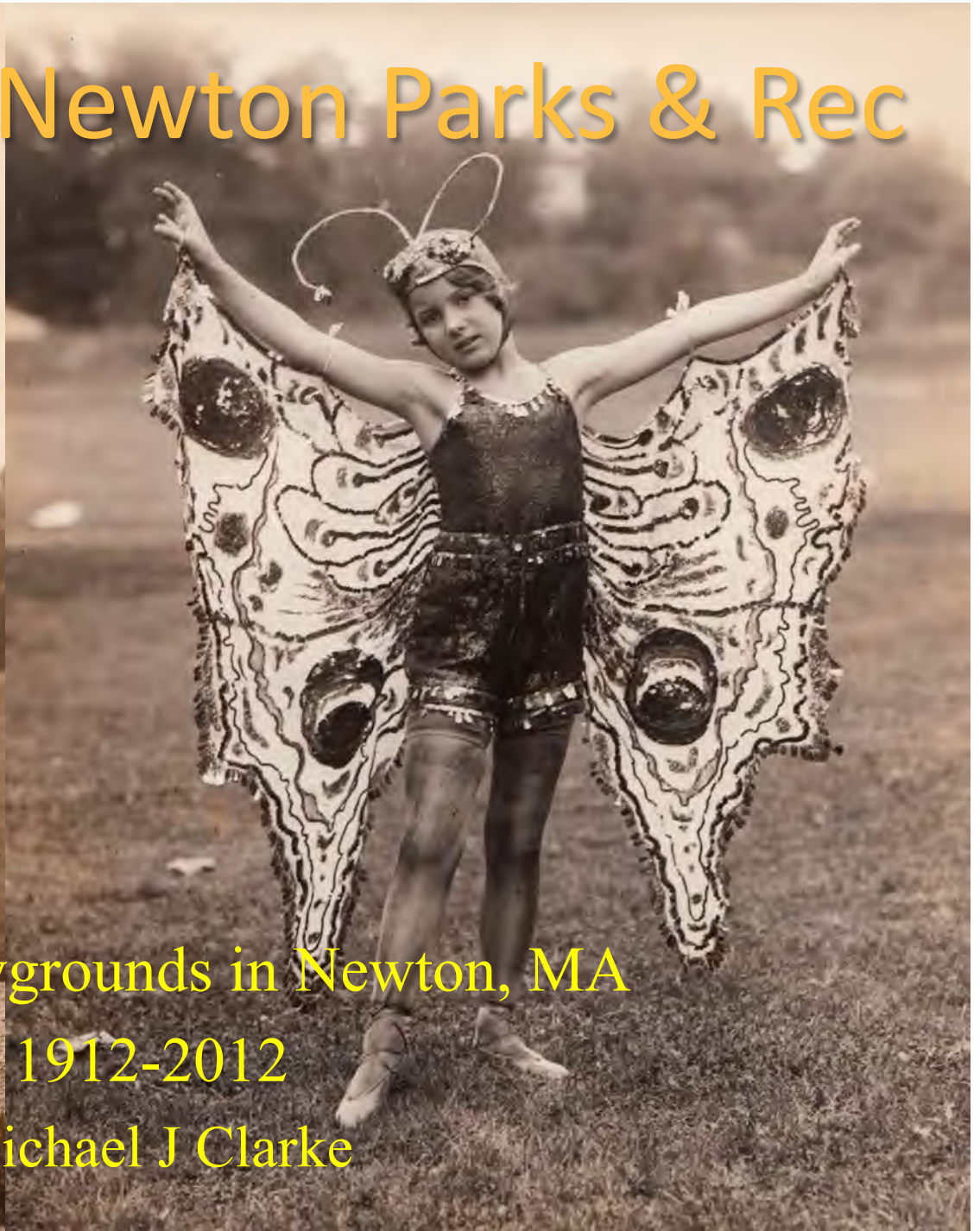


100 Years of Newton Parks & Rec



Parks & Playgrounds in Newton, MA

1912-2012

Michael J Clarke

Newton's First Park

~1700 Newton Centre Green



Trees Planted by Newton Centre Tree Club in 1850s

1897 Map of Newton Centre

German Gymnasts

1811 Friedrich Ludvig Jahn founds the German Gymnastic Movement - Follen, Beck & Lieber were followers of Jahn.

1819 Follen & Beck meet Lafayette in Paris

1825 Charles Beck hired as first Phys Ed Teacher in US (Northhampton, MA) - First outdoor gymnasium

1826 Charles Follen - First college gymnasium in US at Harvard and first outdoor public gymnasium in Boston. (Teaches Charles Sumner.)

1827 Franz Lieber Director of the Boston Gymnasium First Public Swimming Pool in the US.



Teaching Gymnastics



- 1845 Kenrick Park, Waban Park, Walnut Park street ovals
- 1852 Newton Tree Club – first improvement association in US organized by J.F.C. Hyde
- 1860 Dioclesian Lewis develops gymnastics for women at the Nathaniel T. Allen house in West Newton.
- 1861 Lewis Founds Boston Normal Institute for Physical Education
- 1868 Washington Park street median constructed in Newtonville.
- 1875 August Hemenway gives the Hemenway Gymnasium to Harvard.
- 1889 Mary Hemenway founds Boston Normal School of Gymnastics

Newton 1878

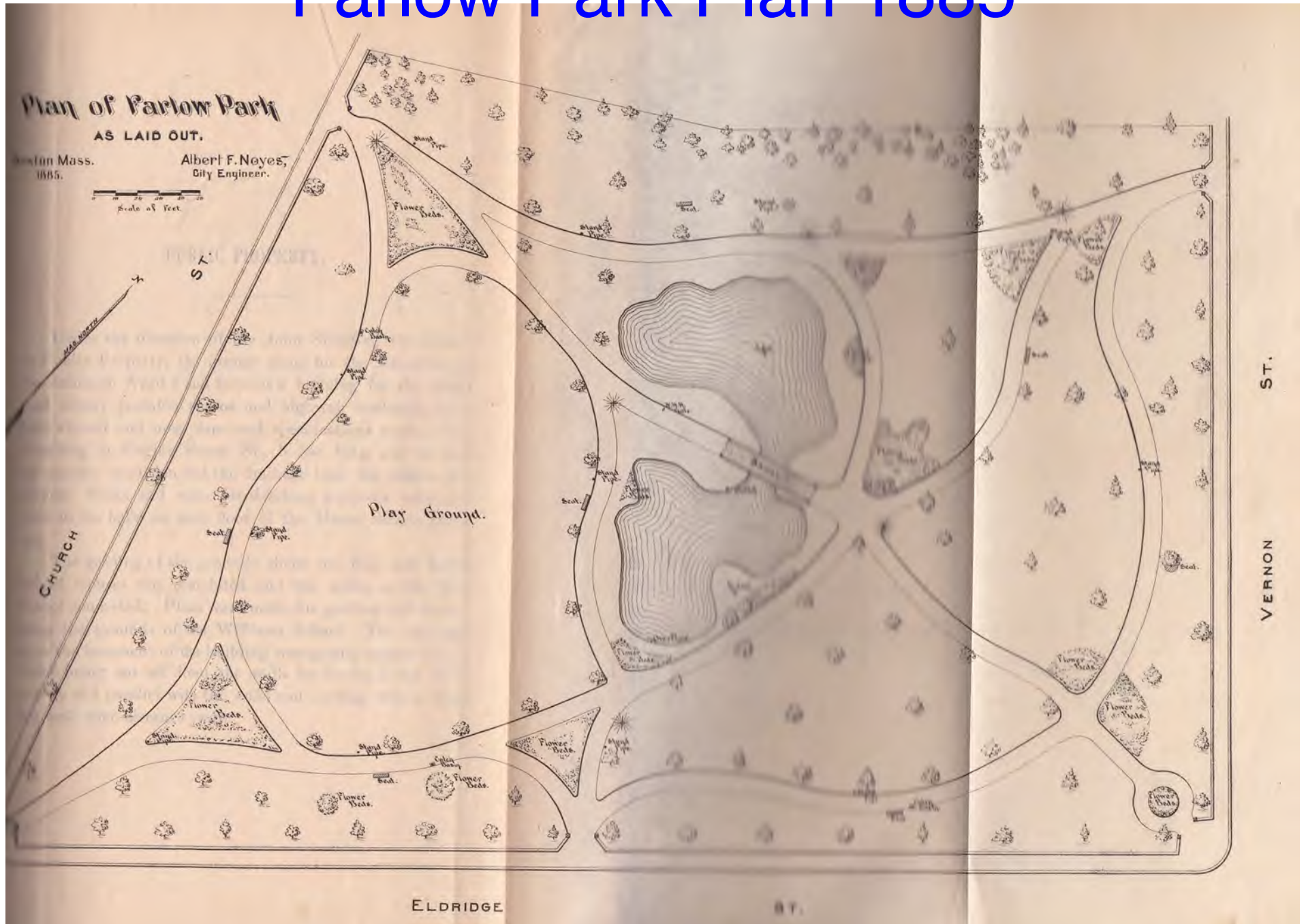


Parks Movement & Farlow Park



- 1837 Boston Public Garden
- 1857 New York's Central Park followed by Parks Movement
- 1875 Newton Board of Park Commissioners formed to lay out city parks
- 1880 Olmsted Plans for Boston's Emerald Necklace begin
- 1880 J.S. Farlow suggests park and offers his property – “a wretched and unsightly bog”
- 1881 Mayor Pulsifer proposes a system of public parks
 - John S. Farlow commits to donate land for park
- 1882 Newton City Council establishes first standing committee on parks
- 1882 [State Act enabling Newton to take land for Parks](#)
- 1883-1884 Newton's Central Park Debate begins when J.S. Farlow suggests a “Central Park”
 - 190 acres, Valentine to Centre Streets including Bullough's Pond (Mayor William Ellison)
- 1885 Farlow Park Completed

Farlow Park Plan 1885



Farlow Park 1888



Farlow Park

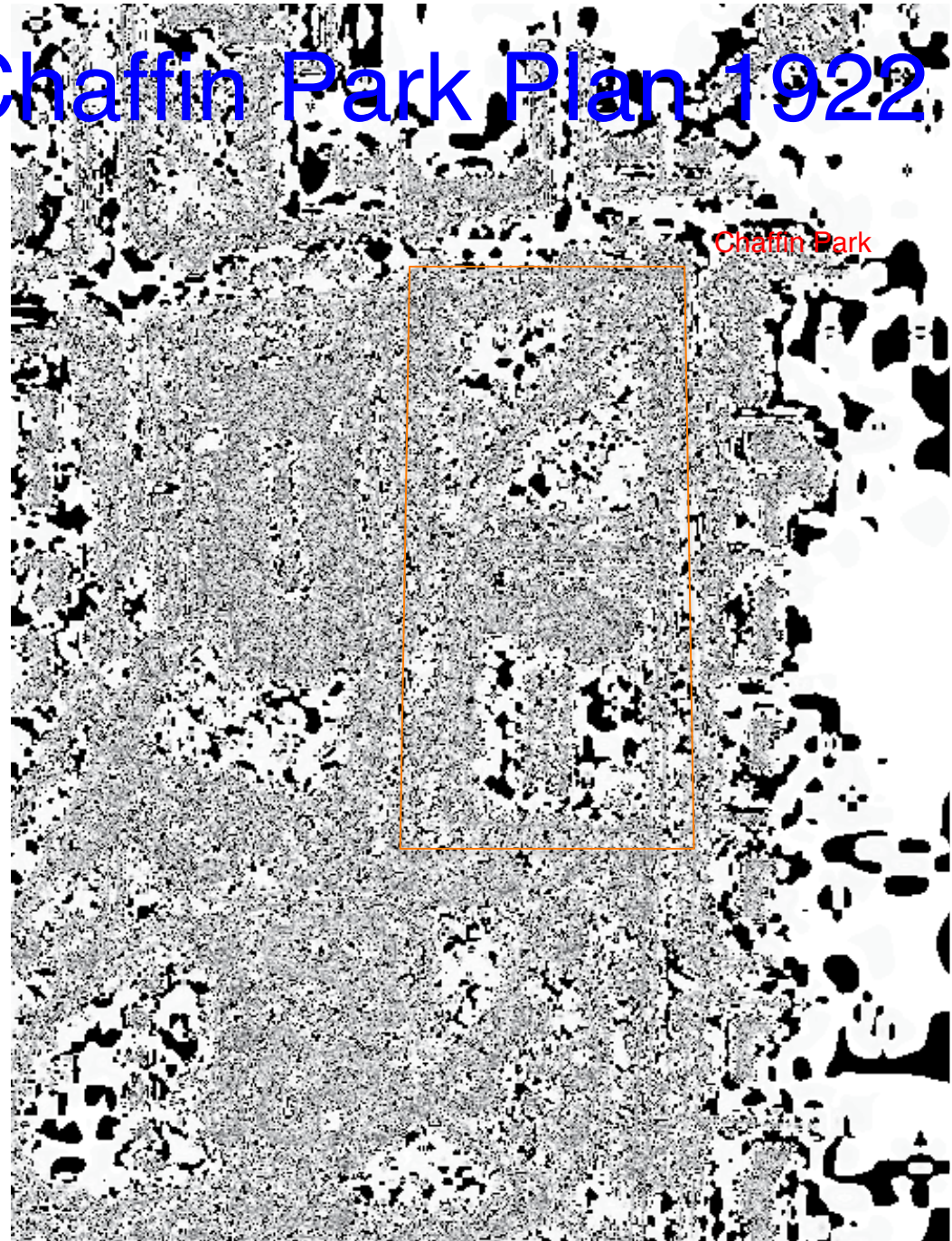


Farlow & Chaffin Park Plan 1922

1934 Chaffin estate added



John C. Chaffin d. 1899



Sand Garden Lubeck, Germany



In 1885 Dr. Marie Lakszewska writes to the chairman of the Hygiene Association, ... pointing out that in Berlin sand-piles were placed in public parks for children to dig and play. She suggested that something of the kind might be done in Boston. – W. Wood, *The Playground Movement in America*, 1913

Farlow Park Sandbox 1916



Mayor Heman Burr 1889

The agitation for a system of parks, which led in 1882 to the passage of a State law authorizing the City Government to take land under certain conditions for public parks and squares has unfortunately subsided.

Having been familiar with our villages from my early childhood and remembering well the time when almost every vacant lot and pasture was a [play-ground](#), I have seen the boys of Newton driven from one field to another by the steadily advancing tide of increasing population, until there is little left to them but the public streets and remote pastures and wood lots...

It is somewhat remarkable that the word "play-ground" is nowhere to be found in the act of 1882. If therefore you decide upon moving in this matter slight additional legislation may be necessary.



Newton Centre Playground

Was it an Olmsted Park?



- 1848 Cochituate Aqueduct (forms north border of Playground along Tyler St.)
- 1876 Sudbury Aqueduct (Pleasant St. to Bowen & Centre St) along south side with Hammond Brook in middle. Largely wetlands.
- 1880 Newton Centre Improvement Association founded
- 1881 Newton Centre Improvement Association Playground Committee established
- 1882 State Act to Provide for Parks in Newton
- 1886 Olmsted firm begins work on the Newton Centre estate of State Senator Robert R. Bishop off Beacon St.
- 1888 Pres. of the Mass. Senate Robert R. Bishop, a member of the NCIA committee, proposes a Playground to the Newton Centre Neighbors' Club
- 1889 Mayor Burr noted that Act of 1882 for Newton to take land for parks did not include playgrounds. Recalling a time when every vacant lot and pasture was a playground, Burr remarked that the boys of Newton were then "driven from one field to another by the steadily advancing tide of increasing population, until there is little left to them but the public streets".
- 1889 Funds raised for land purchases by Newton Center Improvement Assoc., Women's Club & Newton Centre Playground Committee
- 1890 Olmsted firm submits Preliminary Plan. Drainage work begun.
- 1902 Swings, sandboxes, running track, ball fields, walks and bridges completed.
- 1908 Forestry Department takes over parks & playgrounds from Street Department. Comprehensive improvement plan recommended and a former member of the Olmsted firm, Herbert J. Kellaway, completes the plan.
- 1911 Updated Kellaway Plan
- 1916 Episcopal Church (The Hut) moved to site of "School Garden"
- 1959 Mason-Rice School built on western portion of Newton Centre Playground
- 2007 Large accessible children's playground added.

Preliminary Olmsted NC Playground Plan 1890

*Pre-preliminary Plan for
Newton Centre Playground, 13 December 1890
[courtesy of National Park Service,
Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site]*



Newton Centre Playground 1897

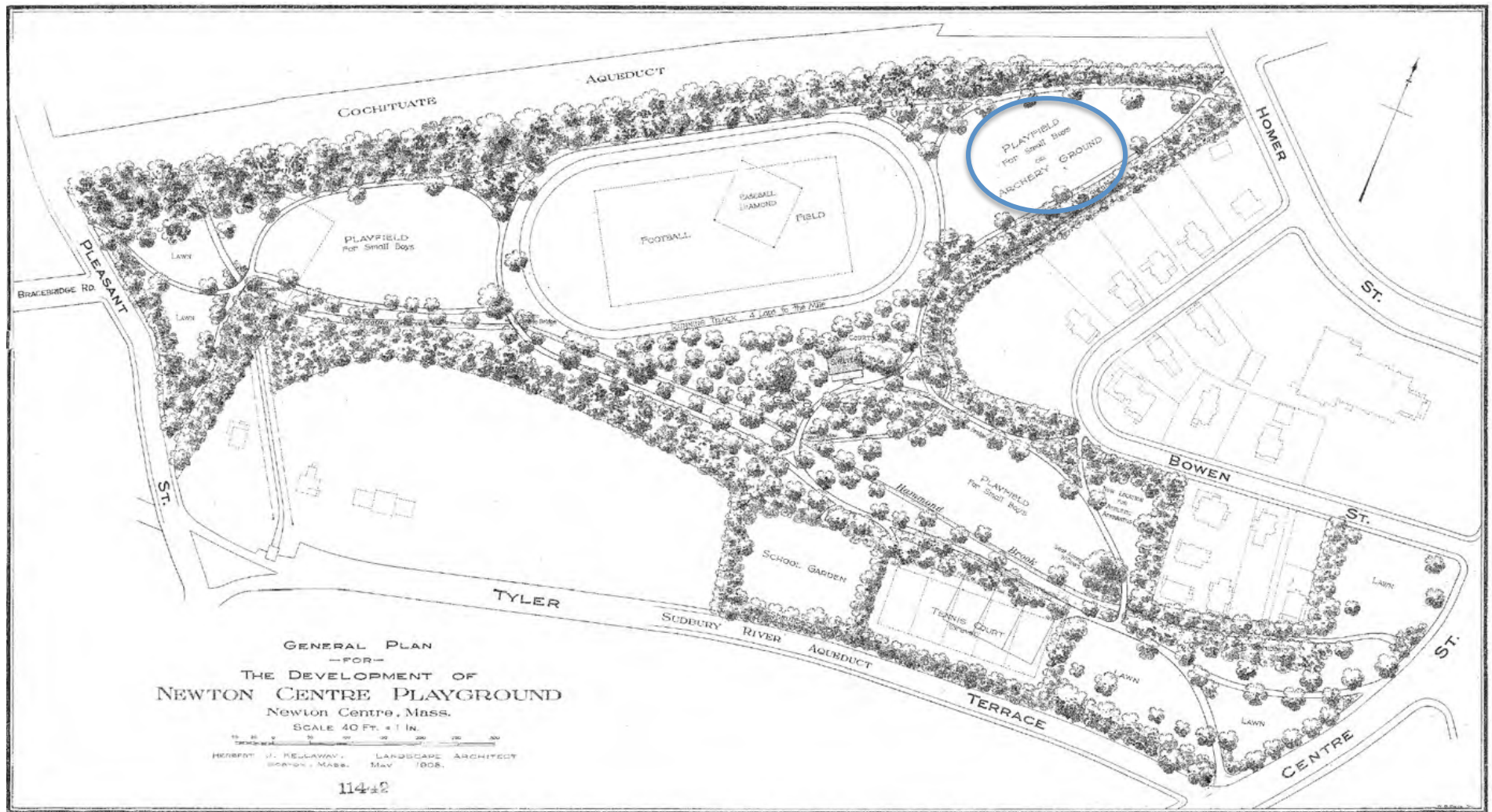


From 1897 Newton Centre Map

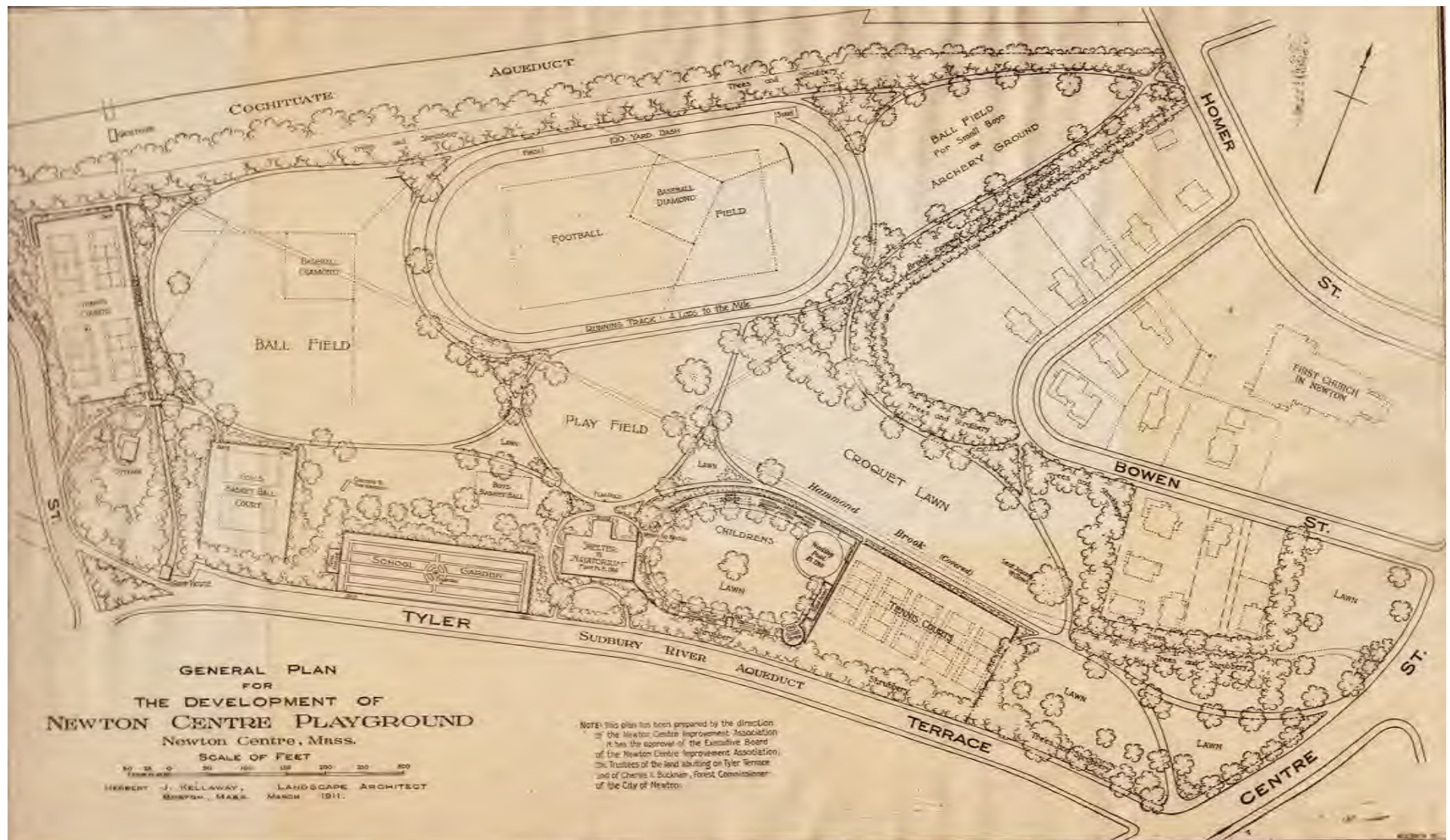
Newton Centre Sandboxes c. 1900



Kellaway NC Playground Plan 1908



Newton Centre Playground Plan 1911



Newton Centre Playground – The Hut



1892 Episcopal Church – Trinity Parish
1914 Moved to Newton Center Playground

Newton Centre Playground Plan 2006



Newton Archers



On the Newton Centre Playground, a field of some 25 acres, in the heart of Newton Centre, Mass, one of the most successful Archery Clubs of America has its regular practicing grounds. A small house 6x8 feet, the floor of which is 3 feet above the ground to insure dryness, contains ten targets, and all the necessary paraphenelia for placing them at the proper height and angle. The Archers men and women, boys and girls, can be seen most days .

Ernst Hermann, *Playgrounds and Gymnasiums, in Mind and Body*, 20, **1913**



Newton Archers 1920



Louis Smith was one of those to be enticed by the enthusiasm of Burton Payne Gray of Newton into the clutching folds of archery when the Newton Archers was organized in the spring of 1911. Archers from all over the State journeyed to Newton for years, as it was the only club – and from its ranks most of the clubs in the State eventually sprang.

National Archery Association Champion, 1919, '21, '22, '24, '25, '26 and '31

Dorothy Smith Cummings



Time Magazine, Aug. 24, 1931

Since 1919 when she won the women's championship for the first time, Mrs. Dorothy Smith Cummings has been the foremost U. S. lady archer. Small, thin and wiry, she had 70 hits for a world's record score. Mrs. Cummings became a toxophilite at the age of nine; now in her late 20's, she shoots with placid abandon from an orthodox position with her heels at right angles to a line drawn from the gold.

Newton Centre Teeters 1909



Newton Centre Tennis Courts

1909-1913



1893-1894 Was a Big Year

- Boyd Playground, 6 acres, Taken to Abate the Nuisance of Boyd Pond (source of malaria and offensive odors)
- Cabot Park, 14 acres, donated
- Auburndale Park “pleasure grounds”, 22 acres, purchased, ½ with donations
- Lower Falls, 46 acres, donated, “high bluff overlooking the river and is covered in part by the finest growth of pine trees to be found around Newton”
- Total: 88 acres

Upper Falls Playground

1909 Baseball Team at Dudley Field



- In 1909, the Upper Falls Improvement Society donated \$4500 to purchase Dudley Field, a hayfield where baseball was played near the river.
- A 1910 design plan was prepared by Boston landscape architect Herbert J. Kellaway, but only the baseball diamond seems to have been placed
- A section from the Marcy property was added in 1924.

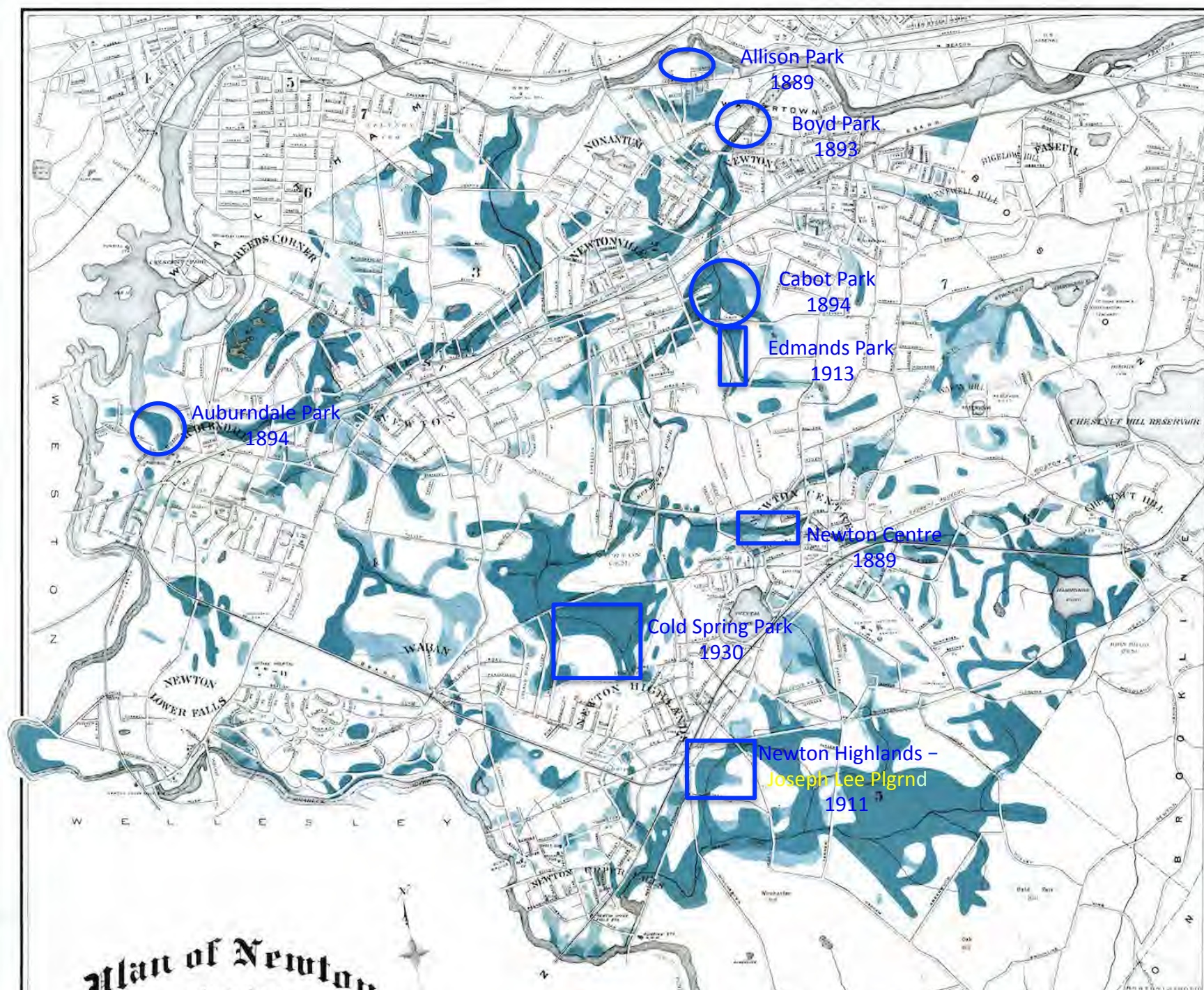
Upper Falls Playground

Construction c. 1911



Parks & Playgrounds Before 1912

Current Name	Year	Acres	Original Name
Farlow Park	1883	3.76	Farlow Park
Richard J. Forte Memorial Park	1889	5	Allison Park Playground
Newton Centre Playground	1889	17.9	Newton Centre Playground (16.41 acres)
Boyd Park	1893	6.06	Boyd Park Playground
Cabot Park	1894	11.6	Cabot Park Playground (14 acres)
Auburndale Park	1894	28.81	Auburndale Park (9.53 acre, 1914)
Lower Falls Park	1894	46	Lower Falls Park
Claflin Playground	1906	6.43	Claflin Field Playground
West Newton Commons Playgrnd	1909	3.63	West Newton Playgrnd, John Weeks Playgrnd
Offr. Robert Braceland Playgrnd	1909	6.93	Upper Falls Playground
Joseph Lee Playground	1911	4.28	Newton Highlands Playground
Lower Falls Playground	1911	8.57	Lower Falls Playground



Newton is a Leader

1906 **Playground Assoc. of America** formed with Joseph Lee as president.

- In 1906 only 41 cities reported having playgrounds – Newton had 6.
- The main idea in 1906 was to secure more playgrounds for small children where they could play safely, away from the hazards of street traffic.
- Playgrounds were also thought to minimize juvenile delinquency
- By 1912 many cities were asking how they could secure professional leaders to head up the work of new playground and recreational Departments.

1908 **Massachusetts Playground Law** passed through leadership of Joseph Lee.

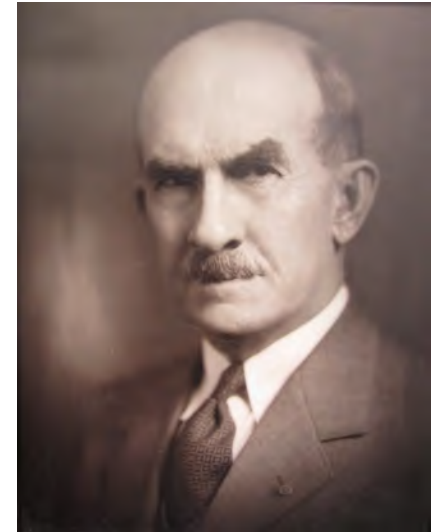
1908 **Forestry Department Created**

– jurisdiction over trees, parks, playgrounds & other open spaces



Newton is a Leader

1912 Newton Playground Commission formed and hires



Ernst Hermann as first Superintendent of Playgrounds.

1869 Born in Brunswick Germany, son of August Hermann, German
Playground Movement Leader

1893 Immigrates to Boston and attends Boston Normal School of
Gymnastics, which later becomes Wellesley College's Department of Phys Ed

1902 Recreation Director of Thomas G. Plant Shoe Factory

1906 Teaches gymnasium class for Harvard faculty members – until 1940

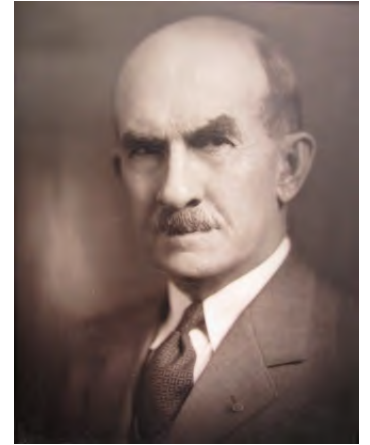
1907 Assistant Director of Physical Training & Athletics for Boston

1909 Superintendent of Playgrounds for Cambridge & Somerville

1916 Teaches Gymnastics at Sargent School of Physical Education

1929 Dean of BU's Sargent School

Ernst Hermann



- Few teachers of recreation and physical education have exerted a more profound influence over a larger number of students .
- Ernst promoted the acquisition of playgrounds, which he called “an oasis in the desert of the modern city.”
- Known for not only the excellence of his recreational playground designs but also for the beauty of his designs.
- “Let us have plenty of space, plenty of structures resembling the structures of the old-fashioned farms and yards, plenty of apparatus for the training of the whole muscular system, plenty of tools for working the earth and the wood, which have always been our best “brain builder”.
- “Recreation leaders should ascertain what children like to do and then assist them in their play.”
- In his opinion, a playground without grass, shrubs, trees, and flowers is not a real playground for children.
- “A playground properly located, properly designed and laid out, properly maintained and properly supervised, is the greatest real estate asset a city has.”

Edwin O. Childs

Mayor 1914-1929, 1936-1939



- Playgrounds and their activities are today a necessity not a luxury, and that department is just as important as the Police or Fire Department. It conserves both life and property. *The boy without a playground is the father of the man without a job.*¹ *The secret of play is the secret of life itself.* Mayors Address 1915
- The city government and all of our people should heartily cooperate with our Playground Commission in the maintenance and promotion of their particular branch of our municipal service which in the last analysis is the greatest factor in the prosecution of crime. Mayors Address 1915
- I recommend strongly the purchase of the land now leased for a playground at Lower Falls. This is by far the most ideal spot in the entire city for sport and recreation. Mayors Address 1915
- I recommend that the supervision of swimming in the city be given over to the Playground Commission with the exceptional opportunities which we have for the development of this form of recreation and sport in this City, with Crystal Lake and Charles River all around us, I am sure that Mr. Hermann can add greatly to the good results which his department has already accomplished in the great "out of doors". Mayors Address 1916

¹ Childs, E. O. *Mayor's Address, Public Documents 1915*; Newton, MA, January 9, 1915

² Leland, A.; Leland, L. H., *Play, Childhood and the Playground, Their Respective Places*. In *Playground Technique and Playcraft* Baker & Taylor Co.: New York, 1910; Vol. I, p 22.

² 1904, *The Survey*, v.12, p.58 Joseph Lee Quote

First Newton Centre Field Day August 28, 1912

Hermann is hired in May, 1912.



Dancing: Stearns Playground 1912

Foot Race: Newton Centre Playground

This is the first year that supervised play has been attempted in this city and the interest was correspondingly great. An excellent program was arranged under the direction of Ernst Hermann, superintendent. Fully, 400 children from the Newton Center, Stearns, Upper Falls, West Newton, Cabot Park and Lower Falls Playgrounds participated. The affair opened with the singing of patriotic songs, after which the flag race was run, resulting in victory for the Stearns Playground. The folk dancing by the girls attracted general attention, as did the baseball game between the girls of the Lower Falls Playground and the Stearns. Playground. *Boston Globe*, August 29, 1912

Newton Centre Costume Parade 1923



The historical pageant which closed the program presented 200 children in the tableaux, and processions, showing in five episodes the coming of the first settlers, the resistance of the Indians, the final peace-making and the coming of the Spirit of Play.
Boston Globe, August 29, 1920

Newton Centre Playground 1923



"I should like to point out the great need of providing resting places in both schools and playgrounds. There must be opportunities for loafing and daydreaming." Ernst Hermann, *Boston Globe*, **1933**

Newton Centre Field Day 1923



All kinds of education must concern itself with the training of the hands as the basis for physical literacy. A quick eye, strong limb, and skillful hand were natural results of generations who had to produce everything they used, ate and needed.

Ernst Hermann, *Boston Globe*, February 26, 1939

Mothercraft Class



One of the features for the first time was the distribution of diplomas in the mothercraft course, which was given to the girls on all the playgrounds by Miss Gertrude Kent, Newton school nurse. *Boston Globe*, August 28, 1924

Newton Centre Field Day 1925



Dean Herman was one with a plea for training of young people in a number of hobbies, with special attention to the development of one particular sport in which they show the most ability, this to be supplemented by arts and crafts. – *Boston Globe*, March 15, 1936

Newton Centre Playground Royal Pageant



The folk dancing on the green, the most colorful event of the day, with more than 200 girls dancing in costume, was the feature of the afternoon. *Boston Globe*, August 24, 1922

More than 2500 Children & 3000 Spectators

Newton Centre 1925



More than 2700 children of this city participated in the colorful "Play Festival" before an audience of 3000 persons. In costumed dances, hundreds of children in multi-colored gowns entertained with folk dances, modern and esthetic dances. The group dancing always a feature of the "Play Festival", was stressed more than ever this year and the spectacle presented on the greensward enclosed by the quarter-mile track on which the grandstands were erected, was one not soon to be forgotten.. *Boston Globe*, August 27, 1925

Newton Centre Field Day 1925



A few weeks ago, I finished a ship model about three feet long and about six inches high, a bark. I have never done any of that work, but I believe that learning is the interesting part in any activity. I was eager to learn again for I believe as long as I can learn or am interested in learning, I do not have to order my coffin yet. – E. Herman 1937

Airplanes 1928

Cold Spring Park



"If you would make your children charming, likeable youngsters, see that they become interested in doing creative work with their hands almost as soon as they can walk." – Ernst Hermann, *Boston Globe*, 1937

Newton Centre Field Day 1927



From 9:30 this morning, when the first truck load of children arrived, until 8:30 tonight, when the 440-yard walk for senior boys took place, there was not a minute without excitement. Mayor Edwin O. Childs addressed the children in the evening and presented the prizes. Charles F. Johnson of the Playground Commission spoke briefly and Ernst Hermann, the indefatigable superintendent of the playgrounds gave the children a talk on sportsmanship. More than 3000 children from every playground in the city attended the field day. *Boston Globe*, August 24, 1922

Newton Centre Playground 1927



It is the expectation of the supervisor that the summer will come to a grand finale with a pageant or some such public exhibition, so that the youngsters may have a chance to display their accomplishments. — *Boston Globe* 1919

Newton Centre Playground 1927



Newton Centre Playground Royal Pageant



Newton Centre Tercentennial Pageant

Newton-The City Beautiful 1930



More than 4000 persons were present, every available seat being taken. The striking color and light effects, combined with the effective working of the curtain of light between episodes again drew prolonged applause. – *Boston Globe*, June 5, 1930

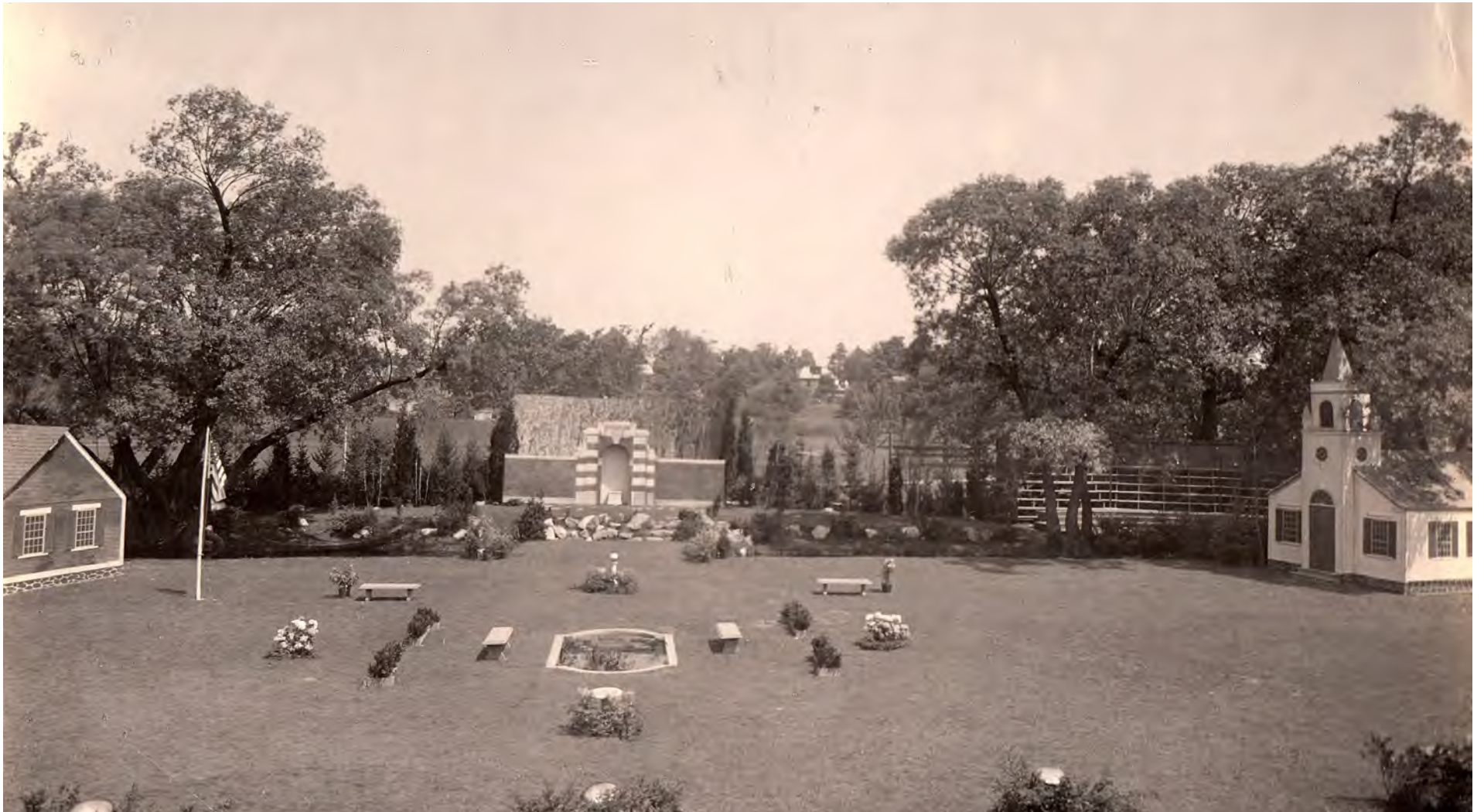
Newton Centre 1930



If the city children of today's machine age do not find creative outlets in such tasks as carving, carpentry and gardening, they will be puny, undeveloped and unskilled.

- E. Hermann, *Boston Globe*, 1939

Newton Centre Tercentennial Pageant



Newton Centre Butterfly 1936



Newton Centre Toboggan Slide 1930 -1978



Winter Sports



Newton has more skating than the rest of America, because Ernst Hermann came there with a methodical memory of how the German system keeps skating all winter. ... "The trick is to keep snow ice from forming on top of the clear ice."

Louis Lyons, Boston Globe, *How Newton Tricks Fickle Weather into Giving it Whole Winter's Skating*, January 26, 1930, B2.

Maintenance 1916



We do it all with one foreman and seven workmen —yes sir, these seven men take care of about 570 acres of land in the city of Newton. From actual statistics last summer the average daily attendance was more than 2,600 youngsters. — *E. Hermann 1919*

Puppet Makers c. 1940s



It was moved, seconded and voted that Miss Forbush and Mr. Hamilton be authorized to attend the Second New England Puppetry Institute on November 10, 11 and 12, and that their tuition of \$2.50 each should be paid by the Department. H.L. Rich, *Playground Commission Minutes*, Nov. 7, 1939

WPA Projects

- Edmands Park 1934-35
- Cold Springs Park
- Auburndale Park -1938
- Hawthorn Playground
- Bullough's Pond Warming House
- Allison Park
- Cabot Park



Newton Centre Playground c.1927



Newton Centre Playground c. 1936

Was it an Olmsted Park?



Halloween Ball

Totem Pole 1953



Changing Organizations

- 1929 Newton Theological Institution donates Thompsonville (Bowen) Playground.
- 1930 Crystal Lake Bathhouse completed. Cold Spring Park purchased. Claflin Park formed.
- 1939 Ernst Hermann Retires -
Newton Playground Commission becomes the Newton Recreation Commission.
- 1941 Albemarle Park developed from the defunct Albemarle Golf Course.
- 1952 Newton North Little League chartered by Little League Baseball.

Public Private Partnerships



The 4-by-8-foot Boston Lager advertisement, one of 18 signs along the outfield wall, includes the company's logo, a picture of the "Brewer Patriot," and admonishes youngsters: "Our beer is carefully aged before drinking. You should be, too."

Arnold, D., Parents Score It an Error. *Boston Globe*, May 6 1998

Parks Commission



Formed in July 19, 1954 to oppose the sale of MDC land for the Chestnut Hill Mall and the Congregation Mishkan Tefila and given jurisdiction over park areas in the city.

“Jacob J. Spiegel, counsel for the Temple and the trustees told Judge Daniel T. O'Connell in Suffolk Superior Court that "in these days of Godlessness and Communism, it is utterly and morally indefensible for a city and Board of Aldermen to attempt to block the erection of religious structures."

“It was alleged in the suit that the MDC agreed to sell the land and signed a deed conveying the site to the temple last July 22 without obtaining the consent of the Newton Park Commission. ” *Boston Globe*, August 18, 1954

1982

- Newton Recreation Commission absorbs the Parks Commission to become the Parks and Recreation Commission.
- The Forestry Department is absorbed into the new Department of Parks and Recreation.

New Parks

- 1982 Kennard Park and house donated.
- 1987 Nahanton Park formed from the Almshouse and Working Boys Home properties.
- 1990 Newton Tree Advisory Task Force (Tree Commission) created.

Weeks Field Renovation 1994



The Youth Soccer group would like to improve the athletic fields at Weeks, which are in disrepair. The proposed plan would renovate the entire nine acres into a uniformly flat, safe, irrigated, grass-covered athletic field. F. Hayes, *Parks & Rec Comm. Minutes*, Nov. 11, 1994

New Parks

- 2000 Parks and Rec Commission Manual Accepted
- 2001 Newton accepts the Community Preservation Act
- 2001 Land on Crystal Lake Acquired with CPA Funds
- 2009 Newton's first off-leash dog park designated in old Cold Spring Playground
- 2017 Joseph Lee (Newton Highlands) Playground Renovated
- 2017 Waban Hill Park (thanks to Mr. Bishop)

