

**NEWTON PUBLIC BUILDINGS SURVEY  
PHASE II – ANALYSIS OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

**Building Analysis**

**Cabot Park Field House**



Address: 101 East Side Parkway  
Year of Construction: 1926

Level of Significance: Level 2 – Moderate Significance.  
A prominent feature within the landscape of Cabot Park in the Newtonville neighborhood of Newton.

Recommended Treatment Level: Rehabilitation

## **PART I - Analysis of Historical Significance**

### *Building History*

Little information, including the name of its original designer, was found on the history of the Cabot Park field house. The brick structure was built in approximately 1925-1926 to serve as a recreation and restroom facility within pre-existing Cabot Park. The structure is rectangular in plan with a square center bay covered by a hipped roof flanked by two flat-roofed side wings. Constructed in a stripped down version of the Neoclassical style the building elevations are arranged in strict symmetry with equal numbers of openings at each side. The most notable feature on the building is the overhanging hipped roof that is supported at its outer edges by columns, creating porches at the front and rear of the building. As seen in historic photos, the roof supports originally consisted of four wood columns with Doric capitals forming an arcade at each side. When constructed the building held a recreation room, showers and lockers and was designed to support park activities. The interior of the building was recently renovated and now houses an afterschool program for children.

Cabot Park was originally developed in 1894 on 14 acres of land donated to the City of Newton by a number of Newton citizens. The tract of land was described in contemporary accounts as including “a grove and stream of clear running water” and as “one of the most beautiful tracts of land that can be found”. The donation and subsequent building of the park was part of a larger contemporary movement within New England to preserve natural areas. Among the many organizations formed at that time period was the Metropolitan Park Commission (1892) that was changed with establishing parks in and around the City of Boston. The Metropolitan Park Commission began a wave of park creation within Newton by establishing the park at Hemlock Gorge in 1893.

In addition to being a time of early conservationism, late 1890s was also when many of the village improvement associations within Newton were organized to guide the City’s development and promote the creation of parks, playgrounds and other public works. The area around Cabot Park became increasingly developed throughout the early 1900s leading to a demand for recreation facilities. In 1901 Citizens in Wards 1, 2 and 7 petitioned for a playground and athletic fields to be built within Cabot Park. These facilities were eventually constructed, and the fieldhouse was built to support this more active recreation component of the park. The total cost of the field house was \$9,962.76.

### *Level of Significance*

The Cabot Park Fieldhouse is significant under National Register Criterion A for its association with the development of Newton’s city park system. Unfortunately the building has not been well maintained over time and much of its original fabric has been lost.

### *References*

- Husher, Jean M. “20<sup>th</sup> Century Brings Success Preserving Public Open Spaces” (2000)  
<<http://www.newtonconservators.org/husher.htm>> (visited 28 November, 2011).  
Massachusetts Historical Commission, “Form B NWT.5801—East Side Pkwy” (1997).  
Massachusetts Historical Commission “Form B NWT.CJ-Cabot Park” (1987).

**PART I - Analysis of Historical Significance: Historic Images**  
*Additional Information Sources for Future Research*

*Historic Images*



Figure 1: Photograph of the Fieldhouse in 1925 from the City of Newton records (Credit: Historic Newton).

## **Part 2 – Description of Historically Significant Features**

### **Exterior Visual Character**

#### *Setting*

- Located at the east edge of the 11.6-acre Cabot Park.

#### *Shape*

- Rectangular in plan with a square center section flanked by two side wings.
- Strictly symmetrical at both front (street-facing) and rear elevations.

#### *Roof and Related Features*

- The square center section of the building is covered with a hipped roof. The roof is clad with asphalt shingles, likely a replacement for slate.
- The roof is supported by exposed wood brackets. The ends of the brackets are shaped to hold a gutter (currently an aluminum replacement), which wraps around the perimeter of the roof. The underside of the roof at the porch areas is clad with tongue-and-groove sheathing.
- The two side wings have flat roofs with aluminum coping caps set over the original cast stone parapet caps.
- The flat roofs drain through scuppers located on either side of the center section.
- A masonry central slope chimney is located at the rear side of the hipped roof.

#### *Openings*

- There is a single door opening at the center of the street elevation, which is the building's main entrance. The door has been replaced.
- The entrance door is flanked on either side by single window openings. The original windows have been replaced with aluminum windows and are covered with heavy exterior metal grates.
- Window openings at the side wings of the street elevation are shorter than those at the center bay. These window sashes have also been replaced with aluminum, but two of the four windows retain their original wood casings and frames.
- The rear (park-facing) elevation was originally configured in the same manner as the front (street) elevation with a center door flanked by symmetrically placed windows. These openings have all been infilled with brick or plywood.
- The side elevations each have a single entrance door opening flanked by two small window openings. The majority of these openings have been infilled with brick or plywood.

#### *Projections:*

- The hipped roof overhangs the front and rear elevations of the building wall creating covered porches at both sides.
- The edge of the roof at both sides is currently supported by painted steel columns. Historic photos show that the edges of the roof were originally supported by four tapered columns with simple Doric capitals. The original columns were likely made of wood.

#### *Trim and Secondary Features:*

- Window openings typically have brick sills and steel lintels. The original molded wood casings sit within the masonry openings.

#### *Materials*

- Walls are brick laid in Flemish bond. The brick is currently painted red. Historic photos show that the walls were originally unpainted.
- The building has an approximately 1'-0" high concrete foundation with a beveled top edge that wraps around its perimeter.

#### *Craft Details*

- A decorative soldier course located five courses below the top of the parapet wall runs along the perimeter of the walls.

### **Interior Visual Character**

#### *Individually Important Spaces*

- The interior has been extensively modified from its original configuration.

#### *Other Significant Interior Features*

- The building has been extensively modified and few original interior features remain.  
Remaining features include
  - Painted brick at some remaining interior walls
  - A shelf with two heavy wood brackets that may be an original interior feature.

**Part 2 – Images**



Figure 2: Close-up view of front entrance and porch.



Figure 3: Exposed brackets below hipped roof at rear elevation.



Figure 4: Original wood casing at window opening.



Figure 5: View of the interior space.

### **Part 3 – Treatment Recommendations**

#### **Preservation Treatment Level**

The Cabot Park Fieldhouse has not been used for its original purpose for quite some time. Renovations for its new life as an afterschool center have been performed recently and took place primarily at the interior and the exterior is in need of significant repair work to prevent further deterioration of the masonry and wood elements and prevent water infiltration into the interior. To allow the fieldhouse to best function in its new capacity it is recommended that future work be performed according to the “Rehabilitation” Level of treatment outlined in the U. S. Secretary of the Interior’s *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. The Rehabilitation treatment level assumes that more repair and replacement of historic material will be required than is called for in a more preservation-based approach. The emphasis is placed on protecting and maintaining historic building material and significant features while providing an efficient contemporary use of the building.

The following bulleted list contains an analysis of existing conditions and recommended treatments for the significant features catalogued in Part 2 of this report.

#### **Exterior Recommendations**

Critical/Urgent (Timeframe: As soon as possible)

- Inspect condition of roof and flashing to determine causes of water damage to the interior. Repair as necessary.
- Investigate causes of water damage to the interior.
- Replace missing rain leaders to prevent additional damage to brick and ensure all gutters and scuppers are still functional.

First Priority (Timeframe: 1-3 years)

- Replace poorly detailed scuppers, which are contributing to moisture infiltration at wall.
- Steel lintels at almost every window opening are severely rusted and displaced and are in need of replacement. Reset and repoint displaced bricks where rust jacking has occurred and where removed to replace lintels.
- Repair rotted and deteriorated wood at hipped roof brackets. Repairs include:
  - Complete removal of existing paint from wood surfaces. It is recommended that paint analysis be performed prior to stripping to identify historic paint colors.
  - Installation of new wood dutchmen with profiles matching the existing wood elements at areas of severe deterioration. Replacement of wood elements in-kind at areas of deterioration that are not repairable.
  - Consolidation at areas of less severely deteriorated wood.
  - Repainting wood surfaces.
- Scrape, prime and paint the steel columns supporting the hipped roof overhang.

Second Priority (Timeframe: 3-5 years)

- Replace the rubber roofs at the side wings, including replacement of the flashing and scuppers. If possible replace the aluminum coping cap with through-wall flashing below the original cast stone coping stones.
- Conduct a thorough survey of window conditions. Restore original wood casings where existing. As sashes are gradually replaced install more compatible wood or aluminum sashes.
- Consider stripping the paint from the brick surfaces and replacement of the front columns to columns that are more similar in appearance to the original columns.

Maintenance (Timeframe: Ongoing)

- Develop a regular maintenance plan with the intent to preserve character-defining features.
- Maintain all gutters, leaders and drains to keep clog-free.

### **Interior Recommendations**

Critical/Urgent (Timeframe: As soon as possible)

- Locate and repair source of water damage at interior.

First Priority (Timeframe: 1-3 years)

Second Priority (Timeframe: 3-5 years)

- Investigate if additional historic features or materials are present below the existing contemporary finishes. As the space is renovated consider how these features can be retained or preserved.

Maintenance (Timeframe: Ongoing)

- Develop a regular maintenance plan with the intent to preserve character-defining features.