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

**1. Name of Property**

historic name : **Cornell Square**

other names/site number : **Park No. 5**

**2. Location**

street & number: **1809 West 50<sup>th</sup> Street (location and mailing address)**  Not for publication

city or town : **Chicago**  vicinity

state **Illinois** code **IL** county **Cook** code **031** zip code **60609**

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*William L. ... SHPS*  
Signature of certifying official

*6-27-05*  
Date

**Illinois Historic Preservation Agency**  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

\_\_\_\_\_  
American Indian Tribe

**Cornell Square**  
Name of Property

**Cook County, Illinois**  
County and State

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**4. National Park Service Certification**

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I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register See continuation sheet.	<u>Patrick W. Andrews</u>	<u>8/11/2005</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain):	_____	_____

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**5. Classification**

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Ownership of Property  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

private  
 public-local  
 public-State  
 public-Federal

Category of Property  
(Check only one box)

building(s)  
 district  
 site  
 structure  
 object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>5</u>	<u>3</u>	Total

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

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

**Historic Resources of the Chicago Park District**

**Cornell Square**  
Name of Property

**Cook County, Illinois**  
County and State

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

**LANDSCAPE/ park**  
**RECREATION AND CULTURE/ outdoor recreation**  
**RECREATION AND CULTURE/ sports facility**  
**OTHER/ field house**

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

**LANDSCAPE/ park**  
**RECREATION AND CULTURE/ outdoor recreation**  
**RECREATION AND CULTURE/ sports facility**  
**OTHER/ field house**

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Beaux Arts Classicism**

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: **CONCRETE**

Roof : **ASPHALT TILES**

Walls: **CONCRETE**

Other: **EARTH**  
**VEGETATION**

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

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Cornell Square, Cook County, Illinois

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**Narrative Description**

Conceived as part of a revolutionary system of 14 parks in 1903, Cornell Square was originally known as Park No. 5. The innovative new parks were conceived by South Park Commission General Superintendent J. Frank Foster and designed by the prominent firms, Olmsted Brothers landscape architects, and D.H. Burnham & Co. architects. Cornell Square consists of 8 resources: 5 contributing and 3 non-contributing. The contributing resources include one building complex, structures and one site consisting of playfields, plantings and pathways.

The South Park Commission completed construction of Cornell Square and opened the new park to the public in August of 1905. By the fall of 1905, a total of ten south side small parks provided recreational, social, and educational opportunities to hundreds of thousands of people in Chicago, as well as a new prototype for the design and programming of neighborhood parks throughout the nation.

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

Cornell Square is bounded on the north by West 50<sup>th</sup> Street, on the south by West 51<sup>st</sup> Street, on the east by South Wood Street and the west by South Wolcott Avenue. The 8.29-acre site lies in the community area known as New City, a neighborhood often referred to as the Back-of-the-Yards, because of its proximity to the Union Stock Yards. Featured in the 1906 novel *The Jungle*, at the turn of the century, this neighborhood was teeming with factories, slaughterhouses, railroad lines, tenement housing, and "Whiskey Row," a strip of bars frequented by the area's numerous laborers. Once home to thousands of immigrants from Poland, Lithuania, Russia, and Bohemia, the neighborhood is now largely composed of Hispanic and black residents. Frame and brick single-family residences, two-flats and apartment buildings surround the park.

The Olmsted Brothers' original plan for Cornell Square [A], placed the field house complex [1] on the far northeast corner of the park. The complex was originally composed of two buildings that were linked together with an open pergola. The primary entrance to the field house is on west side, within the park's interior. There is a concrete plaza [2] that is semi-circular in plan that is adjacent to the entrance of the field house. Over the years, the park district has replaced the concrete of the plaza and walkways [2,3,4] with new concrete. The replacement concrete follows the configuration of the original circulation system. Despite some changes, much of the park's original layout remains intact [C].

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**Cornell Square, Cook County, Illinois**

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The plaza adjoins a wide promenade walk [3]. Historically, this walkway [3] divided the athletic field [5] from the original men's running track [6]. The u-shaped walkway [4] surrounding the sunken athletic field [5] remains [C], although 5 sets of concrete steps leading from the paths to the field have been removed. Originally, the terminus of the promenade walk included a circular form. Other than the removal of one of the sets of concrete steps, this circular form is still evident.

In a number of the neighborhood park designs, the Olmsted Brothers recessed the athletic field and surrounded it by a tree-lined promenade. This provided a lovely area of the landscape for strolling or sitting on bench. This was particularly important in the small squares, where so much of the site was given over to athletics and structured programming. By recessing the field, the views of the field house were reinforced. In addition, the field could be flooded for ice-skating in the winters. Cornell Square is one of the few Olmsted Brothers-designed parks in Chicago in which the athletic field [5] retains its recessed topography. Only a few historic trees survive, however, and not all of the new trees follow the original formal planting design. Historically, the field itself was composed of gravel rather than the existing turf grass. It is likely that this change was made in the 1930s.

Another change in the 1930s [B] was the removal of the men's running track [6]. Originally, this area was considered the men's open-air gymnasium. The oval running track surrounded a space composed of gravel and some turf grass, with gymnastic apparatus in the center. By the late 1930s, the track, gymnastics apparatus and gravel areas had been removed. Horseshoe courts, a volleyball court, and a sand box were installed on the west side of the area. The east side was retained as open space. It did not have a backstop, but appears to have been used for softball (most likely pick-up games). In the 1960s, this area was used for ice-skating during the wintertime. Today, the area is used as a combination soccer and football field.

At the southwestern edge of the park, there is a secondary v-shaped walkway leading from one of the curving portions of the u-shaped walkway to the corner of the park. This configuration is part of the original walkway system [A]. In the 1930s [B], the Chicago Park District built three asphalt tennis courts [7] on the southeast side of the park where the music court was originally located. Composed of a formally planted double row of trees within a passive landscape area, the music court was originally used for concerts and other gatherings. When the tennis courts [7] were installed in the 1930s, the park district also added a second v-shape secondary walk connecting the southeastern side of the u-shaped walk with the outer walk along W. 51<sup>st</sup> Street [B]. Today, these features continue to reflect their appearance from the 1930s period [C].

Just to the north of the tennis courts [7] is the original children's playground. Historically, the area included a wading pool (now the spraypool) [8], sand court (now a planted area) [9], and playground equipment. The neighborhood parks each included a wading pool and sand courts for younger children with a nearby shaded seating area. This wading pool [8] was composed of a rectangular form with a curved wall on its south side. By the late 1970s, the Chicago Park District converted the original wading pool to a spray pool. This was done with minimal alteration to original feature. Today, the spray pool [8] retains the wading pool's

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**Cornell Square, Cook County, Illinois**

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original location, configuration, and curbing. This historic children's sand court [9] was circular in form. The sand sat in the circular basin in the ground. Surrounded by a circular concrete walk, it originally had two adjacent semi-circular concrete benches. Each of the two benches sat beneath a pergola that once provided shaded seating. The Chicago Park District demolished the benches and pergolas sometime after the late 1930s. In 1992, the park district excavated the sand and planted lawn and some ornamental trees in the circular area that had previously been the sand court. By this time the benches and pergola had long since been removed. The curbing and circular walkway still remain [13].

Historically, the children's playground area had a gravel surface. The original playground apparatus was constructed of wood and located along the edges of the area. The Chicago Park District updated the playground several times over the years. The existing soft surface playground [10], installed in 1991, is composed of two rectangular areas flanking the spray pool [8] and the circular remnant that remains from the sand court [9]. The two playground areas have low retaining walls. Wood chips provide the soft surface for the playground equipment, which is located within the retaining walls. Just north of the playground [10] and circular remnant [9] is an asphalt play slab [11] with four basketball courts. In the late 1930s, the park district installed this as a multi-purpose play slab. The only change to this area was the installation of basketball hoops.

The field house complex [1], located on the northeast corner of the park is Cornell Square's most prominent feature. Although the field house [1] is now a single building, the South Park Commission originally built this as a complex of two separate buildings. The primary field house building, fronts onto the park. It has clubrooms and an auditorium at the front—and the original women's gymnasium building at the rear. To the north is the original men's gymnasium building, which is rectangular in plan. Originally, an open pergola connected the two buildings, and there was a center courtyard with the swimming pool [12] in the center. In 1936, the Chicago Park District demolished the pergola and constructed a one-story addition linking the two buildings. The addition provided a bathhouse with separate area for men and women to make the swimming pool more convenient for park patrons.

Like most of the architecture of the South Park Commission's neighborhood parks, Cornell Square's buildings are composed of exposed aggregate concrete. The primary building faces the semi-circular concrete plaza [2] and promenade walk [3]. This two-story building is rectangular in plan and oriented north to south. Its hipped roof, now clad in asphalt tiles, originally had green clay tiles. Historically, this roof had broad overhanging eaves; however, the park district modified the overhang as part of later roof repairs. The women's gymnasium is one and a half stories and also oriented north to south. It also has a hipped roof now clad in asphalt tiles. A one-story building component links the field house with the women's gymnasium. It extends east to west has a gabled roof. This area houses the women's locker and shower room.

The men's gymnasium building, located on the north side of the park, is a two-story structure, rectangular in plan, extends from east to west, with its north façade facing W. 50<sup>th</sup> Street and its east façade facing S. Wood Street. The east and west portions of the building have hipped roofs and the center portion has a gabled roof.

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**Cornell Square, Cook County, Illinois**

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The field house's primary façade has three double entry doors flanked by two sets of fluted pilasters. Flanking the three doors and located between the outer pairs of pilasters there is a casement window on each side, divided into six lights. There are five transom windows above each of the five openings. These transom windows originally had a decorative mullion design composed of a diamond shape with an adjoining cross. The original transom windows were later replaced with transoms divided into three lights. There is a frieze composed of fretwork stretching between the capitals of the pilasters and a simple entablature above. Flanking the entryway there are a pair of oval openings. These were originally elegant windows, but since they were later filled in, they are now blind openings. The original iron light fixtures that extended from a knee wall at the base of the entryway and extended to the lower portion of the oval windows are no longer extant.

There is a stringcourse of molded concrete dividing the first and second stories of the field house. Between this stringcourse and the roofline, the upper façade of the building has a fluted texture that is molded into the surface. Five French windows extend above the entryway. In recent years, the Chicago Park District installed a heavy brown awning that sits beneath the eave of the roof extending over the upper portion of the French windows. The men and women's gymnasium buildings have a large number of hopper windows with mullions configured in a union jack motif. Fortunately, most of these original windows remain.

The field house complex [1] has many fine interior details including elegant stairways with wooden handrails and iron newel posts and ornamental iron balustrades composed of a series of pierced circular forms. The field house lobby also has fluted pilasters, blind roundels, and ornamental plaster work. There are a series of windows with decorative mullions located above the lobby counter that either match the transom windows originally located above the entryway, or perhaps park district employees installed the original windows here when they were removed from the front façade.

There are also two works of art in the lobby of the field house. One is a painting of Ezra Cornell, the cousin of the park's namesake, Paul Cornell. The artist of this portrait, which was painted around 1912, is unknown. The Chicago Park District had the painting professionally conserved in the late 1990s. The second artwork is a bronze bust of Paul Cornell that sits on the lobby counter under a Plexiglass box. Commissioned by descendants of Paul Cornell, the bust was sculpted by Norwegian artist Sigvald Asbjornsen and installed in 1929.

At the east side of the field house complex, adjacent to S. Wood St., there is a wall extending from the women's gymnasium to the men's gymnasium. The park district replaced most of the original concrete wall during a major swimming pool rehabilitation project in 1985. The existing wall is composed of some concrete and some chain link. Although the rectangular swimming pool [12] is similar in appearance to the original swimming tank, it has been repaired and updated many times over the years. Concrete decking surrounds the pool.

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**Cornell Square, Cook County, Illinois**

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Cornell Square suffers from deterioration and some insensitive repairs and alterations. Despite this, the park retains good integrity. The location of features, spatial relationships, architectural elements, some plantings, alignment of walkways, sunken athletic field, and much historic fabric remains intact. The field house retains many fine interior features, including the two original works of art. The small 8.39-acre park has provided the surrounding community with athletic, educational, and social programs for a century while continuing to convey its historic character.

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**Cornell Square, Cook County, Illinois**

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**Contributing Features**

**Non-contributing Features**

**Buildings**

Field house and  
Gymnasium Complex [1] which on the inside includes the Painting of Ezra Cornell and Bust of Paul Cornell

**Sites**

Landscape including  
Athletic Field [5] and Paths [2, 3, 4, 13]

**Structures**

Tennis Courts [7]  
Basketball Courts [11]  
Spraypool [8]

2 Soft surf. Playgrounds [10]  
Swimming Pool [12]

**Cornell Square**  
Name of Property

**Cook County, Illinois**  
County and State

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

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

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

**Entertainment/ Recreation**

**Social History**

**Architecture**

**Landscape Architecture**

Period of Significance: **1905 - 1955** Significant Dates: **N/A**

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

Cultural Affiliation **N/A**

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

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

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**Cornell Square, Cook County, Illinois**

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**Statement of Significance**

Cornell Square meets Criterion A and Criterion C for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The property is nationally significant as part of the revolutionary plan by the South Park Commission in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to provide breathing spaces with recreational facilities and social services to the densely populated tenement districts within its jurisdiction. In addition to the innovative programming, the design of the new parks by D.H. Burnham & Co. architects and the Olmsted Brothers landscape architects influenced the development of small neighborhood parks throughout the country.

The South Park Commissioners began efforts to create a system of 14 new parks in 1903. Ten of the proposed parks, including Cornell Square, opened in 1905, quickly influencing the design and programming of other parks throughout the nation. In fact, in 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt recommended that park administrators throughout America should "... see the magnificent system that Chicago has erected in its south park section, one of the most notable civic achievements in any American city."<sup>1</sup>

Cornell Square qualifies for listing on the National Register under the multiple documentation form, "The Historic Resources of the Chicago Park District." The property is nationally significant during a period spanning from 1905 when construction commenced to 1955, the current fifty-year cut-off date for the National Register of Historic Places. The property meets with the following areas of significance: Entertainment/ Recreation, Social History, Architecture, and Landscape Architecture.

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

By the late 1890s, the South Park Commissioners were concerned that the existing parkland could no longer satisfy the needs of all of the people they served. The city had experienced tremendous industrial growth and the population was surging. In 1869, when Chicago's original park commissions were formed, the city's population was 300,000. By 1900, that figure had increased to 1.7 million, and at that time nearly 750,000 people resided a mile away or farther from any park.<sup>2</sup>

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

<sup>2</sup> Dwight Heald Perkins, *Report of the Special Park Commission to the City Council of Chicago on the Subject of a Metropolitan Park System*. Chicago: 1904, 39.

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**Cornell Square, Cook County, Illinois**

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Aware of the deplorable living and working conditions and lack of open spaces in the tenement districts within its jurisdiction, the South Park Commissioners drafted a bill that would empower them to build new parks for the first time in 30 years. The act, approved by the State Legislature in 1899, allowed for the creation of a new park if it were contiguous to an existing park or boulevard. The following year, the South Park Commission acquired a 34-acre site adjacent to a boulevard, Western Avenue, and near the Union Stock Yards. Providing ball fields, swimming and wading lagoons with changing rooms, and playgrounds, the experimental McKinley Park proved to be an immediate success. This prompted the commissioners to begin efforts to create a more ambitious system of neighborhood parks that would provide beautiful landscapes, recreational programs and social services to the densely populated neighborhoods throughout their district.

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

As explained in the multiple property form, South Park Commission Superintendent, J. Frank Foster largely conceived the neighborhood park concept (FIII, p. 11). Foster believed that the new parks could function as neighborhood centers that would uplift and improve the lives of the residents of the overcrowded tenement districts. He suggested that in addition to the ball fields, swimming facilities, and playgrounds that had been tested in McKinley Parks, the new parks should also provide a variety of features. These included separate outdoor gymnasiums for men and women, running tracks, children's sand courts, and a new type of building, the field house. Based on the precedent of Chicago's settlement houses, these innovative parks buildings "would provide athletic, educational, recreational programs and social services throughout an entire year."<sup>3</sup> This was particularly useful because Chicago's cold climate had traditionally limited park use to the period between the early spring and late fall.

The South Park Commission hired the Olmsted Brothers landscape architects and D.H. Burnham & Company architects to design the innovative system of 14 parks. Both firms had a long tradition of working for Chicago's South Park System. The Olmsted Brothers were successors to Frederick Law Olmsted Sr.(1822-1903). Designer of many of the nation's premier parks and landscapes including New York's Central Park and the town of Riverside, Illinois, Olmsted created the original plan for Chicago's South Park in 1871. In 1875, his stepson and nephew, John Charles Olmsted (1852- 1920) went into practice with him. Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. laid out the gleaming campus of the World's Columbian Exposition that opened in Jackson Park in 1893. After the fair, the firm, then known as Olmsted, Olmsted, and Eliot transformed the site to back to parkland. In 1898, John Charles and his younger stepbrother, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., formed the Olmsted Brothers firm.

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<sup>3</sup> Julia Sniderman Bachrach, *The City in a Garden: A Photographic History of Chicago's Parks*, Center for American Places, Harrisonburg, VA: 2001, 12.

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**Cornell Square, Cook County, Illinois**

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After Frederick Law Olmsted Sr.'s death in 1898, the brothers continued producing plans and landscape designs for thousands of sites throughout the nation.

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

Early in 1904, both the Olmsted Brothers and D.H. Burnham and Company entered into contracts with the South Park Commission to collaboratively design the 14 parks. At the time, Burnham was awaiting the arrival of a young designer from New York, Edward Bennett, joining the firm specifically to work on this project. Therefore, the landscape design proceeded ahead of the architecture, with the Olmsted Brothers submitting preliminary plans on March 1, 1904, even before Bennett arrived and began designing the buildings.<sup>4</sup>

The original plan for a system of 14 new parks included seven considered squares because they were less than ten acres in size and seven known as small parks because they were larger than ten acres. The design for each of the 14 parks was to include the program components conceived by Superintendent Foster. In the Olmsted Brothers' initial recommendations of the design of the squares and small parks, they expressed a strong feeling that most, if not all, of the properties should be designed in a formal idiom. Having designed beautiful large romantic landscapes alongside their father, Frederick Law Olmsted Sr., they were afraid that informal designs on such small sites would become "a petty rendering of what can be far better accomplished in parks many times as large."<sup>5</sup>

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

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<sup>4</sup> William W. Tippens and Julia Sniderman, "The Planning and Design of Chicago's Neighborhood Parks," *A Breath of Fresh Air: Chicago's Neighborhood Parks of the Progressive Reform Era 1900-25*, Chicago: The Chicago Public Library and the Chicago Park District, 1989, 22.

<sup>5</sup> Correspondence from Olmsted Brothers to Henry G. Foreman, President of the South Park Commission. December 7, 1903, 11 Library of Congress, Manuscript Division.

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All park activities were divided by type of facility needed and placed in different zones of the park. Women's activities were separated from men's. Facilities requiring supervision were clustered along a single edge of the park. The front entry court, children's playground area, running track, wading pool, men's and women's open air gymnasiums, swimming tank, and changing booths were symmetrically arranged around the field house. The remaining portion of the park was devoted to a ball field and areas for passive pursuits.<sup>6</sup>

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

In their early recommendations for the entire system of new parks, the Olmsted Brothers asserted that although many of the sites would offer similar accommodations "it would be undesirable to make these playgrounds substantially all alike."<sup>7</sup> They suggested that varying the designs could prove challenging due to the similarities in the characteristics of the sites and program requirements. The five sites that were ten acres or less, which had been designated as squares, were particularly similar:

Considering that a number of them are precisely alike as to area, shape and arrangement of surrounding streets, and that all are flat and completely devoid of any topographical or other important controlling conditions which might be availed of in making plans for them it will not be an easy matter to find good reasons or differentiating them.<sup>8</sup>

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

The placement of the field house complex often had a major impact on the design and location of other elements in the landscape. In Armour Square, for instance, the field house was sited in a corner of the park on a diagonal axis with the sunken playfield that was surrounded by an oval path. At Cornell Square, the field house complex was also placed in the corner, on the northeast side of the site. Unlike Armour Square, the field house is not on axis with the playfield; rather the men's open-air gym is on the northwest side of the field house complex, and the U-shaped sunken playfield is on the southwest side.

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<sup>6</sup> William W. Tippens, "The Olmsted Brothers in the Midwest," *Midwestern Landscape Architecture*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana: 2000, 169.

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

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

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**Cornell Square, Cook County, Illinois**

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Although it was clear that much of the small acreage of the squares would be consumed by athletic facilities, Henry Foreman, President of the South Park Board stressed, the importance of lawn and greenery make the small squares "to some extent beautiful in nature" and create landscapes that would be uplifting to community residents.<sup>9</sup>

This was particularly challenging in Cornell Square. The Olmsted Brothers anticipated heavy use of athletic fields and facilities, and they also believed that the smoky conditions of the surrounding neighborhood would make it difficult for many plants to thrive. One of the Olmsted Brothers preliminary plans was revised to omit pergolas because there were concerns that the intending climbing "vines will not grow in that smoky neighborhood."<sup>10</sup> The Cornell Square planting plan shows "a general tendency toward strong fast growing shrubs and trees," that could withstand the polluted conditions.<sup>11</sup>

The community area surrounding Cornell Square, now know as New City, was historically considered the Back of the Yards. It was part of the old Town of Lake, annexed to Chicago in 1889.<sup>12</sup> Located about a 1 ½ miles from the 320-acre Union Stock Yards, the neighborhood was dominated by dozens of meat packing houses, freight railroad lines and shoddily built frame residential structures that housed tens of thousands of Irish, German, Bohemian, Russian, Ukrainian, and Lithuanian immigrants who came to work in the stock yards and factories. The streets were unpaved and there were no sewers. Homes did not have running water, electricity or in most incidences, gas lights. Portrayed in Upton Sinclair's 1906 novel *The Jungle*, the area:

...was famous for its smell, noticeable for miles depending on the wind. This came from the amassed animals, the factories, particularly those engaged in fertilizer production and tanning, a city garbage dump at 47<sup>th</sup> and Damen Avenue, and an arm of the South Branch of the Chicago River, know as "Bubbly Creek.

Bubbly Creek got its nickname from the bubbles formed by gases that would rise to the surface of the water and burst or even catch on fire. This reaction occurred from the animal carcasses and other waste products that the meat packing facilities and other factories dumped into this portion of the Chicago River.

J. Frank Foster and the South Park Commissioners believed that the aesthetics of the park and its architecture could have an important impact on the immigrants living in filthy, squalid neighborhood surrounding Cornell Square and other new parks. According to one architectural critic of the period:

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<sup>9</sup> Correspondence from President Henry G. Foreman to the Olmsted Brothers, Dec. 26, 1903, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division.

<sup>10</sup> Visit by Mr. John Charles Olmsted to Chicago, March 5, 1904, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division.

<sup>11</sup> William W. Tippens, "Synthesis of Reform: The Development of the Small Parks in Chicago's South and West Park Commissions," Unpublished Master of Science Thesis, Columbia University, NY, 1988, 37.

<sup>12</sup> Chicago Fact Book Consortium. *Local Community Fact Book Chicago Metropolitan Area: Based on the 1970 and 1980 Censuses.* University of Illinois at Chicago, 1984, 61.

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Cornell Square, Cook County, Illinois

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The effect of a good building, in which an untrained boy studies or plays, is far more insidious than is that of some imposing, but remote public monuments... Such surrounding cannot fail in the long run to make for a higher standard of public or private taste.<sup>13</sup>

On March 30, 1904, the South Park Commissioners approved the Olmsted Brothers' plan for Cornell Square. Plans for the park's buildings proceeded in the spring after the young architect, Edward H. Bennett, joined Burnham's firm. When Bennett joined the project, "he entered an undefined area in architecture."<sup>14</sup> D.H. Burnham & Co. already had a long and productive relationship with the South Park Commission. Earlier park structures, however, tended to have a utilitarian purpose such as horse stables, or a singular function emphasizing passive recreation, such as a refectory, and most of these were only open during summer months.

Superintendent J. Frank Foster intended for the new park architecture to achieve much more. Inspired by Chicago's settlement house movement, these buildings were intended as vehicles of social reform. The structures would include indoor gymnasiums, allowing for year-round active recreation in the parks for the first time. Clubrooms, auditoriums and the earliest branches of the Chicago Public Library would be included, and various lectures and classes would be provided, making the field houses social and educational centers in the community. There would be locker rooms with showers and swimming pools, offering many tenement district residents their only access to public bathing.

Like the landscapes, the buildings of the new neighborhood parks all had similar characteristics, but the plans and details were individualized to make each site unique. Bennett varied the architectural design from park to park depending on size, neighborhood context, and landscape design.

Despite the differences in each design, Bennett relied on the same style and materials for all of the parks. Having been trained at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris, Bennett fit well into Burnham's firm that helped inspire the City Beautiful Movement through prominent commissions for monumental buildings and civic plazas throughout the nation. Bennett's park designs echoed the classicism of the World's Columbian Exposition and in fact, in a 1905 article, South Park Commission President Henry Foreman suggested that the new parks "reflected in miniature the architectural beauty of the White City."<sup>15</sup> Many of the plans for the new neighborhood park architecture involved a complex of buildings organized around an outdoor swimming pool representing in a small scale the World's Fair's Court of Honor. These new structures also emulated the fair buildings of a decade earlier because they were rendered in the Beaux Arts style, and had classical ornamentation molded into the surface of the building material.

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<sup>13</sup> "Chicago Parks and Their Landscape Architecture," *Architectural Record*, v. 24, July, 1908, 26.

<sup>14</sup> William W. Tappan and Julia Sniderman, "The Planning and Design of Chicago's Neighborhood Parks," *A Breath of Fresh Air: Chicago's Neighborhood Parks of the Progressive Reform Era 1900-25*, Chicago: The Chicago Public Library and the Chicago Park District, 1989, 24.

<sup>15</sup> Henry G. Foreman, "Chicago's New Park Service," *Century*, v. 69, February, 1905, 610-20.

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**Cornell Square, Cook County, Illinois**

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The building material selected for the whole system of new park buildings was exposed aggregate concrete. From this material, which was also known as "marblecrete" or "popcorn concrete," buildings could be constructed quickly, relatively inexpensively, and ornamentation could be molded directly into facades. Although the buildings relied on classical details, the material allows for a visible expression of the small pieces of aggregate, and the rough-cast character required that details be rendered in a simplified vocabulary devoid of intricacies.

Cornell Square's architectural complex included a field house with a lobby, auditorium, club rooms, and reading room in the primary portion of the building, and a Women's Gym and Locker room in the rear wing. A Men's Gym and Locker Room building was sited to the north. The two buildings were adjoined with an open pergola. The swimming pool was located in the open courtyard, between the two buildings. The architects began preparing detailed plans and construction documents on May 18, 1904. The South Park Commission awarded contracts for the construction of the Cornell Square buildings on August 31, 1904. Cornell Square's construction was completed in early August of 1905. By the end of September the first ten of the new parks had opened to the public. These included: Cornell Square, Armour Square, Davis Square, Mark White Square (now McGuane Park), Russell Square, Bessemer Park, Sherman Park, Ogden Park, Hamilton Park, and Palmer Park.

The new parks provided an array of services and facilities for their surrounding communities including English lessons, vocational training, inexpensive hot meals, and public bathing. The parks had club rooms and auditoriums, and several of them included the earliest branches of the Chicago Public Library. Foster and the commissioners believed that the new park facilities would help educate and shape the character and morals of the immigrants residing in the surrounding communities. In a speech made on Labor Day of 1904, while the construction of most of the field house complexes had just commenced, South Park Commission President Henry G. Foreman asserted:

I believe local patriotism would be developed by neighborhood gatherings. I believe that the young and women would find healthful recreation in club life, if they were provided with a place for meetings; and that such club life would keep them from other things that are distinctly harmful. As for branches of the public library, they would open an avenue of success for many persons who now feel that advancement in life is closed to them because of the unfavorable environment. They would bring almost to the doors of the people means of acquiring useful knowledge.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to the programs and facilities, the commissioners intended to inspire and educate area residents by

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<sup>16</sup> Henry G. Foreman, "Recreation Needs of Chicago," Address at Morgan Park on Morgan Park Day (Labor Day), Sept. 5, 1904, 7.

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**Cornell Square, Cook County, Illinois**

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selecting park names honoring important figures in Chicago or national history, or relating to community histories. Although a group of Polish residents of the community had suggested requested that the South Park Commission should name either Park No. 5 or a nearby park be named for Count Casamer Pulaski, a Polish war hero who fought in the American Revolution,<sup>17</sup> the commissioners decided instead to honor Paul Cornell. (Approximately a decade later, the West Park Commission named one its properties Pulaski Park.)

Paul Cornell (1822-1904) an early Chicago settler, was a lawyer and real estate speculator who served for many years on the South Park Board of Commissioners. Born in New York, he was the cousin of Ezra Cornell, who founded Cornell University. Moving with his family to Adams County, Illinois, he became a teacher and began studying law. After being admitted to the state bar in 1847, he relocated to Chicago. He practiced in several law offices and the established his own firm. In 1853, he began purchasing lakefront land south of Chicago. By deeding property to the Illinois and Central Railroad, he was able to secure transportation linkages with Chicago, which made his new town of Hyde Park a great success. (The small suburb was annexed to Chicago in 1889). Cornell believed that parks would provide "lungs to the great city and its future generations," and began working along with other prominent south siders to draft legislation establishing the South Park Commission.<sup>18</sup> The governor appointed him to the South Park Board, and he served as its first secretary and later as auditor. Cornell was instrumental in hiring Frederick Law Olmsted to lay out Jackson and Washington Parks and the Midway Plaisance.

Along with the other nine new parks, Cornell Square proved to be an immediate success. By the end of the year of 1906, Cornell Square's facilities had an annual attendance of 374,200. The combined annual attendance of all of the branch libraries in the new neighborhood parks totaled more the 600,000; the lunch-rooms collectively had served over 45,000 meals; the bathing facilities had been used more than 800,000 times, and the ten new parks had served more than 5 million people in congested south side districts.<sup>19</sup> In addition to the regular use of the facilities, the parks provided special programs such as lectures on travel, art, science and public health.

It was quickly apparent that the new south park prototype would soon provide a national model for park development. The Olmsted Brothers promoted the concept through city planning groups and conferences. Daniel H. Burnham and Edward Bennett incorporated the concept in their 1905 San Francisco Plan, "and in the 1907 St. Louis City Plan, the published report of which contained illustrations of Chicago's small parks."<sup>20</sup> Historian Joan Draper has documented how quickly and profusely information on Chicago's new south side parks was disseminated:

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<sup>17</sup> Minutes of the South Park Commission Board of Commissioners, June 15, 1904, v. 8, 96.

<sup>18</sup> *Annual Report of the South Park Commissioners for the Fiscal Year 1904*, 59.

<sup>19</sup> *Annual Report of the South Park Commissioners for the Fiscal Year 1906*, Chicago: 1907, 59-61

<sup>20</sup> Joan E. Draper, "Park Planning in Chicago: Art and Science. The South Park District's Small Parks of 1902-1905 and Park Planning in the United States," *Planning the Twentieth Century American City*, Christopher Silver and Mary Corbin Sies, eds, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, 102.

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**Cornell Square, Cook County, Illinois**

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The widely disseminated 1909 Plan of Chicago included a site plan of the largest of the new parks, Sherman Park, along with photographs of two others. Illustrations of “typical examples,” from the South Side of Chicago, usually Davis or Armour Square soon appeared in books about park design aimed at professionals.<sup>21</sup>

Park administrators, social reformers, and advocates of the playground movement throughout the nation also became well acquainted with the new parks when they attended the Playground Association of America’s first annual conference, which took place in Chicago in the summer of 1907.

Despite the small size of Cornell Square, its facilities were extremely well utilized by the members of the densely populated surrounding neighborhood. By the end of the year of 1910, Cornell Square had a total annual attendance of 549,409.<sup>22</sup> This figure reflects the aggregate use of facilities including: shower baths: used 100,385 times; library: used 54,115 times, and outdoor gymnasiums: used 278,498 times over the course of the year.<sup>23</sup>

The South Park Commissioners believed that the new parks could help recent immigrants become accustomed to American culture and society. The parks provided English lessons and classes in Americanization. By 1912, Judge John Barton Payne, then president of the South Park Board of Commissioners, had donated funds to commission artworks depicting “statesmen, historical personages and colonial day events and scenes” to “adorn the walls in each of the eleven field houses.”<sup>24</sup> (Fuller Park had recently opened and was the eleventh field house in the system.) The Cornell Square donation was a portrait of Paul Cornell’s cousin Ezra Cornell (1807-1874), an important figure in American history not only for founding Cornell University, but also for his contributions to developing the electric telegraph, and serving as a New York state senator from 1864 to 1868.

It is unclear whether any of the other paintings donated by Payne in 1912 survive today. The Judge John Barton Payne Art Fund, which was administered by the Art Institute of Chicago, continued until around 1927. A number of murals and large paintings that were commissioned later in the 1910s and in the 1920s still exist in several South Park Commission field houses including: Hamilton, Calumet, Fuller, and Sherman Parks.

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<sup>21</sup> Joan E. Draper, “Park Planning in Chicago: Art and Science. The South Park District’s Small Parks of 1902-1905 and Park Planning in the United States,” in *Planning the Twentieth Century American City*, eds.: Christopher Silver and Mary Corbin Sies, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

<sup>22</sup> *Annual Report of the South Park Commissioners for a Period of Twelve Months from March 1, 1910 to February 28, 1911, inclusive*. Chicago, 1911, 64.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Annual Report of the South Park Commissioners for a Period of Twelve Months from March 1, 1911 to February 29, 1912, inclusive*. Chicago, 1912, 43.

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**Cornell Square, Cook County, Illinois**

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On March 4, 1929, descendants of Paul Cornell presented a bronze bust of the park's namesake.<sup>25</sup> The artwork was presented during a ceremony celebrating the park's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Norwegian artist Sigvald Asbjornsen (1867–1954) sculpted the bust of Paul Cornell. Asbjornsen's other works include the Leif Ericson Monument in Chicago's Humboldt Park and a bust of composer Edvard Hagerup Grieg in New York's Prospect Park.

Cornell Square continued to be well attended by its surroundings during the late 1920s and early 1930s. During this period, activities in the gymnasiums ranged from basketball and volleyball to calisthenics and marching. The park had its own orchestra, and crafts classes such as doll making, puppet craft, and sand craft. Numerous clubs, groups, and organizations used the field house, including more than 40 women's clubs that met monthly at Cornell Square. Scout troops met regularly in the field house and Cornell Square also provided large group gatherings for children. There were also parties and pageants for holidays and extremely popular outdoor movies.<sup>26</sup>

By the early 1930s, there were 22 separate park districts operating simultaneously in Chicago, including the South Park Commission. The Great Depression rendered all of these independent agencies financially insolvent. To gain access to federal funding through President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal, voters approved the Park Consolidation Act of 1934, through which all 22 agencies were unified into the Chicago Park District.

The Chicago Park District established a Recreation Division headed by V.K. Brown, who had served previously as director of recreation for the South Park Commission. Under Brown's leadership, the Chicago Park District continued maintaining its high level of recreational programming. In a 1938 report, Brown provided a list of nationally important athletes who had their beginnings in Chicago park programs. This included track and field star Ralph Metcalf, football hero Knute Rockne, and golf pro Chick Evans. Brown's list also highlighted two athletes from Cornell Square—a national marathon winner, Al Schwidersky, and Frank Motis who won the national amateur heavyweight wrestling championship.<sup>27</sup>

Between 1935 and 1941, the newly consolidated Chicago Park District received more than \$82 million in federal funding through the WPA (Works Progress Administration) and PWA (Public Works Administration). State and city funds increased this total to more than \$100 million.<sup>28</sup> Using these funds, the park district made

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<sup>25</sup> Breen, Daniel, ed. *Historical Register of the Twenty-two Superseded Parks Districts*, Chicago: Works Progress Administration and the Chicago Park District, 1941.

<sup>26</sup> Marian Lorena Osborn, "The Development of Recreation in the South Park System of Chicago," Unpublished Master's Thesis submitted to The Graduate School of Social Service Administration, The University of Chicago, 1928, 109.

<sup>27</sup> V.K. Brown, *Your Chicago Parks- Their Present and Future*. Chicago Park District, 1938, 7.

<sup>28</sup> Julia Sniderman Bachrach, *The City in a Garden: A Photographic History of Chicago's Parks*, Center for American Places, Harrisonburg, VA: 2001, 24.

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**Cornell Square, Cook County, Illinois**

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numerous improvements throughout the system, which then included 130 parks with a total of 83 field houses and 50 swimming pools.

In 1936, the Chicago Park District removed the pergola that linked the field house to the men's gymnasium (on the west side of the complex). In its place, the park district constructed a one-story bathhouse with separate components for men and women. It housed bathrooms, showers, dressing booths and a counter with baskets for checking clothes. These facilities made the use of the outdoor swimming pool more convenient for park patrons.

Also in the late 1930s, the park district built tennis courts in what was originally the music court at the southeast corner of Cornell Square. A multi-purpose play slab was added just to the south of the field house. This was later converted to basketball courts. Additional alterations during this period include removing the men's running track on the west side of the park. Over the years this area was used for volleyball, horseshoes, softball field, and eventually became a soccer field. Despite the removal of the running track, the original path system and sunken athletic field are still intact. (The stairs leading from the path to the athletic field did not survive, however.)

Between the 1970s and turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the park district made several improvements to Cornell Square including constructing a ramp to provide accessibility to the field house, making, repairing and updating the swimming pool and decking, installing ornamental fencing around the park, planting new trees and shrubs, reconditioning the athletic fields, and upgrading the playgrounds.

Over the years, Cornell Square has continuously provided a variety of athletic, recreational, social, and educational programs and services to the community. Although it has adapted to modern needs, the park retains a good deal of historic fabric. Today Cornell Square offers many programs that are similar to those historically offered in the park such as basketball, wrestling, tumbling, homework help, and arts and crafts. It is quite evident that today, historic Cornell Square remains a vital part of the surrounding community.

**Cornell Square**  
Name of Property

**Cook County, Illinois**  
County and State

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### 9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository **Chicago Park District**

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### 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property: **8.29 acres**

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

Zone Easting Northing    Zone Easting Northing

1 16 444152 4627925    3 16 444350 4627727

2 16 444350 4627925    4 16 444157 4627722

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

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

**See Continuation Sheet**

Boundary Justification

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

**See Continuation Sheet**

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Cornell Square, Cook County, Illinois

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Cornell Square, Cook County, Illinois

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PLANS AND DRAWINGS

Chicago Park District. Cornell Square. Field House Alterations. April 6, 1936.

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South Park Commission. Band Stand. May 18, 1905.

South Park Commission. Cornell Square. March, 1909.

South Park Commission. Cornell Square. October, 1916.

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**Cornell Square, Cook County, Illinois**

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**Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The property is bounded on the north by the south curb-line of West 50<sup>th</sup> Street, on the south by the north curb-line of West 51<sup>st</sup> Street, on the east by the west curb-line of South Wood Street, and on the west by the east curb-line of South Wolcott Avenue.

**Boundary Justification**

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

**Cornell Square**  
Name of Property

**Cook County, Illinois**  
County and State

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title: Julia Sniderman Bachrach

organization: Chicago Park District

date: February 24, 2005

street & number: 541 N. Fairbanks

telephone: (312) 742-4698

city or town: Chicago

state: IL

zip code: 60611

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:  
Continuation Sheets

**Maps**

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

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

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

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

---

**Property Owner**

---

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

name **Timothy J. Mitchell, General Superintendent, Chicago Park District**

street & number **541 North Fairbanks**

telephone

city or town **Chicago**

state **IL**

zip code **60611**

---

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

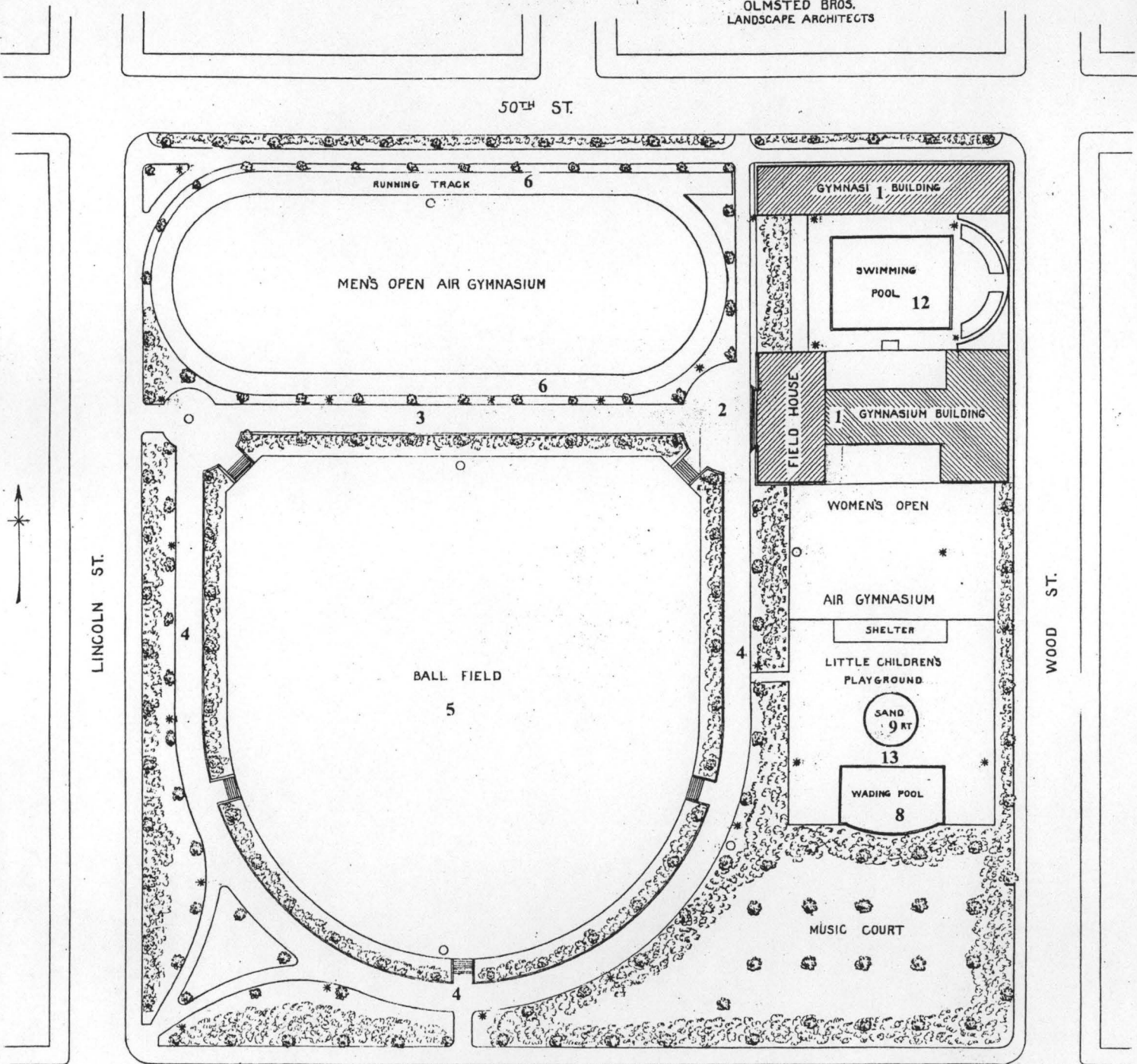
SOUTH PARK COMMISSIONERS  
CORNELL SQUARE  
CHICAGO

A

1904  
0 10 20 30 40 50 100 150 FT.

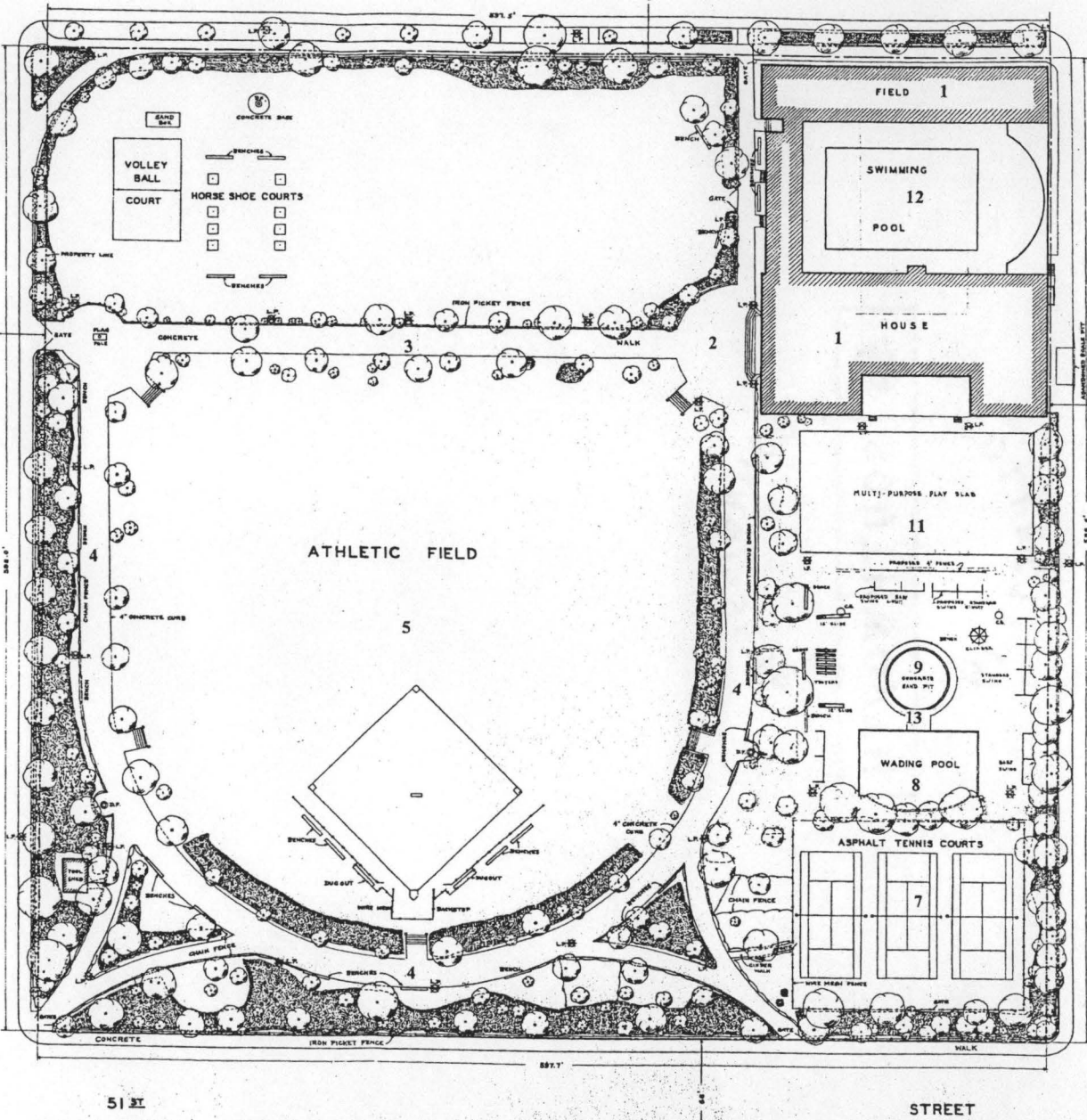
OLMSTED BROS.  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

1904 Plan  
Cornell Square  
Cook Co., IL



AVENUE

S. WOLCOTT



STREET

S. WOOD

STREET

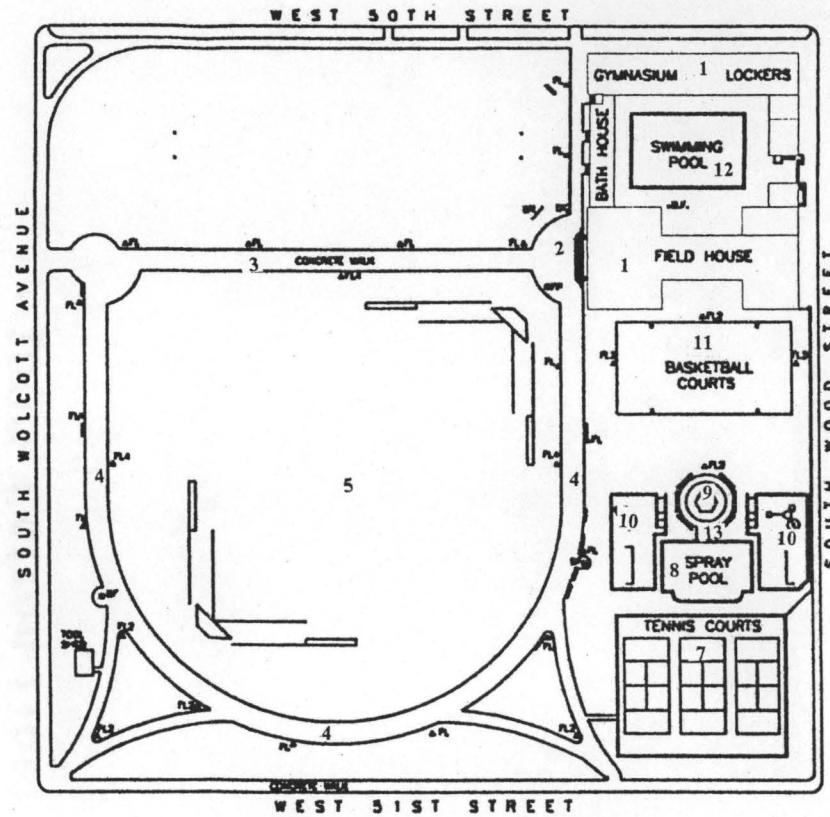
STREET

1939 Plan  
 Cornell Square  
 Cook Co., IL



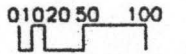
B

DRAWN BY W.P.A. PROJECT 3796 FOR RECORD PURPOSES  
 ACCEPTED BY *[Signature]* SUPT. 3  
**CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT**  
 CORNELL SQUARE  
 TOPOGRAPHICAL SURVEY  
 GENERAL PLAN  
 SCALE: 1" = 30'-0" BOOK NOS. 4456 & 57 DATE: 6-29-31  
 DRAWN BY K. BARNHILL TRACED BY J. HERTZ CHECKED BY [Signature]



*Current Plan  
Cornell Square  
Cook Co., IL*

C



PARK NO. 5  
COMM NO.

1809 W WOOD STREET

PLOT PLAN  
CORNELL SQUARE  
SCALE: 1" = 100'  
CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

DRAWN BY E.S. 2/98 C:\PARKS.DWG

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Cornell Square

MULTIPLE NAME: Chicago Park District MPS

STATE & COUNTY: ILLINOIS, Cook

DATE RECEIVED: 7/01/05      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 7/25/05  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 8/09/05      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 8/14/05  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 05000875

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N    DATA PROBLEM: N    LANDSCAPE: N    LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N    PDIL: N    PERIOD: N    PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N    SAMPLE: N    SLR DRAFT: N    NATIONAL: Y

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    8/11/2005 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Historically & architecturally significant early 20th century neighborhood park constructed as part of Chicago's planned park system.

RECOM./CRITERIA accept AEC

REVIEWER Patrick Andrus      DISCIPLINE Historian

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_      DATE 8/11/2005

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



1. Cornell Square

Cook County IL

Julia Bachrach

Jan 13, 2005

Chicago Park District

View of Field House looking east

[17]



2. Cornell Square  
Cook County IL

Julia Bachrach

Jan 13, 2005

Chicago Park District

View of Field House looking east

E121



3. Cornell Square  
Cook County IL

Julia Bachrach

Jan 13, 2005

Chicago Park District

Interior view of womens gym looking SW

[12]



4. Cornell Square  
Cook County IL  
Julia Bachrach

Jan 13, 2005

Chicago Park District

Interior view of Field House looking N

[17]



5. Cornell Square  
Cook County, IL  
Julia Bachrach

Jan 13, 2005

Chicago Park District

View of bust looking E

[13]



6. Cornell Square  
Cook county, IL

Julia Bachrach

Jan 13, 2005

Chicago Park District

View of promenade walk looking W

[3]



7. Cornell Square  
Cook County, IL  
Julia Bachrach

Jan 13, 2005

Chicago Park District

View of walkway looking S

[4]



8. Cornell Square

Cook County, IL

Julia Bachrach

Jan 13, 2005

Chicago Park District

view of spraypool looking NE

[8]



9. Cornell Square

Cook County, IL

Julia Bachrach

Jan 13, 2005

Chicago Park District

View of circular remnant <sup>lookant</sup> and fieldhouse looking N

[8, 11]



10. Cornell Square

Cook County, IL

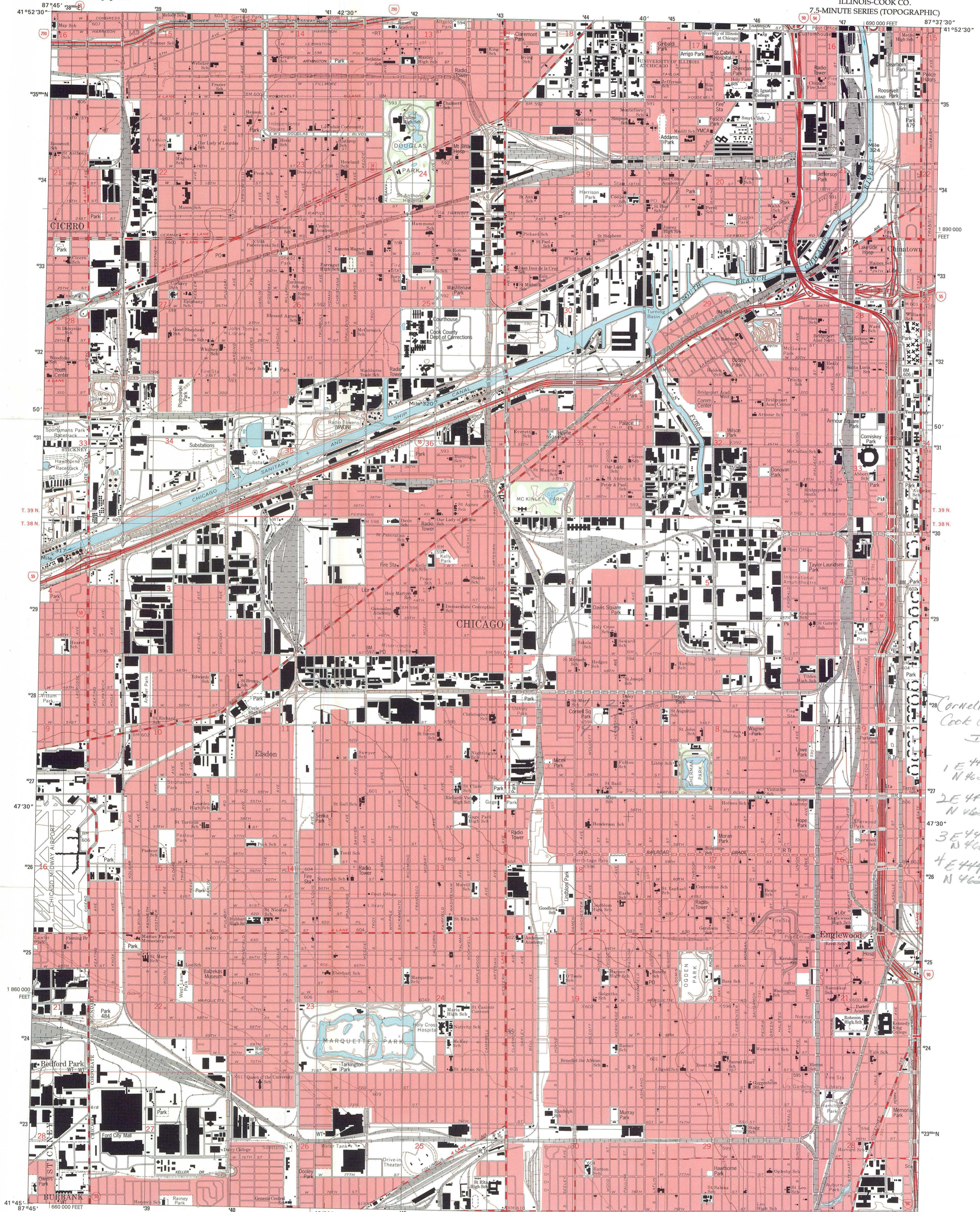
Julia Bachrach

Jan 13, 2005

Chicago Park District

view of swimming pool + field house looking SW

[11, 12]



Cornell Square Cook County IL  
1 E 44152 N 4627 25  
2 E 44 380 N 4627 25  
3 E 44 350 N 4627 27  
4 E 44 157 N 4627 22

Produced by the United States Geological Survey  
 Derived from imagery taken 1988 and other sources. Photoinsected using imagery taken 1997; no major culture or drainage changes observed. PLSS and survey control current as of 1992. Boundaries, other than corporate, verified 1999.  
 North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27). Projection and 10 000-foot ticks: Illinois coordinate system, east zone (transverse Mercator)  
 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 16  
 North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) is shown by dashed corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 27 and NAD 83 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software

SCALE 1:24 000  
 QUADRANGLE LOCATION  
 ROAD CLASSIFICATION  
 Primary highway, hard surface  
 Secondary highway, hard surface  
 Interstate Route  
 U. S. Route  
 Slate Route  
 Light-duty road, hard or improved surface  
 Unimproved road

CONTOUR INTERVAL 5 FEET  
 NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929  
 TO CONVERT FROM FEET TO METERS, MULTIPLY BY 0.3048

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
 FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225  
 AND ILLINOIS GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, CHAMPAIGN, ILLINOIS 61820  
 A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ENGLEWOOD, IL  
 1997  
 NIMA 3467 1 SW-SERIES V863

ISBN 0-607-91744-X  
 9 780607 917444



**Illinois Historic  
Preservation Agency**

1 Old State Capitol Plaza • Springfield, Illinois 62701-1507 • Teletypewriter Only (217) 524-7128

Voice (217) 782-4836

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Mayor Richard M. Daley, City of Chicago  
Brian Goeken, Landmarks Division, Department of Planning and  
Development

FROM: Tracey A. Sculle, Survey and National Register Coordinator *TAS*

DATE: April 1, 2005

SUBJECT: Preliminary Opinion on Cornell Square in Chicago, Illinois

Cornell Square located at 1809 West 50<sup>th</sup> Street (mailing address) is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under the Multiple Property Documentation Form, entitled "The Historic Resources of the Chicago Park District." The park is bounded on the north by West 50<sup>th</sup> Street, on the south by West 51<sup>st</sup> Street, on the east by South Wood Street and the west by South Wolcott Avenue. Cornell Square is nationally significant and meets Criteria A and C for listing in the National Register of Historic Places for the following areas of significance: Entertainment/ Recreation, Social History, Architecture, and Landscape Architecture. The period of significance for Cornell Square is from 1905 to 1955, the fifty-year cutoff for National Register significance. The park was designed in 1905 by the Olmsted Brothers and the buildings were designed by Edward H. Bennett, a young architect with D.H Burnham and Company. Cornell Square is part of the revolutionary plan by the South Park Commission to provide open space, recreational facilities and social services to the heavily populated tenement districts within its jurisdiction.

Cornell Square retains sufficient integrity to convey both its historic and architectural importance and will make a fine addition to the National Register of Historic Places.

Resolution  
by the  
Commission on Chicago Landmarks  
on the  
Nominations to the National Register of Historic Places  
for

**Central Park Theater, 3531-3539 W. Roosevelt Rd.**

**Cornell Square, 1809 W. 50<sup>th</sup> St.**

**Illinois Institute of Technology Academic Campus, roughly bounded by 31<sup>st</sup> St.,  
State St., 35<sup>th</sup> St., and Dan Ryan Expressway**

May 4, 2005

The Commission on Chicago Landmarks finds that:

- The Central Park Theater (now the House of Prayer, Church of God in Christ) is noteworthy as the first theater built for Balaban and Katz by noted theater architects Rapp and Rapp and possess local, state, and national significance for innovations in movie theater design. The building meets Criterion A for entertainment/ recreational history and invention and Criterion C for engineering;
- Cornell Park, nominated to the National Register under the Multiple Property Documentation Form entitled "The Historic Resources of the Chicago Park District," is noteworthy as part of a revolutionary expansion of neighborhood parks on Chicago's South Side in the early 1900s. It possesses national significance and meets Criterion A for entertainment/recreation and social history and Criterion C for architecture and landscape architecture; and
- The Illinois Institute of Technology Academic Campus meets Criterion A for Education and Criterion C for Architecture and Planning as a locally significant technological educational and research institute and a nationally significant expression of the architecture and planning of noted modernist architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. The district also meets Criteria Consideration G (since some buildings in the district are less than 50 years old, the traditional cut-off for listing to the National Register) as these more recent buildings result form similar historical patterns as the campus's earlier buildings, represent a continuation of Mies' planned design, and are integral to the district.

*Now, therefore, be it resolved by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks that it hereby supports the listing of all three nominations to the National Register of Historic Places.*



City of Chicago  
Richard M. Daley, Mayor

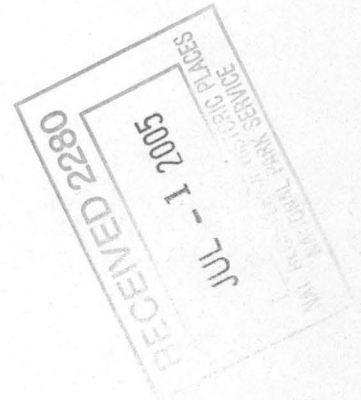
Department of Planning  
and Development

Denise M. Casalino, P.E.  
Commissioner

Suite 1600  
33 North LaSalle Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60602  
312) 744-3200  
312) 744-9140 (FAX)  
312) 744-2578 (TTY)  
<http://www.cityofchicago.org>

May 6, 2005

Tracey A. Sculle  
Survey & National Register Coordinator  
Illinois Historic Preservation Agency  
1 Old State Capitol  
Springfield, IL 62702



**Re: Chicago nominations to the National Register of Historic Places for**

- **Central Park Theater, 3531-3539 W. Roosevelt Rd.**
- **Cornell Square, 1809 W. 50<sup>th</sup> St.**
- **Illinois Institute of Technology Academic Campus, roughly bounded by 31<sup>st</sup> St., State St., 35<sup>th</sup> St., and Dan Ryan Expressway**

Dear Ms. Sculle:

This is in response to your letters of April 5 and 7, 2005, to the Commission on Chicago Landmarks asking for the Commission's comments on the nominations of the properties referenced above to the National Register of Historic Places. As a Certified Local Government (CLG), the City of Chicago is given the opportunity to comment on local nominations to the National Register prior to being considered by the Illinois Historic Sites Advisory Council.

At its regular meeting of May 4, 2005, the Commission voted unanimously to support the National Register listings for all three nominations. The Commission's resolution is attached.

Please contact Terry Tatum of my staff at 312-744-9147 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Brian Goeken  
Deputy Commissioner  
Landmarks Division

Originated by:

Terry Tatum  
Director of Research  
Landmarks Division

encl.



cc: Alderman Dorothy Tillman, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward  
Alderman Shirley A. Coleman, 16<sup>th</sup> Ward  
Alderman Michael Chandler, 24<sup>th</sup> Ward  
Dr. Lincoln Scott, Pastor, House of Prayer, Church of God in Christ  
Julia Bachrach, Chicago Park District  
Arnold Randall, Chicago Park District  
David Baker, IIT  
Jean Guarino  
Mark Kasprzyk and Douglas Gilbert, McClier  
Mary Bonome, Department of Planning and Development  
Juanita Charlton, Department of Planning and Development  
Judy Minor-Jackson, Department of Planning and Development  
Amy Lozano, Department of Planning and Development  
Kim Moore, Department of Planning and Development  
Michelle Nolan, Department of Planning and Development

Toni Deckman  
Ref. No. 05-00545477