

**NOMINATION OF MELLON PARK
TO BE DESIGNATED AS A CITY HISTORIC LANDMARK**

CITY COUNCIL REPORT



MELLON PARK- HISTORIC NOMINATION STAFF REPORT

Name of Property Mellon Park
Address of Property 1047 Shady Avenue
Property Owner City of Pittsburgh
Nominated by:..... Elizabeth Seamons
Date Received:..... 22 September 2020
Parcel No.: 84-S-250, 84-S-251, 85-D-50, 125-N-200
Ward:..... 7th and 14th
Zoning Classification:..... P
Neighborhood..... Point Breeze
Council District:..... 8-Strassberger

FORMAL ACTION REQUIRED BY THE HISTORIC REVIEW COMMISSION:

1. Act on the Preliminary Determination of Eligibility for Historic Designation (6 November 2020)
2. Conduct a public hearing for the Historic Designation (4 November 2020)
3. Review the Report prepared by staff for the property in question, and make a recommendation to the City Council on the Historic Designation (4 November 2020)

FORMAL ACTION REQUIRED BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION:

4. Conduct a public hearing for the Historic Designation (8 December 2020)
5. Review the recommendations of the Historic Review Commission and make a recommendation to the City Council on the Historic Designation (8 December 2020)

FORMAL ACTION REQUIRED BY THE CITY COUNCIL:

6. Conduct a public hearing within 120 days of the Planning Commission’s vote (7 April 2012)
7. Review the recommendations of the Historic Review Commission and the City Planning Commission and take action on the Historic Designation

FACTS

1. On 22 September 2020 , the staff of the Historic Review Commission received an application for the nomination of Mellon Park to be designated as a City Historic Site.

2. **Description of Mellon Park** (as *extracted from the nomination form*)

Mellon Park is a 33 acre city park located at the intersection of the Shadyside, Point Breeze, and Squirrel Hill neighborhoods in the East End of Pittsburgh, approximately five miles from downtown. It is comprised of land that was formerly the estates of the Mellon, Marshall, Scaife, Frew, and Darsie families. These private estates were acquired by the City of Pittsburgh and unified into a city park in the 1940s and 50s while retaining aspects of their original architecture and landscapes.

Mellon Park is situated on both sides (north and south) of Fifth Avenue, a major east-west corridor known in the 19th and early 20th centuries as “Millionaires’ Row.” South of Fifth Avenue, the park consists of pastoral parkland, formal gardens, buildings, and other features (such as fencing) associated with the historic estates. Its buildings are occupied by nonprofit organizations dedicated to the arts and horticulture which lease them from the City. The southern section of the park is bounded by Fifth Avenue to the north, Shady Avenue to the west, Beechwood Boulevard to the east, and Mellon Park Road to the south. Mellon Park Road is the former private drive of the Mellon estate and leads to the building that was historically the Mellons’ carriage house or garage, now (with additions) the Phipps Garden Center. The Mellon house, once the largest and grandest of the mansions that lined Fifth Avenue, was demolished prior to the creation of the park, but its associated gardens and landscapes remain, with varying degrees of integrity. The Frew and Darsie houses are also demolished. The 1911 Colonial Revival Marshall mansion still stands near the intersection of Fifth and Shady avenues. To its south, facing Shady Avenue, is the Tudor Revival house formerly of Alan Magee Scaife and his wife, Sarah Mellon Scaife. Sarah Mellon Scaife was the original donor of Mellon Park, along with her brother, Richard King Mellon. The siblings had grown up in the Mellon mansion and donated the family estate to the city in memory of their parents, Richard Beatty Mellon and Jennie King Mellon, in 1943. The Marshall property was added in 1944 and the Frew and Darsie properties—located east of the Mellon estate—in 1948.

The Mellons donated the section of Mellon Park north of Fifth Avenue in 1946. This part of the park is known as the Mellon Park Recreation Area and is bounded by Penn Avenue to the northeast, the historic alignment of Putnam Street (recently renamed Bakery Square Boulevard) to the northwest, and Fifth Avenue to the south. A stub of Beechwood Boulevard penetrates the site as an access road and parking lot for park users. The Mellon Park Recreation Area contains facilities for active and passive recreation including ball fields, playgrounds, tennis courts, walking paths, a picnic area, and sculptural installations.

3. **History of Mellon Park** (as *extracted from the nomination form*)

Mellon Park is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of Landscape Architecture. Its original 11 acres was the estate of Richard Beatty Mellon and his wife, Jennie King Mellon. After the Mellons died in the 1930s, their 65-room mansion was demolished, and their children Richard King Mellon and Sarah Mellon Scaife donated the landscaped grounds to the city for a park in 1943. Additional donations and land acquisitions by the city increased Mellon Park’s size to 33 acres by 1950. Landscapes and gardens designed for the Mellons in the 1910s, ‘20s, and ‘30s by Alden & Harlow, Vitale and Geiffert, and Olmsted Brothers are examples of the best private landscape design money could buy in those years.

Subsequent landscape work commissioned to adapt the Mellon estate and adjacent properties for use

as a public park displays the work of notable landscape architects of the mid-20th century, including Ralph Griswold, Gilmore D. Clarke, and Simonds and Simonds, and shows sensitivity to the original landscape's historic character.

Millionaire's Row

The Mellon estate occupied a prominent site atop the ridge of a hill near the intersection of Fifth and Penn avenues. Both of these streets originate in downtown Pittsburgh and form major thoroughfares to and through the city's east end. In the 19th century, wealthy families traveled these roads to their estates in what was then the countryside to get away from the commerce, industry, crowding, and pollution at Pittsburgh's point. Fifth Avenue from Oakland through Shadyside and Penn Avenue from Shadyside through Point Breeze became known as "Millionaires' Row," lined with the opulent mansions and elaborate estates of Pittsburgh's Gilded Age elite: the Mellons, Heinzes, Westinghouses, Carnegies, Fricks, and others.

The Mellons' estate also overlooked another important thoroughfare, Beechwood Boulevard. Beechwood Boulevard was conceived in the early 1900s by Edward Manning Bigelow, Pittsburgh's first Director of Public Works, as part of his vision for an integrated city park system linked by green boulevards. Beechwood Boulevard was created in the 1910s and 20s from a series of pre-existing streets and widened into a fashionable automobile drive leading from Fifth Avenue near its intersection with Penn in Shadyside on a winding path along the ridge of Squirrel Hill to Greenfield. The section near the Mellon estate was originally named William Pitt Boulevard; the entire road was later renamed Beechwood after the estate of oil magnate William Frew, located adjacent to the Mellon estate. The Mellons appear not to have named their estate.

Streetcar lines were established along Fifth and Penn (among other major routes) in the 1860s and electrified in the 1890s, making the areas nearby accessible to commuters and desirable for suburban development. For a time, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Millionaires' Row along Fifth and Penn coexisted with the middle-class neighborhoods burgeoning around them. But as the 20th century progressed, Victorian mansions fell from fashion, and maintenance costs rose as the houses aged. Many of the affluent property owners along Fifth and Penn avenues decamped for newer suburban homes in upscale suburbs such as Fox Chapel and

Sewickley Heights. Unable to sell their enormous city homes and unwilling to continue to pay property taxes on them, many families demolished them. The loss of Millionaires' Row was hastened by legislation in the 1940s that rezoned Fifth Avenue to permit apartment buildings.

The Mellon Estate, 1910-1940

Richard Beatty Mellon (1858-1933, also known as R.B. Mellon) was the son of Judge Thomas Mellon, founder of the Mellon banking empire, and brother of Andrew Mellon, who served as Secretary of the Treasury under presidents Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover. In addition to family wealth, R.B. prospered from his investments in aluminum and coal. R.B. succeeded Andrew Mellon as president of Mellon Bank in 1921. His wife, Jennie King Mellon (1870-1938), was the daughter of another prominent Pittsburgh family whose own mansion, "Baywood," still stands on Elgin Street in the Highland Park neighborhood, about three miles away. R.B. and Jennie King Mellon had two children, Richard King (1899-1970) and Sarah Cordelia (1903-1965).

In the first decade of the 20th century, the Mellons resided at 6544 Fifth Avenue, a substantial Queen Anne Style house on a small triangle of land (known in later years, when it was incorporated into Mellon Park, as the Darsie property after its subsequent owner). Their immediate neighbors to the west were William and Emily Frew, whose much larger, Georgian Revival style mansion, "Beechwood," was set farther back from Fifth Avenue and overlooked it from a hilltop. Aspiring to a grander estate commensurate with their titan status in Pittsburgh, the Mellons purchased land from

the Frews. By the publication of the 1904 Hopkins plat map, R.B. Mellon already owned eleven acres south and west of the Frews' estate. The property had been platted with a grid of streets ca. 1880, but it had not been developed. The Mellons' irregularly-configured parcel rose from Fifth Avenue at the north to a ridge adjacent to the hillock occupied by the Frew house, then sloped back down to Beechwood Boulevard at the south. It also included access from Shady Avenue to the west via a narrow strip of land south of the Lawrence Dilworth property at 1047 Shady Avenue.

In 1908, the Mellons commissioned architects Alden and Harlow to design a \$3 million, 65- room, brownstone Jacobean Revival Style mansion, completed in 1911. Alden and Harlow also designed the property, a landscape of romantic parkland, formal gardens, and architectural elements. Most elaborate among these was the Terraced Garden with its brick and stone balustrades and garden walls of dark tapestry brick with red terra cotta coping. The garden featured a two-tiered parterre design with decorative hedges in arabesque patterns, sculpture, and three rectangular pools. In the location of the current Walled Garden, Alden and Harlow designed a horseshoe-shaped flower garden with orthogonal paths crossing in the center, this central cross encircled by a round walk. The scroll stair, still extant, carried the north-south axis of this garden down through a mass of hillside plantings to the pedestrian path to Fifth Avenue. The Mellons also commissioned Samuel Yellin, a Philadelphia master wrought-iron artisan, to design the fencing enclosing the estate.

The New York firm of Vitale and Geiffert designed the Walled Garden to replace the horseshoe-shaped garden in 1929. Mellon had been introduced to Vitale and Geiffert, a prominent New York-based designer of country estates and private gardens, by Arthur Vining Davis, president of ALCOA, whose Long Island estate Vitale and Geiffert had designed (with then-partner Arthur Brinckerhoff) in 1922. In his monograph on Ferruccio Vitale, R. Terry Schnadebach states that Mellon commissioned the garden as a setting for the upcoming wedding of his daughter Sarah Cordelia to Alan Scaife. Perhaps this was the intention, but it is not how the commission worked out. The Mellon-Scaife wedding took place in East Liberty Presbyterian Church in November, 1927, while Vitale and Geiffert's plans for the garden are dated 1929. Sculpture for the garden—a stone fountain and three bronze figures of young women—was provided by Edmond Amateis, a sculptor of national renown.

In 1919, the Mellons initiated a relationship with Olmsted Brothers, successor firm to that founded by America's father of landscape architecture, Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. Olmsted, Sr. ceased active practice in 1895. The next year, his son Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., and stepson John Charles Olmsted reorganized the firm under the name Olmsted Brothers, which existed until 1961. The Mellons' association with Olmsted Brothers continued intermittently through 1931 after which, with the Great Depression underway, R.B. Mellon did not request any more work from Olmsted Brothers. Most of the Olmsted firm's work consisted of updating and revising the plantings of the grounds and gardens as designed by Alden and Harlow. They also added a new feature unlike any other on the property, a Japanese-themed lily pond at a bend in the drive at the south end of the Beechwood Boulevard parkland. Excellent documentation of this and the Olmsted brothers' other designs for the Mellon estate exists, though none of the actual plantings survives.

Richard Beatty Mellon died in 1933 and Jennie King Mellon in 1938. Afterward, their son Richard King Mellon lived at the estate briefly before moving to the family's country property in Ligonier. R.K. Mellon and his sister, Sarah Mellon Scaife, tried to save the house by offering its use to the Red Cross in the hope that the city would forgive the property taxes on the building if it were used for a charitable purpose. When the city refused, the Mellons stripped the house of its interior treasures and demolished it in 1940.

Park Creation and Development, 1943-1951

In 1942, R.K. Mellon and Sarah Mellon Scaife donated the 11-acre Mellon estate south of Fifth Avenue to the City of Pittsburgh for use as a park. Conditions of the gift included a prohibition against through roads in the park and the City's commitment to maintain the Mellons' landscaping "in so far and as long as reasonably possible and consistent with the proper said use of the property." The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported that "[t]he tract, already beautifully landscaped, will be further improved to fit it for public use." Title was officially transferred to the City in July, 1943, and City Council's parks committee voted unanimously to name it Mellon Park in September of that year. Mellon Park opened to the public on April 30, 1944, with a ceremony which included R.K. Mellon and Sarah Mellon Scaife unveiling a plaque commemorating their gift in honor of their parents.

Days later, Charles D. Marshall, a steel executive, and his wife, Dora Marshall, offered their adjoining estate to the city to be "used in any manner the authorities see fit." Located at Fifth and Shady avenues, the two-acre Marshall property included a large, "swank" house and carriage house, which had been vacant for a year since the Marshalls had retired to their farm near Pottstown, PA. The estate was valued at \$85,000.

City officials differed on how to receive this gift. Councilman A. L. Wolk proposed dedicating the house to serve as a "cultural haven" for artists, musicians, performers, and students; however, his colleague, Councilman Edward Leonard, was opposed to accepting the property unless a baseball diamond could be built upon it, an impractical suggestion due to the slope of the land. On May 24, 1944, Council's Finance Committee voted 6-3 to add the Marshall property to Mellon Park. Wolk's faction prevailed, and the following March, the Marshall mansion opened to the public as the Arts and Crafts Center of Pittsburgh with exhibit and performance spaces on the ground floor and offices for ten member organizations on the upper floors.

Mellon Park was well-used in its first year. City Parks Superintendent Ralph Griswold reported that visitor numbers exceeded expectations and likened Mellon Park to one of the small, urbane neighborhood parks of Paris.

In 1946, the Mellons donated three additional parcels totaling over 15 acres along Fifth, Penn, and Shady Avenues, bringing Mellon Park up to nearly 29 acres in area. The new land was to be used to create a Mellon Recreation Center. Along with the land, the Mellons donated a professionally-designed plan for the property and \$100,000 for site preparation and the purchase of equipment.

The proposed recreation area was located across Fifth Avenue from the former Mellon estate at the intersection of Penn Avenue. It consisted of two parcels bisected by Beechwood Boulevard running north-south between them. R.B. Mellon acquired the site from the estate of William Carr between 1910, when he moved into 6500 Fifth Avenue, and 1923, when city property maps show Mellon as the parcels' owner, but Mellon does not appear to have built on it. By 1923, the Carr mansion had been demolished, but some outbuildings remained near Penn Avenue and were still present in 1939. Beechwood Boulevard was laid out to cross the estate west of the mansion in the early 1900s and this segment was constructed ca. 1920.

Photographs taken by the Pittsburgh City Photographer on Fifth Avenue in 1917 show the Carr estate enclosed by a plain iron picket fence set a few feet back from the sidewalk along Fifth Avenue. Street trees were planted in a row along this verge. Ashlar gate piers marked the carriage entrance to the Carr estate just east of the alignment of Beechwood Boulevard.

Plans commissioned by R.K. Mellon and Sarah Mellon Scaife in 1945 and provided with their gift called for the vacation of this segment of Beechwood Boulevard and construction of a large athletic field; a smaller turf ball field and hard-surface courts; junior and senior playgrounds; tennis courts

which could be flooded in winter for ice skating; a swimming pool, diving pool, and bath house; a picnic meadow with shade trees and a shelter; a community building with offices, shower and locker rooms, public rest rooms, a refreshment concession, and an apartment for the park foreman; and parking for 75 cars. The plans were prepared for the Mellons by a team comprised of the firm of Charles M. Stotz and Edward Stotz, Jr., Architect and Engineer; Ralph Griswold, landscape architect (and, until recently, Superintendent of Pittsburgh's Bureau of Parks); James McClain, planning officer of the Pittsburgh Regional Planning Association; and Gilmore D. Clarke, consulting landscape architect. The pool complex and community building designed by Stotz firm were not realized, but the rest of the plan was built out roughly as designed. The historic fencing between the property and Fifth Avenue was removed.

The third parcel donated in 1946 was the home of Sarah Mellon Scaife and her husband, Alan Magee Scaife, at 1047 Shady Avenue. It consisted of two acres containing a house, garage, and playhouse located directly behind the Marshall property and west of the R.B. and Jennie Mellon estate. The 1904 Alden and Harlow-designed Scaife house had been designed for Lawrence Dilworth and purchased by the elder Mellons as a wedding present for their daughter Sarah in the 1920s. Although the Shingle Style house was "one of [Alden and Harlow]'s finest designs," the Mellons preferred medieval styles and had the house remodeled as a faux-half-timbered Tudor Revival. The playhouse was built for the Scaifes' children and later demolished with little record.

Pittsburgh Mayor Lawrence announced that he would accept the Mellons' latest donation and that development of the Recreation Center would begin as soon as possible. In an editorial, the *Pittsburgh Press* praised the gift and the city's prompt acceptance of it, noting the dearth of recreation facilities outside of the major East End parks (Schenley, Highland, and Frick), and that "this will provide an all-around recreation center which can be matched only by the facilities in the big parks." In 1948, two additional parcels totaling almost 4 acres became available to add to Mellon Park through tax delinquency. These were "Beechwood," the former William and Emily Frew estate, which adjoined Mellon Park to the east, and the adjacent former Darsie property, where the Mellons had lived before constructing their hilltop mansion. In 1948, this parcel was owned by Isla Woods. It had been foreclosed upon, and the City had already demolished the house. Richard K. Mellon and Alan M. Scaife donated \$35,000 to the City develop the Frew and Darsie parcels as part of Mellon Park. The City saw clear advantages this proposal: "City Parks Director Howard B. Stewart explained that development of the additional area will provide much better access from the Fifth Avenue to the Beechwood Boulevard side of the oddly-shaped Mellon Park." After gaining the agreement of the two other taxing bodies (Allegheny County and the Pittsburgh Public Schools) to relinquish their rights to the levies, the City formally acquired these properties in 1951. Also in 1948, the Pittsburgh Garden Center dedicated its new home in the former Mellon carriage house. The Pittsburgh Garden Center formed in 1934 as the parent organization of some 75 local garden clubs from around the region. It soon outgrew its first home in a former refreshment stand outside Phipps Conservatory in Schenley Park. Upon a 1945 agreement to lease the carriage house on the former Mellon estate from the City, the Garden Club undertook renovations to provide facilities including a horticulture library and meeting rooms. Some evidence that Charles Moore Stotz was the architect for these renovations is provided by a line in a newspaper article from 1946 noting that the Garden Center's annual Garden Market was to be held in Mellon Park in that year. The item stated that "Charles Stotz, architect, will speak on the proposed new [garden] center" to be located in the former Mellon "garage and outlying territory." The Garden Market the first of several large events to take place annually in Mellon Park.

The first documented alteration to the landscape after the Mellon estate became a park was the redesign of the Terraced Garden. In late 1949, the Garden Club of Allegheny County proposed the

replacement of existing plantings—presumably those designed for the Mellons by the Olmsted firm—with a rose garden in the lower terrace. This opened to the public in May, 1951. In the meantime, in 1950, the City engaged the landscape architecture firm of Simonds and Simonds to prepare drawings for the restoration of the pool in the lower terrace and the reconstruction of the balustrade atop the garden wall. The result of all of this work is shown in a photograph of July, 1951. The final stage in the conversion of the Mellon and adjacent estates to a city park was completed in 1952. In accordance with a new plan for the grounds, again by Simonds and Simonds, the City removed the fences and screen plantings which had historically divided the estates; filled the foundations of the demolished Frew and Darsie houses; and modified the existing drives and walking paths as part of a circulation system designed to unify the visitor experience of the landscape across all five estates it now comprised. The resulting landscape was a single expanse of sloping parkland of turf and trees rising up from Fifth Avenue. The Frew and Mellon drives were incorporated as pedestrian pathways from Fifth Avenue into the park, but the Darsie drive from Fifth Avenue and the Marshall drive from Shady were eliminated. The former service access drive to the Mellon estate from Shady Avenue was maintained as a city street called Mellon Park Road.

City workers filled in the Olmsted-designed lily pond “to prevent accidents” as early as 1951; this feature is not shown on the 1952 Simonds and Simonds plan for the park. Without the pond as its focal point, the landscaping around it was not maintained, but the granite frog which ornamented it was moved to a location near the entrance to the Walled Garden. What became of the pond’s stork sculpture is not known.

Simonds and Simonds’ 1952 plan did not address the former agricultural area of the estate between the Mellons’ Fifth Avenue lawn and the former Marshall estate except to specify that the fence between it and the Fifth Avenue parkland be removed. However, for reasons not documented, the fence has remained. A 1956 aerial view of the site shows that the vegetable gardens had been converted to lawn by this time. Uphill from this, the structure known as the “chicken coop” was adapted for use as the Activity Headquarters of the Pittsburgh Council of American Youth Hostels by 1949.

Park Development, 1953-Present

Mellon Park’s subsequent development consisted of a series of small alterations to its landscape and buildings, some intentional, others resulting from deferred and diminished maintenance.

While each individual change was relatively minor, over 70 years, they had a cumulatively major effect on the historic landscape. Recent initiatives of the late 20th and early 21st centuries have sought to remedy some of the damage and neglect and to restore the intent, if not the specifics, of the park’s historic landscapes.

By 1956, the formal pool in the lower terrace of the Terraced Garden had been filled in as a planting bed edged with low shrubs. The informal pool in the Japanese garden had also been lost, as had the vegetable gardens facing Fifth Avenue.

City officials proposed an ice skating rink for the Mellon Park Recreation Area in 1971, but the site was moved to Schenley Park due to space constraints and the opposition of Mellon Park neighbors. The Allegheny Chapter of the American Rock Garden Society created a rock garden opposite Mellon Park Road from the Garden Center in 1976.

By the 1970s, Pittsburgh’s reduced population and, correspondingly, diminished tax revenues had led to drastically reduced maintenance capacity for its city parks. The formal flower beds of Mellon Park’s Walled and Terraced gardens suffered accordingly. In 1977, the Western Pennsylvania Unit of the Herb Society of America began to plan to replace the rose garden in the Terraced Garden’s lower terrace with a Shakespearean themed herb garden. This opened in 1980 with only a few rose

plantings remaining. The Frank S. Curto Educational Gardens were dedicated in the Walled Garden in 1975, consisting of perennials, shrubs, and small trees selected “with minimum care and maintenance in mind.”

In 1979, the Garden Club of Allegheny County underwrote a master plan for Mellon Park prepared by Seay and Ridenour, Inc., landscape architects and planners. Although billed as a “restoration,” the plan does not appear to have been based on historical documentation, but on the idea of developing Mellon Park as an educational botanical garden and “horticultural showplace” in keeping with the mission of the Garden Club to promote interest in garden design. However, the plan did call for the rehabilitation of the Terraced Garden’s brick walkways and retaining walls and of the balustrades that complemented them, and it was realistic in its recommendation that the upper terrace be replanted with low-maintenance, winter-hardy materials. This work in the Terraced Garden was accomplished with a \$63,500 grant from the Richard King Mellon Foundation later that year, and the Terraced Garden was rechristened the Jennie King Mellon Garden. The plan also recommended several herb gardens, a rose garden, a chrysanthemum cut flower garden, several small demonstration gardens, a formal shrub garden, and strategic screen plantings near parking areas.

The Pittsburgh Center for the Arts (formerly Arts and Crafts Center) announced an expansion in 1981. The architect was The Design Alliance, which proposed a 22,000 square foot gallery built into the hillside between the Marshall and Scaife buildings with windows facing Fifth Avenue. The roof of underground gallery was to be a planted as a garden and incorporate a small coffee shop and restaurant. The idea was reiterated in 1985, but adequate funds were never raised. In 1989-1990, renovations to the Marshall and Scaife buildings were completed and opened to the public: a new lobby, gallery space, and sales space for the arts center in the Marshall building, and a classroom addition and kiln shed at the Scaife house. The underground gallery idea was realized in more modest form, as an expansion of the house’s original front terrace with its basement expanded into a gallery and event space below.

In 1982, the Pittsburgh Garden Center announced an expansion of its own, a \$252,000 wing by the architectural firm of Wilkins and Heaton, along with renovation of its auditorium, library, and gift shop. Ground was broken May of that year for the addition, which extended the garden center eastward from the Mellon garage and added a terrace.

In the 1990s, the City and its tenants in Mellon Park faced criticism for their neglect and misuse of the park’s historic landscape and architectural features. Headlines such as “Signs of Decay: Mellon Park Cracks, Crumbles, and Creeps Toward Ruin” called attention to the extent of the damage left in the wake of years of inadequate budget and deferred maintenance, while the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts attracted public ire over art installations on its grounds that were antithetical to the preservation of their historic character.

In response, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and the R.K. Mellon Foundation assembled a team of landscape historians, landscape architects, and planners to produce “Mellon Park: A Preservation and Management Plan” in 1999-2000. While this document addressed only the former Mellon estate portion of Mellon Park, minus the agricultural area, it did an excellent job of documenting the estate’s historic periods of landscape design and made important initial steps toward planning to reconcile their historic character with the present heavy use demands on them.

Mellon Park’s tennis courts were resurfaced and covered with a dome to allow for year-round play in 2002. The dome was initially supposed to be seasonal, but it is no longer taken down.

In 2009, the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy performed a rehabilitation of the Walled Garden. Work included restoration of the garden’s walls, paths, terraces, and fountain; replanting of the beds with

regard to the intent of historic plantings but suitable to modern park maintenance capacity; and installation of large decorative urns on inscribed stone bases alongside the stairs at the eastern entrance to the garden. The urns mimic those seen in 1930s period photographs of the garden. The project also incorporated a more subtle, but permanent, public art installation, a memorial to Ann Katherine Seamans by artist Janet Zweig. The installation consists of fiberoptic lights installed at grade in the central lawn in the formation of the stars on the date of Ms. Seamans' birth. It is prominently visible only at night and was designed to be minimally intrusive to the historic garden landscape.

4. Significance of Mellon Park *(as extracted from the nomination form)*

The *Pittsburgh Code of Ordinances, Title 11, Historic Preservation, Chapter 1: Historic Structures, Districts, Sites and Objects* lists ten criteria, at least one of which must be met for Historic Designation. The nominator is of the opinion that Mellon Park meets one of the criteria as follows.

3. Its exemplification of an architectural type, style or design distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship;

Three phases of design must be examined for their contribution to Mellon Park's landscape significance. The first is the design of the original estate by Alden and Harlow and modified by Olmsted Brothers, 1910-1931. The Walled Garden of 1929 by Vitale and Geiffert is discussed separately as it is a distinctive and singularly important design. The third period consists of the work of a select cohort of landscape architects retained by the Mellons and by the City to transition the Mellon estate and adjacent properties, including that across Fifth Avenue, to its new function as public parkland.

The Mellon Estate, 1910-1931: The decades just before and after the turn of the 20th century were the pinnacle of private landscape design in the United States. The profession of landscape architecture had initially flourished in the creation of public parks on the model of New York's Central Park (1858). In the late 19th century, a growing caste of ultra-wealthy titans of business and industry increasingly sought the services of landscape architects to design their private estates. The landscape design for Biltmore, George W. Vanderbilt's estate outside of Asheville, North Carolina, was very influential as a model for the planning and design of a large, multi-faceted estate, not just ornamental gardens. The wealth of these clients also accompanied a lifestyle of lavish entertaining. Their mansions were designed to include large halls and ballrooms, and their owners also wanted places to entertain out-of-doors.

In Pittsburgh, bankers and magnates in oil, steel, coal, and coke bought large, undeveloped properties on the verdant outskirts of the city, where the stretch of Fifth and Penn avenues between Oakland and Point Breeze became established as Millionaire's Row. There, Pittsburgh's elite commissioned opulent mansions from the best-known architects of the day and brought skilled craftspeople from Europe to construct and finish them. For the grounds around them, they sought designers of commensurate skill to sculpt scenic landscapes and elegant gardens. In the words of Pittsburgh architectural historian James D. Van Trump, the area was "a veritable parade of wealth in brick and stone, in rare trees and glamorous flowers. There never was in Pittsburgh such visual luxury, nor will there ever be again."

In this contest of displays of wealth through design, Richard Beatty Mellon and Jennie King Mellon moved up, literally. Their first house was a large but not baronial Queen Anne tucked in an awkward wedge of property at the foot of their neighbors William and Emily Frew's hilltop estate facing Fifth Avenue. A historic photograph shows the landscape around it to have consisted predominantly of scattered trees in lawn; there is no evidence of its having been professionally designed. In the early 1900s, the Mellons assembled property on the other side of

the Frews' estate until their holdings spanned the adjacent hilltop and touched Fifth Avenue, Beechwood Boulevard, and Shady Avenue. In 1908, they engaged Alden and Harlow, among the leading architects of the time serving Pittsburgh's industrial elite, to design a 65-room mansion and, around it, a series of landscape features which amounted to a private park.

Alden and Harlow were not landscape designers, per se, but they provided an elegant site plan and architectural features which helped organize the landscape and define areas of different uses and levels of formality. They designed the Mellons' house with an angled plan to relate to both Fifth Avenue and Beechwood Boulevard and provided vehicular and pedestrian access from each. The hillsides sloping down to each of these streets from the house site were treated as pastoral parkland, with specimen trees set in broad lawns which served as a transition and a buffer between the house and the street. Fifth Avenue was clearly intended as the estate's primary frontage, as signified by the especially elaborate treatment of the fencing and the central location of the drive. This drive entered through an elaborate wrought-iron gate and curved to the east as it climbed through the Mellons' parklike front yard to its porte cochere. The scroll stair gave pedestrians entering from Fifth Avenue a more elegant alternative to hiking up and down the steepest slope of the hillside to the house. On the Beechwood side, the drive hugged the edge of the property, suggesting that an uninterrupted view from the Terraced Garden over the tree-studded lawn to Beechwood Boulevard was prized. The absence of any historic planting between the lower margin of the terrace and the street also suggests that the Mellons and their architects wished to emphasize the view from Beechwood Boulevard up to the house on its hilltop: "such a vista must have conveyed the sensations of might, grandeur, and remoteness."

Alden and Harlow designed the Terraced Garden itself along with the house; it is one of the original features of the site. Its architectural qualities attest that it was designed to serve as a sort of outdoor room, a direct extension of the house into the landscape. The Mellon property barely touched Shady Avenue due to the intervening Marshall and Dilworth (later Scaife) properties, so Alden and Harlow designed this connection to provide service access. Even this was treated to an elegant brick and wrought iron portal whose design integrated it into the rest of the estate. Along with Alden and Harlow's site plan, the Terraced Garden, tapestry brick walls, and scroll stair, the Mellon estate fencing that survives from its earliest period is a significant character-defining feature. For the boundaries of their estate at its public faces, the Mellons would not be satisfied with simple wrought-iron pickets such as characterized nearby estates along Fifth Avenue.

Designed by the Philadelphia forge of Samuel Yellin, the Mellon estate fences and gates are the works of a master meant not only for the enjoyment of the family in residence but to signify their wealth and taste to those looking in from outside. The City wisely retained these when adapting the site for use as a park. Their quality far surpasses that of even the finest publicly-provided park infrastructure, serving as a reminder of Mellon Park's Gilded Age origins.

An aspect of the Mellon estate which has received little previous attention is its agricultural area, located between the Walled Garden and the Marshall estate to the west. Like Biltmore, which included a model farm operated on scientific principles, on a smaller scale the Mellon estate set aside property for the cultivation of produce and, possibly, poultry. Exactly how this small urban farm was planned, planted, and used is not well understood through documentation currently available. The fence between the agricultural area and Mellon's Fifth Avenue lawn indicates that the Mellons did not consider their vegetable garden an extension of their private pleasure ground and desired separation between these distinctive landscape functions. Yet, the Mellons chose not to tuck their agricultural appurtenances out of sight near the service area of

their estate, but to display them prominently on their property's most public face, Fifth Avenue. And the structure historically known as the chicken coop, while simple, is not completely utilitarian in design. It appears to date from early in the estate's existence, possibly from its construction ca. 1910.

Whether it was designed by Alden and Harlow is not known. But details such as its multi-pane glazed windows and moulded wood cornice, for example, suggest that the Mellons took pride in the structure and in its function. It may have originally housed animals, but after the Mellons vacated the estate, it was considered fit for offices of the staff of the Pittsburgh Council of American Youth Hostels.

The Mellon estate's original site plan and most of its architectural features were incorporated whole into Mellon Park so that, even without a trace of the lost Mellon house itself, the overall design of the Mellon estate and its relationship to the surrounding neighborhood are preserved.

The 1910 landscape features of Mellon Park reflect the influences of various trends in private landscape design which emerged at different times, and from different traditions, to co-exist with one another in the early 20th century. The pioneer of landscape architecture in America, Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., promoted a romantic, picturesque style characterized by winding paths, rugged stonework, and naturalistic massing of plants and stands of trees intended to represent "rus in urb," or nature in the city. Olmsted and his partner, Calvert Vaux, introduced this style on an impressive scale in their design for New York's Central Park in 1858. Most metropolitan areas subsequently embraced Olmsted's style (and many hired Olmsted himself, if they could) in designing their own public parklands based on Central Park's model in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Olmsted became a sought-after designer for private estates as well—he worked on Biltmore—and many local landscape architects nationwide imitated his style. While not landscape architects themselves, Alden and Harlow would certainly have been aware of Olmsted. Their romantic, pastoral compositions of the Fifth Avenue and Beechwood Boulevard hillsides, with their sloping lawns, artfully planted trees, and winding paths and drives, evince a general, Olmsted-influenced, park-like treatment of these expansive areas.

Alden and Harlow confined formal gardens to discrete, smaller areas with direct relationships to the house they designed. These gardens were indebted to a very different landscape tradition, one based on the Renaissance-era gardens of Italy. A cohort of Americans who traveled to Italy and visited, studied, and restored its Renaissance-period gardens in the late 19th century popularized a fashion for similar garden design at home. Books by two of them, *Italian Gardens* (1894) by landscape architect Charles Platt and *Italian Villas and their Gardens* (1904) by novelist Edith Wharton, who was also an avid traveler and home and garden designer, were "found in the country's best homes." At around the same time, the 1893 World Columbian Exposition in Chicago revived enthusiasm among design practitioners and clients alike for formal, symmetrical, neoclassical designs in buildings and landscapes.

Alden and Harlow's formal, balanced, symmetrical Terraced Garden is indicative of this Italian-inspired, neoclassical trend. As architects, Alden and Harlow were accomplished at creating garden spaces which functioned as extensions of the house's architecture into the landscape, as Italian gardens did. The plantings of the Terraced Garden have varied under different landscape designers, fashions, user demands, and maintenance programs over the years, but the garden's essential character as designed by Alden and Harlow has continued to define it as almost a vestige of the lost house itself. The garden's two formal "rooms," one upper and one lower, were centered on axis with the library of the house and so integrally related to the house's plan. The terraced design worked with the site's sloping topography. As one descended toward Beechwood Boulevard, one would have views upward to the house, looming over the garden on

its hilltop, and below, across the sweep of the hillside lawn. The walls of dark red brick laid in English bond with contrasting white mortar establish its relationship to other outdoor walls throughout the estate. They give the garden a sense of enclosure without being so high that one cannot see over them to the park-like grounds beyond. At key points, balustrades maintain the sense of enclosure while opening the views. A lush variety of plants punctuated by pools of still water originally provided a rich tapestry of color and texture, but even without the pools and with diminished plantings, the essential geometry of the beds and design of the Terraced Garden's outdoor rooms remains.

Interestingly, the Mellons chose to engage the Olmsted Brothers, who continued their father's tradition of naturalistic romanticism, to redesign this formal garden in 1919. Alden and Harlow had delivered the architecture of the Terraced Garden ca. 1910, but the planting had been left to the Mellons' estate gardener, Ernest Guter. After almost a decade, the family desired a more professional garden plan. The signature Olmsted approach was antithetical to the neoclassical design of the garden, but the Olmsted firm had great cachet, and moreover was able to work with the tastes of their clientele. R.B. and Jennie Mellon would have known them from their earlier work for William Larimer Mellon, older brother to R.B. and Andrew. At the same time, in 1919, Andrew Mellon also hired Olmsted Brothers to design the landscape of a house he purchased and enlarged on Woodland Road.

Percival Gallagher, one of two men other than the Olmsted brothers, Frederick, Jr., and John Charles, to become a partner in the firm prior to 1920, appears to have been the main designer assigned to the R.B. Mellon project. Gallagher suggested several changes to the garden's hardscape which were not made, such as replacing the concrete steps and brick walks with flagstone; altering the configuration of walks and planting beds in the upper terrace; and painting the walls' red terra cotta coping a different color. What, if any, of Gallagher's planting suggestions were followed is not known.

In 1931, Olmsted Brothers drew a plan that depicts the Mellon estate's landscape as it appeared then. This includes the locations of specimen trees they specified for the Fifth Avenue and Beechwood Boulevard lawns and their design for a lily pond and surrounding landscape near the southern end of the Beechwood Boulevard parkland. They also drew detailed planting plans for these areas, which were executed. In the 2000 plan for Mellon Park, landscape historian Barry Hannegan derived the following description of the lily pond site from those plans:

The pool and surrounding plantings provide[d] a garden scale landscape and a destination in this broader parkland of trees in lawn. Paths stepped down from the drive [up to the house site from Beechwood Boulevard], through rocks and naturalistic plantings to circle the pond and cross it on a small, arched bridge. The design incorporated several existing trees providing a landscape of dappled light.

The pond was surrounded by azaleas, ferns, and other species and ornamented with a carved granite frog and bronze stork. On the pond site today, only some of the large rocks from this landscape vignette remain. All of the rest of the Olmsted firm's landscape work on the Mellon estate has disappeared. However, the areas where they occurred were not assigned to other uses in the transition from private estate to public park. The availability of these sites, along with the remarkable detail of Olmsted's historic plans for them, makes the possibility of restoration of these landscape designs possible.

The Walled Garden, 1929: Olmsted Brothers was still under contract to the Mellons in the late 1920s, when the family commissioned the Walled Garden. The decision to engage a very different firm, Vitale and Geiffert, for this project may signify the Mellons' preference for more

formal, traditional garden design and acknowledgement that the Olmsted's strengths lay elsewhere.

Vitale and Geiffert was a New York-based landscape architecture firm which made its reputation in the design of private estates for wealthy clients, including Pierre DuPont, Isaac and Solomon Guggenheim, Benjamin Moore, and Conde Nast. Italian-born Ferruccio Vitale (1875-1933) grew up in and around Renaissance-era architecture and gardens near Florence. Trained as an engineer, he emigrated to the United States as a military attache in 1898 and became the protege of George F. Pentacost, Jr., a landscape architect and partner (with Samuel Parson, Jr.) in the New York firm of Parsons and Pentacost. Pentacost and Vitale formed their own partnership in 1905.

Thereafter, Vitale's practice was fluid. He sometimes practiced independently and readily formed new partnerships and associations as suited his career. He partnered with former apprentices Arthur Brinckerhoff and Alfred Geiffert, Jr., in 1917, forming Vitale, Brinckerhoff, and Geiffert. After Brinckerhoff withdrew in 1924, Vitale and Geiffert continued to practice together under the old name until 1932. Geiffert then carried on the practice under the name of Vitale and Geiffert after Vitale's death in 1933. "Together, Vitale and Geiffert were complementary and well suited to each other. Their combined talents produced the best of Vitale's works."

Among these best works were the Walled Garden on the Mellon estate. Geiffert's 1957 obituary in the *New York Times* mentioned the firm's work on the Mellon estate in the same sentence as its estate design for John D. Rockefeller III. Vitale and Geiffert accepted civic commissions during the Great Depression, but their work in the 1910s and '20s was a departure from that of other landscape architects of the time, who sought public works commissions to first make their reputations in the public sector.

Vitale and Geiffert practiced landscape architecture and garden design in a neoclassical idiom that contrasted with the picturesque romanticism of Olmsted and his followers. Their design methodology was based on the fine arts and on principles of architectural composition: space, volume, plane, axis, point, and counterpoint. They did not copy or derive their designs from historic gardens, but created formal spaces with informal plantings that were abstract versions of their classical prototypes. Their work became more simplified, modern and abstracted over time.

Vitale and Geiffert's gardens were structured, often sunken or enclosed, with broad terraces of grass and steps at level changes. They often designed "serial spaces," horizontal compositions of interconnected or interdependent spaces that flowed from one to another. Within this scheme, spaces of various scales were designed to be comfortable for one person, for a couple, or for a large garden party. These they handled architecturally in clearly defined terraces separated by walls or stairs. Vitale said that in garden design, he sought to create a sense of seclusion: "A garden ought to be an intimate, personal, sheltered spot, not a public parade ground."

All of Vitale and Geiffert's design signatures can be found in the Walled Garden of the Mellon estate, completed near the end of their partnership (Vitale died in 1933). Its Gothic west wall reflects the Mellons' preference for a medieval design vocabulary such as defined their house and their renovations to the Scaife house. At the opposite end, the garden now opens to the larger landscape, but the bay window of R.B. Mellon's study originally related that end to the house.

The fountain by sculptor Edmond Amateis in front of the west wall is the garden's focal point and defines its strong central axis along its broad grassy terrace. The fountain's whimsical

forms—a ring of chubby children playing musical instruments and the heads of fish and turtles—seem to make a statement that the garden, though formal, is meant for enjoyment rather than serious contemplation. Along both sides of the central terrace, in parallel, are the serial spaces: the north and south terraces, defined by walls. Like the Terraced Garden, the Walled Garden was a well-defined space, intended to extend the architecture of the house out into the landscape. Current plantings of lilies and other perennials in beds also planted with single trees and bordered with low hedges are reflective of those originally designed by Vitale and Geiffert.

The Park Landscape, 1946-1952: The final significant landscape campaign occurred between 1946 and 1952 and served to transition the Mellon estate and other former private properties to their new, combined function as a public park.

The Mellons' gift of the former Carr estate north of Fifth Avenue explicitly for a recreation area may have been a direct response to the 1944 conflict over the use of the Marshall property, in which some city council members voted to turn down the gift if it wasn't used for recreational purposes. As seen in the deed restrictions governing the Mellons' original gift of their parents' estate, preservation of its landscape qualities was important to them. Concentration of the Mellon Park Recreation Area north of Fifth Avenue seems to have been a deliberate strategy to address the public—and political—desire for recreational facilities while keeping them from impacting the landscape design of the former estate. Writing about Mellon Park in 1960, a journalist stated directly, "To preserve the beauty of the estate, to keep it intact as a place of meditation and sylvan retreat, the recreation facilities are separated to the north by Fifth Avenue."

The Mellons' desire to control the outcome of their donation of the former Carr estate is shown by the fact that they provided a landscape plan along with it, plus seed funds so that the tract's development could begin without delay. They selected a design team of respected, seasoned professionals: Charles M. Stotz and Edward Stotz, Jr., Architect and Engineer; Ralph Griswold, landscape architect; James McClain, planning officer of the Pittsburgh Regional Planning Association; and Gilmore D. Clarke, consulting landscape architect. Each brought particular and relevant expertise.

Charles M. Stotz and Edward Stotz, Jr., Architect and Engineer, was the successor firm to that of Edward Stotz, a successful Pittsburgh architect who designed (among other commissions) Schenley High School and the Oakmont Country Club house. His son Charles Moore Stotz entered the firm in 1923, and Charles and his brother, Edward, Jr., took it over from their father and renamed it in 1936. Charles M. Stotz developed an interest in architectural history and historic preservation in the 1930s when he served as chairman of the Western Pennsylvania Architectural Survey and of the Western Pennsylvania section of the Historic American Buildings Survey. The publication of his survey work, *The Early Architecture of Western Pennsylvania* (1936), is a classic reference. Charles Stotz became one of the first architects in the country to develop a specialty in the preservation and restoration of historic buildings, which at the time was regarded to mean those built in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Although there were no such buildings to preserve on the Mellon Recreation Area site, Charles Stotz was familiar with Mellon Park due to his work for the Pittsburgh Garden Center in the former Mellon garage. His sensitivity to historic contexts would have been an asset, as would the engineering expertise of his brother and partner, Edward, Jr.

For the Recreation Area, the Stotz firm was engaged to design the pool, bathhouse, and community building. A perspective rendering by Charles M. Stotz of these features, printed in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* in January, 1946, shows the buildings connected by a long colonnade at one end of the pool. The pool is shown in two parts—a small half-moon shaped

wading pool at one end and a larger rectangular swimming pool with a fountain—in a sunken area of the site surrounded by walls and steps which also served as seating. These features were not built. They may have been too expensive, and/or this ambitious program may have exceeded the capacity of the park area for which it was planned.

Ralph Esty Griswold (1894-1981) was an accomplished landscape architect who had just stepped down as superintendent of the Pittsburgh Bureau of Parks in 1945 when the Mellons engaged him to work on the Recreation Area design. He had studied landscape architecture at Cornell and, under Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., for three years in Rome. Griswold was the first professional landscape architect hired by the City as an agency director. He oversaw the City's park development from 1934-1945 and was a strong advocate for the city park system, winning WPA funds to improve their infrastructure in lasting and beautiful ways during the Great Depression. Griswold also worked successfully to integrate active recreational amenities, such as ball courts and swimming pools, into city parks that had been planned in the 19th century for more genteel, passive recreation. In his private practice, which bookended his public service, Griswold designed the landscapes at Chatham Village in the 1930s and Point State Park in the 1950s. As these commissions show, Griswold was capable of both traditional, picturesque and more modern, abstracted design approaches. Doubtless his recent experience with Pittsburgh's park department made him a valuable liaison to the city administration, in addition to his demonstrated landscape design skills.

James McClain was a former staff member of the Pittsburgh City Planning Department who moved to a new position as administrative secretary of the Pittsburgh Regional Planning Association in 1945. Founded in 1918 and active through the 1960s, the Pittsburgh Regional Planning Association was a precursor to the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, which formed in 1944 to coordinate civic, regional, federal, and private efforts to clean Pittsburgh's air and water and modernize its infrastructure through urban renewal. Richard King Mellon was the Planning Association's president in the 1940s. Mellon's appointment of McClain to the design team for the Mellon Recreation Area suggests that he saw Mellon Park as an asset, along with a clean, modern, revitalized downtown, that would help ensure the future of the region. The photographic record of the Allegheny Conference supports this idea. During the early 1960s, James McClain photographed many urban renewal sites for the Allegheny Conference: among them were the tennis courts in the Mellon Park Recreation Area. (Figure 25) McClain would have provided a direct link between the Recreation Area's design and its benefactors, R.K. Mellon and Sarah Mellon Scaife. He also would have been connected to Ralph Griswold as a result of his previous position in city government.

The fourth member of the Mellon Park Recreation Area team, listed as consulting landscape architect, was Gilmore D. Clarke. Clarke was a New York landscape architect and associate of Vitale and Geiffert who briefly became a partner in that firm after Vitale's death in 1933. Unlike Vitale and Geiffert, Clarke had a robust career in public works. He was Chairman of the National Commission on Fine Arts, established to advise Congress on art and architecture in the capital, from 1937-1950, and he worked on the design of the National Mall. In 1939, Clarke formed a long-lasting partnership with one of his employees, Michael Rapuano. Clarke and Rapuano worked with New York Parks Commissioner Robert Moses to design the public spaces around most of the parkways, housing projects, and parks that Moses planned. Projects with which the Mellons would have been familiar in 1945 included the restoration of Bryant Park (1930), the Conservatory Garden in Central Park (1937), and the New York World's Fair of 1939. Clarke and Rapuano also designed or redesigned numerous parks and playgrounds in New York during the Great Depression. The connection to Vitale and Geiffert, coupled with Clarke's extensive experience designing public landscapes and urban recreation areas, likely

made Clarke a desirable addition to the team the Mellons assembled to design the Recreation Area.

Exactly how the site planning and landscape design work for the Mellon Park Recreation Area was distributed among Griswold, McClain, and Clarke is not documented. However, their collaboration resulted in an efficient arrangement of a wide variety of passive and active functions in close proximity to one another without loss of the spacious feeling of a park. The Mellon Park Recreation Area is generally regarded as an addendum to the parkland created from the former Mellon and neighbor estates across Fifth Avenue: useful, but without historical or design significance. However, the Recreation Area has its own design genius, unsurprising considering the magnitude of talent employed to produce it.

Griswold, McClain, and Clarke worked cleverly with what they were given: a triangular site almost, but not quite, evenly bisected by Beechwood Boulevard. By calling for the vacation of the northern half of the boulevard, the designers maintained existing vehicular access to the site; avoided disruptive through traffic; and gained ground already the correct size and configuration for a ball field in the right angle at the site's north. A berm separates the field from passive uses to the southeast, and the field's curved outfield softens the triangle's harsh geometry. Building on this, curvilinear paths and a parkland landscape of trees in softly rolling lawn create a zone for strolling, picnicking, and other passive uses in the southeastern section of the triangle. As this is the part of the property where the Carr house stood, it is likely that the landscape architects of the 1940s made use of existing topography and trees to mirror the pastoral character of the estate lawns across Fifth Avenue.

The extant segment of Beechwood Boulevard divides this passive park zone clearly from the active uses in the triangle's southwest corner, in addition to providing vehicular access and parking. The playground, basketball, and tennis courts along Fifth Avenue are buffered from the busy street by another berm, which places them at a lower grade than the cartway. Two smaller athletic fields are nestled between the Fifth Avenue zone and the larger field to the north in the part of the site where the 1945 plans placed Stotz's pool, bathhouse, and community building.

The use of this area as additional ball fields helps preserve a spacious, open feeling to the landscape while allowing for intensive recreational use. A tree-lined walkway provides access to all of the features in the southeast zone and to the smaller access path at the perimeter of the site.

The City commenced its final design development for Mellon Park in 1951 upon taking title of the former Frew and Darsie estates. The Department of Parks and Recreation hired Simonds and Simonds, an up-and-coming firm, to draw up plans to unify these new parcels with the existing park landscape.

Simonds and Simonds was founded by John Ormsbee Simonds and his brother, Philip, in 1939. John Simonds earned a Masters in Landscape Architecture from Harvard University in 1938 (Philip ran the business side of the partnership). While at Harvard, John Simonds aligned himself with the teachings of his professor Walter Gropius, former head of the Bauhaus in Europe.

Simonds' skill with modernism in landscape design positioned him and his firm to flourish during the post-World War II boom and the Pittsburgh Renaissance, during which downtown Pittsburgh was revitalized from a polluted, industrial work place to a modern city of new corporate skyscrapers, plazas, and parks. Simonds and Simonds received many city park commissions, large and small, in Pittsburgh during the 1950s and '60s. Their magnum opus, Mellon Square Park, in downtown Pittsburgh was—like Mellon Park in the east end—closely

tied to the urban renewal vision of Richard King Mellon. Compared to Mellon Square, Simonds and Simonds' work on Mellon Park was early and relatively minor in scope. However, the firm's interventions in Mellon Park at the beginning of the 1950s help define its landscape to the present.

Simonds and Simonds' first job in Mellon Park, in 1950, was to prepare drawings for the restoration of the pool in the lower terrace of the Terraced Garden and the reconstruction of the balustrade atop the garden wall. The familiarity with the park gained in this small, straightforward job may have helped Simonds and Simonds win the contract for integrating the Frew and Darsie properties the next year.

Tasked with expanding the public park by bringing new, formerly private properties into its landscape, Simonds and Simonds called for the removal of all remains of the demolished Frew and Darsie houses as well as the fencing and landscape screening that had existed between them and the Mellon estate. Otherwise, the landscapes around the houses appear to have been left much as they were, implying that there were no significant designed landscape features, such as formal gardens, on the Frew and Darsie properties to either remove or preserve. Most significantly, Simonds and Simonds addressed pedestrian circulation around Mellon Park. The Mellon, Frew, and Darsie estates had historically each had its own vehicular drive off of Fifth Avenue but, being separate properties, did not have paths that interconnected them. Simonds and Simonds designated the Mellon and Frew drives as the primary walking paths into the park from Fifth Avenue and altered their alignments slightly to branch into new, subsidiary walkways that connected the park's various focal features: the Mellon house site, the Walled Garden, and the Terraced Garden. The Frew drive received a new pedestrian connection to the Mellon house site, which flowed into the path up along the northern edge of the Beechwood Boulevard parkland. By eliminating the Darsie drive altogether, Simonds and Simonds relegated that site to a somewhat secluded status as a corner lowland of the park. The overall result was a landscape seamlessly integrated to seem like a continuation of the Mellons' Fifth Avenue and Beechwood Boulevard lawns. Its circulation system served the entire park and diminished the previous experience of individual landscape units, each connected to Fifth Avenue.

5. Integrity

Mellon Park retains integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association.

Its location is the same as the original Mellon estate donated to the City in 1943 and includes all other subsequent lands acquired by the City to expand the park during its period of significance. The park also has strong integrity of setting amid the streetcar suburb neighborhoods of Shadyside, Point Breeze, and Squirrel Hill, which display a strong late 19th-early 20th century character.

The park's integrity of design, workmanship, and materials are evident in the extensive remnants of the historic gardens and grounds associated with the Mellon estate and later revisions to unify it with adjacent former private estates into one coherent park landscape.

6. Photos



Terraced Garden, view ESE across upper terrace from top of stairs



Terraced Garden, north side of upper terrace from above



Terraced Garden, north side wall of lower terrace



Terraced Garden, detail of north side wall showing sundial and dolphin scroll



View from steps of Walled Garden to Mellon house site



Walled Garden: view NE over central terrace from fountain plaza at west end



Walled Garden, gateway to north terrace from east



Walled Garden, north terrace, view to east

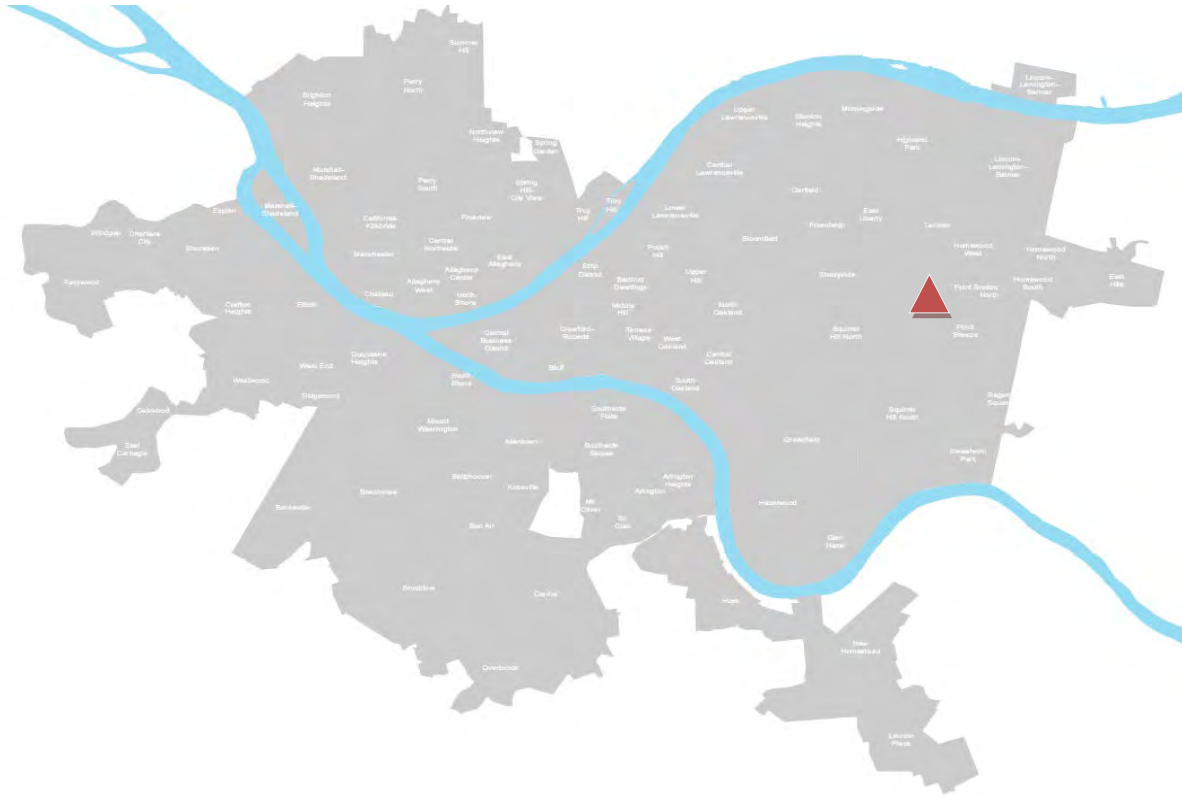


View of Darsie house site from Frew house site; path is former Frew drive



Historic estate fencing along Fifth Avenue: from east to west, Darsie, Frew, Mellon. Beyond the Mellon estate, the Marshall property did not have a permanent fence.

7. Maps



8. Recommendation of the Historic Review Commission

The Historic Review Commission held a public hearing regarding the designation of Mellon Park. On 4 November 2020, the Commission voted to recommend to City Council that it designate Mellon Park as historic

9. Recommendation of the City Planning Commission

The City Planning Commission held a public hearing regarding the designation Mellon Park. On 8 December 2020, the Commission voted to recommend to City Council that it designate Mellon Park as historic.

10. Meeting Minutes

HRC MINUTES – 7 OCTOBER 2020– PRELIMINARY DETERMINATION HEARING

Mellon Park

Historic Nomination

Owner:
City of Pittsburgh

Ward: 7th & 14th

Lot and Block: Various

Nominator:
Elizabeth Seamons

Inspector:

Council District:

Nominations Received: 9/22/20

National Register Status: **Listed:** **Eligible:**

Proposed Changes: Nomination for historic designation.

Discussion:

1. Ms. Quinn makes a short presentation on the park. She states that the nominator found that the park is significant under **Criterion 3**, exemplification of an architectural type, style or design distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship, but there may be other applicable Criteria. She also states that the park does retain integrity.
2. The Commission discusses the nomination.

Motion:

1. Mr. Green moves that the nomination is viable based on at least one Criteria.
2. Ms. Loysen seconds.
3. Ms. Aguirre asks for a vote; all are in favor and motion carries.

HRC MINUTES – 4 NOVEMBER 2020 RECOMMENDATION

Mellon Park

Historic Nomination

Owner:
City of Pittsburgh

Ward: 7th & 14th

Lot and Block: Various

Nominator:
Elizabeth Seamons

Inspector:

Council District:

Nominations Received: 9/22/20

National Register Status: Listed: Eligible:

Proposed Changes: Nomination for historic designation.

Discussion:

3. Ms. Quinn makes a short presentation on the park. She states that the nominator found that the park is significant under **Criterion 3**, exemplification of an architectural type, style or design distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship, but there may be other applicable Criteria. She also states that the park does retain integrity and recommends that the Commission makes a positive recommendation to City Council.
 4. Ms. Aguirre asks for public comment. She mentions that several letters of support were received for the nomination and reads the commenters' names into the record.
 5. Ms. Kathleen Ferrington speaks in support of the nomination.
 6. Ms. Elizabeth Seamans speaks in support of the nomination.
 7. Ms. Aguirre asks for comments from Commissioners.
 8. The Commission discusses the nomination.
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Motion:

4. Mr. Hill moves to make a positive recommendation to City Council based on **Criterion 3**.
 5. Mr. Green seconds.
 6. Ms. Aguirre asks for a vote; all are in favor and motion carries.
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PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES –8 DECEMBER 2020

2. DCP-HN-2020-00705, Historic Nomination, 6501 Fifth Ave, Mellon Park

Ms. Quinn made presentation on accordance with the attached staff report.

Ms. Elizabeth Simmons, resident, supported the nomination.

Ms. Melisa Miller from Preservation Pittsburgh asked commissioners to support the nomination.

Ms. Cindy Burger from Friends of Mellon Park asked to support Mellon Park nomination.

There being no more comments from the Public, the Chairwoman called for questions and comments from the Commissioners.

Ms. Deitrick thanked residents for great job done.

Ms. Mingo thanked everyone for well-prepared historical documents.

There being no more comments from the Commissioners, the Chairwoman called for the Motion.

MOTION:

That the Planning Commission of the City of Pittsburgh provides a positive recommendation to City Council for the nomination of 6501 Fifth Avenue, Mellon Park DCP-HN-2020-00705 for listing as a City- designated historic site.

MOVED BY: Ms. Dick **SECONDED BY:** Ms. Blackwell

IN FAVOR: Mingo, Dick, Burton-Faulk, O'Neill, Blackwell, Mondor, Deitrick, Askey

RECUSED:

OPPOSED:

MOTION CARRIED

