* is only a slightly modified version of Burnham and Bennett's 1909 drawings. The text explains that the proposed parkland would enclose a linear harbor of "over a half a square mile of water," and goes on to describe the landform that would take shape near the park's south side:<sup>22</sup>

"At the point closest to Jackson Park, the largest of the five big islands, three hundred and fifteen acres in extent, will lie, swinging outward at its southern end, to form a sheltered bay off of Jackson Park, at the south end of which a peninsular arm will be projected to lend harbor adjoining this bay, for sailboats in getting to and from their anchorage in that park's southernmost lagoon."<sup>23</sup>

Although the proposed series of five linear islands, inner lagoon, and boating harbor never fully materialized, the 55<sup>th</sup> Street Promontory (which would become known as Promontory Point) developed at the mainland's southern end, in a form reminiscent of the peninsulas shown in the 1909 and 1920 plans.

A pamphlet published by the Illinois State Geological Survey and the Chicago Park District (figure 3) describes the "complicated" process of "making land" to create Burnham Park.<sup>24</sup> The first step involved

<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth Halsey, *The Development of Public Recreation in Metropolitan Chicago*, Chicago: Chicago Recreation Commission, 1941, p. 55.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, pp. 55-56.

<sup>22</sup> Linn White, "A Great Project: Chicago's South Shore Development Under Way," *Parks and Recreation*, vol. 5, 1921, p. 254.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Cheryl Nimz, et. al., *A Walking Guide to the History and Features of Burnham Park*, Illinois State Geological Survey and Chicago

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building the outer bulkhead or seawall at the eastern edge of the proposed new parkland. This bulkhead would hold in the fill and provide protection against wave erosion. To make this bulkhead, workers had to drive parallel rows of enormous timber pilings into the bottom of the lake. The two rows of piles were anchored by tie rods to form cribs. These cribs would be filled with large rocks and topped with four-to-eight-ton quarry blocks. “Once the rock filled timber cribs were in place, fill was added between the cribs and the shoreline” (figure 2).<sup>25</sup>

The fill included clean construction debris and other dumped materials. Sand was also pumped in from the bottom of the lake or brought in from dunes in Indiana or Michigan. Along the outer eastern edge of some stretches of the new parkland (including what would become Promontory Point), “limestone blocks were set on the course bedding to form the stone platform.”<sup>26</sup> During the last steps of the construction process, “limestone blocks were placed in step-stone fashion” from the inner side of the lower platform up towards the edge of the park and its landscape.<sup>27</sup>

In the fall of 1920, the South Park Commissioners hired contractors to begin the process of creating landfill by building the bulkhead between 11<sup>th</sup> Place and south of 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. Completing the northern part of this area was a high priority because it would provide the site for the new Field Museum of Natural History. The long-awaited building (which is officially in Grant Park) opened on May 3, 1921. By early 1922, contractors had begun building 6,315 linear feet of bulkhead between 50<sup>th</sup> and 57<sup>th</sup> Streets.<sup>28</sup> Within the next couple of years, a bulkhead stretched between 23<sup>rd</sup> and 39<sup>th</sup> Streets, but little else was done to create fill towards the south end of the park. At that time, filling operations had progressed much further toward the north end of the park near the Field Museum. In fact, landfill had been completed just south of the Museum, creating the site for Soldier Field (known originally as the Grant Park Stadium), which opened on October 9, 1924.

Just east of the Field Museum, the South Park Commissioners agreed that another landfill area would provide a site for the Shedd Aquarium. Planning for the aquarium began in 1924, and ground was broken for the building three years later. Southeast of this location, the park commissioners filled in what became known as Northerly Island. The northernmost of Burnham’s proposed chain of islands, this was the only one of the series to be realized. (A causeway later replaced Northerly Island’s original bridge, and the landform became a peninsula.)

Although landfill operations to complete the whole park were underway by the mid-1920s, South Siders were becoming frustrated by the slow pace of construction. People were especially aggravated that so little progress had been made on the roadway that would become South Lake Shore Drive (figure 2). In 1926, the *Hyde Park Herald* reported, “Rapid progress is being made in the work of filling in the lakefront and the piling which marks the outer line of the projected outer drive.”<sup>29</sup> But the same article describes the enormous amount of work still needed just to fill the site for the roadway. Another 1926 *Herald* article was entitled “An Historical Sketch of a Rubbish Pile: After Fourteen Years Ashmen Are

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Park District, 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Cyril Galvin, *Preservation Plans for Limestone Revetment Promontory Point*, prepared for the Hyde Park Historical Society under the direction of the Executive Committee of the Community Task Force for Promontory Point, October, 2002, p. 21.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> South Park Commissioners, *Annual Report of the South Park Commissioners for the Fiscal Year Ending February 28, 1922*, Chicago, 1922, p. 39.

<sup>29</sup> *Hyde Park Herald*, July 16, 1926, vol. X, Issue 21, p. 4.

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Making the Fill Very Leisurely.”<sup>30</sup> This publication noted that along its north end near Grant Park, the project had progressed to the point where sand was being pumped in over the fill. But at the south end, between 53<sup>rd</sup> and 55<sup>th</sup> Streets, the work moved along so slowly that one could watch as “all sorts of rubbish—ashes, tin cans, broken brick, plastering from walls of demolished buildings,” and “dirt from excavations” were hauled in by carts and wheelbarrows and dumped into the pit-like fill site.<sup>31</sup>

By early 1927, progress had been substantial enough to prompt the South Park Commissioners to officially name South Shore Development for Daniel H. Burnham. Fifteen years earlier, the Chicago Plan Commission had suggested that the “memory of the architect be perpetuated” by naming the lakefront park for Burnham.<sup>32</sup> But the site did yet exist and the commissioners likely waited until they could provide a fitting tribute to the talented architect and planner who had made so many contributions to the South Park System, including the ambitious original plans for the lakefront park. In January of 1927, Edward J. Kelly, then President of the South Park Board (and later Chicago’s mayor from 1933 to 1947), presented the South Park Board of Commissioners with the proposal to name Daniel H. Burnham Park, noting the importance of commemorating the “originator of the Chicago plan which is being realized in detail.”<sup>33</sup>

As Burnham Park continued developing in the late 1920s, prominent Chicagoans began discussing the possibility of holding a world’s fair there. Although Mayor William Hale Thompson did not support the proposal to host second world’s fair in Chicago, the group solicited support from General Charles S. Dawes, who had become the United States Vice President under Herbert Hoover in 1929. That year, the Illinois State Assembly adopted an enabling act that would allow Chicago to host a world’s fair in 1933.<sup>34</sup> Dawes suggested that the fair should be privately financed, so the local non-profit World’s Fair Organization formed to raise funds through a public campaign and memberships. Despite the fact the fund-raising took place in the early years of the Great Depression, the effort proved to be extremely successful.

As preparations for the fair were underway, landfill operations accelerated. Most of Burnham Park’s 600 acres had been filled in by the early 1930s, but many areas still consisted only of raw fill. At this time, unfinished riprap edged much of the park’s eastern boundary. The fairgrounds extended from Grant Park south to 39<sup>th</sup> Street. Beyond the fair’s southern boundary, the landfill and grading remained unfinished. A Century of Progress, which celebrated Chicago during its centennial year, opened on May 27, 1933. Due to the fair’s tremendous popularity and the need to generate enough revenue to pay back its debt, the A Century of Progress was extended through a second season, finally closing on October 31, 1934.

By the 1930s, the South Park Commission was one of 22 independent park districts operating contemporaneously in Chicago. The Great Depression soon rendered most, and likely all, of these governmental agencies financially insolvent. For years, civic leaders suggested that it was too unwieldy to have so many park districts in the city. “To reduce duplicative services, streamline operations, and gain access to funding through President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal and its Works Progress Administration (WPA), voters approved the Park Consolidation Act,” thereby establishing the Chicago Park District in 1934.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>30</sup> “An Historical Sketch of a Rubbish Pile,” *Hyde Park Herald*, April 23, 1926, vol. X, Issue 9, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> “Burnham’s Name Proposed for New Lake Shore Park,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 17, 1912, p. 8.

<sup>33</sup> “Proposed South Park Drive is Named for Leif Erickson,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 26, 1927, p. 12.

<sup>34</sup> Lenox R. Lohr, *Fair Management: The Story of A Century of Progress Exposition*, Chicago: Cuneo Press, 1952, p. 52.

<sup>35</sup> Julia S. Bachrach, *The City in a Garden: A History of Chicago’s Parks*, second edition, Chicago: Center for American Places at Columbia College, 2012, p. 35.



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Mayor Edward J. Kelly (1876–1950), had previously served as Chief Engineer of the Chicago Sanitary District and President of the South Park Board, and “was known to Chicagoans to be sincerely devoted to the interest of park development to the city.”<sup>36</sup> He appointed several previous Lincoln and West Park Commissioners to serve on the board of the newly-formed Chicago Park District. For the position of General Superintendent, Kelly selected his brother-in-law, George T. Donoghue (1884–1962), a professional engineer who had served as the Superintendent to South Park District since 1926. Many high ranking professionals from the South Park Commission were also given executive staff positions at the Chicago Park District. One of the major goals of the WPA was to create jobs and the newly organized Park District hired a large, highly qualified staff, especially for its engineering and landscape divisions.

The engineering division provided a broad scope of services ranging from architectural design to traffic engineering to repairs and construction. Ralph H. Burke (1884 – 1956), a previous Sanitary District engineer who had become a prominent WPA administrator in Illinois, headed this department.<sup>37</sup> Burke helped secure millions of dollars of funding for Chicago Park District projects. This included significant funds to complete Burnham Park’s shore protection, landscape improvements, and a combination shelter-comfort station for the 55<sup>th</sup> Street Promontory. By this time, South Lake Shore Drive (then called Leif Ericson Drive) was largely completed, and the WPA-funded improvements included the construction of grade separations that would provide pedestrian access points to Burnham Park’s east side, including a new underpass just north of 55<sup>th</sup> Street (figure 4).

At the time of consolidation, the Chicago Park District inherited dozens of field houses in various levels of disrepair. Rather than building additional field houses, the administration focused on repairing existing ones while also designing and building other new structures to offer the public additional “comfort, convenience and enjoyment” within the parks.<sup>38</sup> Projects included bathhouse facilities for swimming pools, as well as comfort stations, and combination comfort station and shelter buildings. The 55<sup>th</sup> Street Promontory pavilion would be one of these combination buildings.

Plans, specifications, and construction documents for the new buildings were created by in-house architects including and under the direction of Emanuel Valentine Buchsbaum (1907–1995). Buchsbaum had studied architecture at the Armour Institute (now IIT) and there he received the Hutchinson Medal for the Highest Average in Design.<sup>39</sup> After college, he worked for five years in the office of Chicago architect R. Harold Zook. Buchsbaum became a South Park Commission draftsman in 1930. He soon “had complete charge of all building design in the various parks,” including preparing “preliminary sketches for consideration of the board,” developing cost estimates, making working drawings, writing specifications, and supervising “the actual construction.”<sup>40</sup> Buchsbaum received the title of architectural designer sometime after the Chicago Park District consolidated in 1934.

Buchsbaum and his staff architects produced plans for the 55<sup>th</sup> Street Promontory pavilion between 1936 and 1937.<sup>41</sup> Most of the drawings were notated as “approved by” Buchsbaum and “drawn by” subordinate

<sup>36</sup> “Chicago Park Systems Consolidated,” *Parks and Recreation*, vol. XVIII, no. 5, January, 1935, p. 165.

<sup>37</sup> “Ralph Burke: Park and City Engineer Dies,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Aug. 24, 1956, p. C9.

<sup>38</sup> E.V. Buchsbaum, “Architectural Activities of the Chicago Park District,” *Illinois Society of Architects Monthly Bulletin*, vol. 20, no. 10-11, April-May, 1936.

<sup>39</sup> *American Architects Directory*, American Institute of Architects, 1956.

<sup>40</sup> Emanuel V. Buchsbaum, Personal Papers, Typewritten list of positions and salaries with a heading written in pencil heading “CPD Feb. 22, 1938,” in the archival box entitled Buchsbaum, Chicago Park District Special Collections, 1938, item 8.

<sup>41</sup> Chicago Public Library Special Collections. The finding aid for the Chicago Park District Records: Drawings is available at: <https://www.chipublib.org/fa-chicago-park-district-records/>.

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architects. Sometimes the staff architects are listed only by initials, and even if names can be determined, they tend to be obscure figures in Chicago's architectural history. One exception is several plans for the pavilion that were notated "drawn by F. G. Dillard, architect."<sup>42</sup> A graduate of Harvard University, Frank G. Dillard (1881–1949) established a Chicago firm known as Dillard & Bacon architects in the 1910s.<sup>43</sup> In the 1920s, Dillard formed a partnership with two brothers Charles R. and Lindley T. Rowe. The firm of Rowe, Dillard, and Rowe was known for producing handsome Tudor Revival style structures such as the Grigsby Estate in Barrington Hills, Illinois, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and two homes located on South Deere Park Drive in Highland Park. Like numerous other local firms, Rowe, Dillard, and Rowe did not survive the Depression. It is uncertain as to how long Frank G. Dillard worked for the Chicago Park District, but this was likely his last position prior to retirement.

Many of the Chicago Park District's new bath houses, comfort stations, and shelters of the mid-to-late 1930s expressed historical Revival styles. For instance, brick Colonial Revival style comfort stations were built in several locations including Humboldt, Columbus, and Douglas Parks. Other WPA-funded comfort stations and combination comfort station and shelters were made of Lannon stone, and some were considered the English Stone type of buildings. Composed of the same kind of cut Lannon stone, the Promontory pavilion was designed in a simplified expression of the French Eclectic style. As explained in *A Field Guide to American Houses*, one of the principal subtypes of the style is the towered version. "This common subtype is immediately identifiable by the presence of a round tower with a high, conical roof."<sup>44</sup> As is generally the case, the front doorway is housed in the tower of the Promontory pavilion (figure 9).

According to a 1987 brochure, Buchsbaum's "picturesque, distinctive building," makes "playful allusions to a castle or lighthouse," that "were appropriate for the setting."<sup>45</sup> The same set of plans for comfort stations and shelters were often built in multiple parks during this era. However, Burnham Park's Promontory Point was the only place where the Chicago Park District erected a towered French eclectic pavilion.

Even as Promontory Point's pavilion was under construction, the site underwent its final grading and revetment construction (figure 5). This enormous project encompassed over 400,000 square yards of area. With landscape designs produced in 1936, grading, planting, and constructing the final step-stone limestone revetments were all completed by 1939 (figure 6). Complete planting plans for this huge and prominent lakefront site were assigned to one of the most talented, but lowest ranking members of the Chicago Park District's landscape division staff, Alfred Caldwell.

Considered the last great Prairie style landscape architect of the twentieth century, Alfred Caldwell (1903–1998) was also an accomplished planner, architect, teacher, and writer.<sup>46</sup> Although Caldwell's contributions had been largely overlooked for decades, his work began receiving critical and popular attention towards the end of his life. Two books chronicling Caldwell's accomplishments were published during his lifetime—*Architecture and Nature* by Werner Blaser in 1984, and *Alfred Caldwell: The Life and Work of a Prairie School*

<sup>42</sup> Dillard's drawings include: Chicago Park District Burnham Park "Elevations and Sections of 55<sup>th</sup> Street Promontory Shelter," January 2, 1936. Chicago Public Library Special Collections: Chicago Park District Records: Drawings 0027-0012-1936.

<sup>43</sup> *Harvard Graduate's Magazine*, vol. 25, 1917, p. 593.

<sup>44</sup> Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, revised edition, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015, p. 485.

<sup>45</sup> John McDermott, Jr. and Victoria Post Ranney, ed. *Promontory Point: Lake Michigan at 55<sup>th</sup> Street 1937-1987*, brochure printed by Friends of the Parks and Hyde Park Historical Society, 1987.

<sup>46</sup> Julia Sniderman Bachrach, *National Historic Landmark Nomination Form* "Lincoln Park Lily Pool," United States Department of the Interior. Designated Feb. 17, 2006, p. 12.

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*Landscape Architect* in 1997. Edited by Dennis Domer, the latter includes a significant compilation of Caldwell's own writings.

Preservationists have been increasingly aware of and concerned about protecting Caldwell-designed landscapes that remain intact today. Several examples of his work have been designated as landmarks. Chicago's Riis and Lincoln Parks are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. (A National Register nomination of Eagle Point Park in Dubuque, Iowa is under consideration in 2017.) The Lincoln Park Lily Pool (now officially named the Alfred Caldwell Lily Pool) is a Chicago Landmark and also a National Historic Landmark. Detroit Michigan's Lafayette Park, an urban renewal development created by Mies van der Rohe, Ludwig Hilberseimer, and Alfred Caldwell, received National Historic Landmark status in 2015.

Born in St. Louis and raised in Chicago, Caldwell attended Lakeview High School, where he was inspired by his science teacher Dr. Herman Silas Pepoon (1860–1941), an accomplished botanist and author of *An Annotated Flora of the Chicago Region*. Pepoon encouraged Caldwell's interest in native plants and his desire to become a landscape architect. Charles A. Tirrell, a landscape architect who was married to one of Caldwell's cousins, was also supportive of young Alfred. Tirrell took him to meet renowned designer and conservationist Jens Jensen (1860–1951) sometime before Alfred entered the Landscape Architecture Department at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. Due to financial problems and his disillusionment with the department's bias towards Beaux-Arts Classicism, Caldwell dropped out of school after about a year.<sup>47</sup>

When he returned to Chicago, Caldwell needed a job. So he went to see a previous acquaintance, George T. Donoghue, who then had a firm that built speculative apartment buildings. Caldwell's timing was good because Donoghue was about to be appointed as superintendent of the South Park Commission and would not have the time to continue running a private firm. Caldwell told Donoghue that he wanted to "start and landscaping business," and asked the successful engineer and real estate developer to form a partnership with him.<sup>48</sup> Donoghue was amused by this audacious request, but agreed to it.

Caldwell learned a great deal from his new position, but after a year or so, he became bored with the small projects. Around 1925, Charles Tirrell suggested that he should ask Jens Jensen for a job. Caldwell visited Jensen at his Highland Park studio and was enthralled when Jensen asked him to begin working the following day. As explained by the Lincoln Park Lily Pool National Historic Landmark nomination form, for over five years, Caldwell served as one of Jensen's superintendents, overseeing landscape construction in the field. He worked closely with Jensen, learning about his philosophies and his Prairie style designs, which were often created in the field, as Jensen did not strictly adhere to plans.<sup>49</sup> Caldwell worked on many private estates including properties for Edsel Ford and the Harley Clark Estate in Evanston, IL. Jensen became Caldwell's close friend and mentor. During his tenure in Jensen's office, Caldwell also met Frank Lloyd Wright, who also became an important source of inspiration to his work.

Jensen's practice dwindled during the Depression, and by the early 1930s he did not have enough work to keep employees. Out of work once again, Caldwell went back to Donoghue to ask for help. In 1933, the South Park Commission had begun receiving grants for park improvements from the Civil Works Administration (a precursor to the WPA) and so Donoghue brought Caldwell on to assist with specific projects. For instance,

<sup>47</sup> Alfred Caldwell, "Oral History of Alfred Caldwell," Chicago Architects Oral History Project, interview by Betty Blum, Art Institute of Chicago, 1987, pp. 5-6, 17-19.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>49</sup> Bachrach, Julia Sniderman. *National Historic Landmark Nomination Form* "Lincoln Park Lily Pool," United States Department of the Interior. Designated Feb. 17, 2006, pp. 14-15.

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Caldwell helped the Park Commission's chief landscape architect Robert E. Moore, Jr. (1899–1969) plant a Japanese Garden near the Ho-oh-den (Japanese Pavilion) in Jackson Park that remained from the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition.<sup>50</sup>

In January of 1934, Donoghue recommended Caldwell as the designer and superintendent of Eagle Point Park, new WPA-funded park in Dubuque, Iowa. Caldwell was appointed to the position and soon produced plans for every aspect of the 160-acre park which is perched on bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River. His extraordinary work included designing the park's Prairie style pavilions. Caldwell incorporated signature Prairie style landscape elements such as stratified stonework, a naturalistic water feature, council rings, sun openings, and native plants. Despite creating a masterful design and having a deep commitment to the position, Caldwell was fired in early 1936, when Eagle Point Park was still under construction.

Returning to Chicago with his young family, Caldwell was desperate to find a job. He sought the help of George Donoghue once again. As General Superintendent of the newly-formed Chicago Park District, Donoghue was in an even more powerful position than the other times when Caldwell had sought his help. Caldwell was hired as a senior draftsman for the Landscape Planning Section of the Park District's Landscape Division. Headed by Robert Moore (with whom he had worked on the Japanese Garden), the division was largely staffed by landscape architects and engineers with impressive academic credentials. Although Caldwell and his college-educated colleagues did not always see eye to eye, Caldwell's associates had deep respect for his talent. Luke Cosme, an engineer who sat at a drafting table near him said: "everyone knew Caldwell was an uncompromising genius," and though he was "difficult to get along with, there was often a line of people" waiting to seek his help on their projects.<sup>51</sup>

Caldwell struggled with the politics and bureaucracy of the Chicago Park District. In 1938, he was given the opportunity for a promotion if he would pass a Civil Service Examination. He wrote a note criticizing the test's authors on the bottom of the exam. In response to the note, Caldwell's superiors failed him and didn't give him the promotion. Two years later, Caldwell retook the exam and received one of the highest marks among his group.<sup>52</sup>

Despite Caldwell's lack of a high-level title or college degree, Moore and other Park District administrators did not hesitate to assign him the lion's share of landscape design projects spurred by a flurry of mid-1930s WPA-grants. Altogether, Caldwell produced plans for approximately 1000 acres of park landscapes. In addition to Promontory Point, he created plans for the Lincoln Park Extension at Montrose Avenue, the Lincoln Park Lily Pool, Riis Park, Northerly Island in Burnham Park, and various boulevards and stretches of Lake Shore Drive.

Caldwell felt that the opportunity to design so many significant public landscapes was "a rare circumstance."<sup>53</sup> When he began working on planting plans for the 55<sup>th</sup> Street Promontory in 1936, the site's general layout had already been determined. An architectural modernist, he believed that the pavilion would be "too heavy for the site and of little architectural value."<sup>54</sup> Still, despite any negative opinions about this building or lack of personal input on its siting, Caldwell created a beautiful Prairie style landscape for the newly manmade lakefront site (figure 1). He designed a central meadow edged with lush plantings of native trees and shrubs

<sup>50</sup> James O'Donnell Bennett, "Lovely Temple of 1893 is Being Restored," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Feb. 18, 1934, p. 7.

<sup>51</sup> Dennis Domer, ed. *Alfred Caldwell: The Life and Work of a Prairie School Landscape Architect*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1997, pp. 19, 25.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>53</sup> Alfred Caldwell, interview by Julia Sniderman and Robert Grese, January 31, 1987.

<sup>54</sup> John McDermott, Jr. and Victoria Post Ranney, ed. *Promontory Point: Lake Michigan at 55<sup>th</sup> Street 1937-1987*, brochure printed by Friends of the Parks and Hyde Park Historical Society, 1987.

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including American hophornbeams, maples, hawthorns, crab apples, prairie roses, viburnums, serviceberries, and American hazels. To take full advantage of the site's lakefront views, he created openings among the beds of trees and shrubs to the north and south sides of the Promontory. Caldwell's planting design provided "two distinct experiences; the lofty meadow, from which the rocks along the water cannot be seen, and the rocks themselves, from which the meadow cannot be seen."<sup>55</sup> A gently curving circuit path would surround the central meadow, and along its outer edges, naturalistic plantings would enhance the perimeter areas.

Within these perimeters, Caldwell planned to have four council rings with center hearth stones for campfires. Jens Jensen had incorporated such circular benches in many of his designs, including his Chicago masterpiece, Columbus Park. The stone benches provided "democratic space that could be used for story-telling and other small gatherings."<sup>56</sup> Caldwell had included a stone council ring in his design for the Lincoln Park Lily Pool. Although that one was built following his specifications, Caldwell's superiors at the Chicago Park District did not approve his plans for the stone council rings at the 55<sup>th</sup> Street Promontory. Much to Caldwell's chagrin, four concrete hexagonal benches were built in their place (figure 8). Caldwell had designed bluestone paths leading to some of the council rings, and these were executed leading to hexagonal concrete seats. But these hexagonal benches, with blocky center fire hearths made of concrete, represented a major deviation from Caldwell's plans and design intentions.

In 1939, as laborers finished building the hexagonal benches, planting the last group of trees and shrubs, and completing the step-stone revetment construction, the *David Wallach Fountain* was installed just east of the pedestrian underpass.<sup>57</sup> A South Side resident, horse-lover, and owner of a successful photographic supply business, Wallach died in 1894, leaving a bequest for a fountain in Burnham Park that was meant to provide refreshment for "man and beast."<sup>58</sup>

Decades later, Wallach's heirs won a lawsuit because the money for the fountain had not been spent as the donor had intended. Husband and wife artists Frederick Cleveland Hibbard (1881–1950) and Elisabeth Haseltine Hibbard (1894–1950) were commissioned to create the decorative fountain. Although the monument never included a horse trough, it was designed to have a bird bath, water basin for dogs, and drinking fountains for children and adults. Known for creating delicate, though realistic sculptures of animals, Elisabeth Hibbard visited the Lincoln Park Zoo to make a clay model for the bronze fawn that would top the Burnham Park fountain.<sup>59</sup> A replica of her Wallach fawn sculpture is located in the Memorial Cemetery in Davenport, Iowa.

People began flocking to the 55<sup>th</sup> Street Promontory even before its full completion (figure 7) and before long, the site played an important role in the city's social and recreational histories. Strolling, picnicking, and gathering for camp-fires soon became popular activities in the park. Since the site's completion, the step-stone revetments have provided a special place where Chicagoans like to sit, read, sunbathe, and hang out. Although there has been a longtime rule against swimming off of the tiered rocks because of safety concerns, this activity been so popular over the years that the police have rarely tried to enforce the swimming ban.

Shortly after the completion of Promontory Point, clubs and organizations began holding outings here. Church groups, YMCA and YWCA social clubs, University of Chicago student organizations, and other South Side

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Julia Sniderman Bachrach, *National Historic Landmark Nomination Form*, "Lincoln Park Lily Pool," United States Department of the Interior. Designated Feb. 17, 2006.

<sup>57</sup> Fifth Annual Report of the Chicago Park District, Chicago: 1939, p. 39.

<sup>58</sup> Eleanor Jewett, "Art Institute Show Devoted to Sculpture," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 14, 1940, p. C4.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

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civic clubs enjoyed having picnics and other special events such as a “city-wide pow-wow of Indian guides” at the Point.<sup>60</sup> In August of 1938, a theatrical group known as the Promontory Players presented a play called “The Yes Sir Man,” in the newly-built pavilion.<sup>61</sup> In the 1940s, many USO events and other social activities that provided entertainment to servicemen were held on the Promontory. Also during this period, the Chicago Park District often held concerts of recorded music and special holiday events such as Halloween parties at the 55<sup>th</sup> Street Promontory.

Community members began calling the site Promontory Point around 1948.<sup>62</sup> It is unclear as to whether the name was inspired by Promontory Point, Utah, however, a possible explanation may be derived from Chicago’s Railroad Fair which opened in Burnham Park in 1948. During the two-season Railroad Fair, pageants and other events were held to commemorate the Transcontinental’s last spike at Promontory Point, Utah in 1869.<sup>63</sup> Perhaps attention to the famous Promontory Point of the American West led to the site’s local name. Whatever the reason, by the mid-1950s, the name had become widely used, and the site continues to be known as Promontory Point today.

In 1953, during the Cold War, the federal government selected Chicago as a “target” city, where “Nike guided missile batteries” would be installed to protect the nation against atomic attack.<sup>64</sup> Several locations along the lakefront were selected as Nike sites. The United States military installed a missile launcher area in Jackson Park and Integrated Fire Control (IFC) radar area in Burnham Park at Promontory Point. A large area of the meadow south of the Point’s pavilion was fenced off and several large radar towers were erected within this restricted area. “One of the towers reached 150 feet in height, and all of them dwarfed the turret of the fieldhouse.”<sup>65</sup>

Community organizations often complained about Promontory Point’s Nike base, and protestors began rallying for their removal. Hyde Park’s alderman Leon Despres and Congressman Barratt O’Hara supported the community’s position, but the controversy continued for over a decade.<sup>66</sup> As the anti-Vietnam War movement grew, community members became more ardent in their demands for the removal of Promontory Point’s Nike installation. In 1970, U.S. Congressman Abner Mikva led 500 demonstrators who protested to “Get the War Machine off the Point,” and “Get the War Machine Out of Indochina.”<sup>67</sup> Finally, the following year, the federal government removed Promontory Point’s Nike installation along with all of the other missile bases along Chicago’s lakefront.

Chicago’s African-American population grew during the second wave of the Great Migration in the late 1950s and 1960s. As larger numbers of black residents began to live in Hyde Park and nearby South Side neighborhoods, Promontory Point became a site of greater diversity.<sup>68</sup> Individuals and organizations committed to racial integration often held events there. In 1953, the Committee for Racial Equality gave a “Twilight Dance” at the Promontory Pavilion.<sup>69</sup> Chicago’s Friendship Club, a group that sought to prove “it’s socially

<sup>60</sup> “Indian Guides Hold Pow-wow Saturday Night,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Nov. 17, 1946, p. S5.

<sup>61</sup> “Promontory Players Give First Program This Week,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Aug. 14, 1938, p. SW5.

<sup>62</sup> U. of C. Picnic, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 7, 1948, p. A1.

<sup>63</sup> “Duplicate of Famed Gold Spike Arrives for Railroad Fair,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 16, 1949, SW5.

<sup>64</sup> “Guided Missile Batteries to Guide Cities: Nike Protection for Chicago, New York,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 25, 1953, p. 13.

<sup>65</sup> McDermott and Post Ranney, ed. *Promontory Point: Lake Michigan at 55<sup>th</sup> Street 1937-1987*.

<sup>66</sup> Charlotte Des Jardins, “Another Battle for Parkland that was Lost,” *Hyde Park Herald*, June 13, 1966, vol. 13, p. A25.

<sup>67</sup> “Mikva Calls Radar Symbol of U.S. Ills,” *Hyde Park Herald*, July 8, 1970, vol. 88, issue A, p. 1.

<sup>68</sup> Michael H. Ebner, “Suburbs and City as Dual Metropolis,” *Chicago Neighborhoods and Suburbs: A Historical Guide*, Ann Durking Keating, ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008, p. 30.

<sup>69</sup> *Hyde Park Herald*, August 6, 1953, vol. 72, n. 31, p.5.

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acceptable to be friends—regardless of race,” regularly held picnics at Promontory Point in the 1960s.<sup>70</sup> But despite such events that sought to foster harmonious interactions, some racial conflicts occurred on the site during this period. For instance, in June of 1956, five white youths attacked a smaller group of Jewish and African-American men at the Point. As a result, Alderman Despres asked for additional policemen to patrol the area.<sup>71</sup>

During the late 1960s, controversy erupted when young people gathered to play and hear bongos and flutes at the Point. Residents of nearby high-rises often complained about these impromptu summer concerts. As most of the musicians were African-American, Alderman Despres and other community members believed this to be a problem of race relations.<sup>72</sup> The alderman argued that the musicians had the right to play in the park prior to its closing time. But sometimes, crowds as large as 200 to 300 people would gather, and when police came to disperse the crowds, melee erupted. To lessen the impact of noise, the Chicago Park District designated the eastern part of the Point for concerts. During some summers, the night-time crowd became so large and frequent that the Park District tried to prohibit musical instruments on Promontory Point altogether. The restriction was generally ignored, and musicians continued playing there. By the late-1970s, Hyde Park had become a more racially diverse community, and this controversy largely faded away. In fact, over the next decades, Promontory Point became known as one of the city’s most racially diverse parks.

The Chicago Park District increased programming at Promontory Point in the early 1980s by assigning a park supervisor to the pavilion for the first time. Although new classes and athletic programs enhanced the Point’s vitality, vandalism and deterioration were taking a toll on the site. In the fall of 1981, vandals stole the Wallach Monument’s bronze sculpture. Fortunately, an anonymous tip led to its recovery and the Chicago Park District re-installed the fawn sculpture that November.<sup>73</sup> By the mid-1980s, community members began discussing their concerns about how much Promontory Point’s landscape had deteriorated. Though some of the original shrubs and trees remained, many had died or been removed over the years, and the Park District had not sufficiently replanted them. A coalition of neighborhood organizations known as “Friends of Promontory Point” soon formed. Members of the coalition met with Park District representatives in 1987 asking for renovations to the Point’s landscape and pavilion. The friends group suggested that Alfred Caldwell, who was then in his late eighties, be contacted to consult on the proposed landscape restoration project .

The Chicago Park District was then in the midst of a major reform effort under the leadership of Mayor Harold Washington who had appointed architect Walter A. Netsch Jr. (1920–2008) to serve on the Chicago Park District Board of Commissioners. Netsch supported the staff’s proposal to allocate a \$250,000 budget for Promontory Point improvements.<sup>74</sup> Alfred Caldwell, who had not visited the Point for years because he did not want to see how dilapidated the landscape had become, donated his consulting services to the revitalization project. Working closely with Park District landscape architects, Caldwell designed stone council rings to replace the four hexagonal benches that had been built without his input or approval. Caldwell also directed the selection and planting of 600 new trees, representing ten varieties of shade and ornamental trees ranging in size from four to 20 feet tall.<sup>75</sup> Most of these were native plants that had been part of his original plan, or substitutions selected under his guidance.

<sup>70</sup> “Talking About,” JET Magazine, Dec. 22, 1960, p. 43; and “Friendship Club in Plans for Annual Picnic,” *Chicago Defender*, July 10, 1963, p. 14.

<sup>71</sup> “Request Police Walk Riot Beach,” *Chicago Defender*, July 21, 1956, p. 3.

<sup>72</sup> John McDermott, Jr., “Promontory Point: A Place to Escape Urban Tensions,” *Hyde Park Herald*, Issue: A, Sept. 25, 1985, p. 17.

<sup>73</sup> “Return Park Statue,” *Hyde Park Herald*, vol. 100, n. 47, November 25, 1981, p.1.

<sup>74</sup> Carolyn Hirschman, “Plan Major Renovation of Promontory Point,” *Hyde Park Herald*, Issue: A, June 7, 1989, p.7.

<sup>75</sup> Carolyn Hirschman, “Point Plans Will Take Park Back to its Beginnings,” *Hyde Park Herald*, Issue: A, March 30, 1988, p.1.

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In 1990, the Chicago Park District allocated approximately \$200,000 of additional funds for Promontory Point's pavilion.<sup>76</sup> In-house architects and engineers prepared plans to fully rehabilitate the building. This project carefully restored the exterior of the pavilion, while sensitively altering the building to allow for year-round use of the shelter room. French doors matching the pair from the tower's overlook were designed to enclose the openings of the shelter room's east and west facades. The scope also included tuck-pointing and masonry work, repairing and replacing ceramic roof tiles, and preserving the building's original windows. Although moisture problems caused issues with the installation of new parquet flooring in the shelter, the architectural restoration project was completed in 1991.<sup>77</sup> (In later years, problems persisted, and hardwood plank flooring replaced the parquet floor.) Over the next decade, the pavilion underwent additional tuck-pointing and other upgrades as the district began to more actively market the building for weddings and other special events. Also during this period, the Park District planted hundreds of additional trees as well as some new shrubs to continue improving the landscape.

During the 1990s, the Chicago Park District, City of Chicago, and Army Corps of Engineers worked together to develop a \$300 million plan to repair and replace the aging revetments along the city's entire lakefront. This plan called for replacing nearly all of the city's remaining limestone revetments with concrete. In 2000, the Park District and the City's Department of the Environment presented preliminary plans for proposed changes to Promontory Point's revetments. The officials "told residents there was no way to save the limestone—the rocks were crumbling under pressure from the water."<sup>78</sup> Many of the Hyde Parkers at the meeting strongly believed that the step-stone revetments were a critical element of Promontory Point's historic landscape. They were aware that the limestone revetments had been repaired in the past, and they believed they could be saved (figure 11). The following year, the community formed a task force, raised funds, and hired Cyril Galvin, a coastal engineer to conduct a feasibility study to determine whether preserving the step-stone revetments could be a viable option. Galvin's report determined that revetment repairs could be undertaken in a manner that preserves the step-stone edge.

By 2006, many groups rallied together to call for an alternative construction option that would save the step-stone revetments. The Promontory Point Task Force received support from several organizations including Hyde Park Historical Society, Landmarks Illinois, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, as well officials such as US Congressman Jesse Jackson, Jr., and then-U.S. Senator Barack Obama. As a result of several meetings held in 2006 and the strong public support for a preservation approach, the Chicago Park District and Army Corps of Engineers agreed that alternative plans would be prepared. However, as of 2017, funding has not been earmarked and new plans have not yet been developed.

Burnham Park's Promontory Point remains one of the loveliest locations in Chicago and most beloved spots in Hyde Park. This peninsula, with tiered stone edges, continues to be enjoyed by diverse people as a place to stroll, picnic, and relax (figure 10). For decades, an informal group of sunrise swimmers has met at the Point to swim off of the rocks. Despite its deteriorating revetments, this practice continues. Alfred Caldwell described the site as "a place you go to and you are thrilled—a beautiful experience, a joy, a delight."<sup>79</sup> Without a doubt, Promontory Point continues to be such a place today.

<sup>76</sup> "Park District Field House Renovations," *Hyde Park Herald*, Issue: A, May 23, 1990, p.1.

<sup>77</sup> Glen C. Thompson, "Park Officials Rush to Repair Point Fieldhouse," *Hyde Park Herald*, Issue: A, Nov. 20, 1991, pp. 1-2.

<sup>78</sup> Ben Joravsky, "Lake of Ire," *Chicago Reader*, vol. 32, n. 31, May 2, 2003, available at: <https://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/lake-of-ire/Content?oid=911953>.

<sup>79</sup> Carol Hirschman, "Point Plans Will Take Park Back to its Beginnings," *Hyde Park Herald*, Issue: A, March 30, 1988, p.1.



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**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 40

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage; enter "Less than one" if the acreage is .99 or less)

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	<u>41.798171 N</u> Latitude	<u>87.580866 W</u> Longitude	3	<u>41.793403 N</u> Latitude	<u>87.574884 W</u> Longitude
2	<u>41.798171 N</u> Latitude	<u>87.574884 W</u> Longitude	4	<u>41.793403 N</u> Latitude	<u>87.580828 W</u> Longitude

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The property is bounded on the north by the centerline of E. 54<sup>th</sup> Street extended, on the south by the centerline of E. 56<sup>th</sup> Extended, on the east by Lake Michigan, and on the west by the east curb-line of South Shore Drive, and east curb-line of South Shore Drive extended north of the former connector with South Lake Shore Drive.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

This is the plot of land historically associated with this property during its period of significance.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Julia Bachrach, Landscape and Architectural Historian date 7/31/2017  
organization Consultant telephone 773-761-5040  
street & number P.O. Box 60995 email Julia@jbachrach.com  
city or town Chicago state IL zip code 60660

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **GIS Location Map (Google Earth or BING)**
- **Local Location Map**
- **Site Plan**
- **Floor Plans (As Applicable)**
- **Photo Location Map** (Include for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map and insert immediately after the photo log and before the list of figures).

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**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

**Photo Log**

**Name of Property:** Promontory Point Historic District  
**City or Vicinity:** Chicago  
**County:** Cook **State:** IL  
**Photographer:** Alan G. Thomas  
**Date Photographed:** October, 2005 and May, 2017

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

**Photo 1 of 17:**

Photo #1: Promontory Point circuit path and perimeter landscape, camera facing northeast.

Photo #2: Meadow with pavilion in the distance, camera facing northeast.

Photo #3: Promontory Point Pavilion, camera facing northwest.

Photo #4: Promontory Point Pavilion west and south facades, camera facing northeast.

Photo #5: Meadow looking towards pedestrian underpass, camera facing west.

Photo #6: Landscape and pavilion in fall, camera facing east.

Photo #7: Pavilion west façade and bluestone terrace, camera facing southeast.

Photo #8: Council ring and perimeter landscape, camera facing southeast.

Photo #9: Step-stone revetments, concrete platform and deflectors, camera facing northeast.

Photo #10: Perimeter landscape and Lake Michigan, camera facing northeast.

Photo #11: Step-stone revetments, stone platform and Lake Michigan, camera facing east.

Photo #12: Perimeter landscape, council ring, revetments, and Lake Michigan, camera facing northwest.

Photo #13: Perimeter landscape and council ring, camera facing northwest.

Photo #14: Pedestrian underpass and path, camera facing west.

Photo #15: David Wallach Fountain, meadow, and pavilion in the background, camera facing east.

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Photo #16: Promontory Point west side landscape, camera facing north.

Photo #17: Soft surface playground, camera facing north.

**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.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Promontory Point Historic District

Name of Property

Cook County, IL

County and State

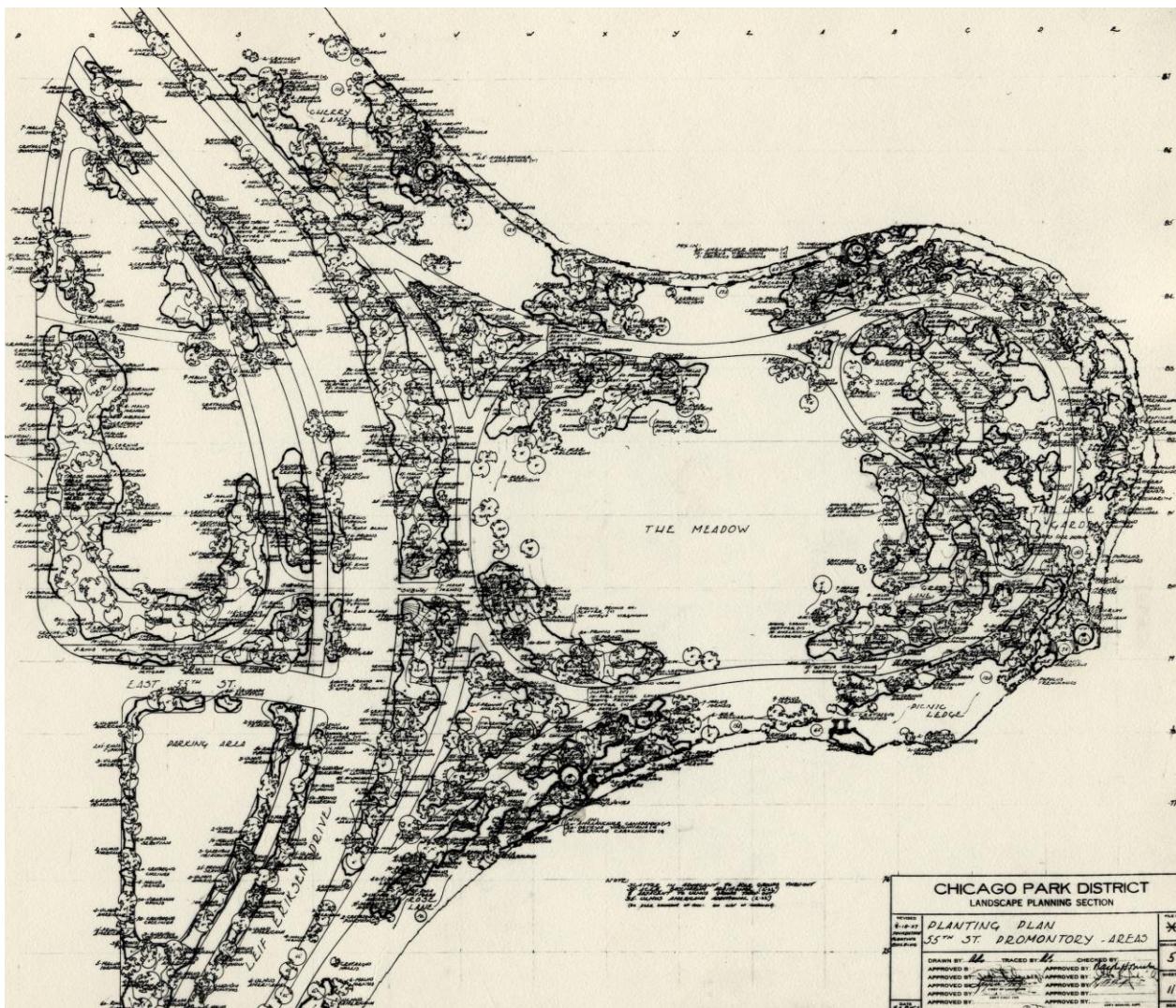
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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### List of Figures

(Resize, compact, and paste images of maps and historic documents in this section. Place captions, with figure numbers above each image. Orient maps so that north is at the top of the page, all document should be inserted with the top toward the top of the page.)

Figure 1. Chicago Park District, Landscape Planning Section, "Burnham Park: Planting Plan 55<sup>th</sup> Street Promontory Areas," Sept. 1, 1936, by Alfred Caldwell, Chicago Park District Records: Drawings, Chicago Public Library Special Collections.





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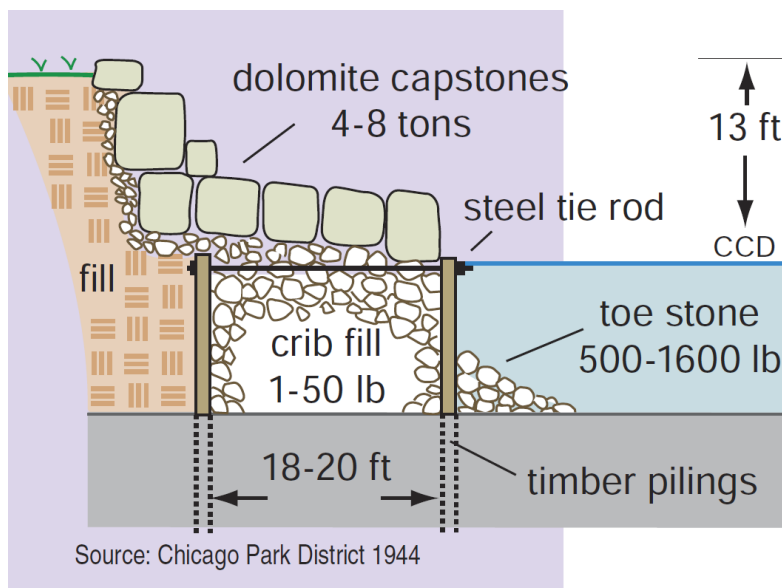
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Figure 2. Aerial view of landfill operations to create Promontory Point, ca. 1925, Chicago Park District Records: Photographs, Chicago Public Library Special Collections.



Figure 3. Illustration of landfill construction method from *A Walking Guide to the History and Features of Burnham Park*, Illinois State Geological Survey and Chicago Park District, 2012.



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Figure 4. Aerial view of Promontory Point showing underway to complete revetments and grading, 1936, Chicago Park District Records: Photographs, Chicago Public Library Special Collections.



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Figure 5. Promontory Point landscape and pavilion construction, 1937, Chicago Park District Records: Photographs, Chicago Public Library Special Collections.



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Figure 6. Construction of step-stone revetments on southeast side of Promontory Point, ca. 1938, Chicago Park District Records: Photographs, Chicago Public Library Special Collections.



Figure 7. Chicago Park District laborers planting Promontory Point's landscape west of pavilion, 1938, Chicago Park District Records: Photographs, Chicago Public Library Special Collections.



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Figure 8. Hexagonal concrete bench and bluestone path, 1939, Chicago Park District Records: Photographs, Chicago Public Library Special Collections.



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Figure 9. Promontory Point Pavilion, ca. 1940, Chicago Park District Records: Photographs, Chicago Public Library Special Collections.



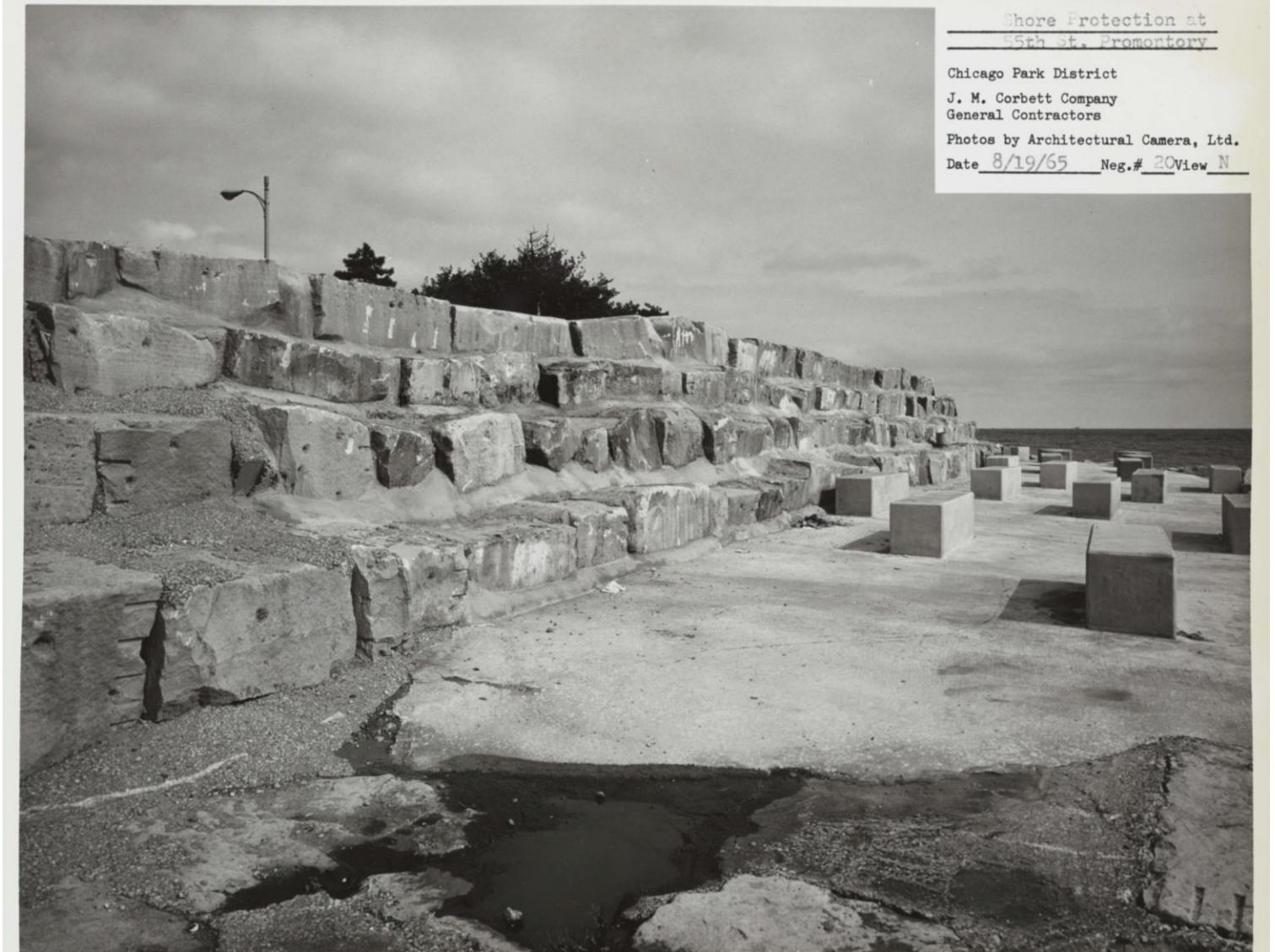
**Property name: Promontory Point Historic District**  
**Illinois, County: Cook**

Figure 10. Aerial view of Promontory Point, ca. 1945, Chicago Park District Records: Photographs, Chicago Public Library Special Collections.



**Property name: Promontory Point Historic District**  
**Illinois, County: Cook**

Figure 11. Promontory Point revetments showing repairs including concrete platform and deflectors, 1965, Chicago Park District Records: Photographs, Chicago Public Library Special Collections.





# Promontory Point Historic District Chicago, Cook Co., Illinois

LAKE  
MICHIGAN



centerline of  
East 54th St. extended

playground

stone  
platform

concrete  
platform  
with  
deflectors

council ring

step-stone  
revetments

pavilion

flagpole

circuit path

council  
ring

MEADOW

David Wallach  
Fountain

council ring

pedestrian  
underpass

circuit path

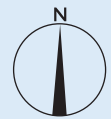
stone platform

parking  
lot

step-stone  
revetments

accessible ramp  
and walkway

centerline of  
East 56th St. extended



0 100 200  
F E E T

■ CONTRIBUTING FEATURES

■ NON-CONTRIBUTING FEATURES

# Promontory Point Historic District Chicago, Cook Co., Illinois

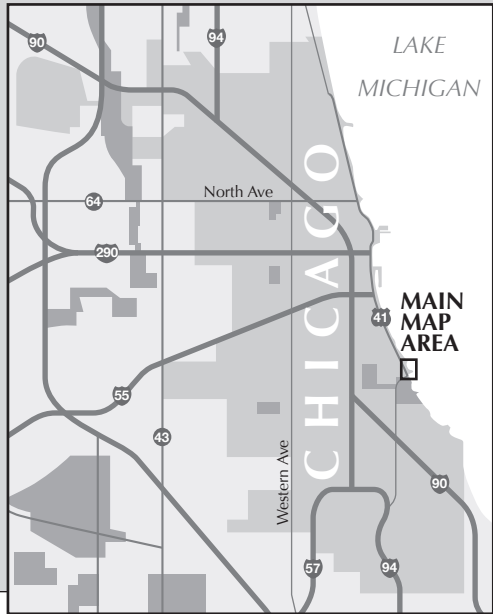
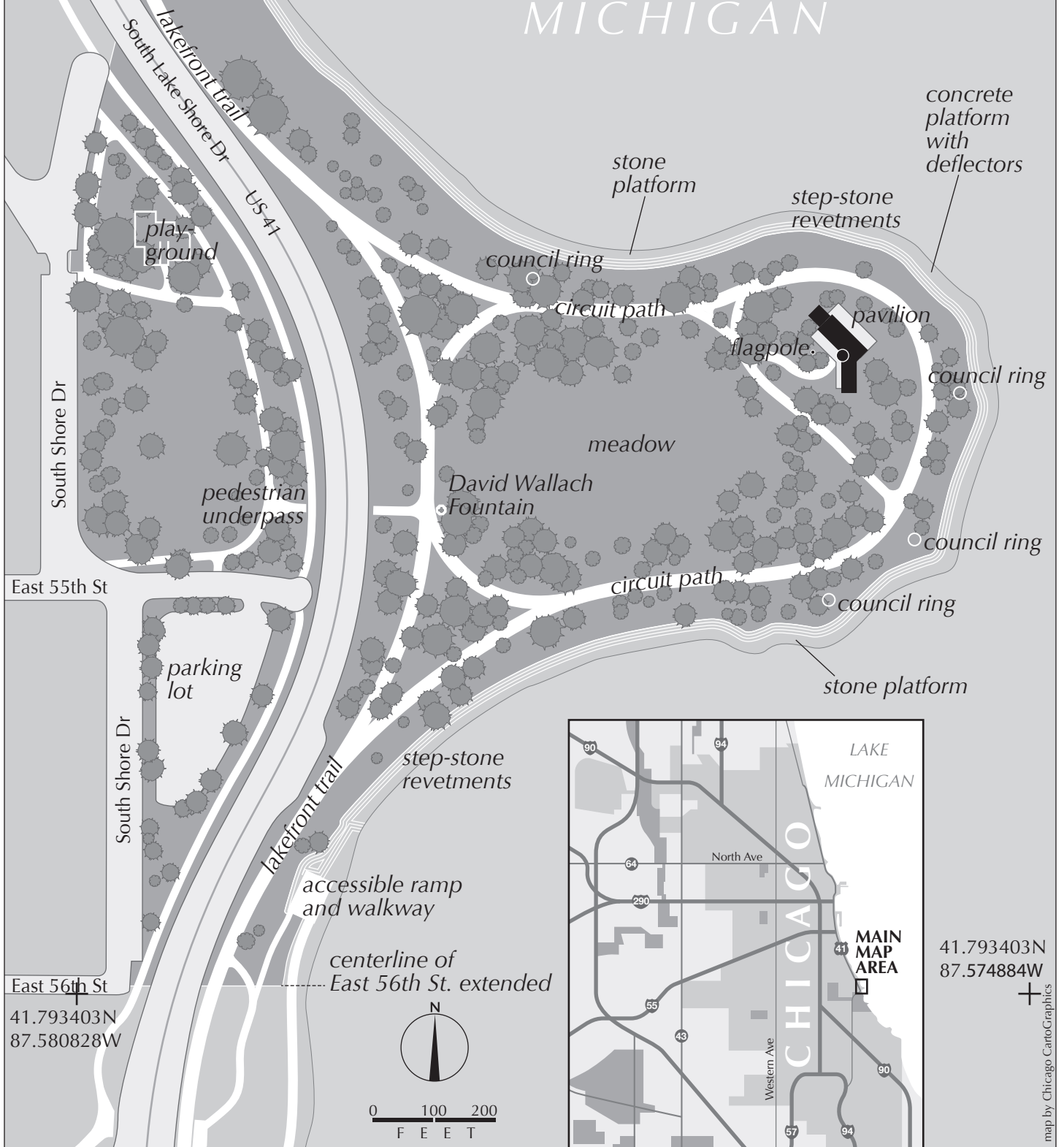
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87.580866W

41.798171N  
87.574884W

centerline of  
East 54th St. extended

LAKE

MICHIGAN



41.793403N  
87.574884W

map by Chicago CartoGraphics

# Promontory Point Historic District

Chicago, Cook Co., Illinois

LAKE  
MICHIGAN

