



*Childrens Corner, 2005*

## EXISTING CONDITIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### ACCESS, CIRCULATION AND PARKING

#### Vehicular Access and Circulation

##### *Background*

The initial Olmsted firm work included paths that had 10' and 16' widths. In 1893 the Newton Centre Improvement Association recommended widening the walk at the Centre Street end of the playground to 20'. In 1908 Kellaway stated that the wide existing drive from Centre Street was never used and recommended that it be reduced to a maximum width of 8'. He also recommended that the path from Homer Street be a maximum of 8' wide, preferring 6'. If demand required, the walk could be widened. The Homer Street entrance and service roadway was rebuilt and blacktopped in 1951.

##### *Assessment*

On the perimeter of the site, Centre Street is a main north-south thoroughfare and Homer Street is a main east-west thoroughfare. Tyler Terrace, Bowen Street and Willow Terrace are residential streets. Tyler Terrace has 5 speed bumps. Bowen Street is one way from Centre Street and Willow Terrace is a dead end street. With construction of Mason-Rice School, the playground no longer fronts on Pleasant Street.

Vehicular circulation inside the park is limited to authorized vehicles. There are 4 points of vehicular access: Centre Street, Homer Street and 2 on Tyler Terrace [the one to the Recreation Center is used informally]. The route from Centre Street remains about 10' wide to the tennis courts while the one from Homer Street is about 6' wide and gated. Tracks in the ground indicate that vehicles go around the gate for access and egress. On Tyler Terrace the main vehicular access drive is 12 to 16' wide until it crosses the brook and then the width diminishes to about 8'. The gravel drive to the Recreation Center is about 20' wide. All have defined curb cuts except the one to the Recreation Center.



*Path from Tyler Terrace and Centre Street, c1918  
[postcard courtesy of Newton Historical Society]*

Emergency services [ambulances] typically enter from Centre Street. Park maintenance vehicles typically enter from Tyler Terrace as does the occasional police patrol. That entrance also serves as the service drive for Mason-Rice School and is the only drive that is cleared to snow.

## NEWTON CENTRE PLAYGROUND

### Parking

#### *Background*

No historic description of parking in the park has been found. In Kellaway's 1908 report, he noted that carriages could use the walks to attend games on the large field if necessary, implying that there was informal acceptance of vehicles inside the park at that time. This implication is reinforced by 2 historic photographs from the 1930s that show parked vehicles below the Recreation Center.

A sidewalk was added along the edge of Bowen Street in the late 1980s to discourage angular parking and the resulting lawn deterioration. Installation of the walk resulted in steep adjacent side slopes.

*Homer Street entrance, 2006*



#### *Assessment*

While there are no facilities for parking inside the park, stationary private vehicles have been observed. There is a limited amount of on street parking available adjacent to the park. Parking is allowed on the park sides of Tyler Terrace [2 hour limit from 7 AM to 7 PM except Sundays and holidays and no parking from 10 PM to 6 AM] and Bowen Street [2 hour limit from 9 AM to 5 PM except Sundays and holidays]. No parking is allowed on the Homer Street park frontage although parking is allowed on both sides of the street otherwise. No parking is allowed on the park side of Willow Terrace. There are parking facilities at Mason Rice School including 3 handicap spaces. It has been reported that the handicap spaces are mostly unused at all times.

There is a perceived need for additional parking facilities particularly for ball games and other events. It has been reported that Homer Street becomes quite dangerous during ball games due to parking activities on the street.

*Parking in the playground, undated  
[Courtesy of Newton Historical Society]*



### Pedestrian Access and Circulation

#### *Background*

In 1892 the City Engineer set lines and grades for laying out paths and grading at the request of the Newton Center Improvement Association following the Olmsted firm plan for the Centre Street end of the park. After adjusting the alignment to make the grade easier, the Association extended that path along the north side of the tennis courts in 1898. They also built a low fence to protect the path at the southwest entrance of the park on Centre Street. There is no further mention of walks until new cement steps were installed from Tyler Terrace to the tennis courts in 1942.

#### *Assessment*

The pedestrian circulation system is incomplete and limited. Paths bring people into the park from numerous locations but do not connect and often end for no apparent reason. There is a narrow dirt path along the top of the Cochituate Aqueduct and numerous connections into the park. Other than those used for vehicular access, most paths are 4 to 6' wide. The Olmsted firm preliminary plan suggested gate posts at each entrance, but there is no evidence that any were installed. Paths are not cleared of snow.

Potential links to other areas or systems, like Newton Centre, MWRA land on the other side of Centre Street and aqueduct trails, have not been developed.

Universal Access

*Background*

There is no mention of universal access related to the park until a plan for handicap access improvement related to Bowen Street was prepared in August 2005. Implementation has been deferred.

*Assessment*

Universal accessibility inside the park without a vehicle is limited. The only acceptable accessible pedestrian route is the paved path from Centre Street to the tennis courts. It is relatively level for most of its length and has a gradient of about 4% above the bridge. Other routes have the following maximum gradients: about 8% on the path from the Centre Street and Tyler Terrace intersection; about 10% on the path from the bridge to Bowen Street; about 15% on the path from Bowen Street to the southwest which is also incomplete; about 13% on the path from Homer Street to the Little League field; about 17% with steps on the path from the Recreation Center to the play structure area; and about 10% on the path/drive from Tyler Terrace to the ball fields.

The only recreation facility that has an accessible route to it is the tennis courts. The Recreation Center is not universally accessible. There are exterior steps at the entrances facing Tyler Terrace and surrounding gradients are too steep for access to the entrances facing Hammond Brook.

Paving Materials

*Background*

The initial paving material was gravel. In 1908 a coal tar concrete walk was laid from the junction of Centre Street and Tyler Terrace, via the new bridge, to the elbow in Bowen Street. Given the steepness of the gradients on that walk, it is likely that this change was made to reduce the maintenance requirements of gravel on a slope. Concrete steps were installed from Tyler Terrace to the tennis courts in 1943.

*Assessment*

Circulation routes today are primarily either bituminous concrete or gravel. There is a concrete stairway to the tennis courts from Tyler Terrace, a concrete stair and concrete risers on a stepped ramp at the path north and east of the Recreation Center, and remnants of stone steps near one of the bridges over Hammond Brook.

The concrete stair and concrete risers on a stepped ramp at the Recreation Center are in poor condition. While there is a handrail along the stepped ramp, there is no handrail at the stair. The concrete stair near the tennis courts is in good condition with a few chipped treads. It has a galvanized steel pipe handrail.

*Objectives*

*To strengthen the interconnected network of pedestrian circulation systems based upon the principles established in the Kellaway and Olmsted firm plans.*

*To develop and maintain adequate visitor and maintenance access to the park.*

*To meet current accessibility standards while restoring historic image.*

*To maintain the historic style of pavement materials.*

*To take advantage of the views and vistas in the park.*

*To restore the relationship between scenery, service and circulation while creating a clear separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic where possible.*

*To control traffic and parking in the park by providing adequate, accessible, visible parking areas at locations that are close to major activity areas.*

*Path from Bowen Street, 2005*



## NEWTON CENTRE PLAYGROUND

### *Recommendations*

#### Vehicular Circulation

Provide 12' minimum paved width emergency/service vehicle routes to provide access to each of the major recreation facilities in the playground. Maintain the Centre Street entrance for emergency/service vehicular use and restrict vehicular access into the playground from Tyler Terrace, Homer Street and Bowen Street. Maintain service access to Mason-Rice School from Tyler Terrace and reconfigure the intersection near the play structures to discourage vehicles from driving toward Hammond Brook.

#### Parking

Continue to make use of on street parking without providing parking facilities inside the playground. Utilize the Mason-Rice School parking lot to provide additional parking for the playground. This should increase use of the lot particularly during those hours when the school is closed and playground demand peaks. Restripe the current handicap parking layout in the lot to meet current standards and facilitate vehicular access for emergency/service vehicles. Monitor the use of these spaces after the addition of the new play structure area and provide additional spaces if deemed necessary. Designate on street handicap parking with 2 spaces each at Homer Street, Bowen Street and Tyler Terrace.

#### Pedestrian Circulation

Provide a complete interconnected pedestrian circulation system serving playground entrances and recreation facilities. This will assist in completing links to other areas and trails outside the playground.

Walks should retain a generous width as is appropriate from a historic and use perspective. Provide 6' minimum paved width for pedestrian routes. Insure that walk locations work with the topography to eliminate the need for steps where possible.

At the Recreation Center, repair the stepped ramp on the east side of the building and remove the steps and path below. The latter is dangerous and infrequently used.

#### Universal Access

Making Newton Centre Playground [path surfaces and facilities] universally accessible is required for compliance with state and federal regulations. All of the main pedestrian entrances can and should be made accessible except for the path into the playground from the intersection of Centre Street and Tyler Terrace which is too steep.

#### Paving Materials

Consideration must be given to the historic and visual appropriateness of pavement materials as well as initial and long term cost and maintenance implications. The use of gravel, cinders or ashes, while appropriate historically, is not suited for use on slopes without an excessive amount of maintenance.

The use of a chip seal material over bituminous concrete is recommended on walks inside the park. This treatment will provide a rustic historic appearance and will reduce the ongoing maintenance requirements associated with gravel or crushed stone. This recommendation is made with the understanding that the city does not plow these walks free of snow because that activity would impair the appearance of chip seal. Maintain drives that are snow plowed in bituminous concrete. Should funding be an issue, paved routes could be installed with bituminous concrete initially to facilitate implementation. A chip seal could be added when sufficient funds are available.

*Chip seal surface over bituminous concrete  
Doherty Playground, Charlestown MA*



**RECREATION FACILITIES**

**Tennis Courts**

*Background*

The 1891 Olmsted firm plan identified space for a tennis ground. While they didn't specifically site courts, there are some indications of locations for courts on their 1890 sketch plan. Some courts were built and in 1895 the Newton Centre Improvement Association equipped them with nets, tape, etc., and cared for them. In 1898 the Association enclosed them with wire netting.

A 1908 plan of the existing conditions showed that 5 tennis courts had been built, 3 where they are now and 2 on the north side of the brook. The same year Kellaway noted that only 2 had been built and that they protruded "objectionably" into the landscape and recommended that they be relocated to the opposite side of the brook at the base of the bank of Tyler Terrace and be enclosed by a fence covered with vines and a mass of shrubs and a few trees to screen the gravel area from general park views. Apparently the 3 additional tennis courts had been installed before Kellaway had completed his plan. His 1908 plan indicates 5 tennis courts where they are now.

The 1911 Kellaway plan included the 5 tennis courts he had previously recommended with an additional 4 tennis courts near Pleasant Street. The latter were not constructed. Later that year a set of tennis register boards was erected and tennis tape was relaid. Two new tennis courts were built in 1912, presumably completing the bank of 5 courts seen today.

In 1930 an appropriation was made for a fence around the tennis courts. There were 3,482 permits issued for use of the courts in 1932, the most for any park in the city. The tennis backstops were repaired in 1947. A special redcoat surfacing was installed on the courts by the Recreation Department in 1962 to allow the courts to be used much sooner after a rain. The practice court and backboard was installed in 1965. Renovation of the clay courts began in 1989.

*Assessment*

There are currently 5 Har-Tru courts in the location recommended by Kellaway in 1908 with a practice court and backboard at the west end of the courts. As the only municipal clay courts in the city, they are heavily used and in good condition. The asphalt practice court is uneven and cracked. Constructed with plywood that is in poor condition, noise from use of the practice backboard can be heard by nearby residences. A sign indicates that use is not to commence before 9 AM. The courts are unlighted and open from May 1 to October 31, from 9 AM to 2 PM and 4 PM to 8 PM.

Tennis players have expressed a desire for lighting to extend the available hours of play and for a small pro shop.

**Basketball Court**

*Background*

At the site of the current basketball court, Kellaway recommended removal of the tennis courts and replacement with a playfield for small boys in 1908. His 1911 plan recommended a croquet lawn for the same area with basketball courts sited further west. There was to be 1 court for boys and 2 courts for girls. At least one court was built about this time with a turf surface. A basketball court was added to the playground in 1947. A new asphalt basketball court was added in 1966 and seal coated in 1992. It was repaired and lighting was added in 1995.

*Assessment*

There is one illuminated asphalt basketball court with aluminum bleachers north of the tennis courts. The pavement has several cracks and there is erosion along the brook edge. The lights have not been used for several years and the bleachers are scheduled for relocation to another park in the Spring of 2006. Leagues have died out and the court is not used for that purpose anymore.

*Basketball court, c1909  
[Courtesy of Newton Historical Society]*



## NEWTON CENTRE PLAYGROUND

### Baseball Fields

#### *Background*

As one of the first improvements to the playground, work began on a temporary ball field near Homer Street in 1890. The following year the ball field had been drained and leveled and was to be seeded in 1892. The following year a 1/4 mile running track was prepared for the 4th of July celebration. A dressing room was built at the running track in 1898.

The 1908 Kellaway plan indicated a baseball diamond and football field inside the 1/4 mile track. He also stated that the area needed grading and that the levels for the track should be studied. He also recommended that the backstop be constructed of open mesh wire, not boards. In 1910 a second baseball diamond was laid out for smaller boys, presumably in one of the 3 areas identified as playfields for small boys. In the 1911 Kellaway plan a second baseball diamond was shown west of the existing one.

*Little League field, 2005*



The playground was noted as having a baseball diamond, softball diamond and cricket in 1940. With the planned construction of the Mason Rice School, improvements were made to other facilities in the playground in 1956. The running track was removed as it was little used then, had been built above the level of the athletic field and was considered hazardous to baseball. Also in poor condition, the baseball diamond and infield was regraded and rebuilt to the standards of the time.

While it is not clear at this time when the Little League field was built, the Newton East Little League field was given a heavy topdressing and reseeded in 1963. After receiving protective fencing in 1964, the little league field was enclosed in chain link fencing in 1967 and dedicated as Jay Gordon Field on 21 April 1991.

#### *Assessment*

The playground currently contains a baseball field and a Little League field. The baseball field is in the same location as originally sited and has no defined limit to the outfield. It has a chain link backstop that is in good condition. Both have aluminum bleachers, team benches and a batting cage with fabric netting between the fields that are also in good condition.

The Little League field has a chain link fenced enclosure and backstop. The field and enclosure are in excellent condition. The field is undersized with the outfield fence 180' from home plate. The current standard is 200'. In March of this year the home of the Little League World Series began the process of expanding that distance to 225'. The Little League field barely fits into its current site and makes access to other facilities from Homer Street difficult. It has been reported that balls have been found in the backyards of residential neighbors.

### Soccer Field

#### *Background*

While not separately identified as a specific application in historic plans, soccer is an appropriate playground use and it has been sited in an area established for that use.

#### *Assessment*

In fair condition, this area is used as an informal practice field as well for volleyball. Dog owners also use the area.

*Soccer field, 2005*



Play Structure Area

*Background*

Although a specific area for this element was not identified in the Olmsted firm plan, following the precedent set by Charlesbank in Boston, the Newton Centre Improvement Association installed an open air gymnasium in 1898. According to the *Tercentenary History of Newton*, new swings, sand boxes and equipment for sports were provided in 1902.

The 1908 Kellaway plan indicated a play area in the “center of all activities” near the intersection of the brooks with seats, scups, swings, sand courts, drinking fountain and other amusements among the trees of a grove for mothers and children. He also recommended a shelter with “sanitariums” for both sexes and hall space for protection from passing showers. Additional swings were provided in 1910.

The 1911 Kellaway plan suggested a new location for this activity, the area between the tennis courts and proposed Recreation Center [shelter and natatorium] with sand boxes, scups, merry go round, wading pool and other facilities. This relocation apparently did not occur. A platform for children’s games was built the same year.

An outdoor stage was created for the Tercentenary pageant in 1930 leading to a recommendation for a permanent stage [outdoor auditorium of rising grass terraces] for outdoor pageantry, drama and music festivals. A plan from 1930 indicates 6 sand boxes, 2 swings, a tilt and a platform in the area of the current play structure area. Apparently a permanent stage was not developed.

The 1941 annual report lists swings, slides, sand boxes and teeters as existing elements. The 1948 annual report was amended to include a jungle gym as well as the previous facilities. A new merry-go-round was installed in 1961, followed by a new tot lot play area with the “latest imaginative apparatus” in 1964. A playground was added at the Mason Rice School in 1989. A galvanized steel jungle gym was removed in 2005 and a plan for universally accessible apparatus was prepared, but not implemented.

*Assessment*

A play structure area is located in the center of the park where the 1908 Kellaway plan suggested it be placed. It is likely that apparatus had already been placed in that area by that time. Although centrally located and near other facilities, in many respects it is the most remote facility related to accessibility. There is also a play structure area at the Mason-Rice School, a portion of which extends into the park. The school play apparatus area was not examined or evaluated.

Apparatus in the play structure area, which is about 1/2 acre in size, includes 2 swing sets with 4 belt type seats each, 1 swing set with 2 toddler bucket type seats, 2 pieces of climbing apparatus [one of wood and one of metal, each with plastic slide components], a wood “car” and a wood balance beam. All are in good to fair condition although there have been complaints of splinters related to the wood apparatus. A concrete pad has been reported at the base of one of the slides. Most of the apparatus appears to have been selected for preschool and early elementary school use. The ground surface is sand in and around each piece of apparatus with turf in between.

While safety zones between each piece of equipment appear to be sufficient, sand is not an accessible surface nor is it appropriate as an impact attenuating material. Current apparatus is not compliant with the 2002 Guidelines for Play Areas prepared by the Access Board of the ADA. Additions or alterations to the apparatus should comply with these guidelines.

*Play structure area, 2005*



## NEWTON CENTRE PLAYGROUND

### School Garden

#### *Background*

The 1908 Kellaway plan included a school garden to teach children how to grow plants. He recommended a level area west of the tennis courts with a fence enclosure covered with vines, and with shrubs at the base of the fence. The adjacent steep bank along Tyler Terrace was to be planted with thorny shrubs to discourage boys from entering anywhere except through the gateway. The 1911 Kellaway plan shifted the recommended location to a position west of the Recreation Center. 32 victory gardens were added to the list of outdoor facilities in the 1945 annual report. It has been reported that they were located along the Pleasant Street edge.

With the planned construction of Mason Rice School, the garden was removed in 1956. It had excellent loam with an average depth of 3 to 4 feet. Approximately 4,000 cubic yards of loam were removed and stockpiled for use in other improvements to the playground. After it was removed, fill from Cleveland Street is used to raise the level of former garden area, 8" of loam was placed on top and the area was graded and seeded.

#### *Assessment*

A school garden at the base of the slope below Tyler Terrace was relocated with construction of the Mason-Rice School to a site between the new school and Hammond Brook.

### Archery

#### *Background*

Both the 1908 and 1911 Kellaway plans indicated the potential of placing an archery ground near Homer Street. Due to a revival of interest in archery, a range was measured off and leveled, and targets were purchased for use in the fall of 1910. In 1933 archery was only being offered at Newton Centre Playground and permits numbered 52 for weekdays and 8 for Sundays. In 1940 the Newton Archery Club had approximately 300 competing in tournaments on the archery range.

With the planned construction of Mason Rice School on the site of the archery range, it had to be relocated in 1956. The following year the Recreation Department built an archery hut from available salvaged or second hand lumber and the Newton Archers furnished the finish lumber. Hoping to spark a revival of the Newton Archers, weekly children's archery classes began in 1962.

#### *Assessment*

Evidence of either former archery range is no longer present, but archery classes are still held in the Recreation Center.

#### *Archery hut, undated*

*[Courtesy of Newton Historical Society]*



### Toboggan Slide and Winter Sports

#### *Background*

Interested in providing winter skating in the playground, the Park Committee of the Newton Centre Improvement Association asked the city to consider the matter. In 1898 they reported that the City Engineer and Superintendent of Streets had stated that it would be impossible to provide skating in the park due to nature of soil. Later that year the Parks and Grounds Committee reported that flooding for skating had been tried anyway and it had not worked. The next year the Park Committee reported that a dike had been built to a flood portion of the playground for skating. In 1901 the Newton Centre Improvement Association voted to authorize \$100 for flooding.

#### *Toboggan slide, January 1938*

*[Courtesy of Newton Historical Society]*





In 1929 an appropriation of \$500 was made for a toboggan slide and there is an untitled plan for the slide dated 1930. It was described as having 2 runs that were 6' wide and 350' long, extending from Tyler Terrace across the brook into the current soccer field. The most days the slides were used was 37 between December 16 and March 2 as noted in the 1934 annual report, although it was described as very active in the 1948 annual report. With only 13 days of tobogganing, there was a recorded attendance of 9,398 noted in the 1958 annual report. The toboggan slide was dismantled in 1978 with no plans for replacement.

*Assessment*

There is no remaining evidence of the former toboggan slide or skating area. Unsupervised sledding activities remain active on the slope west of the Recreation Center and on the slope from Bowen Street. The City provides some temporary protection along the edge of Hammond Brook during the sledding season.

*Objectives*

*To maintain and enhance active and passive recreation opportunities.*

*To recreate the historic landscape as much as possible without compromising today's recreation needs.*

*To relocate or remove inappropriate facilities from sensitive areas.*

*Recommendations*

**Tennis Courts**

Maintain the existing courts. Replace the surrounding fence, practice court and backboard. The latter should have sound attenuating qualities to reduce the acoustic impact on neighbors. Lighting is not recommended because of the proximity to adjacent homes. With two storage structures adjacent to the courts, another structure is not recommended.

**Basketball Court**

Maintain the court as long as neighborhood use continues. Repair the court surface. Remove the lights.

**Baseball and Soccer Fields**

These facilities are well used and in excellent condition. No immediate recommendations are offered. Little League officials are currently satisfied with their field even though it is undersized.

**Play Structure Area**

With private contributions, this facility is scheduled for replacement in place in 2006. While the selection of the site was completed and approved prior to the initiation of this plan, the play structures are being placed in a historically appropriate location even though it is remote from perimeter access points.

This new facility is to meet current ADA guidelines and consist of ground level and elevated play components, ramps and transition systems. An accessible route will be provided and the surface inside the play structure area is to be accessible, firm, stable and slip resistant in accordance with ASTM F1951. Impact attenuated surfaces beneath and immediately adjacent to play structures are to be provided in accordance with ASTM F1292. The playground equipment for public use is to meet the requirements of ASTM F1487.

While the specific details of this replacement facility have not been examined, from a historic perspective, play equipment components inside the park should be metal with recessive colors. The use of primary colors, and roofs that would attract too much attention to themselves is discouraged. While wood might also be an appropriate material choice for some of the new equipment from a historic perspective, it is not recommended because it is less durable and has higher maintenance requirements.

**School Garden**

Maintain the school garden at Mason-Rice School.

**Archery**

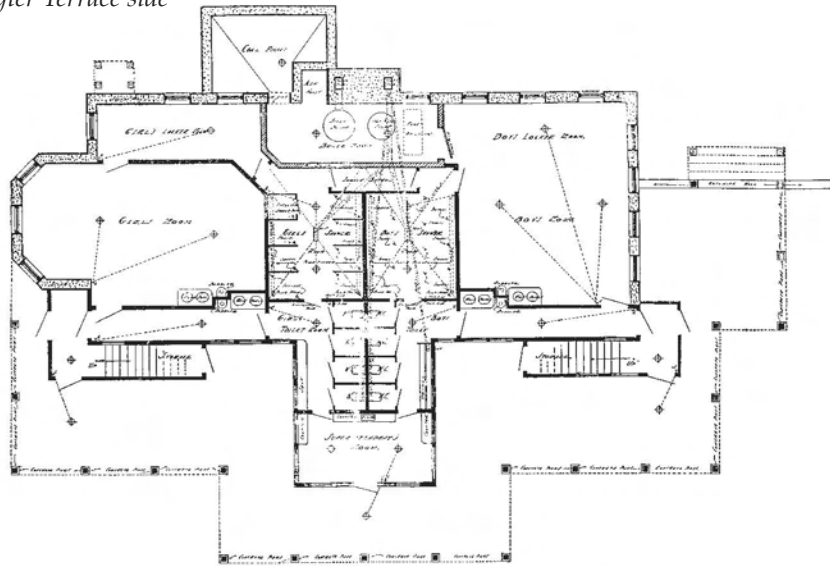
Do not replace archery facilities.

**Toboggan Slide and Winter Sports**

Maintain the existing sledding slopes, but do not replace the toboggan slide. Continue to provide temporary safety features at the bottom of slope to prevent accidents in the brook.

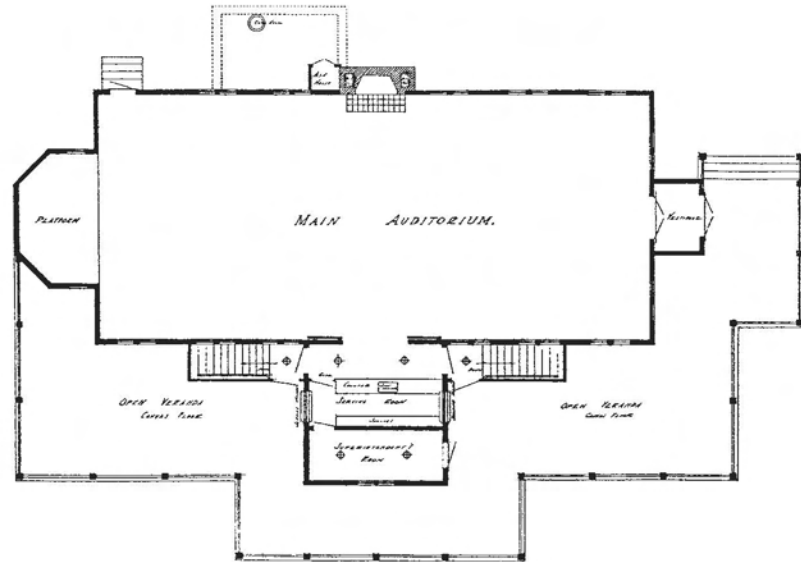
NEWTON CENTRE PLAYGROUND

*Tyler Terrace side*



*Hammond Brook side*

FLOOR PLAN—PLAYGROUND LEVEL



AUDITORIUM LEVEL



ELEVATION

*North Elevation*

*Floor plans and elevation  
of Recreation Center, 1915  
[Courtesy of Newton  
Historical Society]*

**BUILDINGS**

*Background*

The 1891 Olmsted firm plan did not include any buildings. The 1908 Kellaway plan proposed a shelter with “sanitariums” for both sexes in the play structure area. A combined shelter and natatorium was proposed in the 1911 Kellaway plan on the site of the current Recreation Center. Kellaway later sited the building there when the original Trinity Church building was moved to this site at the time the new Trinity Church was built on Centre Street. In 1915 the upper level of the renovated building was planned to have an auditorium seating about 300 people with a stage at one end and a fireplace on the other with an adjacent serving room and superintendent’s room, and an exterior open veranda. The lower level was planned to have separate boys and girls rooms with lockers, showers and toilets, and a large exterior sheltered space beneath a balcony piazza. Near the intersection of Pleasant Street and Tyler Terrace, the 1911 plan also included a cottage that had been on part of the acquired land for the playground. While the use of that structure was not defined, it is likely to have been intended for an on site caretaker as was a common practice at that time and was reported to have been used as such.

The Recreation Center was reconditioned in 1940 and renovated in 1992 with new ceilings, floors, paint and a heating system. If the cottage remained as part of the playground, it was reported to have been removed with construction of the Mason Rice School.

*Assessment*

Only the exterior condition of the Jeannette West Recreation Center [the Hut] was examined. The interior was not evaluated, as it was beyond the scope of this endeavor. The building has green painted wood shingle siding and gray asphalt roof shingles. It appears to be in good condition. With wood shutters covering the windows facing Tyler Terrace and metal fabric covering windows facing Hammond Brook, the building is not welcoming and gives the impression of being in disrepair. It contains the only sanitary facilities in the playground. It has been suggested that additional sanitary facilities closer to the ballfields would be desirable.

There is also a small wood shed and a large steel storage box next to the tennis practice court, a steel storage unit between the ball fields and a large metal shed near Mason-Rice School. All appear to be in good condition except the latter which is in fair condition.

The cottage near the intersection of Pleasant Street and Tyler Terrace is no longer there. It was apparently removed with the construction of Mason Rice School.

*Objectives*

*To prohibit the siting of additional buildings in the playground.*

*Recommendations*

Make the Recreation Center accessible. Defer accessibility improvements to the building until appropriate improvements are made inside the Recreation Center. Continue to provide periodic maintenance to the Recreation Center. No additional buildings should be added to the playground.

*Recreation Center, south side, 2005*



## NEWTON CENTRE PLAYGROUND

### PUBLIC SAFETY AND VANDALISM

#### *Background*

While there is no specific reference to these matters related to the playground in historic documents, in 1908 Kellaway suggested that "Police powers should extend over this area, so that law and order reign." "It will probably be necessary in future to delegate an officer in citizen's clothes to act as guardian, especially when the time for the building of the shelter arrives."

At the time the playground was being developed, juvenile delinquency and vandalism was a general concern. The International Prison Congress at its 1909 October Washington Meeting adopted the following resolution:- "It is resolved that to prevent habits of vagrancy and idleness among children in large cities, there should be vast additions to playgrounds, wholesome recreation centers, gymnasiums and athletic fields as the surest preventives of juvenile mischief and crime and as affording young people places where they may learn to bear defeat with courage and success with modesty."

#### *Assessment*

Public safety has become an increasing concern over the last 30 years. The most significant public safety issues relate to the brooks, fencing and the play structure area. The brooks have vertical walls that are only partially fenced, providing some level of protection near the play structure area. The sand surfacing at the play structure area is noncompliant in that it does not provide a sufficient level of cushioning for a fall. The steps and stepped ramp near the Recreation Center are both in poor condition and dangerous.

It has been reported that teenagers hang out in or near the basketball court at Mason-Rice School and the play structure area in the playground at night. Alcohol containers have reportedly been found in the area and bonfires have occurred in the field area. Centrally located in the playground, with a degree of concealment and good sight lines to playground entrances, it is difficult to apprehend offenders. Police are easily spotted from a distance and there are numerous alternative escape routes.

It has been suggested that operational lights in the field area are desirable to facilitate seeing vandals.

#### *Objectives*

*To enhance the safety and security of park visitors.*

*To keep vandalism to a minimum.*

#### *Recommendations*

Vegetative management along the brooks and additional lighting in the playground is recommended to improve overall visibility, increase the perception of safety, help facilitate observation by police patrol and reduce vandalism. Increased police presence and enforcement is critical to change inappropriate activities and perceptions about the park.

The play structure area is already scheduled for replacement. Other recommendations related to the brooks, fencing, steps and stepped ramp are included elsewhere.

### SITE FURNISHINGS

#### Benches

##### *Background*

Little mention is made of benches in historic documents. The 1908 and 1911 Kellaway plans both note a seat among the Willows near the bridge northeast of the tennis courts. Photographs of the children's corner from c1909 and c1913 depict benches with backs composed of wood slats and probable iron supports. Appropriations were made for park benches throughout the park system in 1937. Park benches were repaired and painted in 1985.

##### *Assessment*

There are 5 styles of benches in the playground in the park today: 3 of wood with backs and concrete supports; 6 of wood with backs and steel supports [tennis courts]; 4 of recycled material with backs and steel supports [play structure area]; 1 of wood without a back [play structure area]; and 4 of aluminum without backs [team benches]. Most are related to activities, with very few sited in passive areas. All are in good to fair condition. Benches at the tennis courts are set too low.

#### *Bench in the Childrens Corner, c1909*

*[Courtesy of City of Newton Public Documents]*



Trash Receptacles

*Background*

No historic reference to trash receptacles has been found. A 1913 photograph depicts a wood keg that might have been used as a waste receptacle.

*Assessment*

A number of green painted 55 gallon drums serve as trash receptacles. There is one next to Tyler Terrace at the Recreation Center, 3 in the area of the basketball court and tennis courts and 3 near the baseball and Little League fields. All are in good to fair condition. It has been reported that some believe that there are an insufficient quantity of receptacles in the playground.

Picnic Tables

*Background*

A plan from 1930 indicates that there were 3 tables in the park in the current play structure area. They may have been considered work tables for activities at that time.

*Assessment*

There are no tables in the park today.

Drinking Fountains

*Background*

A “bubble drinking fountain with single cup” was erected in 1908. It is likely the one shown on a 1930 plan in the current play apparatus area. In 1940 park facilities included 2 drinking fountains.

*Assessment*

There are two inoperable drinking fountains, one in the play structure area and one near the tennis courts. While both are constructed of precast concrete, neither has the same character as others installed in 1908. The one near the tennis courts is scheduled for replacement.

*Bench near Hammond Brook, 2005*



*Tables at Childrens Corner, 1913  
[Courtesy of Newton Historical Society]*



*Drinking fountain in Newton Highlands, 1909  
[Courtesy of Newton Historical Society]*



## NEWTON CENTRE PLAYGROUND

### Signs

#### *Background*

The only historic reference to signs found was related to the controversy about signage at the Little League field in 1991.

#### *Assessment*

Today there is a very large playground identification sign at the corner of Centre Street and Tyler Terrace, a cautionary sign about brook flooding at the bridge near the tennis courts, an identification sign and Roy Miller Memorial electronic scoreboard at the Little League field and a variety of regulatory signs at entrances, on the park perimeter and inside the park. Materials and conditions vary a great deal giving a poor, unattractive and uncoordinated image. Facing Newton Centre, the sole park identification sign is partially concealed by vegetation and difficult to see from any other orientation.

#### *Objectives*

*To enhance the experience of visitors through attractive and functional site amenities.*

*To reconfirm the historic character of Newton Centre Playground through the use of appropriate site amenities.*

*Identification Sign, 2005*



### *Recommendations*

#### *Benches*

Benches serve an important contemporary purpose and should continue to have a place in the playground. While the style of the existing benches relates to a period later than c1905, they should remain in place for the time being because of the expense of immediate replacement. At such time as they are beyond repair, they should be replaced with benches that are more appropriate to the era of significance. While it may be desirable to have benches that are lighter in appearance, like those in historic photographs, consideration should be given to selecting a city wide style of bench for Newton's historic parks to ease long term maintenance requirements for the city.

In general, more benches should be provided throughout the playground, particularly in relation to passive recreation areas. Where possible, benches should be placed in relation to tree plantings such that shade is provided. Ideally, benches should be placed with a hard surface beneath them to prevent the eroded appearance that lawn will give.

*Proposed Bench with recycled plastic slats*



### *Trash Receptacles*

Trash receptacles should be provided to satisfy public expectations even though none have been seen in historic images of the park. Receptacles should be retained at key points that tend to generate trash like active recreation facilities. Receptacles should ideally be visually compatible with the character of other amenities in this historic open space.

### *Picnic Tables*

Other parks in the city are more appropriate for permanent picnic facilities. Do not provide picnic tables in the playground.

*Proposed Trash Receptacle*



**Drinking Fountains**

Replace existing drinking fountains with a universally accessible model that is visually compatible with the historic character of the playground. Like the sign system, this would ideally also be appropriate for all of the historic parks in the city. The drinking fountain near the play structure area should have an associated hose bibb to facilitate cleaning the play equipment.

**Signs**

Consistency of signage with an overall sign program consisting of identification, regulatory, orientation and interpretive signs would benefit the park. A new system of consistent and appropriate signs is recommended to present a sense of uniformity and wholeness. This system can be viewed as an invitation into the park. Signs should be legible and visually compatible with the character of the grounds. The system should be designed to reflect the historic quality of the park. Consideration should be given to developing a system that is appropriate for all of the historic parks in the city.

Decisions related to sign materials should be made with consideration to the overall setting. Many materials, colors and styles can be visually distracting in terms of viewing a historic property. The placement of signs inside the park should be coordinated with drive and path systems so that visitors naturally remain on path surfaces and are not attracted to walk on lawn surfaces.

Appropriate and visible identification signs are needed at entrances to the park and at specific features. Park identification signs should provide some basic information like date of establishment and historic designation, at a minimum.

Regulatory signs enumerating rules and regulations are critical to help resolve and control issues related to use, including the requirement to keep wheels on paved surfaces. Standard city speed and parking regulatory signs can be used in public ways.

Although it is important not to over sign because they become less effective and create visual clutter, directional signing is often welcome. Directional and orientation signs, including orientation maps, make visitor information easily available.

*Accessible Drinking Fountain*



*Identification Sign*



*Identification Sign*



## NEWTON CENTRE PLAYGROUND

The placement of a supporting informational or interpretive sign system component is also recommended. Identifying and giving direction to important sites, as well as providing explanations for particular historic features would be very beneficial in assisting visitors understand the significance of this resource.

### MEMORIALS

#### *Background*

There is no reference to the desire or placement of memorials in the playground.

#### *Assessment*

There are 2 memorials in the playground today. A memorial bench was erected in the play structure area in 1989 with an associated bronze plaque mounted on a small boulder. The bench is dedicated to Sarah S. B. Philipps who died in a tragic airplane bombing en route from Lockerbie, Scotland in 1988. The Roy Miller Memorial scoreboard at the Little League field was dedicated c1991. Both memorials are in good condition.

#### *Objectives*

To limit the addition of new monuments, memorials and markers except as appropriate to the overall design intent.

#### *Recommendations*

There are no recommendations for the other memorials at this time. Recommendations pertaining to the issue of monuments, memorials and commemorative markers in the playground are included under Maintenance/Management.

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

#### *Background*

The description of the 1891 design in the Olmsted firm plan recommended treatment with “as much beauty as practicable, of a natural character”. They wanted the “parts of the ground not needed for games and athletic exercises are to be treated with a view to securing as much beauty as practicable, of a natural character.”

Kellaway pretty much agreed. The 1908 Kellaway plan provided more description. Overall the plan called for a vegetative buffer of trees and shrubs at the edges of the playground, vegetation separating use areas, and open views into the park from Centre and Pleasant Streets. Specific recommendations included removal of individual shrubs scattered about the walks near Centre Street for a simple lawn treatment, replacement of old and overgrown shrub beds near entrance walks with younger growth for low growing edging shrubs on the margins of the beds, removal of perennials in the center of the lawn and move them to a margin of shrubbery, the addition of a plantation of Pine and Hemlock 20 to 30’ wide to screen the back yards from Centre Street, and the use of native shrubs [Privet, Viburnum, Barberry and Wild Rose] along the margins of border plantations, all for a general effect of openness and neat simplicity.

*Willow near tennis courts, c1918*

*[Courtesy of Newton Historical Society]*





At Pleasant Street open spaces with plantations of shrubs and scattered trees permitting views into the playground were recommended. A border plantation was recommended for the length of the field against the bank of the aqueduct, mostly Pines with a few deciduous trees [Paper White Birch] on the margin with a mix of Sumac, Viburnum, Privet, Cornus, and Common Elder for a pleasing natural effect. Yellow or purple leaved shrubs were to be avoided. To secure the future of the grove, trees were to be added.

*Tree in poor condition, 2005*



Because little planting had been done except at the Centre Street entrance where 3 large shrubs beds had been installed in 1898, it was recommended that planting be done as soon as possible. Shrubs were to be planted in masses and allowed to grow naturally to reduce maintenance. Isolated shrubs were to be avoided. Ornamental shrubs [Spiraea, Honeysuckle, Deutzia, Forsythia] could be used near entrances.

The 1908 survey of the park indicated that it contained 33 Maple, 22 Elm, 9 Willow [some of which were clumps], 4 Buttonwood, 4 Apple, 3 Horsechestnut, 2 Oak and 1 Catalpa. In 1912 beds were laid out and shrubs planted at the Homer Street entrance. The Bowen Street entrance was also raised, graded and planted with shrubs. A 1930 survey of the central portion of the park indicated that it contained a Pear orchard, Pinery, 17 Maple, 9 Birch, 7 Elm, 6 Willow, 2 Wild Cherry and 1 Oak.

*Assessment*

While general recommendations were made by Kellaway, there is little record of specific plantings that were installed. The oldest and largest trees, mostly Oaks and Maples that existed in 1908, are in poor condition having received little maintenance over the years. Shade trees historically seen in the childrens corner have also diminished in quantity. Overgrown shrubs near the Centre Street entrances may be remnants of original plantings. Willows along the brooks have disappeared and have largely been replaced with several large groves of evergreen trees, changing the character of the playground.

*View into playground from Tyler Terrace/Centre Street entrance, 2005*



## NEWTON CENTRE PLAYGROUND

The initial design intent of the Olmsted firm was to relocate the brooks, provide waterside planting adjacent to them and use vegetation elsewhere to provide a perimeter buffer and separate various use areas. The brooks were not moved, leaving them to bisect the playground. Vegetation, volunteer and purposeful, lines the brooks creating overgrown edges and accentuating a division of the park. A good deal of this volunteer growth was removed by the City during the winter of 2005-2006. The perimeter buffer is mostly gone and the various use areas are not separated. Few street trees exist, likely due to conflicts with overhead wires.

Existing deciduous tree species include Ash, White Birch, Boxelder, Catalpa, Ginkgo, Linden, Norway Maple, Red Maple, Silver Maple, Sugar Maple, Red Oak, White Oak and other species. Evergreen trees include Red Pine, White Pine, Colorado Blue Spruce, Norway Spruce, White Spruce and Thuya. Shrubs include Forsythia, Privet, Spirea and Sumac. Invasives include Bittersweet. The City arborist has provided an evaluation of 78 trees in the playground and that inspection report is included in the appendix. While most of the trees are in good condition, 33% have structural deficiencies, mostly Maples.

The playground does not contain habitats of rare species, wildlife or vernal pools.

Several areas appear unused or undeveloped like the north side of Hammond Brook along Centre Street and the Homer Street entrance. Views of backyards from Centre Street are still evident.

### *Objectives*

*To use vegetation to restore the scenery and historic style intended for the park.*

*To enhance scenic opportunities in the park as seen from adjacent streets.*

*To use vegetation as a buffer, border or screen between conflicting uses and as a separation of major use areas.*

*To create healthy, long lived plant communities within the park.*

*To develop an ongoing vegetation management program.*

### *Recommendations*

The landscape character that was envisioned by the Olmsted firm and others should be developed as much as possible with the addition of "natural beauty". Permanent plantings consisting primarily of shade trees should be interspersed in appropriate locations along pathways for shade. Provide additional vegetation throughout for shade, particularly in relation to the play structure area.

Provide street trees along perimeter streets, setting them on the playground side of the sidewalks to reduce interference with overhead wires in the right of way. Provide evergreen screening at neighboring back yards as suggested in the Kellaway plans.

Views and vistas should be restored wherever possible to maintain the sense of expanse and distance. Reduce the density of vegetation along the brooks, particularly Hammond Brook, to increase visual access to the brooks and the playground in general. Volunteer and invasive growth should be removed throughout the playground.

**Shrubs and Horticultural Displays:** A desire for more color and variety should be accomplished primarily with large and small trees. The use of shrubs and flowers should be limited to the capacity of the city to maintain them. Large perennial and flower beds are very labor intensive. Areas for the display of flowers should be limited to pedestrian entrances.

This overall plan, particularly in regard to vegetation, should be viewed as a long term goal for revegetation. After the removal of hazardous trees and pruning of trees to remain, trees should be replaced in general conformance with this overall plan which takes into account the intent of the Olmsted firm plan. Detailed planting plans should be developed for review and approval by the Department of Parks and Recreation prior to implementing the recommendations of this plan.

**WALLS AND FENCES**

**Walls**

*Background*

Other than reference to walls related to the brooks, the only other mention found was a recommendation to remove a stone retaining wall at the Homer Street entrance by Kellaway in 1908.

*Assessment*

There are few walls in the playground today other than the stone walls associated with the brooks. The others that exist are concrete retaining walls. One retains the sidewalk and supports a chain link fence along Tyler Terrace and another retains earth at the southeast corner of the tennis courts. The former is beginning to spall. The latter is in good condition. Stone walls associated with the brooks are discussed under storm water management.

**Fences and Gates**

*Background*

Other than fencing related to athletic facilities, the only other reference includes a low fence that had been built to protect the path at the southwest entrance of the park on Centre Street in 1898. Although the 1891 Olmsted firm plan included gate posts at each pedestrian entrance, there is no evidence that they were ever built. The Kellaway plans did not include them. Five years after the 1925 inaugural address Mayor Edwin O. Childs, when he stated "some fencing is needed at Newton Centre Playground", an appropriation was made for a boundary fence.

*Assessment*

There are numerous fences in and adjacent to the playground. Without a property line survey, it is difficult to ascertain the ownership of fences along bordering back yards which tend to be either wood or chain link. While these fences were not evaluated, many had gates providing access into the playground.

A chain link fence with galvanized fabric and painted posts lines the steep bank at the edge of Tyler Terrace from the steps adjacent to the tennis courts to the Recreation Center. A 40' long section has been damaged where many of the posts are no longer attached to the foundation below.

The chain link fences associated with the baseball and Little League fields are in good condition. The perimeter chain link fence at the tennis courts is rusted on 3 sides of the courts. The fence along the south side is in better condition.

The chain link fences associated with the brook relates to the play structure area, basketball court and play structure area of Mason-Rice School. It is incomplete and with a height of 36" does not comply with current safety standards. However, much of the brooks have less than a 30" depth and thus does not mandate the provision of protective fencing. These fences are primarily composed of vinyl fabric and galvanized posts. Bridges over the brooks and headwalls also have chain link fencing. All of this fencing is in fair to good condition.

There are two vehicular gates in the playground, tubular galvanized steel gates at Homer Street and Tyler Terrace. Both are in fair condition. The former appears to be always closed and vehicles drive around it. The latter appears to be always open. There is no gate control at the Centre Street entrance.

*Objectives*

*To enhance the experience of visitors through attractive and functional walls and fences.*

*To reconfirm the historic character of Newton Centre Playground through the use of appropriate walls and fences.*

*To meet current public safety standards while restoring historic character.*

## NEWTON CENTRE PLAYGROUND

### *Recommendations*

#### Walls

Eliminate the stone walls along one or both edges of Hammond Brook and the south end of the brook from Homer Street in conjunction with naturalizing the brooks as discussed under Storm Water Management. Repair and repoint the remaining stone walls and headwalls.

#### Fences and Gates

Provide 42" high vinyl coated chain link fences along Hammond Brook where walls are to remain.

Provide a barrier rail along all public way frontage to restrict vehicular access and provide an appropriate public image for the playground. The rail should be of such a design that it does not collect trash. Remove the gates at Homer Street and Tyler Terrace when the barrier rail is installed. Provide gate posts at pedestrian entrances as suggested in the Olmsted firm plan as well as at the Tyler Terrace drive entrance. Where necessary, provide bollards at pedestrian entrances and bridges for pedestrian use to prevent vehicular access.

Fences for active recreation facilities should be as low as practical [4' maximum height preferred], vinyl coated and uniform in color, preferably black. Fences should be eliminated if possible. Fences that serve no practical purpose should be removed.

Determine ownership of the perimeter fences bordering back yards and take appropriate action if they are city owned fences.

### *Proposed Barrier Rail*



**STORM WATER MANAGEMENT**

*Background*

Prior to the development of an overall plan for the playground, tile drains were laid in one section of the site [in the area of the ballfield] at an average depth of 3'-9" about 24' apart discharging through a connecting pipe into the brook in 1889. Some tile drains already existed in the area in 1869. City Engineer Albert F. Noyes recommended having another section completed west of the area just finished. The brook from Homer Street to Hammond Brook was relocated from the center of the property to the east edge sometime between 1869 and 1890.

The 1891 Olmsted firm preliminary plan for the playground recommended relocating the brooks to the edges of the property "to leave a large area of unbroken turf for ball games". In addition, the channels or walled ditches were to be changed such that they had the "character of natural brooks". In work a year earlier at the Centre Street end, they proposed filling the site, softening the brook section and providing a rustic bridge as an entrance portal to the playground.

In December of 1892 a plan was prepared showing areas requiring drainage in the City as a response to Order no. 11680 of 24 June 1889. Newton Centre Playground was included in that plan. A plan for the surface drainage of the City was prepared at the same time as well as a plan showing the proposed location of park areas, drainage and aqueducts. In a report of City Engineer Albert F. Noyes and Edward A. Buss, CC, an open channel treatment of construction was recommended through parkways or reservations except through high priced localities or under special circumstances where the treatment was to be ornamental rather than a detriment to surrounding properties. A chain of parkways between villages was seen as an economical location for drains and sewage.

In December of 1897 another plan was prepared showing areas requiring drainage. This plan also included the area of Newton Centre Playground. A culvert was built over the brook at Centre Street in 1898. A plan of the existing conditions of the playground in 1908 indicates that Hammond Brook was walled with a bridge near the tennis courts. The reinforced concrete bridge had been built that year. The brook from Homer Street had steep banks. Neither brook had been relocated as previously recommended in the Olmsted firm plans.

*Hammond Brook, view south toward Centre Street, undated, [Courtesy of Newton Free Library]*



## NEWTON CENTRE PLAYGROUND

The 1908 Kellaway plan only recommended relocating the western end of Hammond Brook. It was noted that a deeper channel had been constructed for quite a portion of the way with concrete sides and a stone bed and that the last section of the brook would need to be widened and deepened in the future to take care of increasing development around Chestnut Hill. The plan recommended 5 rustic stone bridges built of permanent character with long wing walls and graceful lines. Vines and shrubs were to be provided to soften the stone work.

The 1911 Kellaway plan proposed covering the brooks to maximize available space for playfields. This proposal was executed in part in 1938 when the brook along the north side of the tennis courts was covered. At the same time the brooks were deepened and lined with stone, and the junction of the 2 brooks was realigned.

### *Assessment*

The playground is in a valley, draining into the drainage channels of Hammond Brook and others. The high point of the playground on the south side is on the Tyler Terrace sidewalk near the Recreation Center at about elevation 151. On the north side the high point is on the Homer Street sidewalk at about elevation 142. Most of the recreation facilities are at elevation 129 to 130. The Little league field is slightly higher at about elevation 132. The outlet of Hammond Brook is about elevation 124.

Hammond Brook and another brook from Homer Street flow through the park. They join and flow toward Pleasant Street where water from the waste weir of the Sudbury Aqueduct enters the brook, and the combined brook passes under the Cochituate Aqueduct. Storm water from adjacent streets, parking areas and residences also enters the brook at various points. A portion of Hammond Brook, between the tennis and basketball courts, is covered.

*Hammond Brook below Recreation Center, 2005*



*Hammond Brook below Mason-Rice School, 2006*



The brooks are contained within stone masonry walls with a stone drainageway base that has stones set in cement. Walls at the brook from Homer Street are 2' high while those along Hammond Brook are 3' high with 1.5 to 1 adjacent side slopes. Most of the walls have a cement parge coat cap and some have parging on the vertical face of the wall. A portion of the wall is collapsing between the play structure area and basketball court. The drainageway floor has collapsed above the bridge. Another portion of the wall is collapsing near the bridge next to the Mason-Rice school play structure area. Numerous volunteer trees are growing out of the walls. They have and will continue to contribute to failure of the walls.

Five bridges were built as suggested in the 1908 Kellaway plan, one prior to the plan and 3 in locations close to those recommended. Each has concrete spanning the brook. One has been built up with an asphalt path over it and another has a turf cover over the concrete. Most have pedestrian widths of 6 to 8'. The turf covered bridge is about 10' wide. The bridge at the end of the drive from Tyler Terrace is about 18' wide for vehicular use.

While the structural condition of the bridges was not assessed, water was observed flowing out of the masonry joints in two of the walls during a rainstorm in May 2006.

Portions of the park are subject to flooding. It has been reported that during heavy rain events the ball fields flood to the base of the Cochituate aqueduct, approximate elevation 129. While this is said to occur on almost an annual basis, the duration of flooding is reported to be relatively short. During a rainy period in May 2006 the brook from Homer Street was observed to be over half full while water flowing in the east and west ends of Hammond Brook had topped the masonry wall channels. Earlier in the year the brook for Homer Street was observed dry while there was some flow in Hammond Brook.

*Sign at Hammond Brook, 2005*



*Volunteer trees growing in Hammond Brook channel walls, 2006*



*Bridge over Hammond Brook, 2005*



*Hammond Brook during a rain event, 2006*



## NEWTON CENTRE PLAYGROUND

Many areas below elevation 129 have very shallow slopes, ranging from 0.5% to 1.5% which is generally insufficient for positive drainage in lawn areas. An extensive area of standing water does occur in and west of play structure area and east of the Mason-Rice play structure area, and there is a wet area southwest of basketball court because of shallow slopes. Standing water also occurs north of the Little League field and southeast of the basketball court in an isolated depression where a clump of Willows once stood. A tile underdrainage system, north of Hammond Brook is assumed to still be intact although it is not known if it still functions.

There are a number of erosion conditions in the playground. The most apparent is on the sledding hill west of the Recreation Center which has a slope of about 3.5 to 1. It has also been reported that there is significant amount of overland flow and erosion related to the maintenance drive at Tyler Terrace. There are also smaller areas adjacent to the brook and some related to the basketball court.

### *Objectives*

*To eliminate standing water by providing positive drainage.*

*To eliminate erosion and sedimentation conditions.*

*Standing water in play structure area and soccer field beyond, 2006*



*Erosion near Recreation Center, 2005*





*Recommendations*

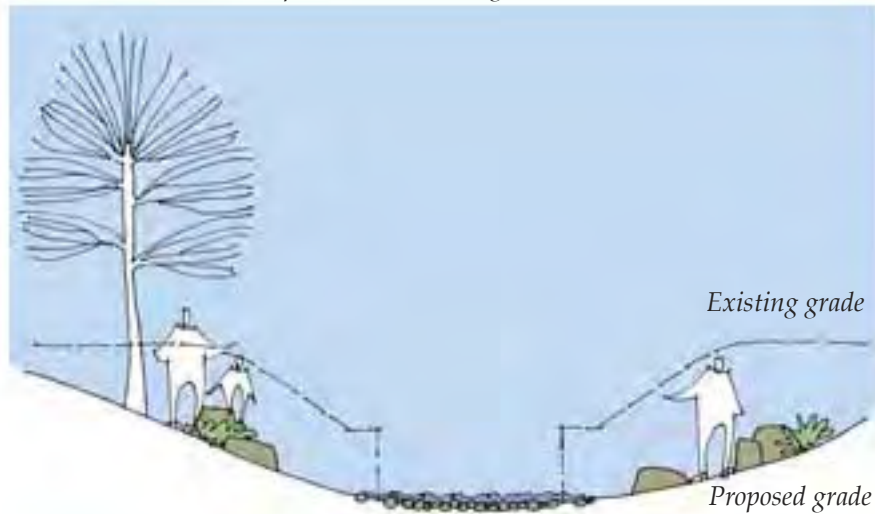
The flooding issue should be resolved downstream of the site to reduce the impact of providing flood storage capacity inside the playground.

Naturalize the brooks in accordance with the intent of the Olmsted firm plan. This will require expansion of the stream area since it is currently within a man made channel and there are steep side slopes on both sides of Hammond Brook. While there is limited opportunity to change the alignment of the stream and reduce its linearity because of adjacent sanitary sewer and property lines, the new channel should be designed to create natural stream features and sequences with riffles, runs, pools and glides. Stones and boulders should be used to help create these features.

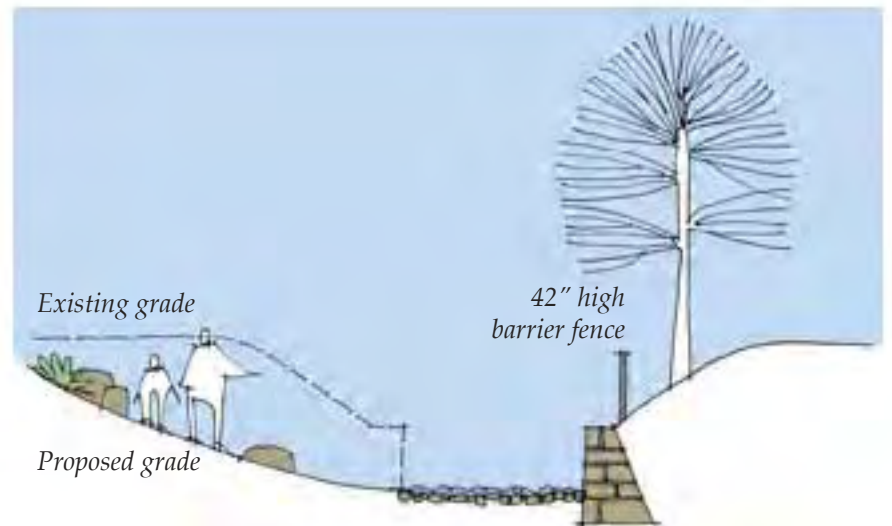
The brook from Homer Street presents an opportunity to create riffles or step pools because of the change in elevation along its course as it approaches Hammond Brook. A pool could be created at the intersection of the brooks as well as at other pipe inlets to dissipate energy within the stream and reduce erosion. The channel within the stream bed should be sized to accommodate full flows without eroding. The areas along the sides the brooks can then be designed so that they will flood without eroding in larger storm events.

The material at the bottom of the channel should be selected so that it will not erode in a bank full condition. The channel bottom currently consists of eight inches of "grouted stone pavement." This material should be replaced with cobbles and stone, that are sized to withstand the same erosive forces as the existing pavement. Reconstruction of the bottom of the channel will reduce the velocity in the brooks because it will create a more irregular surface. The reduction in the velocity will likely require that the width of the stream be increased. Removal of the existing bottom will also encourage infiltration along the length of the brooks. Further testing should be done to assess groundwater table and the impact of removing the channel bottom on the depth of flow in the stream.

*Proposed section through brook*



*Proposed section through Hammond Brook where one wall is to be retained [adjacent to Mason-Rice School and behind the homes near Willow Terrace]*



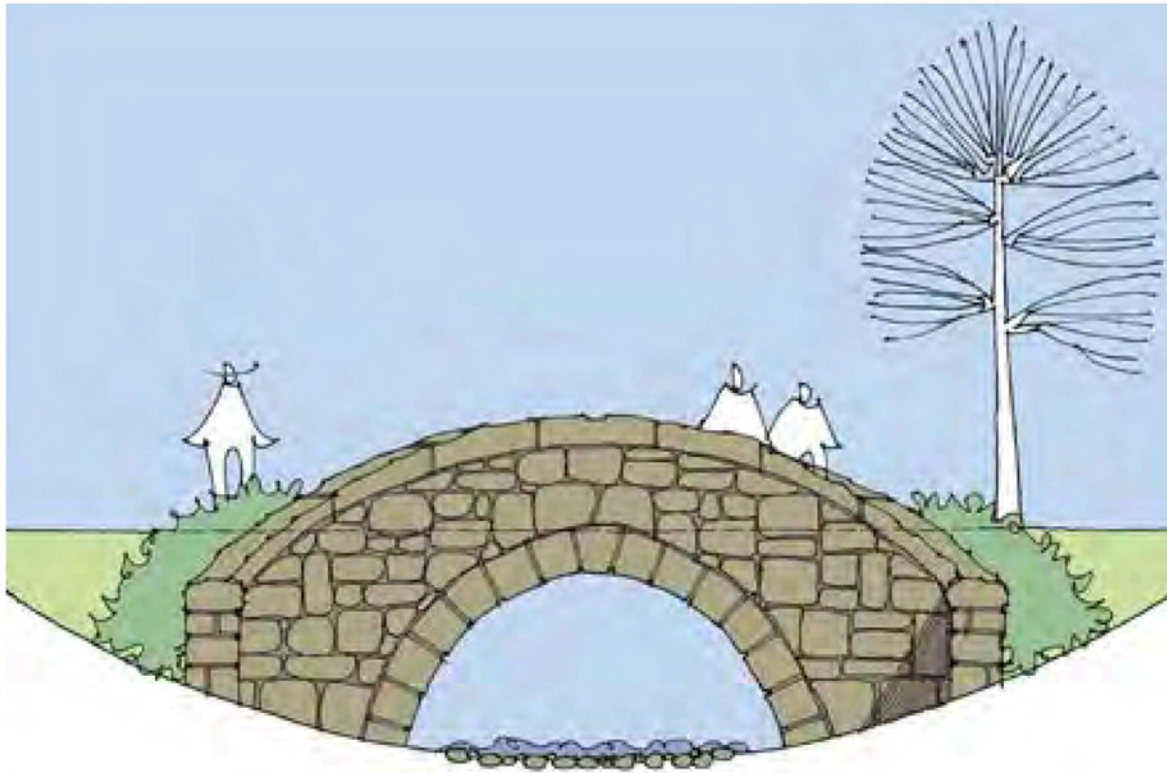
## NEWTON CENTRE PLAYGROUND

Provide new bridges over Hammond Brook near the Centre Street entrance and the Mason-Rice School parking area as well as near the new play structure area over the brook from Homer Street to improve accessibility to the playground. The first two should have a sufficient width for pedestrian use while the latter should be wide enough for vehicular access. The latter should also replace the existing adjacent bridge. All other bridges should remain in place.

The new vehicular bridge should have a 12' clear width and be designed for H-20 loading to support emergency vehicles. The other bridges should be designed for pedestrian use, preventing vehicular traffic with a reduced width and/or with the use of bollards.

The style of the new bridges should be consistent with the intent of the Olmsted firm plan. That is they should have a style that is compatible with natural scenery, made of rustic stone masonry with curving walls. In the event that the cost of stone exceeds budget limitations at the time of construction, rustic wood bridges would be an acceptable alternative.

*Conceptual elevation of new stone bridge*

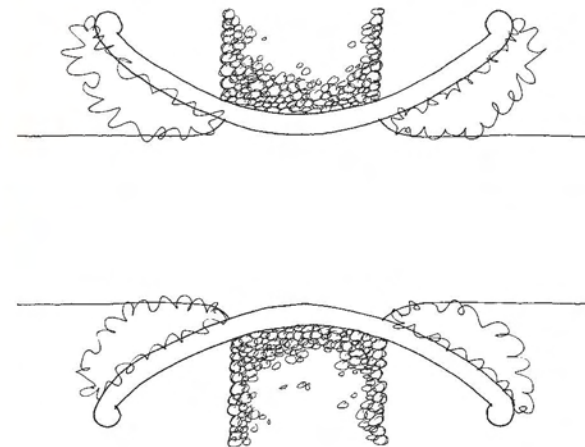


The 4 bridges to remain over Hammond Brook should be reconstructed in a similar style as such time as they need structural repairs. Existing deteriorated sections of the remaining channels should be repaired as soon as possible.

*Olmsted firm stone bridge, c1892  
Ellicott Arch, Franklin Park, Boston*



*Conceptual plan of new stone bridge*



Utilize excess excavated material, including topsoil, from the various implementation projects to fill in depressions and erosion areas. Provide proper and ongoing maintenance to eliminate concentrated overland flows.

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Electric**

*Background*

There is little reference to lighting in the park until the 1966 annual report when it was noted that the toboggan chute had night lights. Lights were added in 1971 for Pop Warner football and in 1994 at the basketball court.

*Assessment*

The 4 fixtures at the basketball court have not been used in a number of years. It is not known if the fixtures on wood utility poles in the area of the baseball and soccer fields are functional although it has been reported that the one near the field is not operating. Placement appears random and many of the utility poles are leaning and in poor condition. There is some security lighting related to the Recreation Center. Overhead wires provide electrical service.

**Water supply**

*Background*

Water was brought into the park for the drinking fountain installed in 1908. A second drinking fountain was installed in 1940 adjacent to the tennis courts. New water lines were installed at the Little League field in 1964 for irrigation.

*Assessment*

The drinking fountains are no longer functional. Water supply has also been provided to the tennis courts to help maintain them and to the Little League field for irrigation.

*Former light at bridge near tennis courts, 2005*

*Light along path to ball fields, 2005*

*Alternative bridge*



## NEWTON CENTRE PLAYGROUND

### Sanitary Sewer

#### *Background*

In 1892 a chain of parkways between villages was seen as an economical location for drains and sewage. A sanitary sewer was installed adjacent to Hammond Brook prior to 1930.



#### *Assessment*

A 20" sanitary sewer runs parallel to Hammond Brook. Water was observed flowing out of a manhole cover near the intersection of Hammond Brook and the brook from Homer Street during a rain event in May 2006.

#### *Objectives*

*To provide utility services that would benefit enjoyment and maintenance of the park.*

*To provide remedial measures for utility services that are detrimental to the site.*

*To accommodate utility services in a manner that is compatible with the historic image of the site.*

*To provide lighting for the safety and security of park users.*

*Proposed Light*

#### *Recommendations*

##### Electric

Provide a limited amount of general illumination inside the playground to increase the sense of safety and to reduce vandalism and discourage other night time activities in the park. Given that the playground officially closes at dusk and is in a residential neighborhood, sports fields and courts should not be illuminated for night use.

Develop and follow a strategy to make lighting inside the playground more uniform and consistent in terms of poles and fixtures. Select a pole and fixture appropriate for use throughout Newton's historic parks. Light sources should be energy efficient, like color corrected mercury vapor, and they should be shielded so as not to impact abutters and reduce light pollution of the night sky. Replace all nonconforming fixtures.

Remove overhead wires and unnecessary utility poles in the park. Place required electric service underground.

##### Water Supply

In addition to upgrading drinking fountains, maintain water supply for lawn restoration, plant establishment and cleaning.

##### Sanitary Sewer

No changes recommended.